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PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 20 October 2020

Time: 6.30pm,

Location: Virtual (via Zoom)

Contact: Lisa Jerome 01438 242203

committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: S Speller (Chair), M McKay (Vice-Chair), D Bainbridge, S Barr, L Chester, M Downing, ME Gardner, J Hanafin, L Kelly, G Lawrence, J Lloyd, G Snell and T Wren

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. STEVENAGE TOWN CENTRE, SG1, STEVENAGE

To consider outline planning permission for the demolition of existing buildings on the site and the mixed use redevelopment of Plots A-K including new retail and food and beverage uses (A1-A5), leisure (D2), office (B1), community (D1) and residential (C3). New buildings to comprise residential accommodation (Class C3), retail floorspace Class (A1/A2/A3/A4/A5 floorspace), leisure floorspace (D2), office floorspace (Class B1), Public Services Hub (Class D1/B1/A1/A3), primary school (D1), plant and storage, servicing, new vehicle and pedestrian accesses and circulation, new public amenity space, new and amended car parking, new landscaping and public realm and associated works. Full details (access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) are submitted for Plots A and K and all matters reserved for Plots B to J;

Pages 3 – 168

3. SWINGATE CAR PARK, SWINGATE, STEVENAGE

To consider the reconfiguration of parking spaces and access road.

Pages 169 – 184

4. URGENT PART I BUSINESS

To consider any Part I Business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider the following motions that:

1. Under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1-7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports (if any) being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

6. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II Business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

Agenda Published 13 October 2020

Meeting: Planning and Development Committee **Agenda Item:**

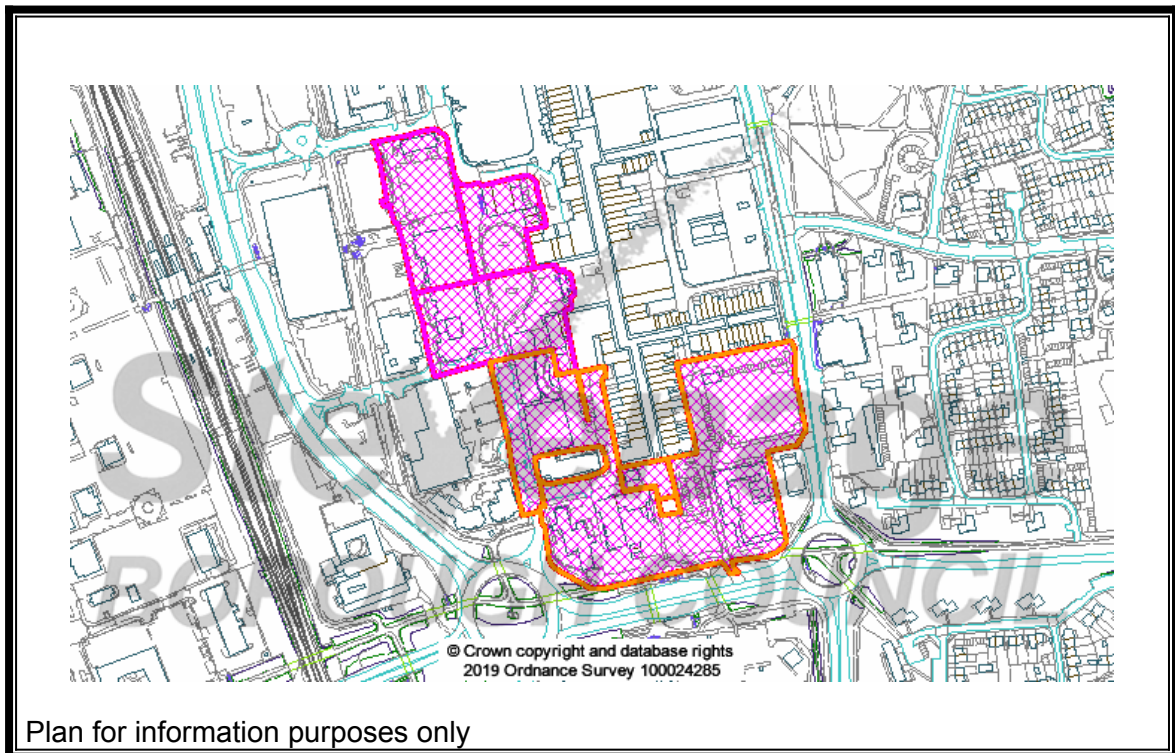
Date: 20 October 2020

Author: James Chettleburgh 01438 242266

Lead Officer: Zayd Al-Jawad 01438 242257

Contact Officer: James Chettleburgh 01438 242266

Application Nos:	19/00743/FPM
Location:	Stevenage Town Centre (SG1), Stevenage
Proposal:	Outline planning permission for the demolition of existing buildings on the site and the mixed use redevelopment of Plots A-K including new retail and food and beverage uses (A1-A5), leisure (D2), office (B1), community (D1) and residential (C3). New buildings to comprise residential accommodation (Class C3), retail floorspace Class (A1/A2/A3/A4/A5 floorspace), leisure floorspace (D2), office floorspace (Class B1), Public Services Hub (Class D1/B1/A1/A3), primary school (D1), plant and storage, servicing, new vehicle and pedestrian accesses and circulation, new public amenity space, new and amended car parking, new landscaping and public realm and associated works. Full details (access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) are submitted for Plots A and K and all matters reserved for Plots B to J.
Drawing Nos.	AA6999_2001 A; AA6999_2002 A; AA-GL-DR-A-AA6999_2003; AA6999_2004; AA6999_2007 A; AA6999_2008 A; AA6999_2009 A; AA6999_2010 A; AA6999_2011 A; AA6999_2012 A; AA6999_2013 A; AA6999_2015 D; AA6999_2016; AA6999_2017. SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A_02001 D; SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A-02002 B; SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A-02005 F; SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A-02010 D; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2100 H; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2101 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2102 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-SR-A-2102 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2103 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2104 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2105 D; ; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-2200 D; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-2201 C; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-2202 C; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-02300 C; SG1-PRP-A-02301 B; SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02001 C; SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02002 B; SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02005 F; SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02010 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02100 H; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02101 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-2102 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02103 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02104 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02105 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02106 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02107 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02108 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02109 F; SG1-PRP-K01-DR-A-2200 B; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2201 B; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2202 B; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2204 C; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2300 B; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2301 B; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-02530 A; SG1-PRP-A01-SG1-02531 A; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2203 SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0100 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0101 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0110 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0111 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0600 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0601 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0704 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0705 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0706 P02.
Applicant:	Mace Developments (Stevenage) Ltd
Date Valid:	8 December 2017
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site (known as SG1) extends to approximately 6 hectares of land within Stevenage Town Centre and is located west and south of Queensway which is the main pedestrianised area of the town centre. The site itself is occupied by Swingate House the Council's Offices, Mecca Bingo, The Plaza, Danestrete Health Centre, Stevenage Central Library, Bus Station, former Police Station and Hertfordshire County Council Offices, retail, commercial and residential properties. There are also a number of surface car parks which are currently operated by Stevenage Borough Council.
- 1.2 To the north and north-east of the application site lies Westgate Shopping Centre and Brickdale House and Skyline which comprises of residential apartments. To the west of the site lies the Gordon Craig Theatre, Stevenage Magistrates and Matalan store. To the east lies the Town Square which is also designated a Conservation Area and comprises the platform with grade II listed statute (The Joyride) and the grade II listed clock tower and surrounding pool. There is also Queensway itself and Vista Towers positioned to the south-east along with the Towers which borders the southern boundary of the site. To the south, beyond the A602 (Six Hills Way) is Asda Superstore.
- 1.3 Looking at the surrounding area, Stevenage Town Centre comprises a mixture of retail, commercial and residential premises combined with a number of surface car parks and St George's multi-storey car park. The town centre, including the application site, is enclosed by a ring road which comprises Lytton Way, St George's Way, Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way. Beyond the ring road to the west (Lytton Way) is Stevenage Police Station and Train Station and to the east (St George's Way) is the Fire Station, hotel, The Church of St George and St Andrew, museum, Town Centre Gardens, Bowes Lyon and Stevenage Swimming Centre. To the north beyond Fairlands Way is King George V Playing Fields.

2 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 Planning application 02/00070/FP sought permission for the demolition of the existing building and construction of public car park with 84 spaces, and temporary use of car park for outdoor market on Wednesdays and Saturdays. This application was granted in June 2002.
- 2.2 Planning application 07/00810/OP sought outline planning permission for a comprehensive redevelopment for a mix of uses to include the full range of retail uses (Class A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5), housing (Class C3), hotel (Class C1), leisure (Class D2), offices (Class B1), voluntary services (Class D1), magistrates court, replacement bus station, together with ancillary and associated developments, pedestrian and cycle circulation and open space, car parking, vehicular access, servicing facilities, highway works, plant and machinery, landscaping and enabling works. Demolition of existing buildings and structures, the closure and alteration of highways and cycleways and the internal and external alteration and change of use of buildings to be retained, engineering works and construction of new buildings and structures. This application has a resolution to grant permission subject to the completion of a S106 agreement. However, this was never completed and the scheme is unlikely to come forward as the applicant has withdrawn their interest.
- 2.3 Planning application 07/00807/FP sought permission for the demolition and reconstruction of the platform beneath the joyride structure and associated works and change of use of public toilets to Class A3 (café). This application was approved in March 2012.
- 2.4 Planning application 11/00262/FP sought permission for the change of use of part of second floor from Class B1 (Office) to Class D1 (Non-residential education, community and worship uses). This application was granted in June 2011.
- 2.5 Planning application 15/00106/FP sought permission for the reinstatement of A1 use to rear ground floor and basement and erection of three storeys to create 6 no. two bedroom apartments. This application was refused in May 2015.
- 2.6 Planning application 15/00407/FP sought permission for a change of Use Class A4 (Drinking Establishment) to Use Class D1 (Place of Worship). This application was approved in August 2015.
- 2.7 Planning application 15/00481/FP sought permission for the reinstatement of A1 use to rear ground floor and basement and erection of two storey extension to create 4 no. two bedroom apartments. This application was approved in December 2015.
- 2.8 Prior approval application 19/00692/PADEMO sought to determine whether or not Prior Approval from the Council was required for the method of demolition. This application related to the demolition of the former police station, social services building and garage block. It was determined that Prior Approval was not required in December 2019.
- 2.9 Prior approval application 20/00531/PADEMO seeks Prior Approval from the Council for the demolition of Swingate House. At the time of writing this report, this application is pending consideration.

3 THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for the demolition of existing buildings on the site and the mixed use redevelopment of Plots A to K including new retail, food and beverage uses (A1 to A5), leisure (D2), office (B1), community (D1),

primary school (D1) and residential (C3). The new buildings will comprise of residential accommodation, retail floorspace, leisure floorspace, office floorspace, public services hub, primary school, plant, storage, servicing, new vehicle and pedestrian accesses and circulation, new public amenity space, new and amended car parking, landscaping, public realm and associated works.

- 3.2 The applicant is seeking at this stage full detailed approval for the access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for Plots A (Swingate House and Car Park) and K (Former Hertfordshire County Council Offices/Police Station and Tower Road Garages). With regards to Plots B to J, all matters are reserved. Although the majority of the development site is in outline form with an element of full detailed proposals, the application is supported by a masterplan and a series of parameter plans showing the maximum scale of development identifying indicative building heights. An illustrative site wide masterplan with associated visuals are set out in the Design and Access Statement which provides the strategic framework to establish the principles for the development over 4 phases with a series of 10 plots. This is expected for a development of this scale and it is expected Reserved Matters will come forward for each phase.
- 3.3 The first phase (Phase 1) of development, which also includes full detailed plans, includes details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale relating to Plots A and K. This phase of the wider development would seek to deliver the following:-
- 757 new dwellings with access to communal spaces;
 - A new Arrival Square at the base of the existing ramp from the train station with new seating and planting at Plot A;
 - New parkland landscaping, including a remodelled pond and water feature, retention of mature trees, new planting and play area around The Towers;
 - A new retail and commercial space within Plot A.
- 3.4 For phases 2 to 4, the illustrative masterplan shows a potentially achievable proposed development. However, this masterplan has been provided for illustrative purposes only and represents only one way in which Phases 2 to 4 could be built out. Further details on the final design of the aforementioned phases will come forward as part of any Reserved Matters applications. This part of the application proposes (excluding Plots A and K in Phase 1) up to 1,107 residential dwelling units and up to 13,038sq.m of non-residential floorspace across 7 development plots, as well as the delivery of a Public Services Hub with a floorspace up to 9,524 sq.m. The final plot on Southgate Car Park would be for the proposed primary and nursery school where the final design and implementation lies with Hertfordshire County Council.
- 3.5 The masterplan as detailed in the Design and Access Statement sets out indicative strategies for the development. One strategy sets out the indicative character areas of the development. This defines each area, five in total, which are shown as having a distinct character defined by their relationship to their respective surroundings, the layout of streets, building typologies, open space. The character areas detailed in the masterplan are as follows:-
- The Northern Quarter – Residential quarter with a range of shops, bars and restaurants, with strong links to the train station;
 - Stevenage Boulevard – This would seek to create an extended pedestrian environment in the town which would also be a shopping street encouraging spill out space for activity and dining;
 - Garden Square and The Hub – A Civic Hub offering a range of public services in one location, overlooking a new green square and rejuvenated Town Square;
 - Danestrete – A quiet residential quarter with a range of starter homes and family housing;

- Southgate Park – Town centre living in a parkland setting with an enhanced natural landscape, new pedestrian and cycle routes and natural play features.
- 3.6 The indicative land use strategy set out in the masterplan is broken into two sections, residential and non-residential. In regards to residential, it sets out a range of typologies responding to the needs of the market catering for different lifestyles and families. The apartments and dwellings would be located in key locations addressing key streets and respecting the characteristics of the wider area. In relation to the non-residential elements, this will include retail, restaurants and commercial units which are to be located surrounding the Garden Square and the Boulevard which would extend the commercial environment of the Town Square and Queensway. There would also be the Public Services Hub which would have active frontages onto the rejuvenated Town Square, as well as the new Garden Square and upgraded and pedestrianised Danestrete. Additionally, there would be the provision of the school to support the town's populations. The masterplan also sets out a commercial strategy from the non-residential elements.
 - 3.7 In regards to the indicative building heights strategy in the masterplan, this sets out that from the Town Square, the buildings will step in height rising to 15 and 19 stories. The Hub Building would be the key building which facilitates the stepped transition of buildings as they permeate out from the Town Square. The parameter plans show the taller buildings would be located at the southern end of the site adjacent to the Towers and Vista Towers. This is in order to establish landmark gateway buildings which would sit in context with the taller buildings situated in this part of the development site. As such, the buildings closer to the Town Square Conservation Area as detailed in the parameter plans would be lower in height (including the Public Services Hub) in order to limit any effect on the significance of the established conservation area as well as the setting of the listed buildings.
 - 3.8 The masterplan also sets out indicative design principles for the development which includes built form, architectural style, layout, scale, building and street typologies along with public realm and open space design all of which would be considered in greater detail at the reserved matters stage. It also sets out in detail indicative movement (including vehicle, pedestrians and cyclists) and parking strategies as well as refuse access, sustainability strategy and stewardship strategy. These aspects will be considered in more detail in this committee report. However, it is important to note that these would also be subject to the submission of details at the reserved matters stage.
 - 3.9 The primary access points serving the SG1 development site will be from Danestrete, Danesgate, Swingate and Southgate where these roads are served from either Lytton Way (A602), St George's Way and Six Hills Way. Each plot will be served by a new access point off the aforementioned spur roads in order to service the buildings as well as their associated parking areas (excluding Plot A). The development would also incorporate new cycleways and footpaths which would connect to the wider network which border the town centre.
 - 3.10 In regards to stopping up of roads to deliver the development, the Towers Road would have to be stopped up and the responsibility of this lies with Hertfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority. There would also be a requirement to close off vehicular access to the existing bus station for which the responsibility will lie with Stevenage Borough Council as landowner. This is because the land presently taken up by the bus station would form part of the new Garden Square, along with the creation of new pedestrianised and cycle routes along part of Danestrete.
 - 3.11 There would also be a series of other points of access to serve the respective plots across the development site. This will include a new vehicle access off Swingate to

serve the development in Plot A. There would also be a new vehicle and pedestrian access off Danestrete to serve Plots F and G in order to create a liveable street.

- 3.12 This application comes before the planning committee for consideration as it is a major residential and non-residential application. In addition, Stevenage Borough Council also owns some of the land within the application site area.

4 PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 As a major planning application the proposal has been publicised by way of letters to 1,004 premises (including 217 premises most affected by amendments to the plans) within the town centre, the erection of 16 site notices across the site and a press notice. Following this publicity, objections have been received from the following:-

- Quadrant Lodge, The Quadrant;
- Nos. 73 and 123 Skyline House;
- 14 Vista Towers;
- Tor Saint-Cloud Way, Maidenhead (on behalf of Mecca Bingo Limited); and
- Bidwells LLP (on behalf of Stonegate Pub Company – The Old Post Office Public House).

- 4.2 A summary of the objections received are as follows:-

- Insufficient parking to serve the development;
- Impact on amenity and outlook;
- Impact on sunlight;
- The documents do not accurately reflect the makeup of apartments in Skyline in terms of noise sensitive receptors;
- The noise assessment has not measured current noise levels from aircraft;
- Has a proper impact assessment been undertaken in terms of GP practices, schools and railway capacity;
- Concerns the development would convert Stevenage to a commuter town which will generate a poor environment.

Mecca Bingo

- 4.3 On behalf of Mecca Bingo Limited, we wish to object to the planning application in respect of the SG1 Development Site, Stevenage, SG1. Mecca Bingo Ltd owns the freehold of its premises (Danestrete, Stevenage SG1 1XB), which are included within the red line on the application plan and it is currently awaiting further communication from Stevenage Borough Council on their proposals for this part of Stevenage.

- 4.4 I would draw your attention to the value Mecca Bingo provides to the local and wider communities. For example, Mecca Bingo Ltd provides employment within a business which also offers a vital community service for the area. This includes offering a safe and enjoyable environment for members of the public to be entertained and to socialise.

- 4.5 Our staff and customers would understandably be concerned on seeing this public application and this will affect them and our business adversely as a result of potential concerns in respect of the impact the proposals within this application would propose to have on our premises.

- 4.6 I confirm Mecca would expect to continue trading from the site, continuing to offer its services to the public. There is no intention to cease to do so for the foreseeable future. We would respectfully ask the Council and Planning Officer to consider the

points raised in this objection to ensure any necessary conditions (if subsequently approved) are utilised to protect this community asset.

Stonegate – Old Post Office

- 4.7 We write to make representation on behalf of our client, Stonegate Pub Company, to the above planning application, seeking outline planning permission for demolition of existing buildings within Stevenage Town Centre and subsequent mixed-use redevelopment of Plots A-K for a variety of uses.
- 4.8 Our client is the owner and operator of the Old Post Office Public House at 2 The Plaza, Town Square, Danestrete. It is a very popular and well-established public house that opens at 9.00am every morning, save Sunday, (11.00am opening) and closes at 11.00pm every night, save Friday and Saturday, when it closes at 1.00am the following morning. It serves food from 9.00am in the morning until 9.00pm in the evening, save Sundays when food is served from 11.00am, with differing specialities every night. It also offers customers live coverage of all major sport events, pool tables, real ale and has a popular outside seating area to the rear, enlivening The Plaza pedestrian concourse and walkway.
- 4.9 Stonegate have invested significant amounts of capital in upgrading and refurbishing the Old Post Office, since first acquiring the lease of Unit 2. Originally known as The Hogshead the company changed its name to The Old Post Office to commemorate the original post office that was part of the Town Square but was demolished in the late twentieth century to be replaced by the current Plaza development in which our client's public house is now located. By name association the public house serves as a historic reminder of one of the original constituent parts of the original shopping centre of Stevenage New Town.
- 4.10 As part of the proposed redevelopment of the shopping centre, The Plaza and all the business units within it, including our client's public house, are proposed to be demolished and the overall site redeveloped.
- 4.11 Identified within the above outline planning application as forming part of Plot F, it is proposed that, together with the adjoining Plot G, The Plaza will be re-developed for residential apartments and maisonette, with the potential for additional commercial floorspace within the ground floor of it and the adjoining Plot G, if appropriate. The need for this, it is stated in the RPS Planning Statement submitted with the application, will be determined at the reserved matters stage.
- 4.12 The Plaza was built in the early 2000's and retains a contemporary appearance with crisp lines and a unity in appearance when seen from Danestrete. It's curved elevation and built form to the pedestrian concourse on its eastern side is even more contemporary in design and appearance, adding architectural character to this part of Stevenage Town Centre.
- 4.13 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Demolition of The Plaza, a contemporary development only 20 years old, cannot be

regarded as a sustainable approach to planning and decision making in any way, shape or form.

- 4.14 Paragraph 80 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which business can invest, expand and adapt. By identifying The Plaza as being within Phase 3 of the redevelopment of the Town Centre, with an indicative enabling and demolition start date in the MACE Masterplan Demolition and Construction Plan of Quarter 3 of 2024, the desire of our client and the operators of other businesses in The Plaza to continue carrying on investing in or trading as a business is very much a material consideration for them all.
- 4.15 As with all major development schemes and related outline planning applications there are many factors that can influence the time table for their determination. The current planning application is scheduled to be determined in March 2020, but there will no doubt be many matters raised following consultation with regional and national statutory undertakers and local/national bodies etc. that will need to be resolved before officers and the Council's Committee can make an informed decision on the application. Subsequently, if there is a vote to approve the application, the terms of any related legal agreement will need to be resolved and a Section 106 agreement signed and sealed before eventually planning permission can be granted.
- 4.16 This process, assuming the outline planning application is approved, could then be dependent on the outcome of any Public inquiry into a Compulsory Purchase Order required to facilitate the development. Subsequently, for Plots F and G, there will then be a reserved matters application that again could have a delayed decision. Funding issues could further delay the whole development process of the Town Centre, including Plots F and G.
- 4.17 In promoting healthy and safe communities Para 92 of the NPPF states that in providing social, recreational and cultural facilities and services which the community needs, planning policies and decisions should guard against the loss of such valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day to day needs. The same paragraph also requires planning policies and decisions to ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise and be retained for the benefit of the community.
- 4.18 The proposal to redevelop not only our client's business but other hospitality and leisure operators based in The Plaza, as part of a phased redevelopment and refurbishment scheme for Stevenage Town Centre, creates effectively a planning blight and will result in our client and no doubt the other business in The Plaza scaling back or indeed stopping any further investment in their existing businesses and potentially closing as known redevelopment proposal make any continuing trading questionable. The closure and loss of our client's business and others in Plots F and G in advance of any redevelopment, or after it with no replacement, would have a serious impact on the town's community and their ability to meet its day to day leisure and social needs.
- 4.19 It is not apparent from the application and all the supporting documents submitted with it, that existing businesses like our client's' will be offered or indeed could afford new lease terms for any new commercial units created as part of the development and

refurbishment of the Town Centre, thereby depriving Stevenage Town Centre and the community of what at the present is a popular hospitality and leisure business.

4.20 In summary therefore it is considered that the outline planning application does not recognise the impact it will have on existing businesses and the local community they serve, and if approved, the likely lack of further investment in them by their operators leading to their potential closure prior to any possible redevelopment, which in itself is subject to many outside unknown factors at this stage, including forward funding issues as well as the timing of any reserved matters application.

4.21 Together with the actual proposed demolition of The Plaza, a twenty year old development of some architectural character, it is considered that the outline application does not constitute sustainable development and is contrary to the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework and should be rethought.

4.22 A number of representations in support of the application were also received from the following:-

- The Cromwell Hotel, High Street;
- MBDA UK Ltd, Six Hills Way;
- Stevenage Football Club, Monkswood Way;
- The Redeemed Christ Church, The Plaza;
- Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, Gunnels Wood Road;
- 98 Boston House, Park Place;
- 99 Jackdaw Close; and
- 40 Hopton Road.

4.23 A summary of the representations in support of the application are as follows:-

- Will support existing and prospective employees of the business;
- Will help to positively encourage visitors to the town;
- Introduction of a more vibrant night-time economy which is an important factor in offering new social and recreational opportunities;
- The regeneration of the town and range of accommodation and services proposed will attract employees to the town;
- Will have a positive impact on businesses;
- It will support the provision of a mixed economy;
- Would like to request Community D1 use for the church to support the existing community of the town;
- The development would increase footfall, from increased residential, commercial activities as well as cultural and community spaces;
- Would encourage the Council to make full consideration of the application which will benefit the football club and its community;
- Enhanced experience for home and away supporters attending fixtures;
- Potential for charitable events to be held in the hub;
- Welcome the idea of a new bus station and the hub with the library and café;
- Suggest parking is free in the New Town after 6:00pm in order to compete with the Old Town;
- Overall, the SG1 regeneration plan is a great start and there is hope for wider long term development to include the Indoor Market, the Gordon Craig Theatre and Leisure Centre;
- Would reinvigorate the town centre by introducing new homes, places to eat and drink, green public spaces, leisure facilities and community and civic services;
- Support Stevenage in becoming a destination town;

- Concerns there are not enough quality retailers, the Council could offer incentives and/or attractive business rates to entice retailers into the town centre;
- Wish for the town centre to not just be full of café's, bars and restaurants, but also a town centre where you can shop, socialise and relax;
- Support the introduction of co-work spaces within the town centre;
- It is still considered vital to provide sufficient parking for visitors travelling from further afield to the town as well as the young families who will live in the town centre.

4.24 Please note that the majority of the comments which have been received have been summarised rather than set out verbatim. A full copy of the comments received can be viewed on the Council's website.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority

5.1.1 The County Council as Highways Authority consider the development to be in accordance with National and local policies. Therefore, the Highways Authority's formal recommendation is that there are no objections to the development proposal subject to the recommended conditions and a S106 agreement to address sustainable transport and highway informatives.

5.2 Hertfordshire County Council Growth and Infrastructure Unit

5.2.1 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has undertaken further work to consider when the SG1 triggers for payment of financial contributions towards the new Stevenage Town Centre primary school (located at the SG1 development) are required. As a reminder, HCC applies the following triggers in relation to new primary schools:-

- 10% of the primary education contribution sufficiently in advance of the transfer of the school site in order to undertake pre-construction work (this is normally prior to the commencement of development);
- 60% of the primary education contribution 18 months prior to the primary school opening (this is the point of transfer of the school site);
- 30% of the primary education contribution on opening of the primary school.

5.2.2 HCC considers that these triggers are reasonable. They already provide a degree of leniency and flexibility as the developer is not required to pay all their contributions before the work on the primary school is started (e.g. 30% of the contributions are paid at the point the building of the school is completed). HCC is therefore already having to forward fund a significant element of the scheme with the associated and additional financial burden. Asking HCC to take on a greater amount of financial forward funding is not reasonable and detrimental to the public purse.

5.2.3 The triggers above have been applied to the SG1 development, with regard to other developments within the town centre and build-up of primary education yield to be mitigated by the new primary school across the wider area. HCC normally opens primary schools when 0.5FE of primary yield has arisen and by September, ready for the academic year. Based on the outcomes of the latest pupil yield modelling, the new Stevenage town centre primary school will need to be open by September 2024.

5.2.4 HCC in response to the SG1 application, have used the housing trajectory which has been provided. Based on the housing trajectory, a September 2024 school opening would be at 970 dwellings arising from the SG1 development. Working back 18 months (how long it generally takes to build the school) the school would need to be transferred to HCC by start of 2023 e.g. 770 dwellings. It is reasonable for

contributions to be triggered at this point in time in order to fund the building of the school (although as already stated above, HCC are not requiring the developer to pay all of the SG1 build costs at this point in time, allowing them to delay paying the balance of their primary education contribution for 18 months).

- 5.2.5 Prior to receiving the school site and starting construction, HCC will need to undertake work in terms of design and working towards a planning application. It is reasonable to seek a contribution towards this work (10% of the overall contribution). In this instance, this work is likely to start 6 months in advance of receiving the school site and therefore, HCC considers it reasonable for contributions to be triggered by mid-2022 (e.g. 570 dwellings arising from the SG1 development).
- 5.2.6 Applying the revised total primary education contribution for SG1 of £2,220,807 (indexation to be applied as of 1Q2020, BCIS All in TPI), to these triggers would require the following contributions to be paid at the following triggers:
- 10% (£222,081) prior to the occupation of 570 dwellings;
 - 60% (£1,332,484) prior to the occupation of 770 dwellings;
 - 30% (£666,242) prior to the occupation of 970 dwellings.
- 5.2.7 HCC considers that these triggers, in addition to being reasonable, broadly meet the requirements of the applicant. Significant financial contributions have now been moved from previously being required in Phase 1 of the development (e.g. the Second Trigger is now 770 dwellings, which is after the completion of the 760 dwellings proposed for Phase 1 of the development) and only the relatively minor contribution of £222,081 now needs to be paid within Phase 1 of the development. In addition, to being a relatively low amount the County Council has also moved this trigger back from requiring on commencement of development to it being triggered on 570 dwellings (3/4 of the way through Phase 1).
- 5.2.8 Given that HCC are not building a bit of school for each phase of the SG1 development, it is not reasonable or practicable to have triggers on a phase by phase basis. Hence the triggers as set out above are in terms of the total SG1 development. HCC has reconsidered its position in light of the revised information and as requested, in this instance, has adopted a flexible approach to the triggers in order that the impacts of the financial contributions are reduced as far as possible. However, the triggers do result in a significant financial burden on HCC in terms of needing to forward fund the building of the school. For this reason it is considered that the triggers cannot be moved back any further and are a reasonable and justifiable approach.
- 5.2.9 Finally, it is recommended that a number of fire hydrants should be provided as part of the development. As such, the fire hydrants and the other requirements requested by HCC would be secured as part of any S106 legal agreement.

5.3 Historic England

- 5.3.1 Historic England would like to thank team members from both the applicant team, and members of Stevenage Borough Council's Regeneration team who presented the application to members of Historic England's Advisory Committee at a digital site visit in early September. The case was duly discussed and the letter submitted to the Council takes into account the Committee's comments, and provides a definitive and final statement of Historic England's position on this case for the benefit of the Council's Planning Committee and other stakeholders. This letter can be read as standalone piece of correspondence, but it includes information set out in more detail in earlier letters from February and July 2020.

Summary

5.3.2 Despite being sympathetic towards the desire to invest in and regenerate Stevenage's town centre, Historic England maintains its objection to the applicant on heritage grounds, owing to the high level of harm to the significance of a number of designated heritage assets. It is for the Council's Planning Committee to determine whether the harm is justified by the proposals. In the event that the application is permitted, we would seek assurances that heritage considerations will be included in the Section 106 agreement and in detailed application to be submitted at a later date. Historic England also seeks the recording of lost heritage assets via planning condition.

Significance of Stevenage's Heritage Assets

5.3.3 It is without exaggeration that Stevenage, in the context of the historic environment and the history of town planning, can be described internationally significant. It was the first of the UK's New Towns to be designated as such following the Second World War (in 1946), evolving from the earlier principles of the private sector led 'Garden City' movement. Its masterplanning and architecture embody many broader aspects of the immediate post-war period, including a sense of clean, crisp modernity, and a society that aimed through planning to provide a better, healthier and more comfortable life for its residents, many of whom in Stevenage moved from substandard or bombed out accommodation in inner city London.

5.3.4 Stevenage is seen as a place of firsts, including most notably being the first pedestrianised town centre in the UK, based on research undertaken in Rotterdam, but incorporating many other innovations besides. The core of the town centre is notable for its cohesion and architectural unity. The architectural design of the structures was, like the masterplanning, consistent and regular, owing to the centralised influence of the Development Corporation's architects' team, headed by Leonard Vincent. The modernist architecture is striking in its character and is an important survival of urban architecture from this period. Historic England also emphasised the importance of the fact that early phases of construction remain relatively intact in accordance with the original design, unlike other later New Towns. The planned, coherent and integral nature of Stevenage's development means its significance is embodied in all the surviving buildings and spaces in the town centre, albeit varying degrees. It is for this reason Historic England (and English Heritage before it) have consistently argued that the existing extent of the town centre, does not appropriately reflect the significance of the whole.

5.3.5 The Town Square forms the heart of Stevenage New Town. This public space is framed by buildings on three sides and the bus station on the west. It contains 'The Platform', upon which Franta Belsky's Joy Ride sculpture and its plinth (Grade II) rests. This platform comprises an integral part of the original town centre masterplan, and was designed as such by Vincent and his team of architects. The sculpture symbolises the vision of Stevenage as a New Town, a mother and child representing old and new, while the platform was used as a means of breaking up the large, sloping Town Square area, and creating visual and spatial interest and variety. The relationships to adjacent spaces, the relative heights, placement and alignment of the platform and its access stairs (as originally conceived) with the Joy Ride sculpture and the Clock Tower and attendant fountain (Grade II) were designed to the interlinked and comprise parts of a coherent whole. Despite alterations, its townscape role and character remains very much legible. The setting and significance of the two listed structures, and the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area as a piece of coherent historic, and therefore fundamentally informed and contributed to by that relationship.

5.3.6 Stevenage is recognised as an internationally important exemplar of post-war modernist town planning and architecture, and, as previously highlighted; it hosted

delegations from countries as far afield as Russia, Canada and the United States of America, and continues to be a subject of international study today. As a consequence of these visits, and the New Town movement generally, the principles of British post-war planning influenced the development of numerous international 'New Towns'. This lends the surviving buildings and layout of the masterplan an additional level of significance.

- 5.3.7 Stevenage New Town is therefore an historic place, which can, without cliché, be described as unique, and of great heritage significance. Although of course it shares a number of characteristics with other New Towns, nowhere else in the UK can be described as 'the first'. Nowhere else have the original principles, layout and architectural character of the place as originally conceived by its Development Corporation design team survived as intact and legible as they do in Stevenage. Few other places can claim to have had such an influence on international planning discourse.

Impact of the Proposed Scheme

- 5.3.8 The proposal seeks outline permission for the demolition of a number of buildings in Stevenage town centre in an arc surrounding the town centre from the north-west to the south-east, and for a masterplan for this area's regeneration. This would include the Joy Ride platform, upon which sits Franta Belsky's Joy Ride sculpture (Grade II), the former Barclays Bank building on the south-west corner of the Town Square, Daneshill House (presently Stevenage Borough Council's office), the Mecca bingo hall, on the immediate north of Daneshill House, the L-shaped range of buildings to the north and north-east of the bus station, including the former Edward the Confessor public house (the first public house built to serve the town centre), and various building and structures to the south adjacent to The Towers on Southgate, all of which comprise structures planned and built as part of the original masterplan for Stevenage New Town. The proposal also seeks detailed permission for the construction of new residential units in two Plots A and K to the north-east and south-west of the Town Centre.
- 5.3.9 The impact of the proposed development would be to fundamentally alter, and irrevocably lose, significant elements of the townscape of Stevenage Town Centre. In particular, this relates to the changes to the Town Square and its immediate surroundings. The loss of the platform would radically change the layout of the Town Square, and remove a key part of its design as originally conceived. The historic civic, social and visual function of the elevated platform would be lost, as would the designed sequence of experiences. People's appreciation of Franta Belsky's Joy Ride sculpture would be undermined by the loss of its supporting platform, which is a critical part of its setting, and the structure for which it was specifically commissioned.
- 5.3.10 Also affecting the Town Square, is the proposal to demolish the former Barclays Bank on the south-west corner of the Square, as well as the L-shaped range of buildings at 1-21 Town Square, some of which are within the conservation area. All of these structures date from the first phase of development, were designed by Leonard Vincent and his team, and are an integral part of the Town Square area. The loss of these buildings, with their contemporary modernist design matching that used elsewhere in the town centre, would erode the architectural coherence of the conservation area and its setting.
- 5.3.11 Taken together the proposals would cause a high level of harm to the significance of the conservation area and listed structures, either through direct demolition, or through demolition and development in their setting. In a broader sense, the significance of Stevenage of Stevenage as an historic place, not just those aspects covered designation, would also be harmed by aspects of these proposals.

Legislative and Planning Policy Context

- 5.3.12 The statutory tests found in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require that considerable importance and weight are given to the preservation of special architectural and historic interest. In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duties of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess, and section 72(a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
- 5.3.13 The National Planning Policy Framework places great weight on the conservation of heritage assets (NPPF 193), and makes clear that they are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (NPPF 184). Local authorities are required by national policy (NPPF 190) to identify and assess the significance of any heritage asset affected by a proposal, so that they can fully understand the impact of a proposal on its significance, and avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Any harm resulting requires a clear and convincing justification (NPPF 194), and local planning authorities are required to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation (NPPF 192).
- 5.3.14 Where a proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate securing its optimum viable use (NPPF 196). Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to the local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting and establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit (NPPF 127).

Historic England's Position

- 5.3.15 Regrettably, Historic England cannot support these proposals in their current form, and maintain an objection owing to the high level of harm caused to designated heritage assets of great significance. Owing to the nature and extent of the heritage designations in Stevenage, and the planning policy framework that sets out the way in which 'harm' is ascribed, Historic England considers that this harm should be considered to be 'less than substantial' in policy terms.
- 5.3.16 We highlight, however, that Historic England are supportive in principle of the Council's ambitions to improve Stevenage's town centre and note that engagement with members of the application team and Stevenage Borough Council's representatives has been positive throughout pre-application and subsequent discussions. We welcome the interest in and appreciation of the modernist aesthetics that characterise Stevenage's New Town identify that has been demonstrated in much of the work carried out. The ambition for Stevenage to unlock its potential is one Historic England share. In addition Historic England remains as keen as the Council to see the removal of the area from the At Risk Register.
- 5.3.17 Historic England have consistently encouraged a conservation-led approach to the enhancement and regeneration of the town centre that sees a holistic and comprehensive understanding of Stevenage's character and heritage interest used to reinforce and better reveal its significance. As Historic England have made clear, it is

considered that the highest amount of harm to be caused specifically by the loss of the 'Joyride Platform', but this harm would be augmented by the loss of a number of other buildings in its immediate vicinity. The applicant team has helpfully set out their reasoning to Historic England on a number of occasions. Some options presented clearly are not appropriate and would lead to a poorly functioning design. Historic England considers proposals that would see the Platform retained, but further compromised, are undesirable. However, from the evidence provided, Historic England remain unpersuaded that the proposed public services hub is the only option. Given this, Historic England do not consider that clear and convincing justification has been provided for the removal of the Platform. Its retention as part of a viable and sustainable scheme would be preferable.

- 5.3.18 Were the relocation of the Joyride sculpture to be accepted in principle, then Historic England recommend a modification to the design of its relocation. Joyride was designed by Franta Belsky to be seen from below, in silhouette. As proposed, this key aspect of the way it is currently experienced would be lost. Therefore, Historic England recommend that it be raised up, if not to its current altitude, but higher that is shown on the illustrative designs, and public seating incorporated using its refurbished plinth as the centre piece. The detail of this will require listed building consent, as will the demolition of the Platform.
- 5.3.19 Historic England noted with interest the Design Councils comments, provided after a Design Review panel earlier in the year. Historic England supports the point regarding the scheme to robustly demonstrate how it will successfully relate to the remaining town centre and the wider vision of Stevenage outside the immediate context of this application. There is support of their comments relating to the mix of residential development strike a chord with the broader significance of Stevenage as a place whose designed intention was to provide a sustainable community for a broad range of people from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- 5.3.20 The harm which Historic consider these proposals would cause to the significance of both listed structures and the Town Centre conservation area requires the Council, as decision maker, to consider both the legislative protection afforded to listed buildings and conservation areas and the great weight which the National Planning Policy Framework accords to the conservation of designated heritage assets (NPPF 193). Historic England have questioned whether there is clear and convincing justification for this harm (NPPF 194), certainly in so far as remaining persuaded that the scheme could not be achieved in other ways. It is, however, for the Council to consider whether the public benefits the scheme would procure would contribute to such justification and to weigh the harm that would be caused against these public benefits (NPPF 196).
- 5.3.21 Under the provisions of Paragraph 199 of the NPPF, Historic England would expect the preservation of various elements of artistic and historic interest from existing buildings, as well as a record of lost buildings and features of heritage interest undertaken to an appropriate level of detail, set out in an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation. This includes, but, is not necessarily limited to the former Barclays Bank, the remainder of the buildings to be demolished north and north-west of Nos. 2-4 Town Square, the Platform, buildings have previously highlighted along Southgate, and, Daneshill House. In relation to the Platform in particular, Historic England would recommend that any recording should include not only its final state, but also the process of demolition, that fabric from the structure (such as the remaining original railings) is salvaged and that salvaged material should be retained and displayed as part of any exhibition on Stevenage's heritage. If planning permission is granted, then would strongly recommend that these recommendations are included as planning conditions.
- 5.3.22 Historic England welcomed the development of a Public Arts Strategy for Stevenage, and are happy to do so again. It is recommended that this, too, is secured via

condition. Confirmation is also sought that there is a legally binding agreement in place whether Section 106, CIL, or another appropriate mechanism, which includes consideration of the historic environment, and secures residual benefits for heritage that might specifically arise from this scheme or works that are required to local infrastructure as a consequence of it. It is requested that Historic England are consulted on the relevant details of such an agreement, in order to confirm whether these are appropriate. If they have not been considered already, it is recommended consideration should be given to, the restoration and reinstatement of the plinth of the Joyride sculpture, any as yet unfunded enhancements to the public realm or structures within the conservation area, on-going support for the proposed 'heritage centre, including the storage and display of salvaged materials relating to the demolished parts of the New Town, and the refurbishment of the Clock Tower and Pool.

5.3.23 As Historic England has set out, it objects to the application on heritage grounds due to Stevenage's exceptional significance as the first New Town and the high level of harm that would be caused by the proposals. In determining this application the Council should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess, and section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

5.4 Twentieth Century Society

5.4.1 Stevenage is of very high significance as the first New Town to be designated. The Town Square deserves special consideration as the only designated town centre conservation area of a first generation new town and as the setting for the listed Clock tower and Joyride sculpture. The Town Square Conservation Area is therefore of major significance not only for Stevenage, but for all of the first generation New Towns in England. The other first generation new towns' central areas have suffered from major alterations in recent years which have diminished their heritage integrity. This makes Stevenage all the more important and unique, as designation has ensured its intactness. However, the conservation area is currently on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk Register' indicating that although statutorily protected, it is at risk of damage due to deterioration and neglect. The wider regeneration of Stevenage is to be commended, especially if it achieves the conservation of the Town Square and arrests the deterioration of the central area of the new town. The wider regeneration of Stevenage is something that the Society would wish to encourage, especially if it renews pride in the post-war heritage.

5.4.2 The key characteristics of the conservation area are the uniform height of buildings which enhances the prominence of the listed Clock Tower as a key landmark in the town centre, the continuous canopies over the shops, the palette of materials and the careful and selective use of colour. These attributes must be respected by any development within the conservation area or, indeed, within its setting - especially in terms of the impact of the view of higher buildings from the Town Square. Carefully located tall buildings already exist in the setting of the Town Square. These are either not visually intrusive from within the conservation area or are located to serve an architectural purpose, such as deliberately terminating a view. Replacements should ideally adopt a similarly sensitive approach.

5.4.3 It is unfortunate that 2 and 4 Town Square will be lost as part of this development as, despite their differing materiality, they form part of the original phase of development in this location, share the same height, massing and canopy detailing as the other original buildings around the Square. However, it is acknowledged that the loss of the Post

Office building has affected the integrity of this area of the Square and the alterations to the platform in 1991 have affected the setting of the Joy Ride sculpture in particular, interfering with the experience of the artwork as part of a through-route into the Town Square.

- 5.4.4 In the light of this the Society considers that a replacement building in this location would not cause harm to the conservation area in principle. A replacement building requires careful handling in terms of its design and massing in order to avoid dominating the Square and detracting from the setting of the listed structures, the Clock tower and Joy Ride sculpture, which will be directly affected by such construction. The Society does not believe that the current proposals for 5 storey Hub building fulfil these requirements. Notwithstanding the intention to step the height away from the Square, the Hub fails to respect the building heights and massing of the surrounding buildings and as such causes harm to both the listed buildings and integrity of the conservation area. The Society would urge a reconsideration of the Hub building to respect the building heights of the conservation area.
- 5.4.5 Similarly, the proposal to replace the existing platform dilutes the original design intention of the area and relocates the sculpture to a less prominent location. Although the new arrangement would seemingly make it more accessible than at present, which is advantageous, the sculpture will lose its definition. The Society would prefer to see the current platform re-used and returned to its original state before the 1990s alterations.
- 5.4.6 The Society has concerns over the height of the proposed masterplan buildings outside the conservation area for their impact on views. In particular the height of the proposed buildings on plots K which will be visible from within the conservation area. It has been noted that tall buildings exist on the periphery of the conservation area and serve as view terminations. However, the proposed height of plot K seems unnecessarily intrusive and we would recommend its reduction to prevent it from being visible in this way.
- 5.4.7 In conclusion, the Society would like to emphasise its support for a conservation-led revitalisation of Stevenage town centre. However, the current proposals (including recent consultation with additional information from RPS to justify the scheme) contain elements that we consider would cause harm to the significance of the Town Centre Conservation Area and that would fail to conserve and enhance the conservation area as required by the NPPF. The Society urges that the applicant be requested to withdraw this application in order to reconsider the details of the proposals in terms of the massing and height of buildings that will affect the designated heritage assets.

5.5 Wood Environmental (Council's Conservation Advisor)

The significance of the heritage assets

- 5.5.1 The application site wraps around the western and southern edges of the Stevenage Town Centre Conservation Area. The majority of the site is located outside of the conservation area; however, it incorporates the western part of the Town Square, including Nos. 2-4 Town Square, the WCs and platform towards the centre of the square and the associated Joy Ride sculpture. The Joy Ride sculpture and Clock Tower within the square are Grade II listed buildings.
- 5.5.2 The proposed development, therefore, has potential to have direct impact on the conservation area, and an indirect impact on the Joy Ride sculpture, Clock Tower and the wider conservation area by virtue of causing change within their setting.

Stevenage Town Square Conservation Area

5.5.3 The Town Square Conservation Area was originally designated in 1988. The boundary was extended in 2010 and is drawn tightly around the properties that enclose Queensway, which forms the north-south spine through the retail area, Market Place, which extends east from Queensway and the properties that enclose the northern and southern side of the Town Square.

5.5.4 Stevenage was designated as the UK's first New Town in 1946 and incorporates the UK's first pedestrianised town centre. Work on Phase 1 of the town centre shopping streets began in June 1956 and all of the shops had opened by the end of 1959. Later phases included Park Place and the northern end of Queensway which has been developed by 1969. The Town Square Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) provides the following definition of special interest:

“Leonard Vince, the Development Corporation’s Chief Architect and Planner from 1954 to 1962, described Phase 1’s importance in a 1960 article as follows:

It has been erected by one contractor at one time to the design of one architect and is therefore probably unique in this respect.

Around the square and central pedestrian way the buildings are constructed with a pre-cast reinforced concrete frame and clad in glass, stone, exposed aggregate panels, mosaics, tiles and brick. The structural frame is a dominant feature in the design, but the buildings are deliberately designed to form a backcloth to the three-dimensional spatial conception of the centre and the movement of people going about their daily tasks. The buildings in the minor pedestrian ways are in cross-wall construction, within in filling panels of steel, glass, brick and other materials.

Connecting all shops near first floor level are continuous canopies and cross canopies, finished in timber to contrast with the hard materials of the buildings. These canopies serve to emphasise and unify the architecture in a dramatic manner, so much so that there was no necessity to control shops fronts.

All the street furniture has been specifically designed by the architect, lamp standards and fittings, seats, litter bins, cycle bollards, concrete flower and shrub boxes, name plants, signs and kiosks. And outdoor advertising formed part of a general scheme of civic design and architecture.

5.5.5 The Conservation Area Appraisal confirms that the principal features of the conservation area are:

- Buildings which are three storeys high, flat roofed, with metal framed windows, primary coloured panels and flat roofed above ground level;
- Pedestrianised precincts of a consistent width, which are enclosed by three storey high buildings on both sides of the street;
- Subtle public art features and street furniture, and
- Overall unique New Town design and architecture.

5.5.6 The Town Square Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012) provides a non-exhaustive list of strengths that are considered to ‘warrant the designation’:

- The Town Square – a large open square in the middle of the town centre with a central raised platform. It is fronted by retail outlets and contains some tree / shrub planting around its edges along with the listed structures of the clock tower and surrounding pool, and the Joyride sculpture;
- Queensway – the main spine of the primary retailing area;

- Public art and street furniture which adds to the overall unique New Town design and architecture;
- The composition of low rise, flat roofed buildings generally of three storeys in height, which have a strong co-ordinating element. The buildings arranged in rectilinear block form throughout the conservation area and present frontage;
- The three storey buildings front onto pedestrianised precincts. The low rise buildings and wide pedestrianised streets were designed to provide a feeling of security and enclosure but they do not over-shadow and dominate the space;
- Canopies – which run along the building frontages to provide protection along the pedestrianised precincts. Canopies are flat topped and sit above the ground floor windows plan metal pole with timber fascia;
- Paving – throughout the area is made of dark coloured slabs, broken up with smaller block paving's;
- Buildings are clad with glass or pre-cast panels with metal window casements. Panels are generally grey in colour, where the original coloured panels have painted over; and
- Important views within, into and around the conservation area.

5.5.7 In describing the special interest of the conservation area, the Management Plan and SPD identified the contribution of several key views, comprising:

- South along Queensway towards the Tower;
- East along Market Place towards The Church of St George and St Andrew;
- Westwards from the bus station and Danestrete into Town Square;
- Views of the Clock Tower in Town Square,
- Views of the Joyride located on a raised platform in Town Square;
- Additionally, the view north along Queensway from the corner of Marker Place.

The Boundary of the Conservation Area

5.5.8 The boundary of the Town Square Conservation Area is drawn tightly around Phase 1 of the pedestrianised retail centre. The original correspondence letter from Historic England advised that the conservation area boundary should be drawn far wider, to cover the town centre island within the ring-road, as recommended by BEAMs in 2005.

5.5.9 The Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) included a boundary review. Until that time, the boundary had included the Town Square and central part of Queensway, adjoining the square, between the corners of Park Place and Market Place. The Appraisal considered that the conservation area boundary should be focused on the whole of the Phase 1 pedestrianised area of the New Town. Therefore, the boundary was extended in 2010, to include the southern part of Queensway and also Market Place.

5.5.10 The 2010 Appraisal referred to the BEAMs report of 2005 and concluded that:

“This is something which we do not believe would be appropriate or beneficial for the future of the town centre and would mean including newer development areas such as the Matalan site, The Plaza, The Forum, and the Westgate shopping centre. None of these were part of the original town centre masterplan and none are of significant architectural or historic interest to warrant inclusion in the conservation area”.

5.5.11 The boundary of the conservation area remains tightly drawn to comprise the Phase 1 pedestrianised development of the New Town, the character and appearance of which is closely aligned with Leonard Vincent's description.

Contributions of the application site

- 5.5.12 A small part of the application site is located within the conservation area, comprising the western part of Town Square and the western ends of the frontages that enclose the northern and southern sides of the square. The majority of the application site is located outside, but adjoining, the conservation area boundary.
- 5.5.13 The western part of Town Square incorporated Nos. 2-4 (location of the proposed Hub) that forms the corner of the original square. Nos. 2-4 is faced in brickwork rather than pre-cast or glass or steel panels, nonetheless it is consistent with the three storey height of the buildings that enclose the original pedestrianised spaces, it incorporates the continuous canopy and the architectural language is compatible with the remainder of Phase 1. Despite changes related to the removal of the post office, the south-western corner of the square is considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.5.14 The raised platform, surmounted by the Joy Ride sculpture, is a prominent feature of the square. Despite previous alterations, the form of the platform, including the canopies, complements the enclosing frontages to the square. If formed part of the original scheme and is considered to make a positive contribution to the conservation area.
- 5.5.15 To the west of the bus station the application site incorporated Daneshill House (Plots E and C), which was designed by Leonard Vincent in 1958. It is contemporary with the main masterplan, there is a clear historic association and whilst outside the pedestrianised area of Phase 1, is considered to make a positive contribution to the setting and significance of the conservation area.
- 5.5.16 The site includes the L' shaped block that encloses the north-east corner of the bus station (Plot B). This formed part of the second phase of development. However, it continues the three-storey, flat roofed form of Phase 1. The elevational details and materials are varied and contrast with Phase 1, however, given the form and broad architectural approach this part of the site is considered to make a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area.
- 5.5.17 To the north of Daneshill House the application site incorporates a surface car and Swingate House at the corner of Danestrete and Swingate (Plot A). The car park appears as a fragmented area of townscape and makes a negative contribution to the setting of the conservation area. Swingate House formed part of a wider expansion plan in the 1970s. However, the rest of that phase was never realised, the Historic England original consultation response referred to Swingate House as "architecturally unremarkable" and it is considered to make a neutral contribution to its setting.
- 5.5.18 The application site continues southwards along the eastern side of Danestrete to include The Plaza (Plots F and G). In respect to the curved form of the eastern side of the complex, its materiality and architectural style has little in common with the character and appearance of the conservation area and is considered to make an adverse contribution to its setting.
- 5.5.19 The southern part of the application site extends along the south side of Southgate (Plots H and K). This part of the site incorporates the health centre and library and the former police station to the west and east of The Tower respectively. The health centre was constructed circa 1965, the library circa 1961 and the former police station circa 1960. Although located outside the pedestrianised zone, those functions create a civic zone at the end of the retail core. The police station and health centre are constructed in brick, while the library incorporated glazed panels. However, architecturally, they complement the form and style of the retail frontages that enclose the pedestrian

spaces and are considered to make a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area.

Listed Buildings

- 5.5.20 The Joy Ride sculpture and the Clock Tower are both listed as Grade II. The Clock Tower is located outside of the application site, whilst the Joy Ride sculpture is located inside the site adjoining the proposed Hub. The Joy Ride was sculpted by Franta Belsky in 1958/9. It was created specifically as a symbol of the arrival of the New Town. The list entry confirms that “The vertical composition with its high centre of interest is a response to its setting on top of a platform with stairs and railings to both side, and a carefully preserved group of trees below. It’s amongst his own distinctive works, specifically designed for a distinguished location”.
- 5.5.21 The Clock Tower was designed by Leonard Vincent. The significance is reinforced by the list entry “...*The Clock Tower and campanile, with its constructivist abstract style represents a monument both to Stevenage as the first New Town and to the New Towns Programme as a whole*”.
- 5.5.22 The sculpture can only be experienced from within the Town Square, while the top of the Clock Tower can also be seen in views along Queensway and from the square and bus station. Daneshill House forms a municipal backdrop on the western side of Town Square and contributes to the enclosure of the square. Nos. 2-4 Town Square also make a positive contribution to the enclosure of the space in which the listed structures are appreciated. However, the majority of the application site comprises later phases of the New Town and it outside of the Phase 1 pedestrianised core, which is integral to the setting and significance of the sculpture and Clock Tower. Most of the application is therefore, considered to make a neutral contribution to the setting and significance of the two listed structures.

Impact Assessment

- 5.5.23 Policy SP4 of the Local Plan (2019) sets out the strategy for achieving a ‘vital town centre’, including a comprehensive strategy for ‘Stevenage Central’. The regenerative impact of the proposed development is anticipated to represent a beneficial affect for the sustainable use and maintenance of the buildings in the conservation area. In this context the Local Plan is mindful of the inclusion of Town Square Conservation Area on the Historic England list of ‘Conservation Area at Risk’ and considers the strategy contained in SP4, including the development of the application site, as a means of securing benefits for the historic environment of the town centre. The proposed development could, therefore, have the potentially beneficial impact of supporting the long-term conservation of the heritage assets.
- 5.5.24 In the context of the wider regenerative benefits of the conservation area, the proposed development would have a neutral impact on a series of key attributes on the conservation area. The vast majority of the original Phase 1 units that enclose the main thoroughfares would be unaffected. The key views north and south, along Queensway, identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal, would not be affected. The vistas through the pedestrian area to the Tower and the Church of St. George and St. Andrew would remain unchanged.
- 5.5.25 Historic England in their original comments raised concerns regarding the height of Plot K on the site of the former police station. The views southwards along Queensway were modelled by the applicant. Whilst the proposal would cause change within the setting of the conservation area, it would not impact on the key views and vistas within the conservation area and would not itself harm the ability to appreciate the character and appearance of the conservation area. The sense of enclosure of Queensway and

Market Place and the opportunity to appreciate the architecture, including the continuous canopies and coloured panels, of the Phase 1 development, would not change as a result of the Plot K proposal. Similarly, the appreciation of the Clock Tower, standing above the three storey frontages of Queensway, would not be affected by that part of the scheme.

