

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

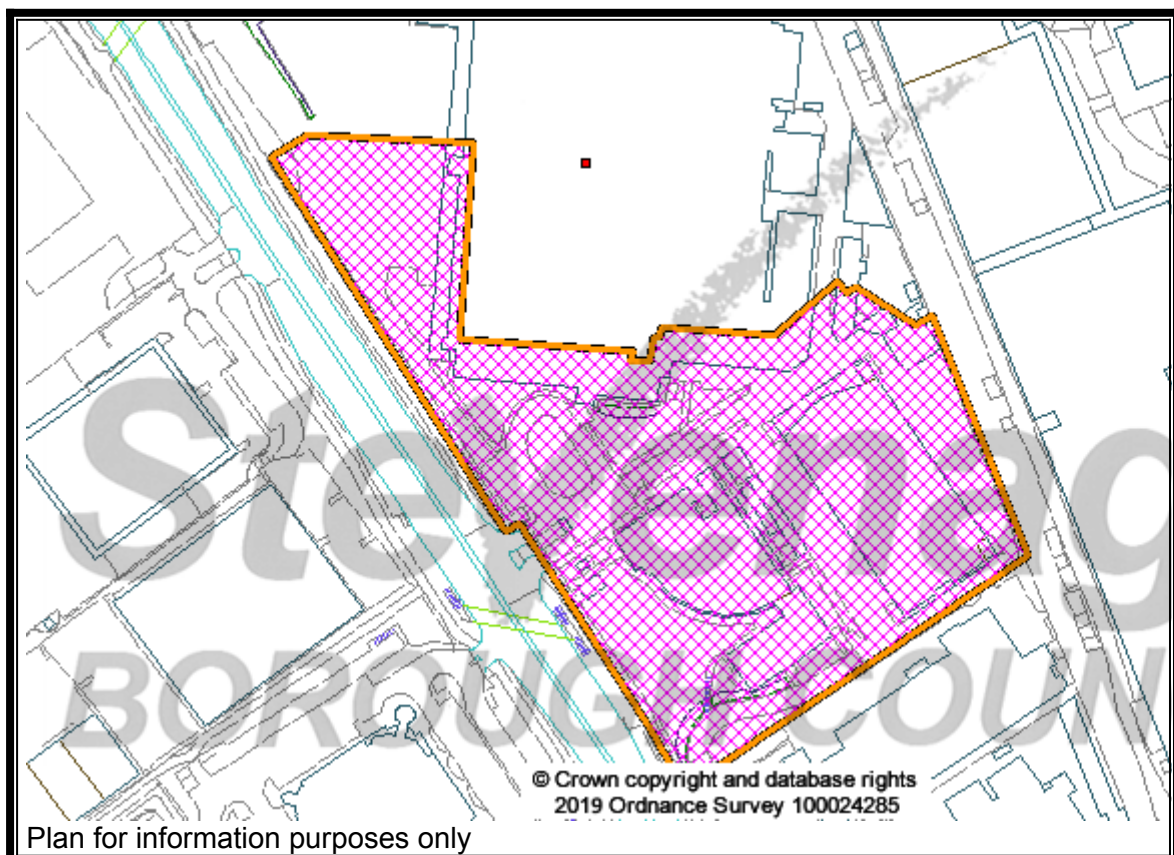
Date: 30 May 2019

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Application Nos:	19/00167/FPM
Location:	Airbus Defence and Space, Gunnels Wood Road, Stevenage
Proposal:	Demolition of existing office building and associated works and erection of new office building including the recladding of the existing factory building facade and associated works including landscaping, car parking and cycle parking.
Drawing Nos.	AIR001/007, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1003 P4, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1001 P06, AIR-BDP-XX-00-DR-A-99-1001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-01-DR-A-99-1001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-02-DR-A-99-1001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-03-DR-A-99-1001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-A-99-3001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-A-99-3002 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-A-99-2001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1002 P07, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1004 P01.
Applicant:	Mr Stephen Fowles
Date Valid:	15 March 209
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The application site is the Airbus site located off Gunnels Wood Road, which in total measures 5.96 hectares in area. The site is adjoined by the Stevenage Leisure Park to the east, Able Smith House, Aspect One and the Mercedes dealership to the west on the opposite side of Gunnels Wood Road. There are commercial buildings to the north on Argyle Way and other commercial premises to the south. There are 4 accesses to the site which are in operational use with the main access taken from Gunnels Wood Road. There are also secondary access points from Gunnels Wood Road, Argyle Way and Fulton Close. The area of the site forming part of this application comprises a smaller part of the overall Airbus site and measures 2.19 ha in area. Adjacent to the site is a footpath and cycleway and there is a bus stop located to the front of the site on Gunnels Wood Road.
- 1.2 The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of office, light industrial and warehouse developments.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 Most of the original buildings on the Airbus site were built in the 1950's and 1960's, with the central office building constructed in the 1980's.
- 2.2 Permission granted under ref 09/00154/FPM in July 2009 for two storey temporary building for B1 (a) (Office) use.
- 2.3 Permission granted under ref 10/00538/FP in January 2011 for partial re-clad of west wing of main office building.
- 2.4 Permission granted under ref 13/00020/FP in March 2013 for demolition of existing offices (Use Class B1 (a)) to facilitate extension of existing research and development, laboratory and manufacturing facility (Use Class B1(b)).
- 2.5 Permission granted under ref 13/00456/FP in January 2014 for construction of a new building to provide a research and development laboratory and manufacturing facility.
- 2.6 Consent granted under ref 16/00757/AD in April 2014 for a graphic to be installed on to Airbus perimeter fencing external to site, to advertise their apprenticeship advertising banner. Granted
- 2.7 Permission granted under ref 18/00519/FP in September 2018 for demolition, temporary buildings and enabling works to include; demolition of existing club house and restaurant building at Gunnels Wood Road. The erection of a temporary restaurant and reception buildings and enabling works to include minor modifications to the access onto Gunnels Wood Road, associated ground works and infrastructure.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 The current application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing central office building (known as COB1.0) and for the erection of a new replacement central office building located further forward, toward Gunnels Wood Road. It is also proposed to re-clad the building façade of the exiting factory building which is sited to the north. The new building will have a total floor space of 11,268 sqm across 3 storeys. This would result in a net increase in floor area of 1, 268 sqm with the current building measuring 10,000sqm.

