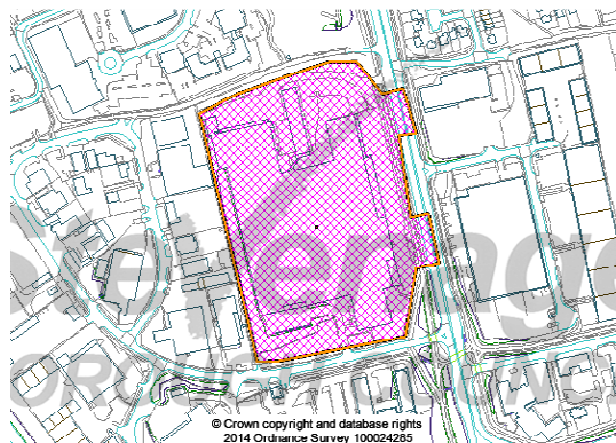


Meeting: Planning and Development Committee **Agenda Item:** 3
Date: 1 March 2016
Author: James Chettleburgh 01438 242266
Lead Officer: Zayd Al-Jawad 01438 242257
Contact Officer: James Chettleburgh 01438 242266

Application Nos:	15/00702/FPM and 15/00703/LB
Location:	Former John Lewis Plc, Cavendish Road, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2EH
Proposal:	
15/00702/FPM	Change of use of the existing warehouse from Use Class B8 (with associated Use Class B1) to sui generis use as a Warehouse Club, including tyre installation and sales together with external alterations, partial demolition and redevelopment, car parking, landscaping and access.
15/00703/LB	Listed building consent for internal and external alterations, including associated demolition works, to facilitate the change of use of the building from Use Class B8 (with associated Use Class B1) to a Warehouse Club (Use Class Sui Generis).
Drawing Nos.	A-01-001 P5; A-01-009 P5; A-01-012 P5; A01-013 P5; A01-014 P5; A01-015 P5; A01-016 P5; A01-017 P5; A01-021 P5; A01-022 P5; A01-024 P5; A02-011 P5; A02-012 P5; A02-013 P5; A03-010 P5; A03-011 P5; A03-012 P5; A04-011 P5; A-04-012 P5; A04-013 P5; A05-011 P5; A05-12 P5; A20-000 P5; A20-001 P5; A20-002 P5; A27-001 P5; A68-001 P5; W1958 1001 C; Vertical Tree Protection Fencing; 701; W1958 S101 A; 2776/PL1 A; 2776/PL2; 2776/PL3; 2776/PL4; 2776/PL5 A.
Applicant:	Costco Wholesale UK Ltd
Date Valid:	20 November 2015
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



Plan for information purposes only

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site is located at the junction of Cavendish Road and Gunnels Wood Road. The site comprises the John Lewis warehouse which is a Grade II (un-starred) Listed Building which was developed over six phases over the last thirty years. The warehouse comprises two main bays, one is the low bay warehouse which fronts onto Gunnels Wood Road and the high bay warehouse which is located to the rear of the low bay. The warehouse comprises a number of extensions which includes the two-storey office extension which fronts onto Cavendish Road. There are also extensions to the high and low bays located on the northern end of the warehouse buildings. These generally have steel framed roof structures and have limited architectural merit due to their simplistic design.
- 1.2 The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of office, light industrial and warehouse developments. To the south of the site is a four storey office block operated by Fujitsu. The office buildings generally have full height glazing with the flank elevations finished in a blue render. To the west of the site, which due to the topography of Cavendish Road, is located on a higher level than the application site, there are single-storey warehouse units with pitched roofs. These buildings are generally finished in profiled sheet metal cladding with the loading bays located on the eastern elevation. To the east of the site, located opposite on Gunnels Wood Road is a modern warehouse complex on Cockerell Close and to the north of the site there is the office development in Rutherford Close.
- 1.3 To the north-east of the application site located across the dual carriageway is the residential estate of Angotts Mead. The estate is generally characterised by brick built detached properties which are generally uniform in design being two-storey in height with traditional gable-end roofs having concrete inter-locking roof tiles. The estate also comprises a staggered terrace and three storey town houses which are constructed from red brick with gable roofs clad in concrete inter-locking tiles.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 Planning application 2/0238/61 sought permission for the erection of a wholesale warehouse and ancillary offices. This application was granted planning permission in January 1962.
- 2.2 Planning application 2/0020/72 sought permission for the extension to van park and car park. This application was granted planning permission in May 1972.
- 2.3 Planning application 2/0076/75 sought permission for a single storey fabric coated building to be used for storage and distribution. This application was granted planning permission in May 1975.
- 2.4 Planning application 2/0033/77 sought permission for a fabric covered steel framed building for use as a warehouse. This application was granted planning permission in April 1977.
- 2.5 Planning application 2/0230/81 sought permission for the retention of fabric covered steel framed building for use as a warehouse. This application was granted planning permission in October 1981.
- 2.6 Planning application 2/0286/81 sought permission for entrance gates of steel construction (height 2.43m). This application was granted planning permission in December 1981.

- 2.7 Planning application reference 2/0152/84 sought permission for a watchman's box at north gate entrance. This application was granted planning permission in May 1984.
- 2.8 Planning application 2/0176/86 sought permission for a detached building to house gas meter. This application was granted planning permission in July 1986.
- 2.9 Planning application 2/0317/86 sought permission for the continued use of a temporary warehouse. This application was granted planning permission in November 1986.
- 2.10 Planning application reference 2/0287/90 sought permission for the erection of temporary portakabin to serve as watch box for security officer. This application was granted planning permission in September 1990.
- 2.11 Planning application 2/0005/92 sought permission for the continued use of the existing temporary warehouse. This application was granted permission in January 1992.
- 2.12 Planning application 2/0006/92 sought permission for the erection of a ground and first floor extension to offices. This application was granted planning permission in March 1992.
- 2.13 Planning application 2/0430/96 sought permission for the erection of a ground floor rear extension. This application was granted planning permission in February 1996.
- 2.14 Planning application 2/0090/97 sought permission for the replacement of a temporary air supported warehouse building. This application was granted planning permission in June 1997.
- 2.15 Planning application 2/0178/97 sought permission for the conversion of the security hut to toilets and provision of pre-fabricated security huts. This application was granted planning permission in August 1997.
- 2.16 Planning application 2/0044/98 sought permission for the erection of a concrete based perimeter fencing and lighting. This application was granted planning permission in June 1998.
- 2.17 Planning application 99/00513/FP sought permission for the retention of the portakabin. This application was granted planning permission in February 2000.
- 2.18 Planning application 04/00211/LB sought permission for the proposed construction of a designated enclosure(s) for the storage of aerosol canisters within warehouse 70. Listed Building Consent was granted on June 2004.
- 2.19 Planning application 10/00178/FP sought permission for the erection of a steel palisade 2.4m high fence. This application was granted planning permission in July 2010.
- 2.20 Planning application 11/00174/FP sought permission for the erection of 2m high heras fencing and a vehicle access area on behalf of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This application was granted planning permission in April 2011.
- 2.21 Planning application reference 12/00186/NMA sought a non-material amendment to previously approved planning application reference number 11/00174/FP for a revised location for the vehicle access tent and 1 no. additional tent. The application was not proceeded with and the file closed on June 2012.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 An application for planning permission and listed building consent has been submitted to the Council. The full planning application (15/00702/FPM) seeks a change of use of the existing warehouse from Use Class B8 (with associated B1) to Sui Generis use as a Costco membership warehouse club comprising 14,429 square metres of floor floorspace. The proposal also comprises demolition works which involves the removal of later additions to the main warehouse and also seeks to undertake external alterations and redevelopment of the hardsurface area to provide 611 car parking spaces, landscaping and access.
- 3.2 The Listed Building Application (15/00703/LB) seeks consent for the internal and external alterations which are to be undertaken in order to facilitate the proposed change of use to a warehouse club.
- 3.3 The “warehouse club” will comprise 14,429 sq.m of floorspace and 611 car parking spaces which includes 537 member spaces, 14 disabled spaces, 60 employee spaces and 30 cycle parking spaces. The building would comprise at ground floor level an in-house bakery, butchers, delicatessen, tyre fitting centre, service area and offices along with the main warehouse area with products stored on racking or in chilled areas. The mezzanine floor would be used for access to the roof and water tank storage.
- 3.4 The site would have three access points, two access points would be from the A1072 Gunnels Wood Road. The southern access would predominantly be used by HGVs serving the development and the northern access would be used by customers. The access from Cavendish Road would be used to access the staff car park. The proposal comprises alterations to both access roads on Gunnels Wood Road with the provision of traffic light control on the northern access point.
- 3.5 The applicant has provided detailed information about the nature of the proposed use. In essence, the proposed development would be similar to a “cash and carry” operation which supports a spectrum of retail and business sectors, but, does also allow some “public” membership for an annual fee. The “trade” aspect of the development represents 65% of the business and the “public” element represents 35%. Reproduced below is an extract from the applicants submission which defines the nature of the operation:

“ Costco is the only warehouse club operator in the UK. The concept to the warehouse club was launched in California in 1976 and has refined and focused since that time so that a mature market with tried and tested formats has been in place for many years. It is an evolution of the cash and carry format that is familiar to the UK....”

....In summary, Costco Wholesale is a membership warehouse club, which offers a limited selection of products within a wide variety of product categories. Costco wholesale was created to serve the needs of small to medium sized business owners who are typically forced to pay a premium for small purchases from traditional wholesale distributors and who cannot otherwise obtain their full range of products at wholesale price from a single source.....”

- 3.6 The applicant has confirmed that the opening hours are as follows:
Monday to Friday: 10:00 to 20:30
Saturday: 09:30 to 18:30
Sunday: 11:00 to 17:00
Bank Holidays: 09:30 to 18:00

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 The planning application and listed building consent application were advertised by way of site notices, neighbour consultation letters and press notices. A summary of the number of comments and representations received are set out in the table below:-

	Planning application reference 15/00702/FPM		Planning application reference 15/00703/LB	
	Object	Support	Object	Support
Number of representations received.	34 Note:- 49 signature petition also received.	33	15 Note:- 49 signature petition also received.	8

4.2 The properties who objected to the applications are listed below:

- Angotts Mead – Numbers 1, 5, 9, 11, 13, 15, 29, 35, 36, 38, 39, 41, 65, 67, 77, 89 and 93;
- Fairview Road – Number 118 and one with no number given;
- Grace Way – Numbers 198 and 248;
- Great Ashby – No number given;
- Harvest Lane – Number 27;
- High Street – Number 64;
- Malvern Close – Number 5;
- Mandeville – Number 3;
- Oaks Cross – Number 35;
- Park View – Number 65;
- Pembridge Gardens – Number 59;
- Sheringham Avenue – Number 18;
- Skipton Close – Number 86;
- Torquay Crescent – Number 19;
- Weston Road – Number 16;

Properties located outside of the Borough boundary.

- 19 Windmill, Welwyn Garden City

Signed petition (49 signatures)

- Angotts Mead – Numbers 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23, 24, 25, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 48, 55, 57, 59, 65, 67, 69, 77 and 89.
- Torquay Crescent – Numbers 5, 11, 13, 17, 21, 25 and 31.
- Brixham Close – Numbers 2, 6 and 3.

Objection was also received from the CTC (National Cycling Charity) Campaigns and Policy.