- 5.5.26 The development of Plot A is considered to have a neutral impact on the setting and significance of the conservation area, whilst the development of Plot F and G has potential to enhance the setting of the conservation area by replacing The Plaza. In this context, the proposed development would also bring forward a series of direct and indirect harmful impacts on the significance of the conservation area.
- 5.5.27 The direct impacts of the proposed development including the partial removal of Nos. 2-4 Town Square. While the enclosure to the south-west of Town Square, including continuity of the canopy, was reduced by the demolition of the post office, and Nos 2-4 are clad in brick rather than glazed or coloured panels, they form part of the original Phase 1 development, contribute to the enclosure to Town Square and the proposed demolition would cause harm to the significance of the conservation area.
- 5.5.28 The removal of the platform to the centre of Town Square would also be harmful. The platform has been modified in the past, however, it still forms part of the original scheme for the square and complements the architecture of the adjoining buildings. The proposed hub would be located within the conservation area. At five storeys, it would stand above the uniform height of the three storey buildings of Phase 1 of the pedestrian area. The Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012) advises that development proposals in Town Square will be expected to “.....*reflect the existing buildings, which are flat roofed, three storeys high and in block formation*”. The proposed hub would rise above the consistent eaves level, reduce proportions of the space and would become the dominant feature in the square. It would reduce the prominence of the Clock Tower and require the removal of some mature trees. In its current form the Hub is considered to represent a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.5.29 The majority of the application is located outside the Town Square Conservation Area and has potential to cause change within its setting. Some of those changes could be potentially beneficial, such as the redevelopment of The Plaza, however, others could have harmful impact on the setting and significance of the conservation area. The frontage of public buildings, either side of The Tower, was built during the early 1960s. It was located outside the pedestrian core, however, the functions and architecture of those buildings complement the retail area of Phase 1.
- 5.5.30 Daneshill House, being contemporary with the pedestrian retail area, complements the architectural scheme and contributes to the associative value of the conservation area. The removal of this building is also considered harmful to the setting and significance of the conservation area.
- 5.5.31 In light of the above, the proposed development is considered to represent an overall cumulative impact on ‘less than substantial harm’ to the character and appearance of the Town Square Conservation Area. It is also considered to represent less than substantial harm to their significance.

5.6 Hertfordshire County Council Archaeology

- 5.6.1 The proposed development site does have some archaeological potential. The landscape in this part of Hertfordshire was heavily populated in the Late Iron Age and Roman periods in particular – Roman pottery and coins have been found at various locations across Stevenage town centre. Late Iron Age or Roman farmsteads have

recently been discovered during archaeological investigations at Norton Green, to the west of the town centre (Archaeological Solutions 2019), and during evaluation of the large housing allocation north of Stevenage.

- 5.6.2 Of more direct relevance, a probable Roman road running along the western edge of the proposed development site. This would have run alongside the Six Hills Roman barrows which are adjacent to the site to the south. These are nationally important scheduled monuments and their proximity shows that the immediate environs of the site were certainly occupied in the Roman period. To the north, along the Roman road, pits containing Roman pottery have been found within Old Stevenage, at Howarde Court.
- 5.6.3 The potential for Stevenage's town centre to have been occupied in the Roman period (in particular) is therefore quite high. A major archaeological question that remains unanswered at this point is whether such remains will have survived the construction of the town centre in the 1950s and 1960s, and any further development since. This office has provided pre application advice to the applicant in the past based on the results of archaeological monitoring of ground investigation works (boreholes, window samples, test pits etc.; Cotswold Archaeology 2019). A full Ground Investigation Report (Ground Engineering Ltd. 2019) has now been submitted by the applicant for Areas A and K, providing some further information on the potential for archaeological survival within these areas.
- 5.6.4 Should the submitted Ground Investigation report be correct, Areas A and K may have higher than expected potential for the survival of deposits with potential to contain archaeological features, particularly outside the footprints of former buildings. An initial truncation assessment was included in the archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) submitted with the application. This appears to use the Cotswold Archaeology interpretation of Made Ground, and therefore interprets much of Area A as moderately to heavily truncated, with Area K potentially less heavily disturbed.
- 5.6.5 In pre application advice to the applicant's archaeological agent, archaeological trial trenching should take place, as an initial evaluation, prior to any demolition or development taking place. This advice is still appropriate, and extends to all parts of the site covered by the hybrid application. The western and south western parts of the site have particular potential, being closest to the Roman road and Six Hills barrows, but archaeological potential is such across the site that all accessible parts that are not definitely truncated should be evaluated. Furthermore if any demolition that may involve groundworks occurs prior to the evaluation this should be archaeologically monitored, as useful information regarding truncation and archaeological potential within a particular area may be provided.
- 5.6.6 The applicant's Heritage Statement identifies several buildings of heritage interest, which are arguably worthy of historic building recording. The former Police Station has already been recorded by the applicant's archaeological agents. Nos. 2 and 4 Town Square should also be recorded, to Historic England Level 2, prior to their demolition.
- 5.6.7 It is believed, therefore that the position of the proposed development is such that it should be regarded as likely to have an impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest and recommend, as per our previous advice that the following provisions be made, should the Council be minded to grant consent:

1. The archaeological historic building recording, to Historic England Level 2, of nos. 2 and 4 Town Square prior to their demolition;

2. the archaeological monitoring of any groundworks related to the demolition of any existing structures, should this occur prior to the trial trenching evaluation in (3). Note this may still be required post evaluation, depending on the results;

3. an archaeological trial trenching evaluation of the proposed development site, prior to the commencement of development, and ideally prior to any demolition taking place;

4. *And* such appropriate mitigation measures indicated as necessary by the evaluation. These may include:

a. the preservation of any archaeological remains in situ, if warranted;

b. the appropriate archaeological excavation of any remains before any development commences on the site;

c. the archaeological monitoring and recording of the groundworks of the development, including foundations, services, landscaping, access, etc. (and also including a contingency for the preservation or further investigation of any remains then encountered);

5. the analysis of the results of the archaeological work, with provision for the subsequent production of report and an archive, and the publication of the results, as appropriate;

6. such other provisions as may be necessary to protect the archaeological and historic interests of the site.

5.6.8 It is believed that these recommendations are both reasonable and necessary to provide properly for the likely archaeological implications of this development proposal. This office further believe that these recommendations closely follow para. 199, etc. of the NPPF, the relevant guidance contained in the NPPG, and in the Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment (Historic England, 2015).

5.6.9 In this case *three* appropriately worded conditions on any planning consent would be sufficient to provide for the level of investigation that this proposal warrants. If planning consent is granted, HCC will be able to provide detailed advice concerning the requirements for the investigations and provide information on professionally accredited archaeological contractors who may be able to carry out the investigations.

5.7 Hertfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste

5.7.1 A Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) should be provided up front or as required by condition to collate information on and set out management strategies for waste arising during demolition and construction so that building materials from recycled and secondary sources can be used within the development. The total volumes of waste during enabling works (demolition) and construction works should also be summarised.

5.8 Hertfordshire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority

5.8.1 The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy prepared by WSP, reference 70051063-RP-FRA-001, dated September 2020 and can make the following comments.

Feasible discharge mechanism and provision of greenfield runoff rates.

5.8.2 The applicant provided infiltration test result information within a summary table in the Letter from WSP dated 28 April 2020, showing that infiltration is not feasible. This information was needed to ensure that the surface water discharge hierarchy has been

assessed, and therefore discharge to a surface water sewer will need to be the means of surface water discharge from the site.

- 5.8.3 Regarding the infiltration test results, we previously requested that the applicant provide the full results rather than a summary table. This has now been provided at Appendix K: Site Investigation Report of the Flood Risk Assessment & Outline Drainage Strategy (FRA & ODS). This shows that infiltration is infeasible for the site. However, it should be noted that tests were not conducted in accordance with BRE Digest 365 as only one test was carried out in trial pit IT1 and two tests in trial pit IT2, rather than the required three. The tests were also not undertaken for long enough, with results only being recorded for a short period of time, and the rest of the results extrapolated, so it is unknown if the pits emptied 25%-75%. Nevertheless, it is accepted that infiltration is unlikely to be feasible within Stevenage town centre.
- 5.8.4 The applicant previously provided explanation and clarification regarding the proposed surface water discharge rates into the Thames Water surface water sewer in the Letter from WSP dated 28 April 2020. Following a conference call on 28 July 2020, and the updated FRA & ODS submission, as the LLFA we still hold some significant concerns regarding this.
- 5.8.5 Within the updated information submitted, the proposed surface water discharge rate for Plot K has been reduced from 5.2l/s + 20l/s (totalling 25.2l/s) to 2l/s + 2l/s + 6.5l/s (totalling 10.5l/s).
- 5.8.6 The applicant should have provided further detailed information on why a rate of 10.5l/s has now been chosen for Plot K. It is understood that this is to maintain a gravity connection. However, we would have expected information submitted in support of the application to have demonstrated an iterative approach starting at the lowest possible discharge rate and demonstrating why that is not feasible and increasing in increments. The justification and background evidence on why this is the maximum rate the applicant has settled on is not sufficient. Particularly as the justification for the exclusion of SuDS features such as blue roofs is not accepted by the LLFA and the potential additional storage which could be obtained from SuDS features such as a blue roof or permeable paving sub-base storage has not been detailed. As stated previously the applicant should be restricting to the pre-developed greenfield runoff rate for the site, regardless of if the site is previously developed.
- 5.8.7 Regarding the rates of betterment proposed for the site, Table 4 of the FRA and the Outline Drainage Strategy have not been updated to reflect the change in discharge rate for Plot K – Private area or for Plot K – Public Area. As stated within our previous letter, as LLFA we accept the justification for the need to limit to 2l/s for the majority of the plots (Plot A, Plot B, Plot C, Plot E, Plot F, Plot G, Plot H and Hub), we would also accept the school site at 2.81l/s, which the applicant states is providing a 97% betterment. However, we are still concerned that the rate for Plot K is too high.
- 5.8.8 As also stated previously, our acceptance of 2l/s (and 2.81l/s) does not however remove this objection point, as the fact that none of these rates are the greenfield runoff rate means that we cannot be certain that Thames Water will accept these discharge rates. The Thames Water pre-planning enquiry states: "Thames Water Planning team would ask to see why it is not practicable to attenuate the flows to Greenfield run-off rates". To note, Thames Water mention "Greenfield run-off rates i.e. 5l/s/hectare of the total site area or if the site is less than hectare in size then the flows should be reduced by 95% of existing flows." As 95% betterment has also not been provided for all plots, we also cannot be certain that Thames Water would accept the proposed rates. This is particularly the case for Plot K, for which the level of betterment has not been updated in line with the new discharge rate. However, this also does not appear to meet the Thames Water requirement of 95% betterment.

- 5.8.9 Reiterating our previous point in our letter dated 21 July 2020, the Thames Water Pre-planning enquiry, as currently provided, states that, regarding the proposed development: "Surface water strategy aiming to greenfield rates. No detailed surface water strategy available." However, since this pre-planning enquiry (dated 9 July 2019) there is a drainage strategy with specific discharge rates proposed for each plot (for both the full and outline plots). The applicant should therefore have provided an updated pre-planning enquiry response in support of this application, so that we can be confident that the receiving Water and Sewerage Company will accept the proposed volumes and flows. It should also be noted, that the current pre-planning enquiry may be considered out of date.
- 5.8.10 If greenfield runoff is not being achieved, the rates should be a 95% betterment, so that the LLFA could therefore be confident that Thames Water would accept these rates. If the discharge rate is not the greenfield runoff rate or 95% betterment where the site area is less than 1ha, unfortunately we cannot be certain that Thames Water will accept it.

Clarification on the discharge to highway drainage

- 5.8.11 As stated in our previous letter dated 21 July 2020, this objection point has now been omitted by the fact that Stevenage Borough Council have requested the LLFA exclude any public areas from the area consulted on. We would note that for Plot K, public and private areas have been included within the Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy submitted in support of this application, it is therefore necessary for us as LLFA to comment on these areas; please see later comments for Plot K.

Modelling and calculations for all plots and the provision of half down drain times (within 24 hours)

- 5.8.12 The applicant has provided the half drain down times for the attenuation within each plot within the previously submitted information (Letter from WSP dated 28 April 2020). This shows each plot achieving half drain down time within 24 hours. However, this has not been updated to reflect the changes in the drainage strategy and the discharge rate for Plot K, and will need to be updated to ensure half drain down times are achieved within 24 hours. This information should have been updated in line with changes in the drainage strategy.
- 5.8.13 As stated in our previous response letter, it is noted that the attenuation tank for Plot A is however almost at the limit at 1369 minutes. For the Tower pond, the applicant has stated how this is unable to be calculated within MicroDrainage itself, however, has stated how this will be less than 1440 minutes. This information will therefore need to be provided as part of the detailed design.

Contributing area plan

- 5.8.14 This point was previously addressed. However, the final areas included as being positively drained will need to be provided as part of the detailed design. We would expect the contributing area to be defined within the full network modelling of the drainage system which will be required to be provided as part of the detailed design.

Provision of SuDS Design Code including the provision of above ground storage

- 5.8.15 Previously in the Letter from WSP dated 28 April 2020, the applicant stated how they “will make clear that the internal courtyards are permeable paving, this wasn’t explicitly stated in the FRA and DS but will be included as part of the works”. However, this information is still not shown on the drainage layout drawings. It is now detailed within the paragraphs in Section 8 of the FRA & ODS. However, the extent of this permeable paving should be shown on the associated drainage drawings that are to be included as part of the information submitted in support of this planning application. Currently, no drainage drawings show areas of permeable paving and it is important that all SuDS features are shown on the drainage plans as any recommended drainage conditions will include approved plans and drawings, which the drainage strategy should be provided in accordance with. The current drainage drawings do not show sufficient management and treatment of surface water without the inclusion of permeable paving (or other SuDS measures which would provide appropriate treatment).
- 5.8.16 As stated in our previous letter response: Regarding blue roofs, we have not seen a reason for excluding them as the statement provide by the applicant that this is due to “the combustible nature of the build-up of blue roofs” is not accepted as a reasonable justification by the LLFA. In addition, we, the LLFA, have seen many sites across Hertfordshire include blue roofs as part of their surface water drainage system, including care homes and at least one site within the central area of Stevenage Town Centre.
- 5.8.17 Following the applicant’s previous response justification for the lack of inclusion of blue roofs and since the teleconference on 28 July 2020, we sought to further research this matter. As LLFA we are of the view that using insurance or the fact that blue roofs are combustible as reasons for not utilising blue roofs for residential should not be accepted. We have recently reviewed other applications in Stevenage town centre which are proposing blue roofs, and it can be done in this location and is acceptable. We would therefore like to reiterate that we do not accept the combustible nature and insurance argument against the use of blue roofs. Therefore, the applicant may be able to achieve greenfield runoff rates once they have explored all possibilities in detail for surface water storage. This should be considered for the entire application, outline and full areas.
- 5.8.18 As suggested within our previous comments under this objection point: For the outline and full applications; with regards to a wider SuDS Design Code for the entire site, this should include the principles of the SuDS to be provided for all plots and include SuDS such as pervious paving and above ground features where possible. The applicant has included paragraphs in Section 8 of the FRA & ODS. However, we would expect a more formal document, which could be referenced for all plots.
- 5.8.19 As stated in our previous response, we would recommend that this is provided as a formal document/text, for future plots to reference as they come forward.

Appropriate Management and Treatment

- 5.8.20 As stated in our previous response, this point should be addressed in comments under point 5. However, it has not been fully addressed. It has also not been addressed as permeable paving has not been shown on the drainage layout drawings.
- 5.8.21 As stated in our previous letter, we would highlight again, how the Thames Water surface water sewers discharge into a Main River, Stevenage Brook, within a short distance away from the site. For Plot K, this is approximately 100m. But we would also want appropriate management and treatment to be provided for all plots. For Plot K,

there are areas draining through the new tank south of the building (Catchment 2C), referring to the area being drained to the east of the site, where no management and treatment is being provided prior to discharge into the sewer. If this area is for cars, which there is at least looks to be a crossing into the new building courtyard, we would expect appropriate management and treatment. Regardless, all hardstanding areas should be permeable paved and shown as such on the drainage layout drawings.

Management of surface water flood risk

- 5.8.22 As stated in our previous response, and reiterating comments in our previous letter before that, the Risk of Flooding from Surface Water map shows that there is some surface water ponding within the site area. This is including all plots, and whilst the areas of public and private are to remain separate; with the public areas to be excluded from comment by the LLFA, it is therefore difficult to provide a holistic solution for the entirety of the development site. Whilst the drainage systems proposed in the private areas will be designed to current standards, with attenuation up to the 1 in 100 year + 40% for climate change, ponding may still occur in areas of public drainage, if these are not designed to the same standard. However, this objection point can be removed in relation to the whole site following the request from Stevenage BC for the LLFA to exclude these public areas from its consideration of the applications.
- 5.8.23 It is therefore accepted that the drainage strategies proposed will provide a level of attenuation not currently provided in Stevenage town centre. Therefore, surface water ponding shown on the Risk of Flooding from Surface Water mapping, should be improved. However, it is not entirely known if the additional volume that may be needed is provided for within the proposed drainage strategies for each plot, particularly for Plot K.
- 5.8.24 With regards to Plot K specifically, there is currently some predicted High Risk of surface water flooding, that is an event with a 3.33% chance of occurring in any given year, shown within this plot boundary. Within the previous information submitted (Letter from WSP dated 28 April 2020) it was stated how “on a review of levels a pathway from the east is possible”. However, the applicant has detailed how “the development is likely to help alleviate the existing exceedance flow path rather than make it worse”. With the drainage system for the private area being designed to current standards (and some public areas within Plot K), this is true. However, we would be concerned regarding the impact the surface water ponding and flow route could have on the new development, and the potential for it to compromise in some way the drainage system proposed.
- 5.8.25 To further expand on the above point, as this has not been addressed within the information submitted to date, we would recommend that this is further clarified within any conditions included should the LPA be minded to approve the application.

Clarifications on Towers Pond and the associated Drainage Strategy for Plot K

- 5.8.26 Since our previous letter dated 21 July 2020, the applicant has updated the drainage strategy for Plot K. However, we still hold a number of concerns regarding the drainage strategy for this area.
- 5.8.27 In previous letters, we highlighted issues regarding ownership of the pond. Following the teleconference meeting on 28 July and within the updated FRA & ODS at Section 8.4, Table 5: Proposed Drainage Maintenance Strategy, the applicant has stated how the Tower Pond will be maintained by Stevenage Borough Council. The applicant has therefore confirmed that Stevenage Borough Council control the ownership and associated maintenance responsibilities of the Tower Pond. As stated previously, from a review of the plan provided at Appendix B: SBC Consultation, of the letter dated 28

April 2020, Stevenage Borough Council has title of the area coloured pink, which the Tower Pond looks to be located within. It is therefore our understanding that Stevenage Borough Council have responsibility of the pond and its future maintenance.

5.8.28 Taken from our previous letter dated 21 July 2020: *With regards to the current status of the pond, our previous comments stated: "The applicant has detailed how it is likely the pond is groundwater fed, ("outside the extent of the Pond, the level of groundwater is fairly deep from 2.5m to 12m deep, whilst from the base of the pond approximately 0.5m deep"). If there is always to be a permanent body of water within the pond, the applicant will need to assess the likely capacity available within the pond. The applicant needs to clarify the total volume able to be provided within the pond. The discharge rates going into the pond from a number of points also need to be assessed with this in mind. It is also highlighted within the FRA/ODS at Appendix H how, with regards to the pond "the flow rate through the year and what it means for the pond will need to be calculated"; particularly if it is groundwater fed. If the pond is to be re-landscaped the applicant should also clarify that the capacity is maintained / increased accordingly as needed."*

The applicant has clarified how historic information indicates the pond "is "potentially" spring fed". In principle we are happy to see an above ground storage feature be provided and adapted to be used for a new development. However, within the additional information submitted, the applicant has detailed that drainage surveys have not indicated any positive outfall from the existing pond and that it is potentially groundwater fed. There is therefore likely a need to undertake groundwater monitoring of the pond and monitoring of the water level in the pond, to ensure that the storage capacity proposed as part of any modifications to the pond as part of the drainage strategy for Plot K can be maintained and provided going forward for the lifetime of the development. In addition, as it is proposed to make the pond deeper than the original to gain more attenuation volume, if the pond is spring fed, this has the potential to fill with groundwater and the surface water attenuation volume anticipated to be provided become compromised.

5.8.29 We are extremely concerned that at Section 8.1.12 it is stated "It is proposed that the pond is lined to prevent any groundwater ingress". However, if the pond is groundwater fed, then making alterations such as lining the pond has the potential to have a significant impact on underlying groundwater flows, with the potential to cause flooding elsewhere, with the potential to cause groundwater flooding both on and off site. Without further information on the current drainage function of this pond this is an unquantified risk. We would strongly recommend that the pond is not lined without a full understand of its function and the potential for groundwater fluctuations in it. Lining of the pond is an additional over and above the additional understanding needed regarding the potential attenuation volume within the pond.

5.8.30 Regarding our previous comments on conflicting information regarding the proposed modifications to the pond. At Section 8.1.11, it is stated: "It is proposed that the location and size of the existing Towers Pond will be altered to reduce the overall size of the pond and move the centre of the pond further westwards." This still appears to be a conflict, i.e. - reducing the overall size of the pond, but more attenuation being provided within it.

5.8.31 Taken from our previous letter dated 21 July 2020: *"The applicant has stated how the total attenuation volume in the pond is approximately 180m³. From a review of the MicroDrainage calculations, this is what has been modelled for the storage. It is understood that this volume is what is proposed above the permanent water level; the volume between the permanent water level and the indicative water storage level, as shown on the LDA Design Drawings provided at Appendix D to the letter. As detailed*

above, and due to the fact that Plot K is treated slightly differently with a combination of public and private areas being drained. We would like to see provided the contributing areas within MicroDrainage. It is acknowledged that catchment areas, area 2A and 2C drain into the pond, so it is presumed that it is these areas that are contributing within the area contributing in the calculations.”

- 5.8.32 The drainage strategy has now been updated from that previously submitted for Plot K. The discharge rate from the Tower Pond is now proposed to be 2l/s, this is lower from the previous 5.2l/s which was proposed. However, the provision of volume at 180m remains the same. This is included in the amended FRA & ODS submitted, at Section 8.1.13. “The total attenuation volume in the pond is approximately 180m³, with a limiting discharge of 2.0 l/s. 8.1.14. The attenuation calculations are based on 815mm of storage and draining catchment area 2A the flow is restricting via a downstream Hydrobrake”. With the updated drainage strategy at a reduced discharge rate, we would normally expect the provision of storage volume to be increased. However, as the provision of storage volume in the pond is the same at 180m³, the applicant should clarify how the system is now working with a reduced rate.
- 5.8.33 All of this is caveated by the fact that the volume available within the pond is a best estimate at the moment, without further groundwater monitoring and drainage investigation of the pond, its drainage function is not fully known, and the extent of volume within the pond is unknown, without an estimate of groundwater fluctuations, if it is indeed groundwater fed. It should also be noted that Thames Water do not normally accept discharges to its sewer system from groundwater so this issue will need to be addressed with Thames Water once the source of the water feeding the pond is known.
- 5.8.34 During the teleconference on 28 July 2020 we recommended that an alternative solution was sought due to the uncertainty regarding the groundwater levels, with the preferred option (utilising the pond) able to be explored as part of a drainage condition, with an alternative secondary option available, should the pond prove unfeasible. However, at Section 8.1.15, the applicant has stated that they are unwilling to do this.
- 5.8.35 Previous strategies submitted show that the private area of Catchment 2C was proposed to drain through the Tower pond. However, with the updated drainage strategy, this now passes through a tank to the south of the proposed new building and restricted via a Hydrobrake before discharging to the Thames Water sewer via Manhole 9853. We therefore note that with the removal of Catchment 2C (Plot K – Private area) all private areas are now draining through a private system, separate from the Tower pond.
- 5.8.36 The applicant has said that the Thames Water sewer connection from the public area of the Tower at Catchment 2A will be severed and instead be diverted through the Tower Pond. Considering that the pond does not just drain landscaped areas and footpaths, but also drains the wider area of Catchment 2A, including the Tower Block Area, this information is still needed to ensure Plot K can be adequately drained. In addition to the fact that the systems aren’t totally separate; the Tower Pond is ultimately discharging through the same manhole as for the entire Plot K site. We would still recommend that all further points of clarification are sought, including that for an alternative strategy as these public and private areas are interlinked in Plot K. However, it is noted that these areas are now all Public areas, and the responsibility of Stevenage Borough Council.
- 5.8.37 We previously raised concerns regarding the free discharge from the tree planters. The applicant has now diverted the overflow outfall from the tree planters through the Hydrobrake serving the attenuation tank. Therefore, addressing the issue of the potentially unknown discharge. However, we still have concerns regarding the

discharge rate for Plot K, as detailed under point 1. In all of our previous letters we have highlighted how there are surface water sewers proposed to be built underneath residential buildings. Taken from our previous letter: *As these are new sewers, we would recommend that they are located outside of the building footprint. This is for reasons of access of maintenance. For all aspects of the drainage system for the entire site, this should be kept in mind. It is noted that for the wider site, showing all the plots, surface water sewers are also located beneath buildings. Regarding this, the applicant has stated: "Noted regarding surface water pipes within the proposed building curtilage, this is unavoidable due to the location of the attenuation tank/internal down pipes." However, unfortunately, this is not acceptable, no new surface water pipe runs should be located underneath proposed buildings. This justification is not acceptable, and the pipes should be routed around buildings.*

- 5.8.38 During the teleconference on 28 July 2020 we recommended again that these sewers should be removed and diverted around the building. Reiterating our previous points regarding this, as LLFA we do not recommend that surface water pipes are located underneath buildings, regardless of the buildings use, but in particular for residential, especially where it is avoidable. Whilst pumping has been discounted as a less sustainable option, we would argue that it would be even more unsustainable to have to dig up a building should any problems occur with the surface water pipe. The applicant has stated at 8.1.17 how the route of the sewer has been "modified to pass through corridors and not actual residential units. Also, as secondary defence the covers can be doubled sealed and locked to prevent any surcharging". However, it would be prudent to remove this risk completely, by diverting surface water sewers around the buildings. We would strongly advise the LPA to seek that the applicant does this. Especially where new surface water sewers are proposed, and we would also recommend that existing sewers are diverted, or appropriate build over agreements are sought from the asset owner.
- 5.8.39 We would like to highlight to the applicant that the Tower Pond contains a small section of mapped Ordinary Watercourse. A map of Ordinary Watercourses in Hertfordshire can be viewed on our ordinary watercourse webpages. Any works proposed to be carried out that may affect the flow within an ordinary watercourse will require the prior written consent from the Lead Local Flood Authority under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991. This includes any permanent and/or temporary works, regardless of any planning permission.
- 5.8.40 The fact that the Tower Pond is designated an Ordinary Watercourse suggests it serves a drainage function. Though it is accepted that visually it is more of a pond than a watercourse. Nevertheless, ponds can be ordinary watercourses, and without further investigation into the pond, its drainage function is unknown. The applicant would need to demonstrate that it does not serve a drainage function if they wish to delete a section of ordinary watercourse. This would also require Land Drainage Consent under the Land Drainage Act 1991.
- 5.8.41 Currently, as LLFA, we are not satisfied on the answers given by the applicant on all of the objection points. We feel there should be more work done on the drainage strategies for all plots but in particular for Plot K. Following a detailed review of our above objection points, and all the information submitted in support of the application we would be minded to object on the basis that the applicant has not addressed all points.
- 5.8.42 In particular, the issue of the discharge rates, modifications needed to the submitted drainage plans, the current drainage function of the Tower Pond and research into above ground storage features, for example, the applicant has not explored all the opportunities for blue roofs.

5.8.43 However, if the LPA is minded to approve the application, we would recommend the following stringent conditions to the LPA should planning permission be granted. We would highlight to the LPA that the applicant's current drainage strategy does not meet these conditions (for Plot K). What the LLFA is proposing to be conditioned is not what is currently being proposed (in terms of the discharge rate and what is shown on the plans), therefore the applicant will need to agree to these. We would recommend that these are required as pre-commencement conditions as these issues need to be resolved.

5.8.44 We have included a whole site condition for which we would recommend is applied pre-commencement to all plots and should be applied for discharge before a detailed design for the drainage strategies be approved for all plots.

5.9 Highways England

5.9.1 Highways England raises no objection to the proposal.

5.10 Environmental Health Department

5.10.1 It is noted that several existing commercial and retail noise sources are identified at the attended monitoring locations which include;

- ST1 Loading bay in shopping centre, audible plant from shopping centre;
- ST2 Audible plant noise from court building;
- ST3 Water feature in square;
- ST6 Tonal plant noise (St Georges Way);
- ST8 Plant noise Westgate shopping centre car park, loading noises Tesco or shopping centre; and
- ST9 Plant noise from Bingo Hall fan and Bingo announcements;
- ST11 Music from Flava bar with heavy bass
- ST12 Bus station noise busses (idling/driving) and pedestrians

5.10.2 The sources listed above were incorporated into the noise model. The mitigation proposed in the site suitability assessment take these noise sources into consideration. The site suitability assessment concludes that with the mitigation, the internal ambient noise level criteria provided in BS8233 would be achieved. As such, no significant impacts are predicted for new future residential receptors from these noise sources”.

Noise source already monitored

5.10.3 Whilst it is helpful that all sources will be measured as part of the baseline unattended measurements, these measurements over a longer time period can easily underrepresent the potential impact of individual noise sources, particularly those sources that operate intermittently or have distinguishing character features. As previously advised, it is considered there is a need to establish hours of operation for key noise sources so we know the full extent of likely impacts. A noise source stopping at 6pm is less likely to impact on noise sensitive receptors than one that stops at 10pm or later, or operates on a 24/7 basis. This is an integral part of a **BS4142** assessment for plant noise in any case and it is the developers responsibility to provide sufficient information to demonstrate that the development will not result in unacceptable living conditions for future residents or risk the viability of existing businesses”

5.10.4 Unless there is a robust and comprehensive assessment of the existing noise sources potential impact on future residents, it cannot be concluded that there will be no significant impacts for new residential receptors. It is also not possible to determine if para. 182 of the NPPF will be complied with.

- 5.10.5 The report states that the type, quantity and location of fixed mechanical and electrical (M&E) plant associated with SG1 masterplan and Phase 1 has not been finalised at this stage in the design and as such the plant rating noise is set to be no greater than the representative background when measured in accordance with BS4142 2014 (as amended). The plant noise criteria are discussed further in section 7 of the report and this will be covered later in these comments.
- 5.10.6 The location of external plant and plant rooms are shown on the submitted plans for plots A and K but there is no reference to the type and quantity of plant to be installed at this stage. It is noted that there are bedroom windows on the upper floors of both apartment blocks overlooking roof mounted plant. The consultant's response to this was that the type and quantity of plant to be installed, as well as attenuation specifications, are not finalised at this stage of the design; plant noise limits are therefore set relative to the pre-existing background noise levels. Plant and attenuator specifications will be selected at a later stage in order to achieve the plant rating limits.
- 5.10.7 The background noise levels may change considerably as a result of the development. Whilst changes to road traffic noise may not be that significant, (detailed assessment to follow see 4 below) other changes such as the relocation of the bus station will reduce noise levels at some building facades but will increase noise levels at other facades, particularly early morning/late evening. If higher noise plant is installed, because the existing bus station makes the noise level at the façade high, if the bus station is then relocated and the noise level at the façade is lower, the plant noise levels will be above the post development background noise level and will be potentially intrusive to future residents. The Environmental Health Section would be interested to know how the acoustic consultant proposes to allow for these potential changes in background noise levels because they may cause a significant overestimate or underestimate of future background noise levels.
- 5.10.8 Background noise levels of facades facing internal courtyards and on upper floors are likely to be considerably lower than noise levels at ground level facing the street. The 3D acoustic models clearly show this for the ground floors of plots A and K. Therefore, plant noise criteria for these internal facades will need to be lower to ensure an acceptable noise climate for future residents. It is noted that only traffic flow changes as a result of phase 1 (Plots A and K) in 2021 have been assessed and future traffic flows for the SG1 masterplan area as a whole are not calculated. Therefore, the potential impact of increased traffic from the wider scheme proposed in the outline application is unknown. The suitability of the wider development has therefore not been demonstrated.
- 5.10.9 To confirm, the original report only assessed the noise impact on the basis of Future Traffic Data. In response to this, a further traffic assessment prepared by WSP, the appointed transport specialists for the proposed development, has been provided, which demonstrates that the SG1 masterplan does not contribute significantly to the overall 2031 predicted flows. The contributions have been typically calculated to have a 0-20% increase from the 2031 baseline. There is one small side road, Danesgate, that will have an increase of 51%; however, this road has very little traffic (currently 1959 movements a day, increasing to 2967 movements a day) and therefore, the overall noise levels from this road traffic are very low. However; it is important to note that where future residents will be affected by road traffic noise, commercial noise and plant noise (existing and/or new). The cumulative impacts of all the noise sources will need to be considered when determining the required noise mitigation measures.

Noise model

- 5.10.10 The assessment states that all identified noise sources have been included in the noise model which considers a worst-case daytime and worst-case night-time

scenario. However; no additional explanation or clarity has been provided regarding the source inputs into the model. A BS4142 assessment of existing commercial/industrial noise sources and plant noise is still required particularly if these sources are to remain post development.

Façade noise levels

5.10.11 These are assessed at the boundary of the site masterplan (as stated above the modelling approach is not transparent). The report goes on to state;

“It is understood that any building proposed within the masterplan will require a separate detailed assessment at a later date, which will consider all facades and noise sources surrounding the proposed building”.

Further detailed assessment is still required for phase 1 (plots A and K) as well as the wider SG1 development.

5.10.12 The consultant’s response to this was that as per the previous response, the modelling approach will be updated to state that levels were modelled in accordance with BS8233:2014 and British Councils for Offices:2014. Assessment for phase 1 is provided in Section 9. Internal ambient noise levels were calculated based on the proposed façade and ventilation strategy. The report states that the specific design strategy and specifications for each element are subject to coordination during the detailed design. This statement has been removed as the glazing requirements have been provided in the document. However; Section 9 does not provide a detailed assessment of all noise sources surrounding plots A and K. Section 9.1.2 states;

“9.1.2 Considered noise sources surrounding roads, Theatre pedestrian traffic, plant and activity noise from Mecca Bingo, Flava Bar, plant from the Westgate Shopping Centre car park, shopping centre pedestrian activity, the Town Square Bus station, loading noises from nearby commercial premises and the Matalan car Park.”

5.10.13 No further detail is provided on measured noise levels from each of these sources, hours of operation, character of noise sources (tones, intermittency etc.). As advised above a BS4142 assessment of these sources is required. Table 9.1 of the report introduces an external plant noise rating limit for plot A. This has been derived by taking the internal noise limits in BS8233, adding the calculated noise insulation. This table suggests plant noise limits for plot A of 59dB daytime and 54 dB night time. If the BS4142 plant noise criteria were used this would mean that the background noise levels at plot A are equal or higher than these values. From table 6.2 the unattended background noise levels (LA90) at LT1 dropped to 35 dB at night on Sat 30th March 2019 and 54 dB daytime on Sat 30th March 2019. Therefore, the night time background noise levels at this nearby location are 19 dB below the proposed plant noise limits. The night time plant noise emission criteria proposed for existing residential receptors in table 7.1 ranges from 35 dB at R1 to 47 dB at R4, all of the values are lower than is proposed in table 9.1. Therefore, the proposed noise rating limits in section 9 for plot A are not accepted based upon the information submitted.

5.10.14 The plant rating noise limits proposed for plot K in table 9.4 are also not agreed based on the information submitted to date and appear unreasonably high.

Unattended measurements

5.10.15 The report states that representative background noise levels have been selected based on the modal average during each measurement period daytime (0700-2300) and night time (2300-0700). This approach may significantly underestimate the potential impact of plant running 24/7 and is contrary to BS4142.

Plant noise assessment

5.10.16 The proposed noise limit criteria for fixed plant noise are given in table 7 of the report. As discussed above the modal value used for the background noise levels has not been derived in accordance with BS4142: 2014 (as amended) because the time period used for the calculation is incorrect. It is also not clear from the information provided how the “representative background noise levels” have been calculated from the monitoring data. Hours of operation of existing and proposed plant are not discussed. Notwithstanding that it is not clear if the methodology to derive the plant noise criteria is valid, the cumulative effects of plant noise are not discussed. There are numerous commercial and residential properties associated with the development each having requirements for plant and fixed equipment.

5.10.17 It is important to note that plant noise rating levels for individual items of plant will be considerably lower than the total maximum noise rating level from all plant at each block façade. Only existing noise receptors are included in the table and plant noise impact on the proposed noise sensitive development is not included. As stated above external plant is shown on the roofs of both plots A and K with residential windows directly overlooking them. There are also residential dwellings on the floors immediately above, below and adjacent to plant rooms. The impact of this plant on future residents will need to be carefully considered at detailed design stage. Internal plant noise impact would typically be compared to noise rating curve criteria rather than BS4142.

5.10.18 An assessment has been included with the available plant data, and reasonable assumptions, for plot A and K. It is noted that the plant has not been finalised and may change in later design stages. External plant rating limits have been set for the future residential receptors of Plot A and Plot K.

Site suitability (Outline assessment masterplan).

5.10.19 It is noted from the 3D model that daytime site boundary noise levels are greater than 75 dBA along Six Hills Way and St Georges Way. It is not clear how much greater than 75 dBA the highest noise level is predicted to be. The façade and ventilation requirements provided in the assessment have a final category of greater than 65 dBA during the daytime. Therefore, it is not known if the specification provided would be adequate to mitigate the highest predicted noise levels.

5.10.20 The sound insulation offered by the building envelope is dictated by numerous elements, such as the sound reduction performance of the wall, window and ventilators and each has a different relevant area. There are other potential factors such as the reduction in noise at the façade due to balconies and façade shape.

5.10.21 The Environmental Health Team would typically expect to see the sound level difference to be achieved by the building façade to be translated into a performance for the individual elements in terms of a sound reduction index. To demonstrate site suitability an estimate of the acoustic performance of the building, based on the highest measured level incident on the façade for that time of day should be provided. This should be based upon manufacturers claimed laboratory test data and/or proprietary predictions for each element and the façade areas of each element. The layout plans for areas A and K have been submitted with the application and therefore it should be possible to obtain typical construction descriptions for each element (walls, windows, ventilation) and verify that mitigation performance would meet the required internal noise standards.

5.10.22 The assessment does not sufficiently demonstrate that performance specifications are achievable and suitable building products are readily available to achieve internal noise level targets within the residential aspects of the development. When considering any noise mitigation strategy, the applicant is encouraged to consider the design and layout of the proposed dwellings as well as façade treatments to deal with noise from external noise sources. The 75 dBA refers to site boundary levels and not façade levels. Section 8.1.2 provides the outline site suitability assessment for the masterplan. This assessment shows that internal ambient noise levels can be achieved with reasonable mitigation. It would be expected that any future plot would either carry out a detailed assessment or discharge planning conditions based on the design. It is generally an accepted methodology to consider the masterplan as an “out-to-in” scenario, i.e. considering all noise sources outside of the site boundaries as the locations and building types have not been fully determined. The assessment is considered to suitably demonstrate that the scale and nature of potential future plots would be acceptable.

5.10.23 It is considered that a detailed assessment will be required for any future plot. Layout changes may be required if noise levels do not meet the required standards.

Luton Airport noise contours

5.10.24 The assessments states that the daytime and night time noise contours for Luton airport are provided in Appendix 2. However, Appendix 2 of the report is road traffic noise calculations and this information is not contained within the planning portal copy. It is therefore not possible to verify the assumptions made regarding aircraft noise. This has been updated to Appendix 3. The noise contours have been included in the appendices.

5.10.25 The noise contours in Appendix 3 do not extend over the SG1 site and appear to be from 2016 (although the submitted copy is blurred) and it is the Environmental Health Section understanding that Luton Airport has expanded since that time and therefore the current and future noise contours (post expansion) should be referenced. Notwithstanding that, the noise levels from aircraft may be higher than in 2016. Consequently, it is considered that potential impact of aircraft noise on future residents should be reassessed.

MUGA, playground noise

5.10.26 The location of the school, it's MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area), playground, hall, plant etc. is not currently known. It is understood it is to be located on plot J and all matters are reserved. Therefore, the potential impact on plot K and existing residents cannot be fully determined and it is agreed that a detailed assessment based on the final proposed school design is required. It should be remembered that the school has potential noise impact on both existing and proposed residential dwellings.

5.10.27 The assessment demonstrates it is possible to site a school here without any mitigation, dependent upon the precise building locations, orientation, etc. specific proposals would need to be assessed at the time and appropriate mitigation developed, if required. A detailed assessment will be required once specific proposals are available.

Phase 1 assessment (Review of amended Noise Impact Assessment)

Site suitability assessment phase 1 plot A

5.10.28 The noise model inputs comprise continuous noise sources, as these sources contribute to the equivalent sound pressure level. This includes the surrounding roads,

shopping centre car park plant, and Mecca Bingo plant. Sources that were considered to be impulsive, i.e. loading bay noises and car park noises, were considered separately as these sources produce max noise levels. Flava bar was also considered separately – the dominant noise produced by Flava bar was low frequency impulsive noises through the entrance door, whenever the entrance door was opened. This was modelled separately, based on the orientation of the Flava bar entrance door. The façade break-in calculations were based on the worst-case scenario.

5.10.29 Calculations have been provided in Appendix 4 on the updated noise impact assessment. Two typical plot A noise break in calculations have been submitted. The first states it uses spectral data from short term measurement but the time, date and location of the measurement is not provided, It is not explained why this measurement is thought to be representative of all external noise sources that would impact on a typical plot A room. Generally consultants provide break in calculations for the worst affected room and specify the location within the building and why that is considered the worst case. No allowance has been made for internal noise such as mechanical services even though clearly some of the plot A dwellings will be affected by noise from plant.

5.10.30 The second plot A calculation says it is based upon typical spectral plant data (presumably this is the attenuated inlet/outlet data provided in the summary fan data sheet?). This is said to be adjusted to find the maximum permissible external noise levels for receptors overlooking the plant. A figure of 59 dBA is derived in the calculation. However this is lower than the existing measured noise level of much of the north and east façade of the plot A noise model. The proposed levels are not agreed.

Site suitability assessment Plot K

5.10.31 A 3D acoustic model has been used to predict noise levels at the proposed facades of plot K. The report does not explain the methodology used to create the model and the data inputs. Considered noises are said to be surrounding roads, Flava Bar, the Town Centre Bus Station, shopping centre pedestrian activity and the Matalan car park. The wider modelled area and location inputs for each of these sources are not shown. Only one input appears to be shown on the model diagram.

5.10.32 Noise levels are predicted to be as high as 70 – 75 dBA along the southern, part eastern and part western façade. Mitigation proposed is enhanced glazing and mechanical ventilation. Detailed calculations to support this mitigation strategy have not been provided. It is stated that the proposed roof terrace will meet the criteria in BS8233 for external amenity. The model also doesn't appear to have considered any noise sources from the future development including roof plant, plant rooms, the future school site (to be located to the north based on the pre application.)

5.10.33 The noise model inputs comprise continuous noise sources, as these sources contribute to the equivalent sound pressure level. This includes the surrounding roads, shopping centre car park plant, Mecca Bingo plant. Sources that were considered to be impulsive, i.e. loading bay noises and car park noises were considered separately as these sources produce max noise levels. Flava bar was considered separately as well – the dominant noise produced by Flava bar was low frequency impulsive noises through the entrance door, whenever the entrance door was opened. This was modelled separately, based on the orientation of the Flava bar entrance door. The façade break-in calculations were based on the worst-case scenario.

5.10.34 Two typical plot K room noise breaks in calculations have been provided in Appendix 4. The first uses spectral plant data from measurements but does not give the time date and location of the measurement, it is not explained why this measurement is

thought to be representative of all external noise sources that would impact on a typical plot A room. As explained above we generally see calculations for worse case room not typical rooms and the location of the room is stated. An internal LA max level of 45 dBA is achieved which is right on the boundary of acceptability but the Noise Rating level for the plant noise. This would not be acceptable for an internal noise level from plant in a residential development. Therefore, Environmental Health are very concerned that future residents would complain about noise from this source.

5.10.35 Additional external plant rating limits have been set for new plant to control plant noise at future residential receptors. These calculations are also provided in Appendix 4. The second noise break in calculation states it has used an indicative plant sound power level to find the maximum permissible external noise level for receptors overlooking the proposed plant.

5.10.36 Due to the concerns which have been raised, if the Council is minded to grant planning permission, then the Environmental Health Section recommend the following conditions be imposed dealing with the following:-

- Sound insulation and noise mitigation details – external noise;
- Sound insulation and noise mitigation details – internal noise;
- Noise levels – Mechanical Equipment or Plant;
- Hours of operation;
- Overheating and noise;
- Construction Management; and
- Delivery and service plan.

5.10.37 Further to the above, if permission were to be granted, the Environmental Health Section recommends conditions relating to contaminated land, measures to control dust emissions and pest control measures. In terms of Air Quality, the documents submitted with the application have been reviewed with regard to the local environment. The Environmental Health Section are satisfied with the approach taken in the assessment on Air Quality, and its finding that while the development will inevitably have an effect on surrounding air quality, this will be minimal, and commensurate with its size and nature.

5.11 Council's Parks and Amenities Section

5.11.1 Following an assessment of the development, it is agreed that a condition can be utilised to secure an appropriate detailed landscaping scheme. The plans submitted more recently provide a good and clear indication of those areas that will fall with the Council to maintain. There may be a requirement for more detail on the boundaries between public and private for each plots, but these can be dealt with at a later stage.

5.11.2 With regards to drainage such as physical drains, pipe channels, on land to be maintained by the Council, this would have to be dealt with by the Council's Engineering Section. With respect to financial contribution towards maintenance, following clarification on the Developer Agreement (DA), it is understood the applicant is only expected to provide a contribution for a further 3 years after handover to the Council. As such, the Parks Section is liaising with the Council's finance department to review costings to take into account the high profile nature of the scheme (These contributions will be via a Dowry payment to the Council as part of the DA). This will include consideration of maintenance rates.

5.11.3 In terms of access for maintenance, there are currently no concerns with what has been provided. The Parks Section will liaise with the applicant if any issues with maintenance access at the detailed design stage of any landscaping strategy are identified. This will ensure the Council can safely maintain the spaces it will have

jurisdiction over. In terms of assisting with street sweeping activities, the Parks Section support the preference of upstands to assist with street cleansing activities. Therefore, Parks welcome the support from the applicant on the upstands and to providing more details of these at the detailed design stage.

- 5.11.4 There are currently no areas of concern regarding planting near footways and carriageways, but expect where appropriate, planting on road corners to be designed out. With regards to protection, the Parks Section advise the use of bollards should be avoided as much as possible. Separately, it is recommended the applicant liaises with the Council's Engineering Section in terms of landscape protection measures. With respect to sourcing of plants and plant specs, it is requested further details are provided at the detailed design stage.
- 5.11.5 Looking at the tree species proposed, following discussions with the Council's Arboricultural Manager, these are deemed to be acceptable. Turning to the street furniture, it is agreed with the applicant that these can be reviewed at later stages as there are concerns around maintenance of large amounts of timber being provided. In terms of the play, it is appreciated these are a requirement for the development. As such, any play facilities within the public realm needs to be robust. Therefore, to help with inspections, it is recommended that equipped play to be provided in one area, rather than scattered throughout the public realm. The Parks Team does welcome the use of non-equipped informal play features in appropriate areas such as boulders, mounding and sensory planting.
- 5.11.6 It is also recommended that accessible play is incorporated into the design. Consideration also needs to be given to access to existing and nearby play facilities in respect to the location of the site. There will need to be a post installation inspection to be carried out by a ROSPA accredited inspector to ensure the play is safe to use. The play area should be made available within early occupation of the site to ensure residents are aware of the location of the play facilities. With regards to final details of any play area, this can be secured via condition or part of a reserved matters application.
- 5.11.7 In terms of irrigation, the applicant's proposals are acceptable but look forward to further details of these systems. In relation to litter bins and street recycling, the Parks Section would wish to work with the applicant and the Council's Regeneration Department in determining suitable bin and street furniture designs. This again could be dealt with as part of any detailed design which can be secured by condition. With regards to the Operations Team who handle waste collection etc. they have confirmed they do not require storage provision in the first phase. However, they will need suitable storage facilities in later phases of development. As such, the Parks Section would welcome further discussions with the Regeneration Department and the applicant to secure the provision of suitable storage facilities.
- 5.11.8 The Parks Team also support the use of rain gardens as well as the use of log piles, which form part of the indicative landscape strategy as recommended by the Ecologist. The final locations of the log piles can be agreed as part of the detailed design stage. With respect to use of gravel, this should be within the rain gardens only. Looking at the proposed pond, it is agreed this should be more open and accessible, however, the pond will also need to be designed for wildlife. There is the potential to use a low level decorative metal fence around part of the pond in order to provide a safe refuge for wildlife. With regards to Algal blooms, some form of control will need to be introduced to manage this and this will be considered as part of the ongoing maintenance of the pond.
- 5.11.9 In relation to the proposed species rich meadows, it is agreed the full detail of these meadows can be secured at later stages. However, consideration should be given to

investigating a meadow mixture that can be cut and dropped rather than collected. Parks also welcome a mixture that is of a lower growing variety and supports pollinators.

5.12 Council's Arboriculturist

5.12.1 An observation on the new trees proposed to be planted would be regarding their location with the fire engine access road in mind. It is the officer's view that for any planting either side of the fire engine access road, trees with a narrow/upright port should be considered in favour of the ones with wider crowns/ports. The reason is the obstruction, wider trees could cause, as they grow, for emergency vehicles here, especially as the 3.7 metres width is already tight.

5.12.2 The narrow port of the newly planted trees would also be situated better for the locations adjacent to the windows of the proposed flats.

5.13 Police Crime Prevention Design Officer

5.13.1 The measures in the updated information from the applicant on the whole are acceptable. However, there are two areas of concern, the first area of concern relates to access controls. The letter from the application states "Secure door entry system at each entrance door, leading into the entrance lobby. Tradesperson and time release mechanisms will be avoided." Whilst this sounds good the fact is that the Access Control system used could just be audio only and not an audio / visual system as recommended in section 27 of the Secured by Design (SBD) guide "Homes 2019", in addition Section 29 also gives further guidance on CCTV & recording.

5.13.2 The second area is in relation to Part 'Q' of Building Regulations – The letter states "All easily accessed doors and windows will comply with Part 'Q' of Building Regulations. This also covers the locks and hinges required". The issue with this is that Part 'Q' relates to all the entrance doors and any easily accessible windows. This includes every individual flat entrance door (in fact now the requirement is for the flat entrance doors to be dual certified to both Pas 24 and Resistance to fire for at least 30 minutes – this is as a result of the finding from the Grenfell Tower inquiry) and not just the ones that are deemed to be 'easily accessible'. In addition, Part 'Q' states that "Secure door sets should be either;

- Manufactured to a design that has been shown by test to meet the security requirements of British Standards publication PAS 24:2012, or
- Designed and manufactured in accordance with Appendix B"

5.13.3 In light of the events at Grenfell, where it was assumed the products were tested, it is strongly recommended that either the correct pass certificates for that door are supplied or if it was tested 'in house' that whoever is ordering these products contacts the supplier in order to view them undergoing testing to ensure they are of the right standard.

5.13.4 Alternatively, by going down the SBD route we ask that all the relevant doors and windows are third party tested, that is a recognised test house has tested and certified the products and also carries out regular checks of the products to ensure compliance. This then gives piece of mind that the product used is the correct one. Also because SBD is a bit more flexible than Building Regulations they use a more up to date standard. The Crime Prevention Officer would also ask that the communal Entrance doors meet the required standards as per Homes 2019.

5.13.5 Other than the issues highlighted above, the other comments raised by the applicant are agreed. If these were to be combined with the comments above and the applicant seeks to achieve SBD accreditation, then the Police would fully support the application.

5.14 Environment Agency

5.14.1 The site is partly within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3 (SPZ3). SPZ's are defined areas around a public water abstraction point. They indicate how long it will take for a pollutant to travel from the water below ground to the source. They also show the area around the source which needs protecting from potential pollutants. Therefore, it is recommended that the requirement of the NPPF and NPPG are followed. This means that all risks to groundwater and surface waters from contamination need to be identified so that appropriate remedial action can be taken. This should be in addition to the risk to human health that the Environmental Health Department will be looking at.

5.14.2 It is expected that reports and Risk Assessments be prepared in line with our Groundwater Protection guidance (previously covered by the GP3) and CLR11 (Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination). In order to protect ground water from further deterioration:

- No infiltration-based sustainable drainage systems should be constructed on land affected by contamination, as contaminants can remobilise and cause groundwater pollution;
- Piling, or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods, should not cause preferential pathways for contaminants to mitigate to groundwater and cause pollution;
- Decommission of investigative boreholes to ensure that redundant boreholes are safe and secure, and do not cause groundwater pollution or loss of water.

5.15 Thames Water

5.15.1 Thames Water would advise that with regard to the foul water sewerage network infrastructure capacity, there are no objections to the application. In terms of surface water drainage, if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water there are no objections. Where the developer proposes to discharge to a public sewer, prior approval from Thames Water Developer Services will be required.

5.15.2 The proposed development is located within 15 metres of underground waste water assets and as such, would recommend an informative attached to any approval granted. In regards to water supply, this comes within the area covered by the Affinity Water Company.

5.16 NHS East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

5.16.1 Following an assessment of the proposed development, phase one (Plots A and K) would generate a patient yield of 1,512.7. In relation to the development as a whole, based on the overall indicative mix, the development would generate a total patient yield of 3,759.5. Therefore, the NHS would seek a total financial contribution towards GMS GP Provision of £1,108,744.22 of which £446,122.46 would be sought in phase 1.

5.16.2 The monies would be spent on a live and progressing project the NHS has involving the Stanmore Road Medical Group, specifically Stanmore Road itself. This will require reconfiguration and refurbishment of the existing site provision and the complete reconfiguration and refurbishment of a wing attached to it. This is in order to increase GMS capacity to help absorb the increase in patients arising from this development.

5.16.3 Following negotiations on the financial contributions due to viability issues, the NHS CCG considers the financial contribution of £769,309 towards GP provision is acceptable. In addition, the proposed triggers of payment are also agreed. These triggers, for each phase of development would be 50% of the obligation is payable on occupation of 50% of the units. The remainder (50%) would be payable upon occupation of 85% of the units.

5.17 Sport England

5.17.1 An objection is made to the proposals for community sports facility provision to meet the needs of the proposed development in its current form due to the lack of confirmed provision. This position will be reviewed if it was confirmed appropriate financial contributions would be made towards off-site indoor and outdoor sports facility provision, secured through a section 106 agreement.

5.17.2 The proposal is a hybrid planning application for a mixed use regeneration scheme known as SG1 covering a large proportion of Stevenage Town Centre. The scheme is residential led and includes proposals for residential development of up to 1,867 dwellings across the development. The population of the development is estimated to be 4,480 people based on a typical dwelling occupancy of 2.4 persons per dwelling. The additional population will generate additional demand for community sports facilities. If this demand is not adequately met then it may place additional pressure on existing sports facilities, thereby creating or exacerbating existing deficiencies in facility provision. In accordance with the NPPF, Sport England seeks to ensure that the development meets any new community sports facilities needs arising as a result of the development.

5.17.3 In its current form, the outline application makes provision for public open spaces and civic spaces but no on-site provision for formal outdoor sport or indoor sport facilities. As set out in paragraph 8.285 of the Planning Statement, it is anticipated that financial contributions will be calculated during the course of the development which will be secured via S106 Agreement or possibly CIL.