- 3.2 As set out above, planning permission was granted in 2018 for the demolition of the existing club house and restaurant building and for the erection of a temporary restaurant and reception buildings and enabling works. This permission has been implemented and the demolition works are occurring at the site. These buildings were located to the front of the COB 1.0 building which is the subject of this application. The temporary buildings have also been introduced at the site.
- 3.3 The proposed Central Office Building (which will be known as COB 2.0) is to be located in the south west corner of the site, providing a statement frontage to Gunnels Wood Road and enhancing the cluster of high-quality business within the Gunnels Wood Road employment area. Existing uses which were previously spread between the existing COB 1.0 office building and the restaurant and reception building are to be accommodated within the COB 2.0 Central Office Building. This will include an open plan reception area and business lounge, a restaurant, open plan office spaces, meeting rooms, collaborative and informal work or meeting areas and other supporting facilities. The first and second floors are predominantly open plan office space. The development will provide a physical connection between the new Central Office Building and the existing factory building. The emphasis is on functionality and high quality with the new building being designed to create a new gateway to the Gunnels Wood Road Employment Area for the Airbus campus.
- 3.4 As referred to previously, the submitted plans indicate the building being located further toward the front of the site than the existing building. There would be visitor parking to the front of the building set within landscaping. It is also proposed to create a garden area to the northern side of the building, with a further seating and dining area immediately to the rear of the building. Beyond this would be the staff car park which would provide 171 spaces, which is a like for like provision for that to be lost. The proposed development will be phased in order to maintain site functionality during the construction process. The intended sequence is as follows:
- Construction of new Central Office Building and adjacent external works;
 - Recladding of existing factory building;
 - Following completion of the new Central Office Building, the existing office building COB 1.0 will be demolished; and
 - Construction of car parking in the south east corner of the Airbus site, to the rear of the new Central Office Building
- 3.5 In terms of design and appearance, the building would be 3 storeys as opposed to the existing 4 storey building. It is proposed to construct the office out of a mixture of materials. On the front elevation, this incorporates the main entrance which would be fully glazed on two storeys. It is proposed to introduce a projecting feature flash detail, with glazing at the ground floor recessed back from the main façade. Glazing is introduced at first and second floors. The remainder of the elevation would comprise dark cladding. It is also proposed to introduce 2 solar shading fins as a design feature. These materials would give an attractive modern structure.
- 3.6 The application comes before the planning committee for consideration as it is a major application.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 As a major planning application, the proposal has been publicised by way of letters to adjoining premises, posting of a site notice and a press notice. At the time of drafting this report no responses have been received.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority

5.1.1 Have commented on the application and are raising no objection on highway safety grounds, however, have requested additional information identifying the location of the parking spaces. They have also sought additional clarification on the trip assessment, on the location of the pedestrian accesses and vehicular access points. They have also sought further clarification on the parking levels. Additionally, they are seeking the provision of electrical charging points as part of the development, and are requesting details of the cycle parking design, surfacing of the car park and pedestrian area and a construction management plan. All of these they recommend should be conditions of any grant of permission.

5.1.2 In terms of s106 requirements, HCC have advised that the nearest bus stop is located outside of the site along Gunnels Wood Road; the stop is located approximately 100m from the site entrance. They consider that the buses serving the site have a good links to Stevenage bus station, Broadwater and poplars. However, they consider that the bus stop located to the south of the site on Gunnels Wood Road is in need of some enhancements where possible, for example:

Kessel kerbs approx. (£8000)

Bench approx. (£8000)

Shelter approx. (£8000).