4.3 The summary of the objections which have been received are as follows:

- Will have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the area;
- Will affect the health of local residents;
- Will affect the noise levels of the area;

- Will affect the privacy of local residents;
- Will have a detrimental impact on property values;
- Will cause an increase in traffic generation;
- Will have a detrimental impact on access into Angotts Mead;
- Will have a detrimental impact on the air quality of the area;
- The Council has not adequately notified local residents of the applications or provided a sufficient period of consultation for residents to consider the applications;
- Will have a detrimental impact on safety and security;
- The proposed use of the site as a retail development would be too close to the boundaries of residential properties;
- The developer is trying to generate money at the expense of local residents;
- The proposed development will cause parking issues on local roads;
- The development if approved would set a precedent;
- The development would prejudice the safety and operation of the highway;
- It is questioned whether the applicant has carefully considered alternative sites;
- The development would have a detrimental impact on the A1(M) through increased traffic levels;
- The development is not in keeping with the surrounding area;
- Those who are in support of the application do not live in close proximity to the development;
- The development would increase congestion in the area, especially with the introduction of a new set of traffic lights;
- No one will cycle, walk or use public transport to access the development, it would all be car, van and HGV;
- The development would pose a safety risk to cyclists and pedestrians;
- The development would affect the route of general cycling enthusiasts as well as two running clubs which use the cycle track located adjacent to the development;
- The proposed traffic lights would affect the safe and free flow of traffic where comparison can be drawn to the Sainsbury's Coreys Mill lights on Hitchin Road;
- The Council should not rely on the traffic report published by the applicant;
- Access should be made from Cavendish Road with Costco paying the costs for road improvements;
- Cavendish Road junction is grade separated and therefore, there would be no conflict between users of Costco, cyclists and runners. Thus, the plan should be reconfigured to provide the major access, if not the only access, from Cavendish Road.
- The proposed development is opposite Woollenwick Primary School and so the traffic generated by the development would pose a risk to school children;
- The development would potentially increase road traffic collisions, especially vulnerable road users (cyclists and pedestrians) that are using the separated junction;
- The HGVs entering the southern end of the site would have a detrimental impact on highway safety and again, poses a potential risk to vulnerable road users. Especially given the number of fatal incidents in London;
- It has been forecasted an increase in traffic as a result of the development, queues already form a significant way along both entry and exit slip roads at both Junctions 7 and 8 of the A1(M), then the increase of traffic would widen the congestion at these junctions;
- The applicant should look at analysing the impact based on the current flow of traffic on Mondays and Tuesdays where queues are longer and slower moving;
- The development would affect the route of emergency services who utilise Gunnels Wood Road;
- The applicant seems to consider the collision rate in the area which the development would directly impact is deemed acceptable. However, it is

common knowledge that the majority of collisions often occur at low speeds with drivers not paying attention. Therefore, the development is likely to increase the level of collisions due to the level of traffic generated;

- The development would lead to illegal parking on local roads;
- The information contained in the applicants Transport Assessment is not representative of the existing use of the site and is misleading, especially the TRICS data provided;
- The Transport Assessment was undertaken on a Friday in June where you would expect less traffic compared to a Tuesday in January or even May;
- The PICADY analysis in the Transport Assessment shows post-development traffic, to result in minor queuing on Gunnels Wood Road. It is more likely to result in a detriment to the free flowing nature of the Road;
- The PICADY analysis in the Transport Assessment does not consider queuing and waiting times on the individual junction and has not considered the impact of the signalised junction on Fairlands Way/Gunnels Wood Road roundabout;
- The Transport Assessment is misleading and does not truly represent the impact the development would have on the highway network. It is also considered that the proposed access arrangements are inadequate;
- Inadequate information has been provided to local residents about the proposal;
- The proposed traffic lights would disrupt a well-used cycle track, so it is recommended that Dutch style lights are provided with a maximum of 20 seconds when pedestrians/cyclists need to cross;
- The proposed development would frequently disrupt a key cycle route,
- The amount of traffic generation across the cycleway would destroy its character;
- The proposed installation of additional traffic lights is an unusual arrangement and out of character arrangement on Gunnels Wood Road;
- The Council's Cycle Strategy is to safeguard, enhance and promote the present cycle network, approving the planning application would be contrary to this strategy;
- The CTC were not consulted on the application given the proposal would have a major impact on cycle facilities and cyclists;
- The developer should look to provide underpasses at the access points on Gunnels Wood Road;
- The development would create 1 million extra movements which would pass near the garden areas of properties on Angotts Mead;
- The application site is not a retail park.

4.4 The properties who wrote in support of the applications are listed below:

- Albert Street – Number 4;
- Alexander Gate – Number 12;
- Archer Road – Number 374;
- Ascot Crescent – Number 141;
- Brixham Close – Number 38;
- Canterbury Way - Numbers 68, 471, 486;
- Chertsey Rise – Numbers 82 and 90;
- Cherwell Drive – Number 90;
- Cleveland Way – Number 189;
- Dovedale – Number 11;
- Durham Road – Number 102;
- Ellis Avenue – Number 48;
- Greenfield Road – Number 4;
- Grove Road – Number 8;
- Holly Leys – Number 16;

- Hopton Road – Number 56;
- Kilby Road – Numbers 115, 119;
- Kymswell Road – Number 57;
- Oaks Cross – Number 16;
- Rookwood Drive– Number 9;
- Wansbeck Close (No number given)
- 2 properties in Windermere Close (No numbers given)
- York Road – Number 330;

Properties located outside of the Borough boundary.

- 15 Ivel Close, Langford, Biggleswade;
- 95 Hillbrow, Letchworth;
- 127 Westmill Road, Hitchin;
- Middle fields, Letchworth;
- 128 Wymondley Road, Hitchin;
- 36 Willian Road, Hitchin;
- 16 Glebe Close, Watton-at-Stone, Hertford;
- 153 Biggleswade Road, Upper Caldecote, Biggleswade

4.5 The summary of the comments in supports which have been received are as follows:

- The proposed development would introduce jobs and trade into the town;
- The development would provide a range of food and goods which are high quality and reasonably priced;
- The development would be used by ordinary families and local businesses;
- The development would be a great asset to the town;
- It would reduce the travel distances of customers who currently commute to other Costco stores;
- The development would generate additional revenue streams for the town;
- It would improve competition in the area;
- The renovation of the existing building would be beneficial for the area;
- Traffic management issues would be factored into the development;
- The development would promote investment into the local community;
- The development would be located within an existing industrial area and thus, would have little impact on the surrounding residential areas;
- The proposed development could help to entice other businesses to come to Stevenage;
- There are already issues regarding noise and light pollution from the existing development with the site currently operating 24 hours, the majority of the warehouse closes for business at 20:30;
- The majority of trade for the development, as with supermarkets, is during the weekdays, so the risk of increased traffic is minimal.

4.6 General comments were also received regarding the application from a resident on Fairview Road (No number provided). A summary of their comments are as follows:

- The development would generate more jobs and would bring in more people into the town,
- The development would however potentially cause parking issues in the local area;
- The residents of Angotts Mead are located in close proximity to an industrial area and if the site was taken on by another warehouse company, it could potentially operate 24/7.

- 4.7 Given the detailed nature of the representations which have been received the full content of the letters are available to view on the Council's website.
- 4.8 Further to the above, as the proposed development would be a departure from the adopted Local Plan, a further site notice and press notice has been issued. Any additional representations which are made and are materially different to the representations which have been received to date, will be reported to the planning committee.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority

- 5.1.1 Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority has considered that the proposed development would not generate any major capacity or queuing problems on the local highway network. In regards to the junctions of Gunnels Wood Road with Hitchin Road and Broadhall Way, it is recommend that planning obligations would be obtained and utilised towards capacity and safety improvements at these two junctions.
- 5.1.2 In regards to the existing access points, it is recommended that the northern access is signalised which would be designed to support both pedestrians and cyclists through the introduction of a TOUCAN crossing. Additionally, the operational arrangement of the car park would be acceptable.
- 5.1.3 Consequently, it is considered that the proposed development, subject to mitigation measures which would be secured through a S106 legal agreement, would not have a significant impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining highways. Given this, the Highway Authority raises no objection on highways grounds.

5.2 Council's Arboricultural Officer

- 5.2.1 Following a review of the applicant's submission, it is considered from an arboricultural point of view that there are no objections to the proposed development. In regards to the proposed landscaping scheme, this is considered to be acceptable.

5.3 Lead Local Flood Authority

- 5.3.1 The drainage strategy which has been submitted to the Council is considered to be acceptable. It is considered that the proposed development site can be adequately drained and mitigate any potential surface water flood risk. The applicant has also demonstrated that an appropriate sustainable drainage scheme can be implemented in accordance with best practice.
- 5.3.2 If the Council is minded to grant planning permission, it is recommended a condition be imposed requiring that the drainage scheme provided should be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

5.4 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

- 5.4.1 The information which has been submitted is considered to be acceptable and agree with the recommendations carried out in the report. It is also recommended that the ecological enhancements are secured by way of condition if the Council is minded to grant planning permission.

5.5 Council's Conservation Advisor

5.5.1 Due to the uniqueness of the John Lewis building within its site, and the significance of the fabric both as an aesthetic object and part of the local history it is a building worthy of preservation. The removal of the modern extensions and nearby buildings as identified by the applicant would help to enhance the preservation of the building. The proposed development is therefore, supported on heritage grounds.

5.6 Historic England

5.6.1 Following an assessment of the proposal, it was considered that the proposed removal of the abutting low-quality later extensions and the additional removal of a small number of internal divisions would be acceptable. Further, the proposed change of use of the warehouse and the associated demolitions of later additions would not cause harm to the listed building. Consequently, the removal of the later additions would enhance the significance of the listed buildings. Therefore, the proposed development would be in accordance with the guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

5.7 Council's Environmental Health Officer

5.7.1 Following a review of the proposed development, it is considered that the pollution levels which would be generated by the proposed development are unlikely to significantly increase or become a greater public health risk than the current situation. The two nearest monitoring stations for nitrous oxides (generated by diesel vehicles particularly) have not shown any adverse results.

5.7.2 In regards to noise, it is noted that the ingress and egress of lorries and van traffic serving the development would be located furthest away from the nearest residential areas. Consequently, the unloading of vehicles would take place on the Cavendish Road side of the development and therefore, is less likely to cause noise problems.

5.7.3 In regards to controlling noise, dust, contamination etc, it is recommended that if planning permission was to be granted, a number of conditions could be attached to any permission issued. The recommended conditions are as follows:-

- Contaminated Land;
- Restriction on working hours relating demolition and construction works;
- Dust control measures;
- Restriction on the burning of materials/waste generated on the site;
- Asbestos survey;
- Demolition and construction method statement;
- Control on external lighting;
- Methodology on the screening or enclosure of plant and machinery;
- Piling operations.

5.8 Thames Water

5.8.1 In reference to sewerage infrastructure capacity, it is considered that there are no objections to the planning application. In relation to surface water drainage, this is the responsibility of the developer to make proper provisions.

5.9 Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue

5.9.1 Following a review of the submitted drawings, it is considered that there is adequate access for fire appliances and provision of water supplies.

5.10 Hertfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste

5.10.1 The Council needs to be aware of the Policies in regards to waste management of the site, including the re-use of unavoidable waste where possible and the use of recycled materials where appropriate to the construction.

5.11 Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor

5.11.1 No objection is raised to the proposed development.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 Background to the Development Plan

6.1.1 In the determination of planning applications development must be in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Stevenage the statutory development plan comprises:

- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and 2014);
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 (adopted 2007); and
- The Stevenage District Plan Second Review 2004.

The Council has now commenced work on the new Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031. The draft version of the Plan was published in January 2016 and will be used as a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications registered on or after Wednesday 6 January 2016. The Site Specific Policies DPD, the draft Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan (AAP), the draft Old Town AAP, the Pond Close Development SPG, Stevenage West Masterplanning Principles SPG, the Gunnels Wood Supplementary Planning Document and the Interim Planning Policy Statement for Stevenage are no longer material considerations in the determination of all planning applications registered on or after Wednesday 6 January 2016.

6.1.2 Where a Development Plan Document has been submitted for examination but no representations have been made in respect of relevant policies, then considerable weight may be attached to those policies because of the strong possibility that they will be adopted. The converse may apply if there have been representations which oppose the policy. However, much will depend on the nature of those representations and whether there are representations in support of particular policies.

6.1.3 In considering the policy implications of any development proposal the Local Planning Authority will assess each case on its individual merits, however where there may be a conflict between policies in the existing Development Plan and policies in any emerging Development Plan Document, the adopted Development Plan policies currently continue to have greater weight.

6.2 Central Government Advice

6.2.1 In March 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published and in doing so it replaced many documents including all Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Annex 1 of the NPPF provides guidance on how existing local plan policies which have been prepared prior to the publication of the NPPF should be treated. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF applies which states that only due weight should be afforded to the relevant policies in the adopted local plan according to their degree of consistency with it.

- 6.2.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is itself a material consideration. Given that the advice that the weight to be given to relevant policies in the local plan will depend on their degree of consistency with the NPPF, it will be necessary in the determination of this application to assess the consistency of the relevant local plan policies with the NPPF. The NPPF applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 6.2.3 In addition to the NPPF advice in the National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014) also needs to be taken into account. It states that, where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date, paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires the application to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development unless otherwise specified.
- 6.2.4 In reference to the proposed works affecting Listed Buildings, consideration needs to be made to the legislation set out in the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Through this legislation, authorisation is required for any extension or alteration to a listed building from the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Therefore, the LPA has a statutory duty to carefully consider how a development proposal would affect the historic character of the listed building. This is to ensure that particular features which are of historic importance are carefully preserved as part of any development to the listed building.