Evidence Base and Policy Context

5.17.4 The evidence based for community sport and local planning policy context can be summarised as follows:-

- The adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2011 – 2031) includes policy HC8 which supports residential developments where on-site sports facilities provision is made or a commuted sum paid in accordance with the standards in the Council's Sports Facilities Assessment and Strategy;
- Stevenage Borough Council's Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 (2015) provides a robust assessment of current future community sports facility needs to support the delivery of the local plan and development management. The assessment identified a range of quantitative and qualitative deficiencies for both indoor and outdoor sports facilities and identified priorities for addressing these needs. Policy H8 and other relevant policies of the local plan have been informed by this evidence base and set out the priorities of how developments should make provision for sport. While needs have been identified for new facilities, there is an emphasis in the local plan and sports facility strategy on prioritising enhancements to existing facilities or the replacement of existing facilities in order to meet both current and future needs.

5.17.5 In view of the local planning policy and evidence base context, it is considered in accordance with Government policy in paragraph 95 of the NPPF, a robust local basis

exists for justifying the provision of outdoor and indoor community sports facility provision to be made by this development.

Outdoor sports provision

- 5.17.6 Given that this is a town centre regeneration scheme where a high density mixed use scheme is proposed, it would not be considered practical or reasonable to consider on-site provision for outdoor sports facilities in view of their land take requirements. The preference would therefore be for outdoor sports provision to be made through financial contributions (secured through a section 106 agreement) towards the provision or improvement of off-site projects elsewhere in Stevenage. The action plan in the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy has identified potential projects which could be implemented on a number of existing sport facility sites in the local area and the delivery of such projects is considered by Sports England and sports governing bodies to be a greater priority and more preferable than seeking to provide any new facilities on-site as part of the development.
- 5.17.7 To inform off-site options, discussions should take place between the Council, Sport England and the sport's governing bodies and reference should also be made to the Council's Strategy to inform how financial contributions should be used. In accordance with paragraph 11.44 of the adopted local plan, a section 106 agreement would be need to make provision for an appropriate contribution to be secured and paid within a reasonable timescale and this would need to be ring fenced for identified outdoor sports projects on specific sites. As set out in paragraph 11.43 of the Local Plan, the value of the contributions from housing developments should be equivalent to the value of the area of sports facilities that would otherwise be provided by the development.
- 5.17.8 Therefore, a commuted sum to be secured based on the Council's approach set out in the local plan would be acceptable. This would be subject to Sport England being advised of the amount of the contribution that would be secured and the projects that a commuted sum would be used towards before the planning application is determined and the agreed projects would need to be referenced in a planning obligation.
- 5.17.9 To assist the Council, an estimate of the demand generated for outdoor sports provision can be provided by Sport England's Playing Pitch Calculator strategic planning tool. Team data from Stevenage Borough Council's Sports Facilities Strategy can be applied to the Playing Pitch Calculator which can then assess the demand generated in pitch equivalents (and the associated costs of delivery) by the population generated in a new residential development. Sport England have used the latest version of the calculator for estimating the demand generated by a new population in Stevenage of 4,480.
- 5.17.10 In summary, for natural turf pitches, this development would generate demand for the equivalent of 0.73 adult football pitches, 1.36 youth football pitches (including 9v9), 0.93 mini soccer pitches, 0.15 rugby union pitches and 0.18 cricket pitches. In relation to artificial grass pitches, the calculator estimates the development generates a demand for 0.08 hockey pitches and 0.16 3G football pitches. The total cost of providing these pitches is currently estimated to be £542,092. In terms of changing room provision to support the use of this pitch demand, the calculator estimates that the total demand generated will be equivalent to 4.16 changing rooms which would currently cost £777,671. Consideration should be given by the Council to using the figures from the Playing Pitch Calculator for informing the level of a financial contribution.

Indoor Sports Provision

- 5.17.11 As indoor sports facilities are strategic facilities that serve large populations and as the population generated by the proposed development in isolation would not be sufficient to justify the provision of a conventional facility on-site (see below Sports Facility Calculator figures), it is considered that off-site provision in the form of a commuted sum towards the provision or improvement of off-site facilities would be the most suitable form of provision on this occasion i.e. similar to the approach proposed above for outdoor sport. The Council's Sports Facility Assessment and Strategy 2014-2031 and the adopted local plan (paragraph 11.39) has prioritised the replacement of the Stevenage Swimming Centre and the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre as the strategic priority projects for meeting the current and future needs of Stevenage and it would therefore be considered appropriate for contributions to be secured towards the delivery of these projects as they would also be located in the town centre in close proximity to the application site. A similar approach to that set out above for outdoor sports in relation to identifying a contribution and the projects that the contribution would be used towards would be advocated.
- 5.17.12 Sport England's established Sports Facilities Calculator (SFC) can help to provide an indication of the likely demand that will be generated by a development for certain facility types. The SFC indicates that a population of 4,480 in Stevenage Borough will generate a demand for 0.32 sports halls (£113,528), 0.22 swimming pools (£917,494) and 0.05 rinks of an indoor bowls centre (£126,683).

Conclusion on Sports Facility Provision

- 5.17.13 As there are no confirmed proposals at this stage for meeting the development's outdoor or indoor sport facility needs, an objection is made to the planning application. However, the objection would be withdrawn in due course if it is confirmed that appropriate financial contributions, secured through a section 106 agreement as set out above, will be made towards the provision of these facilities and the expected level of the contributions is confirmed together with the project that the contributions will be used towards.

Active Design

- 5.17.14 Sport England, in conjunction with Public Health England, has produced 'Active Design' (October 2015), a guide to planning new developments that create the right environment to help people get more active, more often in the interests of health and wellbeing. The guidance sets out ten key principles for ensuring new developments incorporate opportunities for people to take part in sport and physical activity. The Active Design principles are aimed at contributing towards the Government's desire for the planning system to promote healthy communities through good urban design.
- 5.17.15 The town centre regeneration proposals are based around providing a pedestrian focused environment with a wide mix of co-located uses and attractions that will encourage people to be physically active which is welcomed. The masterplan design and placemaking principles would be consistent with the Active Design principles and the proposals for open space and civic spaces such as the Arrivals Square, Garden Square, Southgate Park and the Boulevard are particularly welcomed in this regard as are the proposals for the pedestrian and cycle links within the development site. Sport England have considered the proposals for the detailed design and layout of the Phase 1 scheme covering Plots A & K and these are broadly welcomed. The only minor comment Sport England would make is that consideration should be given to providing some benches adjoining the proposed pond (which would be a focal point of the park) in Southgate Park as this would encourage people from all groups to walk to the pond as

a recreational destination e.g. elderly people who may not be willing or able to sit on the sloped lawn around the pond.

5.17.16 While the conceptual proposals for the later phases of the development that would be addressed through reserved matters are welcomed in principle, to help ensure that designing to encourage physical activity is given appropriate consideration in practice when the reserved matters applications are prepared, Sport England would request a planning condition to be imposed requiring details to be submitted and approved which demonstrate how promoting physical activity has been considered in the design and layout of the development. The Active Design guidance includes a checklist that can be applied to developments and it is recommended that the checklist is used to inform the provision of such details. Advice from Hertfordshire County Council's public health team (Healthy Places Officer – Planning & Transport) should also be considered in relation to how the proposed design of the development has considered opportunities for promoting healthy lifestyles.

Financial Obligation offer from the applicant

5.17.17 Sport England welcome a financial contribution of £182,294 as now offered rather than no contributions to indoor sports facilities as previously anticipated. However, in the context of the costs of meeting the demand for indoor sports facilities generated by the proposal being equivalent to approximately £1.9m (as shown in the Sports Facility Calculator figures that I provided with my formal response) in total Sport England could not withdraw our objection on the basis of such a contribution as Sport England would have no technical or policy basis to do so. In the context of the significant viability issues that Sport England understand are associated with the delivery of this scheme, Sport England do recognise that the applicant has attempted to maximise the contribution that they can offer towards indoor sports facilities and while not changing our position on the application Sport England would understand the reasons why the Council may choose to accept this proposed contribution in the context of the wider benefits associated with the delivery of this regeneration scheme.

5.17.18 In this context, if the Council is minded to approve the application and accept the financial contribution of £182,294 towards indoor sports facilities, Sport England would recommend that the contribution be secured through a section 106 agreement and the payments phased in accordance with the suggested payment schedule and that the contributions be ring fenced towards the proposed new leisure centre on the Stevenage Swimming Centre/Bowes Lyon House site unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Borough Council.

5.18 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

5.18.1 There are no comments to make on the application, it appears to be acceptable.

5.19 National Grid

5.19.1 There are low or medium pressure (below 2 bar) gas pipes and associated equipment in the vicinity of the development.

5.20 Natural England

5.20.1 It is considered that the proposed development will not have a significant adverse impact on statutorily protected nature sites or landscapes.

5.21 Affinity Water

5.21.1 The proposed development is located adjacent to an Environment Agency defined groundwater SPZ2. Therefore, if the application is approved, it is recommended conditions are imposed to protect the public water supply, which would need to address:

- The construction works and operation should be done in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Best Management Practices;
- Any works involving excavation below the chalk groundwater table (for example, piling or the implementation of a geothermal open/closed loop system) should be avoided. If these are necessary, a ground investigation should first be carried out;
- Excavations are also likely to generate turbidity in the chalk aquifer, which could travel to the public water abstraction point and cause disruption to the service. Mitigation measures should be secured by way of condition to minimise this risk;
- The demolition works may also affect the existing network of public water mains and service pipes in the area.

5.21.2 Being within a water stressed area, Affinity Water encourage the developer to consider the wider water environment by incorporating water efficient features such as rainwater harvesting, rainwater storage tanks, water butts, and green roofs (as appropriate) within each dwelling/building.

5.22 Council's CCTV Section

5.22.1 The CCTV section would be looking for a provision of additional cameras across the development site in order to ensure sufficient coverage.

5.23 Council's Car Parking Manager

5.23.1 In relation to the plots A-K we can assume the loss of J car park (80 spaces) and approximately 20 spaces from the adjacent car park (F). These displaced customers can be accommodated by redirecting to our St Georges Multi Storey. There is sufficient capacity for the foreseeable future. The issues particular to this site are that two other car parks P & H, 'not more than 40 metres away', and totalling 165 spaces are also being developed upon in the near future. The customers of the Leisure Centre, particularly the Theatre users will be increasingly pushed to park greater distances from the events.

5.23.2 The Car Park J at Swingate also serves to provide close proximity parking for customers and staff who have temporary disabilities or are under personal threat. We would require detailed proposals from the developer regarding access to F car park to establish exact numbers for spaces lost.

5.24 The Design Council

5.24.1 Stevenage was built as an ambitious visionary New Town, so this project carries with it the power and obligation to contribute to its existing and evolving character and legacy as well as to play a key role in securing a successful future for Stevenage Town Centre. In addition, the town's role in post war Britain's history means its progress is likely to attract interest and scrutiny nationwide. It is therefore, critical that the masterplan for SG1 establishes the right principles for the extensive transformation and sets a quality of design and accommodation that will set a positive future for the town centre.

- 5.24.2 The Design Council supports the high aspirations of the Council to establish a successful community here, and their vision to create cohesive neighbourhoods, modal shifts and better connectivity. The Council holds a number of roles in this project as regulatory authority, developer partner, in achieving in housing targets, meeting the aspirations of the local community, who have waited a protracted period of time for change to be delivered in the Town Centre. It also recognised the significant work carried out by the design to progress the application to its current stage.
- 5.24.3 In terms of the masterplan and proposals for phase one, the Design Council do not think it meets the strategic ambitions of the project, establishing a sufficiently aspirational precedent for the future of Stevenage Town Centre, or provides the quality that is required and expected, from a scheme which sits in a context of this heritage and historic importance. As such, it is considered a number of issues need to be addressed in advance of a planning decision to be made.
- 5.24.4 It is recommended the Council and project team work together to continue to develop the vision, ambition and narrative for SG1, including how it responds to and supports the Local Plan, Framework and other strategies across the town centre, as it is not considered the narrative is yet clear in the masterplan. This also includes addressing how the site will be integrated into the wider setting in terms of connectivity.
- 5.24.5 The rationale for focusing on providing housing as a first stop in populating the town centre is sound, although it is recommended that the approach to uses in the masterplan is considered as part of the wider economic strategy for Stevenage. There are, however, some concerns, contrary to the Council's aspirations for a sustainable and vibrant community; there is a limited mix of different types of housing. The mix provided is likely to support people for only a certain period of their lives rather than at all stages of their life, and hence it is unlikely to support the creation of long-term communities in the town centre.
- 5.24.6 There are also concerns regarding the accommodation and open space provisions for Plots A and K. Furthermore, as the manifestations of the principles of the masterplan in detail, this is likely to set a lower quality precedent for the future of the town centre. Therefore, question is raised as to the extent to which the aspirations of the masterplan can be adequately implemented and further consideration should be given to how the principles of the masterplan can be enshrined in the future.
- 5.24.7 The Design Council considers the individual landscaped spaces work well, but, there is some concern with respect to density and feel the masterplan is not providing a sufficient level of high quality open spaces. In addition, there is also insufficient clarity in the landscape strategy for the hierarchy of spaces, and how these relate to the surrounding buildings. It is recognised the design team set out an approach in relation to existing character, form and architecture of the town centre in the masterplan. However, this need to be better articulated and requires some resolution and clarity as to how the proposal echoes or contrasts in a complimentary way to the existing character of the town centre.
- 5.24.8 In terms of climate change, the Design Council welcomes the Council's ambition for achieving net zero carbon by 2030 and the intention for the proposals to improve on incoming sustainability regulations. It is recommended some extra work is carried out in order to maximise sustainability, particularly through landscaping and having a benchmarking system, such as BREEAM, is implemented so that aspirations are demonstrated through each stage of development.
- 5.24.9 It is appreciated with respect to use mix and economic strategy that the project team has pursued a strategy that does not create competition between this project and other

town centre areas, which has contributed to a focus on residential uses. The rationale is recognised and the project responds to a wider approach across Stevenage which is broadly sound. However, the project does not currently offer enough diversity of use and activity in order to create a truly vibrant town centre and could undermine the broader success of the town centre as a place. As such, a range of businesses will be essential to enliven the town centre. In addition, as town centres evolve over time and to achieve resilience, places need to be adaptable. However, it is not considered the scheme offers enough flexibility of use that is required, both in the envisaged use but also the flexibility over time. It is acknowledged that some business activity is being proposed within the mix of use and a unit in Plot A has been designed to be flexible, but do not consider either provision is adequate. Therefore, it is recommended the overall approach of giving greater emphasis to flexibility in order to ensure Stevenage can be responsive to change.

5.24.10 In terms of consideration around mix, there should be the encouragement to create workspaces which can support a range of types of business alongside the economic strategy. It is considered the Town Centre is well placed to foster studios and innovation spaces that will be valuable to supporting organisations to be established and be able to grow.

5.24.11 Some more work is needed to establish who will live in this development and how the proposal will meet their needs as the scheme in its current form is not very clear from this aspect. The research undertaken by the project team is welcome as it was conducted with prominent businesses and estate agents to find out what their employees and potential residents seek in terms of housing. The findings show a requirement to provide homes for people aged 25-40, so requires a mix of homes to progress through the housing ladder at different stages of their life, including families and larger homes. However, the range is not evident in the proposal and there are some concerns the town centre will only be able to accommodate people for a short period, who will then have to move out as they prosper and/or have families.

5.24.12 The masterplan should cater for a genuine mix of people and in doing so create more long-term communities. As part of this, it is recommended a variety of town centre activities (such as pop-up spaces, markets and festivals) and a wider variety of public, private, civic and commercial spaces. It also encourages the team to incorporate spaces with a playful quality.

5.24.13 With regards to a response on design and the narrative, it is recognised the design team have set out their approach, but at present, the Design Council consider the approach still requires some resolution. It is recognised that the design narrative picks up on the existing nodes, vistas and open spaces as well as the interlocking grid and connections with the Old Town. It is also acknowledged reference is made to the existing Piet Mondrian influence, however, remain unconvinced this is the correct approach. It is also considered the scale and form of the mid-rise courtyard blocks move the town's character from a lightweight, modernist one that forms clear streets towards a series of blocks located at intervals. Therefore, it is not a properly interrelated series of buildings and spaces that create a cohesive street or place. It is therefore, recommended that a clearer response to the existing urban form and character be provided, and the proposal then robustly developed in accordance with this choice (whether Stevenage's existing character or an entirely new character such as Le Havre in France).

5.24.14 Looking at public art and heritage, Stevenage has a strong tradition in this area and it is welcome the design team has carefully analysed this. But, the Design Council considers the masterplan should go beyond just responding to art already in place, and to carry on the tradition of investing in public art. The Design Council urges the development of a Public Art strategy that allows this aspect of Stevenage's character

to evolve and build on the town's legacy. With regards to the platform, the Design Council understand the significance of this to the Town Square, but aware it has undergone much intervention over the year. Therefore, a decision must be made to either restore it to its original form or to remove it completely, as solutions that lie in-between are distractions that do not do this feature justice.

5.24.15 Turning to landscape and public realm, whilst there are concerns over this space (as set out above), it is urged the project team recognise the critical role this space plays in people's health and well-being combined with social resilience and water management. In terms of phasing, Covid-19 has emphasised the value of open spaces for people at all ages and therefore, it is important to have meaningful amenity space to support the development coming forward at each stage.

5.24.16 It is noted the Council is preparing a Biodiversity Action Plan which is welcomed, but note it is not currently manifested in the proposal for the Town Centre Masterplan. The landscape proposal can contribute to the borough's ambitions to achieve net zero carbon and therefore, recommend broadening the sustainability strategy to incorporate the landscape and biophilic design.

5.24.17 The landscape proposals are broadly sound, and particularly welcome the design of the public realm and open spaces between the station and town square. However, it is vital the design narrative needs to be clear in order to reflect the holistic vision for Stevenage. In addition, the buildings and landscape need to work together coherently so recommend the undertaking of spatial analysis to understand movement flows to create a hierarchy of spaces. This needs to be connected with the overall economic strategy of the scheme. There is also the possibility that Danestrete, which is envisaged as a green, active and attractive street, could challenge the prominence of Queensway. Whilst this is not necessarily an issue, it is recommended careful planning is made to ensure there no unintended consequences, as the latter could have negative impact on Queensway.

5.24.18 With respect to transport and connectivity in the masterplan, the downgrading of the dual carriageway and creation of strategic connections to other parts of the town centre, and the strategic cycle network will be critical to ensuring successful connectivity into and across the masterplan. Within the site, it is noted car parking plays a dominant role in Stevenage, which has a negative impact on the town centre. Sustainable transport initiatives are vital to environmental resilience and provide people a variety of choices for travel and also produce significant benefits in Stevenage in terms of reducing the amount of parking. It is suggested that initiatives such as e-bikes, car sharing programmes etc. need to be explored.

5.24.19 In terms of design quality, there are various options to explore. A robust design code could be one option. Another option would be to develop a clear set of principles and/or targets that can be benchmarked through the later scheme. It is advised that the landscape design must be secured in the outline application and not value engineered or compromise delivery. There as such, needs to be a robust maintenance and management strategy in place. Looking at Plots A and K, these being detailed at this stage must set the standard as they will form the benchmark for the remaining phases.

5.24.20 The landscaping proposal for the Arrival Square is strong and likely to create a successful space. There is also the support for retaining the trees along with the incorporation of benches and there is an opportunity here to provide some public art. However, in terms of the buildings and spaces provided, the Design Council feels these do not currently deliver on the aspiration and quality envisaged in the masterplan. The main concern is around the lack of sufficient quantum of quality amenity space, with poor quality courtyards, including for both Plots A and K. The roof gardens do not provide adequate amenity space for the number of people living on

these sites. There are concerns regarding some of the single aspect units, where natural light levels are compromised and issues with ventilation combined with concerns about the design of some of the internal corridors. The smaller units are likely to be suited to a younger demographic who will likely need to move when they have children.

5.24.21A sustainable community derives from people's ability envisaging their long-term future in their neighbourhood, which engenders a desire to invest in the area. Therefore, recommend consideration either within Plots A and K or in the future phases the provision of a wider mix of residential types to provide people to move within the site when circumstances change. The layouts of these plots also need to be more flexible and feel the roof gardens do not provide sufficient private amenity space for residents in these plots.

5.24.22Looking at density, it is considered that the high density of units in Plots A and K create significant compromises. The lack of ground floor amenity space plays a critical part in this. The Design Council recommends the project team works on how density could be handled to create the desired high quality. One option is to increase the heights of the buildings and encourage testing to see if this is possible. It also recommended the design of the courtyards is revisited so they become amenity spaces. There is also a lack of play space in Plots A and K and while it is recognised Plot K is a Build to Rent block and will have lower children numbers, it is noted children do tend to live in and visit smaller flats and therefore, recommend provision is made.

5.24.23With regards to parking, it is recommended that the project team explore alternative locations for parking, such as off-site on underground parking, or reduce parking in combination with a sustainable transport strategy that reduces the necessity for cars. With regards to active frontages on Plot A, it is considered these need to look at in more detail as for example the location of the bike stores sterilise the ground floor frontage. In addition, with residential at ground floor it does not contribute to active frontages, particularly on the prominent southern elevation which creates the entrance to the site from the train station. Therefore, the design team should look at providing more non-residential uses at ground floor in order to maximise the plots location. There is also question over the height of the wall at Plot K being 2.4m in height. It is recommended this is lowered or removed.

5.24.24Looking at height and townscape, the proposal includes tall buildings in significant locations which will have an impact on townscape, views and character. However, the analysis provided in the planning application is not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate how these buildings are acceptable. The scheme's tallest element is located in Plot K, away from the town square which is considered to be the correct approach, but there is some concern of creating a wall of taller buildings to the south which contrasts with the town's overall lightness. Therefore, further assessments need to be made to robustly understand the way in the proposals impact Stevenage and its setting.

5.24.25The Design Council supports the removal of Swingate House, as it does not make a positive contribution to the town centre and a new building will allow a better framing for the proposed Arrival Square. In terms of materiality, the design team has selected brick, which creates a contrast with the existing materials of mid-century architecture across the town centre and does not intrinsically offer the same qualities of lightness, delicacy and simplicity as the concrete, glass, steel and stone of the original architecture. It is acknowledged that there is the potential to replicate these qualities in brick, but if the lightness and modernity in the approach the design team is seeking, then further refinement of the architecture is needed.

5.25 Council's Engineering Section

- 5.25.1 The Council's Engineering Services Section has provided a number of comments over the course of the application and have been actively negotiating with the applicant's Highway Consultant on a number of highways matters relating to this scheme. As such, I wanted to provide you here with a consolidated statement which includes the key information set out in detail from previous comments made on the application.
- 5.25.2 As advised previously, we fully support the provision of good quality cycle and pedestrian access to the new development as well as the creation of continuous cycling routes through the town whilst respecting a smaller 'pedestrian only' core in Town Square and Queensway. With minimal car use provided for in the development, it is essential that the streets make cycling the most convenient option and the design of the public realm gives the cycling infrastructure enough visual impact for it to act as a positive encouragement to new cyclists. We appreciate the majority of the scheme is in outline, so the overall design and layout of the pedestrian and cycle routes would be considered as part of any reserved matters application. We recommend that the cycleways be designed to be clearly distinguishable from carriageways to ensure safety particularly where vehicles have to cross the cycleways. There is also a case for them to be more clearly distinguished in the pedestrian areas. Using flag paving materials for informal cycling links may be appropriate in areas where we don't want cyclists to have priority over pedestrians such as the link across Garden Square for example. But where there are key new designated cycle routes, cyclists should have priority on these routes and be given a smooth continuous surface without joints such as a coloured bound asphalt material.
- 5.25.3 On Plot A, it is noted the applicant has amended the scheme to deal with some of our concerns regarding pinch points on the pedestrian footway heading north towards Tesco. We would nevertheless urge that a scheme be brought forward for removal of the roundabout to enable pedestrian improvements in the area as soon as possible in conjunction with this development. With regards to disabled parking on-street next to Plot A, it is our preference that these should be provided within the courtyard so that the on-street disabled bays can be for public use. However, we appreciate that the courtyard was re-designed following a design review and as such this may not be acceptable. If required disabled bays can be reserved for residents by forming a small Parking Permit Area (PPA) for blue badge holding residents. If we need to go down this route, it is recommended the two 'standard bays' are also for residents within the PPA. The matter of inadequate loading facilities west of the site on Danestrete for servicing by refuse freighters has been raised and I must advise that there are ongoing discussions with the applicant on this matter. These detailed design matters can be dealt with via the TRO and SDA process so it should not affect the Council from making a decision from a planning perspective.
- 5.25.4 On Plot K, the new Southgate Park will provide a critical link for cyclists from the Six Hills Way cycleway on the southern boundary up to Southgate and the future school site. It is noted that the applicant has provided an indicative design for a shared cycle/footpath through the park. A more direct and segregated cycleway would be preferred. A formal cycle route is proposed along Southgate (West) which stops at the Towers and becomes two informal links. Any link which is not designated for cycle use is liable to result in complaints from pedestrians who will see them as intruders in their space. A formal segregated route throughout Southgate and a better formal linkage to the Six Hills Way are recommended to support the school and the residents of Plots H and K. However, it is appreciated with Plot H this is in outline, so any detailed design of the cycle and pedestrian routes may be considered at the reserved matters stage.
- 5.25.5 On Plot C, this can only be serviced from the road on its western boundary so it will be necessary to ensure that all bin stores open up either side on the western flanks of the

building or into a private central courtyard that be accessed by the refuse vehicles. The cycle lane along the boulevard is welcomed as this is a key route to the train and bus stations. This could be a new designated cycle route where cycling priority is adopted. Some redesign of the indicative cycle route is required in terms of its radii and the links in the Garden Square are not clear. Cycle parking should be provided in this square so that cyclists can leave their biked and walk into the pedestrian area of the town centre. However, appreciate this could be dealt with as part of any reserved matters application.

- 5.25.6 It is requested that the applicant provides a schedule identifying all altered traffic restrictions to allow regulatory impacts to be understood and plans detailing the proposed regulations including speed limits, parking restrictions, cycle tracks and other traffic controls. This will need to identify both long term requirements and interim/construction phase needs, and the timings for these, and the developer should recognise timescales involved in making Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) and the amount of notice required. These matters fall within the outline, as such this would be discussed in more detail as part of any reserved matters application.
- 5.25.7 The quality and design of the streets which will be maintained by the Council is critical and it is understood these will be submitted as future reserved matters applications. The Engineering Services section will be keen to see as early as possible any detailed design for Danestrete, Swingate and Southgate.
- 5.25.8 We note some of the conditions recommended by HCC Highways requiring cycle and pedestrians links to highways outside the site boundary in order to achieve the objectives of the LCWIP and support this approach. On a separate point, we have provided comments on the Swingate Car Park application and confirm we have no objections to this proposal.

Section 106 obligations

- 5.25.9 The S106 should include a requirement for the developer to enter into Street Development Agreements with the Council with regard to any works proposed on land to be retained by the Council. These agreements will be similar to S278 agreements that would have been used had the streets in question been maintainable instead by the Highway Authority. Any costs for officer time associated with assessing the detail design of these 'public realm' areas (including any new roads, footpaths, cycleways, loading bays, parking bays etc.), legal costs associated with the drafting of the agreements and officer time for the supervision of works must be met by the developer and suitable financial security put in place to protect the Council's interests. I would also recommend a final schedule for the detailed design elements should also be secured as part of any S.106 agreement.
- 5.25.10 Subject to final agreement over parking controls across both plots, the initial estimate of the Council's TRO costs which would need to be secured by S106 is £16,000.00. I would recommend a final schedule for the TRO's should be detailed in the S.106 agreement for Phase 1 to ensure that it is clear to all parties what TRO's are required for this development. In terms of any future TRO's which may be required in the later phases of development £3000 should be allowed per TRO and secured as part of any legal agreement.
- 5.25.11 When considering parking displacement, this development is one of several planned over the coming years in the town centre which are liable to contribute to increasing parking pressures in Bedwell. A contribution of £15,000 per phase is sought to cover a proportion of the anticipated costs of monitoring and, when necessary, implementing a parking permit scheme to protect existing residents in those neighbourhoods.

5.25.12 The existing car club bays next to Plot A will be lost as a result of this development. I would therefore recommend that there is an obligation in the S.106 to secure the re-provision of these bays. The final location and provision of these e-car club bays can be dealt with separately outside of the planning process, but, by securing this obligation it does give Members and officers assurance that these will be re-provided accordingly as it would become a legal requirement to do so.

5.26 Hertfordshire County Council Public Health

5.26.1 For development proposals, it is recommended that applicant refer to the Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Practice Guidance and Public Health England's Spatial Planning for Health evidence resource. In terms of local health priorities, life expectancy in the town is lower than the England average. There are also clear local health priorities, income deprivation, increased level of inactive adults, prevalence of overweight and obesity in year 6 children, people with long term illness or disability, premature mortality are all significantly worse in Stevenage compared to the Hertfordshire average.

5.26.2 Given the above, it is recommended a Health Impact Assessment is undertaken as it is an essential assessment to demonstrate that the development will not have negative implications for the physical health and mental wellbeing of both existing communities in the vicinity as well as future residents of the development. The assessment could also be a tool through which to demonstrate the opportunities of a proposal and how a development has been positively planned.

5.26.3 Some of the key considerations will relate to encouraging the early adoption of active travel behaviours for new occupants. This is especially given Stevenage has excellent cycle and pedestrian networks which are underused. This through a target to reduce obesity and physical activity, should be a key objective for the planning authority to address. Therefore, use of appropriate signage towards key local destinations and rights of way as well as encourage adoption of new active travel behaviours. There should also be a good level of affordable housing which is important to health and wellbeing, especially as there is a lack of such housing in Stevenage.

5.26.4 There should also be the provision of health, affordable food to enable individuals to make healthy choices, whilst promoting local diversity. This could be through licensing restrictions for food outlets in the development. There should also be a requirement to ensure noise exposure is minimalised due to the impact it has on mental and physical health. This will be for the Council's Environmental Health Section to consider. There should also be the encouragement to use stairwells in apartment blocks rather than lifts in order to enhance active lifestyles. The comments by Sport England are supported and need to be provided in such development and there needs to be consideration on air quality, especially school children. The Local Planning Authority will need to consider how it intends to enforce against parking on or near the development in order to reduce overspill combined with the fact anti-social parking can discourage walking, cycling and informal play.

5.27 Network Rail

5.27.1 Network Rail has no observations to make on the application.

5.28 Council's Garages Section

5.28.1 No comments.

5.29 UK Power Networks

5.29.1 No comments.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 Background to the development plan

6.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that the decision on the planning application should be in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Stevenage the statutory development plan comprises:

- The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031
- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and 2014); and
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 (adopted 2007).

6.2 Central Government Advice

6.2.1 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019. This largely reordered the policy substance of the earlier 2012 version of the NPPF, albeit with some revisions to policy. The policies in the Local Plan are in conformity with the revised NPPF and that the Local Plan should be considered up to date for the purpose of determining planning applications. The NPPF provides that proposals which accord with an up to date development plan should be approved without delay (para.11) and that where a planning application conflicts with an up to date development plan, permission should not usually be granted (para.12). This indicates the weight which should be given to an up to date development plan, reflecting the requirements of section 38(6) of the 2004 Act. The NPPF with which Members are fully familiar, is a material consideration to be taken into account in determining this application.

6.3 Planning Practice Guidance

The PPG contains guidance supplementing the NPPF and with which Members are fully familiar. The PPG is a material consideration to be taken into account together with the National Design Guide (2019) which has the same status as the PPG.

6.4 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted 2019)

Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage;
Policy SP3: A strong competitive economy;
Policy SP4: A vital town centre;
Policy SP5: Infrastructure;
Policy SP6: Sustainable transport;
Policy SP7: High quality homes;
Policy SP8: Good design;
Policy SP9: Healthy Communities
Policy SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution;
Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment;
Policy SP13: The historic environment;
Policy EC7: Employment development on unallocated sites;
Policy TC1: Town Centre;
Policy TC2: Southgate Major Opportunity Area;
Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area;
Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area;
Policy TC11: New Convenience Retail Provision;
Policy TC12: New Comparison Retail Provision;

Policy IT1: Strategic Development Access Points;
 Policy IT3: Infrastructure;
 Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans;
 Policy IT5: Parking and access;
 Policy IT6: Sustainable transport;
 Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists;
 Policy IT8: Public Parking Provision;
 Policy HO1: Housing Allocations;
 Policy HO7: Affordable housing targets;
 Policy HO8: Affordable housing tenure, mix and design;
 Policy HO9: House types and sizes;
 Policy HO11: Accessible and adaptable housing;
 Policy GD1: High quality design;
 Policy HC4: Existing health, social and community facilities;
 Policy HC5: New health, social and community facilities;
 Policy HC6: Existing Leisure and Cultural Facilities;
 Policy HC7: New and refurbished leisure and cultural facilities;
 Policy HC8: Sports facilities in new developments;
 Policy FP1: Climate change;
 Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1;
 Policy FP5: Contaminated land;
 Policy FP7: Pollution;
 Policy FP8: Pollution sensitive uses;
 Policy NH5: Trees and woodland;
 Policy NH6: General protection for open space;
 Policy NH7: Open space standards;
 Policy NH9: Areas of archaeological significance;
 Policy NH10: Conservation areas.

6.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document January 2012.
 Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document January 2009.
 Town Square Conservation Area Management Plan July 2012.
 Town Square Conservation Area Appraisal 2010.

6.6 Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule

- 6.6.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule in 2020. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location and floorspace of a development.

7. APPRAISAL

- 7.1. The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are its acceptability in land use policy terms; affordable housing, build to rent and section 106 planning obligations, impact upon the character and appearance of the area including the conservation area, whether the design of the development is of high quality design in accordance with policy, the effect of the proposed development on the setting and significance of heritage assets including designated heritage assets, impact upon amenity, whether the development would provide an acceptable living environment for future residents, means of access and highway safety, parking provision, impact on the environment, development and flood risk, trees and landscaping/open space, ecology, sustainable construction and climate change, impact on archaeological remains.

7.2 Land Use Policy Considerations

Compliance with the Council's Housing Policies

- 7.2.1 The NPPF states at paragraph 7 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF also stipulates that decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. In addition, the Framework also sets out that sustainable development needs to be pursued in a positive way and at the heart of the framework is a "presumption on favour of sustainable development".
- 7.2.2 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF 2019 requires that the planning system should deliver, inter alia, a mix of housing particularly in terms of tenure and price to support a wide variety of households in all areas. Paragraph 67 of the NPPF states that planning policies should identify a supply of specific deliverable sites for years one to five of the plan period, and specific deliverable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6 to 10 and where possible, for years 11 to 15. NPPF Paragraph 73 states that "Local Planning Authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies".
- 7.2.3 Paragraph 117 of the NPPF stipulates that planning policies and decisions should promote the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes such as through the use of brownfield sites (previously developed land) and the development of underutilised land.
- 7.2.4 With respect to the five year land supply of deliverable housing, local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements, but the supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:-
- a) 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market; or
 - b) 10% where the local planning authority wishes to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable sites through an annual position statement or recently adopted plan, to account for any fluctuations in the market during that year; or
 - c) 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply.
- 7.2.5 Turning to five year housing supply, the Five Year Housing Land Supply Update September 2020 identifies the Council can demonstrate a supply of 5.64 years. As the site under consideration is considered to be 'deliverable' in line with the definition included in the revised NPPF (2019), the dwelling units to be delivered under Phase 1 by this scheme before 31 March 2025 are included in the calculation of 5.64 years. Excluding these units from the calculation, the Council will only be able to demonstrate a 4.19 year housing supply which is a deficit of 474 units. The site when it is delivered as a whole, is considered an important element of the future housing supply for the town and will continue to be due to the relatively long-scale delivery which will ensure a consistent supply of housing for a period beyond the end of the current five year period.
- 7.2.6 Turning to the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (2019), under Policy SP7: High Quality Homes, this policy identifies that 2,950 new homes will need

to be delivered in and around the Town Centre during the local plan period in order to meet the Council's Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN). Policy HO1: Housing allocations also identifies a requirement to deliver new homes within the town centre. Looking at site specific policies, Policies TC2: Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area and TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area stipulate that planning permission would be granted for high density use class C3 residential units.

7.2.7 This development providing dwellinghouses on an allocated site would form part of the Council's planned delivery of housing over the plan period. In respect to Policy HO9 (House types and sizes) of the Adopted Local Plan (2019), as the proposed development seeks to provide a mixture of studio, 1, 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings, it would be in accordance with this policy, especially due to the provision of a large number of apartments, and as such, it would add to the overall mix of housing which is required to meet the OAN over the local plan period. Furthermore, 50% of the dwellings within the development has been designed to be accessible and adaptable in accordance with Policy HO11.

Compliance with the Council's Retail Policies

7.2.8 Policy TC8: Town Centre Shopping Area of the adopted Local Plan (2019) sets out that in the Town Centre Shopping Area (TCSA), uses which are appropriate will be permitted at ground floor level, including Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A3, C1, D1 and/or D2. The policy provides that uses other than A1 will be granted in respect of premises which are not within a primary retail frontage, where the benefits to the overall vitality and viability of the town centre would equal or outweigh those that would be provided by an A1 or A2 use in the equivalent location. This will be considered having regard to whether:

- The proposal will retain an active frontage;
- The proposal will generate footfall equivalent to, or greater than, an A1 or A2 use in the equivalent location; and
- The unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for A1 or A2 use, or has remained vacant for at least six months.

7.2.9 Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area of the adopted Local Plan (2019) sets out that planning permission will be granted where new Use Class A1, A3 and A4 shop, bar, restaurant and café uses are delivered as part of any scheme. The proposed development, under Phase 1 (Plots A and K), would not result in the loss of any A1 or A2 floorspace. In addition, as part of the development in Plot A, there would be the provision of 151 sq.m ground floor retail and/or cafe unit. This would help to activate this part of the town centre travelling down the ramp from the train station.

7.2.10 With regards to later phases of the development, the proposal would result in the loss of a number of non-A1 and A2 uses such as the betting shops, public houses, bars and hot food takeaways and therefore there would be the loss of some A1 and A2 floorspace. This would include Use Class A2 premises such as Lloyds Bank, HSBC Bank and former Barclays Bank, along with a number of smaller A1 premises such as the Phone Repair Store. However, as detailed in the masterplan and parameter plans submitted with this application, the development would seek to deliver a mixture of food and beverage units surrounding the new Garden Square, and new retail accommodation such as along the boulevard. This would seek to compensate for the loss of any existing A1 and A2 premises. The overall detail of the retail, food and beverage provision for each phase of the development would be dealt with at the detailed reserved matters stage.

- 7.2.11 In terms of active frontage, the masterplan and parameter plans depict how the scheme would help to activate primary pedestrian routes and public spaces. The shops, cafés and restaurants would also be encouraged to have spill-out spaces out into the surrounding public realm in order to create an interaction of spaces. In addition, the combination of new primary active frontages and spill out space would help to drive up footfall across this part of the town centre, focused around a new garden square which would sit on what is currently the existing bus station.
- 7.2.12 Taking the aforementioned into consideration, the proposed development would help to develop and support the town's overall vitality and viability. This scheme would also help to make the town centre a more attractive destination for shoppers as well as people who want to enjoy leisure and social activities in the town centre. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development would accord with the Council's retail policies in this instance.

Compliance with the Council's Employment Policies

- 7.2.13 Policy EC7 of the adopted local plan: Employment Development and Unallocated Sites states that new major employment development will not be permitted outside of allocated areas and centres. Additionally, this policy also addresses planning applications which seek development causing the loss of employment land on sites not allocated for any specific purposes. This part of the policy states:-

'Planning permission for the loss of employment land on sites not allocated for any specific purpose will be granted where:

- i) There is sufficient suitable employment land available elsewhere;
- ii) The proposals provide overriding benefits against other objectives or policies in the plan; or
- iii) It can be demonstrated that a unit has been unsuccessfully marketed for its existing use, or has remained vacant, over a considerable period of time'.

- 7.2.14 With regard to part iii above, the guidance in the local plan states that "the Council would normally expect a site to be have remained vacant and be actively marketed for a period of at least six months to satisfy criterion iii". Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment in the adopted Local Plan (2019) also identifies a requirement to deliver 35,000sq.m of B1(a) office floorspace within Stevenage Central. As the development site forms part of this allocation, there will be a requirement to provide office floorspace.

- 7.2.15 The proposed development would result in the demolition of the existing Stevenage Borough Council offices which are deemed to be a key employment based use, within the town centre. There are also a number of offices within the development site such as for example Swingate House (now vacant). In order to compensate for the loss of employment floorspace, the proposed development would deliver a new "Public Services Hub" which would incorporate new office floorspace for the Council.

- 7.2.16 With regards to Swingate House, the majority of existing tenants and users of this building have been decanted such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and CCTV. In addition, the masterplan identifies the potential provision of commercial/office floorspace in the quieter streets which will have less pedestrian footfall. Detailed office floorspace provision would be provided as part of any subsequent reserved matters application for the later phases of the development scheme. Given the aforementioned, it is considered that the proposed development would accord with the Council's employment policies. This is because the proposed development seeks to

provide replacement employment floorspace over the subsequent phases of development.

Compliance with the Council's healthy communities policies

7.2.17 Policy SP9 of the Stevenage Local Plan states that leisure, social, cultural and community facilities must be protected and enhanced, and that new public health services must be delivered in this town centre. Policy HC4 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) sets out that planning permission that results in the loss or reduction of any existing health, social or community facilities will be granted where:

- a. The existing facility can be satisfactorily relocated within the development proposal, or replaced in an appropriate alternative location;
- b. It can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for the particular facility; or
- c. the facility, or any reasonable replacement, is not and will not, be viable on that site.

7.2.18 Policy HC5 of the same document stipulates that planning permission will be granted for appropriate D1 healthcare uses. Other uses will only be accepted where they are required for ancillary facilities. Planning permission for new health, social or community facilities, or to modernise, extend or re-provide existing facilities, on an unallocated site where:

- a. A need for the facility has been identified;
- b. The site is appropriate in terms of its location and accessibility; and
- c. The facility is integrated with existing health, social or community facilities, where appropriate.

7.2.19 Policy HC6 of the Local Plan stipulates that development which results in the loss or reduction of any existing leisure or cultural facility will only be permitted if:

- a. The existing facility can be satisfactorily relocated within the development proposal, or replaced by a facility of equivalent or better quality and quantity, in an appropriate alternative location;
- b. Up-to-date evidence shows there is no longer a need for the particular facility; or
- c. The development is for alternative leisure or cultural provision, the needs of which clearly outweigh the less.

7.2.20 Policy HC7 of the same document states that planning permission for new leisure facilities, or to modernise, extend or re-provide existing facilities, on an unallocated site will be granted where:

- a. A need for the facility has been identified;
- b. The site is appropriate in terms of its location and accessibility;
- c. With the exception of sports facilities, a sequential approach to site selection has been followed and it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that no suitable, available or viable sites exist in identified centres; and

- d. An impact assessment has been provided, where required by Policy TC13, and it has been demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts.
- 7.2.21 With regards sports facilities in new developments, Policy H8 is the adopted Local Plan (2019) sets out that planning permission for residential development will be granted where on-site sports provision (in accordance with other plan policies), and / or a commuted sum, is made in accordance with the standards set out in the Council's Sports Facilities Assessment and Strategy.
- 7.2.22 The proposed development would result in the loss of existing leisure, cultural, social and recreation as well as healthcare facilities. This includes the City of David and fit4less gymnasium as well as the Danestrete Health Centre (Use Class D1) which is operated by the NHS. The proposal would also result in the loss of the existing Stevenage Central Library along with other community based uses.
- 7.2.23 The proposed scheme has been expressly designed to respond to the Council's aspirations by allowing for maximum flexibility within its non-residential floorspace, incorporating leisure and cultural uses within modern, purpose built, flexible and multi-purpose space. The development will include approximately 3,651 sq.m of such floorspace in a flexible A1/A2/A3/A4/A5/D1/D2 use, in addition to the new proposed Hub, which will include approximately 9,524 sq.m of flexible commercial and community uses, including a café, library, health services and front-facing Council services in a key location within Town Square. As such, there will therefore be ample opportunity throughout the lifetime of the development to allow existing community uses to relocate within the proposed non-residential spaces. The substantial benefit of the SG1 proposal is that it can flex to the needs of the changing population dynamics, market and future considerations to any repurposing of the town centre; this will be particularly important in a post-Covid world.
- 7.2.24 Separately, Policy SP9 also requires new development to make appropriate contributions towards new facilities. The development will also deliver financial contributions, including for GP provision, via the S106 agreement, as well as a sizeable CIL levy, which will be strategically allocated by Stevenage Borough Council to help deliver key infrastructure and facilities required within the Borough; this can include the replacement of the Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Central Library, healthcare facilities, youth facilities and secondary education, amongst others. As such, the proposal will therefore be providing a significant benefit to Stevenage Borough Council's infrastructure and community/health/leisure facilities irrespective of the opportunities for relocation or reprovision of facilities afforded as part of the development.

Re-location of the bus station

- 7.2.25 Policy TC5 of the adopted Local Plan (2019), provides that applications should address under criterion i. a replacement bus station closer to the train station. Under planning application 20/001235/FPM, permission was sought by the Council for the creation of a new bus interchange, including ancillary building and covered waiting area. This will be sited on the car park to the south of the Arts and Leisure building which is bound by Lytton Way, Danesgate and London Road. This application was granted planning permission on the 19th June 2020.
- 7.2.26 The proposed development would result in the loss of the existing bus station which is located on Danesgate positioned opposite the Council's Offices. This is in order to facilitate the creation of a Garden Square, Public Services Hub along with residential and commercial development. However, in order to compensate for the loss of the existing bus station, the Council has granted planning permission (Planning Application Reference:- 20/00135/FPM) for a new bus interchange which will be located adjacent

to Lytton Way and the Arts and Leisure building and is expected to be operational in the Summer of 2021. This interchange would also include an at-level crossing across Lytton Way to the train station in order to improve interconnectivity between the two transport nodes. Therefore, bus services would continue to serve the town once the new interchange is operational.

Education

- 7.2.27 The NPPF gives the highest level of national policy support to school provision and Local Plan Policy TC2 (Southgate Park Major Opportunity Area) criterion e. identifies the requirement of a new primary school on the Eastgate car park. The primary school as identified in paragraph 7.26 (of the Local Plan) will not only serve the needs of the new residents of the new Southgate Park, but also of the larger new residential community proposed in and around the wider Stevenage Central area.
- 7.2.28 Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Growth and Infrastructure Unit (GIU) following the undertaking of demographic modelling of proposed developments coming forward in and around the town centre, identify the requirement to deliver a new 2 form entry primary school. This development would, according to HCC GIU, generate a pupil yield of 0.49 forms of entry. As such, the applicant would be expected to provide a proportionate financial contribution (see section 7.3 of this report) towards the delivery of the school as well as the transfer of land. This would have to be secured as part of any S.106 legal agreement. based on pupil yield modelling the transfer of the primary school site to HCC would need to take place prior to the occupation of 770 dwellings. This is the long-stop date by which it needs to be done. However, given that the primary school is required in order to mitigation other new developments in the town centre and the wider area, there needs to be a requirement within the S.106 legal agreement for the primary school to be transferred sooner than 770 dwellings if HCC consider that to be necessary.
- 7.2.29 With regards to secondary education, it has been agreed by HCC GIU that this would need to be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) item. Consequently, HCC GIU would have to make a bid to Stevenage Borough Council in order to secure monies towards the delivery of a new Secondary School which is to be located at the former Barnwell East Secondary School site (Policy HC9). Currently, there are no planning applications or planning approvals for a Secondary School on this site. However, HCC GIU has advised officers that the Department for Education (DfE) is looking to deliver a free school on this site.

Conclusion

- 7.2.30 In summary, the overall mix of uses proposed for the site is considered consistent with policy and is therefore acceptable in principle. Issues regarding impact on the environment and infrastructure are considered in more detail in the following sections of the report below.

7.3 Affordable housing, Build to Rent and Section 106 Planning Obligations

- 7.3.1 Policy HO7 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) which governs affordable housing, stipulates that planning permission will be granted for residential development which would maximise affordable housing provision. There is a requirement to provide 25% of new homes to be affordable.
- 7.3.2 Policy HO7 continues that "planning permission will be refused where these targets are not at least achieved unless:

- a) Developers robustly demonstrate that the target cannot be achieved due to site-specific constraints resulting in higher than normal costs, which affect its viability; or
- b) Meeting the requirements would demonstrably and significantly compromise other policy objectives.”
- 7.3.3 Where a development is phased, or a site is either divided into separate parts or otherwise regarded as part of a larger development, it will be considered as a whole and the appropriate target will apply. In terms of the exact tenure, mix and design, this is guided by Policy HO8 of the Local Plan. The policy sets out that where affordable units have been secured through Policy HO7, the Council will expect at least 70% of units to be for rent. The remainder will be for other tenures which are to be agreed with the Council’s Housing Team. For the purposes of testing viability, it has been assumed that the remaining 30% is provided as shared ownership / intermediate housing.
- 7.3.4 In regards to Build-to-Rent, the adopted Local Plan (2019) does not refer to any need for, nor requirements of, build-to-rent schemes across the Borough as identified OAN assessment which forms the evidence base to the Local Plan. As such, the Council does not have a specific policy on affordable housing for such developments in the adopted Local Plan. As such, reference is made to the NPPF (2019) and associated Planning Practice Guidance which set out that affordable housing for build to rent schemes should be provided by default in the form of affordable private rent, a class of affordable housing specifically designed for built to rent developments.
- 7.3.5 The benchmark is generally 20% for the level of affordable private rent homes to be provided (and maintained in perpetuity) in any built to rent scheme. The policy also requires a minimum rent discount of 20% for affordable private rent homes relative to local market rents. Thus, for the purposes of viability and consideration of the proposal before the Council, the affordable housing requirement of Plot K is 20%.
- 7.3.6 The application was accompanied by a Financial Viability Assessment (prepared by Monatgu Evans, February 2020) which has been reviewed by Apsinall Verdi, as an independent Assessor appointed by the Council. The assessment prepared by the applicant identified that there was a development deficit of -£12,870,739.00. The Council’s viability consultant undertook a comprehensive assessment looking firstly at a policy compliant scheme scenario of 25% affordable housing (20% in Plot K as per PPG on Build to Rent). The scenario consisted of 240 no. affordable rent and 103 no. shared ownership units distributed across the masterplan. This was shown to be unviable, generating a significance deficit of - £35.5m. In the second scenario, an assessment of the development as entirely private to determine whether the masterplan was viable without any affordable housing, this scenario generates a reduced deficit of - £6.5m, but again remains commercially unviable.
- 7.3.7 A final scenario undertaken by the Council’s consultant looked at construction costs, by value engineering the scheme and tested a policy compliant scenario. This resulted in a reduction in build costs of circa £40.5m, where the appraisal concluded the scenario to be viable, generating a surplus of circa of £35.1m. In conjunction with reduced costs, the improvement in viability is also attributed to lower development costs. However, it is important to note that this is a simplistic assumption that costs could be significantly reduced while values could be maintained. But, in reality, if construction costs were markedly reduced, then the specification and finish of the units would be impacted, meaning there could be lower sales values. This would nullify the net viability impact on any costs savings. In addition, the proposals as at today would be deliverable and profitable as a 100% private scheme were the Applicant willing to accept profit margins below the normal market aspirations for this type of development. The Applicant has confirmed that they are willing to proceed with the scheme on this basis, which will see significant planning benefits set out in the application delivered for the benefit of the

town and establish momentum behind the regeneration. The Applicant recognises the viability challenges present in the early stages of major regeneration schemes such as SG1, and also the improvements in viability that can be achieved over time through investment in placemaking of the sort proposed. This underpins the Applicant's commitment to work in partnership with the Local Authority as majority landowner to bring forward this transformational regeneration.

- 7.3.8 Taking the above into consideration, the Council's consultant agrees the scheme is unviable, especially in the earlier phases of development. In addition, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Growth and Infrastructure Unit have also reviewed the viability assessment and have also concluded that the scheme is not viable. Consequently, the Council's viability consultant agrees with the applicant's suggestion that review clauses are installed within the S106 agreement for the Reserved Matters application associated with Phases 2-4. This will allow viability to be reassessed throughout the course of development and thus ensure any future improvements in viability are used to deliver affordable housing. It is recommended that the viability reviews should consider actual build costs incurred and revenues received by the applicant.
- 7.3.9 Whilst the scheme is not viable, the applicant has submitted an Affordable Housing Position Statement which will be considered in more detail in paragraph 7.3.12 to 7.3.16 of this report. This is because this statement sets out the rationale for their approach which takes into account the other various financial obligations which have been sought by the Council and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).
- 7.3.10 In addition to affordable housing, financial contributions are also required in accordance with the Hertfordshire County Council tool kit and contributions to Stevenage Borough Council for the maintenance of the Public Realm (although the precise figure is yet to be agreed) and the provision of the Primary School within the development site. Based on an assessment of the development, the following contributions would be sought:-

Stevenage Borough Council	Financial Contribution
Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) (Phase 1)	£16,000
Traffic Regulation Order (Outline Phases)	£3,000 per TRO required in any future phase of development.
Parking Impact Assessment Per Phase (Refundable on any monies not spent)	£15,000
Hertfordshire County Council	
Primary Education – Towards the new primary school proposed in Stevenage Town Centre	Transfer of 0.6159ha of land and a financial contribution of £2,220,807.00
Travel Plan and Monitoring Fee Per Plot	£6,000.00
NHS England and East & North Herts CCG	
GMS GP Provision - Total requirement for SG1 development	£1,167,285.44
Sports England	
Indoor sports facilities	£1,157,705.00
Outdoor sports facilities	£1,319,763.00
Total	£2,477,468.00
NOTE:- All financial obligations would be index linked.	

- 7.3.11 It is important to note that the exact amount payable with regards to S106 obligations is based on the information provided with this application. Therefore, the final amount payable will be dependent on the final mix of accommodation that is proposed through subsequent Reserved Matters. Separately, there would be a requirement to secure fire hydrants on the application site which the applicant is prepared to provide.
- 7.3.12 To summarise, as set out previously, the application has been accompanied by a viability appraisal which has been assessed and found that the development would be unviable, based on an initial submission provision of 0% affordable housing. However, as outline in paragraph 7.3.9, the applicant has provided an Affordable Housing Position Statement. They have set out that the scheme is being brought forward in partnership with the Council as principal landowner. They have emphasised that both parties recognise the important of affordable housing and are committed to maximise the amount of affordable housing the can be viably delivered.
- 7.3.13 However, it is important to note that the development seeks to provide a new Public Services Hub, with funding contributions coming from land payments from the development. There is also the provision of 3 acres of newly landscaped public open spaces, including a new first phase public park and a New Garden Square adjoining the existing Town Square. The scheme is also providing significant CIL contributions as well as the various S106 contributions which are detailed in the table above and the following sections below. However, the applicant has recognised that whilst the scheme may not be able to viably support affordable housing at the present time, this position may change as a result of place making that is proposed, or through improved market conditions or both.
- 7.3.14 Given the above, the applicant agreed to the use of a viability review mechanism which is included in the S.106 agreement as part of any subsequent reserved matters application. The exercise will include re-consideration of the following inputs based on actual data from previous phases and on prevailing market conditions at the time:-
- Residential sales values;
 - PRS rents and yields;
 - Commercial rents and yields;
 - Construction costs;
 - Professional fees;
 - Marketing and disposal costs; and
 - Development timescales.
- 7.3.15 These viability assessments will need to be reviewed by the Council's appointed viability advisor with each input being scrutinised. Should it be concluded that viability has improved sufficiently to support affordable housing, the exact nature of affordable housing contribution for that phase will then be discussed with the Council. Subsequent reviews of viability will then include this affordable housing provision as a minimum baseline, all reviews will then be upwards only which would result in an increase in overall housing contributions. These contributions can include either financial obligations or the provision of units on-site, and this would be discussed with the Council's Housing Development Team for their agreement.
- 7.3.16 As per the viability consultants suggestion, the review will take into account actual build cots and value data from previous phases of the scheme, ensuring any improvements to viability throughout the life of the masterplan can be used for affordable housing. In parallel to viability, the applicant is fully committee to continue to work closely with the Council to attract funding and grants that will enable the maximum amount of affordable housing to be delivered.