Additionally they have requested a £6,000 evaluation and support fee for the submitted travel plan.

Finally, they are seeking £33,860 towards sustainable transport measures based on the trip generation they believe will be generated from the proposed development.

5.2 Highways England

5.2.1 Raise no objection.

5.3 Environmental Health Department

5.3.1 It is recommended that if planning permission was to be granted, conditions should be imposed to any permission issued. These conditions relate to contamination and hours of construction.

5.4 Environment Agency

5.4.1 The previous use of the proposed development site as part of a factory presents a risk of contamination that could be mobilised during construction to pollute controlled waters. Controlled waters are particularly sensitive in this location because the proposed development site is located:

- within source protection zone 1;
- within 130 meters of a known borehole used for the supply of water for human consumption; and,
- upon a Secondary A aquifer (Glaciofluvial deposits) and a Principal aquifer (Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation).

5.4.2 We designate Source Protection Zone 1 as significant groundwater source used for potable water supplies usable for human consumption and may be at particular risk from polluting activities on or below the land surface arising from the proposed development.

- 5.4.3 Recommend the imposition of a condition to deal with the aforementioned drainage issues.

5.5 Lead Local Flood Authority

- 5.5.1 Originally objected to the application. However, following the receipt of additional information advise that they are now in a position to remove their objection on flood risk grounds.
- 5.5.2 Comment that they are pleased with the overall drainage strategy for Phase 1, in accordance with the advice between the applicant and the LLFA. However, advise it is important that a number of aspects need to be confirmed through conditions. The outline drainage strategy within the FRA only takes account of the COB 2.0 project within the blue boundary shown in figure 4-1. The proposed demolition of the COB 1.0 building and the construction of the proposed car park is not included within the FRA. A proposed surface water drainage assessment is needed for this area. With conditions imposed to deal with these aspects raise no objection to the grant of planning permission.

5.6 Thames Water

- 5.6.1 The developer will need to follow the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water. In regards to the waste water network and waste water process infrastructure capacity, there are no concerns with the proposed development.

5.7 Police Crime Prevention Officer (PCPO)

- 5.7.1 I have no concerns with this application. Should they wish to go for SBD commercial then please sign post them to me.

5.8 Council's Arboriculturist

- 5.8.1 I have looked into this application and can confirm that I have no objection from an Arboriculture view point.

5.9 Council's Parks and Amenities Section

- 5.9.1 In reference to the above planning application, there are insufficient details at this stage to be able to comment on any proposed soft of hard landscaping proposals. If permission is granted, we would be happy to comment/review the landscaping details at a later stage via a condition. To enable us to comment, the applicant must provide us with full plans, specifications and schedules of proposed the planting.

5.10 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

- 5.10.1 No comments received.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 Background to the Development Plan

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

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

The Council has now reached an advanced stage in the preparation of a new Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031. The Plan has been used as a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications registered on or after Wednesday 6 January 2016. The Plan has now been through the Examination process and the Inspector's Report was received in October 2017. This recommended approval of the Plan, subject to modifications proposed. The Plan was previously subject to a holding direction placed upon it by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which prevented its adoption. The holding direction on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan was lifted by MHCLG on 25 March 2019 and is now subject to formal adoption by Stevenage Borough Council.

- 6.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies, and their degree of consistency with policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 6.1.3 In considering the policy implications of any development proposal, the Local Planning Authority will assess each case on its individual merits, however, bearing in mind the positive Inspector's Report, significant weight will be afforded to policies within the emerging Local Plan.

6.2 Central Government Advice

- 6.2.1 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Annex 1 of the NPPF provides guidance on how existing local plan policies which have been prepared prior to the publication of the NPPF should be treated. Paragraph 213 of the NPPF applies which states that due weight should be afforded to the relevant policies in the adopted local plan according to their degree of consistency with it.
- 6.2.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is itself a material consideration. Given that the advice that the weight to be given to relevant policies in the local plan will depend on their degree of consistency with the NPPF, it will be necessary in the determination of this application to assess the consistency of the relevant local plan policies with the NPPF. The NPPF applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 6.2.3 In addition to the NPPF, advice in Planning Practice Guidance must also be taken into account. It states that, where the development plan is absent, silent or the relevant policies are out of date, paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires the application to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development unless otherwise specified.

6.3 Adopted Local Plan

TW1: Sustainable Development;
 TW8: Environmental Safeguards (Stevenage Design Guide);
 TW9: Quality in Design;
 TW10: Crime Prevention;
 E2: Employment Areas;

E3: Employment Sites;
 E4: Acceptable Uses in Employment Areas;
 T12: Bus Provision;
 T13: Cycleways;
 T14: Pedestrians;
 T15: Car parking strategy;
 EN13: Trees in New Developments;
 EN18: Natural Habitats in Adjoining Local Authorities;
 EN27: Noise Pollution;
 EN36: Water Conservation;
 EN38: Energy Conservation and Supply.