6.3 Adopted District Plan

TW1: Sustainable Development;
TW8: Environmental Safeguards;
TW9: Quality in Design;
TW11: Planning Requirements;
E2: Employment Areas;
E4: Acceptable Uses in Employment Areas;
T6: Design Standards;
T12: Bus Provision;
T13: Cycleways;
T14: Pedestrians;
T15: Car parking strategy;
EN10: Green Links;
EN13: Trees in New Developments;
EN18: Natural Habitats in Adjoining Local Authorities;
EN27: Noise Pollution;
EN29: Light Pollution;

6.4 Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking Provision SPD (2012)
Stevenage Design Guide SPD (2009)
Gunnels Wood Employment Area SPD (2006)

6.5 Interim Planning Policy Statement

IP01: Sustainable development principles
IP02: Planning Requirements
IP05: Transport Assessments and Travel Plans
IP11: Flood Risk and Drainage

6.6 Other documents

Draft Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan (2010)

APPRAISAL

7.1 The main issues for consideration in the determination of the application are its acceptability in land use policy terms, impact on the listed building, Impact on visual amenity, Impact on residential amenities, parking provision, means of access and highway safety, trees and landscaping, impact on the environment, ecological impacts and development and flood risk.

7.2 Land Use Policy Considerations

Employment

7.2.1 The National Planning Framework (NPPF) states that *“the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”*. In paragraph 7, the NPPF outlines three dimensions to sustainable development which are: economic, social and environmental. The economic role involves *“contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure...”*.

7.2.2 Paragraph 18 of the same document relates to the aim of building a *“strong, competitive economy”* and states that the *“Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country’s inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future”*. Paragraph 19 makes it clear that the *“Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.”*

7.2.3 The application site is located within the Gunnels Wood employment area as defined by Policy E2 of the Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991 – 2011. Policy E4 sets out acceptable uses in employment areas and specifically states *“in the employment areas already designated a range of employment uses within the B1, B2 and B8 use classes will be encouraged. A mix of uses within a development site will also be encouraged.”*

7.2.4 The proposed development seeks to provide a Costco wholesale warehouse club which is defined as ‘Sui Generis’ under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As amended). The proposal would therefore seek a change of use from Use Class B8 (warehouse) and thus, lead to the loss of a Warehouse (Class B8 Use). Consequently, it would be contrary to the policies contained in the adopted Local Plan (2004). This is reflected in the Gunnels Wood Employment Area SPD (2006). Furthermore, Policy GW04 of the Draft Gunnels Wood Area Action Plan (2010) (AAP) states that within area 3, planning permission for development proposals greater than 1,000m² will only be granted for B-class development. However, Policy E4 of the adopted Local Plan (2004) does also state *“proposals for employment generating uses that do not fall within the use classes order will be considered on their own merits”*. In this regard, an assessment has to be made regarding the individual merits of the proposed development which is dealt with in more detail in the following sections of this report. Furthermore, the NPPF, does state *“where there is no reasonable prospect*

of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits.”

- 7.2.5 Firstly, in clarifying the use of the proposed development, prior to the amendment to the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987, under R v Thurrock Borough Council, *ex parte*, Tesco Store High Court Case (1993), it was determined that warehouse clubs be classed as a “sui-generis” use (not fitting into one use class), rather than a shop. It was held in the court that a warehouse club which offers members a paid annual prescription, provides a limited amount of products from a wide variety of categories, with low prices, but in bulk quantities was not a shop in the statutory definition ‘for the retail sale of goods’ to visiting members of the public. This is because the warehouse club was not open to the public, but only to club members.
- 7.2.6 Further to the above court decision, there are also a number of appeal decisions supporting the fact that a warehouse club does not fall within any specific Use Class category and therefore, is defined as being “sui-generis”. Given that these uses cannot be disaggregated from each other, as trade and individual members have access to the same product, Costco falls within the “sui-generis” use class. Consequently, due to established case law and appeal decisions, the Council as the Local Planning Authority needs to consider the proposed development as not being a retail development, but as a “sui-generis” development which is a hybrid of retail and warehousing.
- 7.2.7 Turning to the current use of the site as a warehouse (Use Class B8), it has been confirmed that John Lewis are seeking to discontinue operations from the application site in Spring 2016 and relocate to a large distribution centre in Milton Keynes. The main reason stated to relocate operations is due to the fact the current building is compromised, unsuitable and unviable to operate effectively as a warehouse. The reason for this are due to the low ceiling heights, poor internal layout and functionality of the space (mainly due to the presence hyperbolic paraboloids which are concrete columns supporting the roof). Having regard to these constraints, the site is also unsuitable for traditional warehouse operators. Moreover, as the existing building is Listed, it is unlikely that it can be completely demolished and replaced with a comprehensive new structure.
- 7.2.8 Given the above, the proposed development would ensure that the site remains in operation and the Listed Building does not fall into disrepair. Dealing with the proposal in detail, it would result in the removal of 21,670 sq.m of floorspace following the demolition of the existing office block and warehouse extensions. The retained 14,429 sq.m of floorspace would be used to accommodate the proposed Costco development. The proposal would seek to provide initial employment of 160 jobs, rising to around 250 jobs within 3-5 years as the warehouse business matures. This is greater than the existing John Lewis Depot which at its peak, employed 140 staff.
- 7.2.9 The employment aspects of Costco are also a material consideration and have been considered in previous Costco appeal decisions. At Chingford (Reference:- LRP219/U5930/09), the Planning Inspector noted that Costco would:
- “Provide a useful source of local employment....I am not persuaded that those jobs would necessarily be inferior to jobs in manufacturing, even if there were grounds to believe that the site could soon be restored to industrial use. Furthermore it seems to me that the proposed warehouse could have a positive effect on the local economy by providing a relatively cheap source of supply for countless small businesses. Lower costs would improve their competitive edge, and might enable them to take on extra labour”.*
- 7.2.10 Costco has provided information about their employment in that they would offer to work with Stevenage to ensure that jobs are directed to those in most need and where

employment could potentially have the greatest impact on economic regeneration contributing to provide a strong, responsive and competitive economy supporting the community's needs.

7.2.11 It is also set out in the applicants submission that for Costco in the UK, the majority of the jobs created (over 90%) are filled by locally recruited staff. They are also committed to promoting personnel from within the company and staff are encouraged to undertake training to improve their position. The applicant also stated that recruitment would be undertaken through the local job centre and recruitment agencies. Where appropriate, they advise that jobs would be targeted on economic and social priority areas.

7.2.12 With regard to the impact on existing local businesses, Costco Wholesale's target customer are small and medium businesses. These include the following:

- Independent retailers;
- Food and drink outlets such as restaurants, cafes, sandwich shops etc.;
- Service outlets such as estate agents, accountants, garages and other professional firms;
- Independently owned hotels, guest houses etc.

7.2.13 In 2011, a report which was published by CBRE (who are a global commercial real estate service) (An assessment of Economic Impacts) concluded that Costco Wholesale Warehouse Clubs provide significant positive impacts which benefit local economies, including the ability for bulk purchase and the resulting price savings available to members. The CBRE also states that such planning proposals for Costco have significant direct and indirect benefits which need to be taken into consideration when determining applications.

7.2.14 The applicant as part of their application submission has also provided an Employment Opportunities Report with detailed skills, training and employment plan. This document sets out a commitment by Costco to work in partnership with the local authority in order to gain a full understanding of employment needs that are specific to Stevenage. They would also work with local recruitment facilities such as Job Centre Plus. Through this approach, local residents would be able to capitalise from the proposed development. Therefore, if members are minded to grant planning permission, it is recommended that the Employment Opportunities Report is incorporated as part of the S106 agreement.

7.2.15 In relation to employment and training, Costco as set out in their Employment Report seek to employ both unskilled and skilled staff who would be trained internally within the company. There would also be specific skill training such as food hygiene through to working in the bakery, butchers etc. Also, for certain jobs such as fork lift drivers and tyre fitters, they would be provided external training. The company also looks to promote within, so they would invest in training staff so they can advance themselves into higher positions.

7.2.16 Given the amount of benefits which would be generated, the proposed change of use of the site to create a Wholesale Warehouse Club would accord with one of the fundamental aims of the NPPF which is to contribute towards building a strong, responsive and competitive economy. Consequently, whilst the proposal will result in the change in the type of employment use of the site and would be contrary to Gunnels Wood AAP (2010), the development could lead to significant employment benefits and in this respect, it is considered to be an acceptable exception within the established employment area in accordance with Policy E4 of the adopted Local Plan. Furthermore, it is important to note that if the application was submitted after the 6th January 2016, both the Gunnels Wood Employment Area SPD (2006) and Draft

Gunnels Wood AAP (2010) have been rescinded. These documents also have limited weight as the assessment has to be against the adopted development plan and the NPPF which have significant weight in this instance. Furthermore, the proposed would constitute sustainable development through the re-use of an existing building.

Retail impact and the Sequential Test

- 7.2.17 The relevant adopted Local Plan Policies TR5 and TR6 of the Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991-2011 adopted 2004, which relate to retail development, were not saved from September 2007. Accordingly, in relation to retail issues, the proposal falls to be assessed against the provisions of the NPPF and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- 7.2.18 The NPPF reaffirms the Government's objectives for ensuring the vitality and viability of town centres. For proposals that are not in an existing centre, the NPPF states that a sequential test must be undertaken giving preference to town centre sites and then edge of centre sites before consideration is given to out of centre sites. For reference, under Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF, warehouse clubs are identified as main town centre uses. Additional to this, the NPPF states that for proposals of this scale (above the default threshold of 2,500m²) an impact assessment must be undertaken which considers impact on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in centres and impact on the vitality and viability of defined centres. There is, however, no requirement for the applicant to demonstrate a need for the development.
- 7.2.19 The NPPG (2014) reaffirms the 'town centre first' principle, that compliance with the sequential and impact tests does not guarantee that permission will be granted and that the Local Planning Authority will have to take into account all material considerations in reaching a decision. With regards to the sequential test, the NPPG states that the applicant must demonstrate flexibility. A town centre site does not have to accommodate precisely the scale and form of the proposed development and consideration should be given to the contribution that more central sites are able to make.
- 7.2.20 To address the two tests, the applicant has submitted a Planning and Retail Statement dated November 2015. This document and its associated appendices contains a significant amount of technical information and judgements on the suitability and availability of alternative sites and the likely impacts from the proposed development. These have been carefully assessed in the following sections of this report.

Sequential Assessment

- 7.2.21 To properly consider the sequential assessment, it is necessary to be clear that the proposal is to create 14,429 sq.m of wholesale warehouse floorspace and that the application site is currently a warehouse (Use Class B8) located in an out-of-centre site in terms of retail policy.
- 7.2.22 In considering the suitability of alternative sites, it is necessary to have regard to the characteristics of any site that must be met in order to satisfy the applicant's business model. Legal decisions such as the Supreme Court Decision of Tesco Stores Ltd v Dundee City Council (2012) and appeal decisions (Rushden Lakes decision – APP/G2815/V/12/2190175) have confirmed that the sequential test is directed at what the developer is proposing, not some other proposal which the planning authority may seek to substitute for it which is something less than that is sought by the developer. What this means is that when applying the sequential test, neither the NPPF nor the NPPG refers to disaggregation, thus, a development cannot be altered or reduced in order to fit into an alternative site.

7.2.23 The applicant has confirmed that the minimum requirement for the proposed occupier (Costco) is a store of 13,000 sq.m with substantial parking, which typically translates into a land requirement of 5 hectares. Furthermore, the sequential test needs to be carried out having regard to the special nature of a warehouse club business. This approach has been supported by a number of Secretary of State Decisions at Chingford, Oldham, Reading, Chester and Coventry. The recognised business model of Costco as a warehouse is specifically identified as a “Sui Generis” use that combines the main function of the warehouse (B8 sales and distribution) with sales to individual members.

7.2.24 Given the nature of the business model, a format approach to site selection needs to be undertaken due to the economies of scale and the operation of Costco. Furthermore, the need for the large warehouse format and parking requirement is also an important matter to consider due to the nature of the purchases made when undertaking a sequential assessment. This approach is supported in appeal decisions clarifying that an application for a warehouse club has the distinctive characteristics and function of a warehouse (Use Class B8) and a retail outlet of which, the B8 element was not subject to the sequential test. However, given the wholesale and A1 elements cannot be disaggregated, the assessment as set out above has to consider the operational requirements of the Costco business model.