7.3.17 With regards to the financial contributions sought by the Council towards the creation of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and Parking Impact Assessments, the applicant has agreed to pay these obligations. In terms of the financial contribution sought by HCC as Highways Authority in relation to Travel Plan Monitoring, the applicant has also agreed to this financial obligation as well.

7.3.18 Turning to primary education, the applicant has confirmed they are in agreement to the financial contribution which has been sought by HCC GIU as being acceptable. However, negotiations are still taking place with respect to the triggers of payment. This is due to significant viability issues with the development (as detailed above) and there is a need to ensure the scheme can still be viably delivered. Therefore, officers will provide the committee with an update at the Planning Committee meeting on these triggers following the completion of negotiations with HCC GIU.

7.3.19 Turning to the contributions for the NHS CCG with respect to GP provision, as set out above, there are significant viability issues with the development. However, through negotiations with the applicant, as they appreciate they will need to mitigate the impact the development has on GP provision, they have agreed to offer a financial contribution of £769,309.00. This contribution would be split across the four phases which would be as follows:-

- Phase one - £310,402.00;
- Phase two - £75,498.00;
- Phase three - £81,204.00;
- Phase four - £329,205.00.

7.3.20 In terms of triggers, under each phase 50% of the contribution would be paid on occupation of 50% of the units and the remainder of the contribution (50%) would be payable on occupation of 85% of the units. Through negotiations with the NHS CCG, they have agreed the financial contribution offered by the applicant is acceptable. In terms of the obligation itself, this would still be towards Stanmore Road Medical Group, specifically the Stanmore Road surgery as requested by the NHS. Turning to the obligations sought by Sport England, the applicant has offered an obligation of £182,294 towards the new leisure centre at Stevenage Swimming Pool/Bowes Lyon Youth Centre site (or alternative facilities) including maintenance. The payment triggers for this obligation would be as follows:-

- £45,574.00 in Phase 3; and
- £136,721.00 in Phase 4.

The obligation has been split over the later phases of the development is due to significant viability issues, especially in the first two phases of development. In addition, the applicant is already paying significant financial contributions towards education and the NHS in the first two phases as well. Following correspondence with Sport England, whilst they still object to the application, they fully appreciate there are viability issues with the development. Therefore, they are in agreement with the financial obligation which has been offered by the applicant.

7.3.21 In addition to the above, the S106 agreement will need to secure the delivery of the Public Services Hub as it is a significant public benefit of this development. Furthermore, it is fundamentally required in order to release the existing Council Offices, Daneshill Outpatient Clinic and Stevenage Central Library for development has part of the wider masterplan. This obligation as such, has been agreed by the applicant.

7.3.22 Turning to the requirement of Season tickets in relation to Plot A, following the design review session earlier in the year, the courtyard area of this Plot has been

substantively re-designed to take into account these concerns. As such, this has resulted in the loss of the courtyard parking area which would have served the development. Therefore, in order to compensate the loss of the courtyard parking area, the applicant has negotiated with the Council to secure the provision of Season Tickets. Given this, an obligation will need to be secured to require the applicant to enter into a contract with the Council in order to secure the relevant Season Tickets. The applicant has agreed that this obligation is acceptable.

7.3.23 With respect to the existing E-car club bays on Swingate, in order to facilitate the development in Plot A, the existing E-car club bays will need to be re-located within a suitable location in the town centre. Given this, an obligation will need to be secured in the S.106 legal agreement to ensure these are reprovided in an acceptable location to the Council. Following negotiations with the applicant, they are in agreement with this obligation to be secured as part of the S.106.

7.3.24 In terms of the Disabled parking, due to the loss of the courtyard parking area of Plot A, the applicant has look to sought the provision of 3 blue badge bays on Swingate as they are a planning requirement. Given this, and through negotiations with the Council, they would agree to the introduction of a Parking Permit Area (PPA) for blue badge holding residents. In addition, it is also recommended the two standard bays are also for residents under the PPA Given this is a planning requirement, this would need to be secured as part of any S.106 legal agreement.

7.3.25 Looking at Plot K, this would be a “Build to Rent” building as part of the overall housing provision. The build to rent definition in the Framework glossary states that build to rent developers will normally offer longer tenancy agreements of 3 years or more to all new tenants who want one. These are generally known as ‘family friendly tenancies’ as they provide longer term security and stability for those who wish to settle down within a community.

7.3.26 In order to secure a Build to Rent scheme which is in accordance with this definition, it is recommended a clause is added to the S.106 agreement to ensure scheme operators offer tenancies of 3 or more years to all tenants in the development. However, tenants will be able to opt for shorter tenancies such as 6 months, 1 year or 2 years if they wish, as the obligation to offer 3 year tenancies will lie with the scheme operator. There would also be a restrictive covenant imposed to the build to rent scheme as well which would be secured in the legal agreement.

7.3.27 Turning to the detailed design of local service roads, provision of new cycle tracks and pedestrian footpaths, the drafting and implementation of TRO’s, provisions of new signage, replacement of P&D equipment and signage, provision of disabled bays, parking bays, drainage, public realm and any other associated works on land owned by the Council, these would be secured through a Street Development Agreement (SDA). To ensure the applicant enters into this agreement with the Council, the Engineering Section has recommended this is secured as part of any S.106 legal agreement. Following discussions with the applicant, they have agreed to enter into such agreement with the Council.

7.3.28 In terms of sourcing plants and trees from UK nurseries for the landscaping areas, the reason for recommending this obligation is to restrict the introduction of invasive pathogens and pests which could potentially kill off any future landscaping. Therefore, this obligation would reduce this risk of introducing pathogens and pests in this instance which has been agreed by the applicant.

7.3.29 In order to bind all of the different landowners and parties to the obligations detailed in the S.106 legal agreement for all of the different phases of development, a grampian

condition would need to be imposed to any permission issued by the Council. Please refer to condition 75 for more details on how this condition would work.

7.3.30 With respect to the overall maintenance of the public realm, there is a separate contractual agreement (including a dowry payment) between the Council and the applicant which deals with this aspect. Given this, it was deemed to unreasonable to request the applicant also provides a financial contribution to public realm maintenance through the planning process.

7.3.31 In summary, whilst the scheme is unviable, the applicant has agreed to secure a number of financial obligations which will mitigate the impact on infrastructure such as roads, education, sport and GP provision. In addition, with the use of a clawback mechanism, any uplift in viability would be captured to ensure there is the provision of affordable housing in the later phases of development. Moreover, relevant obligations have been to secure in relation to the Build to Rent scheme, combined with the securing of season tickets and replacement E-car club bays.

7.4 Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Area

7.4.1 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF 2019 stipulates that planning decisions should ensure development functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area, not just in the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also sets out that development should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. In addition, the NPPF sets out that development should establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using arrangements of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit. It also stipulates that development should optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate mix of development and finally, create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

7.4.2 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that “permission should be refused for development of poor design that fail to make available opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions”.

7.4.3 The National Design Guide (2019) which was published by National Government is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It sets out that Buildings are an important component of places and proposals for built development are a focus of the development management system. However, good design involves careful attention to other important components of places. These include:

- the context for places and buildings;
- hard and soft landscape;
- technical infrastructure – transport, utilities, services such as drainage; and
- social infrastructure – social, commercial, leisure uses and activities.

7.4.4 A well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including:

- the layout;
- the form and scale of buildings;
- their appearance;
- landscape;
- materials; and

- their detailing.

7.4.5 The Guide further iterates that all developments are made up of these components put together in a particular way. As such, the choices made in the design process contribute towards achieving the ten characteristics and shape the character of a place. For reference, these ten characteristics are as follows:-

- Context – enhances the surroundings;
- Identity – attractive and distinctive;
- Built form – a coherent pattern of built form;
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around;
- Nature – enhanced and optimised;
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive;
- Uses – mixed and integrated;
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable;
- Resources – efficient and resilient;
- Lifespan – made to last.

7.4.6 This section of the report will deal with the relevant characteristics excluding nature and movement. These aspects will be dealt with in the relevant sections of the committee report. In terms of design policies in the adopted Local Plan (2019), Policy SP8 requires new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability. Policy GD1: High quality design generally requires all forms of development to meet a high standard of design which includes form of built development, elevational treatment and materials along with how the development would integrate with the urban fabric, its relationship between buildings, landscape design and relevant aspects of sustainable design.

7.4.7 The Council's Design Guide SPD (2009) sets out that a high quality environment is essential for providing a good quality of life for residents. A well-designed and managed space not only provides a visually attractive environment, but can also help to ensure that a place is easy to move around and within, is safe and secure, and is useful for all members of the community.

7.4.8 This application is a hybrid application with full details for Plots A (Swingate House site) and K (former Police Station, Hertfordshire County Council Offices and Garages) and outline form (with all matters reserved) for Plots B to J (Including the Public Services Hub). An assessment of the individual plots is set out in the following sections of the report below.

Plot A (Full Details)

7.4.9 This part of the development site comprises the existing six storey Swingate House office building and the Swingate East surface car park. To the north of the site lies Brickdale House which is a six storey building which was formerly occupied by the Land Registry. This building was converted into residential apartments under Prior Approval. To the east of the development site lies the Westgate Shopping Centre, specifically the decked car park and to the south lies the access ramp up the Arts and Leisure building, Mecca Bingo and the Council's offices which is up to seven storeys in height. To the west lies Swingate West surface car park and beyond this is the Arts and Leisure building.

7.4.10 The proposed development, following demolition of the existing Swingate House offices, would comprise the erection of a building which would stand between six storeys (approximately 20.35m in height) and ten storeys (approximately 32.10m in height) in height. The building itself, which has a perimeter block arrangement, will span 47m in width and 66m in length and would comprise a centralised courtyard

measuring 18m in width by 34m in length. The tallest element of the building, which would be chamfered, will be positioned on the junction with Danestrete and Swingate, marking the corner, with the building stepping down to six stories towards the Arrival Square (intersection between Danestrete and the access ramp up to the Arts and Leisure Building).

- 7.4.11 At ground floor level, the building would comprise 151 sq.m retail/restaurant (Flexible Use Class A1, A2 and A3) (Now Class E under the amended Use Classes Order) which integrates the scheme with the Arrival Square located at the front of the building. There would also be communal cycle parking and refuse storage facilities along with residential entrance lobbies, plant and ancillary rooms as well as residential premises. Turning to the internal courtyard area, the scheme as originally submitted to the Council comprised a parking courtyard. However, in order to address the concerns raised by the Design Council, the courtyard has been redesigned to provide a centralised private amenity area to serve future residents. Whilst the plans are indicative, it would comprise of an area of soft landscaping with informal play features and street furniture. In addition, the ground floor “duplex” units would also have a private amenity space which backs onto this private courtyard. The building would also comprise a roof terrace on the sixth floor which will provide additional amenity provision for residents.
- 7.4.12 With regard to the proposed external appearance of the building, it would be constructed in contrasting facing brickwork finished in either buff or red brick. The windows, including the curtain walling system (including the proposed shop front), forming the fenestration detail of Plot A would be metal framed with either metal head panels or cladding. The windows have been designed to set within a vertical grid with each floor horizontally expressed by precast concrete bands. These bands will be stepped in order to allow the building volumes to be expressed which will add variety and interest into the architectural composition of the building. The windows which would serve the units have been designed so that the living room module is twice the size of the bedroom module. To further express the corners, there would be a shearing in the positioning of the windows from one floor to the next in order to provide an element of variation in the massing and giving the corners a strong expression in design terms.
- 7.4.13 The projecting balconies which will be installed onto the building would be precast with metal balustrades. These help to provide additional variety and interest into the architectural design as well as to help further break up the massing of the building itself. At ground floor level, a number of properties would comprise of recessed terrace areas, so these would be enclosed by brick walls with metal steel railing. By introducing these terraces, they help to create interest and activity to the ground floor level of the building.
- 7.4.14 Turning to the proposed pedestrian entrances, the north-east entrance to the building is recessed with the proposed glazing system wrapping partially around the corner. There would also be design features such as brickwork patterning and pre-cast band detailing adjacent to the entrance in order to create a focal point. The southern residential entrance would also be glazed and set with a chamfer in order to add variety and interest to the built form as well. In terms of the northern entrance, this would be of a similar design in order to create a key focal point as viewed from Swingate. In relation to the cycle and bin stores, these would be set within the building and accessed via metal louvered doors. In relation to the gated access at the northern end of the building, this would be recessed back with 2.7m high metal gates. These gates would have metal bars in order to allow glimpsed views into the courtyard. The gated access is required for maintenance vehicles to enter into the courtyard.

Plot K (Full Details)

- 7.4.15 This part of the development site consists of the former police station and Hertfordshire County Council offices along with the former Towers garage block. The former Police Station/County Council building is three-storeys in height with a flat roof and constructed from brown and dark brown/purple brick with a symmetrical and uniform fenestration detail comprising of timber windows. On the roof of the building is a lift overrun with metal cladding and on the rear elevation are 2 no. two-storey flat roof projections with full height glazing. On the principal elevation is a recessed entrance which is sheltered beneath a wide cantilevered canopy.
- 7.4.16 Turning to the garage block, this is two-storeys in height and constructed from brick with the lower garages recessed. The upper floor level is accessed via a ramp at the southern end of the block. With regards to the surrounding area, to the east of the application site lies Vista Towers (formerly Southgate House) and to the west lies The Towers. To the north is Southgate Car Park and main town centre and to the south beyond the A602 is Asda.
- 7.4.17 The proposed building situated within this plot would be between 8 and nineteen storey's and comprise 496 residential units with a mix of 392 no. one bedroom units (including 79 no. studios) and 105 no. two bedroom units. At ground floor level on the north-western area of the building would be a communal lobby which provides a meeting place for residents of the building and their guests. The lobby opens out into a communal area with a number of break out spaces. The final layout of the space could potentially include a lounge, library, dining rooms and office space. This area would also overlook the new park which is to be created as part of the wider re-development of this part of the town centre. The proposed building would have a vehicle access off Southgate which would serve an external car park and centralised amenity courtyard. The building would also comprise of an outdoor roof terrace of around 260 sq.m and associated residents lounge.
- 7.4.18 The building, as with Plot A, would have a perimeter block arrangement. It would measure approximately 57m in width with an overall length of approximately 71m. In terms of height, the 8 storey element of the building would be approximately 26m as measured from ground floor level with the tower element being approximately 58m as taken from natural ground level. In terms of external appearance, the building would predominantly be constructed from a dark grey brick with light buff brick which would help frame the fenestration detailing of the building. The fenestration detailing of the building comprises of metal framed windows which are set out in a grid arrangement. The windows would be grouped horizontally with reference to modernist architecture which defines the town centre. The lattice style structure helps to create a dynamic façade with a strong horizontal emphasis. In order to break up the building's scale, at the human scale, the lower two storeys of the building would be grouped together and generously proportioned. At the roof level of the 8 and 9 storey parts of the building, these would be set back which helps to provide visual interest into the architectural form.
- 7.4.19 With regards to the tower element, this would be well articulated with the top two storeys having a marker element being defined with finer brick piers. Looking at the proposed residential entrances, the main entrance to the building is the north-west entrance. This would be a double height entrance with a coloured metal panel above and would be recessed in to create a dynamic corner feature. The remainder of the entrances would also comprise a coloured metal panel above the entrance. These are to reflect the vernacular of the town which was heavily influenced by modernist art and that of Piet Mondrian. These features help to further break up the visual massing of the building and add interesting architectural focal points when viewed from the public realm.

Plots B to J (Outline – All Matters Reserved)

7.4.20 Whilst this part of the application is in outline, the applicant has submitted indicative plans to show how these plots could be built out in the future. However, it is important to note that the precise detail and appearance of the buildings (including the Public Services Hub) as well as their overall scale and layout will be addressed at the reserved matters stage. However, there are a number of parameter plans which have been submitted with the application and these are considered in more detail below.

Parameter plans

7.4.21 The application is supported by a suite of Parameter Plans which illustrate one way for how the proposed development could be delivered. The parameter plans which have been submitted include the following:-

- Demolition;
- Layout;
- Land use;
- Building heights;
- Access and movement (Vehicular, Pedestrian and Cyclist);
- Open space and play provision;
- Phasing plan

7.4.22 The demolition plan identifies all of the relevant buildings which will need to be demolished as part of this development. These will include Swingate House, Mecca Bingo, Council Offices, commercial and retail premises (including The Plaza), bus station shelters, the platform, Danestrete outpatient centre, Stevenage Library, former police station and garages. However, it is important to note the scheme does not involve the demolition of any listed buildings such as the Clock Tower and the Joy Ride statue (this will be relocated as part of the development proposal). A number of these buildings are of limited architectural interest, however, some buildings are of merit being as they represent key aspects of the New Town. An assessment of these is considered in more detail in Section 7.6 of this report.

7.4.23 The proposed layout plan shows the minimum distances between the site built form will be located. It also comprises minimum streetscape dimensions and it also establishes the site's maximum developable area and building extents, within which all proposed buildings should be delivered. The boundary off-sets and separation distances between built form to ensure optimum distances are maintained which allows the scheme to be brought forward without compromising access to and the operation of the existing occupants. Minimum street widths are also provided in order to allow the scheme to be permeable for pedestrians and cyclists along with how these buildings will be serviced and accessed by motor-vehicles.

7.4.24 The land use parameter plan depicts the ground floor mixed use land zone which are located centrally with the main town centre uses orientated around the centre. The commercial uses identified include a mixture of office, retail and commercial combined with the delivery of a new public services Hub. The overall mixed use of the scheme allows for flexibility of the potential uses which will inevitably future proof the development. The building height plan demonstrates the maximum heights which can be delivered across the site which also takes into consideration existing building heights. The sites lowest heights are located adjacent to the Town Square Conservation Area with a corridor of taller buildings along Danestrete. The tallest buildings would be located at the southern end of the site facing onto Six Hills Way.

- 7.4.25 In terms of access and movement, the plans demonstrate how vehicles can access the relevant building parcels utilising existing access points. The plan also details a hierarchy of routes which builds upon the existing town centre network. It would also help to define typologies and uses across the masterplan area. However, it is intended that vehicle access would be restricted at the centre part of the site. In terms of pedestrians and cyclists, the parameter plan identifies a hierarchy of spaces and routes which permeate through this scheme. The parameter plan has been designed to encourage active travel and encourage a modal shift away from the private care.
- 5.4.26 Turning to open space, the plan identifies each of the principle areas of public realm and open spaces which are located across key pedestrian corridors. Through the emphasis of having pedestrianised streets (with provision of cycle routes), the central primary and secondary public realm provide opportunities for retail and commercial uses to spill out (e.g. outdoor seating) incorporating new and existing trees, lawns and places where people can sit out and enjoy. At the southern end of the site, the scheme would utilise the existing pond in create a new high quality park area which would be punctuated with the provision of play. Finally, the phasing plan which has been submitted identifies how future parcels of development across the development site are brought forward.
- 5.4.27 The parameter plans provide the overall framework within which the masterplan is delivered. They establish the key urban structure of the fundamental design features which are set out in detail above. These parameters provide the minimum requirements for all future detailed design proposal for the individual phases which will come forward. A more detailed assessment of the indicative masterplan is set out in the following sections of this report below.

Plots B, C and E (Mixed Use Residential and Non-Residential)

- 7.4.28 Looking at each individual plot which form part of this outline application, Plot B comprises an existing three-storey building which forms part of the Town Square as well as an area of the bus station. The plot currently comprises ground floor retail premises including Paddy Power (1 Town Square), Lloyds Bank (3 Town Square) up to Roosters Spot (19 Town Square) with two-storeys of retail and commercial floorspace above. The building itself is constructed from a mixture of red brick and concrete cladding with the fenestration comprising of crittall windows.
- 7.4.29 Looking at Plots C and E, these plots comprise the Mecca Bingo building and the Council's main offices respectively. In terms of Mecca Bingo, this is a utilitarian, two storey building which is constructed from contrasting red brick and has a flat roof. On the principal elevation there is the recessed glazed entrances with the fascia sign above affixed to a blue cladding panel. Above this is an area of purple cladding representing the corporate colours of Mecca. In terms of the Council Offices, this is a six storey building which is pre-cast concrete with a crittall window system. The main entrance to the building is single-storey and constructed from brick with a recesses entrance and brick pillar supported cover. To the side and rear of the building is a more modern brick built addition.
- 7.4.30 The proposed development would involve the demolition of each of these buildings in phased approach. In terms of the proposed building in Plot B, this would be mixed use comprising approximately 172 residential units with 1,336 sq.m of non-residential floorspace at ground floor level. The commercial floorspace at ground floor level would help to activate Westgate, Danestrete and the new Garden Square with residential above. In regards to Plot C, this would comprise of approximately 156 apartments with 926 sq.m of non-residential floorspace, again at ground floor level. Once completed, this would complete the frontage onto the Arrival Square introduced under Phase 1, Plot A with the provision of additional commercial floorspace at ground floor. With

respect to Plot E, this would also be a mixed use building with around 158 residential apartments with approximately 852 sq.m of non-residential floorspace. The proposed buildings across each plot would be between five storeys to nine storeys in height with the potential use of a podium deck garden above ground floor parking. This building would also have a similar ground floor offer to Plot C.

- 7.4.31 All of the buildings would be of a perimeter block design with flexible floorplans in order to help activate this part of the town centre. These buildings would act as gateways into the town centre and would be constructed from robust high quality materials. Between Plots C and E would be the proposed boulevard which would connect the town square to the approved Bus Interchange.
- 7.4.32 The boulevard creates a new sense of arrival as you enter into the town centre from the train station or bus station. There would be the provision of new ground floor retail floorspace in order to activate the boulevard with the provision of spill out space. The boulevard has been designed that views are obtained down towards the clock tower. Ultimately, it would form a high quality gateway into the town centre with generously glazed shops, flexible ground floor spaces, enhanced pedestrian routes and pockets of greenery to enhance the built environment and create a sense of place.

Plot D (Public Services Hub)

- 7.4.33 This part of the site comprises part of the Town Square which includes the former Barclays Bank (2 Town Square) and what is currently the visitor centre (4 Town Square) as well as The Plaza and part of the existing bus station. The proposed development would also comprise the demolition of the existing Platform which will require the re-location of the grade II listed Joy Ride statue by Franta Belsky. This area of the application site also falls within the Town Square Conservation Area.
- 7.4.34 The proposed public services Hub building would comprise of mixture of commercial, retail and public sector uses and would be up to five storeys in height. The plans submitted, whilst indicative, depict a high quality, landmark building which utilises a contrasting use of materials with active frontages incorporating full height curtain wall glazing elements. The building has been designed to frame and reinforce the Town Square Conservation Area via its eastern facade. It has been designed to activate the Town Square as well as the Hub Terrace. The buildings massing would be responsive and transitional stepping between the surrounding three-storey buildings of the conservation area. There would also be an accented corner which would meet the boulevard and Danestrete in order to create a landmark feature. The building could also potentially comprise of a roof terrace to overlook the Town Square and proposed Garden Square.
- 7.4.35 This part of the development would also seek to create a hub terrace which would be an elevated public space bordering the Town Square. The space would help to create the opportunity to create a spill-out space from the ground floor of the hub building with benches, bistro style tables and chairs. The terrace could also potentially comprise of seating platforms as raised plazas as well as areas of integrated soft landscaping areas. The hub terrace, whilst indicative, would also create a new space for the Joy Ride Sculpture above the Town Square and positioned to be readily visible from the Garden Square (existing bus station). The sculpture would be located in a similar position to where it is now in alignment with the Clock Tower. Ultimately, the terrace would define the western edge of the Town Square and provides an elevated viewing platform for people to enjoy looking at the life of the Town Square.
- 7.4.36 Nevertheless the precise detail and appearance of the public services hub and associated terrace will be addressed at the reserved matters stage.

Plots F and G

- 7.4.37 This part of the application site comprises what is currently The Plaza building and part of The Quadrant which includes the en-bloc garages. These are generally pre-fab garages with The Plaza being a more modern brick built commercial buildings. These would both be demolished in order to deliver the third phase of development.
- 7.4.38 Plots F and G comprise a mixture of different housing typologies. One of the typologies proposed is the introduction of the Mansion Block typology into the town centre on what is currently The Plaza. This typology aims to provide a modernist approach to the classic Victorian mansion block. This building would front onto Danestrete and be positioned to the south of the Hub. The building itself would be up to 9 storeys in height and would step in height from the Town Square. The buildings which front onto Danestrete could also incorporate commercial units at ground floor level.
- 7.4.39 The mews houses would be located off Danestrete which would introduce a unique typology into the town centre. This part of the scheme would introduce compact family homes fronting a liveable street. This house typology could potentially incorporate garage parking with a roof level terrace and up to three storeys in height. The stacked maisonettes would be located adjacent to the Mews houses. This introduces a hybrid family home which comprises the stacking of two-storey maisonettes on top of each other. These typologies would have four units per building and would have private amenity space located to the rear in the form of a garden for ground floor properties. The upper floors would have a private terrace area.

Plot H

- 7.4.40 This would form part of the final phase of development. This part of the application site consists of the existing library building and outpatient clinic. The library is a concrete frame building with brick ends with the principal elevation finished in concrete panels. The fenestration is simple and uniform comprising of crittall windows. In terms of the outpatient building, this is located on the junction of Danestrete and Southgate. It is a two storey stepped building constructed from pre-cast concrete with red brick finish. The building also comprises decorative concrete panels on the flank and principal elevation.
- 7.4.41 The building to be located on this plot could be between 8 and 19 storeys in height and would overlook an area of Parkland as per Plot K. This block would potentially comprise a roof top communal area with an internal courtyard. The building would stand alongside two existing towers and comprise of active frontages. It would incorporate additional parkland and public open spaces. The primary elevations would express regularity and horizontal rhythm to minimise the impact of the taller building. This element of the building would also create a landmark feature.

Plot J

- 7.4.42 The final plot of the development site comprises the East Gate Car Park which is located to the north of Vista Towers, south of Market Place and east of Queensway. It currently operates as a surface car park with the northern and western edges of the site bordered by garages. This would be the proposed location of the primary school as identified under Policy TC2 of the adopted Local Plan (2019). There are no details of the proposed school submitted with this application. This is because if planning permission were to be granted, Hertfordshire County Council would submit a Reserved Matters application for the Primary School as they would be the body who would deliver the school.

Assessment – Plots A and K

- 7.4.43 It is noted that a number of concerns have been raised regarding the design of these buildings by the Design Council. However, since the Design Review session, the scheme has been amended to seek to address a number of the concerns raised. One of the key changes is the introduction of private amenity courtyards in both Plots A and K. These would significantly enhance the living environment of future residents. In addition, the applicant has also introduced a new housing typology into Plot A through the provision of duplex units (1 and 2 bedroom units across two floors) which are dual aspect and comprise of private terraces and amenity gardens. The applicant has also significantly increased the number of balconies to Plot A. These not only enhance the amenity provision, but they help to add variety and interest into the design as well as help to break up the visual massing of the building.
- 7.4.44 Further to the above, both Plots A and K would be well articulated, constructed from high quality contrasting materials which have been carefully selected following a comprehensive material study of the town centre. The proposed buildings have also been designed to respond to the historic architectural composition of the new town which has been emphasised through the detailed elevational design approach for each plot. The buildings also comprise high quality entrances which create well defined focal points from the public realm. The overall scale and massing of the buildings have also been carefully designed to reflect the scale and massing of buildings which define the town centre. In terms of building heights, Plot A is similar in height to Brickdale House and the Ibis and Plot K, whilst taller than Vista Towers and The Towers, would sit comfortably in conjunction with them.
- 7.4.45 The tower element of Plot K also provides a landmark gateway building as the town centre is entered. The buildings would also have strong active frontages which would help to create a better sense of character and place which the current buildings do not currently offer. They would also be a catalyst and set a minimum benchmark for future development of the town centre.

Assessment – Outline and Masterplan

- 7.4.46 This part of the development is in outline with all matters relating to design, layout and scale of development are reserved. However, the application is supported by a set of parameter plans for development, including footprint and height. The application is also supported by a Design and Access Statement which provides indicative details of the plots B to H, including the Public Services Hub (Plot D). It also sets out along with the parameter plans the distribution of uses, series of design principles, including urban grain and street alignment, access arrangements (pedestrian, vehicles and cyclists), building appearance and architecture, character areas and materiality as well as the public realm. It also provides details of a mixture of housing typologies which would make up the masterplan area.
- 7.4.47 The proposal consists of a legible network of streets that links well with surrounding streets and are well addressed with active frontages, either by commercial uses or apartments. The introduction of the boulevard is a logical approach which will enhance connectivity between the town centre and the train station to the west. The perimeter treatments to the blocks would incorporate integrated planting and the proposed Hub terrace carefully considers the level changes of the Town Square Conservation Area.
- 7.4.48 The masterplan, which can be secured by condition, secures a minimum requirement towards the public realm with the provision of high quality spaces such as Southgate Park and Garden Square. There would also be the introduction of a high quality landscaping strategy, seating and surrounding active uses around the main public thoroughfares and spaces. The masterplan also incorporates a sustainability strategy

which seeks to deliver a fully electric scheme with the roof spaces used to deliver a balance of energy, ecological and community enhancements. It also encourages the delivery and improvements to pedestrian areas with clearer routes to encourage walking and cycling in this part of the town centre.

7.4.49 The masterplan also seeks to create a development which enhances biodiversity through the provision of new parks and enhancements to the public realm. It also seeks to safeguard occupants from pollution as well create an enhanced experience and local environment which supports the well-being of the wider community. The height, massing and scaling of the buildings responds well to the existing context of the area. The range in building heights with a stepped increase in height from the Town Square helps to ensure there is a limited impact on the setting of the Town Square Conservation Areas and associated listed buildings. They also have been designed to sit in context with the existing buildings in the area. The massing has also been designed to ensure buildings would receive acceptable levels of light whilst limiting the impact on existing properties.

7.4.50 The use of the perimeter block arrangement responds well to the urban grain of the development site. With regards to architecture, as this is an outline aspect of the application, no specific details have been submitted. Accordingly, there is limited detail in the application on architecture and materials. However, the masterplan and supporting Design and Access Statement seeks to ensure the highest quality materials are used within each phase of development. It also carefully draws upon the established modernist architecture of the New Town and also establishes character areas which would help create variety and interest across the masterplan area. In terms of public realm, this would introduce high quality spaces with the provision of active play, as well introduce new soft landscaping features to improve biodiversity as well as the overall streetscape of the town centre. The introduction of rain gardens, additional tree planting, collective dining and seating areas, open lawns, spill out spaces would help to activate this part of the town centre and help to create a sense of place which is welcoming and is of high quality.

7.4.51 In terms of phasing, as is expected with such a development, it would be delivered in phases. As such, subsequent reserved matters applications for each phase of development or each plot within the defined phase will be submitted in the future. Such applications will be required to adhere to the minimum standards detailed in the masterplan submission which provides details of the “place making” approach to each phase. Furthermore, whilst it is noted concerns were raised by the Design Council in relation to the masterplan, it has been designed to flexible and adaptive to ensure a high quality form of development can be delivered but also one which respects the historic character of the town centre. Consequently, it is recommended a condition is imposed requiring any future reserved matters application meets the minimum requirements detailed in the masterplan.

Summary

7.4.52 In summary, the applicant has actively worked with officers in order to enhance the overall design of both Plots A and K. It is considered that the amended design helps to address these concerns and would deliver high quality, well-designed landmark architecture which would form a catalyst to the wider regeneration of the town centre. In addition, the masterplan does deliver a flexible, mixed use development with a variety of housing typologies to meet the needs of the wider community. It would enhance the overall movements of pedestrians and cyclists across the town centre, it would deliver a high quality public realm and buildings which respect the architecture of the new town. In addition, it would deliver a high quality Public Services Hub and Hub Terrace which helps to frame the western edge of the conservation area and would form a key landmark building.

7.4.53 Given the aforementioned, the scheme delivers upon the policy objectives outlined in the Local Plan along with the requirements of the National Design Guide, the Framework and associated Planning Practice Guidance.

7.5 Impact upon the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area/Setting of heritage assets.

7.5.1 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* incorporates several 'statutory duties' for decision-makers, all of which are applicable to the proposed development. Section 16(2) of the Act stipulates that when considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features or special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 66(1) requires that special regard shall be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting in determining the application. Section 72(1) of the same Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. The Courts have concluded that Section 16(2), 66(1) and 72(1) establish a strong presumption against planning permission being granted for any development that would harm the setting of a listed building or would fail to preserve or enhance a conservation area.

7.5.2 Case Law (South Lakeland, 1992) has determined that 'preserve' means to do no harm'. However, if harm is identified, the NPPF provides a means of weighing either 'substantial harm' or 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the proposal. In doing so, case law has emphasised the need to give 'considerable importance and weight' to preserving listed buildings or the character and appearance of conservation areas. However, the presumption 'to preserve' is not irrebuttable and can be outweighed by material considerations powerful enough to do so and a decision maker that has followed the process set out in the NPPF, in respect to weighing harm and benefits, can reasonably be expected to have complied with the statutory duties of the 1990 Act.

7.5.3 Paragraphs 193 to 196 of the NPPF (2019) have to be considered in the determination of this planning application. As established through case law, if there is any harm to designated heritage assets, great weight has to be given as to the impact the development may have on these assets. Dealing with Paragraph 193, it stipulates that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss, or less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 194 sets out that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

7.5.4 Paragraph 195 sets out that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss. In reference to paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2019), this sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

- 7.5.5 Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required to having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 7.5.6 Paragraph 198 sets out that Local Planning Authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred. With respect to paragraph 199, this sets out that Local Planning Authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.
- 7.5.7 Additional to the above, Policy SP13 of the Adopted Local Plan relates to the historic environment. This states that the council will preserve and enhance the most important area and characteristics of Stevenage. The policy goes on to state that the Council will:-
- a. Have carried out Heritage Impact Assessments for development sites within, or adjacent to, conservation areas. Site specific mitigation measures have been incorporated to minimise the impacts of development.
 - b. Will use national guidance and legislation to review, designate and determine planning applications affecting heritage assets.
 - c. Will protect areas of archaeological importance and other relevant heritage assets by applying the detailed policies set in this plan.
- 7.5.8 Policy NH10 Conservation Areas states those development proposals within, or affecting a conservation area should have regard to the guidance provided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document. In terms of site specific policy, Policy TC2 stipulates that a heritage assessment and design work to preserve and enhance the significance of the Town Square Conservation Area and the contribution made by its setting has to be considered as part of the scheme's design. This requirement is also reflected in Policy TC5. This policy under criterion IV also sets out that all development proposals should continue the preservation and enhancement of the Town Square Conservation Area.

The Town Square Conservation Area

- 7.5.9 The application site wraps around the western and southern edges of the Town Square Conservation Area where the majority of the site falls outside. However, part of the application site incorporates nos. 2-4 Town Square (location of the Public Services Hub) and the platform which incorporates the associated Joy Ride sculpture which is Grade II listed. Whilst outside the application site boundary, the conservation area also includes the Clock Tower and surrounding pool which is also Grade II listed. The aforementioned are located within the Town Square Conservation Area.
- 7.5.10 Given the above, the proposed development therefore has the potential to have a direct impact on the conservation area and indirect impact on the Joy Ride sculpture, Clock Tower and the wider conservation area by virtue of causing change within their setting.

- 7.5.11 The Conservation Areas was originated designate in 1988. The boundary of this was extended in 2010 following a review and is drawn tightly around the properties that enclose Queensway. This is the main north-south spine which runs through the retail area. It also includes Market Place which extends east from Queensway and there are also the properties on the northern and south side of Town Square which form its enclosure.
- 7.5.12 The conservation area reflects Stevenage being designated as the UK's first New Town in 1946. As such, the town centre was planned as part of the product of contemporary thinking on planning and architecture in the 1950's. For this reason, Stevenage town centre has a unique and distinctive architectural form, reminiscent of post war town planning. The town centre was constructed over three phases and was completed by the late 1960s, presenting a continual retail frontage of low rise, three storey buildings arranged in a block of rectilinear plots. The retail streets were designed as traffic free pedestrianised routes, to create a safe shopping environment.
- 7.5.13 The Town Square Conservation Area Appraisal 2010 confirms the principal features of the conservation area. These are the buildings which are three-storeys in height, flat roofed, with metal framed windows, primary coloured panels and flat roofed canopies above ground level. It also sets out that the pedestrianised precincts are of a consistent width, which is enclosed by the three-storey buildings on both sides of the street. There are subtle public art features and street furniture with an overall unique New Town Design and architecture.
- 7.5.14 The Town Square Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012) provides a non-exhaustive list of strengths that are considered to warrant the designation of the Conservation Area. One of the key features of the conservation area is the large open square in the middle to the town centre with a central raised platform. This square is enclosed by retail outlets and it is punctuated by trees and shrub planting around its edges. There are also the listed structures as detailed in paragraph 7.5.9 of this report. It is noted that Queensway is the primary retail parade which forms Phase 1 of the Town Centre combined with the provision of key features as detailed in the Conservation Area Appraisal (see paragraph 7.5.13). There is also the low rise buildings (being three storeys) which have a strong co-ordinating element. They are arranged un rectilinear block form throughout the conservation area which present a uniform frontage.
- 7.5.15 There is also the presence of the canopies which run along the building frontages which provide protection along the pedestrianised precincts. The canopies themselves are generally constructed from timber and are supported with metal poles. The paving throughout is generally block paved concrete which is broken by smaller block paving. There are also key views of special interest which are described in detail under paragraph 5.5.7 of this report.
- 7.5.16 Turning to the boundary of the conservation area, as mentioned this is tightly drawn around Phase 1 of the pedestrianised retail centre. It is noted from original correspondence from Historic England who advised that the conservation area boundary should be drawn wider, in order to cover the town centre island within the ring road as originally recommended by BEAMS 2005. The main reason for this was to put in place wider protections of some of the original New Town features outside of Phase 1 of the original town centre.

- 7.5.17 However, the Conservation Area Appraisal (2010) included a boundary review. The review considered that the Conservation Area boundary should only be focused on the whole of Phase 1 pedestrianised area of the New Town. The justification for not expanding the conservation area boundary beyond the current boundary was because it was agreed by the Council at the time that it would not be beneficial or appropriate for the future of the town centre and would include newer developments such as the Matalan site, the Plaza, The Forum and the West Gate shopping centre. None of these were part of the original town centre masterplan and none are of significant architectural or historic interest to warrant inclusion in the conservation area.
- 7.5.18 The Conservation Area Appraisal 2010, stipulates in detail that post 1980 development, such as the construction of Matalan and The Forum, these are more akin to out of town retail parks, and have lost the integrity of proportion, ignoring the layout that underpins the original concept for the town centre. In addition, it sets out that the setting of the conservation has been adversely affected by the building of The Plaza to the south west of Town Square, next to the bus station, where the Old Post Office buildings formerly stood. The more recent development also ignores the original principles which underpin the town centre, through its curving form, lack of stylistic consistency and busy façade treatment in contrast to the linear forms and plain faces of Town Square and Queensway.
- 7.5.19 Given the town centre has not substantively changed since the Appraisal had taken place, it is not considered that the expansion of the conservation area would be acceptable. Therefore, the assessment of this application will focus on the adopted Conservation Area as detailed in the Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012).

Contributions of the application site (Conservation Area)

- 7.5.20 As set out in paragraph 7.5.9, a small part of the western side of the application scheme is located within the Town Square Conservation Area. The main elements affected as detailed is Nos. 2-4 Town Square and the platform. Nos. 2-4 forms the corner part of the original square with this building finished in facing brick, rather than pre-cast and steel panels. Nevertheless, it is consistent with the three storey height of buildings that enclose the original pedestrianised spaces. The building also incorporates the original canopy design and the overall architectural composition of the building corresponds with the characteristics of the remainder of Phase 1 of the Town Centre.
- 7.5.21 It is noted that prior to the construction of The Plaza lied the original four storey post office building which defined the south-western corner of the square, nos. 2 to 4 Town Square still positively contributed to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The raised platform with Joy Ride sculpture surmounted on top, is also a prominent feature of the square. It is noted that there have been previous alterations to the platform which have affected its significance, the form of the platform, including the canopies complements the enclosing frontages of the squares. Furthermore, it is appreciated that the platform forms part of the original scheme and thus, does make a positive contribution to the conservation area as advised by the Council's Heritage Consultant.

- 7.5.22 Looking at the platform in more detail, it was constructed to provide a prominent setting for the Joy Ride sculpture and includes toilet facilities. The platform creates a sense of enclosure to the main square itself, sited at the change in levels to the west and forming a retaining structure against the higher level of the bus station. The main focus of the platform is concentrated on its role as a “platform” for the Joy Ride sculpture. The platform itself was substantially altered in 1991, reduced the visibility of Joy Ride sculpture by the introduction of grilles and denser railings. The alterations also led to the loss of the east steps, which originally formed an east-west axis with the Joy Ride and Clock Tower. In addition, the alterations also resulted in the loss of the original steps and extended the platform to create the disabled toilets and enclosed the under stair storage voids, The overall changes have made the toilets the focal point when viewed from the Town Square which undermine the original quality of the platform
- 7.5.23 To the west of the bus station which falls within the application site is Daneshill House (Plots E and C). This building was designed by the architect Leonard Vincent in 1958 who was the Chief Architect of the Stevenage Development Corporation. It is of contemporary design with the main town centre masterplan, there is a clear historic association and whilst Daneshill House is outside of the pedestrianised area of Phase 1, it does make a positive contribution to the setting and significance of the conservation area.
- 7.5.24 The site also includes the L-shaped block (former McDonalds unit round to Paddy Power and includes Lloyds Bank) that encloses the north-eastern corner of the existing bus station (Plot B). This area formed part of the second phase of the town centre development. However, whilst the elevation details and materials are varied and contrast with Phase 1, it does continue architectural style of buildings which fall in the conservation area being three-storeys and flat roofed. Therefore, it is considered this building, as advised by the Council’s Heritage Advisor, makes a positive contribution to the setting of the conservation area.
- 7.5.25 At the northern end of the site lies Swingate House and the surface car park (Plot A) which previously was the bowling alley. It is considered that due to the loss of the bowling alley, the car park itself as advised by the Council’s Heritage Advisor appears as a fragmented area of townspace which makes a negative contribution to the setting of the conservation area. Turning to Swingate, this formed part of a wider expansion of the town in the 1970s. This building, as advised by Historic England, is architecturally unremarkable, and whilst it has been advised that this building has a neutral impact, the overall architectural composition of the building is not in keeping with the traditional approach to development in Phase 1. As such, it is considered that the building, in combination with the car park, makes a negative contribution to the setting of the conservation area.
- 7.5.26 The eastern side of side Danestrete includes The Plaza (Plots F and G). This building, following demolition of the four storey post office building, comprises a curved form on the eastern side of the complex. Its materiality and architectural style significantly deviates and does not reflect the established character and appearance of the conservation area. Therefore, it is considered The Plaza, as advised by the Council’s Heritage Consultant, makes an adverse contribution to the setting of the conservation area.

- 7.5.27 The southern part of the application site (Plots H and K), which do lie outside the conservation area, encompasses the health centre and library and the former police station to the west and east of The Tower respectively. All of these buildings were constructed in the 1960s and although outside of the pedestrianised zone, the public functions of these buildings create a civic zone at the end of the retail core. The police station and health centre are constructed from facing brick whilst the library consists of a glazed panel frontage. These buildings architecturally complement the form and style of the retail frontages that enclose spaces are considered to make a positive contribution to the town centre.
- 7.5.28 However, it is important to note that the former police station has been vacant for a number of years with the building itself in a state decline. The windows of this building are boarded up as well and there is no prospect of this building being reutilised as a civic building in the future. Furthermore, the Council has granted Prior Approval 19/00692/PADEMO) to demolish this building as it is not statutorily protected. In addition, as part of the application process, the Council is only able to consider the method of demolition. Therefore, the Council would have been unable to consider the impact the loss of this building would have on the setting of the conservation area. Notwithstanding, an historic building recording has been undertaken of this building to develop our understanding of the historical significance of this building in context with the development of the town centre.

Listed Buildings

- 7.5.29 As set out in paragraph 7.5.9 of this report, there are two listed structures in the conservation area. Therefore, this scheme would have an impact on the significance of these heritage assets. This impact will be considered in more detail in the following sections of this report. Looking at the special architectural and historic interest of the listed structures, the Joy Ride sculpture (Grade II) sits atop of the platform, which was sculpted by Franta Belsky in 1958/59. The listing description sets out that it is a bronze mother and child on a circular stone plinth, where the moth is carrying her little boy on the back. Franta Belsky was appointed by the Development Corporation to produce something symbolic for a recently created New Town, the Corporation having been inspired by the use of symbolic sculpture in the rebuilding of bombed Rotterdam. The figures are thus symbolic of the arrival in a new Town. The vertical composition with its high centre of interest is a response to its setting on top of a platform with stairs and railings to either side with a carefully preserved group of trees below.
- 7.5.30 The Clock Tower and surrounding raised pool is also Grade II listed. The listing description identifies the Clock Tower and campanile (free standing bell tower – Italian from campana ‘bell’) at 19m in height and was designed by the chief architect of the Development Corporation Leonard Vincent. It is four levels above ground constructed from a reinforced concrete frame with a flat roof with black Brazilian granite cladding. It has an open framework with recessed infill panels at first and third (clock tower chamber) levels. On the south face, between first and second levels, there is a recessed panel in green panel clad in green Westmorland slate which records the visit of HM Queen Elizabeth II on 20 April 1959. On the west face is tiled cladding with a bronze relief of Lewis Silkin. The second level is open with steel mast and rung ladder to clock chamber. There is also a flagpole on the east side, and pattern tiled soffit to the roof. The tower stands at the east side of a shallow rectangular pool with raised sides, clad in black Brazilian granite. The pool has been modified to include a raised inner pool with fountain.

Contribution of the application site (Listed Buildings)

- 7.5.31 In terms of the Joy Ride, this can only really be experienced from within the Town Square, whilst the top of the Clock Tower can also be seen in views along Queensway

and across the square and bus station. Daneshill House forms a municipal backdrop on the western side of Town Square and contributes to the enclosure of the Square. Nos. 2-4 also make a positive contribution to the enclosure of the space in which the listed buildings are appreciated. However, the majority of the site comprises later phases of the New Town and is outside of the Phase 1 pedestrianised core, which is integral to the setting and significance of the sculpture and Clock Tower. Most of the application site is therefore, considered to make a neutral contribution to the setting of the two listed structures.

Impact Assessment

- 7.5.32 Policy SP4 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) establishes the overall strategy for achieving a 'vital town centre' including a comprehensive regeneration for 'Stevenage Central'. The regenerative impact of the proposed development, is anticipated, as stated by the Council's Heritage Advisor, to represent beneficial effects for the sustainable use and maintenance of the buildings in the conservation area. In this context, the Local Plan is conscious of the inclusion of Town Square Conservation Area on the Historic England list of 'Conservation Areas at Risk' and considers the strategy contained in Policy SP4, including the development of the application site, as a tool for securing potential beneficial impacts to support the long-term conservation of the heritage assets.
- 7.5.33 Further to the above, it is important to consider what the Inspector advised in their report on the proposed allocation of the site in the Adopted Local Plan. The Planning Inspector in paragraph 173 of her report (dated 18 October 2017) stated "*A key part of the strategy of this Plan is the regeneration of the town centre. When it was constructed it was the UK's first wholly pedestrianised shopping centre. The original phase 1 of the town centre now forms the core of the Town Square Conservation Area. The centre currently appears tired and in need of regeneration to bring it up to modern standards and thus a desirable place for businesses to locate and for people to live and shop. There is clear evidence that the town centre is under-performing, uses land inefficiently and is not an attractive prospect for investors*". As such, the Inspector goes onto state "*The specific policies and overall vision for the town centre are well thought out and have the potential to improve the town centre significantly in a number of ways*" (Paragraph 178). Therefore, the inspector concluded that the town centre regeneration plans are soundly based as the Inspector identifies the Local Plan seeks to secure "significant benefits" to remove the conservation areas from the "Conservation Areas at Risk" register.
- 7.5.34 In addition to the above, in the Secretary of States from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government letter to the Council which removed the holding direction and released the Local Plan for adoption, stated "*I am committed to supporting Stevenage achieve its full potential.....I remain keen to see progress on the regeneration of the town centre*". This also demonstrates that the Secretary of State sees the public benefit in delivering the regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre as detailed in the adopted Local Plan (2019).
- 7.5.35_ The application is supported by a Built Heritage Statement (BHS) and Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA). The BHS was prepared in accordance with paragraph 189 of the NPPF which has assessed the significance of all built heritage assets potentially affected by the development. This includes Stevenage Town Square Conservation Area, the Joy Ride Sculpture (Grade II listed), the Clock Tower and Surrounding Pool (Grade II listed) and the Parish Church of St Andrew and St George (Grade II listed). The applicant has also provided additional Heritage Responses following on-going consultation with Historic England and 20th Century Society. The TVIA provides a detailed analysis as to the potential impact the development would have on the wider townscape.

- 7.5.36 Following a review of the submitted documentation, including associated planning application drawings, it is considered as advised by the Council's Heritage Consultant that the proposed development would have a neutral impact on a series of key attributes of the conservation area. This is because the vast majority of the original Phase 1 of the New Town units which enclose the main pedestrianised thoroughfares remain unaffected by the development. In addition, the key views, as advised by the Council's Heritage Advisor as established in the Conservation Area Appraisal, would not be affected. This is because the vistas through the pedestrianised areas to The Tower (Queensway) and the Church of St George and St Andrew (Market Place) would remain unchanged.
- 7.5.37 Given the above, whilst Historic England did raise some initial concerns with Plot K (on the former police station site) in terms of its height. However, the views along Queensway were modelled by the applicant and so whilst Plot K would cause change to the setting of the conservation area, it would not impact, as advised by the Council's Heritage Consultant, the key views identified in paragraph 7.5.35. Therefore, this building would not harm the ability to appreciate the character and appearance of the conservation area. As such, the sense of enclosure to Queensway and Market Place and the opportunity to appreciate the architecture, including the continuous canopies and coloured panels, on the Phase 1 of the New Town would not change as a result of Plot K. Similarly, appreciation of the Clock Tower, standing above the three storey frontages, would not be affected by that part of the development proposal.
- 7.5.38 Turning to Plot A, this would involve the demolition of Swingate House and the car park which currently have a negative impact on the setting of the conservation area. Through the redevelopment of this part of the development, as advised by the Council's Heritage Consultant, this part of the development would have a neutral impact on the setting Town Square Conservation Area. Turning to The Plaza, Plots F and G, combined with part of the Public Sector Hub (Plot D) would have the potential to enhance the setting of the conservation area. This is because The Plaza currently has a negative impact on the conservation area. This is worsened by the fact that the original post office building, in which The Plaza replaced, whilst being 4 storeys in height, incorporated contemporary features such as panel glazing and a canopy which tied in with elements of the Phase 1 of the masterplan.
- 7.5.39 Taking into consideration of the above, the proposed development would bring forward a series of direct and indirect harmful impacts on the significance of the conservation area. The direct impact of the proposed development includes the partial removal of Nos. 2-4 Town Square. However, it is important to note that the original context of this building has changed since the demolition of the post office building which could be argued as an integral part of the Town Square in terms of enclosing a larger space to what is currently experienced today. The canopy of Nos. 2 to 4 originally carried around and across the post office which results in a curtailed appearance to the canopy to the side elevation of the building. Therefore, it can be argued that due to the demolition of the post office, there was a diminishment in the overall enclosure of the Town Square.
- 7.5.40 The building itself, is of historic interest as it formed part of the early stages of Phase 1 of the New Town. However, architecturally, whilst it is flat roofed and comprises a canopy, the external brick appearance and window design does not fully replicate the established design principles which make up the majority of the Town Square. In addition, this building is in a state of decline with the windows boarded with metal sheets, timber cladding over the former ATMs, intrusive roller shutters and the declining condition of the canopy as well. Consequently, it can be argued that through the partial demolition of this building, it would cause harm to the significance of the conservation area as advised by the Council's Conservation Advisor and Historic

England. However, the 20th Century Society considered, taking into consideration of the points raised above, did not raise object to the loss of nos. 2-4 Town Square. This is because forms part of the early stages of Phase 1 of the New Town and helps to enclose the Square. However, the overall setting of this building and this part of the conservation has been diminished by the loss of the post office and the construction of The Plaza. Furthermore, the building is in a state of decline in terms of its condition and its overall finished appearance does deviate from the established appearance of the majority of buildings in the conservation area.

- 7.5.41 With regards to the demolition of the Platform which is located in the centre of town square, as mentioned the platform was originally designed to provide a sense of enclosure to the main square and formed part of Phase 1 New Town development. It also forms an elevated platform for the Joy Ride sculpture which is Grade II listed. Therefore, by demolishing the platform would be harmful to the conservation area as well as the setting of the conservation area, Joy Ride sculpture as well as the setting of the Clock Tower which is also Grade II listed.
- 7.5.42 However, in order to comprehensively understand the proposed demolition on the significance of the Town Square Conservation, it is necessary to look beyond the boundary of the conservation area and look at the broader perspective. Consideration of the platform fitted within the original design of the town centre and how this context has changed to what forms the backdrop of the Platform today. When Phase 1 of the New Town was completed, there was the four storey post office building positioned west of nos. 2-4 Town Square, continuing the line of the square itself. These buildings were physically connected by one continuous canopy that characterised the conservation area. The platform provided some low level of enclosure as a light weight structure along the western edge of the town square. The sense of enclosure was continued by Phase 2 with the construction of Daneshill House which terminated views in that direction. The Town Square was therefore, considered a more intimate space that what is currently experienced.
- 7.5.43 Due to the demolition of the post office, the broader experience of a larger enclosed space was lost with space to the west becoming isolated and unused. In addition, the rest of the area has become more car dominated by vehicle activity at the bus station and surrounding poor quality redevelopment of The Plaza.
- 7.5.44 Consequently, the platform in the present day assumes a greater townscape than what is originally envisaged, providing an end point, rather than a link between two spaces. In addition, its light weight design has been eroded through the unsympathetic additions which have been undertaken to it. Therefore, the platform today is much more diluted than its original lightweight form and as such, its overall character and appearance in the conservation areas has been reduced. Furthermore, it is important to note that the Town Square Conservation Area Appraisal (2010), does not attribute any particular value to the platform or detail the exact contribution it makes to the overall significance to the conservation area. The Conservation Area Management Plan also states that "*The position of the raised platform and its safety barriers also restrict movement across the Town Square*".
- 7.5.45 The proposed Public Service Hub and Hub Terrace would be located within the conservation area. The terrace is designed to provide a transition between the Town Square and Hub, whilst contemporising the characteristics of the Platform. The proposal would form a sense of enclosure whilst opening up movement into the Town Square. The proposal also seeks to provide an elevated platform for events, similar to that which currently performed by the existing platform. The scheme would also incorporate a raised position for The Joy Ride which would sit in alignment as per its current position.