6.4 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 Publication Draft (Emerging Local Plan)

SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;
 SP2: Sustainable Development in Stevenage;
 Policy SP3: A strong, competitive economy;
 Policy SP5: Infrastructure;
 Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport;
 Policy SP8: Good Design;
 Policy SP11: Climate Change, Flooding and Pollution;
 Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area;
 Policy EC5: Active frontages and gateways;
 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 GD1: High Quality Design;
 Policy FP1: Climate Change;
 Policy FP5: Contaminated land;
 Policy FP7: Pollution;
 Policy NH5: Trees and woodland.

6.5 Supplementary Planning Advice

Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document 2009
 Stevenage Design Guide 2012

7. APPRAISAL

- 7.1. The main issues for consideration are the acceptability in land use policy terms, impact on the character and appearance of the area, impact on neighbouring amenity, highway safety and parking provision.

7.2 Land use policy considerations

- 7.2.1 The application site is designated within the Gunnels Wood Employment Area where policies E2 and E4 of the Stevenage District Plan Second Review 1991-2011 adopted 2004 apply. Policy E2 seeks to protect the Gunnels Wood area for employment uses and Policy E4 sets out acceptable uses in employment areas and specifically states “in the employment areas already designated a range of employment uses within the B1, B2 and B8 use classes will be encouraged”. Policies EC1 and EC4 of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 Publication Draft – January 2016 generally reflects the above policies as it sets the acceptable uses within the employment area.

7.2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) states that significant weight should be placed on both the need to support economic growth and productivity taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The application site is located within land under the ownership of Airbus which is an established employment based operator. The proposed development seeks to provide a replacement central office building at the site including the main reception area restaurant and staff facilities.

7.2.3 Given the above, it can be seen from this assessment that the proposal fully accords with the land use policies in the adopted Local Plan, Emerging Local Plan and is also supported by the NPPF.

7.3 Impact on visual amenity

7.3.1 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.

7.3.2 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”.

7.3.3 Policy TW9 of the District Plan (2004) 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. Policy GD1 of the emerging Local Plan (2016) generally reflects the above policy. Turning to Gunnels Wood Road specifically, emerging Policy EC5: Active frontages and gateways states that planning permission for the (re-) development of sites with a frontage along, in this case Gunnels Wood Road, will be granted where:-

a. Proposals face directly onto the identified road and provide active frontages and natural surveillance;

b. Buildings are not set back significantly from the identified road;

c. Car parking and service areas are located away from the street frontage of the identified road;

d. On corner plots, where the roads intersect, schemes incorporate landmark architecture and gateway features wherever this would be compatible with the proposed use(s).

7.3.4 In assessing the details of the proposed new building, it is clear that what is being proposed is a high quality 3 storey building which would be of a high quality design, using glazing and aluminium curtain walling to the external walls. The building would be set close to the frontage of the site with Gunnels Wood Road and the main entrance would comprise double height framed glazing at the north western corner of

the building. It is noted that the layout is such that the main parking area would be located to the rear of the building and given this position and the proposed design and appearance, it is clear that this would create an attractive building along the frontage of the site. Furthermore, the elevations to all of the building, including the rear, represent an appropriate design solution. Whilst it is noted and understood why it is necessary to provide visitor parking to the front of the building, this would be augmented by grassed areas, replacement planting and a garden area to the north west of the building. It is also noted that seating and landscaped areas are to be provided to the rear of the building.

7.3.5 Internally, the building would create a reception area, restaurant and meeting rooms at the ground floor augmented by toilet and staff facilities. At first and second floor, the floor space would be mostly open plan offices with a few meeting rooms and additional staff facilities. Cycle parking facilities and bin storage areas would be located to the rear of the building.

7.3.6 Based on the above, it is considered that the replacement building would represent a high quality development at this prominent location along Gunnels Wood Road, providing upgraded replacement floorspace.

7.4 Impact on residential amenity

7.4.1 The application site is located within the established employment area of Gunnels Wood Road. In relation to the impact on neighbouring properties, the site is bounded by buildings on the leisure park to the east, existing buildings on the Airbus site to the north, Gunnels Wood Road to the west and commercial buildings to the south. As such, it is not considered that the development would have any adverse impacts on the existing operating conditions of these businesses. In terms of residential amenity, the site is not adjoining any residential premises and given that the new building would provide office and other ancillary facilities, it is not envisaged that this will adversely affect the nearest residential properties. Notwithstanding the above, it likely that a condition will be added to any grant of planning permission restricting the hours of construction in order to safeguard the amenities/working conditions of any adjoining premises whilst works are ongoing.