7.2.25 The Costco wholesale warehouse club operates from a large warehouse building, selling bulky goods in large quantities which are aimed towards its members who visit on an infrequent basis. Consequently, the characteristics of Costco do not reflect those which are found in a town centre location. Furthermore, Costco is a member based business, thus, they do not encourage passing trade compared to a traditional retailer.

7.2.26 Notwithstanding the above, in line with the requirements of the NPPF, the applicant has undertaken a sequential test. The applicant states that the assessment looks at all district/town centres within a 30 minute drive time from the application site. The assessment focused on sites with a minimum site threshold of 2 hectares which are within 300m of the primary shopping area. The assessment undertaken by the applicant takes into account the following:-

- Proximity and linkages;
- Accessibility to the road network and accessibility to businesses in the catchment area;
- Land ownership and site assembly issues;
- Site constraints, including availability, site size, topography, planning policy objective etc;
- The need for flexibility in determining the format of the design and scale of development;
- Development plan allocation and impact on Development Plan strategy.

7.2.27 The following sites have been considered by the applicant as part of the sequential test:

- The Goods Yard, Bishops Stortford;
- Churchgate Centre, Hitchin Market and Biggin Lane Car Park, Hitchin;
- Garden Square Shopping Centre, adjoining car park, Council Offices, former public house, Genon Road and 28-74 Eastcheap, Letchworth Garden City;
- Civic Centre Opportunity Sites, St Albans;
- Drovers Way Opportunity Site, St Albans;
- Stevenage Town Centre North (previously allocated under Policy TR2 of the Local Plan 2004);
- Marks and Spencer, Queensway, Stevenage;
- Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Proposal;

- Stevenage Town Centre sites identified under the Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework;
- Matalan Site, Danestrete;
- High Street (Old Town).

7.2.28 Taking into consideration the advice in the NPPG and the decision of the Supreme Court in the Tesco case, the Local Planning Authority has considered the above sites. Dealing with the sites located outside of Stevenage, the Goods Yard in Bishops Stortford is allocated under Policy BIS11 in the East Herts Local Plan Second Review (2007) for a comprehensive redevelopment comprising residential, leisure, public house/restaurant and/or hotel, retailing, including some food retailing, boating and mooring basin, and uses falling within Class B1. The site is also currently under the freehold ownership of Network Rail with sub-lettings to a number of train and freight companies. Consequently, the site is not currently available for redevelopment, and, given the policy designation of the site, a Costco warehouse would be contrary to the development plan policy of East Herts. Accordingly, this site does not represent a sequentially preferable site.

7.2.29 Looking at the Churchgate Centre, Hitchin, North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) adopted the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy as a Development Plan Document (DPD) in 2004. The strategy identifies a redevelopment of the site for a mix of retail, food and drink, leisure and residential uses. The majority of the site is formed of the Churchgate Centre where a number of retailers operating from the centre have long leases. Therefore, the site is not currently available for redevelopment. NHDC as set out in the DPD also seeks to enhance the market areas which in essence, would reduce the area of land available to redevelop the site for a Costco warehouse. Furthermore, the proposed development would be contrary to the objectives which are set out in the Town Centre Strategy. Accordingly, this site does not represent a sequentially preferable site.

7.2.30 In relation to Garden Square Shopping Centre, Letchworth, NHDC adopted the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Strategy DPD (2007). The strategy identifies the site for a wide variety of uses with retail use in ground floor units incorporating additional residential units above. The majority of the site is currently occupied by a number of retailers which are on long leases. Consequently, the proposed development would be contrary to the aspirations of NHDC and is not readily available for redevelopment. Accordingly, this site does not represent a sequentially preferable site.

7.2.31 The Civic Office Opportunity Site, St. Albans, is identified under Policy 116 of the St Albans City and District Local Plan 1994. This policy allocates the site for a mixture of shopping including a potential department store, civic, leisure, cultural or entertainment uses, public car parking, and improved pedestrian routes from the Maltings into the Alban area. St Albans District Council also adopted the Civic Centre Opportunity Development Brief SPD (2012) which seeks to provide a mixed use development. The site is owned by a number of private land holders and the Council (St. Albans) also owns a large area of the site. Due to the complex nature of the different land owners, it would mean the site would not be readily available for redevelopment. Furthermore, due to the nature of the Costco Business Model, it would not be open to visiting members of the public, thus, the proposal would be contrary to St Albans District Council intention of a retail-led regeneration within the town centre. Furthermore, the proposal would also be contrary to the adopted Local Plan for St. Albans in that it would not deliver a development of multiple uses. Accordingly, this site does not represent a sequentially preferable site.

7.2.32 In respect to the Drivers Way Opportunity Site, St Albans, the site is identified in the St Albans City and District draft strategic Local Plan 2011 – 2031 under Policy SLP19

for major retail development. However, the site is currently occupied by Aboyne Lodge School and a multi-storey car park which are both in use. The draft Local Plan for St. Albans does identify that the site is not currently available for redevelopment. This is supported under St Albans planning application reference 5/2014/1710 which was for the proposed extension of London Colney Retail Park, the case officer stated in their report to the St Albans District Council Planning Committee that the Drovers Way site is not considered to be available within a reasonable time period. Consequently, the application site is not suitable for the proposed Costco development. Accordingly, this site does not represent a sequentially preferable site.

- 7.2.33 Looking at Stevenage Town Centre North, this site was allocated under Policy TR2 of the adopted Local Plan (2004). Under this policy, it was identified that the site would be suitable for redevelopment for retail (principally A1 with ancillary A3) and car parking, and optionally ancillary D1 Community Centre and/or D2 Leisure. However, Policy TR2 was not saved by way of direction in 2007 and no other saved policies within the Local Plan are specifically concerned with the Town Centre Redevelopment Proposals. Furthermore, a number of the units are not owned by Stevenage Borough Council and with part of the site being designated a conservation area, the site is not considered to be readily available or suitable. Therefore, this site cannot be considered to be a sequentially preferable site.
- 7.2.34 In reference to the former Marks and Spencer site in Queensway, despite the site being readily available for development, it would be too small to accommodate the proposed Costco development. Furthermore, in order to facilitate a development at this site, the applicant would need to acquire a large amount of land from the Council and other land owners in order to deliver the development. Consequently, this site cannot be considered to be a sequentially preferable site.
- 7.2.35 With regard to the Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Proposal, this achieved a resolution to grant planning permission in January 2012, subject to the completion of a S106 agreement, which to date, has not been signed. The proposal sought to redevelop the bus station and the surrounding underutilised sites. Approximately 45,000m² floorspace was proposed, including a department store, a hotel and residential units. The regeneration scheme does not include the provision of a Wholesale Warehouse Club as part of the wider redevelopment of Stevenage Town Centre. However, the proposed development partnership has withdrawn their interest in the scheme. Given this, it is considered that this proposal is neither available within the necessary timeframe required by the developer, nor is it viable in terms of the costs of implementing the scheme. Accordingly, this scheme does not represent a sequentially preferable site.
- 7.2.36 In reference to the sites which are identified in the Stevenage Town Centre Central Framework, the proposed development of a Wholesale Warehouse would be contrary to the aspirations and objectives of the Council for these sites. In particular, the majority of the sites are earmarked for a mixture of residential, retail, sports and leisure facilities. Furthermore, a number of the sites have multiple land owners e.g. the NHS, Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council along with a number of private land owners and the sites in question are still in use. Consequently, the sites set out in the Framework are not available for redevelopment and therefore, do not represent sequentially preferable sites for the proposed development.
- 7.2.37 In assessing the Matalan site, there is a resolution to grant planning permission under planning application reference 14/00559/OPM for a mixed residential of 526 residential apartments and commercial units Class A1 (Retail), Class A2 (Professional and Financial), Class A3 (Restaurant) and A4 (Drinking Establishment) and A5 (Hot Food Take-away) with associated landscaping following demolition of the existing building. The site itself, however, is only 1.34 hectares in size, therefore, it is considerably too

small to accommodate a Costco warehouse with the necessary amount of car parking. Accordingly, the site identified does not represent a sequentially preferable sites for the proposed development.

7.2.38 In regards to Stevenage Old Town, it has not been included in the Stevenage Central Framework and has not been identified for retail expansion in Stevenage. The only site which is identified in the adopted Local Plan is Pond Close, which is only 0.9 hectares in area and allocated for residential development. The Old Town is also protected for its high architectural and historic qualities. Consequently, there are no sites which are of an appropriate size for the proposal.

7.2.39 Given the aforementioned assessments of the alternative sites, it is considered that there are no sequentially preferable sites other than the application land and accordingly, it can be concluded that the application passes the sequential test.

Impact Assessment

7.2.40 The NPPF advises that when assessing applications for *inter alia* retail outside of town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if a development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold. Stevenage Borough Council does not have a locally set threshold and therefore, the default threshold of 2,500m² has to be used. The proposal is to create 14,429m² of wholesale warehouse club floorspace and thus an impact assessment has been provided by the applicant.

7.2.41 An assessment of impact is essentially determined by the projected turnover of the proposed development, where this trade will be drawn from and the ability of the existing centres to absorb the predicted impact. The assessment should include the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area and the impact of the proposal on a town centre's vitality and viability.

7.2.42 In respect to the first test, the applicant has undertaken health checks in each of the centres of the study area. The applicant assessment focuses on the existing, committed and planned public and private investment scheme within the centres outlined in the study area. Where schemes have been committed (developments with planning permission), these have been assessed as part of the impact assessment as well.

7.2.43 With regard to the second test, the town centre health checks are important to set a baseline so that the relative value of any impact can be fully assessed.

The Study Area and Base Year

7.2.44 Using baseline studies from previous Costco developments, the study area which has been assessed is a 30 minute drive time from the application site. Consequently, the centres which have been assessed by the applicant as part of the Impact Assessment are as follows:-

- Baldock;
- Biggleswade;
- Bishops Stortford;
- Harpenden;
- Hatfield;
- Hertford;
- Hitchin;
- Hoddeson;

- Letchworth Garden City;
- Potters Bar;
- Royston;
- St Albans;
- St Neots;
- Stevenage;
- Welwyn Garden City;

7.2.45 The base year for the impact assessment undertaken by the applicant is 2015. The applicant has advised that the store would open in 2017 and would take between 3 to 5 years to mature. However, the applicant has adopted 2018 as the design year (the year the proposal has achieved a mature trading pattern) for their assessment. This is considered to be acceptable as it is a three year window between 2015 to the first full year of trade in the Costco development.

Predicted Turnover of the Proposed Development

7.2.46 In order to assess how much trade draw there would be (which is the proportion of trade that the development is likely to receive) an assessment has to be made of the proposals turnover. In assessing the developments trade draw, the trading characteristics of a Costco Warehouse need to be carefully considered. This is important as they operate in a way which cannot be compared to a supermarket or high street shop as they are more akin to a cash and carry. In addition, and as supported by Case Law, 65% of turnover is attributed to Trade Members and thus does not constitute retail sales. Consequently, the impact test cannot be applied to this proportion of the turnover of the warehouse. The assessment identifies that the turnover of the proposed Costco warehouse in 2018 would be £70.28 million. However, only 35%, or £24.60 million, of this turnover relates to individual member spend. These baseline figures have been derived from comparable Costco stores and thus form the operators benchmark turnover of convenience and comparison goods.

7.2.47 Dealing with the turnover of existing retail facilities, major retail commitments and population growth, the applicant has adopted a study area of a 30 minute drive from the application site. This study area looks at both convenience (a retail business that stocks a range of everyday items) and comparison (comparison of the price of goods or services provided by different shops or companies) provision. Looking at existing retail facilities and comparison goods generally, an assessment of the existing turnover looked at various town centres in the study area (which includes for example Baldock, Biggleswade, Harpenden, Hoddesdon, Stevenage, St. Albans and Welwyn Garden City). The assessment identified that Stevenage made up 15.8% of the total turnover within the study. In regards to existing food stores within the study area, Stevenage made up 16.1% of the total convenience turnover for 2015.