- 7.5.46 The rationale for the demolition of the platform is partly justified through the unsympathetic alterations which have taken place to the Platform itself. The scheme has also been designed in order to remove a physical barrier to movement and integrating the overall townspace proposed under this application such as the creation of a new Garden Square and boulevard. By integrating between the new and existing areas, this would help to bring enhancements which would help to activate spaces and support vitality of the Square. These are in order to help address the weaknesses and threats that have led to the Conservation Area being included on the At Risk Register.
- 7.5.47 What the overall aim of the Hub and the Hub Terrace would together, re-provide design attributes of the demolished platform using high quality architecture and public realm, which help to create a sense of enclosure they would provide for the Town Square. The proposal has also been designed to incorporate level changes and elevations which also seeks the Joy Ride to continue to feature as a principal focal point. The Hub and Hub Terrace have also been designed to replicate how the existing platform integrates with the sloping topography of this part of the conservation area.
- 7.5.48 Turning to height of the Public Services hub, at five storeys, the Public Services Hub would stand above the uniform height of the three storey building which make up Phase 1 of the New Town. The Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012) advises that development proposals in Town Square will be expected to reflect the existing buildings, which are flat roofed, three storeys in height and in block formation. The proposed hub would rise above the consistent eaves level, reduce the proportions of the space and would also become the most dominant feature in the Square. Therefore, it would reduce the prominence of the Clock Tower and will require the removal of several trees which are a key feature of the conservation area. In its current form, concerns have been raised by Historic England and 20th Century Society as to the harmful impact the Hub is considered to represent on the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 7.5.49 However, it needs to be emphasised that the detailed design of the Hub would have to be dealt with as part of a reserved matters application. Whilst it is fully appreciated that if planning permission is granted establishes the principle of a five storey building being acceptable, the detailed design will allow for a stepping of building heights, which may be restricted to three-storeys adjacent to the existing building, before increasing in height for the main range of the Hub building, whilst retaining the physical enclosure of the town square. This approach would also replicate the previous relationship between nos. 2-4 Town Square where this building being three storeys, the former post office stepped up to 4 storeys which did “tower above” the three-storey buildings in the square.
- 7.5.50 The positioning of the building is also fundamentally important as it would be located in the heart of the town centre, which is in keeping with the ethos in which New Towns were originally created. In this regard, the Hub would provide a range of services for the entire community and it would complement and reinforce the role of the town square as the heart of the town. Therefore, the Hub will become a critical focal point for services and socialising for the residents.
- 7.5.51 The importance of the square is also the sense of arrival that is experienced when one enters the public open space from the enclosed streets. This progression from one space to another gives the Town Square its own distinct identity. However, due to unsympathetic development on the western side the positive experience is not replicated. This is very noticeable when you travel into the town from the train station. Therefore, the Hub has also been positioned in order to enhance this sense of arrival. Its location would also allow for a new pedestrian route views into the Town Square from the west. The existing bus station acts as a barrier to movement and views and is

considered a poor environment, especially due to the poor condition of the bus shelters, when approaching the train station.

- 7.5.52 The proposal would therefore, seek to deliver a new east-west link with the train station via the bus interchange in order to create the “boulevard”. This would be supported by a comprehensive landscaping strategy which will reintroduce planting back into the town centre as envisaged by the original masterplan. The new route would be aligned with the Joy Ride and Clock Tower creating an important linear link for a clear appreciation of these two landmarks. This will enhance the sense of arrival into the Conservation Area, thus enhancing its significance.
- 7.5.53 The majority of the development is located outside of the Town Square Conservation Area and has potential to cause change to its setting. However, some of these changes are deemed to be beneficial such as the demolition of The Plaza, however, there are others which do have a harmful impact on the setting and significance of the conservation area.
- 7.5.54 The removal of the former police station, library and health centre from the southern side of Southgate is considered to represent harm on the setting and significance of the conservation area as stipulated by Historic England and the 20th Century Society. These frontage of public buildings, either side of The Tower, were built in the early 1960s, but, they were located outside of the pedestrian core. Notwithstanding, their functions and architecture complement the retail area of Phase 1. With respect to Daneshill House, this is also contemporary with the pedestrian retail area, and complements the architectural scheme and contributes to the associative value of the conservation area. In addition, it is considered that the loss of the L-shaped building north the bus station would also cause an element of harm.
- 7.5.55 Given the aforementioned assessment and the direct and indirect impacts the development would have, Historic England as well as the Council’s Heritage Advisor consider the cumulative impact of “less than substantial harm” to the character of the Town Square Conservation Area. In addition, the proposed impact on the setting of the grade II listed Joy Ride sculpture and the Clock Tower is also considered to represent ‘less than substantial harm’. Therefore, both Historic England and 20th Century Society objected to the application. However, whilst the scheme does result in “less than substantial harm”, the harm is at the lower end of the scale because the elements which have to be demolished are of lower significance due to their overall condition and have been altered from their original form”. In addition, the proposed location of the public Services hub was deemed to be the most appropriate location. It also accords with the requirements of Policy TC2, part vii of the Local Plan (2019) which stipulates The Plaza site should be redeveloped into the new Public Services Hub, fronting onto Town Square. Therefore, the Platform has to be demolished in order to facilitate the construction of the new Hub building which will provide community facilities in the centre of Stevenage.

Assessment of Heritage Balance and Public Benefit

- 7.5.56 Paragraph 194 of the NPPF (2019) any harm to a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. In addition, where proposals that may cause less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, should be weighed up against the public benefits of the proposal, including where appropriate, securing an optimum viable use. In undertaking that weighting exercise ‘considerable importance and weight’ must be given to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building, including their setting, and includes conservation areas (i.e. their setting). In determining the application, it must be noted that ‘less than substantial harm’ is not a ‘less than substantial planning consideration’/

7.5.57 In considering the public benefits that may be derived from the proposed development, the Planning Practice Guide (PPG) advises that they should be of a nature and scale that will be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit. Whilst a range of benefits that help deliver sustainable communities could be relevant, the PPG provides examples of heritage based public benefits, as follows:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution to its setting;
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset;
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long terms conservation.

7.5.58 The Council's Conservation Management Plan SPD (2012) identified a number of weaknesses with the Town Square Conservation Area which are as follows:-

- Lack of maintenance of cladding panels which appear on the first and second floor of building frontages;
- The replacement of windows in uPVC and varying materials which affect the overall look of buildings and do not complement the original architecture;
- First and second floor advertising creates an untidy appearance with a range of colours and styles being used;
- Ad hoc advertising for stores located in inappropriate locations / positions which break up the uniformity of the precincts;
- Lack of maintenance to canopies, which in some places are rotting, with chipped paint, debris collecting on top, including a build-up of moss, and a general state of disrepair;
- Poor coordination of public realm enhancements;
- Lack of directional signs throughout the conservation area;
- Uninviting connections and alleyways in to the conservation area;
- The bus station is a barrier to access for the Square; and
- Around the edges of the conservation areas there are unattractive backs of buildings and service yards.

7.5.59 Together, the above weaknesses are deemed to impact negatively upon the conservation area. There is also the loss of traditional features, vacant buildings and a general lack of maintenance all of which have a negative impact on the area. There has also been unsympathetic repairs which detract from these features which make the area special. As such, due to the declining and poor condition of the conservation area, Historic England placed it on the "At Risk Register".

7.5.60 One of the most fundamental benefits of this schemes in terms of public benefit, is the much needed regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre which will clearly and decisively outweigh the less than substantial harm which has been identified. The scheme provides a number of key benefits to the public which includes a new Civic Centre incorporating a new Public Services Hub which incorporates a number of key services within a centralised location.

7.5.61 The scheme will also provide 1,867 new homes which will help the Council to continue to meet its NPPF requirement to have a 5 year supply of new homes. The development would also deliver new office, commercial and retail spaces (including Food & Beverage (F&B)). These bring wider benefits to the local economy through the provision of new employment and training opportunities to local people as well as support local businesses. Further to this, it would help to make Stevenage Town Centre a destination centre which will attract visitors and businesses to the town as well as provide flexible employment provision. In addition to this, by bringing residents into the town centre, which it currently lacks, would help to boost footfall traffic which would help to provide a more viable market for an improved retail and F&B offer.

- 7.5.62 As such, the proposed development, by attracting in new businesses along with the wider regeneration of the town centre with noticeable improvements to the built fabric, reflects the objectives in the Framework whereby the scheme would make efficient use of the land, as well as provide an integrated approach to the location of housing, economic uses along with new community facilities and services. The development would also deliver a new public park at the southern end of the side, will provide significant open space for neighbouring users and occupiers and thereby improving the town centre's offer for the local community.
- 7.5.63 In addition to the above, what Historic England and 20th Century Society do not thoroughly consider is the public realm works which are already being undertaken in the Town Square by the Council in order to address the weaknesses identified in the Conservation Area Management Plan. These works comprise the provision of high quality paving, new street furniture, a chandelier light to replicate the chandelier light that was removed combined with new replacement lighting features which replicate the design of the original lighting installed in the town centre. Furthermore, the rejuvenated public realm once completed could be utilised for street markets, outdoor cinemas and public events (e.g. Christmas light switch on) which is deemed to be a public benefit.
- 7.5.64 Further to the above, the Council under planning permission 19/00063/FPM is currently undertaking renovation works to 21 to 29 Town Square which also form part of the Conservation Area. This development comprises new and sympathetic curtain wall glazing at ground, first and second floor levels of numbers 21 to 23 Town Square. There would also be the replacement of existing concrete cladding at 27 and 29 Town Square with modern pre-cast cladding panels finished in a stone colour. Further, the proposal would also to seek to refurbish the existing timber canopies on the building along with the cleaning and refurbishment of the existing concrete façade and the east and west elevations of 21 to 23 Town Square as well as the south and east elevations of 29 Town Square. Moreover, this scheme seeks to replace existing windows sympathetically with double-glazed aluminium/composite windows, the repainting of the existing first-floor balcony balustrade at 27 to 29 Town Square along with the cleaning and refurbishment of existing pre-cast columns. This scheme also seeks to deliver new co-working office space, F&B unit and gallery in order to improve the vitality of the conservation area. Furthermore, these projects also help to improve the overall setting of the grade II listed Clock Tower and Joy Ride where significant investment is being made to reverse the decline of the Town Square.
- 7.5.65 Given the aforementioned, whilst these works are being undertaken outside of the scope of the planning, the proposed development will act synergistically with these other initiatives. Firstly, and is identified as a weakness, the scheme will remove the barrier in which the existing bus station causes in terms of access into the Square. This would be through the creation of a new Garden Square with a linear east-west route (the boulevard) which allows for greater appreciation of the significance of the Clock Tower and Joy Ride Statue as you enter the town square from the west. In terms of the public services Hub, whilst this scheme causes harm through the loss of the platform and its indicative height, it would help to enclose the square and would remove a 20th century additional which causes harm to the significance of the conservation areas.
- 7.5.66 The applicant team has, as advised by Historic England, set out their reasoning to on a number of occasions. They present a number of options to overcome their concerns about the loss of the Platform, but these alternative options would lead to a poorly functioning design with a contrived enclosure to the detriment of the historic character of the conservation. Historic England has also advised that the proposals that would see the Platform retained, but further compromised, are undesirable again harmful to the conservation area. Therefore, the proposed Hub has been designed so there is a not poorly contrived environment. The hub terrace can also form the function of the

platform as a place which can not only have a civic function, but as a place to “elevate” the Joy Ride sculpture in alignment with the Clock Tower. This approach would allow for greater appreciation to the significance of the Joy Ride, which was one of the original intentions of Franta Belski when he created the statute. This is especially given the unsympathetic additions to the platform restrict the ability to be able to fully appreciate the statute.

7.5.67 The scheme would also introduce new public spaces through the provision of a new park in Southgate as well as the new Garden Square. These spaces not only represent a significant improvement to the public realm, they also create great opportunities to improve cycle and pedestrian connectivity across the town which builds upon the “pedestrianised streets” of the town centre. Furthermore, these spaces would help to support the health and wellbeing of the public which is seen as a public benefit along with the encouragement to walk and cycle.

7.5.68 Further, the development would also secure the delivery of a new Primary School and Nursery which is a key piece of infrastructure which needs to be delivered in the town centre. This is because the school would be utilised by the residents of Stevenage Central and the wider area and as such, is also seen as a significant public benefit. The development would also make financial contributions towards GP provision as well as sports provision, more importantly to help fund the delivery of a new wet and dry leisure facility which is another key piece of infrastructure identified in the Local Plan which needs to be delivered.

7.5.69 Under the provisions of Paragraph 199 of the NPPF, Historic England would expect the preservation of various elements of artistic and historic interest from existing buildings, as well as a record of lost buildings and features of heritage interest undertaken to an appropriate level of detail, set out in an agreed Written Scheme of Investigation. This includes, but, is not necessarily limited to the former Barclays Bank, the remainder of the buildings to be demolished north and north-west of Nos. 2-4 Town Square, the Platform, buildings have previously highlighted along Southgate, and, Daneshill House. In relation to the Platform in particular, Historic England have recommend that any recording should include not only its final state, but also the process of demolition, that fabric from the structure (such as the remaining original railings) is salvaged and that salvaged material should be retained and displayed as part of any exhibition on Stevenage’s heritage. If planning permission is granted, then it is strongly recommend that these recommendations are included as planning conditions.

7.5.70 Further to the above, in order to improve the significance of the Joy Ride statue, the Clock Tower combined with the Town Square Conservation in terms of enhancements and preservation, it is recommended a condition is imposed requiring to the planning permission requiring the applicant to submit a Heritage Strategy. This strategy will seek to do the following;-

- Secure appropriate treatment of the Joy Ride statute and its restoration;
- Refurbishment of the Clock Tower Pool;
- The storage of any salvaged material and agreed strategy for re-use;
- Enhancement and refurbishments of historic structures and buildings;
- Enhancements to the public realm in the wider conservation area.

7.5.71 It also recommended, as per the advice of Historic England, a Public Art Programme in accordance with the Council’s Cultural Strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council as the Local Planning Authority. This would help to further enhance the significance of the historic character of the New Town which has a rich history of public art.

Demolition of non-listed buildings

- 7.5.72 Historic England in their comments have raised concerns in relation to the demolition of some of the non-listed buildings. It should be noted the majority of these buildings fall outside of the conservation area and do not benefit from any statutory protection and therefore, could be demolished under Article 3, Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) via a Prior Approval process (such as the former Police Station and HCC offices). However, nos. 2 and 4 Town Square are located within the Town Square Conservation Area.
- 7.5.73 The other buildings, which are outside the conservation area but can be said to fall within its setting and have been substantially altered since the first construction of the Town Square and the first phases of Stevenage New Town. It is noted that Historic England support the demolition of some of these buildings, however, they do raise concerns about the following buildings:-
- Daneshill House;
 - The Mecca Bingo Hall;
 - 1-21 Town Square;
 - Various buildings to the south (presumed to include the outpatients clinic, health centre and library).
- 7.5.74 Historic England argue that these are elements of the early phases of the New Town and would be lost. However, as advised in paragraph 7.xxx, these buildings are not protected. Notwithstanding, the SG1 scheme has been designed to retain elements which are deemed to be of the highest significance whilst the scheme itself draws upon the Design Principles of the New Town. In addition, the overall benefits of the scheme would outweigh the loss of these buildings.

Detailed Design of Plots A and K

- 7.5.75 In terms of the design of the development, as considered in more detail under section 7.4 of this report, whilst Historic England have raised concerns regarding materiality and the height of the development outside of the Conservation Area within Plot K, the proposals have been designed to sit within their outlining context. Dealing firstly with materiality, the applicant's project team have undertaken a comprehensive character analysis of buildings surrounding the Town Square with recognition of the work by Leonard Vincent. For reference, this assessment identifies the town centre buildings are predominantly constructed from a mixture of pre-cast concrete frame and clad in steel, glass, stone, exposed stone aggregate panels, mosaics, tiles and bricks.
- 7.5.76 The most prevalent buildings within the vicinity of Plot A are light coloured concrete clad buildings throughout the Town Centre, and soft coloured brickwork which makes up the built fabric at various points along Queensway, Market Place and Westgate. As such, the external finish of Plot A draws from this established materials palette. The building's façade in Plot A has also been carefully design to reflect this historic character of the Town Square Conservation.
- 7.5.77 Plot K has been designed in context with the surrounding parkland, southern end of Queensway combined with the presence of taller building in this part of the town centre. This includes The Towers and Vista Towers. The façade details for the proposed development in Plot K reflects the architectural expressions of surrounding buildings and the material palette has been designed to fit in context with this part of the town. Plot K also subtly references the Neo-Plasticism work of Mondrian in the materials palette as well. With respect to the building's height, the tallest element being 19 storeys is located at the south-eastern corner, alongside a lower courtyard building. The tower has been designed to be slender and would form a gateway feature.

7.5.78 Further to the above, the height and location of the tower element would comply with Policy TC2, part I, of the adopted Local Plan (2019) which requires that applications should consider landmark buildings in prominent locations. The supporting text of this policy sets out that development within the vicinity of the Town Square Conservation Area will need to preserve its setting. Policy TC1 defines the extent of the town centre, its supporting text reiterates the requirements to protect the conservation areas setting, but where a building is not in immediate proximity, tall buildings are likely to be acceptable. The tower element has been positioned the furthest away from the conservation area. The building would also be read in conjunction with Vista Towers and Vista Towers. It has also been positioned so as to not detract views from the Conservation Area where The Towers forms a key focal point.

Summary

7.5.79 In summary, whilst the development would cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the Town Square Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Joy Ride Sculpture and Clock Tower, the proposal will deliver a number of significant public benefits which is considered to outweigh this harm. These public benefits including the delivery a Public Services Hub, much needed housing along with the provision of a new primary school and nursery, as well as contributions towards health and sports facilities. The development would also remove development such as The Plaza which has a negative impact on the setting of the conservation area. The development would also seek to deliver a new park, garden square combined with new jobs both in construction as well as directly employed by the new premises which will operate from the development. It would also significantly improve cycle and pedestrian routes which build on the original ethos of the “pedestrianised” streets of the original town centre.

7.5.80 The conservation area is also on the “At Risk Register” due to its poor and tired condition. This scheme would therefore also facilitate much needed investment into the town centre which would in turn, would help to facilitate wider rejuvenation of the conservation area which is already taking place by the Council. This is through the new public realm works in the town square which comprises new paving, high quality lighting which replicates the design of the original lighting of the town centre, re-introduction of the chandelier lighting as well as new street furniture. Works have also progressed on repairing the canopies combined with the significant refurbishment of 21-29 Town Square. Whilst these works are already taking place, it is evident the development scheme can be seen as working synergistically with these other and potential future initiatives which will further enhance the conservation area. Therefore, it seeks to address the “weaknesses” which are identified in the Conservation Area Management Plan. Furthermore, the scheme would also remove the barrier of the existing bus station and create enhanced views towards the Clock Tower and Joy Ride through the introduction of a new linear east-west route which will be known as the boulevard.

7.6 Impact upon amenity

Impact on amenity of existing residents

7.6.1 In assessing the impact on neighbouring amenity, the Council’s Design Guide sets out standards which should be met to safeguard the privacy and outlook of adjoining properties from new developments. In this regard, when assessing developments over 2 storeys in height the recommended separation distances are 30m for a back to back relationship or 20m for a back to side relationship. There are no standards relating to front to front, front to rear or front to side relationships.

- 7.6.2 Looking at Plot A, the rear elevation of this building would be 20m from the side elevation of Brickdale House and 22m from the rear of Skyline House. With respect to Brickdale House, the main windows on the flank elevation serve the stair core and secondary windows. In addition, this part of the building is already overlooked by Swingate House. Consequently, it is not considered the development would detrimentally impact on the privacy or outlook of the occupiers of this development.
- 7.6.3 In terms of the impact on Skyline House, the nearest windows affected currently serve the stair core of the building. As such, there would be no direct overlooking of habitable windows from the proposed development. In addition, the habitable windows on the southern elevation of Skyline House are recessed so the projecting wing acts as a physical screen which further protects their privacy from any views out of the development. With regards to the existing flats positioned above 1 Town Square (Paddy Power), there are no windows which would directly look onto the rear of the existing apartments. In addition, the proposed development would be over 24m from these apartments and therefore, would not harm the outlook of the occupiers of these properties. Furthermore, it is important to note that these apartments also form part of the SG1 development and as such, would be demolished in the future in order to facilitate the delivery of Plot B.
- 7.6.4 With regards to Plot K, the side elevation of the building (western elevation) would be 20m (eastern) from the side elevation The Towers. The building side (eastern) elevation would also be 20m from the side (western elevation) of Vista Towers. Firstly, the Council does not have any guidance on side to side separation distances in the currently adopted Design Guide. As such, there potentially could be an issue in terms of privacy and outlook. However, the tallest element of the building has been positioned at the south-eastern corner of the building. This ensures there is no direct overlooking from this part of the development onto the habitable room areas of the neighbouring buildings. With regards to the elements closest to Vista Towers and The Towers, these would be the smaller elements of the building at 9 storeys which with the level of separation ensures that the impact, in terms of overlooking would be limited.
- 7.6.5 Turning to the front elevation (northern) of Plot K, this would, in part, be 22m from the side elevation of the properties in Eastgate. As set out earlier, there is no guidance on front to side separation distances. However, the internal layout of the building has been designed to ensure there is no direct overlooking of the habitable room windows or external balconies on the southern elevation of Eastgate. In addition, as the bulk of the development is not positioned directly opposite, it would not harm the outlook or appear overbearing to the occupiers of this development. Furthermore, the internal layout of the apartments has been designed in a way to reduce perceived loss of privacy from the existing properties within The Towers and Vista Towers. In addition, it is not uncommon in urban environments and town centres such as this to have reduced separation distances where densities are much higher. For example in Park Place, the separation distance between properties is approximately 12m. The properties in Eastgate and The Quadrant as well as Market Place have a separation distance between them of 12.5m. Therefore, it is considered that the overall level of separation would be acceptable, especially given the context of the development site.
- 7.6.6 Looking sunlight and daylight impact on existing buildings, this application has been accompanied with a Daylight and Sunlight report undertaken in accordance with the BRE Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice (2011). They assessment was also undertaken in accordance with guidance set out in BS8206-2 2008, Lighting for Buildings – Part 2: Code of practice for daylighting (2008) (superseded in part by BS EN 17037:2018) and CIBSE Lighting Guide 10, Daylighting – A Guide for Designers: Lighting for the Built Environment (SLL LG10, 2014). This assessment considers the impact on the following residential developments:-

- Skyline House;
- Brickdale House;
- 1-26 Eastgate;
- 1-16 The Quadrant;
- 6 St Georges Way;
- Vista Tower;
- The Towers; and
- Pinetree Court.

7.6.7 The assessment itself only tests the main rooms in each property as advised by the BRE guidelines. There is no requirement to test staircases, hallways, bathrooms, toilets etc. i.e. rooms which are not classed as “habitable”. Looking firstly at daylight, a VSC (Vertical Sky Component) assessment was undertaken and this is test which measures the amount of skylight available at the centre of a windows. It has a maximum value of 40% for a completely unobstructed wall. However, the diffuse daylighting of an existing building may be adversely affected, as defined by the BRE Guide, where:-

- The VSC measured at the centre of the main window is less than 27%, and less than 0.8 times its former value; or
- The area of the working plane in a room which can receive direct sunlight is reduced to less than 0.8 times its former value.

7.6.8 In addition to the above, a daylight distribution test has also been undertaken. This calculates the area of the working place inside a room that will have a direct view of the sky. For each test undertaken, the guiding principle that if the amount of daylight is reduced by 0.8 times its former value (if there is more than 20% loss), the loss will be noticeable to the occupants. In terms of sunlighting to existing buildings, the assessment looks at the level of available sunlight a room would have. This is measured in terms of the percentage of annual probable sunlight hours (APSH) at the centre point of a window. It is defined as the long-term average of the total number of hours during a year in which direct sunlight reaches the unobstructed ground.

7.6.9 Looking at the impact of neighbouring properties impacted by Plot A, these are predominantly Skyline and Brickdale House. In terms of Skyline, the VSC results indicate that 81% of the windows tested achieve the BRE’s guideline values. The remaining windows, 13 in total, are located on the ground floor and retain factors of former value between 0.70 and 0.79 which are only marginally below the 0.8 times former value. In terms of daylight distribution, 96% of the rooms tested adhere to the BRE guide. The remaining two rooms are located on the first and third floors and retain factors marginally below guidelines. As per the BRE guidelines, the results of the daylight distribution test should be considered in parallel with the VSC results.

7.6.10 The sunlight results for the properties in Skyline House indicate that all windows and rooms achieve BRE guidelines. This is, as per the Guidelines, 25% on an annual basis and 5% during the winter months, or by retaining 0.8 times former value on both an annual and winter basis. For Brickdale House, 8 (57%) of the 14 windows tested achieve BRE guidelines. The remaining windows, 6 in total, serve bedrooms on the ground to fifth floors and retain factor of former values of between 0.71 and 0.74. However, apart from the ground floor, these windows are secondary windows to bedrooms which are served by another window of equal or greater size which achieve the BRE’s guideline values.

7.6.11 In terms of daylight distribution results, these indicate that 77% of the 8 rooms tested achieve recommended values. The remaining room is a bedroom which still has an acceptable level of daylight. Considering the impact of the development on Brickdale House as a whole from a daylight perspective, the building is considered to retain good

light levels with the proposed development in place in accordance with the BRE guideline.

- 7.6.12 Turning to Plot K, there are a number of buildings which are likely to be. Dealing firstly with 23 Eastgate, this is located to the north of the proposed building and is to the west of Eastgate. The VSC assessment identifies that 10 (83%) of the 12 windows tested achieve relevant guidelines, or marginally below achieving factor of former value of between 0.70 and 0.77. The remaining 2 windows serve rooms which are situated beneath balconies which restrict the ability of light to the windows below them. The daylight distribution indicates that 10 of the 12 windows achieve recommended values. The remaining two rooms achieve factor of former value of between 0.71 and 0.73. Again, these windows are sited beneath balconies so views of the sky are already limited.
- 7.6.13 The sunlight results for 23 Eastgate identifies that all windows and rooms achieve the BRE guideline values for APSH. With respect to 61 St George's Way, this is located to the east, on the eastern side of St George's Way. The VSC result indicated 94% of the windows assessed achieved guideline values. The remaining windows face away from Plot K, one serving a second floor room, and continue to achieve excellent daylight levels. The daylight distribution results indicate 58% of rooms meet recommended values. However, the remaining rooms are west facing and enjoy relatively high daylight distribution levels in the existing condition. As such, the test when considered together, demonstrate existing daylight levels at 61 St George's Way would not be detrimentally affected by the development.
- 7.6.14 With regards to APSH, again, the results shows this property in terms of its windows and rooms all achieving guideline levels. Turning to Vista Towers, this is located east of the site. The VSC results show 78 (52%) of the 149 windows achieve BRE guidelines. The remaining windows are on the ground floor mezzanine to 9th floors. Despite reductions in VSC on the lower floors, reasonable absolute values remain from the second floor and above, with the majority of windows achieving VSC values from 15% +. The results also indicate that there are a number of windows, particularly those on the lower floors, which achieve low VSC in the existing scenario. This is the result of the self-obstruction of the Vista Tower design in the form of an overhang positioned above the first floor windows. In contrast, the windows now self-obstructed, indicate higher values in the existing scenario. This is because existing VSC results on the first, second and third floors are 27%, 37% and 38% respectively.
- 7.6.15 In terms of daylight distribution, 66 (63%) of the 104 rooms achieve the recommended values. The rooms which fall short are on the 1st to 8th floor. However, these rooms are very deep with living rooms, dining rooms and kitchens being 6.2m. For rooms greater than 5m deep, the BRE guide states that 'greater movement of the no skyline maybe unavoidable'. For reference, a no skyline divides areas of the working plan which can and cannot receive direct sunlight (BRE Report 209). With respect to sunlight, of the 104 rooms tested for APSH, 67 (64%) achieve guidelines on an annual basis and 93 (89%) on a winter. However, the overall results indicate relatively good adherence rates given an urban location.
- 7.6.16 Consideration also has to be given to the fact that Plot K development site is currently occupied by low-rise building. This means that the west facing façade of Vista Towers currently enjoys a relatively open aspect, not typical for an urban environment. Therefore, any meaningful development of the Plot K site is likely to impact on the level of daylight and sunlight which are received beyond the guidelines in the BRE. In addition, the proposed massing of Plot K has been distributed on the site such that the tallest element is on the southern portion set away from Vista Tower. Therefore, the scheme has been designed sensitively to ensure distance between the tallest element and Vista Towers in order to minimise the impact on the west-facing windows.

Therefore, the results generated in the applicants assessment need to be considered in context of the town centre location and the aspiration to increase density of the site.

- 7.6.17 Finally, looking at the impact on the eastern elevation of the Towers, this building is located west of the development site for Plot K. The VSC results indicate 63% of the windows assessed (110 windows) achieve the BRE's guideline values. The windows which are below the guidelines are on the ground to 8th floors, with all windows on the 9th to 12th floors meeting the guidance. The reason for some of the windows being below is partially down to the projecting wings on either side of the central windows which are set back from the main façade. With regards to daylight distribution, 66% (74 room) of the rooms assessed rooms achieve the recommended values. The rooms which fall short are on the ground to 7th floors, with the remainder of the floors meeting the guidance. However, a number of the rooms are living rooms which are 5.3m deep. Therefore, being more than 5m, the greater movement of the no skyline maybe unavoidable. With respect to APSH, the rooms tested all achieve the BRE guidelines for annual and winter sunlight.
- 7.6.18 As per Vista Towers, it is important to note the site is currently occupied by low rise buildings which is not typical of an urban environment. Therefore, as mentioned above, any meaningful re-development of Plot K is going to have an impact on the level of sunlight and daylight which is received by properties in The Towers. Therefore, the scheme has been designed to ensure that the tallest element is positioned away from this building in order to reduce its impact.
- 7.6.19 The applicant has also prepared a sunlight and daylight assessment on the outline massing as detailed in the masterplan and the potential impact, as the plans are indicative, could also have on neighbouring properties. With regards to the impact on 1-26 Eastgate, of the 52 windows tested, 50 (96%) achieve guideline values for VSC. The remaining windows are secondary windows to rooms which are also served by much larger windows which exceed guideline values. In addition, out of the rooms test 100% of the units would achieve guideline values for daylight distribution. With regards to sunlight, the results also demonstrate the scheme meets the guideline values of 25% on an annual basis and 5% during the winter months.
- 7.6.20 In relation to 1-16 The Quadrant, the VSC assessment identifies that 67% of the 39 windows achieve the required guidance levels. Of the remaining windows, these are only marginally below their former value. In addition, 92% of the rooms assessed achieve the recommended daylight distribution values. When the two results are considered in parallel, there would still be sufficient levels of daylight received in these properties. With respect to sunlight, all of the windows achieve the guidelines set in the BRE for APSH. In regards to The Towers, i.e. the west facing elevation, the VSC identifies 66 (59%) of the 11 windows achieve guidelines. The windows which fall short are on the ground to 8th floor. In terms of daylight distribution, 61% of the 74 floor achieve the recommended values. However, the issue with light penetration relates to some of the windows being recessed, combined with the depth of the living rooms being over 5m. Moreover, the buildings to the west are low rise so any development on the Library and NHS sites will have an impact on the level of daylight received.
- 7.6.21 In terms of sunlight, of the rooms tested for APSH, 81% achieve the BRE guidelines for annual basis and 90% on a winter basis. These results show a good adherence rate given a town centre location. Again, the main impact is down to the existing site being low rise so any development is likely to have an impact.
- 7.6.22 With regards to Pinetree Court, the VSC results indicate 44 (68%) of the 95 windows assessed meet the BRE guidance. However, the remaining windows are marginally below the guidance for VSC. However, the daylight distribution across all rooms tested meet the recommended values. Therefore, the overall level of daylight received at

Pinetree Court will accord with the guidance. In relation to sunlight, this property in terms of its windows and doors would all achieve the BRE guideline values of 25% on an annual basis and 5% during the winter months.

Impact on amenity of future residents

- 7.6.23 In assessing the future residential amenity which would be provided by the proposed development in terms of Plot A, all of the dwelling units within this block accord with the space requirements set out in the adopted local plan. With regard to amenity space, the Council's Design Guide recommends that 50 sq.m of amenity space plus an additional 10sqm per unit over 5 is required. This also states that where there is no communal space, effort should be made to provide balconies or roof gardens. With regards to Plot A, the development would comprise a mixture of balconies (112 in total increased from 58) and private terraces. The scheme would also incorporate a 320 sq.m roof terrace on the sixth floor of the building. The terrace itself would form a communal space which can be accessed by all residents who would reside within the block. The terrace has been positioned in order to ascertain significant amounts of daylight so it can be enjoyed for long periods. In addition, and through negotiations with the applicant following comments received by the Design Council, the courtyard has been amended to now incorporate a 406 sq.m communal private amenity area. Furthermore, the ground floor duplex units would also have access to not only terraces, but private gardens to the rear as well creating an additional 312 sq.m of amenity space.
- 7.6.24 The amenity space provision for Plot A would exceed standards recommended in the Design Guide providing 102% of the overall requirement. With regards to why not all of the apartments have been provided with a private balcony is partly due to the constrained nature of the site due to the presence of the Westgate to the east and residential apartment block to the north. In addition, the Swingate Car Park to the west may come forward in the future for residential development so the scheme has been designed so as to not prejudice any potential delivery of development on this site.
- 7.6.25 Notwithstanding the above, those apartments which do not have balconies are within a short distance to either the shared communal courtyard or the roof terrace. In addition, the site is within 10 minute walking distance of the King George recreation ground which offers a range of open space and play equipment facilities. The scheme is also within a short walking distance to the Town Centre gardens. In addition, whilst it does not form part of the first phase of development, the wider masterplan seeks to deliver a new garden square which would be positioned where the existing bus station is sited. There is also the urban park comprising children's play equipment on Market Place which could also be utilised by future residents of the development. With regards to apartment sizes and bedroom sizes, these would accord with the National Described Space Standards as a detailed requirement under Policy GD1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019).
- 7.6.26 Turning to sunlight and daylight, this application has been accompanied with a Daylight and Sunlight report. This assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the guidance specified in paragraph 7.7.6. The Annual Daylight Factor (ADF) assessment for Plot A, identified that 328 of the 336 rooms tested meet or exceed the guideline values. For reference, the following minimum values for ADF in housing are as follows:-
- 1% for bedrooms;
 - 1.5% for living rooms;
 - 2% for kitchens.

- 7.6.27 Of the rooms tested, the only rooms which fall short of the guideline values comprise living/diners and studios on the first to third floors. This includes 3 living dining rooms on the south-facing external elevation and 1 internal-facing living dining room which achieve between 1.20% and 1.49%. Therefore, these are only marginally below the guideline value of 1.5%. The remaining rooms are studios, which achieve an ADF of between 1.30% and 1.89%. However, the layouts of the studios are such that the living rooms are located closest to the window wall, in order to maximise daylight availability to these area. As such, the daylight levels within the main habitable portion of the room is appropriate for the room use.
- 7.6.28 Focusing on sunlight, of the 41 windows tested, 179 (43%) achieve the guideline values for annual sunlight and 177 (42%) achieve the winter guideline values. However, expectation of sunlight is lower in north facing rooms, and if the room results are considered for the south facing rooms, 67% of the rooms in the summer and 68% in the winter achieve the guidelines on annual basis. Notwithstanding, it is important to note that sunlight levels are lower in a town setting, especially given the town centre is earmarked for development, so the overall results represent a reasonable level of adherence. Also, as indicated by the ADF results, the majority of rooms tested achieve the recommended daylight levels.
- 7.6.29 Turning to the amended design of Plot A, it is noted the scheme has introduced a number of addition balconies. This assessment identifies that whilst the addition of the balconies will reduce daylight levels to some extent, given the high levels of daylight availability; these rooms are likely to continue to exceed BRE guidelines. Furthermore, the assessment also concludes that the overall levels of sunlight being received would also meet BRE guidance. A furthermore amendment to the scheme is the reconfiguration of the ground and first floor levels through the introduction of duplex units. These units would be duplex with rooms facing out onto the internal courtyard creating a dual aspect. Following an assessment of the amended layouts, it is identified that the some of the rooms which face out into the courtyard fall short of the guideline values for daylight at ground floor level. This is mainly due to the building, however, these rooms are mainly bedrooms and are assessed against lower target levels of 1% ADF. Therefore, all of the roofs generally adhere to the relevant guidelines. With regards to sunlight, the overall levels achieved accord with the guidance.
- 7.6.30 Looking at Plot K, a number of the dwelling units as detailed in the application submission would be below the National Described Space Standards. The units in question are the studios being 32 sq.m are 5 sq.m below the 37 sq.m standard. In addition, the one bedroom, two person units which have floor areas of 42 sq.m, is 8 sq.m below the 50 sq.m standard. However, as detailed in the PPG, there is no national requirement for authorities to apply national space standards for such developments. Furthermore, the PPG stipulates that where national space standards are adopted, authorities can dis-apply them for particular development types such as Build to Rent schemes.
- 7.6.31 In order to offset for the shortfall in space standards, , amenity space is provided elsewhere within the building which is available for all future occupiers of this building. This is considered in more detail in paragraphs 7.7.34 to 7.7.35. In addition, as the apartments are part of a built-to-rent product, a holistic approach to co-living encourages members of the residential community to interact and contribute through the variety of communal facilities and provisions.
- 7.6.32 Turning back to space standards, the apartments have been designed to minimise circulation space and maximise open living spaces. The apartments would also been not too deep in order to allow light penetration. They would all have good daylight levels and the windows are generously proportionate at approximately 2.5m wide for

living rooms and 1.25m wide for bedrooms. The floor to ceiling heights are 2.4m in height which exceed national space standards. In addition, the standardisation of the units allows for a higher quality, consistent finish to be achieved. With regards to the studios particularly, these benefit from larger windows to provide more natural daylight, where there is a window adjacent to the kitchen worktop to provide an outlook and natural ventilation. There would also be separate bedroom and living zones to provide privacy and divide the flat into daytime and night time uses.

- 7.6.33 Plot K, like most Build to Rent accommodation, comprises an internal community space (Communal Lobby) for residential use as you enter the north-western entrance of the building. This lobby is approximately 220 sq.m in area and could include (dependent on the final operator) a lounge, library, dining room and office spaces. This space overlooks and would interact with Southgate Park which will act as a spill out amenity space for the future occupiers of this development. The proposed development would also comprise a residents 'lounge on the 8th floor which incorporates a communal area. This space also connects to an outdoor terrace as well and this would be a dedicated shared space. A future operator would also be able to utilise this space for organised events. This space would therefore, help to diversify the choice of external amenity space available to residents in Plot K.
- 7.6.34 In addition to the above, through negotiations with the applicant following the Design Review, they are also providing additional outdoor amenity space (395 sq.m) within the internal courtyard area which would be south facing. This would be a shared communal area as well and would have a connection with the proposed lobby area as well. With the provision of high quality, communal amenity spaces within Plot K, as well as access to Southgate Park, these facilities would more than compensate for the limited shortfall in space standards. Moreover, the site is also within 10 minute walking distance to King George V playing fields.
- 7.6.35 The daylight assessment for Plot K tested a total of 556 rooms. The ADF results show that 507 (91%) of the rooms tests would achieve or exceed the recommended ADF guideline value. The rooms which fall short include 14 living/dining rooms which achieve between 1.21% and 1.49% ADF. They are therefore, slightly below the guideline value of 1.5%. The 8 studios which face onto the courtyard achieve ADF values ranging from 0.95% to 1.7%. The results for the studios assess the average light across the entire floorspace, rather than specific levels in different areas of the accommodation. However, the layout of these studios is such that the living dining rooms are located towards the elevations of the property ensuring the best light levels, likely to be equivalent of 1.5% to 2% and with the bedrooms being around 1%. Overall, the level of light achieved will likely be appropriate parts of the accommodation. Therefore, it can be inferred that the daylight levels in each portion of the rooms will be akin to the recommended guidelines for each room type therefore, providing appropriate light levels to the uses laid out. The remaining rooms are bedrooms, and whilst these are slightly below standards, the BRE guide considers bedrooms to be less important than main habitable rooms.
- 7.6.36 In terms of sunlight, an assessment was undertaken of 625 windows of which 267 (43%) achieve the guideline for annual sunlight, and 291 (47%) achieve winter guideline values. As with Plot A discussed above, the expectation of sunlight is lower in a town setting and as indicated above, the majority of the rooms tested will achieve the recommended daylight levels.
- 7.6.37 In relation to the outlook and privacy of future occupiers of both Plots A and K, as detailed in paragraph 7.7.2 to 7.7.5, the overall separation distances are considered on balance to be acceptable. As such, the overall level of privacy and outlook of the future occupiers in context with existing development would be acceptable. With regards to the properties which would overlook the courtyard, the buildings have been designed

to ensure that there is sufficient separation distances between apartments. Focusing on the proposed amendments to the internal courtyards to both Plots A and K, these have been designed and tested to ensure they achieve maximum levels of sunlight to ensure they are functional and usable space for future occupiers of the development.

7.6.38 Looking at the masterplan in more detail, as referred to above, the remainder of the development scheme which has been submitted is in outline form only. Consequently, there is limited detail at this stage to assess the impact these parts of the proposal would have on future residents in terms of living space standards, amenity provision, outlook and privacy. However, the applicant has submitted a sunlight and daylight assessment to demonstrate how future plots could be delivered to ensure the level of light enjoyed by existing properties are not detrimentally affected (Please refer to Paragraphs 7.7.22 to 7.7.25). They also provided indicative separation distances to demonstrate how future parcels could be delivered. Notwithstanding, a detailed assessment on sunlight and daylight assessment would be provided as part of each reserved matters application once the internal room arrangements, buildings scale, massing and design are known. As such, these aspects would be assessed at the detailed stage as part of any reserved matters application.

7.6.39 Having regard to the above assessment, it is considered that future residents of the dwellings will all have an acceptable living environment.

Noise impact on existing and future residents

7.6.40 With respect to noise, Policy FP8: Pollution Sensitive Uses stipulates that planning permission for pollution sensitive uses will be granted where they will not be subjected to unacceptably high levels of pollution exposure from either existing, or proposed pollution generating uses. Taking this policy into consideration, it is appreciated the application site does sit within a town centre environment so there is already a significant amount of background noise generated by traffic, plant and equipment, pedestrians and residents as well as the operation of existing businesses. As such, these noise sources could have an impact on the future amenities of the future residents of the development as well.

7.6.41 Dealing first with the impact of noise from the development, specifically construction, it is recommended a condition could be imposed to any permission restricting the hours in which noisy activities can take place. The imposition of such condition is supported by the Council's Environmental Health Section. With this condition in place, it would help to protect the amenities of existing nearby residents and business operators from unacceptable noise levels outside of the hours specified in the condition (Please see condition 12).

7.6.42 Turning to the potential impact on future occupiers within the proposed development, it is comprehensively detailed in section 5.10 of this committee report that a number of concerns have been raised by the Council's Environmental Health Section. These concerns relate to the potential impact of external noise sources on future residents from the following sources:-

- Mechanical Plant and Equipment (Existing and Proposed);
- Existing business operators;
- Traffic on the local highway network;
- Playground noise from the MUGA from the Primary School;
- Luton Airport flight path;
- Other background noises which occur within the town centre and surrounding area.

7.6.43 Given the aforementioned, the applicant submitted a noise impact assessment as part of this planning application which assesses the aforementioned noises sources in

detail. It also provides details of potential noise mitigation measures from the various noise sources. Following consultation with the Environmental Health Section, as detailed in Section 5.10 of the report, concerns have been raised regarding some of the modelling work undertaken as detailed in the Impact Assessment or needs more detailed work.

- 7.6.44 Following a review of the noise assessment in combination with further correspondence with the applicants noise consultant to address these concerns, it is considered that an extensive noise survey has been undertaken. This is because the measurements taken were conducted across the application site during daytime, evening and night time/early morning hours during both weekdays and weekend periods. The proposed development itself, is no different from any other urban redevelopment where there will be multiple noise sources within a typical town centre setting. However, due to the town centre setting, it is not always possible to map and characterise every specific existing and future noise assessment in accordance with British Standards (BS4142 – Method for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound). For reference, BS4142 is applicable to determine noise levels at outdoor locations to assess sounds from existing, proposed, new, modified or additional sources.
- 7.6.45 Impacts which are determined by an assessment in line with BS4142 for sources that are outside of the site boundary cannot be mitigated i.e. providing a higher rated building envelope (in terms of sound insulation) as it would not change the outcome of the assessment. Therefore, the aforementioned standard requires consideration is made to other standards which are deemed more appropriate. Therefore, in line with the requirements of BS4142, BS8233:2014 (Guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings) has been used by the applicant's noise consultant to assess acceptable living conditions for future residents of the development.
- 7.6.46 Turning specifically to Plots A and K, based on the survey measurements which have been submitted, the assessment provides details of mitigation in the form of glazing, façade and ventilation specifications to achieve internal noise levels in accordance with the standards. The scheme would use MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery) which provides fresh filtered air into the building whilst retaining most of the energy which has been used in heating the building. This would also be in accordance with BS58233. As such, there is not a requirement to have trickle vents on the façade of the building to achieve the required ventilation rate.
- 7.6.47 With respect to plant noise limits for Plots A and K, these have been positioned so that the BS8233 internal noise levels are achieved. However, air handling plant is considered a steady and anonymous noise source. In terms of the masterplan detailed in the noise assessment, as this part of the scheme is in outline the details provided are only indicative such as plot locations. Therefore, a detailed assessment would have to be carried out for future plots as their locations are determined and from this aspect, one would be able the noise climate/surrounding noise sources at that time. This would also addresses the Environmental Health Officers concerns regarding the change into background noise over the planned development period. In addition, future assessments could also detail any suitable mitigation measures which are required to protect future residents.
- 7.6.48 In regards to control of noise from transport, plan and commercial / leisure, this is typically conditioned which are set along the following:-
- Entertainment noise shall be no higher than NR20 inside residential receptors;
 - Transport noise should be controlled to meet BS58233:2014 IANL guidance whilst background ventilation is provided;

- Plant rating noise level should be controlled to no higher than X in relation to pre-existing background noise levels.
- 7.6.49 In terms of the assessment of impact for future receptors, the Noise Impact Assessment does provide detailed analysis of internal levels in accordance with BS8233. This is deemed to be the only means to guarantee acceptable noise levels within dwellings. In terms of the points raised about cumulative impacts, the assessment does consider these in detail which has determined what noise mitigation measures are required.
- 7.6.50 With regards to plant itself, limits have been applied for future receptors in order to achieve internal noise level criteria in accordance with BS8233. This would be achieved by a combination of limiting plant noise and the façade sound insulation performance of the building in question. With regards to the comments on aircraft noise, the applicant has confirmed that this has been picked up in the attended measurements as the general noise climate was measured. Therefore, the mitigation measures provided in the scheme would take into account aircraft noise.
- 7.6.51 It is also noted that the façade strategy proposed in the noise report accounts for a much higher noise level than stated in the noise contours as a worst-case. Consequently, aircraft noise would be mitigated by default. With regards to the calculations provided in the Noise Impact Assessment which Environmental Health have raised some concerns about, additional information has been provided regarding the calculations.
- 7.6.52 These calculations consider the layout of the apartments taken from the drawings taken from the architects. The external noise levels used in the calculations were based on the highest predicted façade noise levels of the development which results from surrounding noise sources. The calculations were used specific data was used to determine the external plant noise levels for existing receptors. These calculations have allowed for an additional 5dB to account for the contribution of other external noise sources.
- 7.6.53 With regards to the modelling undertaken, which Environmental Health raised some questions on, was prepared in accordance with relevant guidance with data being at worst-case. This modelling, which was used to draw up the mitigation measures for the scheme, ensures that noise levels would not exceed the noise level criteria set out in British Standards.
- 7.6.54 Given the aforementioned, it is evident that a comprehensive analysis was undertaken of the wider noise environment. In addition, the scheme has been designed to ensure that future residents would not be exposed to unacceptable noise levels. Furthermore, detailed analysis in terms of noise for future phases of development can be dealt with as part of any reserved matters application. This approach is supported by Environmental Health do consider some of the detail in terms of noise mitigation and building design. In addition, Environmental Health did not object to the application as they also recommended, if the Council was minded to grant planning permission, a number of conditions. The recommended conditions would cover the following:-
- Sound insulation and noise mitigation details – external noise;
 - Sound insulation and noise mitigation details – internal noise;
 - Noise levels – Mechanical Equipment or Plant;
 - Hours of operation;
 - Overheating and noise;
 - Construction Management; and
 - Delivery and service plan.

7.6.55 With the above conditions imposed, it would ensure that the amenities of future residents of the proposed development would be protected. In addition, these would also help to overcome the concerns raised by Environmental Health in relation to some of the noise impact modelling and technical details outlined in the Noise Impact Assessment.

7.7 Means of access and highway safety

7.7.1 The plans and Transport Assessment (TA) submitted with the application identify that in terms of Phase 1, Plot A would be served by a new vehicular access off Swingate which would serve a courtyard parking area. In relation to Plot K, this would be served via reconfigured existing access off Southgate which would also serve a parking courtyard. Both of these roads are managed by Stevenage Borough Council as landowner.

7.7.2 In addition to the above, in order to deliver the residential block within Plot K, Towers Road will need to be stopped up with the existing ramped access road having to be removed. In terms of pedestrian and cycle access, with respect to Plot A, the scheme would seek to retain existing footways which run along the northern end of Danestrete as well as those along Swingate. The scheme, in terms of the first phase, also seeks to retain the existing ramped access which runs up from Danestrete through to Stevenage Train Station via the Arts and Leisure Centre. In order to deliver the development within Plot A, the existing car park will have to be closed off with its existing access points extinguished. The scheme would also comprise a reconfigured service road serving the western car park which is to be retained. The spur road would comprise replacement Electric Vehicle (EV) bays, a disabled bay and loading bay.

7.7.3 Taking the aforementioned into consideration, the scheme comprises a new "Arrival Space" at the bottom of this ramp. This would not only create an enhanced sense of arrival as you come into the town centre from the train station, it would also allow for continued access between the town centre and Stevenage train station until an alternative solution is delivered in the future. The new building within Plot A would have pedestrian access points which connect to the new "Arrival Space" and existing footway network.

7.7.4 Plot K would comprise of a new pedestrian access via the creation of a new pedestrianised plaza to the north of the building. There would also be pedestrian access to the rear of the building which would also be accessible via the existing pedestrian and cycle route which borders the site. The scheme also comprises a new shared pedestrian and cycle route between the town centre and the existing pedestrian and cycle route to the south via the new park (Southgate Park).

7.7.5 The wider scheme, whilst in outline form, would comprise a mixture of street typologies comprising of vehicle access routes with cycle paths and footways to provide enhanced permeability within the town centre. These cycle paths and footways would also provide continuity between the site and existing pedestrian and cycle facilities which make up the town centre and the wider pedestrian and cycle network. The scheme's design would also retain key networks of footpaths and provides additional footway/cycle links both within the site and from the site to surrounding areas. A detailed design of these new pedestrian and cycle links would form part of any future reserved matters applications for the later phases of development.

7.7.6 Looking at the street typologies, whilst these are indicative, they have been designed to aide movement and flow of people, cyclists and vehicles throughout the masterplan area. One of the key typologies of the scheme is the creation of a new boulevard which runs east to west forming a connection to the town square up to the bus interchange which was approved recently by the Council (Planning Reference:-

20/00135/FPM) and the railway station beyond. The typologies outlined in the masterplan also include indicative details on access roads, tertiary streets, service mews, mews streets. They set out how these spaces will work, including the areas which are designated for cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles. The typologies themselves would be heavily focused towards pedestrians and cyclists.

- 7.7.7 The proposed walking and cycling improvements detailed in phase 1 and the wider masterplan will support the Stevenage Mobility Strategy set out in SBC's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (March 2017). This seeks improvements to the walking and cycling network in Stevenage by providing new links where there are missing gaps in the network, better access to the railway station, improved lighting and visibility at underpasses, more policing and more cycle parking at key locations, such as the town centre and railway station. The IDP advises that new developments will need to be appropriately connected to existing walking and cycling networks. Through the proposed pedestrian and cycle routes within the masterplan and detailed in Phase 1 which would connect to the existing pedestrian and cycle network, the development would be well connected so as to meet the objectives of the IDP.
- 7.7.8 Turning to the existing bus station itself, a key aspect of the wider regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre is the relocation of the existing bus station. As referenced in paragraph 7.8.6 of this report, the replacement bus station has been granted planning permission from the Council. Once this facility is operational, the existing bus station would be closed off with the vehicle access points stopped up. The land in which this station sits would form part of a new Garden Square along with an enhanced public realm incorporating new street typologies, including the boulevard which do not include provision for motor-vehicles (unless for emergencies or events in the town).
- 7.7.9 Looking at traffic generation, the applicant's transport consultant has produced a transport assessment (TA) which incorporates details of proposed traffic generation for weekdays. The assessment also comprises a future year assessment model in order to inform the potential future impact of the development on the surrounding highway network. In regards to the traffic generation, the peak periods the assessment focused on were 08:00-09:00 AM and 17:00-18:00 PM. The model utilised to predict the amount of traffic which would be generated was via TRICS (Trip Rate Information Computer System) with a base model of private residential development and education land uses. This is because the majority of the non-residential aspect of the scheme would be a re-provision. In addition, the TA also reviews existing vehicular movements as well as on-street surveys which included a review of the off-street and on-street parking occupancy rates which were undertaken in April 2019. This is in order to develop baseline data as part of the traffic modelling of the scheme. In addition, the TA also focuses on committed and planned developments, including the new bus interchange as well as planned highway improvements such as the A1(M) Smart Motorway and the GSK hamburger scheme (new upgraded roundabout for the Gunnels Wood Road and Broadhall Way (A602) junction). The TA also undertook a comprehensive assessment of accident data for the most up to date period from HCC's accident data team.
- 7.7.10 In order to understand the potential trip generation of the scheme, the assessment also sets out a baseline travel demand. This is because the site currently comprises a mixture of non-residential uses such as retail and commercial floorspace, council offices and surface car parks. In consideration of the trips for the commercial and retail elements, it is needs to be taken into account that the development is generally a re-provision of these existing floorspace areas and not new trip generators within the town centre. As such, the assessment has focused on the effect of new trip generators.
- 7.7.11 Focusing on the proposed residential demand, the scheme is deemed to be "car-lite", with the provision of approximately 0.11 parking spaces per unit. The justification for

this level of parking is to support the use of sustainable transport modes such as by foot, cycling and public transport. The TRICS database of surveyed sites has also been used to forecast the residential travel demand associated with the development. These sites were selected based on criteria which reflect the nature of this project. The assessment also looked at modal split (based on Census Data) in order to determine a base line for the estimated method of travel to work. The total forecast residential trip generation based on 1,867 units for the AM Peak is detailed in the table below:-

Mode	In	Out	Total
Train	73	384	458
Bus	20	105	125
Taxi	1	4	5
Motorcycle	3	16	19
Car Driver	16	81	97
Car Passenger	4	20	24
Bicycle	9	47	56
Foot	69	361	430
Total	195	1019	1214

7.7.12 In terms of the total forecast for the residential trip generation of 1,867 units for the PM Peak is detailed in the table below:-

Mode	In	Out	Total
Train	293	136	429
Bus	80	37	117
Taxi	3	1	4
Motorcycle	12	6	18
Car Driver	62	29	91
Car Passenger	15	7	22
Bicycle	36	17	52
Foot	275	128	403
Total	776	362	1138

7.7.13 Based on the aforementioned, it is forecasted the development would generate 1,214 AM Peak and 1,138 PM Peak two-way total person trips. Of this, 97 and 91 two-way car driver trips are expected within the peak hours equating to less than two vehicles a minute across the hour. Looking at the more detailed aspects of the scheme, the assessment also looks at the level of trips which are generated by the developments within Plots A and K. In this regard, the total forecast residential trip generation for Plots A (264 units) and Plot K (496) for the AM Peak is detailed in the table below:-

Mode	In	Out	Total
Train	30	155	185
Bus	8	42	51
Taxi	0	2	2
Motorcycle	1	7	8
Car Driver	6	33	39
Car Passenger	2	8	10
Bicycle	4	19	23
Foot	28	146	174
Total	49	412	491

7.7.14 In terms of the total forecast for the residential trip generation of the PM Peak for the detailed aspects of the proposal, these are set out in the table below:-

Mode	In	Out	Total
Train	118	55	173
Bus	32	15	47
Taxi	1	1	2
Motorcycle	5	2	7
Car Driver	25	12	37
Car Passenger	6	3	9
Bicycle	14	7	21
Foot	111	52	163
Total	314	146	460

7.7.15 The detailed elements of the scheme based on the above, would generate in the AM Peak 491 two-way trips and in the PM Peak 460 two-way trips. In terms of car travel, a total of 39 and 37 two-way trips are expected within the peak hours equating to less than one vehicle per minute across the hour.

7.7.16 The assessment submitted as part of the TA report looks at the delivery of a two form entry (FE) school. The number of pupils is based on a typical 1FE of 30 places per year group. Primary schools typically have seven year groups from reception to year six, there a typical 2FE has 420 pupils. However, to ensure a robust assessment, an additional 30 pupils have also been included as Primary Schools generally have a nursery attached. So the overall pupil total could be 450. The assessment utilising TRICS data, identified that at the AM Peak, there would a total of 672 two-way trips. This is broken down to 523 inbound trips and 149 outbound trips. With respect to the PM Peak, it is estimated there would be 41 two-way trips. This is broken down as 13 inbound and 28 outbound respectively.