7.5 Parking Provision

7.5.1 The Council's Parking Standards SPD (2012) sets out the maximum level of parking requirements for Class B1a (office) developments. The car parking standards which are required for such development is 1 space per 30m² of gross floor area. In this regard, a maximum of 42 spaces would be required to serve the proposed development based on the net increase in floor area created by the new building. However, given the application site is located within a non-residential accessibility zone (zone 1), the requirement can be reduced to between 0% and 25% of the maximum giving a requirement of between 0 spaces to 10.5 (rounded up to 11) spaces. The applicant is not intending to provide any additional parking to serve the site given the highly sustainable location of the premises. This approach is considered to be acceptable.

7.5.2 In terms of cycle parking, the parking standards SPD requires 1 short-term space per 500m² of gross floor area plus 1 long-term space per 10 full time staff. The Transport Assessment (TA) submitted with the application clarifies that there are a total of 193 cycle spaces to serve the Airbus site, 90 of which are located beneath the building to be demolished. During construction these 90 spaces would be relocated to another part of the site and following the completion of the new office building, 96 spaces will be provided to the rear of the new building. Taking this into consideration, the proposed development accords with the standards. In addition, the applicant will also

be providing shower facilities within the new offices. Furthermore, parking for 16 Motor cycles will be provided at the site which meets with the Council's standards. Given this provision, whilst the applicant is not providing any additional off-street parking, they are seeking to encourage staff to cycle to the offices in order to encourage a modal shift from the private car in order to become more sustainable. However, to ensure that this cycle and motor cycle parking is made available prior to the first use of the development; it is recommended that a condition be imposed to ensure that these are constructed in accordance with details to be submitted.

7.6 Means of access and highway safety

- 7.6.1 The application site would be served by the existing main access road off the A1072 Gunnels Wood Road, which is a designated distributor Road. The existing access and egress arrangement off Gunnels Wood Road is of an industrial standard so it is currently of sufficient width to accommodate the traffic generated from the site. The proposed development does not seek to amend or alter this existing arrangement. Furthermore, no changes are proposed to the other 3 access which serve the site. Similarly, the existing pedestrian access points into the site from Argyle Way and Gunnels Wood Road would remain.
- 7.6.2 The application has been accompanied by a Transport Statement (TA). The TA states that the erection of the new building, (COB 2.0), will be a replacement of the existing offices, reception area, restaurant and clubhouse buildings in terms of their function and capacity. The TA suggests that the development is a like for like replacement, however, this is erroneous as the new building will comprise of 11,268sqm Gross Floor Area (GFA) of B1 office space, which is an increase of 1,268 sqm over the existing building. The TA goes on to state that the new building will have the capacity to house 726 staff in total; this allows for a 10% growth in staff from the current 660 who are located within the existing building. However, the growth in employee numbers will be organic over a period of time to suit workload.
- 7.6.3 The Airbus site is located on Gunnels Wood Road to the west of Stevenage town centre in a pedestrian friendly urban environment. The site is integrated into a network of wide footways and a number of local pedestrian crossings via Stevenage's underpass system. The site is also accessible via Stevenage's extensive cycle network, which is largely segregated from roads and footways. The reasonably gentle topography of the local area also contributes to the attractiveness of the local cycle network.
- 7.6.4 The site is within walking and cycling distance of a large number of facilities and public transport services and has a significant residential catchment. The site is well connected to existing bus services. To the west, bus services are provided on Gunnels Wood Road outside the main site entrance; and to the east, services are provided outside Stevenage railway station, and at the central bus station within the pedestrianised town centre.
- 7.6.5 Stevenage railway station is located to the east of the site and is approximately 500m on foot from the site; this is less than the mean walking distance of 800m to rail stations in the UK. The station can be easily accessed from the site via local walking and cycling infrastructure. Stevenage railway station provides a wide range of frequent services. Thameslink and Great Northern operate services from Stevenage which call at London Kings Cross, Moorgate, Peterborough, Cambridge, Hatfield and destinations across the South East of England. Stevenage is also a stop on longer distance intercity services via the East Coast Mainline. Given the proximity of high-quality public transport (HQPT) services and the excellent provision of pedestrian and cycle facilities, the site is considered to be in a location where a high proportion of journeys can be undertaken by foot, cycle or public transport.

- 7.6.6 The development proposals do not include for any additional on-site car parking. New surface level car parking spaces will be created that match, but will not exceed the existing number.
- 7.6.7 Due to the erection of the temporary reception building associated with the planned COB 1.0 demolition works, there will be a temporary loss of 168 car parking spaces within the site west wing car parking area, and a temporary loss of 47 spaces under and alongside COB 1.0 due to the erection of the temporary restaurant and relocation of cycle racks. This reduction will be strictly for a temporary period. An additional 100 off-site parking spaces will remain available to Airbus staff at MBDA on Gunnels Wood Road, which is an ongoing agreement. Additionally, season ticket passes have been purchased at Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC) St. Georges Way Car Park, to be used by Airbus employees throughout the duration of the works.
- 7.6.8 With regard to cycle spaces, the proposed development will provide 96 spaces on full occupancy in accordance with the cycle parking standards set out with the Stevenage Borough Council Parking Provision SPD (2012). In addition, cyclist changing facilities will be provided, which will include showers, lockers, a drying room and WCs.
- 7.6.9 A Travel Plan is provided alongside this application to support access for existing and future employees. To encourage employees to travel by sustainable modes, it is proposed that Travel Plan measures will be implemented by a Travel Plan Coordinator.
- 7.6.10 With Travel Plan measures in place and an absenteeism factor applied; upon full occupation the proposed development is predicted to attract no additional vehicle trips, 13 additional cycle trips, 9 additional pedestrian trips, 33 additional public transport trips and 2 additional motorcycle trips between 0700-1000. Between 1600-1900 the proposed development is predicted to generate no additional vehicle trips, 13 additional cycle trips, 9 additional pedestrian trips, 34 additional public transport trips and 2 additional motorcycle trips.
- 7.6.11 Based on the additional predicted development-generated movements by mode, as set out in the TA, it is considered that the additional demand can be readily accommodated on the local highway, cycle and pedestrian networks.