7.2.48 In respect of turnover of major retail commitments (developments with planning permission for new food stores, extensions to existing retail parks etc.) within the study area, the total turnover in 2018 would be £65.7 million for convenience goods and £182 million for comparison goods. This compares to the growth in available expenditure on convenience goods of £62.19 million and £233 million for comparison goods between 2015 to 2018. It is also forecasted that there would be an increase in available expenditure on convenience and comparison goods within the study area due to population growth. It is shown that there will be a similar increase in convenience and comparison expenditure through population growth as there is in potential expenditure from major retail commitments.

7.2.49 Following a review of the applicant's retail impact assessment, it is identified that the Costco store would draw 80% of its turnover from the study area in respect to both convenience and comparison provision. Therefore, the proposed development would draw away trade (trade draw) from both convenience and comparison goods retailers and therefore, would impact upon their respective turnover. Given this, an assessment has to be made on the impact the trade draw would have on both convenience and comparison goods provision within the study area. Through this assessment, it can be determined whether or not the proposed development would have a detrimental impact upon the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Predicted Trade Draw

7.2.50 Predicting where a proposed store will derive its trade is a matter of judgement informed by factors such as distance from competing stores and centres and the size and retail composition of those centres. It is basically the proportion of trade that a development is likely to receive from customers within and outside its catchment area. However, the trade patterns of a warehouse club are different from a traditional retailer and as mentioned in the Employment section of this report, Costco is not a retailer but a wholesale membership club and therefore, does not attract passing trade. Furthermore, the applicant only sells bulky wholesale produce and thus, individual members are unlikely to do a weekly shop at Costco due to the restricted range of products which are sold.

7.2.51 Given the above, individual members would visit the warehouse on a less frequent basis than a traditional retailer. Therefore, price savings rather than the locality of a warehouse is a determining factor in trade draw. Generally, Costco would compete with large foodstores, rather than small town centre shops. However, given the nature of Costco, trade would be evenly dispersed across the study area. The applicant's assessment shows that the proposed warehouse in relation to convenience stores would have an average trade draw from the following town areas:-

- Hitchin (1.06%);
- Letchworth Garden City (1.48%);
- Baldock (3.5%);
- Welwyn Garden City (1.31%);
- Hatfield (1.87%);
- Stevenage (2%);
- Hertford (0.9%)

7.2.52 This indicates that the impact of the proposed development of Costco on its own is very low. In all cases, the average convenience impact of Costco on retail facilities is approximately 2%. It is noted that when calculating major retail commitments, the level of impact increases. However, this is not down to the Costco development but the effect of retail commitments in the study period. For the case of Stevenage, the average impact of the proposed development on convenience stores would only be 0.9%.

7.2.53 Turning to the trade draw of the proposed development on retail commitments and on shops selling comparison goods, the predicted trade draw is as follows:-

Town Centres (excluding food stores)

- Hitchin (7.5%);
- Letchworth Garden City (5%);
- Baldock (0.5%);
- Welwyn Garden City (15%);
- Hatfield (0.5%);

- Stevenage (20%);
- Hertford (0%)

Retail Warehouses

- Stevenage (5%);
- Letchworth (1%);
- Hitchin (0%);
- Hertford (0%);
- Welwyn Hatfield (2%);
- St Albans (2%);
- St Neots (0%).

Other

- Supermarkets in study area (5%);
- Commitments including Biggleswade Retail Park (5%);
- Shops outside the study area (20%).

7.2.54 Given the above, it is considered that the level of trade diversion from the proposed development would be modest. Furthermore, there are no Costco stores within the study area, or any other wholesale warehouse clubs. Moreover, given the nature of the proposed development, the proposal would not attract shoppers away from the town centre. However, it is calculated that a 20% share of turnover being diverted from Stevenage Town Centre would result in a trade diversion of £1.72million and this would equate to an impact of only 0.7% in 2018.

Effect on the Vitality and Viability of Stevenage Town Centre

7.2.55 The ability of a centre to absorb impacts depends on the underlying health of that centre. The NPPG advises that a judgement as to whether the likely impacts are significant and adverse can only be reached in light of local circumstances. It is also the case that a healthy, buoyant centre will be more capable of absorbing impact than a centre which is fragile.

7.2.56 The applicant's Town Centre Health Check on Stevenage Town Centre was undertaken in September 2015 and is consistent with the Stevenage Retail Study April 2013. The Retail Study identifies some weaknesses of Stevenage Town Centre, mainly its dated appearance and its ability to provide a good retail offer to its natural catchment area. However, it does identify that the town centre meets the needs of much of the town's population and the health check indicators such as vacancy, rental levels and investment rates show that the town is performing better than the national and regional average. The applicant identified good levels of pedestrian flows in the core areas of the town. Therefore, it can be argued that the town centre is reasonably healthy in terms of viability and vitality.

7.2.57 Taking the above into consideration, the impact of the proposed development on Stevenage Town Centre would be 0.9% as the worst case scenario. As such the proposal is not considered to have a significant adverse impact on the town centre.

7.2.58 Finally, in addition to trade diversion from Stevenage Town Centre, it is evident that the proposed development would also divert trade from a number of other town centres which include Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Welwyn Garden City and St. Albans. On the basis that approximately £5 million of trade would be diverted from these centres, it is considered that the level of impact predicted to fall upon these town centres would be limited. Given this, the proposal would not undermine the vitality and viability of these centres either.

Impact on Investment

- 7.2.59 Paragraph 26 of the NPPF states that, in assessing impact, account should be taken of the impact of the proposal would have on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal.
- 7.2.60 As has been set out in paragraph 7.2.35 above, the Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration proposal is now moribund as the consortium has withdrawn its interest. Whilst a scheme based on the major redevelopment of the town centre could be resurrected, it is likely that the delivery of such a scheme may be many years away, even if a wholesale warehouse club is not built at the John Lewis site. Given this position, it cannot be argued that there is a committed scheme.
- 7.2.61 Additionally, in the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan, the only adopted document which can be considered is the Stevenage Central Framework which covers the leisure centre, town centre, town centre gardens and the lower end of the Old Town. This framework seeks to promote Stevenage as a “destination town centre” with a focus on increasing the variety of shops, including independent retailers and in particular leisure uses and restaurants. The Framework also aims to provide new residential communities, high quality areas of public space, a public sector hub with library, health centre and access to Council services and enhanced public transport links. The proposed development would not fall within the aspirations which are set out in the Framework.
- 7.2.62 Furthermore, given the nature of Costco which is not classed as retail, it would not directly compete with any future retail developments which may be delivered within the town centre under the Framework. Rather it would generally complement the retail offer which is available within the town centre presently and in the future.
- 7.2.63 Given the status of the Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Proposals and the lack of Development Plan policy to protect such a scheme, it must be concluded that there would no adverse impact on the planned investment in Stevenage Town Centre. Additionally, there is no other planned investment which the proposed development could frustrate.

Other Retail Policy Issues

- 7.2.64 The NPPG states that compliance with the sequential test and impact tests does not guarantee that permission will be granted and that the local authority will have to take into account all material considerations in reaching a decision. Additionally, the NPPF states that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre.
- 7.2.65 Whilst it is agreed that the application site is out of centre, the site is only 740m to the north-west of the town centre. Additionally, the site is considered fairly accessible by modes of transport other than the private car as there are bus stops in close proximity on Gunnels Wood Road. There are also good footpath and cycleway links to the site from the town centre, taking approximately 15 minutes to walk to the site from the town centre and approximately 5 minutes to cycle.

- 7.2.66 The proposed development seeks to refurbish the Grade II listed building in order to secure its ongoing use and thus, fundamentally supports the principle of sustainable development. Therefore, the development would secure significant levels of investment into the site which would help to modernise and enhance the historic character of the listed building. Further, the proposal would also provide additional employment opportunities for local people as well providing benefits for local businesses and would make efficient use of this brownfield site.
- 7.2.67 To conclude this section on retail planning policy, it has been demonstrated that the application passes both the sequential test and the retail impact test. Whilst it has been shown that the proposal would have a predicted negative impact of 0.9% on town centre turnover, it is considered that this would not have a significantly adverse impact on the town centre, particularly as the town centre is considered to be reasonably healthy. Finally, there are no sequentially preferable sites within the town centre framework area which would be able to support the proposed development. Therefore, the conclusion has been reached that the proposal is acceptable in retail planning policy terms.

7.3 Impact on the Listed Building

- 7.3.1 The existing warehouse is a Grade II (un-starred) listed building which comprises a low and high bay warehouse. These warehouses which were completed between 1963 to 1967 were designed in collaboration with the engineer Felix Candela. The warehouses have been designed as large commercial spaces formed by board marked hyperbolic paraboloids (hypar), which appear as inverted pyramids, supporting structures which are in a linked row. These hypars support a serrated roof profile and face northward to allow in north light.
- 7.3.2 The extensions which have been added to the main warehouse over the years are of limited architectural interest and therefore, sit disharmoniously with the historic core of the building. In essence, these extensions which do not reflect the innovative hypar design principle of the main warehouse, screen and dilute the historic fabric of the building.
- 7.3.3 The proposed development seeks to retain the historic core of the building (low bay and high bay warehouses) which encompasses the key historical features, the hypars. The later extensions to the warehouse buildings, the administrative/office building, loading bays and chimney stack have no architectural interest and are unsympathetic to the historic character of the building. These are to be demolished accordingly along with the removal of some brick infill pillars.
- 7.3.4 The proposed demolition of the extensions would expose and open up the low bay warehouse and hypars which are of historic importance. These would be more readily visible from public vantage points along Gunnels Wood Road. This area where the loading bays are removed on the eastern elevation of the building would become an open car park area.
- 7.3.5 On the south-western elevation of the building, the proposal seeks to rationalise the loading bays and attached mezzanine which are currently redundant. These structures are of poor architectural design and therefore, do not represent the historic architectural composition of the main warehouse. The proposal then seeks to encompass new loading bays to serve the development which are paramount to the overall operation of the business.

- 7.3.6 Turning to the western elevation of the building, the proposal seeks to retain this brick elevation with new fire exit locations being created. This element forms part of the historic fabric of the building and ties in with the high bay warehouse. On the south and north elevations, following demolition of the extensions, the proposal would comprise of replacement façade treatment. The external treatment has been designed to reflect the functionality of the building as a warehouse using sheet cladding with subtle colour finishes in order to reflect the utilitarian warehouse structure and to not detract from the historic fabric of the exposed elements of the building.
- 7.3.7 With regard to the existing roof, this is currently in a poor condition. Consequently, its associated north lights would be repaired and upgraded and the existing membrane will be removed and replaced with upgraded insulation and membrane as well as replacement of the north lights. The roof profile would be retained and new replacement windows would reflect the profiles of the existing windows.
- 7.3.8 Internally, the proposal seeks to remove existing services which currently dominate the hypar structures in a un-sympathetic manner. The proposal seeks to remove and upgrade the services which will be positioned so as to avoid damage to the historic fabric of the building. The proposal also seeks to remove the internal wall between the low bay and the high bay warehouse on the east-west axis of the building. This is a later addition and thus does not form part of the historic fabric of the listed building. The development also seeks to remove the mezzanine floors which are located along the edge of the internal structure of the building. The removal of the mezzanine and the internal wall would help to further expose the hypars.
- 7.3.9 Finally, the proposal seeks to lay down a new floor slab over the top of the existing floor. This is required in order fit the racking as well as the layout of the proposed Costco warehouse. This floor slab would overlay the existing floor which is in a poor condition and does not have an even surface.
- 7.3.10 Following consultation with the Council's Conservation Advisor, it was advised that the existing John Lewis building within the site is considered to be significant due to its overall fabric, aesthetics and local history and is worthy of preservation. With this in mind, the preservation of the building would be enhanced by the removal of the extensions and nearby buildings. This is supported by Historic England who consider the extensions to be low-quality and the removal of later additions would not cause harm to the significance of the listed building. It was also advised that the removal of later accretions would enhance the setting of the building.
- 7.3.11 Given the aforementioned comments, the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the historic fabric of the listed building and would help to enhance the setting and appearance of the listed building.

7.4 Impact on Visual Amenity

- 7.4.1 As mentioned in section 7.3 above, the proposal seeks to demolish the modern extensions and accretions attached to the historic core of the warehouse. The removal of these extensions would expose the hypars which are of historic interest due to their design. Furthermore, by removing these later extensions which have no architectural merit, the character and appearance of the listed building would be enhanced.
- 7.4.2 Following the removal of the later additions, the proposal seeks to enhance the overall façade on all the elevations of the building. On the northern and eastern elevation, the façade would re-clad in metal composite cladding finished in cream with a red band and brick returns. The use of subtle colours on the cladding ensures that the hypars remain the dominant feature when viewed from the public realm.