7.7.17 In terms of the trips themselves, it is envisaged that the primary school will be used by the local community including the future residents of the proposed development. However, the TA identifies a mode share split based on evidence derived from Hertfordshire County Council. This evidence is used as a baseline to identify the potential mode share of trips generated by the proposed primary school. The TA in this regard, identifies the following mode split for the AM Peak:-

Mode	In	Out	Total
Train	0	0	0
Bus	0	0	0
Taxi	0	0	0
Motorcycle	0	0	0
Car Driver	0	0	0
Car Passenger	55	16	71
Bicycle	28	8	36
Foot	437	125	562
Other	3	1	4
Total	523	149	672

7.7.18 The table below identifies the predicted PM Peak in terms of travel modes:-

Mode	In	Out	Total
Train	0	0	0
Bus	0	0	0
Taxi	0	0	0
Motorcycle	0	0	0
Car Driver	0	0	0
Car Passenger	1	3	4
Bicycle	1	1	2
Foot	11	23	34
Other	0	0	0
Total	13	28	41

7.7.19 The aforementioned identifies that for primary schools, there would be 71 two-way AM Peak trips, the primary school is forecast to generate 47 two-way vehicle trips in the AM peak period and three two-way trips in the PM peak. In addition, based on typical education staffing levels, the education proposal could generate up to 35 members of staff consisting 15 full time teachers as well as part time cleaners, caterers, cleaners etc.

7.7.20 With regards to the Public Services Hub, the trips associated with this part of the development would already be on the network within Stevenage Town Centre. This is a result of the Hub replacing the existing Council buildings in the centre. Given this, trips associated with the hub have not been presented in the TA as it is identified the proposal will not create any additional net increases in trips. In addition, the Travel Plans for the commercial floorspace and Hub will encourage no car modes and reduce private car driver trips.

7.7.21 Turning to deliveries and servicing, it is forecast that for Plot A, at the AM Peak there would 1 Light Goods Vehicle (LGV) an in the PM Peak there would be 2 LGV. During the servicing peak (10:00 to 11:00), it is forecasted there would be 2 LGV visiting the development plot. However, over the course of the day (07:00 to 19:00), it is estimated there would be 24 LGV visits. With respect to Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV), it is predicted there would be 3 visits a day. Turning to Plot K, it is forecast that at the AM Peak, there would be 1 LGV visit and in the PM Peak 3 LGV arrivals. In regards to the servicing Peak timeframe, there would be approximately 4 LGV visits and 44 LGV visits on a daily basis. With regards to HGV, it has been modelled that there would be 1 visit during the Servicing Peak with daily total of 5 HGV visits.

7.7.22 As detailed above, it is forecast that for Plots A and K would generate in the region of 27 and 49 daily servicing trips respectively. Based on the forecast daily profile, there would 2 serving trips in any hour to Plot A and 5 trips for Plot K. Turning to the outline aspect of the residential aspect of the development scheme, the TA forecasts the following:-

- AM Peak (08:00 to 09:00) – 3 LGV, 0 HGV;
- PM Peak (17:00 to 18:00) – 8 LGV, 1 HGV;
- Servicing Peak (10:00 to 11:00) – 10 LGV, 1 HGV;
- Daily (07:00 to 19:00) – 99 LGV, 12 HGV.

7.7.23 Taking the aforementioned into consideration, the residential uses detailed in the later phases of the masterplan forecasts to generate approximately 110 servicing arrivals per day, with a maximum of 11 arrivals in the servicing peak hour. In terms of trips per hour, this equates to approximately 9.25 (rounded up to 10) trips. With respect to the not residential elements of the scheme, Plot A comprises 149 sq.m of non-residential/retail floorspace. As such, the forecast delivery trips for this element is 1 LGV arrival at the AM Peak and 1 in the Servicing Peak, with 2 arrivals in total. The

modelling does not identify any HGV deliveries which are due to the limited size of the premises.

7.7.24 In terms of non-residential elements in the masterplan area, it is forecasted in the TA the following:-

- AM Peak (08:00 to 09:00) – 5 LGV, 0 HGV;
- PM Peak (17:00 to 18:00) – 1 LGV, 0 HGV;
- Servicing Peak (10:00 to 11:00) – 7 LGV, 1 HGV;
- Daily (07:00 to 19:00) –50 LGV, 4 HGV.

7.7.25 Based on the modelling, it is identified there would be 54 servicing arrivals per day. However, it is important to note that not all of the servicing trips will be new trips on the highway network. This is a result of the proposed development replacing existing commercial premises and as such, already has associated servicing trips already on the network. With respect to the Hub, this element of the proposal is still under development by the Council where the detailed scheduled of uses is not available at this stage. However, the trips associated with the plot will largely comprise of those already on the network within Stevenage Town Centre, this is a result of the Hub replacing the existing Council offices already within the town centre. In addition, the nature of the other commercial/retail uses will largely comprise pass-by-linked trips associated with the wider town centre use. On this basis, the Hub is not forecasted to create any substantial increased in trips, and is therefore accounted for within the Town Centre Highways Model (S-Paramics). Furthermore, limited car parking will be provided for the hub (to defined as part of any future reserved matters application) with supporting travel plans which will seek to encourage sustainable travel modes and reduce single occupancy car trips.

7.7.26 In terms of the impact on the local highway network, the TA considers the effect of the masterplan, alongside the two-centre proposals to re-locate the bus station and introduce improvements for non-car modes on Lytton Way. In order to ensure there is consistency between this application and the approved application for the bus interchange, the TA evaluates the effects of introducing bus priority lanes on Lytton Way as part of the bus interchange proposal. In support of the TA, a Technical S-Paramics Model Forecasting report has been prepared in co-ordination with Hertfordshire County Council. The Highway Assessment model looked at a number of different scenarios. Under each scenario, three peak periods have been modelled including the AM peak (08:00 to 09:00), PM Peak (17:00 to 18:00) and Saturday Peak (12:00 to 18:00). The assessment scenarios are as follows:-

- Core Assessment 1 (CA1):
 - 2019 base matrix; and
 - Existing Bus Station.
- Core Assessment 2 (CA2):
 - 2021 future year matrix (to include relevant committed developments)
 - 2021 Committed Schemes (GSK updated hamburger scheme and A1(M) Smart Motorway);
 - SG1 Phase 1 Proposals (Plots A and K); and
 - Relocated Bus Station
- Core Assessment 3 (CA3):
 - 2031 future year matrix (to include relevant committed developments);
 - 2021 Committed Schemes (GSK updated hamburger scheme and A1(M) Smart Motorway and 2031 schemes (North Road signalised junctions);
 - Full SG1 Masterplan Proposals; and

- Relocated Bus Station (Preferred layout plus associated Lytton Way scheme – with full length bus priority lanes).
- Core Assessment 4 (CA4):
 - 2031 future year matrix (to include relevant committed developments);
 - Committed Schemes (GSK updated hamburger scheme and A1(M) Smart Motorway and 2031 schemes (North Road signalised junctions);
 - Full SG1 Masterplan Proposals; and
 - Relocated Bus Station (Preferred layout plus associated Lytton Way scheme – with partial length bus priority lanes).

7.7.27 The TA as part of the assessment for each Core Assessment (CA) scenario, in order to illustrate network performance and queuing lengths, the following key junctions around the town centre were modelled:-

- A1155 Fairlands Way/A602 Lytton Way;
- A1155 Fairlands Way/ St George’s Way;
- St George’s Way / Six Hills Way / Monkswood Way; and
- Six Hills Way / Lytton Way / Danestrete / London Road.

7.7.28 The assessment, taking into account the proposed arrangements to Lytton Way, as determined under the Bus Interchange application, would have an impact on general traffic capacity on Lytton Way. This is likely to result in queuing around the wider town centre network. Turning back to the CAs in terms of network performance, for the AM Peak this is detailed in the table below:-

	CA 1	CA2	CA3	CA4
Total Vehicles	23779	24378	26725	26768
Average Time (s) / Veh	305	303	610	606
Average Distance (m) / Veh	3405	3676	3767	3753
Average Speed (mph)	25	27	14	14

7.7.29 In the modelled baseline data, the average speeds for CA1 and CA2 are at similar levels. However, the speeds do reduce in CA3 and 4 and this is predominantly owing to the forecast levels of traffic growth associated with the Local Plan committed developments (to 2031) within the model, alongside the introduction of bus lanes on Lytton Way. In terms of the impacts of each core assessment in relation to queuing across the model network, the above table represents the level of queuing at the middle of the Peak Hour i.e. 8:30. This is when it is considered queues are at their greatest. Whilst there is an increase in queuing in the future years, the model still continues to show the network functions well, with fairly low levels of queuing.

7.7.30 Turning to the PM Peak hour, the CAs in relation to network performance is detailed in the table below:-

	CA 1	CA2	CA4
Total Vehicles	26758	24378	26768
Average Time (s) / Veh	305	303	606
Average Distance (m) / Veh	3405	3676	3753
Average Speed (mph)	25	27	14

7.7.31 In the modelled baseline scenario (CA1), there would be an average speed of 27 mph across the network experienced. This decreases to 17mph in CA2 before further reducing following the introduction of bus priority measures on Lytton Way. In terms of what the models identify, under CA1, the level of queuing around the town centre during the PM peak hour is slightly higher than the AM Peak hour. In terms of CA2, the increased level of queuing is forecast in the PM Peak which is primarily due to the capacity downgrade of Lytton Way as part of the proposed bus interchange development (reduction from 3-lane to 2-lane). Accordingly, queuing is forecast to increase on Lytton Way in both directions and on St George's Way, primarily as a result of the Lytton Way works with vehicles transferring to avoid delays.

7.7.32 The model also shows some traffic queuing along St George's Way to the roundabout junction of the A602 / St George's Ways. There would also be increasing delays on the A602 (N) at the junction of A602/A1155 Fairlands Way. However, the model does show that vehicles are still moving along the network despite delays and queues do dissipate as the hour progresses. With regards to CA3, with the introduction of full bus priority lanes (as an identified requirement in the adopted Local Plan) results in the model not completing its run which is why it is not detailed in the table at paragraph 7.8.30. The reason why the model does not complete its run is largely down to traffic growth within the 2031 future year model (i.e. the end of the Local Plan period) rather than the traffic which is generated by the SG1 development. This is a limitation of the model and in reality, it is likely vehicles would re-route via alternative roads.

7.7.33 In regards to CA4, it is identified there is a further increase in queuing forecasted over that identified for CA1 and CA2 within the PM Peak hour. This is expected due to the Local Plan growth (to 2031) and the full SG1 development, alongside the partial-length bus lanes. As such, the model shows a displacement of queuing to elsewhere on the town network. The models do indicate that despite increases in queuing, vehicles continue to move along the network, with traffic dissipating as the hour progresses. In terms of the Saturday Peak, the modelling undertaken in TA shows, as per the Weekday, whilst queuing will increase between CA1 and CA4 scenarios during the Saturday Peak Hour (12:00 to 13:00) and speeds reduce from 28mph (CA1) to 16 mph (CA4), vehicles are still moving along the network.

7.7.34 As part of the overall modelling exercise, consideration was also given to the reduction in town centre parking which is considered in more detail in Section 7.9 of this report. There would be a total loss of 510 town spaces from the town centre following implementation of key developments, including this development scheme. In terms of

parking being lost, there would be 479 off-street spaces and 31 on-street spaces. This would mean there would be a reduction in vehicle trips to these car parking spaces.

7.7.35 In order to reduce the impact on the highway network, the applicant is looking to deliver a number of measures to encourage a modal shift towards active travel. These include the following:-

- Car-lite proposal (reduced car parking provision) and town centre parking consolidation i.e. at 0.11 parking spaces per unit;
- New long and short-stay cycle parking;
- EV charging points within new residential areas (10% of parking spaces to have EV charging facilities for Plots A and K);
- Improved provision of on-street EV charging points and Car Club bays as part of the future SG1 masterplan phases;
- Sustainable delivery measures; and
- Travel Plan measures.

7.7.36 The overarching strategy of the development is to enhance the opportunities for sustainable travel to be maximised and fully inclusive. This will be through the provision of enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes and connections to the existing network along with the creation, in future phases, of liveable streets. In terms of the framework Travel Plan, this identifies measures to promote sustainable travel choices. This includes a reduction in parking, EV charging and the feasibility of implementing a Car Club within the masterplan framework. It also looks at the provision of secure and safe cycle parking, all properties being broadband ready and issuing residential travel packs upon occupation (in order to raise awareness of sustainable travel opportunities). The Travel Plan also recommends the provision of a similar travel park for future employees of new workplaces within the masterplan.

7.7.37 In terms of residential deliveries, there would be an increase in the provision of delivery drop-off/collection services such as Amazon Lock and Click and Collect. With local collection points it reduces having deliveries sent to individual home addresses. Therefore, residents will be encouraged to utilise these collection points when ordering goods. This would be detailed in the Travel Pack when a resident moves into one of the properties. With respect to commercial and retail operators, they will be encouraged to implement a management strategy to enable the efficient and sustainable movement of goods and deliveries. In addition, whilst not part of this planning application, is the re-location of the bus station in close proximity to the railway station. This helps to provide a better public transport interchange which will help the town centre to be more sustainable through the enhanced use of buses and trains.

7.7.38 Looking at the impact on the pedestrian and cycle network, the detailed application (Plots A and K) is forecast to generate 176 and 165 two-way trips in the morning and evening peaks respectively in terms of pedestrian trips. There would be an additional 239 (AM Peak) and 224 (PM Peak) trips walking to public transport services. This equates to 416 two-way pedestrian trips in the AM and 389 in the PM Peaks. The remaining outline scheme is forecast to generate 254 and 238 two-way trips within the morning and evening peaks. There would also be an additional 344 and 322 AM and PM peak trips where people are walking to public transport. This would equate to 598 two-way pedestrians in the AM and 560 in the PM peak. This equates to up to 10 additional pedestrian movements every 10 minutes across the masterplan area.

7.7.39 Whilst the existing pedestrianised town centre has a strong pedestrian environment, the proposed development would seek to upgrade and provide enhanced areas of public realm throughout the masterplan. As such, the forecast pedestrian trips can be accommodated within the existing and enhanced footway networks. Turning to cycle

trips, it is forecasted for Plots A and K, there would be 23 and 21 two-way trips in the AM and PM peak hours. The outline element of the scheme is predicted to generate 33 and 31 two-way trips in the AM and PM peaks.

- 7.7.40 In order to accommodate cycling within the development, the detailed aspect of the proposal (Plots A and K) would seek to provide 762 long stay cycle parking spaces (ratio of 1:1) for residents and 24 Sheffield stands for visitors. The outline aspect of the scheme, whilst indicative, would seek to provide 1,122 long stay and 76 short stay spaces. However, full details for cycle parking for the outline aspect of the scheme would be dealt with at the reserved matters stage. The scheme through the provision of relevant cycle infrastructure, which also includes enhancements to the existing cycle network, would help to support active travel with a mode shift towards cycling.
- 7.7.41 With respect to the forecast impact on the public transport, for Plots A and K, the scheme is predicted to generate 51 and 48 two-way trips by bus within the AM and PM peak hours, respectively. The remaining outline elements are predicted to generate 74 and 69 two-way bus trips within the AM and PM peak hours respectively. This results in a total of 125 and 117 two-way trips within the peak hours as an output of the masterplan. In terms of distribution across all services, the proposal would generate two additional trips per service. However, in contrast, the TA identifies that all additional trips would use routes with destinations outside of town centre, suggesting the proposal would create 7 additional trips on each service.
- 7.7.42 In relation to rail services, the detailed plots in Phase 1 are expected to generate a total of 188 and 176 two-way rail trips during the AM and PM peaks. With respect to the wider masterplan (outline aspect), it is expected the development would generate a further 270 and 253 railway trips in the AM and PM peaks. In terms of distribution, it is reasonable to assume that the majority (approx. 90%) will be south towards London. The remainder (approx. 10%) would travel north of Stevenage. In terms of rail passengers per carriage, the modelling forecasts of up to 4 additional passengers per carriage for the scheme as a whole.
- 7.7.43 Following consultation with Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority, they are content with the overall approach of providing a high density residential development in a sustainable location with the attendant local car parking. They also do not raise any concerns from a highway safety perspective. This is because, the proposed development seeks to establish new cycle routes through the town centre which would connect into National Cycle Route 12 and the existing formal and informal routes which run through the town. In addition, the TA sets out a number of aspirations for the town centre in terms of pedestrian connectivity as well. As such the Highways Authority recommends at the reserved matters stage, to capture these aspirations through, a cycle strategy that is consistent with the LCWIP (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan) in HCC's LTP4 (Local Transport Plan 4).
- 7.7.44 In terms of the Trip Generation, the Highways Authority has accepted the principle of a very low car parking provision development. They also note that the scheme would be interlinked with the new bus interchange with improved connectivity to Stevenage Railway Station. As such, they consider the trip rates as set out in the TA are satisfactory. However, as set out in paragraph 7.8.43, this is dependent on the delivery of an "excellent level" and quality of cycle provision, including appropriate facilities for staff along with the provision for electric car charging and car club spaces.
- 7.7.45 For Plots A and K, the TA provides detailed Swept Path Analysis for emergency and refuse vehicles which can safely manoeuvre in around these plots (the later phases of the masterplan would require detailed Swept Path Analysis to form of any future reserved matters application submission). The applicant is also seeking to provide a number of measures to encourage a modal shift away from the public car. In addition,

details of vehicle access and the closure of Towers Road have also been provided with the application. The Highways Authority considers these details to be acceptable subject to them being secured via condition.

- 7.7.46 Turning to the outline element of the masterplan, details of off-street and on-street parking, cycle parking, vehicle access, trip generation, car parking management plans, public realm are all indicative. Therefore, as confirmed by the Highways Authority in their comments, these aspects would have to be secured as part of any future Reserved Matters application for each relevant development phase. This is to ensure the aspirations of LTP4 which seeks to put sustainable modes at the top of the hierarchy when assessing transport provision to new development. In terms of financial contributions, the Highways Authority is seeking £6,000 per Travel Plan monitoring contribution. This contribution has been agreed by the applicant.
- 7.7.47 In addition to the above, with respect to the proposed downgrading of Lytton Way, it is also to note that the Planning Inspector who lead to Examination in Public (EiP) did not raise any concerns to this proposal in her report. Under paragraph 179 it is states *“While a number of respondents are dissatisfied with the town centre proposals, it is principally the closure of part of Lytton Way that concerns most people. However, this partial closure will be of great benefit to the overall regeneration programme planned here and importantly provide an additional development site that will provide new offices and housing on the eastern side of the train station. I have not been presented with any alternative solutions to providing the much needed regeneration here”*. Whilst it is appreciated some may have concerns about the partial closure of Lytton Way and the potential highway impact, it is evident that both the Planning Inspector and Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority do not have any concerns with this proposal.
- 7.7.48 With regards to the potential impact of the development on the A1(M) motorway, through consultation with the Highways England, they do not raise any concerns with the application proposal in terms of impact on junctions 7 and 8.
- 7.7.49 Following consultation with the Council’s Engineering Section in terms of the highways which are managed by the Council, they have advised that they generally support the implementation of a quality cycle and pedestrian network with an emphasis on cycling and a modal shift away from the private car. In terms of the detailed design of any new cycleways and pedestrian routes, these would be dealt as part of a Street Development Agreement (SDA) between the Council and the applicant which can be secured as part of the S.106 agreement. Furthermore, it has also been agreed that all other detailed design of any highways works would also be dealt with as part of any SDA.
- 7.7.50 Given the aforementioned assessment, providing the suggested conditions are attached any permission issued and the financial obligations are secured, then it is not considered the proposed development would prejudice the safety and operation of the highway network being a parking lite scheme. Moreover, the scheme seeks to introduce and enhance pedestrian and cycle connectivity across this part of the town centre as well connect to the currently under construction bus interchange helps to encourage a modal shift from the private car. As such, the scheme builds on the objectives of Hertfordshire County Council’s LTP4, the policies contained in the adopted Local Plan (2019) and the National Framework along with the Council’s Mobility and Cycle Strategies.

7.8 Parking Provision

- 7.8.1 Policy IT5 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that planning permission will be granted where proposals comply with the parking standards set out in the plan. The

Council's Car Parking Standards SPD (2012) sets out the maximum amount of off-street parking for residential developments based on the number of bedrooms. It also sets out the requirements for non-residential developments based on floorspace. The proposed development in Plots A and K would comprise the following accommodation schedule:-

Plot A

- 57 no. Studio (Starter) apartments (1 parking space per unit);
- 125 no. one bedroom apartments (1 parking space per unit);
- 79 no. two bedroom apartments (1.5 parking spaces per unit); and
- 151 sq.m of retail space (1 space per 30sq.m of gross floor area)

Plot K

- 79 no. Studio apartments (1 parking space per unit);
- 313 no. one bedroom apartments (1 parking space per unit); and
- 104 no. two bedroom apartments (1.5 parking spaces per unit).

7.8.2 Taking into consideration of the above, there would be a requirement to provide 849 off-street parking spaces. No visitor parking is required as the parking provided is to be unallocated. However, the application site is located within residential accessibility zone 1 where the Council would seek between 25% to 50% of the maximum number of car parking spaces to serve the development. In this regard, the Council would require between 212.25 spaces (rounded up to 213) to 424.5 (rounded up to 425) parking spaces.

7.8.3 Turning to the retail element of the proposed, Section 4 of the Council's Parking Standards SPD states that non-residential development in the town centre will not follow the maximum standards provided. Parking provision for such developments will be calculated on a site by site basis via the TA process. In addition, National Policy stipulates that town centre developments should meet any parking needs through shared public parking provision. Dedicated provision for customers and staff will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. However, it is important to ensure that the supply of town centre parking is sufficient to support the vitality and viability of the retail economy. Given the limited size of the proposed retail space and accessibility to nearby surface car parks, no off-street parking is required for the proposed unit in this instance.

7.8.4 The proposed development in Phase 1 (Plots A and K) would comprise of parking 34 spaces (0 spaces in Plot A and 34 spaces (including 3 disabled bays) in Plot K) which are to be unallocated. Given this, whilst no visitor parking would be required, there would be a shortfall of between 179 spaces to 391 spaces serving the development. This is a significant shortfall in the level of off-street being provided to serve this development. However, paragraph 2.9 of the adopted Standards state reductions below the standards may be permitted where the location and/or characteristics of the development could reduce car ownership levels. Paragraph 2.22 of the Council's Car Parking Standards SPD, also states "*Car-free residential development will only be permitted in those locations that have accessibility by non-car modes and are within walking distance of shops and services.* Consequently, the Car Parking Standards do encourage lower parking provision on sites which are in more accessible locations such as Stevenage Town Centre. This is because it is well served by public transport by both bus and railway and there is also easy access to local shops and local facilities. Furthermore, the scheme seeks to provide additional and enhance cycle and pedestrian connectivity in order to help encourage the modal shift.

- 7.8.5 Further to the above, the Council has recently published the Draft Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD 2020. Whilst it is fully appreciated this is not formally adopted by the Council, it shows the intention to seek a reduced standard for residential parking in the town centre to between 0 to 25%. This is in order to encourage the shared use of public parking facilities between different uses to maximise housing density and minimise land occupied by parking. This is also reflected in paragraph 2.23 of the adopted Parking SPD. Furthermore, it is also to further encourage, as per the currently adopted Parking SPD, people to modal shift from the private car towards more sustainable forms of transport.
- 7.8.6 Given the above, the overall level of parking proposed is deemed to be acceptable. This is because firstly, the development is within in Stevenage Town Centre which is deemed to be a sustainable location where the site is in walking distance to the bus station, train station, shops and facilities. Secondly, by meeting the necessary standards, the level of parking required would dominate the development plot which is not considered to be good design as per the National Design Guide and as detailed in paragraph 2.22 of the adopted Parking Standards SPD (2012). Thirdly is cost, in order to deliver a basement car park, costs approximately £1,068 per sq.m to construct and a decked car park costs approximately £677 per sq.m (Source:- Statista, 2020 – costs based on 2018 prices). Taking this into consideration, for example on Plot K alone (which is the largest of the two plots), it could potentially cost approximately £2m to build a basement car park plus approximately £1.7m per decked car park floor in order to meet the Council's parking requirements. With such additional build costs, the viability of the development would be further weakened.
- 7.8.7 Turning to disabled parking, as parking will be communal, it is set out that 5% of the total spaces provided should be designated for disabled parking. However, it should be at the full standard and should not be reduced according to accessibility zones. The proposed development seeks to provide 3 disabled bays within Plot K. In relation to Plot A, following a redesign of this plot following concerns raised by the Design Review Panel, the scheme no longer incorporates a central courtyard area which would have been used for parking. Given this and through negotiations with the applicant and the Council's Engineering Section, there would be the provision of three blue badge bays on Swingate adjacent to the development. To ensure these bays are for the residents of this development, a Parking Permit Agreement (PPA) would need to be introduced. In order to secure the PPA to ensure there is the necessary disabled parking to serve Plot A, it would need to be secured as part of a S.106 legal agreement. The applicant has confirmed that they would be willing to enter into an agreement to secure the provision of a PPA. For reference, this PPA will also cover the two standard bays detailed on the application submission which would also be made available for future residents.
- 7.8.8 In assessing car parking provision associated with the outline aspect of the development as detailed in the masterplan, as it is in outline form it is not possible at this stage to determine the number of car parking spaces which would be required. The parking requirement will be worked out on the number of bedrooms per dwelling and currently the precise mix of dwellings and the detailed layout of the development are not yet known. In addition, parking is also calculated on the amount of floorspace which is being provided for retail, leisure, commercial and office space where the precise amount of floorspace is not yet known at this time. As such, car parking provision for the outline elements of the scheme will be assessed at the reserved matters stage in accordance with the Council's adopted car parking standards.
- 7.8.9 In relation to the loss of the public car parking facility, a study was undertaken to assess the overall need for car parking facilities across the town centre. In terms of the town centre (including Stevenage Leisure Park), there are 4,125 spaces of which 1,208 spaces are located in the Leisure Park. However, whilst the parking in the

Leisure Park is free and there are no time restrictions, users are charged a fine if they leave the site. This is in order to prevent the car park being used by rail commuters and/or visitors to the rest of the town centre.

7.8.10 Turning to the existing car parking in the town centre, these are either Long Stay or Short Stay spaces. In terms of the Long Stay car parking, these are predominantly located at the Railway Station and the western part of the town centre. However, St George's Way Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) is the largest capacity Short Stay car park with 900 spaces. The analysis undertaken by the applicant identifies that the occupancy of the Long Stay car parks are the highest on Thursday during the working hours when all the car parks are full and this drops to just over half full on Saturday. The occupancy of the short stay car parks is the highest on Saturdays. The main occupancy for the long stay car parks are commuters where the short stay car parks are tended to be used by people shopping in the town or for leisure activities.

7.8.11 In addition to the above, there is also a number of on-street parking bays across the Town Centre which comprise the following:-

- 74 Pay and Display bays;
- 22 Disabled bays;
- 7 Tax Bays;
- 4 Electric Vehicle Car Club bays;
- 96 Garages.

7.8.12 Looking at the car parks which are the subject of this application, the proposed development would involve the closure of Swingate East (89 parking spaces) and the loss of 15 spaces at Swingate Car Park (subject to approval under Planning application 20/00060/FP). This is in order to facilitate the delivery of the proposed development in Plot A along with the reconfiguration of Swingate itself. The scheme would also involve the closure of Southgate/Eastgate Car Park (211 parking spaces) with this car park identified as the site for the 2FE Primary School which is also allocated in the adopted Local Plan (2019). The proposed development, as detailed in the Transport Assessment, would also result in the loss of 31 on-street pay and display parking bays.

7.8.13 Following an analysis of the car parks, the Swingate car parks which is the subject of this application and planning application 20/00060/FP, prior to Covid-19, are full for the longest time during the week with 100% occupancy between 8am to 1pm on Thursday as it will include commuters during the day and leisure users in the evening. This means the car park is used by people who work in the town or use the train station during the week as it is within walking distance to the train station. On Saturday, there is 100% occupancy peak between 7pm and 8pm as the car park will be used by a mixture of shoppers and leisure users. With regards to the Southgate/Eastgate car park, this reaches 100% occupancy at 1pm on a Thursday but peaks at 53% capacity at 1pm on a Saturday. The predominant use of the car park will be for people shopping in the town centre. Turning to the pay and display parking (P&D) spaces, the assessment identified that the Quadrant which provides the greatest number of spaces (31), was at 90% capacity during the hours 10am to 12pm. However, the observations noted that parking bays in the area were being used by waiting vehicles on occasions which has affected the data. Notwithstanding, within the survey around 70% of P&D spaces appear to be occupied between 10am through to beyond 7pm, with around 20 vacant spaces. This is also similar for the blue badge spaces, but reduced to only 32% occupancy beyond 7pm.

7.8.14 The Local Plan (2019) also identifies Marshgate Car Park (156 spaces) as a Major Opportunity Area (Policy TC7) for redevelopment. In addition, the Council granted planning permission (14/00559/OPM) for the redevelopment of the Matalan Site which

also includes Danesgate Car Park. This would result in a further reduction of 178 spaces (101 spaces at Matalan and 77 spaces at Danesgate). Furthermore, the bus interchange also required the closure of the Leisure Centre Car Park on Danesgate which comprises of 90 parking spaces which is now under construction (Planning reference: 20/00135/FPM).

- 7.8.15 Taking into consideration of the above, the total amount of parking which would be lost would equate to 801 parking spaces. However, the Council has not received any formal planning applications for the Marshgate Car Park so this is still available for parking for the public. In addition, the 101 spaces at Matalan are not owned by the Council as it is privately operated and currently serve this store. Therefore, the overall loss of public owned parking spaces would be 544 spaces, of which 69% of the total loss of parking is accounted for by the proposed development.
- 7.8.16 In terms of analysis of all of the car parks, the Car Parking Assessment undertaken by the applicant identifies that as a worst scenario, for both days (Thursdays and Saturday), there is spare capacity in St. George's MSCP which can accommodate all of the cars from the closed car parks (including Swingate and Eastgate/Southgate). After the proposed transfer, the St George's Way car park will have over 100 vacant parking spaces on Thursday and almost 250 spaces on Saturday. In addition, during the weekday, there is plenty of capacity in Westgate and The Forum which both have a similar charging regime to St George's Way. Turning back to the proposal itself, the Car Parking Manager has confirmed that there is sufficient capacity in the St George's Way MSCP to accommodate any parking which is displaced by the proposed development. Therefore, it can be concluded that there would still be sufficient public car parking provision to serve the town centre.
- 7.8.17 With regards to the loss of disabled parking, under phase one (Plots A and K), the application is looking to provide 3 no. blue badge bays on Swingate. To the north of Plot K, the applicant was looking to re-provide the existing 5 no. blue badge spaces on Southgate. Given this, the proposal under phase one looks to provide a total of 8 spaces. In terms of the blue badge spaces affected by the scheme as detailed in the masterplan, as these aspects of the development are in outline the overall parking provision is not known at this time. As such, any replacement blue badge spaces would be considered as part of any future reserved matters application. This will also be the case for the loss of any existing pay and display spaces as well.
- 7.8.18 Taking into consideration the above, as the proposal does not provide the necessary parking for the development, there is the potential that on-street parking could be generated on nearby streets in the Bedwell Area. Consequently, a financial contribution is requested by the Council's Engineering Section of £15,000 per phase is sought. This obligation would cover the anticipated costs of monitoring and when necessary, implementing a parking permit scheme in order to protect existing residents from parking displacement. This financial obligation will be secured as part of a S.106 legal agreement. In addition to this, through negotiations with the applicant and Council's Regeneration Team, in order to off-set the shortfall in parking provision in Plot A, it has been agreed that 36 Season Tickets can be provided to future residents.. This will also need to be secured as part of any S.106 agreement. It can be confirmed that the applicant has agreed to enter into a legal agreement to secure the above obligations
- 7.8.19 With regards to the existing 4 no. Electric Vehicle Car Club bays on Swingate, these will need to be relocated once construction works take place within Plot A. Following negotiations with the applicant, the Regeneration Team and the Council's Engineering Section, it has been agreed the required re-provision of the E-car club bays should be secured as part of any S.106 legal agreement. This will put in place a legal obligation

to replace these spaces in a suitable location in the town centre with the necessary infrastructure to be put in place as well.

- 7.8.20 Turning to the proposed parking controls detailed in the application which need to take place on the public highway, these will require a number of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to be prepared. As these TRO's will need to be drafted, consulted on, advertised and the formal making of the TROs, the Engineering Section has sought a financial contribution of £16,000. For reference, the new parking controls at both plots which include replacement disabled parking bays, on-street parking bays, provision of new loading bays and any other traffic restrictions which form part of the development works associated with the development. With respect to future phases of development, as final details of layout, scale etc. will have to be dealt with at the reserved matters stage, officers do not know what TRO's would be required for these subsequent phases. As such, a clause will be added into the agreement setting that our any future TRO costs will need to be covered. Each individual TRO which will be required for each of the later phases of development will cost £3,000. The applicant has confirmed that they are in agreement to the obligation of securing the relevant TROs' as part of any S.106 legal agreement.
- 7.8.21 In summary, subject to the relevant mitigation measures being secured via S.106, the overall parking strategy for the proposed development in phase 1 is deemed to be acceptable. In terms of the later phases of development, these will be assessed in more detail as part of any future reserved matters application.

7.9 Impact on the Environment

Land contamination

- 7.9.1 Policy FP5 of the Local Plan (2019) specifies that planning permission will be granted for development on brownfield sites if an appropriate Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) is submitted which demonstrates that any necessary remediation and subsequent development poses no risk to the population, environment and ground water bodies.
- 7.9.2 The application site is classed as brownfield land comprising of hardsurfacing (including car parks and footpaths), buildings and areas of soft landscaping which includes a pond at the southern end of the site adjacent to the Towers. Given this, the applicant submitted a Preliminary Geo-Environmental Risk Assessment and Ground Investigation Report. The assessment identified that the risk to future site users of potential contamination is low. In regards to ground gas, this was identified to be low to moderate due to the geology, potential made up ground from when the Town Centre was built and surrounding land uses. The assessment also identified risks to groundwater as being low to moderate. Consequently, the assessment identified that risks to human health, the environment and ground water bodies are deemed to be within acceptable limits for Plots A and K (Phase 1). However, the assessment does recommend that further ground investigation is undertaken for each phase of development. This is in order to determine whether or not there are any contamination risks associated with these parts of development and as such, any relevant remediation strategies need to be adopted.
- 7.9.3 Following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Section, they consider the findings of the report to be acceptable. In addition, if permission were to be granted, a condition would be imposed requiring a Ground Investigation Assessment is submitted as part of any future applications for later phases of development. In addition, a condition would be imposed requiring a remediation strategy to be submitted in the event previously unidentified contaminants are detected during the demolition and construction phase of development. With these conditions in place, they

would ensure the health of construction works and future users of the development along with the ground and water environment are protected.

Groundwater

7.9.4 The application site is located upon Secondary A aquifer within the superficial glaciofluvial sand and gravel deposits and a Principal aquifer within the Chalk bedrock. Given this, the Environment Agency and Affinity Water recommend that in order to protect groundwater quality from further deterioration, the following needs to be adhered to:

- No infiltration-based sustainable drainage systems should be constructed on land affected by contamination, as contaminants can remobilise and cause groundwater pollution;
- Piling, or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods, should not cause preferential pathways for contaminants to migrate to groundwater and cause pollution; and
- Decommission of investigative boreholes to ensure that redundant boreholes are safe and secure, and do not cause groundwater pollution or loss of water supplies, in line with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

7.9.5 It is recommended that the above requirements can be secured by conditions if the Council was minded to grant planning permission.

Air quality and air pollution

7.9.6 Policy FP7 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that all development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce air, water, light and noise pollution. Looking at air quality and air pollution specifically, the development is not located within or in close proximity to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). In terms of the impact of the development on air quality, the air quality assessment undertaken by the applicants consultant focuses on both the demolition/construction phase and operational phase of the development. Dealing with the construction phase, it is noted that there would be activities which will affect local air quality. These include dust emissions and exhaust emissions from plant, machinery and construction traffic.

7.9.7 In order to mitigate the construction phase, the applicant would look to develop and implement a stakeholder communication plan that includes community engagement. They would also look to implement a Dust Management Plan (DMP) which would form part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which will also include the recording of any complaints and to identify causes in order to take action. They would also monitor the site daily through visual inspections which will also include receptors outside of the respective construction sites. There would also be regular inspections to ensure compliance with the DMP along with planning the site layout in order to locate dust generating activities as far as possible from nearby receptors. There would also be the use of solid screens around dusty activities and stockpiles along with keeping scaffolding and barriers clean.

7.9.8 There would also be a requirement to remove all dusty materials from the site as soon as possible along with the introduction of speed restrictions. In addition, there will be a requirement for vehicles to switch off engines when stationary, avoid the use of generators where possible, and produce a logistics and sustainable travel plan in order to reduce the number of construction vehicles on the road. They would also put in place measures relating to cutting, sawing and grinding to reduce dust emissions along with the use of enclosed chutes, conveyors and skips and use of suitable dust suppression measures on site. There would also be a number of other measures implemented during the demolition and construction phases of development.

7.9.9 Following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Section, they do not raise any concerns with the proposed mitigation measures to be put in place during construction. However, a condition would be imposed requiring the submission of a CEMP to ensure the overall measures taking place during construction do reduce any impact in terms of air quality on the local environment. With regards to the operational aspect of the development, the air quality modelling undertaken by the applicant demonstrates that air quality would meet the annual and hourly NO₂ objectives throughout the proposed development and at adjacent off-site receptors. The modelling has indicated that the emissions from the operational traffic would give a very limited rise in NO₂ emissions which in accordance with IAQM/EPUK guidance is identified as having a negligible impact at all receptors in the area. As such, the air quality objective across the masterplan and the need for additional mitigation has not been identified as being required. As such, the Council's Environmental Health Section has confirmed that the operational aspect of the development would not have a detrimental impact in terms of air quality.

Environmental Wind

7.9.10 The Wind Comfort Analysis report undertakes a qualitative assessment of the environmental wind conditions for Phase 1 (Plots A and K) which specifies the building envelopes and heights, areas of public amenity space and road location. Wind at ground level is determined by the detailed massing and orientation of these buildings within each development plot and its acceptability is evaluated on the intended use of the spaces.

7.9.11 The analysis identifies that despite the introduction of new buildings within these plots, including a tall building in Plot K which will sit in conjunction with Vista Towers and The Towers, the vast majority of the areas adjacent to these site is rated as safe for all users. The only exception during a storm or high wind event is the vehicle passageway through Plot K (located between Plot K and Vista Towers) into the courtyard. However, the building does have multiple entrances around the building which are safe and have used trees in the courtyard to control wind in the courtyard. There are also a number of well-designed entrances within the courtyard so it is safe for pedestrians/cyclists to enter the building. With regards to the amended scheme, the Window Analysis Addendum report identifies that these amendments would not have a significant impact on the local wind climate.

7.9.12 In summary, the environmental wind conditions when the development is in operation are not considered significant. With respect to the outline aspect of the development for each plot, a detailed assessment of wind and any necessary mitigation measures will be submitted as part of any reserved matters application.

7.10 Development and flood risk

7.10.1 The application site is located in 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 and Flood Risk Assessment.

7.10.2 The drainage strategy proposes that geo-cellular attenuation tanks are installed within the private drainage areas within each development plot. It is also proposed that part of the development in Plot K will discharge surface water to the Towers pond. Surface water discharge rates from each development plot will be limited to greenfield run-off

rates, or as close to as possible to these rates, in order to achieve gravity outfalls from each plot. It is also proposed to create permeable paved parking courtyards within the private car parking areas within the development plots along with the use of raingardens where viable.

- 7.10.3 The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been assessed by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). As detailed in section 5.8 of the committee report, the LLFA are not satisfied on the answers given by the applicant on all of the objection points. They feel there should be more work done on the drainage strategies for all plots but in particular for Plot K. Following a detailed review of the objection points, and all the information submitted in support of the application, the LLFA have advised that they would be minded to object on the basis that the applicant has not addressed all the points they have.
- 7.10.4 The main issue they have raised objection relates to the discharge rates, modifications needed to the submitted drainage plans, the current drainage function of the Tower Pond and research into above ground storage features, for example, the applicant has not explored all the opportunities for blue roofs.
- 7.10.5 Notwithstanding the above, the LLFA have advised that if the Council is minded to approve the application, they recommend a number of stringent conditions to the Council should planning permission be granted. The LLFA wants to highlight to the Council that the applicant's current drainage strategy does not meet these conditions (for Plot K / Phase 1K). What the LLFA is proposing to be conditioned is not what is currently being proposed (in terms of the discharge rate and what is shown on the plans), therefore the applicant will need to agree to these. The LLFA would recommend that these are required as pre-commencement conditions as these issues need to be resolved.
- 7.10.6 The LLFA have also suggested a whole site condition for which they would recommend is applied pre-commencement to all plots and should be applied for discharge before a detailed design for the drainage strategies be approved for all plots. With these conditions in place, it would ensure that the overall drainage strategy would be acceptable and would reduce the risk of flooding.

7.11 Trees and Landscaping/Open Space and public realm

- 7.11.1 Paragraph 175 of the NPPF (2019) states that when determining planning applications local planning authorities should apply the principle, in respect of veteran and ancient trees, that if a development results in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats it should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. Policy NH5 of the Local Plan (2019) states that development proposals will be expected to protect and retain individual trees within development sites and should include new planting where appropriate.
- 7.11.2 Within the development site there are 136 individual trees, a group of Norway Maple and Wild Cheery and a common beech and maple hedge. The majority of the trees are category C (of low quality and value) and category U (Those in conditions in which they should not be retained). The proposed development would involve the removal of 33 individual trees in order to facilitate the development, the majority of which will be to facilitate the delivery of Plot K. However, out of those being removed, the proposal would involve the removal of 2 no. Category A trees (of high quality and value) and 3 no. Category B trees (of moderate quality and value) with the remainder being category C (26 trees).
- 7.11.3 In order to compensate the removal of existing trees, under Phase 1 (Plots A and K), as part of the landscaping strategy, the proposed development will seek the planting of

new trees. In Plot A, the central courtyard will comprise of approximately 8 trees along with 9 trees in the public realm (“Arrival Square”). With respect to Plot K, the scheme would comprise of 14 new trees which will be planted within the courtyard car park. There would also be 28 trees also being planted in the new public realm, including the proposed “Southgate Park”. The proposal also comprises a significant mix of shrubs, ornamental planting along with the creation of rain gardens as well as new planting for the pond.

- 7.11.4 Following consultation with the Council’s Arboricultural Manager, he considers the proposed programme of tree removal to be acceptable. In addition, the tree and planting schedule would more than compensate for the trees which are to be removed as part of the proposal. Turning to the outline aspect of this hybrid application, the Design and Access Statement set out the long term aspirations for the public realm and open space for the development. This document sets out indicative details of the hierarchy of open and multi-functional spaces which form the core of this development scheme.
- 7.11.5 The scheme, whilst indicative, would include two green spaces, this is Southgate Park to the south (adjacent to the Towers) and the Garden Square which is currently the bus station. Southgate Park will include a large area of open space for future residents and would incorporate the existing pond as a key feature. The Garden Square would be a new area of green space which would be positioned adjacent to the Hub and would also act as spill out space for future commercial operators. The scheme also incorporate the use of rain gardens, communal residential gardens, defensible planting which will also form part of the wider public realm.
- 7.11.6 In terms of how the open space will function, the masterplan indicates that the public open space will be delivered through a series of squares, pedestrian streets and a new park whilst communal open space will be limited to the shared roof terraces. The main areas of public realm, including Garden Square and Southgate Park, will also include the Hub Terrace, Arrival Square and the Boulevard. Looking at these different features individually, the “Arrival Square” which will be delivered in Phase 1 as it lies adjacent to Plot A, would comprise of flexible seating areas which incorporate planting, feature timber platforms with a paving pattern reflecting the Mondrian motif seen in the town centre.
- 7.11.7 In terms of the Boulevard, this is a key aspect over the overall masterplan as it will eventually connect the Town Square with Stevenage Train Station form a key east-west route. The Boulevard, which will also pick up on the Mondrian theme, could also incorporate mulita functional spaces with the use of rain gardens timber platforms, open lawns, collective dining and flexible seating areas. With regards to the Garden Square, this will be a key area of space connecting to the Boulevard, Arrival Square as well as the existing Town Square and future Hub. This would potentially be a large open space with the use of lawns, rain gardens, spill out spaces for commercial spaces, a pocket park, outdoor dining seating and tree planting. It is generally to create a flexible area of open space which would enhance the sense of arrival as you enter the town centre.
- 7.11.8 Looking at the Hub Terrace, this would be an elevated public space which overlooks the Town Square and will form a sense of enclosure to the western edge of the Town Square. The new space would help to create opportunities for spill-out from the Hub with benches and bistro style tables and chairs. This space, would also incorporate the “Joyride” which would be positioned on the new terrace and would sit in the same position as it currently stands. The scheme could also include the provision of two seating terraces and platforms which will make up the level changes in the land.

- 7.11.9 The design approach being adopted to Danestrete would be through the creation of shared public/cycle space through the new Garden Square between Plot A to the north and the Public Services Hub (Plot D) to the south. Beyond the hub, the southern stretch of Danestrete would comprise a segregated system between motor-vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists in order to create a safe environment. The public realm works would comprise of new areas of paving which would be punctuated by trees. The Mews street which would be a new spur off Danestrete would comprise of a “Home Zone” which is shared surface area. This new street typology being introduced in the town centre would incorporate high quality paving areas with structural planting to soften the appearance of the new street.
- 7.11.10 The scheme also encompasses new park (Southgate Park) at the southern end of the site between Plots H and K, adjacent to The Towers. This would be delivered over two separate phases where the first part, including a new pond, would form part of phase 1. The park area would comprise of waterside lawns and planting along its banks. The scheme also encompasses new tree planting, retention of a number of existing trees as well as defensible space planting along the edges of the buildings. There would also be a play area along with the creation of a new plaza with transitional garden space.
- 7.11.11 The scheme would also seek to incorporate well-designed, high quality street furniture along with a mixture of soft landscaping features comprising of trees, flower rich perennials and native hedges along with shrubs, rain gardens and amenity lawns. There would also be the provision of new public art which would be installed across the development, including the use of existing arts and sculptures such as the Joyride and Seated Figures at The Towers.
- 7.11.12 Following consultation with the Council’s Parks and Amenities Section, they consider that the indicative landscaping and public realm proposal detailed in the application submission would be acceptable. The overall landscaping strategy with specific details on planting specification, street furniture, maintenance liabilities etc. will be secured by condition This is to ensure that the public realm is of a high quality which enhances the overall streetscape of the town centre and is maintained to the highest of standards. In addition, it would ensure items such as play equipment are provided in accord with current child safety standards as well. Moreover, certain aspect of the public realm areas would also be dealt with as part of any future Street Development Agreement between the applicant and the Council.
- 7.11.13 The proposed landscaping strategy would significantly enhance the overall character and appearance of the town centre. This is because the scheme would introduce high quality paving and hard landscaping features with detailed edging which will complement the architectural aesthetics of the new town. This approach to the hard landscape would also help to break the monotony of the concrete paved areas of the town. The proposal also incorporates the provision of new and modern street furniture such as benches, planters, integrated cycle stands which will help to add variety and interest into the public realm. The soft landscaping strategy would introduce a mixture of trees which have been chose for their striking form and complementary colours in autumn and spring. The strategy would also be complemented with the introduction of various habitats to create semi-natural woodlands, native hedges, flower rich perennial and herbaceous planting combined with the creation of rain gardens and amenity laws.
- 7.11.14 The aforementioned would help to enhance biodiversity as well as contribute to the overall character of place. The planting strategy would help to create a seasonal variety of colours which would help to create an attractive and high quality environment which will also be of public benefit for people’s health and well-being. In terms of the rain gardens themselves, these have been designed to capture the surface water drainage to reduce the need for irrigation and comprise a mixture of species which

require limited maintenance. These rain gardens will help to further soften the appearance of the public realm which overall, would enhance the wider streetscape of the town centre. The development also creates a new parkland area which will significantly enhance the setting of the Towers and this part of the town centre. It would open this space up to the public and create an attractive high quality environment as well. With regards to the proposed Garden Square which comprises of lawns, this would significantly soften the appearance of the town centre as it would effectively replace the bus station. It would create an attractive and welcoming environment as you enter the town centre which would significantly improve the overall perception of the town centre itself.

7.11.15 In summary, it can be concluded that the overall public realm strategy would significantly improve the character and appearance of the town centre and the visual amenities of the wider street scene. It would help to soften the appearance of the wider street scene as well introduce variety and interest into the streetscape creating an attractive environment. It would also build on the traditional pedestrianised streets of the town centre as these public realm spaces have been created for cyclists and pedestrians in mind and not that of the private car. Furthermore, the scheme has been designed to compensate for any trees which will be lost as part of the development as well improves biodiversity. In addition, protective measures can be put in place via condition to protect any retained trees during the demolition and construction phases of development.

7.12 Ecology

7.12.1 National Planning Policy on biodiversity and conservation is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This emphasises that the planning system should seek to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity wherever possible as part of the Government's commitment to halting declines in biodiversity and establishing coherent and resilient ecological networks. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, is of particular. Paragraph 174 states:-

“To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”

7.12.2 The application site is classed as brownfield land comprising of hardsurfacing (including car parks and footpaths), buildings and areas of soft landscaping which includes a pond at the southern end of the site adjacent to the Towers. The surrounding area is urban in nature comprising of buildings and hardsurfacing with interspersed areas of amenity grassland and trees. The applicant has undertaken a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to assess the potential for the site and adjoining habitats to have species that receive legal protection at either UK and/or European level.

7.12.3 As set out in the Appraisal, a Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken on the site to record habitat types and dominant vegetation, including invasive species and a reconnaissance survey for evidence of protected fauna and flora or habitats capable of supporting such species. A desk top study was also undertaken from Hertfordshire

Biological Records Centre and from the Multi-agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC).

- 7.12.4 The survey identified that the development site is of low ecological value and plant species and habitats that are present are mostly introduced species or ornamental planting and not considered to be of ecological value. The onsite pond, hedgerow and mature Oaks are of site or local conservation importance. The pond is deemed to be a UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) and Hertfordshire BAP priority habitat, and the hedgerow is a UK BAP priority habitat. It was identified the site was considered unlikely to support plant species of conservation interest.
- 7.12.5 In regards to species impact, the assessment identified that there would not be a significant impact on invertebrates and the pond was surveyed and no evidence of Great Crested Newts were found. In relation to reptiles, due to the nature of the site it was advised a survey was not required. In regards to birds, these are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is considered that there is a suitable foraging and nesting habitat on the site, particularly within the boundary trees and scrub. Consequently, 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.
- 7.12.6 In relation to bats, several species of bats, including bat roosts, were recorded within 2km of the site. It was also identified that nine buildings had low potential for bat roosts. In addition, buildings in proximity of the site were identified to have low or negligible bat roost potential. Furthermore, the trees on-site have been identified as not having features suitable for roosting bats. However, a couple of trees had low potential to roost bats, but, multiple oak trees within the fenced garden at The Towers were noted as having features suitable for roost bats and as such, had a high potential. In terms of foraging, the majority of the habitats surveyed are not likely to be used by foraging and commuting bats. However, tree lines to the east of the site could be utilised by less light sensitive bat species.
- 7.12.7 The appraisal did not identify definitive signs of badgers or dormice due to the nature of the site. In terms of mammals, the amenity grassland and fenced garden at the southern end of the site have the potential for hedgehogs. But there are no other records of mammal species which are of conservation significance.
- 7.12.8 In order to mitigate the impact of the development from an ecological perspective, the appraisal makes a number of recommendations in relation to mitigation and enhancement measures. The appraisal recommends that the native hedge on site is of conservation importance and qualifies as a UK BAP priority habitat but not as a good quality example. As such, it is recommended the equivalent or greater length of native replacement planting should be incorporated into the wider landscaping strategy. It also recommends a number of Oak trees at the southern end of the site should be retained. It is also recommended a number of matures trees on the site along with replacement and additional vegetation within the soft landscaping strategy would mitigate impact and enhance the site for invertebrates.
- 7.12.9 The onsite pond will be retained but its location and its location will be adjusted. The pond itself would be utilised as part of the developments drainage strategy and would be utilised as a water attenuation feature. The condition of the pond can also be improved through the reduction of shading aquatic vegetation and planting of native marginal and bank-side vegetation along with re-profiling to increase habitat diversity and water retention. These features would enhance the habitat for aquatic plants and invertebrate species as well as amphibian species.
- 7.12.10 With regards to birds, the appraisal recommends the provision of bird boxes on buildings and suitable trees around the site would provide replacement habitat for

breeding birds. Scrub and tree planting should be carried out in order to also provide replacement nesting habitats. With respect to bats, it is recommended that any external lighting strategy would need to be carefully designed as to not impact upon foraging and commuting bats. There is also an opportunity to enhance the development in terms of biodiversity through the provision of bat tubes or boxes on suitable trees or new buildings as well as create hedgehog links. It is also recommended that there should be the use of native planting in the landscaping scheme.

7.12.11 With regards to local wildlife sites, the closest non-statutory designated site is Six Hills Common Local Wildlife Site which is located 106m to the south-west of the application which is positioned beyond the A602. As such, due to the separation distance combined with the presence of the dual carriageway, it is not considered the development would have a significant impact on the ecological interests of the non-designated Local Wildlife Site.

7.12.12 Following consultation with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, they consider there is little ecological impact and the recommendations set out in the report are deemed to be acceptable. As such, it is recommended that these recommendations are imposed as conditions if permission were to be granted by the Council.

7.12.13 Turning to the Knebworth Woods SSSI, the development site falls within the impact zone of this SSSI. However, the site is separated from the SSSI by some distance (0.9km) and urban development and highway infrastructure (including the A1(M)). As such, Natural England have not raised any concerns as to the potential impact this development could have on the SSSI (including increased recreational pressure from residents residing from this development).

7.13 Sustainable Construction and Climate Change

7.13.1 Policy FP1 of the Local Plan (2019) stipulates that planning permission will be granted for development that can incorporate measures to address adaptation to climate change. New developments will be encouraged to include measures such as:

- Ways to ensure development is resilient to likely variations in temperature;
- Reducing water consumption to no more than 110 litres per person per day, including external water use;
- Improving energy performance of buildings;
- Reducing energy consumption through efficiency measures;
- Using or producing renewable or low carbon energy from a local source; and
- Contributing towards reducing flood risk through the use of SuDS or other appropriate measures.

7.13.2 The applicant has provided a sustainability statement with the application outlining how the development would be adaptable to climate change. With regards to the detailed aspects of the development under Phase 1 (Plots A and K), the statement sets out a number of measures which are as follows:-

- Use of metering;
- Use of well insulated materials and high air tightness;
- Use of LED lighting throughout the buildings;
- Installation of photovoltaic panels;
- To incorporate an electrically fuelled energy strategy (instead of gas) within the buildings;
- No gas flues are required so this would reduce the carbon emissions of the development;
- The buildings would have appropriately sized and orientated windows with low emissivity solar shading in order to reduce overheating;

- Full natural ventilation in Plot A and some mechanical ventilation in Plot K to deliver fresh air into some of the rooms;
- The residential and commercial units will be provided with water efficient sanitary fittings and other measures to ensure water usage is not greater than 110 litres per person, per day;
- Using sustainable sourced materials which respond and adapt to climate change;
- Use of roof terraces with planting along with green roofs to support amenity and biodiversity;
- 10% of parking bays to include electric vehicle charging points;
- Provision of secure cycle parking in the apartment blocks and proximity to the railway and bus stations will encourage sustainable modes of transport.