Assessment

- 7.6.12 In considering the trip generation as set out in the TA, as no additional parking is proposed and with the introduction of a Travel Plan to encourage use of other modes of travel than the car, it is not anticipated that the number of trips proposed in the am and pm peak times will change. Even taking into account the increase in floor space, it is not anticipated that this would generate any significant additional traffic to the site. The applicant has also indicated that whilst the number of employees will increase over time, this would be incremental to suit workload.
- 7.6.13 HCC as highway authority has assessed the application and reviewed the TA. From this, whilst they are raising no objection in highway safety terms, they have estimated that as the number of staff and office space will increase, then the number of journeys undertaken by a private vehicle will increase. Consequently, they estimate that the development will generate an additional 23 new car trips in the am peak, based on a proposed increase in staff numbers from 660 to 726. In view of this and in accordance with the HCC toolkit, they are requesting a financial contribution of £33,860 toward improvements to sustainable transport in the area (upgrading bus stops or cycle path improvements). This figure is based on £1000 per additional trip with interest added.
- 7.6.14 Whilst the request for a financial contribution is noted, for this to be acceptable it must accord with certain tests as set out in the NPPF. These are:-

- a) it is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b) it is directly related to the development; and
- c) it is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

7.6.15 Having regard to the information in the TA, it is not envisaged that the car trips generated from the new building will be increased, particularly as no additional car parking is proposed and a Travel Plan is to be introduced as part of the development to encourage the use of public transport and better use of cycle and pedestrian routes. Additionally, it is proposed to introduce electric vehicle charging points as part of the development. Furthermore, any additional staffing is anticipated to be incremental. In view of this, the request for the financial contribution is considered to fail tests a) and c) above. Even if the increase in trips estimated by HCC were to be correct, an extra 23 am peak hour trips would have minimal impact on the highway network and, therefore, as HCC are raising no objection on highway safety grounds, the contribution is not considered necessary to make the development acceptable. Consequently, the request is unreasonable.

7.6.16 Notwithstanding the above, HCC have also requested further contributions toward the monitoring of the submitted Travel Plan (£6,000) and toward upgrading the bus stop to the front of the site (Kerb improvements, new shelter and bench - £24,000). The applicant has confirmed a willingness to pay these monies. The contribution toward the monitoring and evaluation of the travel by HCC is industry norm. With regard to the bus stop improvements, the applicant has accepted that the bus stop to the front of the site is substandard and the improvements requested would be beneficial to employees as well as the wider public. These monies can be secured by a Unilateral Undertaking (UU) under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

7.6.17 Taking into consideration of the above, the proposed development as confirmed by HCC as the Highways Authority would not have a detrimental impact on the safety and the operation of the highway network. Whilst the request for a financial contribution based on trip generation is considered to be unreasonable, contributions toward the monitoring and evaluation of the Travel Plan and upgrade of the nearby bus stop are proposed. On this basis and subject to conditions relating to a Construction Management Plan, further Travel Plan details, the provision of cycle facilities and the need for electric charging points, the development is considered to be acceptable in highway safety terms.

7.7 Impact on the environment

7.7.1 The application site is located on previously developed land so there is the potential presence of contamination. Taking this into consideration, the Council's Environmental Health Officer has recommended that a condition be imposed to deal with the aspect. This has also been recommended by the Environment Agency.

7.8 Development and flood risk

7.8.1 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.

7.8.2 Following consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), they have advised that the applicant has provided an appropriate sustainable drainage scheme and

subject to the imposition of conditions to deal with the drainage aspect are raising no objection to the application.

7.9 Trees and Landscaping and Ecology

7.9.1 As part of the earlier grant of planning permission to demolish buildings at the site, a number of trees have been removed, however, none were considered to be of a high amenity value. To offset this loss, the development proposes replacement planting. Therefore, it is recommended that a condition be imposed requiring details of the proposed replacement landscaping scheme to be submitted to the Council. This will ensure that the finished appearance of the development would be enhanced through the use of appropriate soft landscaping.