- 7.4.3 On the eastern elevation of the building, there would be 4 number bays which are associated with the tyre fitting centre. These bays would comprise of roller shutter doors which would not be too dissimilar to the existing roller shutters on the building. Further to this, on the north-eastern corner of the building would be a new glazed frontage with a concrete stall riser and this would form the lobby area to the warehouse.
- 7.4.4 Turning to the southern elevation of the building, the façade would be reclad in composite metal panels finished in cream with an existing brick return. Part of this elevation also seeks to retain the original brickwork. This elevation would also incorporate the 4 no. loading bays which would comprise of a concrete surround. Looking at the western elevation, the existing brick work is retained and cleaned.
- 7.4.5 It is considered that the proposal, following the removal of the extensions and additions, combined with the exposure of the hypars and the façade improvements to the existing building would not have a detrimental impact on the visual amenities of the area.

7.5 Impact on Residential Amenities

Noise

- 7.5.1 The application site is located 50m to the south-west of the nearest residential property which is no. 9 Angotts Mead and the proposal has the potential to impact on the amenities of residents located within the cul-de-sac of Angotts Mead. However, it is important to note that the application site is located within an established employment area. Given this, there are already a number of noise generating businesses which operate in the area and surround the Angotts Mead estate. For example, 21m to the south of Angotts Mead is Cockerell Close containing the Buildbase trade centre, the Orbital Centre and a warehouse.
- 7.5.2 Further to the above, the application site is currently operating as a warehouse for John Lewis which has no restrictions in place. Consequently, noise is currently generated from the site by vehicles manoeuvring within the site via reversing alarms, the loading and unloading of vehicles etc. To the west of the John Lewis site is Cavendish Road where a number of light industrial, industrial and commercial operations are currently undertaken. There are also office complexes located to the north (Meadway Corporate Centre) and to the south (Fujitsu).
- 7.5.3 The application site is located next to Gunnels Wood Road which is a dual carriageway and a main through road. In regards to hours of operation as specified in paragraph 3.6 of this report, this can be controlled by way of condition in order to restrict the opening times of the warehouse. In terms of delivery times, these would occur between 5:00am to 10:00am. The service area is located at the southern end of the application site which is away from residential properties and thus, an improvement on the current situation as it moves the noisy activities away from the residential area of Angotts Mead. Given this, the Environmental Health Officer has considered that the proposed development would not generate an unacceptable level of noise. However, in order to mitigate noise levels during construction, it has been recommended that conditions be imposed to control the hours of construction as well as construction methodology in order to reduce noise. This would help to mitigate against any potential noise which would be generated during the demolition and construction phase of the development.
- 7.5.4 Taking into consideration of the above, it is noted that residents have raised significant concerns about the potential impact the development would have on their amenities. However, given the context of the area and through the imposition of conditions, there would be insufficient grounds to warrant refusal due to impact on residential amenity.

External lighting

- 7.5.5 The applicant as part of their application submission have provided details of external lighting. The proposed development seeks to install a number of LED lights which would be attached to existing lamp columns along with additional lighting which would be pepper potted around the surface car parking areas. These lights, due to their design and the type of lighting used have a reduced light spillage with more direct lighting towards the car park areas and servicing areas. These proposed lights would have limited overspill beyond the site boundary with the majority of the light which may affect residents at Angotts Mead coming from the existing street lights located along Gunnels Wood Road. Given the design of the lights and limited light spillage, the proposed external lighting scheme would not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of local residents. This is supported by the Council's Environmental Health Officer.
- 7.5.6 In summary, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties.

7.6 Parking Provision

Parking provision for traders and members

- 7.6.1 The application proposes to provide 611 car parking spaces which includes 537 member spaces, 14 disabled spaces, 60 employee spaces and 30 cycle parking spaces. The parking spaces would be larger than normal, with spaces measuring 2.9m by 5.33m (rather than 2.4m by 4.8m) and with 6.5m aisles. This is in order to facilitate the loading of vehicles and to aid the passage of customer trolleys (including flatbed trolleys) through the car park.
- 7.6.2 The applicant has set out in their application submission that through analysis of existing warehouses operated by Costco, the provision of 611 spaces is an appropriate level to serve the needs of the warehouse. Furthermore, the applicant has stipulated that the 611 spaces would be close to peak parking demand which is likely to occur in November and early December where the duration of stay at the store would increase. The proposed parking provision would not be too dissimilar to other permitted Costco warehouses which include Thurrock, Chingford, Farnborough and Reading.
- 7.6.3 Given the Costco operation is different to a normal retail operation and the Council does not have a set of standards for wholesale warehouse in the adopted Parking Standards SPD (2009), therefore, in this instance it is appropriate to base the parking provision on the operation of the user. This approach has been supported by the Secretary of State and identified in a number of appeal decisions. Therefore, it is considered that the applicants parking car parking requirements would be adequate as the number of spaces would reflect the operation of Costco. Consequently, it is considered that the applicants car parking requirements would be adequate as the number of spaces would reflect the operation of Costco. Finally, as the immediate area has parking restrictions in place that would prohibit any parking on the adjoining highway, there should not be any overspill parking out onto the neighbouring highway.

7.6.4 In terms of bicycle parking, as there is no specific minimum cycle parking standard for “sui-generis” wholesale warehouse, the applicant has calculated the parking on Use Class B8 warehouses. In the Parking Standards SPD (2012), it states that 1 long-term space per 10 maximum staff should be provided on site. Given the proposal seeks to employ a total of 250 staff, with the maximum number of staff on site at one time being 150, the standards would require 15 long term cycle spaces. The applicant is seeking to provide 20 long-term cycle spaces for staff with a further 10 short-term cycle spaces for members. Taking this into consideration, it is considered that the proposed development would have sufficient cycle parking provision. In terms of the cycle spaces themselves, these would be installed to the “Sheffield Standard” to ensure that they are safe and secure.

Parking for delivery vehicles

7.6.5 The proposed service yard would be located on the southern end of the application site. The development would comprise of four loading bays. This service area would be completely separate to the surface car parking area which would be utilised by traders and members which would be located to the north and east of the site. Therefore, the proposed development would adequately accommodate four articulated and delivery vehicles without affecting the parking for traders and members.

7.6.6 Given the aforementioned comments, it is considered that there would be sufficient off-street parking to serve the proposed development. This is supported by Hertfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority.

7.7 Means of access and highway safety

7.7.1 The application site currently has four access points, two of these are located on Cavendish Road and two are located on the A1072, Gunnels Wood Road which is a dual carriageway. The existing eastern access point on Cavendish Road would be utilised as an access/egress point which would serve the proposed staff car park. This access point would not be altered as it is of a sufficient width to allow for two-way traffic to safely enter and exit the site. The western access point on Cavendish Road would be stopped up and closed off as it would not be required to serve the proposed staff car park.

7.7.2 Turning to the access points on Gunnels Wood Road, the proposed development seeks to alter both the southern access and northern access. In regards to the southern access, the bell mouth of the access road would be widened from 12m to 39m. This access point needs to be widened as the service yard for the proposed wholesale warehouse would be located at the southern end of the site. Given this, the southern access road has been re-designed to accommodate 16.5m articulated vehicles. These vehicles would then enter into an independent service road which runs up to the service yard. This helps to reduce conflict between customer vehicles and articulated vehicles entering the service yard.

7.7.3 In regards to the northern access point on Gunnels Wood Road, this would be altered and re-designed to a traffic controlled crossing taken off of the side arm of the junction. The signalised junction has been designed and modelled using LINSIG (models traffic signals) and it is considered it would benefit vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. This would be achieved by introducing a TOUCAN 3m crossing which can be controlled by cyclists and pedestrians with a button on the signalised junction. This access point would be utilised by trade and general members of the warehouse in order to reduce any conflict with articulated vehicles servicing the site which would utilise the southern entrance.

- 7.7.4 Turning to visibility splays, the proposed access points on both Gunnels Wood Road and Cavendish Road would have adequate vehicle to vehicle and pedestrian inter-visibility splays in line with the Department for Transport (Dft) Manual for Streets and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Roads in Hertfordshire Design Guide. Therefore, vehicles entering and egressing should not prejudice the safety and operation of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles utilising the highway network, including the adjacent cycle track.
- 7.7.5 In regards to the internal road layout as specified in the applicant's Transport Assessment, the access road to serve the northern car park would span between 7m to 8m in width. Given this, the internal road layout for the surface car park would be of a sufficient size to accommodate two-way traffic in line with the Dft Manual for Streets. In regards to the internal roads serving the car park on the western end of the site, these would be approximately 6.4m in width. Again, these internal roads would be of sufficient size to accommodate two-way traffic in line with the Manual for Streets.
- 7.7.6 In assessing traffic generation, the applicant's transport consultant has produced a transport assessment which incorporates details of proposed traffic generation for weekdays and weekends. The traffic generation figures are based on surveys which are carried out at other Costco sites, in this case Farnborough as it is comparable to Stevenage in terms of local population and socio-economic characteristics. On a weekday AM peak (07.30 to 08.30), the proposed development is predicted to generate 11 movements (two-way) and weekday PM peak (16.30 to 17.30), the proposed development is 489 (two-way). The low morning peak is a reflection of the fact that the club does not open to trade members until 10:00am and from 12:00pm onwards for non-trade members. On Saturdays, the peak time of between 12:00pm to 13:00pm, it is predicted that there would be 792 movements (two-way)
- 7.7.7 In regards to the existing use, this is still operating by John Lewis but the company is looking to relocate. The warehouse is not currently operating at full-capacity. The applicants transport consultant has used the National Traffic Generation Database (TRICS) in order to calculate the potential traffic generation of the existing site. The transport assessment identifies that the existing weekday AM peak would be 175 movements (two-way) and weekday PM peak of 206 movements (two-way). Taking this into consideration, the proposal would result in a reduction of 164 movements in the AM peak, but, an increase in movements of 283 on the PM peak. In regards to the weekend, the existing use is set at zero. This is because there is insufficient data on TRICS to calculate vehicle movements on the weekend. However, it is considered that the existing site would still operate on a weekend but with less vehicle movements.
- 7.7.8 Turning to the proposed use in regards to light vehicles/HGV movements, the proposal would comprise of 15 deliveries in the morning between 05:00AM to 10:00AM. The existing site in the weekday AM peak currently has 102 movements (two-way). Therefore, the proposed development would result in a reduction in light vehicle/HGV movements. However, as identified in paragraph 7.7.7, the proposed development would generate an increase in vehicle movements on weekday peak PM. Notwithstanding this, Hertfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority has raised no objection to the increase in vehicles and consider that this can be mitigated through planning obligations for highway safety and improvement works.
- 7.7.9 With regard to the implications of the proposed development on the adjoining local highway taking into account the applicants transport consultant has focused on the following junctions:-

Roundabout Junctions

- Hitchin Road/Gunnels Wood Road roundabout
- Bridge Road/Clovelly Way/Gunnels Wood Road roundabout

- Fairlands Way/Gunnels Wood Road roundabout
- Six Hills Way/Gunnels Wood Road roundabout
- Broadhall Way/Gunnels Wood roundabout.

7.7.10 These roundabouts were modelled using ARCADY software which is an assessment of roundabout capacity and delay. The assessment focuses on capacities, queues, delays and accidents at roundabouts. The applicant also looked that the following signalised junctions:-

Signalised Junctions

- Cavendish Road/Gunnels Wood Road signal junction
- Hitchin Road/Gunnels Wood Road roundabout
- Gunnels Wood Small Network

7.7.11 These junctions are assessed using LinSig which is a design and assessment tool for traffic signal junctions and urban networks. The above assessments undertaken by the transport consultant focuses on the peak periods of Weekday PM (16:30 to 17:30) and Saturday PM (12:00 to 13:00). The reason for these timeframes to be modelled is because that these are the timeframes where there would be an increase in vehicle traffic movements to and from the site. Following consultation with HCC as the Highways Authority, it was considered that the proposed development would not generate any major capacity or queuing problems on the local network. However, the data provided by the applicant does show some capacity problems on the Hitchin Road/Gunnels Wood Road signalised roundabout and the Broadhall Way/Gunnels Wood Road roundabout. Notwithstanding this, HCC have advised that this can be mitigated against by developer contributions which would be secured by S106 Agreement. These contributions are discussed later in the report.