7.13.3 With regards to the outline aspect of the development and the wider masterplan, the overall scheme will be focused on energy demand reduction with the use of on-site renewables with the use of electrical solutions (to remove use of gas). The development would also incorporate sustainable drainage solutions such as via rain gardens and other landscaped areas as well creating new landscaped spaces such as Southgate Park and Garden Square lawns. The materials for the later phases of the development would also be sustainable sourced and water consumption will meet relevant requirements. The development, being in a sustainable location, will actively encourage the use of public transport, so it will be car light along with the provision of secure cycle parking for both residential and commercial aspects. Notwithstanding, further details regarding sustainability and adaptability to climate change would be submitted as part of any subsequent phase of development. This can be secured by way of condition.

7.13.4 With regards to construction waste, Herfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste have advised a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will be required in order to help reduce waste and its environmental impact. This can be secured through the imposition of a condition to any planning permission issued.

7.13.5 Given the above, and subject to conditions, it is considered that the development has been designed in order to be adaptable to climate change through the use of sustainable technologies, construction methodology and through the encouragement of a modal shift away from the private car. In addition, the scheme also goes in some way to try and address the Council's Zero Carbon by 2030 objective.

7.14 Impact on Archaeological Remains

7.14.1 The NPPF paragraph 128 states that "*In determining applications...Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation*".

7.14.2 Paragraph 129 notes that "*Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal*".

7.14.3 As part of the application, archaeological reports were submitted relating to the historic environment. This included an archaeological desk based assessment (DBA). This assessment concluded that the site has been found to contain high potential for Roman and Medieval remains, with the presence of a possible Roman Road (which

relates to the Scheduled Six Hills Round Barrows) and the Line of the Old Highway running through the eastern section of the site. Following an assessment of the information submitted with the application and through consultation with Hertfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Advisor, the details submitted are considered to be acceptable, subject to the imposition of conditions.

7.15 Other matters

Refuse and Recycle Facilities

- 7.15.1 The Design Guide (2009) states, provision should be made within new development for the storage and collection of waste from a site. The submitted plans indicate that there would be sufficient refuse facilities which will serve the proposed residential properties and commercial premises. As such, a condition can be imposed requiring these facilities to be delivered in accordance with the details specified in the application. In terms of the outline aspect of the hybrid application, further details for general waste and recycle facilities would be dealt with at any subsequent reserved matters application which would have to be submitted in the future.

Crime Prevention

- 7.15.2 In regards to crime prevention and designing out crime, whilst the concerns of the Police Crime Prevention Officer are noted an informative can be imposed with respect to phase 1 (Plots A and K) to seek accreditation for the buildings which are "Secure by Design". With regards to the outline element of this hybrid application, matters regarding "Secure by Design" can be dealt with in greater detail at the reserved matters stage of the application process for each relevant phase of development.

Equalities Impact

- 7.15.3 Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:-
- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.15.4 Officers have had full regard to this duty in the assessment of this application and the Committee must be mindful of this duty *inter alia* when determining all applications. The consultation process has served to notify all relevant adjoining parties likely to be impacted by the development. However, additional regard has been given to any potential impact upon the protected characteristics outlined in the Equalities Act 2010 Section 149 and the provisions contained therein. It is considered that due regard has been given to the impact of the scheme on all groups with the protected characteristics schedule.
- 7.15.5 The development would result in the loss of Mecca Bingo, which is an existing bingo hall which operates from a premise which adjoins Stevenage Borough Council offices. The bingo hall provides leisure and entertainment services to a wide range of customers and therefore, the loss of the bingo hall could have an adverse impact on these groups which may include experiencing a loss of social inclusion. There is limited evidence/statistics about the age, gender or race of bingo player who are customers of

Mecca. However, nationwide, the evidence that is available suggests that the majority of people that attend games at live bingo halls are women and are within an older age demographic generally 60+. Notwithstanding, there is growing evidence to suggest, given the increase in popularity in online bingo playing, that there has been an increase in younger in players attending live bingo halls. This has led to some bingo hall operators remodelling their premises to appeal to younger audiences. Data by YouGov in 2018 has found that those who played bingo, 28% had gone to a bingo hall in the past 12 months, which compared to just 6% of the public generally.

- 7.15.6 To assist in identifying whether the proposed development has a negative impact on a protected group, it would be reasonable to consider the number of representations received to the application and whether any of these refer to the loss of the Mecca bingo hall. This would then allow the Council to be able to gain any data/information from these representations or other sources which would identify the people directly affected by the decision and whether they share a relevant protected characteristic. As such, it would allow the Council to determine what the likely consequence for all those that share a protected characteristic.
- 7.15.7 Taking the above into consideration, the only letter of representation received regarding Mecca Bingo is from the operator. The Council has not received any further representations which make reference as to the loss of the bingo. Therefore, the only data the Council has on the bingo hall is from the operator itself. However, this letter of representation does not provide any data about the age, gender or race of bingo players. Therefore, the only assumption which can be made, based on national data, is that the loss of the bingo is likely to impact on women who are within an older age of demographic which is 60+. As such, with the very limited evidence to hand, this will need to be weighed up against other material considerations. These are dealt with in more detail below.
- 7.15.8 In terms of the location of the existing bingo hall, if the building was to be retained, it could have impact on the successful delivery of the regeneration scheme. This is because there would not be the ability to create an enhanced arrival space as you enter the town centre down the access ramp. It would have a detrimental impact in delivering the boulevard which is a fundamental feature in wider placemaking aspects of the development. It would also have an impact on the development's viability which could prejudice the wider delivery of the project. In terms of a location of the nearest bingo halls, these would be in Luton and Harlow. Therefore, it is fully appreciated that by losing this facility could have an impact on the main demographic of the bingo hall. As such, the Council's Regeneration Team has agreed to work with Mecca to secure an alternative site within the town. However, it is important to note that the development seeks to provide significant wider benefits to the town. It would not only help to revitalise the town centre, but will provide new jobs, homes as well as places to work along with the creation of new leisure, retail, food and beverage premises to help drive up the towns viability.
- 7.15.9 Further to the above, the development seek to provide a new park in Southgate and Garden Square combined with a new Public Services Hub which will include new council offices, library facilities and NHS facilities. This would also be a significant public benefit to the town. The scheme would also help to fund the delivery of a new primary school along with significant financial contributions towards GP provision as well. There would also be a number of other positive equality impacts arising from this development. The proposed development through the provision of a new Public Services Hub, would provide a range of facilities, including a replacement medical facility, in one location and would be accessible to a wide group of people. In addition, by removing the platform and positioning the listed Joyride statue to a more accessible location, people who have restricted mobility will be able to have a greater appreciation of this historic statue.

- 7.15.10 The scheme has also been designed to have an enhanced connectivity with Stevenage train station and the recent approved Bus Interchange which also comprises a “Shop Mobility” unit which supports people who are disabled. The scheme also looks to provide new disabled parking spaces which would be on-street so accessible to the wider public. The residential blocks in phase one (Plots 1.A and 1.K) would also comprise disabled parking for residents who have restricted mobility. The scheme also provides enhanced public realm which will enhance the environment for both pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.15.11 In addition to the above, it is anticipated that all affected parties will continue to be able to enjoy their property in the same manner as they presently. All properties will continue to be accessible throughout the development and thereafter upon completion, the development does not result in any properties having unacceptable levels of adequate daylight and sunlight. Moreover, existing businesses will also be able to continue to operate during the construction phase of the development. The Council is satisfied the development would strengthen the vitality and viability of the area. For those businesses which may be lost as part of this development, including the church, these businesses could potentially be reprovided as part of the later phases of development.
- 7.15.12 The Council also extensively consulted on the application via letter to all properties within Stevenage Town Centre as well as the placement of site notices and press notices. Furthermore, the application was advertised in the press and details were available (pre Covid-19) at the Tourism Centre where members of the public were able to understand the development.
- 7.15.13 With regards to the operators point that the bingo hall is deemed to be a community facility, the NPPF does not in Annex 2: Glossary provide a definition of community facility, although at paragraph 92 it provides examples of community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural building, public houses and places of worship. However, it is interesting to note that bingo halls are referred to under the definition of main town centre uses in Annex 2:Glossary, as one of the examples under the heading ‘leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses’.
- 7.15.14 Recent amendments to the Use Classes Order have introduced Schedule 2, Part B which relates to ‘Local Community and Learning’ uses. A bingo hall is not listed in that Order as a ‘local community use. However, article 3(6) of the Order state that no class specified in Schedule 1 or 2 includes the uses specified at 3(6), including at 3(6)(v) a bingo hall. Therefore, bingo halls do not fall within a specified use class in the order.
- 7.15.15 Paragraph 11.24 of the adopted Local Plan (2019), states the policies that refer to health, social and community facilities (including Policy HC4) are facilities covered by use classes C2, D1 and D2, a bingo hall has not been constituted as a community facility for the purposed of the Local Plan. There is also an interesting appeal decision (Reference: APP/J2372/W/18/326731 – Festival Leisure Park, Rigby Road, Blackpool) which concerned the demolition of a public house and the erection of a bingo hall. In this case, the Inspector considered that a bingo hall provide a place of leisure and entertainment experience which could be enjoyed by groups of friends from a local community, but it would not necessarily accord with the description of such facilities within the Framework of enhancing the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
- 7.15.16 Taking the above into account, with due regard given to the definition of health, social and community facilities in the adopted Local Plan and the reference to bingo halls as a leisure/entertainment use in the NPPF, it is not considered that a bingo hall could be

defined as a community facility. As such, the proposed development would not result in the loss of a community facility with respect to mecca bingo.

7.15.17 Given the aforementioned, whilst it is noted the development would result in the loss of the bingo hall and impact upon a certain demographic of people who visit the bingo hall, however, the Council is satisfied that the overall benefits of the development would outweigh the loss of the bingo hall in this instance. In addition, the bingo hall itself is classed as a leisure and entertainment establishment and not one which is defined as a community facility in planning terms. As such, the scheme would not result in the loss of a community facility either.

Community Infrastructure Levy

7.15.18 As indicated above, the Council adopted CIL on 1 April 2020 and the CIL Charging Schedule specifies a payment for new floorspace in line with the following rates (plus appropriate indexation):

Development Type	CIL Rate (£ per square meter)	
	Zone 1: Stevenage Central, Stevenage West Urban Extension and North of Stevenage Extension	Zone 2: Everywhere else
Residential		
Market housing	£40/m ²	£100/m ²
Sheltered housing	£100/m ²	
Extra care housing	£40/m ²	
Retail development	£60/m ²	
All other development	£0/m ²	

7.15.19 CIL is a non-negotiable charge. The exact charge will be determined by the Council's CIL officer after an application has been granted in accordance with the CIL Charging Schedule and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). Opportunities for relief or exemption from the CIL charge exist and will be taken into account in the calculation of the final CIL charge.

7.15.20 CIL replaces the need for S106 agreements to specify financial and/or land contributions for non-site-specific infrastructure projects. This allows infrastructure to be planned on a borough-wide scale rather than on a site-by-site basis as mitigation against the impacts of individual proposals. A CIL Form 1: Additional Information has been submitted along with the application. The CIL contribution for this development is estimated to be £4,237,532.00 of which £1,783,161.00 would be the CIL liability for Phase 1. The CIL charge for the development will be index linked based on when the development is commenced on-site. A CIL liability notice would be issued once planning permission is granted (subject to the Planning and Development Committee approving this application). In terms of CIL liability for the later phases of the development, these would be calculated during the determination process of each reserved matters application which is submitted to the Council for its approval.

7.15.21 The reason why the aforementioned is an approximate/estimate is because the CIL liability is generally calculated once planning permission is granted and whether or not any exemptions are to be applied (e.g. there is no CIL liability for affordable homes so CIL liability is reduced). In addition, as we do not know the exact floorspace figures for the later phases of the development, the CIL liability calculation would be undertaken

when the relevant reserved matters application is submitted to the Council for its approval.

7.15.22 With regards to how the CIL monies are spent, the ultimate decision lies with Stevenage Borough Council and the allocation of funding amount of £75,000 or over will rest with the Planning and Development Committee. Service providers who would not receive contributions through the Section 106 agreement for this development, including but not limited to those at Hertfordshire County Council and Stevenage Borough Council, will be able to bid for funding in due course.

Public Art Strategy

7.15.23 Stevenage and the town centre comprises a range of public art features which includes the existing Peter Lyon unnamed sculpture, Franta Belsky Joyride, David Noble Seated Figures along with murals, tiles and references to Mondrian. Therefore, public art plays an important role in Stevenage's cultural heritage. In this regard, the applicant will be looking to commission a new piece of public art along with a range of art pieces which could include heritage trail plaques, sinuous seating, sculptural lettering and insect hotels. The scheme also looks to improve opportunities to interact with both the Joyride and Seated Figures.

7.15.24 In order to deliver a comprehensive Public Art strategy as part of this development, a condition could be imposed requiring the applicant to submit a Public Arts programme for each phase of development. It is recommended that these programmes accord with the Council's overall cultural strategy in order to commission art pieces which respect the diverse heritage of the town and its community. With this condition in place, it would address the points raised by Historic England and the Design Council.

Statement of Community Involvement

7.15.25 The applicant has submitted with this application a Statement of Community Involvement. This statement details how the development team engaged the wider community prior to the submission of a formal planning application. It sets out that Community Involvement sessions took place on Wednesday 17th July 2019 from 6pm to 8pm at the Ibis Hotel (targeted to town centre businesses) and over three consecutive days from Friday 19th to Sunday 21st July 2019 between 8am and 4pm at the former Subway shop, The Plaza. This event was targeted at local residents and local businesses as well.

7.15.26 In term of pre-publicity, door-to-door delivery of invitations was undertaken on the 9th July 2019 to all residents living within the identified catchment area within the town centre. This involved notification to around 800 residential properties. In addition, a door-to-door delivery on the same day to 250 town centre businesses. This was followed up by an email on the 10th July 2019 and a reminder email on the 15th July 2019. The development team also set up a dedicated website and social media presence on 9th July along with banners in the town centre advertising the three day public event.

7.15.27 Posters were also provided in the main reception area of Stevenage Borough Council offices from the 11th July 2019 and also in the windows of the former Subway shop. Traditional media launch via new release which in front page coverage in the Stevenage Comet on 18th July. Broadcast coverage on local BBC radio on the morning of 19th July 2019 featuring the Leader Councillor Sharon Taylor and local residents in-situ.

7.15.28 All of the sessions included exhibitions and display of a model, along with idea walls, where visitors were able to leave their ideas/comments. There were also feedback

forms and in the case of Ibis Event, Councillor John Gardner and Mace Development Director Kevin Cowin also provided introductory speeches. All the feedback from this session was noted by the team who facilitated the event. In terms of the number of visitors who attended the events, this was counted as 460 where the majority were residents from Stevenage. At the Ibis Hotel event, there were 28 representatives of town centre businesses and organisations.

7.15.29 With respects to feedback, there were 86 completed forms from the public events or posted following the events. There were also 112 individual notes on the Ideas Wall. The overall feedback was generally positive and 4 key propositions were identified from the feedback which were as follows:-

- New Places to Drink and Socialise;
- A New Public Services Hub,
- Improvements to Public Spaces;
- Need for Regeneration.

7.15.30 There was also a high level of engagement on social media which included the SG1 Facebook Page, Twitter and SG1 website. Following the community engagement sessions, a presentation was made on 23rd July 2019 at the Stevenage Borough Council Annual Business Event held at the Novotel. On the 10th September 2019, the scheme was presented at Hertfordshire County Council Offices in Stevenage which are located in the Gunnels Wood Employment Area. The Council, as development partners also set up a communications channel which was transacted through the “Stevenage Even Better” initiative which included a dedicated website, twitter and Instagram presence. The Council also opened a Visitor Centre on Town Square which contained information for residents and visitors on SG1. Since it was opened in July 2019, there were some 2,300 visitors (pre Covid-19).

7.15.31 The development team along with the Council sponsored an ‘urban beach’ in the Town Square, which included SG1 branding and helped support the visitor centre. The Community involvement programme also involved local school such as Camps Hill Primary School (3rd October 2019) and Woolenwick Infant and Nursery (6th November 2019) which involved presentations and interactive sessions. Furthermore, sessions were held with Stevenage Youth Parliament on 13th November 2019 at Bowes Lyon. The applicant also undertook individual briefings with major employers which included the following:-

- MBDA;
- The Wine Society;
- Catalyst;
- GSK;
- Nemco;
- Airbus;
- Viavi Solutions; and
- Fujitsu.

7.15.32 The employers were extremely positive of the regeneration proposals and conveyed message as to the importance of improving the town centre and its surroundings. The businesses also mentioned a requirement to attract and retain employees, and the role of the town centre in promoting the appeal of working for the respective business. Furthermore, positive support from Bill Grimsey who is also the leading author of the Grimsey Review which sets out strategies for town centre regeneration commented favourably on social media following reports of the SG1 proposal. Finally, there were further broadcasts on local radio as well as an article of the scheme in the Stevenage Chronicle (Autumn 2019).

7.15.33As detailed in the aforementioned paragraphs, prior to the submission of a formal planning application, extensive consultation on the SG1 scheme was undertaken. In addition, the information provided in the Statement of Community Involvement identified the broad support of the scheme from both local residents and the business community.

Public Health

7.15.34HCC Public Health have advised that due to local health priorities in the area, they should undertake and submit a Health Impact Assessment. However, there is no statutory requirement for an applicant to submit such an assessment. Notwithstanding this, the various reports and assessment undertaken by the applicant do set out measures to improve the communities (existing and proposed) health and well-being. For example, the scheme seeks to encourage active travel through the creation of new and enhanced cycle and pedestrian routes. These would connect into the wider cycle and pedestrian network in order to encourage active travel. Furthermore, being a car lite scheme with a significant provision for cycling further helps to encourage active travel for future residents.

7.15.35In terms of affordable housing, whilst the first phase of development does not provide any affordable units due to viability issues, the applicant has agreed a number of viability review clauses in order to try and deliver physical affordable housing units in later phases of development. Notwithstanding, the scheme does seek to provide a new public park in Southgate along with a new Garden Square within the heart of the development. These are shown to help a person's health and well-being as they will have access to areas of amenity space. In addition, through the provision of children's play also help to encourages children to be more active and helps support their health.

7.15.36In terms of air quality, the proposed scheme being car lite with the adoption of an electricity only energy strategy would help to keep the air quality in the area to acceptable levels in accordance with national standards. This is further supported by the schemes delivery of new and improved cycle and pedestrian infrastructure combined with the creation of a new boulevard in order to create direct access to the bus interchange with the main town square. This would help to further encourage a modal shift which in turn also helps air quality. This in turn also helps to reduce the exposure of school children to poor air quality, especially those who will attend the new school. In terms of exposure to noise, the Environmental Health Section has recommended a number of conditions be imposed to help reduce the exposure to noise for future residents of the development.

7.15.37With respect to placing a restriction on fast food outlets, the applicant has agreed for a restrictive condition be imposed to any permission issued for Phase 1 (Plot 1A). The condition will restrict the uses of development which can operate within the development (see condition 8). With this condition in place, any fast food outlet applications will require planning permission from the Council. In terms of the wider masterplan and the later phases of development, these would be subject to the submission of future reserved matters applications. Given this, officers will work with the applicant, in conjunction with Environmental Health, in seeking to reduce the provision of unhealthy fast food outlets and to provide alternative healthy eating establishments. As such, with these measures in place and working closely with the applicant, it would help to control the introduction of any unhealthy fast food outlets which is of benefit to the health and well-being of the community.

7.15.38In relation to the comments raised by Sport England, it is noted that they have sought financial contributions towards indoor and outdoor sport. However, as set out in section 7.3 of this report, there are significant viability issues with the scheme. Notwithstanding this, Sport England can make a bid to the Council to utilise some of the CIL receipts to

be used towards indoor and outdoor sport. Furthermore, future residents are within walking distance to King George V playing fields and Stevenage Leisure facilities in order to take part in healthy activities. Moreover, the scheme also seeks to deliver new public spaces through the creation of Swingate Park and Garden Square which create attractive spaces for people to relax and enjoy. Therefore, residents do have access to spaces and places which will support their health and well-being.

7.15.39 Given the aforementioned, the scheme would help to support, through the various measures combined with the delivery of new spaces and places when people can relax and enjoy, the health and well-being of the community. As such, the proposal would accord with the objectives set out in the NPPF, specifically paragraphs 91 and 92 as well as the policies contained in the adopted Local Plan (2019). It also accords with the County Council's Public Health Section in trying to deliver significant health benefits as part of any future developments and to support the health and well-being of the local community.

Fire Safety Strategy

7.15.40 In terms of the fire safety strategy for this development, the applicant has confirmed that the scheme would incorporate sprinklers within each residential apartment. An automatic fire suppression (sprinklers) system will be designed, installed and maintained in accordance with British Standards. The sprinkler system will also be extended to all ancillary and communal areas. There will also be an enhanced system consisting of dual pumps with a secondary power supply and extended water supply (60 minutes).

7.15.41 The apartments which are affected by a fire will be notified of the fire, with a fire detection system and alarm. The apartments and corridors have also been designed to also have a high level of separation in order to control the spread of a fire. The common corridors will be mitigated with the provision of sprinklers and mechanical smoke ventilation systems within each core. All elevations of the buildings will accord, and where possible, exceed the latest building regulation requirements for fire safety, especially since the tragic incident which occurred at Grenfell. This is the main reason the applicant is utilising bricks/brick slip system for the construction of the buildings rather than a traditional cladding system.

7.15.42 In terms of access for fire tenders, as part of the consultation process with HCC Highways, HCC Fire and Rescue were also actively engaged in this process. Through negotiations with the fire service, the buildings detailed for phase 1 (Plots A and K), would be highly accessible for fire tenders. With regards to Plot A, fire tenders can reach this building from Swingate and Danestrete. In relation to Plot K, the access road and pathway around the building has been design to accommodate an aerial ladder so all parts of the building, including the tower element can be safely accessed by fire crews.

7.15.43 With regards to the wider masterplan, specific fire safety details including access for fire tenders would be considered in more detail as part of any future reserved matters application. However, the parameter plans submitted demonstrate that the site would be accessible for fire tenders, including the pedestrianised areas. This is because these will have designated fire tracks as is the current situation for the town centre. The final detail of these tracks would be agreed with the fire service as part of any future reserved matters application.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 In summary, the overall mix of uses proposed for the site is considered consistent with policy and is therefore acceptable in principle. In terms of S.106 and affordable

housing, whilst the scheme is unviable, the applicant has agreed to secure a number of financial obligations which will mitigate the impact on infrastructure such as roads, education, sport and GP provision. In addition, with the use of a clawback mechanism, any uplift in viability would be captured to ensure there is the provision of affordable housing in the later phases of development. Moreover, relevant obligations have been to secure in relation to the Build to Rent scheme, combined with the securing of season tickets and replacement E-car club bays.

- 8.2 The development would deliver a high quality, well-designed landmark architecture which would form a catalyst to the wider regeneration of the town centre. In addition, the masterplan delivers a flexible, mixed use development with a variety of housing typologies to meet the needs of the wider community. It would enhance the overall movements of pedestrians and cyclists across the town centre, it would deliver a high quality public realm and buildings which respect the architecture of the new town. In addition, it would deliver a high quality Public Services Hub and Hub Terrace which helps to frame the western edge of the conservation area and would form a key landmark building.
- 8.3 The development, whilst it would cause less than substantial harm to the conservation area and the setting of the listed structures, the overall public benefits of the development would outweigh this harm. In addition, the proposal, subject to conditions, would not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of existing residents and the development would also provide suitable living standards for future residents. With respect to the impact on the safety and operation of the highway network as well as the overall level of parking provided, subject to appropriate conditions and S.106 obligations to secure relevant mitigation measures, the scheme would not prejudice the safety and operation of the highway network.
- 8.4 In terms of contamination and impact on groundwater, subject to appropriate conditions, suitable mitigation measures would be put in place to protect groundwater as well as remove any unacceptable risks of contaminants to the wider environment. Further to this, the scheme has been designed to ensure it does not detrimentally affect the wind microclimate of the town centre. Moreover, whilst the scheme would result in the loss of existing trees, conditions would be imposed to ensure any retained tree is adequately protected during the demolition and construction phases of development. Also, through the imposition of conditions, a high quality landscaping and public realm scheme can be delivered which would significantly enhance the urban environment of the town centre. It would also ensure suitable replacement tree planting is also secured as part of any planning permission. The development, through the use of appropriately worded conditions, would also incorporate a suitable drainage strategy which would ensure surface water flooding is controlled and to reduce the risk flooding in the wider area.
- 8.5 The scheme has also been designed to be adaptable and address climate change through a number of mitigation measures. There would also be appropriate conditions to secure measures to protect any archaeological remains which are of significance. The development would also have sufficient general waste and recycling facilities and the applicant has agreed to deliver a scheme which meets the requirements of Secure by Design. The scheme would also not detrimentally impact on the equalities of the community in terms of age, gender, race and religion as well as anyone who is disabled.
- 8.6 The development would be liable for CIL and through an appropriately worded condition; a Public Arts Strategy can be secured which will be prepared in accordance with the Council's Cultural Strategy. This will ensure that existing public art is protected and re-utilised within the development combined with the commissioning of new public art. The proposal, as detailed in the applicants Statement of Community Involvement,

was also widely publicised prior to the submission of the application with the wider community. This included a number of exhibitions, communiques with local businesses and the community, as well as a number of other measures to ensure the community was actively engaged and consulted on this development.

- 8.7 The development would also seek to provide an environment which is significantly beneficial to people who live and work in the community in terms of their overall health and well-being. The applicant has also provided a comprehensive fire strategy for this development, especially since the tragic incident which occurred at Grenfell.
- 8.8 Given the above, the proposed development is considered to accord with the Policies contained within the adopted Local Plan (2019), the Council's Design Guide SPD (2009), the Council's Parking Standards SPD (2012), the Town Square Conservation Area Management Plan SPD (2012), the NPPF (2019) and PPG (2014).

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That outline planning permission be GRANTED subject to the applicant having first entered into a S106 agreement to secure/provide contributions towards:-

- Transfer of land and proportionate financial contribution towards a 2FE Primary School including nursery provision and relevant triggers as agreed by the Planning Committee;
- Financial contribution for GP Provision and relevant triggers as agreed by the Planning Committee;
- Financial contribution towards the new leisure centre at Stevenage Swimming Pool/Bowes Lyon Youth Centre Site (or alternative facilities) including maintenance, and relevant triggers as agreed by the Planning Committee;
- Securing of the travel plan and a monitoring fee;
- Financial contribution towards a Parking Impact Assessments;
- Financial contribution towards the creation of TRO's and full schedule of TRO's for Phases 1A and 1K;
- Replacement E-Car Club Bays;
- To secure the delivery of the Public Services Hub;
- To secure the provision of Season Tickets;
- To secure the provision of a Parking Permit Area;
- To secure the requirement to enter into a Street Development Agreement;
- Community use agreement to use school facilities;
- Trees and plants from UK nurseries;
- Provision of fire hydrants;
- Review clauses/mechanisms to capture uplift in values to deliver affordable housing;
- Restrictive covenant for the Build to Rent Units;

The detail of which is to be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in liaison with the Council's appointed Solicitor and subject to the following conditions:-

1. Approved Parameter Plans and Phasing Plans

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved parameter and phasing plans unless otherwise agreed in writing:

AA6999_2001 A; AA6999_2002 A; AA-GL-DR-A-AA6999_2003; AA6999_2004; AA6999_2007 A; AA6999_2008 A; AA6999_2009 A; AA6999_2010 A; AA6999_2011 A; AA6999_2012 A; AA6999_2013 A; AA6999_2015 D; AA6999_2016; AA6999_2017.

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

2. Approved Plans for Phases 1A and 1K

The development hereby permitted for Phase 1 (Plots A and K) shall be carried out in accordance with the following:

SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A_02001 D; SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A-02002 B; SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A-02005 F; SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A-02010 D; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2100 H; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2101 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2102 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-SR-A-2102 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2103 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2104 F; SG1-PRP-A01-ZZ-DR-A-2105 D; ; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-2200 D; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-2201 C; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-2202 C; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-02300 C; SG1-PRP-A-02301 B; SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02001 C; SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02002 B; SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02005 F; SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02010 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02100 H; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02101 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-2102 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02103 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02104 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02105 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02106 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02107 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02108 D; SG1-PRP-K01-ZZ-DR-A-02109 F; SG1-PRP-K01-DR-A-2200 B; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2201 B; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2202 B; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2204 C; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2300 B; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2301 B; SG1-PRP-A01-XX-DR-A-02530 A; SG1-PRP-A01-SG1-02531 A; SG1-PRP-K01-XX-DR-A-2203 SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0100 P03; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0101 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0110 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0111 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0600 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0601 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0704 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0705 P02; SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-0706 P02.

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

3. Three Year Time Limit

The part of the development for which full planning permission (Phases 1A and 1K as per the approved Phasing Plan) has been granted shall be begun within a period of three years.

REASON:- To comply with the requirements of Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

4. Details of Reserved Matters - Outline

For Phases 2 B to J of the development for which Outline permission is granted as outlined in the application submission, no development in relation to Phases 2 B to J shall commence until detailed plans for those phase(s) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These plans will show the layout (including car parking provision, access and servicing arrangements, and waste management), scale (including existing and proposed levels), design, layout and external appearance of the phase to be constructed and the landscaping to be implemented (hereinafter referred to as “the Reserved Matters”) on that phase. The development shall only be carried out as approved.

REASON:- To comply with the requirements of section 92(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 and to ensure that high standards of urban design and a comprehensively planned development are achieved. To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.

5. Time Limit for Reserved Matters - Outline

All applications for the approval of the Reserved Matters for each phase or combination of phases (excluding Phases 1A and 1K) shall be made to the Local Planning Authority not later than eleven years from the date of this Outline permission, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The commencement of each phase shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of the last reserved matter of that phase to be approved, whichever is the later, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To comply with the requirements of section 92(4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

6. External materials

Before any above-ground work is commenced on any individual phase of the development hereby permitted, samples of all external finishing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This shall include:

- i) Facing and roof materials;
- ii) Balcony treatment;
- iii) Window material details;
- iv) The boundary treatment;
- v) External rainwater goods where permitted.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be retained.

REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance.

7. Surfacing materials

No development (Excluding any demolition and enabling works) on the outline phases of the development will commence until details of the following matters in respect of the that outline phase have been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- a) surfacing materials;
- b) contamination;
- c) green/brown roofs;
- d) cycle parking;
- e) electric vehicle parking provision; and
- f) tree protection in accordance with British Standards.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance.

8. PD restrictions

Notwithstanding the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that order) the non-residential units shall be used for Use Classes A1 /A2 /A3/ A4/ A5/ B1/ D1/ D2 only of the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and for no other purposes (including Use Class C3 – Residential), unless agreed in writing or approved by way of separate planning permission

REASON:- To ensure the retention of active frontage, appropriate infrastructure is retained to support the residential community and because highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above uses.

9. No plant/equipment affixed to external face of buildings

Unless agreed through the approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Condition 4, through the detail approved under application for Phases 1A and 1K or through any future application in relation to Phases 1A and K, no plant or equipment shall be affixed to any external face of a building or added to the roof of the building.

REASON:- In the interests of amenity

10. PD restriction on satellite equipment

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no external telecommunications equipment or infrastructure shall be erected to any build development within the development site, other than those expressly authorised by this permission.

REASON:- To retain the high quality external design promoted by this development.

11. Telecommunications/Satellite Strategy

Prior to occupation of each phase(s) of development within the application site, details of any associated communal telecommunications infrastructure and plant shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details approved and maintained as such thereafter.

REASON:- To ensure satisfactory appearance and facilitate equitable access to telecommunications services.

12. Construction hours of working

No demolition, construction or maintenance activities audible at the boundary and no deliveries of construction and demolition materials shall be undertaken outside the hours 07:30 hours to 18:30 hours Mondays to Fridays, 08:30 hours to 13.00 hours on Saturdays and shall not operate on a Sunday or Bank Holiday, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction and maintenance of the development does not prejudice the amenities of occupiers of nearby premises due to noise pollution.

13. Restriction on infiltration drainage

No drainage systems for the infiltration of surface water to the ground are permitted other than with the written consent of the local planning authority. Any proposals for such systems must be supported by an assessment of the risks to controlled waters. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure that the development does not contribute to, is not put at unacceptable risk from, or adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilised contaminants.

14. Piling and penetrative methods of construction

Piling or any other foundation design using penetrative methods shall not be permitted within the development other than with the express consent of the Local Planning Authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To protect groundwater environment, including groundwater. Some piling techniques can cause preferential pathways for contaminants to migrate to groundwater and cause pollution. A piling risk assessment should be submitted with consideration of the EA guidance. This groundwater monitoring programme should incorporate mitigation measures to the adopted design should piling works be noted to be adversely impacting on groundwater quality beneath the site.

15. Management of Boreholes

A scheme for managing any borehole installed within the development for the investigation of soils, groundwater or geotechnical purposes, for any given phase(s) of the development, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall provide details of how redundant boreholes are to be decommissioned and how any boreholes that need to be retained, post-development, for monitoring purposes will be secured, protected and inspected, for that relevant phase(s). The scheme as approved shall be implemented prior to the occupation of any relevant phase(s).

REASON:- To ensure that the development does not contribute to, is not put at unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilise contaminants. This is in line with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework and adopted local plan policy FP5: Contaminated land.

16. Hedge/shrub clearance outside bird nesting period.

All areas of hedges, scrub or similar vegetation where birds may nest which are to be removed as part of the development within each phase(s), are to be cleared outside the bird-nesting season (March - August inclusive) or if clearance during the bird-nesting season cannot reasonably be avoided, a suitably qualified ecologist will check the areas to be removed immediately prior to clearance and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded, no vegetation clearance or other works that may disturb active nests shall proceed until all young have fledged the nest.

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

17. Construction Management Plan (Excluding Phase 1K)

No development shall commence (including demolition and site clearance) (excluding Phase 1K) of each individual phase(s), until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the works of construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved plan. The Construction Management Plan shall address the following matters:-

- (i) Details of construction phasing programme (including any pre-construction enabling works and highway works);

- (ii) Hours of operations including times of deliveries and removal of waste which should avoid school pick up/drop off times;
- (iii) Demolition and construction works between the hours of 0730 and 1800 on Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 0830 and 1300 on Saturdays only.
- (iv) The site set-up and general arrangements for storing plant including cranes, materials, machinery and equipment, temporary offices and other facilities (including welfare facilities), construction vehicle parking and loading/unloading and vehicle turning areas;
- (v) Access and protection arrangements around the site for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users;
- (vi) Details of the provisions for temporary car parking during construction which shall be provided prior to the commencement of construction activities;
- (vii) Construction vehicle numbers, type and routing;
- (viii) Details of fencing, hoarding and scaffolding provision;
- (ix) End of day tidying procedures;
- (x) Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking);
- (xi) Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
- (xii) Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
- (xiii) Control measures to manage noise and dust;
- (xiv) Disposal of surplus materials;
- (xv) Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and access to the public highway.
- (xvi) Details of the access and highways works from the local highway network to accommodate construction traffic.
- (xvii) Details of consultation and compliant management with local businesses and neighbours.
- (xviii) Mechanisms to deal with environmental impacts such as noise and vibration, air quality and dust, light and odour;
- (xix) Details of any proposed piling operations, including justification for the proposed piling strategy, a vibration impact assessment and proposed control and mitigation measures;
- (xx) Details of a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) detailing actual waste arising and how waste is managed (i.e. re-used, recycled or sent off site for treatment or disposal) and where it is sent to. Further updated should be provided throughout the life of the development at an interim of two months or sooner should the level of waste be considered significant by the developer.

REASON:- To minimise the impact of construction vehicles and to maintain the amenity of the local area.

18 Construction Management Plan (Phase 1K)

No development shall commence following demolition and site clearance on Phase 1K, until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the works of construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved plan. The Construction Management Plan shall address the following matters:-

- (i) Details of construction phasing programme (including any pre-construction enabling works and highway works);
- (ii) Hours of operations including times of deliveries and removal of waste which should avoid school pick up/drop off times;
- (iii) Demolition and construction works between the hours of 0730 and 1800 on Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 0830 and 1300 on Saturdays only.
- (iv) The site set-up and general arrangements for storing plant including cranes, materials, machinery and equipment, temporary offices and other facilities (including welfare facilities), construction vehicle parking and loading/unloading and vehicle turning areas;
- (v) Access and protection arrangements around the site for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users;
- (vi) Details of the provisions for temporary car parking during construction which shall be provided prior to the commencement of construction activities;
- (vii) Construction vehicle numbers, type and routing;
- (viii) Details of fencing, hoarding and scaffolding provision;
- (ix) End of day tidying procedures;
- (x) Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking);
- (xi) Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
- (xii) Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
- (xiii) Control measures to manage noise and dust;
- (xiv) Disposal of surplus materials;
- (xv) Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and access to the public highway.
- (xvi) Details of the access and highways works from the local highway network to accommodate construction traffic.
- (xvii) Details of consultation and compliant management with local businesses and neighbours.

- (xviii) Mechanisms to deal with environmental impacts such as noise and vibration, air quality and dust, light and odour;
- (xix) Details of any proposed piling operations, including justification for the proposed piling strategy, a vibration impact assessment and proposed control and mitigation measures;
- (xx) Details of a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) detailing actual waste arising and how waste is managed (i.e. re-used, recycled or sent off site for treatment or disposal) and where it is sent to. Further updates should be provided throughout the life of the development at an interim of two months or sooner should the level of waste be considered significant by the developer.

REASON:- To minimise the impact of construction vehicles and to maintain the amenity of the local area.

19. Servicing and Delivery Plan

Prior to the occupation of each phase of the development, the applicant shall submit a Servicing and Delivery Plan for that relevant phase(s). This plan is to be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Servicing and Delivery Plan shall contain the delivery and servicing requirements, waste collection points for the proposed use, a scheme for coordinating deliveries and servicing for the proposed development, areas within the development site that will be used for loading and manoeuvring of delivery and servicing vehicles, and access to from the site for delivery and servicing vehicles. The details shall include waste vehicle circulation route and constructed in accordance with the approved details. Thereafter the routes shall be maintained in accordance with those approved details.

REASON: In the interest of maintaining highway efficiency and safety.

20. Written Scheme of Investigation - Archaeology

Prior to the commencement of development a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing a programme of archaeological trial trench evaluation of the proposed development site for any given phase(s) of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the preservation of potential remains of the site following archaeological investigation.

21. Written Scheme of Investigation - Archaeology

No development shall commence in each phase of the development until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation detailing a programme of archaeological mitigation, as appropriate given the results of the archaeological evaluations, has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing.

REASON:- To ensure the preservation of potential remains of the site following archaeological investigation

22. Site Investigation for Archaeology

The development of each phase shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition 21 and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.”

REASON:- To ensure the preservation of potential remains of the site following archaeological investigation.

23. Control of emissions

Prior to the first occupation of the non-residential units to be used within class A3/A4 hereby permitted for each phase, a scheme for the installation of equipment to control the emission of fumes and smell from the premises including any air conditioning equipment, for that relevant phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and the approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of these units. All equipment installed as part of the scheme shall thereafter be operated and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

REASON: To protect the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining properties.

24. Restriction of uses (Phase 1A)

Notwithstanding the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that order) the non-residential units shall be used for Use Classes A1 /A2 /A3/ A4/ B1/ D1/ D2 only of the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and for no other purposes, unless agreed in writing or approved by way of separate planning permission

REASON:- To protect the amenities of the occupiers of adjoining properties.

25. Construction Environmental Management Plan (Phase 1K)

Prior to the commencement of any development for Phase 1K under Phase 1 (excluding operations consisting of site clearance, demolition, earthworks, archaeological investigations, investigations for assessing ground conditions, remedial work in respect of any contamination or other adverse ground conditions, diversion and laying of services, erection of any temporary means of enclosure, and the temporary display of site notices or advertisements) a Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plan. The plan will include the following information:

- i) Procedures and protocols to prevent or manage the exposure of construction workers, visitors to the construction area, and users of neighbouring areas to contaminated materials;
- ii) Measures to limit dust generation during excavation, handling and storage of potentially contaminated materials;
- iii) Boundary monitoring of dust, volatile organic compounds and asbestos fibres during excavation and soil handling at points of greatest sensitivity;
- iv) Appropriate procedures for handling and treatment of groundwater;
- v) Measures to protect workers from vapours and dermal contact if hydrocarbon contamination is excavated, for instance, during piling;
- vi) Measures required under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and associated code of practice;

- ix) Good practice operation and containment measures for storage of fuels or liquid chemicals to conform with government regulations and pollution prevention guidance (PPGs) issued by the EA;
- x) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities, identification of biodiversity protection zones, practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction, the location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features, identify the times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works, responsible persons and lines of communication, use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

REASON:- To ensure the implementation of the development does not harm ecological features during the construction phase and to minimise disruption to neighbouring properties and the environment.

26. Construction Environmental Management Plan (Outline and Phase 1A)

Prior to the commencement of a particular phase(s) (including Phase 1A) of development a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan for that particular phase(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved plan. The plan will include the following information:

- i) Procedures and protocols to prevent or manage the exposure of construction workers, visitors to the construction area, and users of neighbouring areas to contaminated materials;
- ii) Measures to limit dust generation during excavation, handling and storage of potentially contaminated materials;
- iii) Boundary monitoring of dust, volatile organic compounds and asbestos fibres during excavation and soil handling at points of greatest sensitivity;
- iv) Appropriate procedures for handling and treatment of groundwater;
- v) Measures to protect workers from vapours and dermal contact if hydrocarbon contamination is excavated, for instance, during piling;
- vi) Measures required under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 and associated code of practice;
- ix) Good practice operation and containment measures for storage of fuels or liquid chemicals to conform with government regulations and pollution prevention guidance (PPGs) issued by the EA;
- x) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities, identification of biodiversity protection zones, practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction, the location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features, identify the times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works, responsible persons and lines of communication, use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

REASON:- To ensure the implementation of the development does not harm ecological features during the construction phase and to minimise disruption to neighbouring properties and the environment.

27. Contamination

Each reserved matters applications submitted pursuant to condition 4 shall include a Ground Investigation Assessment (GIA).

REASON:- To safeguard human health and ground water.

28. Contamination

If during a particular phase of development contamination that has not been previously identified has been found to be present in a particular area of the Phase, then no further development in that phase (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted a remediation strategy (or addendum strategy if contaminants were identified and remediation strategy was submitted as part of the requirements of condition 24) specifically for the previously unidentified contamination to the Local Planning Authority detailing how it shall be dealt with and obtained written approved from the Local Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

REASON:- To safeguard human health and ground water.

29. Maximum number of residential units

The maximum number of residential units on the site shall be restricted to 1864 units, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

30. Limits on retail/leisure/community floorspace

For the non-residential element of the development hereby permitted under this permission no more than 18,317sq.m of gross internal area (GIA) of floorspace shall be provided unless otherwise agreed in writing through a reserved matters application pursuant to condition 4.

REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and because the highway and other impacts have been assessed on the basis of the above quantum of development.

31. External lighting

Prior to relevant works in each phase of development pursuant to condition 4, details of any external lighting (including access roads, footpaths and footways) proposed shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved external lighting shall be provided before that phase of development is occupied.

REASON:- To ensure that the development does not prejudice the amenities of adjoining occupiers, visual amenities of the area and to protect bats.

32. Green Roofs (Phases 1A and 1K)

Prior to relevant works for Phases 1A and 1K, details of the biodiverse (green/brown) roof(s) for that phase within the development site and maintenance strategy/schedule for the green/brown roof(s) shall be submitted to be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the details so approved and maintained as such thereafter.

REASON:- To minimise the impact of the development on the ecological value of the area and to ensure the development provides the maximum possible provision towards the creation of habitats and valuable areas for biodiversity

33. Bird and Bat Boxes

Prior to relevant works for each phase of development, a strategy for the siting and maintenance of permanent nesting and roosting boxes within the façade and roof ledges of built structure and/or trees shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Nesting and roosting boxes shall be provided in accordance with the approved strategy prior to occupation of the relevant building.

REASON:- To ensure that the development contributes to improving the ecology and biodiversity of the area

34. Energy and Sustainability statement (Phases 1A and 1K)

The measures detailed in the submitted Energy and Sustainability Statement to manage adaptability to climate change along with measures to manage overheating and cooling shall be implemented in phase 1 (Phases 1A and 1K) in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure the development is adaptable to climate change and to avoid overheating and minimising cooling demand.

35. Energy and Sustainability statement (Outline)

Each reserved matters application submitted pursuant to condition 4 shall include an Energy and Sustainability Statement detailing requirements of how the building(s) in each respective phase(s) are adaptable to climate change (detailing renewable energy technologies as well detailing measures to control overheating and cooling demand in the building(s), to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall also include a management plan and maintenance strategy/schedule for the operation of the technologies, a servicing plan (if applicable) and a noise assessment (if applicable). The measures for adaptation to climate change as well as managing overheating and cooling shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the development is adaptable to climate change and to avoid overheating and minimising cooling demand.

36. Cycle parking (Phases 1A and 1K)

The cycle parking strategy for Phases 1A and 1K as detailed in the application submission shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of any dwelling unit and commercial unit, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To secure adequate and high quality cycle parking provision.

37. Electric parking provision (Phases 1K)

Prior to relevant works relating to Phase 1K the details of the [siting, type and specification of EVCPs, the energy sources and the strategy/management plan for supply and maintenance of the EVCPs] shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All EVCPs shall be installed in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of each of the units and permanently maintained and retained, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority

REASON:- To ensure the development provides sufficient electric vehicle charging facilities.

38. Noise impact (Phases 1A and 1K)

The noise mitigation measures for the residential apartments in Phases 1A and 1K as detailed in the application submission shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation.

REASON:- To ensure that the occupiers of the buildings are protected from external noise pollution.

39. Noise impact (Outline)

Each reserved matters application submitted pursuant to condition 4 shall include a noise impact assessment and detailed mitigation measures shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The mitigation measures approved shall be implemented prior to occupation of buildings in each relevant phase.

REASON:- To ensure that the occupiers of the buildings are protected from external noise pollution and to protect the amenities of existing neighbouring properties.

40. Wind effects and mitigation

Each reserved matters application submitted pursuant to condition 4 shall include a detailed assessment of the wind effects and related mitigation measures for that phase of development as identified pursuant to condition 1, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure the development does not prejudice the amenities of existing and future residents due to wind effects.

41. CCTV Provision

Prior to the occupation of any building of each phase of development as identified pursuant to condition 4, details of any CCTV provision for that phase, including locations and management proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CCTV systems shall be provided in accordance with the approved details prior to first occupation of the approved buildings, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure the future residents of the development are safe and secure.

42. Tree Protection (Phases 1A and 1K)

Prior to the commencement of development Phases 1A and 1K (excluding demolition and associated works in Phase 1K), the scheme for the protection of the existing trees (other than those the removal of which have been approved as part of this permission) shall be implemented accordingly and shall be maintained in full until the development is completed, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- In order to protect trees which are to be retained as part of this development.

43. Tree Protection (Outline)

Each reserved matters application submitted pursuant to condition 4 where trees are affected by the development in that particular phase(s) shall include a scheme for the protection of trees which are to be retained where such a scheme accords with the relevant British Standards. The approved scheme for the protection of existing trees shall be implemented before development commences and be maintained in full until the development is completed, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- In order to protect trees which are to be retained as part of this development.

44. Refuse and Recycling (Phases 1A and 1K)

Prior to the first occupation of Phases 1A and 1K the general waste and recycling facilities shall be implemented in accordance with the details specific in the application submission for that relevant phase.

REASON:- To ensure there is sufficient general waste and recycling provision to serve the future occupiers of the development.

45. Refuse and Recycling (Outline)

Each reserved matters application submitted pursuant to condition 4 shall include details of general waste and recycling facilities which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The general waste and recycling facilities shall be in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the building(s) in that particular phase(s).

REASON:- To ensure there is sufficient general waste and recycling provision to serve the future occupiers of the development.

46. Sunlight and Daylight Assessment

Each reserved matters application submitted pursuant to condition 4 shall be supported with a Sunlight and Daylight Assessment which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure that the overall quantum of development in each phase does not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of existing properties as well as the amenities of future occupiers of the development.

47. New access(es) (Phases 1A and 1K)

Prior to the first occupation or use of Phases 1A and 1K the vehicular access(es) for the relevant phase(s) shall be provided and thereafter retained at the position(s) shown on the approved plan(s) drawing numbers SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-100 PLOT K GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN and SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-101 PLOT A GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN. Arrangement shall be made for surface water drainage to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge from or onto the highway carriageway.

REASON:- To ensure satisfactory access into the site and avoid carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway.

48. Visibility Splays (Phases 1A and 1K)

Prior to the first occupation or use of Phases 1A and 1K hereby permitted, a visibility splay measuring 2.4 x 43 metres shall be provided to each side of the access(es) where it meets the highway for that relevant phase(s) and such splays shall thereafter

be maintained at all times free from any obstruction between 600mm and 2m above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.

49 Provision of parking and servicing areas (Phases 1A and 1K)

Prior to the first occupation or use of Phases 1A and 1K development hereby permitted, the proposed access, onsite car and cycle parking, servicing / loading, unloading / turning /waiting area(s) for that phase(s) shall be laid out, demarcated, levelled, surfaced and drained in accordance with the approved plan(s) (SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-100 PLOT K GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN and SG1-LDA-00-ZZ-DR-L-101 PLOT A GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN), and retained thereafter available for that specific use, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety

50 Monitoring

Prior to superstructure works of any phase of development the submission and agreement of a mechanism of continual review of the transport impacts of the relevant phase(s) of development to include (but not be restricted to) the installation of traffic counters upon each access, travel plan monitoring and regular dialogue between Developer, Local Planning Authority and Highway Authority. The findings of this work shall be shared between all interested parties with a view to remedying any problems arising directly from the construction or occupation of the relevant phase(s) of the development.

REASON:- To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised.

51 Travel Plan(s)

In conjunction with the Framework Travel Plan submitted with the application, draft or Full Travel Plans for each phase of the development (to include the residential and commercial elements) shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to the occupation of any phase. The plans shall make provision for relevant surveys, review and monitoring mechanisms, targets, further mitigation, timescales, phasing programme and on-site management responsibilities. It shall be implemented and subject to regular review in accordance with the above approved details. (The agreed travel plans are to be appended to the S106 agreement).

REASON:- To ensure that the development traffic is within the predicted levels in TA, to promote sustainable transport measures and maintain the free and safe flow of traffic

52 Estates Road(s)

Superstructure works shall not commence on any phase of development until full details for that relevant phase have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in relation to the proposed arrangements for future management and maintenance of the proposed streets within the development. (The streets shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved management and maintenance details until such time as an agreement has been entered into under Section 38 of the Highways Act 1980 or a Private Management and Maintenance Company has been established).

Reason: To ensure satisfactory development and to ensure estate roads are managed and maintained thereafter to a suitable and safe standard

53 Car Parking Management Plan

Prior to first occupation/use of each phase of the development, a Car Parking Management Plan relating to public car parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. It shall include the following:

- i. Details of car parking allocation and distribution;
- ii. Operational details, and integration with other Stevenage Borough Council managed car parks within the town centre area;
- iii. Scheme for signing car park and any real time capacity information system;
- iv. A scheme for the provision and parking of cycles;
- v. Provision for Electric Vehicle charging points (which will serve as dual charging points with the capacity);
- vi. Details of the infrastructure that will be provided as part of the development and subsequently, both within the site and off site as necessary, to enable the capacity of vehicle charging provision to be increased to an agreed figure in the future, and;
- vii. Monitoring required of the Car Park Management Plan to be submitted to and approved in writing in accordance with a time frame to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

The Car Parking Management Plan shall be fully implemented before the development is first occupied or brought into use (and updated at stages to be agreed through the Masterplan build out), in accordance with a timeframe agreed by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter retained for this purpose.

REASON:- In the interests of highway safety and to ensure sufficient available on-site car parking and the provision of adequate cycle parking that meets the needs of occupiers of the proposed development and in the interests of encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport.

54 Existing Access – Closure

Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted vehicular and pedestrian (and cyclist) access to and egress from the adjoining highway for Phases 1A and 1K shall be limited to the access(es) shown on drawing number SG1-PRP-K01-GL-DR-A-02005 (E) PLOT K SITE PROPOSED and SG1-PRP-A01-GL-DR-A-02005 (E) PLOT A SITE PLAN PROPOSED only. Any other access(es) or egresses relating to Phases 1A and 1K shall be permanently closed, and the footway and highway verge shall be reinstated in accordance with a detailed scheme to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority, concurrently with the bringing into use of the new access.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety and amenity

55 Public Highway

The proposed new highway boundary(ies) or areas of public highway/realm under control of Stevenage Borough Council shall be marked out on site prior to commencement of construction of any part of the development fronting the highway.

REASON:- To prevent unauthorised structures being erected within the highway boundary.

56 Stopping Up (Removal) of Highway Rights

Excluding demolition of Phase 1K, no development shall commence in each phase until such time as Stopping Up Order(s) to remove all highway rights over the land in that relevant phase are successfully obtained as illustrated on drawing numbers 70051063-TP-SK-051_01 Rev P02 to 70051063-TP-SK-051_06 P02 are successfully obtained.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development.

57 Highway Structures (including retaining wall)

Pursuant to the stopping up of Towers Road and removal of highways structures, bridge and access road, no development shall commence, excluding demolition and all associated works for Phase 1K, shall commence until the developer has complied fully with the requirements of the Department for Transport's DMRB Standard CG 300: Technical Approval of Highway Structures. The Approval in Principle and Design and Check Certification, accompanied by full structural details, shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All works shall proceed in accordance with the details submitted and Construction Compliance certification and documentation submitted to the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.

58 Highway Improvements – Offsite (Design Approval) (Part A)

Notwithstanding the details indicated on the submitted General Arrangement drawings for Phases 1A and 1K, no on-site construction works above slab level shall commence until a detailed scheme for the highway improvement works as indicated on drawing(s) number(ed) (70051063-TP-SK-051_01 Rev P02 to 70051063-TP-SK-051_06 P02) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and that the highway improvement works are designed to an appropriate standard in the interest of highway safety and amenity.

59 Highway Improvements – Offsite (Implementation / Construction) (Part B).

Prior to the first occupation /use each phase of the development hereby permitted the offsite highway improvement works referred to in Part A of this condition shall be completed in accordance with the approved details for that relevant phase, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and that the highway improvement works are designed to an appropriate standard in the interest of highway safety and amenity.

60 Details of Reserved Matters – Outline

For each Phase of development for which Outline permission is granted (as outlined in Drawing Number: AA6999_2015-SG1 INDICATIVE PHASING PLAN), no development, in relation to that Phase, apart from enabling works and earthworks, shall commence until detailed plans for that Phase have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These plans will show the access, layout, scale, design, internal layout, and external appearance of the buildings to be constructed and landscaping to be implemented (hereinafter referred to as "the Reserved Matters") on that Phase. The development shall only be carried out as approved.

REASON:- To comply with the requirements of section 92(4) of the Town and Country planning Act 1990 and the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 and to ensure that high standards of urban design and a comprehensively planned development are achieved. To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety.

61 Detailed Highways Plans – Outline

Prior to superstructure/relevant works of the development within any Phase apart from Phases 1A and 1K, full details in relation to the design of estate roads (in the form of

scaled plans and / or written specifications) for that Phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to detail the following:

- a. Roads;
- b. Footways
- c. Cycleways;
- d. External public lighting;
- e. Minor artefacts, structures and functional services;
- f. Foul and surface water drainage;
- g. Visibility splays;
- h. Access arrangements including temporary construction access
- i. Hard surfacing materials;
- j. Parking areas for vehicles and cycles;
- k. Loading areas; and
- l. Turning and circulation areas.

The development shall be implemented in accordance with those approved plans.

REASON:- To ensure suitable, safe and satisfactory planning and development of the site.

62 Maintenance of Streets – Outline

Prior to the occupation of any dwellings within any Phase of the development, full details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in relation to the proposed arrangements for future management and maintenance of the proposed streets within that Phase. Following the provision of such streets, the streets shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the approved management and maintenance details until such time as an agreement has been entered into under Section 38 of the Highways Act 1980 or a Private Management and Maintenance Company has been established in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure satisfactory development of the site and to ensure estate roads are managed and maintained thereafter to a suitable and safe standard.