7.9.2 With regard to ecology, a preliminary ecology report has been submitted with the application. This has assessed the site for the impact on any protected species but has concluded that there are no major ecological constraints on the site. It does identify that there are risks associated with the regard to the removal of habitats suitable for breeding birds; however, any impact can be avoided if the works are undertaken outside of the nesting season. This can be dealt with by the imposition of a condition. Given the existing low value of site there is an opportunity through replacement landscaping at the site to deliver net gains for biodiversity. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust were consulted on the application and have raised no objection.

7.10 Sustainable Construction and Climate Change

7.10.1 Policy EN36 of the District Plan states that development proposals will be encouraged to reduce water consumption and run-off by using suitable water conservation and storage measures such as the use of rainwater, water efficient devices and by recycling water. Policy EN38 of the same document states that development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that methods of maximising energy efficiency and supplying of energy in the development need to be considered. Policy FP1 of the Emerging Local Plan (2016) stipulates that development 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.

7.10.2 The applicant has provided a building performance report with the application which indicates that the building would be designed to achieve low energy carbon emissions and would be designed to maximise daylight and solar shading. The building will be appropriately insulated and glazed to maximise energy efficiency and use thermal bridging to maximise air tightness. It will use a series of design features including hybrid heating and cooling system, high efficiency LED lighting, intelligent lighting and options to install PV panels. These measures are considered to be appropriate and accord with the Council's sustainability requirements.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 In principle, it is considered that the proposed development would be acceptable within the established employment area of Gunnels Wood Road.
- 8.2 In terms of impact on residential amenity, due to the development's siting and position and separation distance to the nearest residents, the proposal would not harm the amenities of residential properties. Additionally it would not harm the operating conditions of adjoining and nearby businesses. Furthermore, the proposed development, subject to conditions, would not prejudice the safety and operation of the highway network and would provide adequate car parking and cycle facilities. Added to this the development would ensure that land contamination, if found, can be adequately controlled by the Council. In relation to SuDS, the proposed development would have adequate SuDS scheme which would ensure that surface water run-off is managed on the site and does not overload the existing mains sewer or cause flooding related issues. Finally, the proposal has an acceptable impact in terms of ecology and landscaping at the site.
- 8.3 Given the above, the proposed development accords with the Policies contained within the adopted Local Plan (2004), the Council's Emerging Local Plan (2016), the Council's Supplementary Planning Documents, the NPPF (2019) and PPG (2014).

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the applicant having first entered into and completed a unilateral undertaking under S106 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to secure financial contributions towards:-

- Improvements to the bus stop to the front of the site;
- Monitoring and evaluation of the Travel Plan;

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

AIR001/007, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1003 P4, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1001 P06, AIR-BDP-XX-00-DR-A-99-1001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-01-DR-A-99-1001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-02-DR-A-99-1001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-03-DR-A-99-1001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-A-99-3001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-A-99-3002 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-A-99-2001 P05, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1002 P07, AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1004 P01.

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

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

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

3. No development shall take place above slab level until a schedule and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the approved COB 2.0 office building (Phase 1), hereby permitted, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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

4. No work shall commence on the Factory Building recladding (Phase 2) until details of materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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

5. Prior to occupation of the COB 2.0 office building (Phase 1), hard and soft landscaping details and surfacing details of the car park and pedestrian areas within that Phase are to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land and details showing all trees to be removed, or retained, together with details of all new planting to take place including species, size and method of planting. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

6. Prior to commencement of the rear car park (Phase 3), hard and soft landscaping details and surfacing details of the car park and pedestrian areas within that Phase are to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land and details showing all trees to be removed, or retained, together with details of all new planting to take place including species, size and method of planting. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

7. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the first occupation of the building(s) or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner.

REASON:- To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

8. All hard surfacing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out prior to the first occupation of the building or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner.

REASON:- To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

9. Any trees or plants comprised within the scheme of landscaping, which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure a satisfactory appearance for the development.

10. No tree shown retained on the approved plans, or subsequently approved landscaping scheme, shall be cut down, uprooted or destroyed, nor shall any retained tree be topped or lopped within five years of the completion of development without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure the protection of those trees which should be retained in the interests of visual amenity.

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

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

12. As this is a previously developed site there may be a risk of the land containing contaminants. If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found

to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until a remediation strategy detailing how this contamination will be dealt with has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:-To ensure that the site does not pose any risk to human health or the water environment by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is completed.

13. 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. This is in line with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework and your draft local plan Policy FP5: Contaminated land.

14. Piling, deep foundations and other intrusive groundworks (investigation boreholes, tunnel shafts, ground source heating and cooling systems etc.) using penetrative methods can result in risks to potable supplies from, for example, pollution/turbidity, risk of mobilising contamination, drilling through different aquifers and creating preferential pathways. None of these penetrative methods shall be carried out other than with the written consent of the LPA. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure that the proposed deep intrusive ground works does not harm groundwater resources, this is in line with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework and your draft local plan Policy FP5: Contaminated land.