7.7.12 Turning to highway safety, the applicant has undertaken a review of accident data which is set out in the Transport Assessment. Following a review of this data in conjunction with HCC as the Highways Authority, it has been demonstrated by the applicant that the development would be unlikely to exacerbate existing accident concerns. However, HCC has recommended further highway improvements on the two junctions mentioned in paragraph 7.7.11 which would be secured by way of S106 Agreement.

7.7.13 Turning to the access roads onto Gunnels Wood Road, the proposed northern access road has been modelled using PICADY (junction and signal design) and LinSig software. The northern access road, following an assessment of the modelling would become a signalised junction. It has been identified that this junction will be able to cope with the demand that the development would generate. Furthermore, the junction has been modelled to allow cyclists and pedestrians to safely cross the junction. This assumption has been agreed by HCC as the Highway Authority. In regards to the southern junction, there would be a limited amount of traffic flow entering and egressing from this access road as the northern access would be the main junction. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal is unlikely to affect the safety of pedestrians and cyclists as well as the operation of the cycle network more generally. Furthermore, HCC state that there are a number of traffic free cycle routes within the vicinity of the site which provide a connection to Stevenage Rail Station, residential areas and the town centre. Therefore, HCC as the Highways Authority does not raise any concerns as the development, incorporating the provision of a signalised junction, would not have a detrimental impact on the cycle network.

7.7.14 Further to the above, HCC has also recommend a financial contribution be provided by the developer in order to improve facilities for cyclists in the locality. The improvement would relate to cycle way improvements, cycle parking and improving connectivity with the existing national cycle network. HCC have advised that schemes relating to cycling

would be designed in consultation with interested parties. In regards to the proposed car park access on Cavendish Road, given this is already used to serve the car park for the John Lewis Depot, it is considered that the proposed access road would not prejudice the safety and operation of the highway.

7.7.15 Turning to the impact on Bridge Road West and Fairview Road, it is not anticipated that the proposed development would result in a noticeable increase in traffic on these roads. This is because the majority of traffic would impact on the junctions identified in paragraph 7.7.9 which can be accommodated to support the proposed development. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed development would not prejudice the safety and operation of Angotts Mead as there would be a reduction of traffic in the morning which is when the greatest level of movements occurs from this road.

7.7.16 The applicant has also provided a Draft Travel Plan as part of the transport assessment. The travel plan details measures which are aimed at encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport. The plan comprises a mixture of hard measures which includes the provision of safe and secure cycle parking and soft measures such as initiatives to provide information on public transport services. It is recommended that if planning permission were to be granted, the applicant be required to submit a Travel Plan prior to the occupation of the development. This will ensure that the Council in conjunction with HCC can assess that the sustainable transport measures adopted by the applicant are acceptable.

7.7.17 Separate to the above, it was raised by objectors that the applicant should seek to move the main access to serve the development onto Cavendish Road. This is in order to remove the requirement to have a signalised junction and to reduce the interference the development would have on the established cycle network. It was also argued that if the traffic lights on the junction were modified for vehicles to turn left and right, it would reduce the level of traffic passing Angotts Mead. The applicant's Transport Consultant has reviewed this and advises that due to the level differences on Cavendish Road and the inability to amend the layout of the warehouse, given that it is a listed building, it would not be possible to create a main access point to the car park from Cavendish Road.

7.7.18 Turning to the mitigation measures and S106 obligations which are being sought by HCC, these are as follows:-

- £20,000 to improve existing bus stops in the near vicinity of the site with the provision of new shelters;
- £100,000 towards improvements to facilities for cyclists;
- £163,000 towards capacity and safety improvements at the junctions of Gunnels Wood Road/ Hitchin Road and Broadhall Way/Gunnels Wood Road. This money would be pooled with other monies which have been collected in order to provide capacity and safety improvements from these junctions.

The applicant has confirmed in writing that they are willing to pay the S106 monetary contributions which are being sought by HCC.

7.7.19 In summary, subject to a S106 Agreement securing the relevant monetary contributions, and, the imposition of conditions, the proposed development as advised by HCC as the Highways Authority would not have a detrimental impact on the safety and operation of the highway network.

7.8 Trees and landscaping

- 7.8.1 The applicant has submitted an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) as part of the planning application. The proposal seeks to remove 8 trees which are located at the southern end of the site. These trees are to be removed in order to accommodate the proposed service yard. The proposal also seeks to remove 3 trees which are located at the northern end of the site in order to create the through road to the northern car park area. The majority of these trees have been identified as Category C trees of low quality and therefore, have limited amenity value as defined in the British Standards BS:5837:2012. Therefore, the removal of these trees would be acceptable as confirmed by the Council's Arboricultural Officer.
- 7.8.2 Notwithstanding the above, one of the trees (English Oak) is a Category B tree which is a tree of moderate quality and therefore has material conservation value. Unfortunately, this tree is located within the centre of the proposed northern car park and therefore, needs to be removed in order to facilitate the construction of this car park. Consequently, in order to mitigate the loss of this Oak Tree and through negotiations with the applicant in conjunction with the Council's Arboricultural Officer, the applicant has agreed to plant one replacement English Oak as part of the landscaping scheme.
- 7.8.3 Further to the above, the applicant is seeking as part of the soft landscaping scheme, to provide 40 Hornbeam trees, 5 birch trees and a number of young trees. These trees would punctuate the northern car park area, planted along the eastern edge of the site and additional trees in the staff car parking area. Given this, these additional trees which would be planted as part of the wider landscaping scheme would mitigate against the loss of the trees which are to be removed from the site.
- 7.8.4 The proposed landscaping scheme also seeks to provide a number of amenity planting areas which would comprise of a mixture of shrubs and wildflowers. These amenity planting areas would be located in and around the surface car parking area. The applicant is also seeking to provide low level native planting along the eastern and southern edges of the site. The landscaping scheme also encompasses a number of retained trees along with the group of trees which are located on the northern edge of the application site. Given the extensive soft landscaping which is being proposed, the Council's Arboricultural Officer considers the proposed landscaping scheme to be acceptable.
- 7.8.5 In summary, it is considered that the proposal, despite the loss of some existing trees on site would help to soften the appearance of the application site which would improve the visual amenities of the wider area. However, to ensure that the landscaping scheme is implemented, it is recommended that a condition be imposed requiring the landscaping to be planted in accordance with the submitted plans. Furthermore, a condition would be imposed requiring any trees, shrubs or planting which is damaged, destroyed or dies to be replaced and the protection of those existing trees which are to be retained.

7.9 Impact on the Environment

- 7.9.1 The application site is currently operating as a warehouse. Consequently, there is the potential for contaminants on-site. There is also the potential for asbestos within the existing building which poses a health risk to contractors during the demolition phase of the proposal. Taking these into consideration, the Council's Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition be imposed stipulating that if the ground is to be broken a phase one investigation desk top study should be undertaken. This investigation would identify if there is any contaminants on the application site and if so, provide details of mitigation and remediation measures which are to be agreed by the Council.
- 7.9.2 Turning to asbestos, again the Council's Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition be imposed requiring the applicant to provide a detailed asbestos report. Further, if asbestos is found, details would need to be submitted as to how this would be removed and disposed of. This would ensure that any contractors undertaking works on the building are not at risk from exposure to asbestos.
- 7.9.3 With regard to air pollution, a number of residents have raised concerns that the proposed development would increase levels of air pollution which could affect their health, including the children at Woolenwick School. The Council's Environmental Officer has reviewed the nearest air monitoring stations which identify that there the nitrous oxide levels are not at a level which should adversely affect the health of local residents. Furthermore, the application site is not located within a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) where limits are set on pollutants due to air pollution issues. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the proposed development would result in an adverse impact on the health of local residents and students at Woolenwick School.
- 7.9.4 Given the above and subject to appropriate conditions, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the local environment.

7.10 Ecological Impacts

- 7.10.1 The application site is generally built up with buildings and hardsurfacing which is punctuated by individual trees and small amounts of amenity grass land. The wider environment is generally urban in nature where beyond the A1(M) to the west the environment becomes more rural. The applicant has undertaken a Phase 1 Habitats Survey to assess the potential for the site and adjoining habitats to have species that receive legal protection at either UK and/or European level. The survey comprised a desk top study of records from Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre (HERC) and aerial photographs. A field survey was undertaken in August 2015 along with a reptile survey.
- 7.10.2 The survey identified that there are no protected species such as birds, flora, invertebrates, mammals and reptiles within the application site. In terms of impact, as the development site is a considerable distance from any designated sites, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on these sites. Notwithstanding this, there is a hedgerow which is located just off-site which is species poor, but, comprises some native species and therefore is covered under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Whilst its ecological value is not significant, due to its listing under the NERC Act 2006, it does require protection and therefore, should not be damaged during construction. This can be secured by way of a condition.

7.10.3 In regards to birds, these are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is considered that the scattered trees and hedgerow could potentially provide good cover and therefore, a suitable nesting source for birds. However, it is unlikely that these hedgerows and trees as identified by the study support a vast array of breeding birds of conservation significance. Notwithstanding this, as birds are protected, a condition would be imposed to protect nesting birds and for trees to only be removed at certain times of the year.

7.10.4 Given the above, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on protected species, both flora and fauna. This is supported by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

7.11 Development and Flood Risk

7.11.1 The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 within the Environment Agency's flood risk map. Flood Zone 1 is defined as land having less than 1 in 100 annual probability of flooding. Therefore, all developments are generally directed to Flood Zone 1. Notwithstanding this, the application which has been submitted to the Council is classified as a Major, therefore, in line with the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the applicant has provided a Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy.

7.11.2 The Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy (SuDS) confirms that the proposed car parking areas would be constructed from a porous surface in order to allow surface water to drain freely into the aggregate below with an impervious membrane. Following consultation with the LLFA, they have advised that the applicant has provided an appropriate sustainable drainage scheme in accordance with industry best practice. The LLFA has also recommended that a condition be imposed to require the development to be carried out in accordance with the drainage strategy.

7.12 Other Matters

Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 Publication Draft – January 2016

7.12.1 Since this planning application was made valid by the Local Planning Authority in November 2015, the Council adopted the Stevenage Borough Draft Local Plan (2016) for development management purposes. This draft plan came into force on the 6th January 2016.

7.12.2 Given the Draft Local Plan was adopted after the planning application was made valid, no assessment or reference of this document has been made in this Committee Report. This is because the Draft Local Plan, including all the relevant policies contained in this document on town centre regeneration, retail, employment etc. cannot form a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 This application for a membership warehouse club which would result in the loss of a B8 storage use is acceptable in principle. Based on assumptions from other Costco sites in the UK, the proposal could lead to significant employment and business benefits for local people and local businesses and in this respect is considered to be acceptable including returning and reusing the existing grade II listed building. In terms of retail impact it is concluded that at worst the net effect on retailers and businesses overall is neutral but likely to be beneficial and there are no alternative sites available to accommodate the proposed use.

- 8.2 It is considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the historic character of the Grade II (un-starred) listed building or the visual amenities of the area. The development would not have an adverse impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties or neighbouring properties. Furthermore, the proposal would provide sufficient off-street parking and would not prejudice the safety and operation of the highway. Moreover, the proposal would provide a suitable landscaping scheme as part of the development.
- 8.3 The proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the environment or have a negative impact on local ecology and bio-diversity and would incorporate adequate sustainable drainage measures to ensure surface water runoff is controlled.
- 8.4 Given the above, the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms subject to a number of conditions and the applicant entering into a Section 106 agreement. Therefore, the proposal is in accordance with the adopted Local Development Plan Policies, the Council's Supplementary Planning Documents, the NPPF (2012) and NPPG (2014).

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That subject to no further materially different objections to those already received when the departure notice expires on 10th March 2016, then planning application reference 15/00702/FPM be GRANTED subject:-
- A) no intervention from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government following reference of the application under the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009;
- B) the applicant having first entered into and completed a S106 legal agreement to secure/provide financial contributions towards:-
- Secure the following operational controls in order to define the planning use:-
 - Both parties to the agreement acknowledge that the application is proposed on the basis that at least 65% of annual turnover will be to trade members of the warehouse club and therefore no more than 35% to individual members.
 - The warehouse club will restrict itself to approximately 4,000 different stock items.
 - Those items will be aimed primarily at the Trade members and will mainly consist of items packaged in institutional packs or multi packs or of an institutional quality.
 - The agreement acknowledges that the use of the warehouse club as a Class A1 shop would amount to development requiring planning permission.
 - An annual membership system is to be operated, requiring the payment of a fee and goods can only be bought by members in possession of a membership card which includes a photograph of themselves and their signature; membership cards will be checked on entry to the warehouse club and at the checkout.