63 Off-site walking and cycling routes (outline)

Prior to the commencement of development (excluding Phases 1A and 1K), a scheme of off-site pedestrian and cycle improvements, as shown in principle on drawing number AA6999_2012-SG1 PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN & CYCLE MOVEMENT shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority, unless otherwise agreed in writing. The pedestrian and cycle improvements shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details. The off-site pedestrian and cycle improvements shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure early delivery of off-site linkages and to promote the use of non-car modes of transport in accordance Policy TRA1 of the District Plan and to ensure construction of a satisfactory development in the interests of highway safety and amenity, in accordance with Policies 5 and 7 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 2018.

64 School Travel Plan – Outline

Within three months of the first use of the school, a Modeshift STARS School Travel Plan should be prepared and submitted to Hertfordshire County Council, and fully approved by the School Travel Plan Team (the team can be contacted at: activeandsafertravel@hertfordshire.gov.uk). Thereafter the Travel Plan shall be implemented in full throughout the life of the school.

REASON:- To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised.

65 Sound Insulation and Noise Mitigation Details

Each phase of development hereby permitted shall not commence, excluding demolition works relating to Phase 1K, until a report identifying those residential premises within the relevant phase of the development that require mitigation of external noise levels and detailing the mitigation required to achieve satisfactory noise levels within those premises (and to their private balcony and amenity areas, where relevant) has first been submitted to the Local Planning Authority in writing to be agreed. The report shall also detail arrangements for ventilating the residential premises so identified. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the report so agreed and shall be retained as such thereafter.

REASON:- To ensure that potential adverse noise impacts to residential premises within the development are mitigated and to ensure a high standard of amenity for future occupiers.

66 Sound Insulation and Noise Mitigation – Internal Noise

Prior to the commencement of any superstructure works in each phase of development pursuant to condition 4, a full detailed scheme for the soundproofing of the building(s) in that relevant phase against internally generated noise shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include airborne and impact sound insulation. The approved noise mitigation measures shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the building(s) and thereafter permanently retained.

REASON:- In order to secure that no undue disturbance is caused to individual occupants by the transmission of airborne and impact sound between non-residential and residential uses and from internally generated plant noise.

67 Noise Levels – Mechanical Equipment or Plant

Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, the individual and cumulative rating level of noise emitted from plant and/or fixed machinery at the development hereby approved shall be no greater than the existing background noise levels. The noise levels shall be determined at the façade of the nearest residential property. The measurements and assessments shall be made in accordance with British Standards 4142' Method for rating industrial noise affecting mixed residential and industrial areas. Before any plant is used, measurements of the noise from the plant must be taken and a report / impact assessment demonstrating that the plant (as installed) meets the design requirements, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure that the development achieves a high standard of amenity for future occupiers of this development and the neighbouring buildings.

68 Hours of operation

Prior to the first occupation of the non-residential units of each phase hereby permitted (retail, leisure, office, public services), details of the hours of operation for the non-residential units for that relevant phase hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The non-residential units shall thereafter be occupied solely with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure that no nuisance or disturbance is caused to the detriment of the amenities of adjoining occupiers or users of the area generally.

69 Overheating and noise

Prior to the commencement of any superstructure works in each phase of development pursuant to condition 4, a ventilation and summer cooling scheme for the proposed dwellings for that relevant phase(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall enable appropriate noise levels to be achieved whilst ventilation is provided at the minimum whole building rate as described in The Building Regulations Approved document F. The scheme shall also ensure that the thermal comfort criteria defined in the Chartered Institute of Building Engineers (CIBSE) Environmental Guide (2015) is achieved with windows closed where required to meet the noise standards for commercial and leisure noise. The residential use of the relevant properties for that relevant phase(s) shall not commence until the approved ventilation scheme has been installed in full accordance with the approved scheme.

REASON:- To protect the amenity of future residents of the development.

70 Public Art and Sculptures

Prior to the commencement of any superstructure works in each phase of development pursuant to condition 4, a public art programme for that relevant phase(s) and in accordance with the Council's Cultural Strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council as the Local Planning Authority. The public art shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of each relevant phase(s) of development.

REASON:- To ensure the delivery of high quality public art within the public realm.

71 Landscaping, Public Realm, children's play and Street Furniture

Prior to the first occupation of buildings in each phase of development pursuant to condition 4, a scheme of landscaping scheme including details of both hard and soft landscaping, street furniture, the pond and children's play for that relevant phase(s) shall be submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall also include a schedule of all trees (including tree pit design), shrub, plants and other vegetation planting which shall form part of any landscaping scheme. The scheme as approved shall be implemented within the first available planting season following the completion of each relevant phase(s) of development. Any trees, shrubs or plants that die within a period of two years (the period in which the developer is responsible for maintenance) from the completion of each relevant phase(s) of development, or are removed and/or become seriously damaged or diseased in that period, shall be replaced (and if necessary continue to be replaced) in the first available planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written permission for any variation.

REASON:- To ensure satisfactory landscape treatment of the site which will enhance the character and appearance of the area.

72 Landscape Management

Prior to the first occupation of buildings in each phase of development pursuant to condition 4, a landscape management plan, including long term objective goals, management responsibilities and maintenance responsibilities (other than small, privately owned, domestic gardens and/or amenity areas) for that relevant phase(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved management plan.

REASON:- To ensure satisfactory landscape treatment of the site which will enhance the character and appearance of the area.

73 Historic Building Recording

No development or demolition works shall take place in relation to the following buildings: 2 to 4 Town Square, Daneshill House, Stevenage Central Library and the Danestrete Centre until an appropriate programme of historic building recording and analysis has been secured and implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out at all time in strict accordance with the approved scheme, or such other details as may be subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure that an appropriate record is made of the historic building fabric that may be affected by the development.

74 Masterplan Framework

Prior to the commencement of development on any individual phase approved pursuant to condition 1, excluding Phases 1A and 1K, each reserved matters application submitted in accordance with details listed in condition 4, shall demonstrate compliance with the SG1 Hybrid Application Design and Access Statement (December 2019, Ref: AA6999 Rev. I) agreed on 20 October 2020 (date of Planning Committee) which sets the minimum benchmark design requirements for all future phases of development, unless otherwise agreed in writing with Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure a high quality design and satisfactory appearance.

75 S.106 Grampian Condition

No development other than the agreed works can commence in any phase unless and until:

(a) all estates and interests in such Phase in its entirety to and bound by the terms of a Section 106 Agreement related to this planning permission dated [dated – to be added on day planning permission is issued] and entered into between [Parties] insofar as such obligations relate to or affect either the whole site or such phase specifically; and

(b) The Council has confirmed in writing it is satisfied, having been provided with and investigated title, that all interest in the relevant Phase are bound by the said Agreement or undertaking.

For the purposes of this condition, “Agreed Works” shall mean:

- Surveys;
- Site Investigations;
- Demolition;
- Archaeological Trenching;
- Utilities works;
- Reconfiguration of parking areas (excluding access and egress).

REASON:- To ensure all relevant parties are legally bound to the obligations set out in the Section 106 legal agreement.

76 Heritage Strategy

Prior to the commencement of development on any individual phase approved pursuant to condition 1, excluding Phase 1K, a Heritage Strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Heritage Strategy shall include details of the following, where relevant to the respective phase:-

- Appropriate treatment of the Joy Ride Statue and its restoration;
- Storage of any salvaged material and an agreed strategy for reuse;
- Enhancements and Refurbishments to Historic Structures;
- Enhancements to the wider public realm within the Conservation Area.

The Heritage Strategy shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- In order to preserve and enhance the historic characteristics of the Town Square Conservation Area and the Grade II listed Clock Tower and surrounding pool and the Joy Ride sculpture.

77 Whole Site Condition for SuDS (Full and Outline)

No development of any Plot (Excluding demolition and site clearance of Phase 1K) / Catchment Area shall take place until the submission of a SuDS Design detailing provisions for the SuDS to be provided across the entire development site is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The SuDS Design Code shall also include:

1. Inclusion of SuDS for all sites in line with the Ciria SuDS manual with all plots to follow the SuDS hierarchy for inclusion of SuDS features;
2. The SuDS Design Code should ensure all viable options for promoting above ground storage are explored across all plots with demonstration of a preference towards above ground storage such as blue roofs, permeable paving with sub-base prior to use of below ground storage tanks.

REASON:- To ensure the sustainable development and satisfactory storage or and disposal of surface water from the entire strategic site.

78 Phase 1A / Catchment 1 (Implementation)

The development permitted by Phase 1A by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the SG1 Stevenage Flood Risk Assessment & Outline Drainage Strategy, Ref: 70051063-RP-FRA-001, dated September 2020, prepared by WSP, and the following mitigation measures:

1. Limiting the surface water run-off rates to a maximum of 2l/s for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + climate change event with discharge into the Thames Water surface water sewer.
2. Provide attenuation (285m³ of storage, or such volume agreed by the LPA) to ensure no increase in surface water run-off volumes for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + climate change event.
3. Implement drainage strategy utilising lined permeable paving, geocellular attenuation and a Hydrobrake.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site.

79 Phase 1A / Catchment 1 (Pre-commencement)

No development at Phase 1A shall take place until the final design on the drainage scheme is completed and sent to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The surface water drainage system will be based on the submitted SG1 Stevenage Flood

Risk Assessment & Outline Drainage Strategy, Ref: 70051063-RP-FRA-001, dated September 2020, prepared by WSP. The scheme shall also include:

1. A detailed drainage strategy demonstrating attenuation and restricted surface water discharged at 2l/s.
2. Demonstration of a drainage strategy, which has reviewed all viable options promoting above ground storage such as the use of blue roofs, permeable paving, tree pits, swales etc.
3. Detailed engineered drawings of the proposed SuDS features including their location, volume, depth and any inlet and outlet features including any connecting pipe runs and all corresponding calculations/modelling to ensure the scheme caters for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + 40% allowance for climate change event.
4. Demonstrate appropriate SuDS management and treatment and inclusion of above ground features such as lined permeable paving.
5. Provision of half down drain times within 24 hours.
6. Silt traps for protection of any residual tanked elements.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site.

80 Phase 1A / Catchment (Final as built)

Upon completion of the drainage works for the site (Phase 1A) in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements, the following must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

1. Provision of a verification report (appended with substantiating evidence demonstrating the approved construction details and specifications have been implemented in accordance with the surface water drainage scheme). The verification report shall include photographs of excavation and soil profiles/horizons, installation of any surface water structure (during construction and final make up) and control mechanism.
2. Provision of a complete set of as built drawings for the site drainage.
3. A management and maintenance plan for the SuDS features and drainage network.
4. Arrangements for adoption and any measures to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site.

81 Phase 1K / Catchment 2 (Pre-commencement)

No development (excluding demolition and site clearance) shall take place until the final design scheme is completed and sent to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The surface water drainage system will be based on the submitted SG1 Stevenage Flood Risk Assessment & Outline Drainage Strategy, Ref: 70051063-RP-FRA-001, dated September 2020, prepared by WSP. The scheme shall also include:

1. Detailed groundwater monitoring over a minimum period of 6 months over the autumn and winter, ideally to be provided for the entire calendar year.
2. Detailed drainage investigation and survey of the Tower Pond determining its drainage function
3. A detailed drainage strategy demonstrating discharge at the greenfield runoff rate or 95% betterment.
4. Analysis of the Risk of Flooding from Surface Water mapping, ensuring the provision for storage for the predicted surface water flooding. No flooding should occur on site up to the 1 in 30 year event, and no flooding of any building up to the 1 in 100 year + climate change event, with additional surface water storage volume to be provided on site.

5. Demonstration of a drainage strategy which has reviewed all viable options promoting above ground storage such as the use of blue roofs, permeable paving, tree pits, swales etc.
6. Demonstration of a drainage strategy ensuring no new surface water sewers underneath new buildings and exploration of the diversion of existing surface water sewers around new buildings where possible.
7. Detailed engineered drawings of the proposed SuDS features including their location, size, volume, depth and any inlet and outlet features including any connecting pipe runs and all corresponding calculations/modelling to ensure the scheme caters for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + 40% allowance for climate change event.
8. Demonstrate appropriate SuDS management and treatment and inclusion of above ground features such as lined permeable paving.
9. Provision of half drain down times within 24 hours
10. Silt traps for protection of any residual tanked elements

The approved scheme shall be implemented in full for the life of the development.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site.

82 Phase 1K / Catchment 2 (Final as built)

Upon completion of the drainage works for the site (Plot K) in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements, the following must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

1. Provision of a verification report (appended with substantiating evidence demonstrating the approved construction details and specifications have been implemented in accordance with the surface water drainage scheme). The verification report shall include photographs of excavations and soil profiles/horizons, installation of any surface water structure (during construction and final make up) and the control mechanism.
2. Provision of a complete set of as built drawings for site drainage.
3. A management and maintenance plan for the SuDS features and drainage network.
4. Arrangements for adoption and any other measures to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site.

83 Plots B, C, E, F, G, H, Hub, School Site (Catchment Areas 3-10) (Implementation)

The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the SG1 Stevenage Flood Risk Assessment & Outline Drainage Strategy, Ref: 70051063-RP-FRA-001, dated September 2020, prepared by WSP and the following mitigation measures:

1. Limiting the surface water run-off rates to the greenfield runoff rate or 95% betterment for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + climate change event with discharge into the Thames Water surface water sewer at a maximum of the following discharge rates for each Plot / Catchment Area:
 - a. Plot B (Catchment Area Ref. 3): 2l/s
 - b. Plot C (Catchment Area Ref. 4): 2l/s
 - c. Plot E (Catchment Area Ref. 5): 2l/s
 - d. Plot F (Catchment Area Ref. 6): 2l/s
 - e. Plot G (Catchment Area Ref. 7): 2l/s
 - f. Plot H (Catchment Area Ref. 8): 2l/s
 - g. Hub (Catchment Area Ref. 9): 2l/s

h. School site (Catchment Area Ref. 10): 2.81l/s

2. Provide attenuation to ensure no increase in surface water run-off volumes for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + 40% for climate change event. Attenuation volumes to be provided per Plot / Catchment based on the following, (or such volume agreed in writing by the LPA):

- a. Plot B (Catchment Area Ref. 3): 282m³
- b. Plot C (Catchment Area Ref. 4): 215m³
- c. Plot E (Catchment Area Ref. 5): 216m³
- d. Plot F (Catchment Area Ref. 6): 165m³
- e. Plot G (Catchment Area Ref. 7): 248m³
- f. Plot H (Catchment Area Ref. 8): 424m³
- g. Hub (Catchment Area Ref. 9): 244m³
- h. School site (Catchment Area Ref. 10): 848m³

3. Implement drainage strategy based on the approved SuDS Design Code (approved at the discharge of Condition 1)

4. Implement drainage strategies utilising lined permeable paving, geocellular attenuation and Hydrobrakes.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site.

84 Plot B, C, D, E, F, G, H, Hub, School Site (Catchment Areas 3-10) (Pre-commencement)

No development (excluding demolition and enabling workings) shall take place until the final design of the drainage scheme is completed for each Plot / Catchment Area and sent to the LPA for approval. The surface water drainage system will be based on the submitted SG1 Stevenage Flood Risk Assessment & Outline Drainage Strategy, Ref: 70051063-RP-FRA-001, dated September 2020, prepared by WSP. The scheme shall also include:

- 1. A detailed drainage strategy demonstrating discharge at the greenfield runoff rate or 95% betterment.
- 2. Demonstration of a drainage strategy which has reviewed all viable options promoting above ground storage such as the use of blue roofs, permeable paving, tree pits, swales etc.
- 3. Demonstration of a drainage strategy which has used SuDS features in line with the SuDS Design Code in line with the entire development site (approved at the discharge of Condition 1).
- 4. Demonstration of a drainage strategy ensuring no new surface water sewers underneath new buildings and exploration of the diversion of existing surface water sewers around new buildings where possible.
- 5. Detailed engineered drawings of the proposed SuDS features including their location, size, volume, depth and any inlet and outlet features including any connecting pipe runs and all corresponding calculations/modelling to ensure the scheme caters for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year + 40% allowance for climate change event.
- 6. Demonstrate appropriate SuDS management and treatment and inclusion of above ground features such as lined permeable paving.
- 7. Provision of half drain down times within 24 hours
- 8. Silt traps for protection of any residual tanked elements.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site.

85 Plot B, C, D, E, F, G, H, Hub, School Site (Catchment Areas 3-10) (Final as built)

Upon completion of the drainage works for each Plot / Catchment Area in accordance with the timing / phasing arrangements for each Plot / Catchment Area, the following must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

1. Provision of a verification report (appended with substantiating evidence demonstrating the approved construction details and specifications have been implemented in accordance with the surface water drainage scheme). The verification report shall include photographs of excavations and soil profiles/horizons, installation of any surface water structure (during construction and final make up) and the control mechanism.
2. Provision of a complete set of as built drawings for site drainage.
3. A management and maintenance plan for the SuDS features and drainage network.
4. Arrangements for adoption and any other measures to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site.

86 Drainage management and maintenance plan

Prior to the first occupation of the relevant phase(s) of development hereby permitted, a detailed management and maintenance plan of the approved SuDS features, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The SuDS management and maintenance plan shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details over the lifetime of the relevant phase(s) of the approved development.

REASON:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site.

INFORMATIVES

Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority

AN1) Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

AN2) Obstruction of public highway land: It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to willfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

AN3) Road Deposits: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit mud or other debris on the public highway, and section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible. Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

AN4) S106 Agreement. A Section 106 agreement will be required for the following:

Approved Travel Plan(s), with individual monitoring fees (and contributions for remedial actions should targets be missed), in accordance with the current HCC Travel Plan Guidance for Business and Residential Development (£6k per use);

Travel Plan Remedial Fund (should approved targets not be met) (10k per annum for five years)

The above contributions will come under the auspices of the Planning Obligations Guidance Toolkit for Hertfordshire (2008) for schemes in the local area that accord with the three CIL tests.

AN5) Construction standards for works within the highway: The applicant is advised that in order to comply with this permission it will be necessary for the developer of the site to enter into an agreement with Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the satisfactory completion of the access and associated road improvements. The construction of such works must be undertaken to the satisfaction and specification of the Highway Authority, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements. Further information is available via the website:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>

AN6) Stopping up of public highway land:

- i) An application for a "stopping up" order to extinguish highway rights over the land will need to be made. In this respect, this initially needs to be made to Hertfordshire County Council:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/changes-to-your-road/apply-for-a-stopping-up-order-on-a-highway.aspx>

If this proposal is acceptable to the highway authority, then you would need to either make an application to the County Council, as highway authority, for a highway "stopping up" order under Section 116 of the Highways Act 1980 for the area of land in question.

Any such application together with a plan showing the area concerned should be sent to Legal Services, Hertfordshire County Council, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8DE. The costs of making such an order would be in the region of £3000 - £4000 which includes the formal consultation and application to the Magistrates Court.

- ii) Alternatively, if any such request is in conjunction with the redevelopment of the property, then you may wish to apply for a "stopping up" Order pursuant to Section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. All such applications would need to be made to the Secretary of State's National Transport Casework Team (nationalcasework@dft.gsi.gov.uk, see also the DfT website); and
- iii) In the meantime, I would point out that when an area of highway is "stopped up" then the surface of the land reverts back to the original owner of the subsoil of the land. This may or not be the applicant.

Details of the ownership of land may be available at the Land Registry, Leicester Office, Westbridge Place, Leicester, LE3 5DR. Their telephone number is 0300 006 0411. Land Registry can also be contacted by e-mail on customersupport@landregistry.gov.uk

AN7) The applicant is advised that in order to comply with Condition 14 of this permission it will be necessary for the developer of the site to contact the Hertfordshire County Council Bridge Asset Manager in connection with the requirements of Department for Transport Standard CG 300: Technical Approval of Highway Structures. Further details can be obtained from the Highway Authority by telephoning 0300 1234047 or by email: highway.structures@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Community Infrastructure Levy

Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule at Full Council on 27 January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 01 April 2020.

This application may be liable for CIL payments and you are advised to contact the CIL Team for clarification with regard to this. If your development is CIL liable, even if you are granted an exemption from the levy, please be advised that it is a requirement under Regulation 67 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) that CIL Form 6 (Commencement Notice) must be completed, returned and acknowledged by Stevenage Borough Council before building works start. Failure to do so will mean you risk losing the right to payment by instalments and a surcharge will be imposed. NB. please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions if relief has been granted.

Stevenage's adopted CIL Charging Schedule and further details of CIL can be found on the Council's webpages at www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL or by contacting the Council's CIL Team at CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk

Thames Water

The proposed development is located within 15 metres of Thames Waters underground assets and as such, the development could cause the assets to fail if appropriate measures are not taken. Please read our guide 'working near our assets' to ensure your workings are in line with the necessary processes you need to following if you're considering working above or near our pipes or other structures:-

<https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/planning-your-development/working-near-or-diverting-our-pipes>

Should you require further information please contact Thames Water by email:- developer.services@thameswater.co.uk or Phone 0800 009 3921 (Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm) or write to: Thames Water Developer Services, Clearwater Court, Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 8DB.

Police Crime Prevention Design Advice

The proposed development should achieve Secured By Design (SBD) accreditation in order for it to comply with current Building Regulations. The Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor by telephone on 01707 355227 or email mark.montgomery@herts.pnn.police.uk

Environmental Health (Pest Control)

Construction sites may cause the disturbance of rats and other vermin. Developers have a duty to manage the treatment of rats, vermin and pests on the site. Where suitable controls are not in place Prevention of Damage by Pest Act 1949 and nuisance and public health legislation will be used.

Pro-active statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led 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.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.
2. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision adopted January 2012 and Stevenage Design Guide adopted October 2009.
3. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 adopted 2019.
4. Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4 adopted May 2018.
5. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.
6. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework February 2019 and Planning Policy Guidance March 2014.
7. Community Infrastructure Levy 2010 (as amended).

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The Meeting: Planning and Development Agenda Item:
Committee

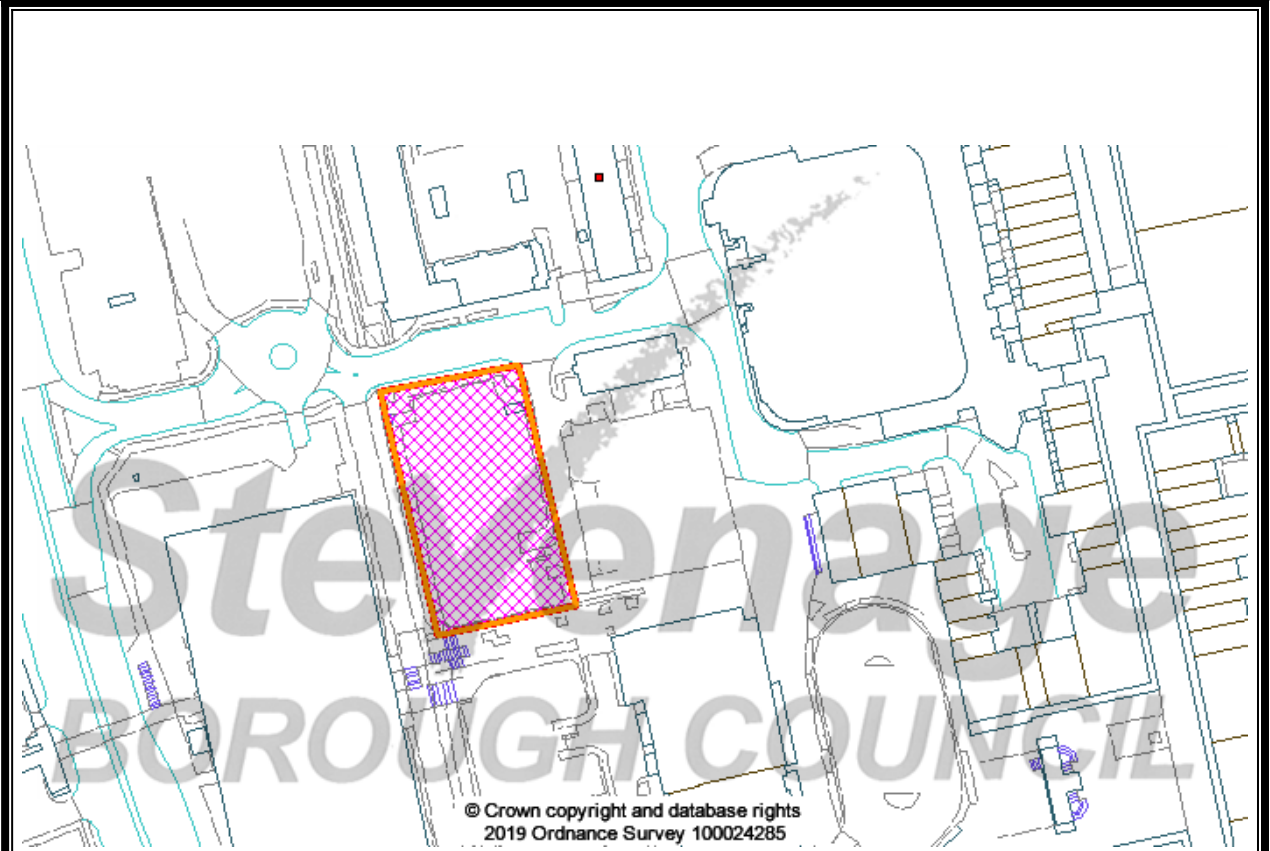
Date: 20 October 2020

Author: James Chettleburgh 01438 242266

Lead Officer: Zayd Al-Jawad 01438 242257

Contact Officer: James Chettleburgh 01438 242266

Application Nos:	20/00060/FP
Location:	Swingate Car Park, Swingate, Stevenage.
Proposal:	Reconfiguration of parking spaces and access road.
Drawing Nos.	AA6999 – 2500 A; 70051063-TP-SK-044_001 E; 70051063-TP-SK-044_002 E; 70051063-TP-SK-044_003 D; 70051063-TP-SK-044-TR1.
Applicant:	Mace Developments (Stevenage) Ltd.
Date Valid:	27 January 2020.
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION.



Plan for information purposes only

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site is located on the western side of Stevenage Town Centre and comprises a public surface car park operated by Stevenage Borough Council. The site is bordered by Swingate to the north and east and the ramped access up to the Arts and Leisure building to the south. To the west of the site lies the old London Road which runs along the eastern flank of the Arts and Leisure building. The car park itself is set up from the old London Road and Swingate to the north due to the sloping topography of the area. Between the application site and the old London Road is a row of mature trees and established vegetation.
- 1.2 In terms of the surrounding area, to the north beyond Swingate lies Tesco superstore and Skyline development. To the east is the second public car park on Swingate which also incorporates the office building known as Swingate House. To the south and south-east beyond the ramp lies additional surface parking and the Magistrates Court along with Mecca Bingo and Stevenage Borough Council offices. To the west lies the Arts and Leisure Building and beyond this is the A602 Lytton Way and Stevenage train station.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 Planning application 2/0350/91 sought permission for the re-location of the information cabin on south-west corner of Swingate Car Park. This application was granted planning permission in December 1991.
- 2.2 Planning application 04/00610/FP sought permission to change the use of part of the carriageway to car park and part of the pedestrian thoroughfare to a vehicular link. This application was withdrawn.
- 2.3 Planning application 07/00810/OP sought outline permission for a comprehensive redevelopment for a mix of uses to include a full range of retail uses (Class A1, A2, A3, A3 and A5), housing (Class C3), hotel (Class C1), leisure (Class D2), offices (Class B1), voluntary services (Class D1), magistrates court, replacement bus station, together with ancillary and associated developments, pedestrian and cycle circulation and open space, car parking, vehicular access, servicing facilities, highway works, plant and machinery, landscaping and enabling works. Demolition of existing buildings and structures, the closure and alteration of highways and cycleways and the internal and external alteration of buildings being retained, engineering works and construction of new buildings and structures. This permission has a resolution to grant subject to the completion of a S.106 agreement. However, the legal agreement was never completed as the applicant has withdrawn their interest in delivering this scheme. As such, this planning proposal is deemed to be moribund as it is unlikely it will be delivered in the future.
- 2.4 Planning application 19/00743/FPM seeks outline planning permission for the demolition of existing buildings on the site and the mixed use redevelopment of Plots A-K including new retail and food and beverage uses (A1-A5), leisure (D2), office (B1), community (D1) and residential (C3). New buildings to comprise residential accommodation (Class C3), retail floorspace Class (A1/A2/A3/A4/A5 floorspace), leisure floorspace (D2), office floorspace (Class B1), Public Services Hub (Class D1/B1/A1/A3), primary school (D1), plant and storage, servicing, new vehicle and pedestrian accesses and circulation, new public amenity space, new and amended car parking, new landscaping and public realm and associated works. Full details (access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) are submitted for Plots A and K and all matters reserved for Plots B to J. This application is pending consideration.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

3.1 The proposed development seeks planning permission for the reconfiguration of existing parking spaces and the access road serving Swingate West Car Park (Long-stay Car Park F). The existing car park currently provides 100 spaces and would be reduced to 85 spaces. This is due to the Swingate carriageway being increased in width to 5.5m throughout with a continuous kerb alignment. As a result, the western kerb of Swingate has been relocated 700mm further west. The new entrance to the reconfigured car park would comprise of barriers, as is the current situation, along with the re-provision of pay stations. In terms of Swingate itself, the spur road serving the car park would also comprise the provision of the following:-

- 3 no. blue badge bays;
- 1 no. loading bay; and
- 2 no. parking bays.

3.2 The justification for the reconfiguration of the car park and carriageway is because Swingate East Car Park (Long-stay Car Park J) and the associated Swingate House offices form part of the wider regeneration project (known as SG1) detailed under planning application 19/00743/FPM. This part of the regeneration scheme as outlined in the Masterplan accompanying the aforementioned application would be for residential development (identified as Plot A). Part of this proposal requires the Swingate spur road which serves these car parks to be altered in order to deliver the residential development.

3.3 Given the above, this application comes before the Planning and Development Committee as it is interlinked with planning application 19/00743/FPM.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 Following notification of the application through the erection of site notices, no comments or representations have been received.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority

5.1.1 The County Council has noted the amended reconfiguration of the Swingate carriageway which has now increased to 5.5m in width throughout. This results in a continuous kerb alignment which has resulted in the edge of the kerb of Swingate being relocated 700mm further west. It is understood this will be subject to detailed design and the necessary highway technical approval.

5.1.2 It has been noted that the proposed landscaping between the parking bays will be low-level planters or small trees to ensure sufficient vehicle inter-visibility is provided. This will be subject to a Stage One Road Safety Audit as part of the highways approvals for the proposed Swingate improved carriageway works.

5.1.3 The County Council as Highway Authority has considered that the proposal would not significantly increase the traffic generation of the vehicle movement to the development or the operational arrangement of the adjacent car park. In addition, it has been considered that the proposal would not affect the safety and operation of the adjoining highway. Consequently, there are no objections on highways grounds.

5.2 Council's Arboricultural Officer

- 5.2.1 There are no objections to the removal of Lime Trees T1 and T3 as these are not considered to be substantially important enough for the site. With respect to the Pine Tree (T16) in the raised planter, it is preferred to see this tree retained as it is an important feature in its location. However, as a compromise to the path amendment issue, it is suggested that the planter is modified (wall moved southwards by 300mm) whilst the tree is kept in-situ.
- 5.2.2 In order to compensate for the inevitable root disturbance, it is suggested a 20-30% crown reduction to lower the tree's centre of gravity, combined with killing off any Ivy. It is suggested an Arboriculturalist is present at the time of the excavations. Since neither the tree reduction nor planter modifications would otherwise be needed if it weren't for the application, it is suggested the cost of this operation is borne by the applicant.
- 5.2.3 If, at any point it is felt that the planter modification with the tree in situ is not viable, then it is agreed that the Pine tree is removed and replaced in the same spot, with an instant size tree (16-18cm +) of a suitable species.
- 5.2.4 The only concern would be the western boundary, and more specifically the roots of existing trees should any excavation take place in their root protection areas (RPAs). However, it is understood that the existing surfacing would be kept and no excavations are planned in this area. If they were, then an Arboriculturalist should be present to ensure the trees' stability and health is not compromised.

5.3 Council's Car Parks Manager

- 5.3.1 No comment.

5.4 Council's Engineering Section

- 5.4.1 The Engineering Section is satisfied that the proposed layout, bay sizes and aisle widths are appropriate and workable and are an efficient use of the available space. Approval should be granted with a condition that subsequent detail design elements including drainage, lighting and barrier, ramp and footways be approved by the Council.
- 5.4.2 Turning to the comments raised by the Council's Arboricultural Manager, the Engineers have reviewed these and are also content with the removal of the 2 trees within the boundaries of the car park to allow reconfiguration of the spaces. In terms of the conifer tree's brick pit surround, this has been agreed to be reduced together with a corresponding tree reduction to restore a minimum path along the southern footway of Swinggate on the approach to the roundabout.

5.5 Council's Environmental Health Section

- 5.5.1 The Council's Environmental Health Section has advised that the porta-cabin toilets within the car park are generally used by Taxi Drivers. However, it can be confirmed there is very little use of these, but they are located relatively close to the Danestrete rank opposite the Westgate carpark.
- 5.5.2 The best solution would be to enable access to toilets being provided at the new bus station. This being next door to the theatre and will be across the road from the station rank. This has far more use than Danestrete.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 Background to the development plan

6.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that the decision on the planning application should be in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Stevenage the statutory development plan comprises:

- The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031
- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and 2014); and
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 (adopted 2007).

6.2 Central Government Advice

6.2.1 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019. This largely reordered the policy substance of the earlier 2012 version of the NPPF, albeit with some revisions to policy. The policies in the Local Plan are in conformity with the revised NPPF and that the Local Plan should be considered up to date for the purpose of determining planning applications. The NPPF provides that proposals which accord with an up to date development plan should be approved without delay (para.11) and that where a planning application conflicts with an up to date development plan, permission should not usually be granted (para.12). This indicates the weight which should be given to an up to date development plan, reflecting the requirements of section 38(6) of the 2004 Act. The NPPF, with which Members are fully familiar, is a material consideration to be taken into account in determining this application.

6.3 Planning Practice Guidance

6.3.1 The PPG contains guidance supplementing the NPPF and with which Members are fully familiar. The PPG is a material consideration to be taken into account together with the National Design Guide (2019) which has the same status as the PPG.

6.4 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (Adopted 2019)

Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
Policy SP2: Sustainable Development in Stevenage;
Policy SP3: A strong, competitive economy;
Policy SP4: A vital Town Centre;
Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport;
Policy SP8: Good Design;
Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development;
Policy TC1: Town Centre;
Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area
Policy TC5: Central Core Major Opportunity Area;
Policy IT5: Parking and Access;
Policy IT8: Public parking provision;
Policy GD1: High Quality Design;
Policy NH5: Trees and woodland;

6.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document January 2012.
Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document January 2009.

6.6 Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule

6.6.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule in 2020. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location and floorspace of a development.

APPRAISAL

7.1 The main issues for consideration in the determination of the application are its acceptability in land use policy terms, impact on visual amenity, impact on residential amenity, parking provision, means of access and highway safety and trees and landscaping.

7.2 Acceptability in Land Use Policy

7.2.1 Policy SP2 of the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (2019) provides that planning permission will be granted where proposals demonstrate, how amongst other matters they will:

- Regenerate areas of the town that are under performing;
- Make good use of land and maximise opportunities for brownfield redevelopment in the town;
- Improve quality of life and make sure that residents share in the benefits of regeneration;
- Promote journeys by bus;
- Make high quality buildings and spaces that respect and improve their surroundings; and
- Support facilities that encourage people to live, work and spend leisure time in Stevenage.

7.2.2 Looking at the site itself in terms of its allocation, this is located in Stevenage Town Centre as identified under Policy TC1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019). More specifically, the site is designated as falling within the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area (MOA) under Policy TC4 and Central Core MOA under Policy TC5 of the Local Plan (2019) (these policies reflect the objectives of Policy SP4). Dealing firstly with Policy TC4, this seeks the provision of the following:-

- An extended and regenerated train station;
- New bus station;
- High density residential development;
- New multi-storey or basement car parking;
- New office floorspace;
- New shops, restaurants and cafes.

7.2.3 Policy TC5 identifies the delivery of high density residential, new retail, bar, restaurant and café floorspace, multi-storey or basement parking, office floorspace, leisure, cultural and civic spaces (including a replacement theatre and museum) and signature public spaces. Policy EC1 (Allocated sites for employment development) (which reflects the objectives of Policy SP3) of the Local Plan (2019) sets out a number sites and areas which are allocated for employment development. Under this policy, the site is identified under EC1/5 (Stevenage Central) for the provision of 35,000m² of office floor space.

7.2.4 The proposed development seeks to reconfigure the existing surface car park in order to help facilitate the redevelopment of Swingate House and the public car park as detailed under planning application 19/00743/FPM. As such, the proposal would not

prejudice the ability to redevelop this site as part of the wider policy objective in terms of regenerating the town centre. In addition, the scheme would allow the existing public car park to continue to operate until such time an application is made to redevelop this site in the future. Therefore, it is considered that the principle of the development is acceptable in this instance.

7.3 Impact on Visual Amenity

- 7.3.1 In terms of design, Policy SP8 of the Local Plan requires new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability. Policy GD1: High quality design generally requires all forms of development to meet a high standard of design which includes form of built development, elevational treatment and materials along with how the development would integrate with the urban fabric, its relationship between buildings, landscape design and relevant aspects of sustainable design.
- 7.3.2 The Council's Design Guide SPD (2009) sets out that a high quality environment is essential for providing a good quality of life for residents. A well-designed and managed space not only provides a visually attractive environment, but can also help to ensure that a place is easy to move around and within, is safe and secure, and is useful for all members of the community.
- 7.3.3 Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 stipulates that planning decisions should ensure development functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area, not just in the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also sets out that development should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that "permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to make available opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions". In terms of aspects of what constitutes good design is detailed in the National Design Guide (2019) introduced by the Government and as such, is deemed to be a material consideration.
- 7.3.4 The existing surface car park, which is operated by the Council, has an area of approximately 2,682 sq.m. It is predominantly constructed from tarmac and concrete paving for the pedestrian areas with the car park punctuated by a number of trees. At the north-eastern end of the car park lies a portable building (which is currently a WC for taxi drivers). At the northern end of the car park there is a low level retaining wall due to the changes in land levels. There are also ramped and stepped access points into the car park due to the level changes in the topography. The car park is also bordered by concrete posts and metal railings along Swingate, which runs along the eastern boundary. The car park is accessed via a metal barrier system and adjacent to the access are the pay machines. Along the western edge of the site is a row of trees which run parallel with the old London Road.
- 7.3.5 The proposed car park, whilst reduced in size, would be constructed (where required) in similar materials to those used in the existing car park. The scheme would also have a new ramped and stepped access at the north-eastern end which would involve the removal of the portable building. This is in order to provide additional parking spaces as well create safe access to the car park for pedestrians and those who may be disabled. There would also be a similar access arrangement for vehicles with the barriers being relocated onto a new island. The pay machine would also be re-located to the south-eastern edge of the car park. The scheme would also involve the removal of the existing retaining wall and construction of a new retaining wall. This would allow for a widened un-segregated footpath at the northern end of the site.

7.3.6 Given the aforementioned, the proposed development works would not substantively alter the overall design and appearance of the existing car park. As such, the development proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the visual amenities of the wider street scene.

7.4 Impact on residential amenity

7.4.1 The nearest residential properties to the development are located 21m to north at Skyline. Given this, the proposal could potentially have an impact on the amenities of the occupiers in this residential development. However, the proposed development merely seeks to re-configure the existing public car park and would continue to operate as such once works are completed. Consequently, the proposed operation of the re-configured public car park would be no different than the current situation.

7.4.2 Notwithstanding the above, there is potential that construction noise, when works take place, could impact on the amenities of nearby residents. Therefore, if planning permission were to be granted, it is recommended a condition is imposed to restrict the hours of construction where noise is audible at the boundary. With this condition in place, it would restrict the hours in which noisy construction activities can take place on-site.

7.5 Parking Provision

7.5.1 Policy IT5 of the Local Plan (2019) states that planning permission will be granted where proposals comply with the parking standards set out in the plan. Policy IT8 of the same document relates to public parking facilities. This policy sets out that planning permission resulting in the loss of existing car or cycle parking provision will be granted where:-

- i. Existing spaces are replaced within or adjacent to the new development;
- ii. Replacement car and cycle parking provision are made within 200 and 80 metres walk respectively of the key attractors currently served; or
- iii. It can be robustly evidenced that the parking is no longer required.

7.5.2 In relation to the loss of the public car parking facility, a study was undertaken to assess the overall need for car parking facilities across the town centre. The existing car park currently has 100 car parking spaces. In terms of the overall town centre (including Stevenage Leisure Park), there are 4,125 spaces of which 1,208 spaces are located in the Leisure Park. However, whilst the parking in the Leisure Park is free and there are no time restrictions, users are charged a fine if they leave the Leisure Park site (Only available for users of the Leisure Park). This is in order to prevent the car park being used by rail commuters and/or visitors to the rest of the town centre.

7.5.3 Turning to the existing car parking in the town centre, these are either Long Stay or Short Stay spaces. In terms of the Long Stay car parking, these are predominantly located at the Railway Station and the western part of the town centre. However, St George's Way Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) is the largest capacity Short Stay car park with 900 spaces. The analysis undertaken by the applicant identifies that the occupancy of the Long Stay car parks are the highest on Thursday during usual working hours when all the car parks are full and this drops to just over half full on Saturday. The occupancy of the short stay car parks is the highest on Saturdays. The main occupancy of the long stay car parks are by commuters, whilst the short stay car parks tend to be used by people shopping in the town or for leisure activities.

7.5.4 The car park which is the subject of this application, prior to Covid-19, is full for the longest time during the week with 100% occupancy between 8am to 1pm on Thursday as it will include commuters during the day and leisure users in the evening. This

means the car park is used by people who work in the town or use the train station during the week as it is within walking distance to both the train station and town centre. On Saturday, there is 100% occupancy peak between 7pm and 8pm as the car park will be used by a mixture of shoppers and leisure users.

- 7.5.5 Looking at the wider regeneration of the town centre, the SG1 Planning Application (19/00743/FPM), if granted planning permission by the Council, would involve the closure of Swingate East (81 parking spaces) and Southgate (211 parking spaces) car parks, with Southgate Car Park identified as the site for a proposed Primary School. The Local Plan (2019) also identifies Marshgate Car Park (156 spaces) as a Major Opportunity Area (Policy TC7) for redevelopment. In addition, the Council granted planning permission (14/00559/OPM) for the redevelopment of the Matalan Site which also includes Danesgate Car Park. This would result in a further reduction of 178 spaces (101 spaces at Matalan and 77 spaces at Danesgate). Furthermore, the Council granted planning permission for the bus interchange (Planning application 20/00135/FPM) which has resulted in the loss of 90 car parking spaces. As such, if all this development comes forward, there would be a significant reduction in available parking within the town centre.
- 7.5.6 Taking the above into consideration and following an analysis of all the car parks, the Car Parking Assessment undertaken by the applicant identifies that, as a worst case scenario, for both days (Thursdays and Saturday), there is spare capacity in St George's Way MSCP which can accommodate all of the cars from the closed car parks (including the Leisure Centre car park). After the proposed transfer, the St George's Way car park will still have almost 100 vacant parking spaces on Thursday and almost 250 vacant spaces on Saturday. In addition, during the weekday, there is plenty of capacity in Westgate and The Forum which both have a similar charging regime to St George's Way. As such, whilst some car parks will be lost, including the 15 spaces which are to be lost by this proposal, there is still capacity within the retained car parks to absorb the displaced spaces.
- 7.5.7 Turning back to the proposal itself, as per the Council's Car Parking Manager comments raised in planning application 19/00743/FPM for SG1 and planning permission 20/00135/FPM for the bus interchange, they confirmed that there is sufficient capacity in the St Georges Way MSCP to accommodate any parking which is displaced by the proposed development. Therefore, it can be concluded that, allowing for the loss of 15 parking spaces as a result of the current proposal, there would still be sufficient public car parking provision to serve the town centre in this instance.

7.6 Means of access and highway safety

- 7.6.1 The proposed development seeks to utilise the existing access off Swingate carriageway. The access itself would be reconfigured in conjunction with the redesigned carriageway which forms part of planning application 19/00743/FPM. The access would however, be similar to the existing arrangement i.e. one way in and one way out. The new access into the car park would be approximately 6.60m in width with a bell mouth width of approximately 11.60m. It would also have a centralised island with 2 no. chip coin electronic barriers. In terms of the parking bays themselves, these would all measure 2.4m by 4.8m in accordance with Department for Transport (DfT) Manual for Streets and the Council's Car Parking SPD (2012).
- 7.6.2 With regards to Swingate, this would have an increased width to 5.5m resulting in the western kerb moving 700mm to the west. This would allow for the provision of a new loading bay, 3 no. blue badge bays and 2 no. standard bays/E-car club bays (to be secured under planning application 19/00743/FPM). The proposal would also comprise the relocation of the ramps and stepped access to the car park. These would now be located at the north-eastern end of the car park. The scheme would also comprise an

un-segregated (not segregated between pedestrians and cyclists) footway following the removal of the existing wall and ramp.

7.6.3 Following consultation with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) as Highways Authority, they have considered that the amended scheme has addressed their original concerns. Their original concerns mainly related to the relocated ramp access and retaining wall (including the one utilised around the Pine Tree) and the effect this could have on pedestrian safety. Furthermore, they originally had concerns with respect to the horizontal alignment of the carriageway combined with the proposed planting of trees near the parking bays on Swingate and the potential safety issues these had on the highway.

7.6.4 The applicant, in response to the concerns raised by the Highways Authority, confirmed that they intend to maintain the same type of low level wall currently retaining the car park. In addition, the ramped access has been designed to create a safe access into the car park in combination with an un-segregated pedestrian footway. In terms of the road alignment, Swingate carriageway has been increased to a width of 5.5m with a continuous kerb alignment moving the kerb 700mm to the west. With respect to landscaping, these would be low level planters or small trees to ensure sufficient vehicle inter-visibility, details of which can be secured by condition. Taking these into consideration, HCC as Highways Authority does not consider the proposed development would prejudice the safety and operation of the highway. However, this would be subject to the applicant undertaking a Road Safety Audit.

7.6.5 With respect to the retaining wall around the Pine Tree, whilst the applicant advises they do not intend to modify the existing low level retaining wall, the Council's Engineers have recommended this wall should be modified. The justification for this is to improve pedestrian safety when crossing Swingate near the junction with old London Road. Given this, a condition is recommended requiring the applicant to provide details of how the retaining wall around the Pine can be modified in order to improve pedestrian safety. This approach is agreed by the Council's Arboricultural Manager as they consider the roots of the tree would be able to withstand any alterations to the retaining wall (planter). However, they recommend a 20% to 30% crown reduction along with ivy removal in order to help to facilitate any works to the retaining wall as well as ensure the tree remains vigorous and healthy due to its amenity value.

7.6.6 Turning to the overall operation of the car park, the re-configured parking bays have been designed and positioned to allow sufficient space for a vehicle to safely manoeuvre within the car park. This would mean vehicles can safely exit the car park in a forward gear as demonstrated in tracked path analysis submitted with this application. Given this, the Council's Engineering Section do not have any concerns with the proposed development. However, they do recommend the detailed design of the car park and Swingate will need to be secured via condition. This is to ensure the re-configured car park, Swingate and associated highway works are constructed to highways specifications to ensure they do not prejudice the safety pedestrians and road users.

7.7 Trees and landscaping

7.7.1 Policy NH5 of the Local Plan (2019) states that development proposals will be expected to protect and retain individual trees within development sites and should include new planting where appropriate. Paragraph 175 of the NPPF (2019) states that when determining planning applications local planning authorities should apply the principle, in respect of veteran and ancient trees, that if a development results in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats it should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

- 7.7.2 The applicant's Arboricultural Impact Assessment sets out that the application site and the land which borders it comprises of 20 individual trees of which seven are Category A (high quality), eight are category B (moderate quality) and five are category C (low quality) trees. The proposed development would result in the removal of two trees, 1 no. category B tree and 1 no. category C tree, both of which are Lime trees. One of the trees is to be removed (T1) due to the proposed reconfiguration of the site entrance and carriageway. In terms of the second tree (T3), this is to be removed due to its declining condition and damage sustained to a major limb.
- 7.7.3 The proposed development would seek to retain the existing trees on the western edge, including the large Oak tree which is located centrally within the existing car park. In order to protect the trees during construction, the Assessment recommends the use of Root Protection Area barriers in accordance with British Standards.
- 7.7.4 Following consultation with the Council's Arboricultural Manager, the proposed removal of the trees is considered to be acceptable. In addition, the proposed protective measures are also deemed to be acceptable as detailed in the applicant's Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Therefore, if planning permission is granted, it is recommended a condition be imposed requiring the tree protection measures to be in place before and during the construction phases of development.
- 7.7.5 In terms of replacement trees, there is not sufficient space within the application site to plant trees without affecting the number of parking spaces being proposed. However, the proposed development outlined in planning application 19/00743/FPM for the wider regeneration of the town centre comprises a detailed masterplan outlining a landscaping strategy. This sets out in detail how additional landscape features, such as trees can be planted across the masterplan area. This strategy would compensate for any trees being lost under this proposal as well those being removed as part of the aforementioned application. However, some small amount of planting is recommended for Swingate and details of this planting can be secured via condition.
- 7.7.6 With regards to the impact on the Pine tree (T16) which is located at the north-western end of the site, this is considered in detail in paragraph 7.6.5 of this report as well as being addressed by recommended condition 9. However, for reference, the proposed works to this tree would help to facilitate improvements to pedestrian safety in relation to the crossing on Swingate.

7.8 Other matters

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 7.8.1 The proposed development is not seeking to create any new floorspace. As such, there will be no CIL obligations for this development.

Equalities Impact

- 7.8.2 Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:-

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.8.3 Officers have taken this into account in the assessment of this application and the Committee must be mindful of this duty *inter alia* when determining all applications. The consultation process has served to notify all relevant adjoining parties likely to be impacted by the development. However, additional regard has been given to any potential impact upon the protected characteristics outlined in the Equalities Act 2010 Section 149 and the provisions contained therein. It is considered that due regard has been given to the impact of the scheme on all groups with the protected characteristics schedule.

7.8.4 The proposed development does not seek to remove any existing disabled parking provision on this part of the town. In addition, whilst forming part of planning application 19/00743/FPM, the combined schemes would deliver 3 no. blue badge bays on Swingate. Moreover, it seeks to provide a new ramped access up to the car park for persons who are disabled and the scheme would continue to provide parking for the wider public who visit the town centre. As such, the scheme from an equalities perspective is deemed to be acceptable in this instance.

Porta cabin WC

7.8.5 In terms to the existing porta-cabins, it is noted that these facilities were provided for Taxi Drivers. Given the proposal seeks to reconfigure the existing car park, these facilities would need to be removed in order to allow space to construct the new access ramp. Following consultation with the Council's Environmental Health Section who also deal with licensing, they advise that these facilities see very little use. As such, they have not raised concerns about their removal. Notwithstanding, as a solution the taxi drivers, as recommended by Environmental Health, could potentially use the toilet facilities which will be provided in the new bus interchange building. This facility is also closer to the taxi drivers who run from the train station itself.

7.8.6 In addition to the above, until they are removed and the bus interchange is in operation, there are toilet facilities within the town centre as well which could also be used by the taxi drivers. Therefore, it is considered that there are alternative facilities in which drivers can use once the porta-cabins have been removed.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 In principle, the proposed development is acceptable as it would not prejudice the future delivery of the wider regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre. Furthermore, the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the visual amenities of the street scene, and, subject to condition, the amenities of nearby residential properties. Moreover, there would still be sufficient car parking within the town centre to absorb any loss of spaces as a result of this development. In addition, the scheme would not prejudice the safety and operation of the highway network. It is also considered, that subject to appropriate conditions, any trees to be retained can be protected and appropriate planting can be secured as part of this development.

8.2 Given the above, it is considered that the proposed development would accord with the policies contained in the adopted Local Plan (2019), the Council's Design Guide SPD (2009), the Council's Parking Standards SPD (2012), the NPPF (2019) and NPPG (2014).

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That this application be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:-

1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans, unless otherwise agreed in writing, by the Local Planning Authority:

AA6999 – 2500 A; 70051063-TP-SK-044_001 E; 70051063-TP-SK-044_002 E; 70051063-TP-SK-044_003 D; 70051063-TP-SK-044-TR1.

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 Prior to the commencement of development the scheme for the protection of the existing trees (other than those which are to be removed and have been approved as part of this permission) shall be implemented in accordance with the details specified in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Prepared by RPS, document reference:- JSL3203_771 revision 1.0, dated 21st January 2020) and shall be retained during the construction phase of the development. Within the fenced off areas, there shall be no alteration to the ground levels and they shall be kept clear of vehicles, materials, surplus soils, temporary buildings and machinery.

REASON:- To prevent any trees which are to be retained from being damaged, destroyed or uprooted during the construction phase of development.

4 All areas of hedges, scrub or similar vegetation where birds may nest which are to be removed as part of the development, are to be cleared outside the bird-nesting season (March - August inclusive) or if clearance during the bird-nesting season cannot reasonably be avoided, a suitably qualified ecologist will check the areas to be removed immediately prior to clearance and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded, no vegetation clearance or other works that may disturb active nests shall proceed until all young have fledged the nest.

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

5 No demolition, construction or maintenance activities audible at the boundary and no deliveries of construction and demolition materials shall be undertaken outside the hours 08:00 hours to 18:00 hours Mondays to Fridays, 08:30 hours to 13.00 hours on Saturdays and shall not operate on a Sunday or Bank Holiday, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure the construction works associated with this development do not prejudice the amenities of occupiers of nearby premises due to noise pollution.

6 The car parking spaces shall be surfaced and fully marked out as detailed in drawing number 70051063-TP-SK-044_002 Rev E prior to the first operation of the car parking area hereby permitted, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The car parking spaces shall thereafter be used solely for the parking of motor vehicles and shall not be used for any other purposes, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure there is sufficient off-street parking to service Stevenage Town Centre.

- 7 Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted, vehicular and pedestrian access to and egress from the adjoining highway shall be limited to the access(es) shown on drawing number 70051063-TP-SK-044_002 Rev E, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Any other access(es) or egresses shall be permanently closed, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, and the footway and highway verge shall be reinstated in accordance with a detailed scheme to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, concurrently with the bringing into use of the new access.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety and amenity.

8. Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted, a detailed landscaping scheme (including details of vehicle inter-visibility splays for the proposed parking bays on Swingate) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved landscaping scheme shall be carried out no later than during the first planting season when the development hereby permitted is ready for operation. All soft landscaping features shall be maintained for 5 years and any trees or plants removed, dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years of planting shall be replaced with others of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

REASON:- To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and to ensure the planting scheme does not prejudice highway safety.

9. If the Pine Tree (T16) is to be retained, then prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted, details to modify the Pine tree's (T16) planter shall be submitted to and approved in writing. The crown of the Pine Tree (T16) shall be reduced by 20% to 30% with the works to the planter undertaken in accordance with the approved details and overseen by a qualified Arboriculturalist.

If the Pine Tree (T16) has to be removed in order to improve pedestrian safety, then details of a replacement tree (including any planter details) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This replacement tree shall be planted in the first available planting season prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted. The replacement tree shall be maintained for a period of 5 years and if the tree is removed, dies, is severely damaged or becomes seriously diseased within 5 years of planting it shall be replaced with a tree of a similar size and species to the one originally required.

REASON:- In order to improve pedestrian safety at the junction of London Road with Swingate.

10. Prior to the commencement of development hereby permitted, details of car park markings, arrows, footways and ramp access, barrier entrance, drainage, lighting and all other associated highways (including street furniture) works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The detailed design of the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- So that vehicles may enter and leave the site with minimum interference to the free flow and safety of other traffic on the highway and for the convenience and safety of pedestrians including people with disabilities.

Pro-active statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant 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.

13 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.
2. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision adopted January 2012 and Stevenage Design Guide adopted October 2009.
3. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 adopted 2019.
4. Hertfordshire County Council’s Local Transport Plan 4 adopted May 2019.
5. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.
6. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework February 2019 and Planning Policy Guidance March 2014.

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