15. A scheme for managing any borehole installed for the investigation of soils, groundwater or geotechnical purposes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to construction above slab level. 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. The scheme as approved shall be implemented prior to the occupation of any part of the permitted development.

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. This is in line with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework and your draft local plan Policy FP5: Contaminated land.

16. The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy, Doc No: AIR-BDP-XX-XX-RP-C-980001, Job No: P2008334, Rev: P01, dated January 2019 and the following mitigation measures for Phase 1 (COB 2.0 project):

1. 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 + climate change event.
2. Implement drainage strategy based on oversized pipes, restricted discharge with a 50% betterment to current discharge rates and a petrol interceptor for treatment.

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

17. No development shall take place above slab level until the final design of the drainage scheme is completed and sent to the LPA for approval. The surface water drainage system will be based on the submitted Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy, Doc No: AIR-BDP-XX-XX-RP-C-980001, Job No: P2008334, Rev: P01, dated January 2019. The scheme shall also include:

1. 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 + climate change event.

2. Demonstration of appropriate SuDS management and treatment.

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

18. Prior to any works on site for Phase 3 (including demolition of the existing COB 1.0 building) a full detailed surface water drainage strategy is to be completed and sent to the LPA for approval. The scheme shall also include:

1. A drainage strategy which includes a commitment to providing appropriate SuDS in line with the non-statutory national standards, industry best practice and HCC Guidance for SuDS.

2. Detailed calculations of existing/proposed surface water storage volumes and flows with initial post development calculations/ modelling in relation to surface water are to be carried out for all rainfall events up to and including the 1 in 100 year including an allowance for climate change.

3. Evidence that if the applicant is proposing to discharge to the local sewer network, they have confirmation from the relevant Water and Sewerage Company that they have the capacity to take the proposed volumes and run-off rates.

4. If surface water is to be discharge via a surface water sewer. The applicant will need to propose an appropriate surface water discharge rate, the discharge rate should be at the greenfield runoff rate for the site, or no worse than 50% betterment.

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 + climate change event.

6. Demonstration of appropriate SuDS management and treatment.

The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved Phase 2 detailed surface water drainage strategy.

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

19. Upon completion of the drainage works for the site and in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangement, a management and maintenance plan for the SuDS features and drainage network must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include:

1. Provision of a complete set of as built drawings for site drainage.

2. Maintenance and operational activities.

3. 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.

20. Within one month of the grant of this permission, a Construction Management Plan/Method Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority in consultation with the highway authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan/Statement.

The Construction Management Plan/Method statement shall address the following matters

- (i) Details of a construction phasing programme (including any pre-construction or enabling works);
- (ii) Hours of construction operations including times of deliveries and removal of waste;
- (iii) Site set up and general arrangements for storing plant including cranes, materials, machinery and equipment, temporary offices and other facilities, construction vehicle parking and loading/unloading and vehicle turning areas;
- (iv) Access and protection arrangements around the site for pedestrians, cyclists and other customers;
- (v) Details of provisions for temporary car parking during construction;
- (vi) The location of construction traffic routes to and from the site, details of their signing, monitoring and enforcement measures;
- (vii) Screening and hoarding details
- (viii) End of day tidying procedures;
- (ix) Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking);
- (x) Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
- (xi) Cleaning of site entrances, site access roads and the adjacent public highway and;
- (xii) Disposal of surplus materials.

REASON:- In order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way.

21. No construction work relating to this permission shall be carried out on any Sunday, Public or Bank Holiday nor at any other time, except between the hours of 0730 and 1800 on Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 0830 and 1300 on Saturdays, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These times apply to work which is audible at the site boundary.

REASON: - To safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

22. Prior to the removal of the current on-site cycle parking (commencement of Phase 3) hereby approved, details of the proposed on site cycle and Motor cycle parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: - To ensure the suitable provision and location of cycle and motor cycle facilities to serve the development.

23. Prior to occupation of the COB 2.0 office building (Phase 1), additional details to support the approved Travel Plan or an updated Travel Plan should be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. These additional details will include the following:

- Measures to promote sustainable travel;
- The Travel Plan co-ordinator; and
- Appropriate monitoring programme.

REASON:- To promote sustainable transport measures to the development in accordance with the advice contained in the NPPF.

24. Prior to the use of the parking facilities provided as Phase 3 of this development, the Electric Vehicle Charge Points as identified on drawing AIR-BDP-XX-XX-DR-L-99-1004 P01 shall be provided at the site and made available for use and permanently retained thereafter.

REASON:- In order to provide facilities to charge electric vehicles and to help reduce the impact of vehicle emissions on the local environment.

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 District Plan Second Review 1991-2011.
3. Emerging Stevenage Local Plan 2011-2031.
4. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision adopted January 2012.
5. Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan LTP4 2018-2031
6. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework February 2019 and the National Planning Policy Guidance 2014, as amended.
7. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.