- Warehouse Club to operate in accordance with stated use, as described in the document “Costco Membership Warehouse Club - its Philosophy and Operation”.
- Submission of a Skills, Training & Employment Plan committing to adopting local labour and employment initiatives and not to occupy the development until the Plan has been approved.
- Financial contributions towards:-
 - £20,000 to improve existing bus stops in the near vicinity of the site with the provision of new shelters;
 - £100,000 towards improvements to facilities for cyclists;
 - £163,000 towards capacity and safety improvements at the junctions of Gunnels Wood Road/ Hitchin Road and Broadhall Way/Gunnels Wood Road.

The detail of which would be delegated to the Head of Planning and Engineering in liaison with the Head of Legal Services.

9.2 The proposal be subject to the following conditions:-

1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

A-01-001 P5; A-01-009 P5; A-01-012 P5; A01-013 P5; A01-014 P5; A01-015 P5; A01-016 P5; A01-017 P5; A01-021 P5; A01-022 P5; A01-024 P5; A02-011 P5; A02-012 P5; A02-013 P5; A03-010 P5; A03-011 P5; A03-012 P5; A04-011 P5; A-04-012 P5; A04-013 P5; A05-011 P5; A05-12 P5; A20-000 P5; A20-001 P5; A20-002 P5; A27-001 P5; A68-001 P5; W1958 1001 C; Vertical Tree Protection Fencing; 701; W1958 S101 A; 2776/PL1 A; 2776/PL2; 2776/PL3; 2776/PL4; 2776/PL5 A.

REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

REASON:- To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

3 No development, including site clearance or demolition works, shall commence until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance and to protect the visual amenities of the area.

4 No development, including site clearance or demolition works, shall commence until a survey has been carried out to identify the presence of any asbestos on site which is to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any asbestos that is found must be removed using recognised safe methods and carried out by a licensed contractor.

REASON:- To ensure that risks from asbestos to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and

ecological systems, and to ensure development can be carried out safely with no unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other off site receptors.

- 5 No development, including site clearance or demolition works, shall commence until a Code of Construction Practice has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include measures during the construction process to minimise the amount of dust generated, minimise the amount of noise generated, to prevent mud, soil and other materials from the site being deposited on the highway, detailed construction methods and a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) to detail how waste materials generated as a result of the proposed demolition and/or construction methods shall be disposed of, and detail the level and type of soil to be imported to site as part of the development. The approved Code of Construction Practice shall be implemented in full for the full duration of the construction activity relating to this permission at this site.

REASON:- To prevent harm to human health, to minimise the impact of construction and to maintain the amenity of neighbouring properties.

- 6 No development, including site clearance or demolition works shall commence until a methodology for the screening or enclosure of plant and machinery to be used during the construction period has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The siting of plant and machinery shall be away from noise sensitive areas wherever possible. Vehicles and machines in intermittent use shall be shut down in the intervening periods between works. The Plant and machinery enclosure shall be provided in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To minimise the impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

- 7 No development, including site clearance or demolition works shall commence until full details of a construction management plan for the development hereby permitted has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The construction project shall thereafter be carried out in complete accordance with the approved construction management plan unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include details of the following elements:

- a) hours of construction operations including times of deliveries and removal of waste;
- b) site set up and general arrangements for storing plant including cranes, materials, machinery and equipment, temporary offices and other facilities, construction vehicle parking and loading/unloading and vehicle turning areas;
- c) access and protection arrangements around the site for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users;
- d) the location of construction traffic routes to and from the site, details of their signing, monitoring and enforcement measures;
- e) screening and hoarding details;
- f) end of day tidying procedures.

The construction activities shall be designed and undertaken in accordance with the code of best practice set out in British Standard 5228 1997 and with the agreed details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure the correct construction of development in the interests of minimising disruption to the public highway during construction, minimising any environmental impacts, in the interests of highway safety and amenity.

- 8 If there is to be ground broken a phase one investigation desk top study should be undertaken. Should anything be identified from this study further investigations will be required and a report produced and submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This investigation and assessment must be undertaken by a

competent person, and shall assess any contamination on the site, whether or not it originates on the site. Moreover, it must include:

- (i) a survey of the extent, scale and nature of contamination;
- (ii) an assessment of the potential risks to:
 - human health,
 - property (existing or proposed) including buildings, crops, livestock, pets, woodland and service lines and pipes,
 - adjoining land,
 - groundwaters and surface waters,
 - ecological systems.

REASON:- To prevent harm to human health and pollution of the water environment in accordance with Government policy set out in The National Planning Policy Framework.

- 9 No development including site clearance or demolition works shall commence until a detailed remediation scheme to bring the site to a condition suitable for the intended use by removing unacceptable risks to human health, buildings and other property and the natural and historical environment has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme must include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, an appraisal of remedial options, and proposal of the preferred option(s), and a timetable of works and site management procedures. The scheme must ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation.

REASON:- To prevent harm to human health and pollution of the water environment in accordance with Government policy set out in The National Planning Policy Framework.

- 10 Prior to the occupation of the development, a detailed Travel Plan with the object of reducing the staff and visitors traveling to the development by private car shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The applicant should then implement the approved travel plan upon first occupation of the development and thereafter, maintain and develop the transport plan to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To provide sustainable transport measures for visitors and staff and to ensure that the impact of the proposal on the free and safe flow of traffic on the highway is kept to a minimum.

- 11 The building hereby permitted shall have a maximum total flood area of 14,429 sq.m plus a mezzanine of 115 sq.m. The mezzanine floor shall only be used for service plant for not for the sale of any items/products.

REASON:- To ensure the development does not have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre.

- 12 Prior to the occupation of the development, the cycle storage facilities as detailed on drawing number A-02-011 P5 shall be installed and constructed to "Sheffield Standard" and thereafter, permanently retained.

REASON:- To ensure the suitable provision of cycle storage.

- 13 No development, including site clearance or demolition works, shall commence until the trees as specified on drawing number 701 (Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by RPS) to be retained on the site have been protected by fencing in accordance with the vertical tree protection fencing, Landscape Statement (prepared by Landscape and Architects & Environmental Consultants, dated February 2016) and drawing number 701. The protective fencing shall be retained during the demolition and construction phasing of the development.
REASON:- To ensure that the retained trees are not damaged or otherwise adversely affected during site operations.
- 14 Within the areas to be fenced off in accordance with condition 13, there shall be no alteration to the ground level and they shall be kept clear of vehicles, materials, surplus soils, temporary buildings and machinery.
REASON:- To ensure that the retained trees are not damaged or otherwise adversely affected during site operations.
- 15 The hard and soft landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted Landscape Statement (prepared by Landscape and Architects & Environmental Consultants, dated February 2016) and drawing numbers W1958 1001 C (Landscaping Scheme), A-02-012 P5 (Propose Site Layout Hard landscaping), unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All hard surfacing comprised in the details of approved landscaping shall be carried out within three months of the first occupation of the building(s) or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner.
REASON:- To ensure the proper completion of the of the hard and soft landscaping and in the interests of the visual amenities of the area
- 16 All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the first occupation of the building(s) or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner.
REASON:- To ensure the proper completion of the soft landscaping in the interests of visual amenity.
- 17 No tree shown on the approved soft landscaping plan W1958 1001 C shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree detailed on drawing 701 be topped or lopped within five years of the completion of development without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority.
REASON:-To ensure the protection of those trees which should be retained in the interests of visual amenity.
- 18 Any trees or plants comprised within the scheme of landscaping, which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
REASON:- To ensure the maintenance of the approved landscaping scheme in the interests of visual amenity.
- 19 The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the access, as generally shown in principle drawing (Drg A-02-011 Rev P5) has been designed in detail and constructed with the signalised junction at the northern access of Gunnels Wood Road to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.
REASON: To ensure that the impact of the traffic associated with the construction and use of the development on the free and safe flow of traffic is minimised.
- 20 No part of the development shall be occupied until the relevant access, car parking and turning areas have been constructed, surfaced and been permanently marked out in

accordance with drawing A-02-011 P5. The car parking and turning areas so provided shall be maintained as a permanent ancillary to the development and shall be used for no other purpose at any time.

REASON: To ensure that adequate parking is provided at all times so that the development does not prejudice the free flow of traffic or the conditions of general safety along the adjacent highway, or the amenities and convenience of residents and businesses.

- 21 No demolition or construction works relating to this permission shall be carried out on any Sunday or Bank Holiday, nor before 07.30 hours or after 18.00 hours on any weekdays, nor on any Saturday before 09.00 hours or after 13.00 hours.

REASON:- To protect the amenities of adjoining land users

- 22 No waste materials generated as a result of the proposed demolition and /or construction operations shall be burned on site. All such refuse shall be disposed of by alternative methods.

REASON:- To protect the amenities of adjoining land users.

- 23 No removal of trees, scrubs or hedges shall be carried out on site between 1st March and 31st August inclusive in any year, unless searched before by a suitably qualified ornithologist.

REASON:- Nesting birds are protected from disturbance under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As amended).

- 24 The opening hours of the development hereby permitted should not exceed the following:

Monday to Friday – 10.00 to 20.30

Saturday – 9.30 to 18.30

Sunday – 11.00 to 17.00

Bank Holidays – 09.30 to 18.00

REASON:- To protect the amenities of nearby residential properties.

- 25 The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the drainage strategy prepared by Quattro Consult project number 4266 dated November 2015, and mitigation measures detailed within the drainage strategy including:-

1) Confirmation by Thames Water that the proposed discharge is accepted into the sewer network.

2) Provision of the supporting calculations behind the proposed attenuation volumes.

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory disposal of surface water from the site. To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of surface water from the site. To ensure that the site will be effectively drained during the lifetime of the development.

27 The lighting scheme as detailed on drawing numbers 2776/PL1 A; 2776/PL2; 2776/PL3; 2776/PL4; 2776/PL5 A shall be carried out in accordance with these approved plans. No additional exterior lighting shall be erected without first seeking written approval by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- In order to protect the amenities of neighbouring properties.

Pro-active statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage and during the determination process which lead to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

INFORMATIVES

Hertfordshire Highways

The applicant is advised that separate Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) may be required for some elements of the highway works associated with this development scheme. The TROs must be confirmed in writing by the Highway Authority prior to the commencement of development.

The applicant is advised that no Highway works should commence until the licenses and agreement under section 50 and section 278 of the Highways Act are in place and associated commuted sums are agreed with the Local Planning authorities. No developments shall take place until the maintenance liabilities of the public and private highway networks have been agreed with the local planning authorities. No developments or structures on the highway or in the vicinity shall commence until the relevant street work licenses (such as scaffolding/hoardings/skips etc.) and or financial liability and public liability insurance and or assurances and or bonds are in place and agreed with the local planning authority and highway authorities.

Lead Local Flood Authority

The applicant should contact the Environment Agency to determine whether a petrol interceptor should be installed as part of the drainage scheme. This is because contaminants may enter into the water system and therefore, need to be controlled at the source.

9.2 That Listed Building Consent Reference: 15/00703/LB be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

A-01-001 P5; A-01-009 P5; A-01-012 P5; A01-013 P5; A01-014 P5; A01-015 P5; A01-016 P5; A01-017 P5; A01-021 P5; A01-022 P5; A01-024 P5; A02-011 P5; A02-012 P5; A02-013 P5; A03-010 P5; A03-011 P5; A03-012 P5; A04-011 P5; A-04-012 P5; A04-013 P5; A05-011 P5; A05-12 P5; A20-000 P5; A20-001 P5; A20-002 P5; A27-001 P5; A68-001 P5; W1958 1001 C; Vertical Tree Protection Fencing; 701; W1958 S101 A; 2776/PL1 A; 2776/PL2; 2776/PL3; 2776/PL4; 2776/PL5 A.

REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2 The works for which consent is hereby granted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

REASON:- To comply with the requirements of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

- 3 No development, including site clearance or demolition works, shall commence until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance and to protect the visual amenities of the area.

13 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.
2. Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991-2011.
3. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Publication Draft 2016
4. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 and National Planning Policy Guidance 2014.
5. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.