

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

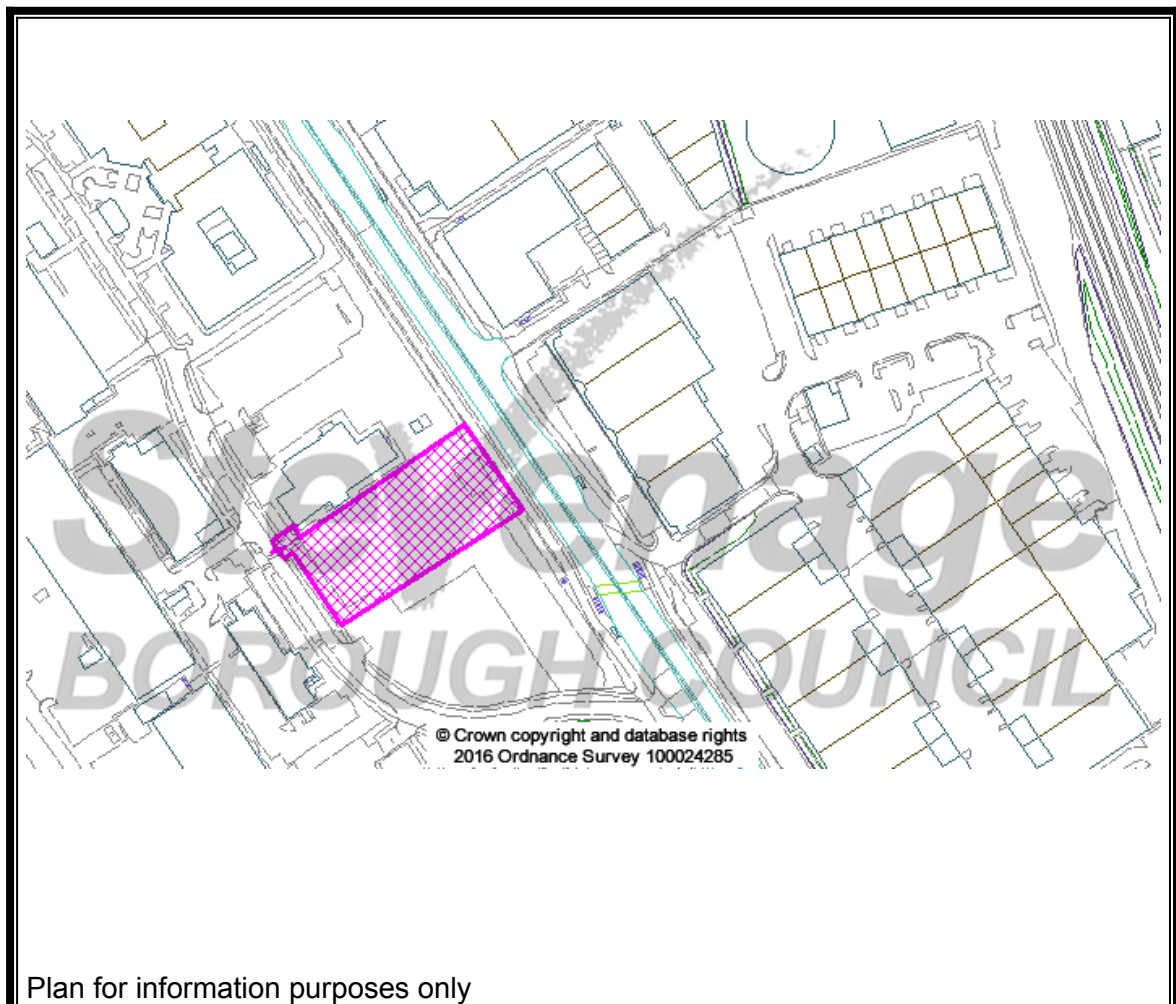
**Date:** 04 September 2019

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|------------------|---|
| Application Nos: | 19/00253/FPM  |
| Location:        | MBDA UK, Six Hills Way, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 2DA   |
| Proposal:        | Erection of a two storey modular office building with associated boundary treatments and landscaping. |
| Drawing Nos.     | A010 P2; A011 P2; A012 P2; A013 P2; A014 P2; A015 P2; A016 P2; A017 P2; A018 P2.                      |
| Applicant:       | MBDA UK   |
| Date Valid:      | 30 April 2019   |
| Recommendation:  | GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION   |



## **1. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 1.1 The application site is located on the western side of Gunnels Wood Road which falls within the Gunnels Wood Employment Area. The application site comprises a single-storey modular office building with associated plant and equipment. The building is enclosed by a 2.5m high security fence. The surrounding area comprises the MBDA UK complex which consists of two-storey warehousing and industrial units, modern three-storey office buildings, waste storage compound, portakabins and surface car parking. The warehouse and industrial buildings are generally uniform in design, constructed from profiled sheet metal cladding and windows which run horizontally within the elevations. The buildings also have industrial roller shutters on the western elevation. The office buildings are modular in form and constructed from either brick or steel frames with large areas of glazing. The MBDA site is currently accessed from Six Hills Way and Gunnels Wood Road.
- 1.2 The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of office, light industrial and warehouse developments. To the south of the application site is the Ford car dealership showroom. The site comprises a two-storey showroom which is constructed from profiled steel cladding with a large glazed frontage. On the rear and eastern elevations are roller shutters for the service areas. To the west of the application site is the A1(M) motorway and to the east is Gunnels Wood Road. To the north of the site is Six Hills Way beyond which is the office complex (Farnham House) occupied by Hertfordshire County Council. This is a three storey brick built building with undercroft car parking. There is also Campus Six immediately adjacent to Farnham House which comprises a number of modern office buildings which are constructed from brick with large glazed areas on the facade.

## **2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 2.1 Planning application 99/00265/FP sought permission for the installation of a satellite dish on the roof. This application was granted planning permission in August 1999.
- 2.2 Planning application 00/00041/OP was an outline application for the Construction of New Offices, Two Hotels and Industrial/Warehouse Buildings including Refurbishment of 3 Existing Buildings. This application was granted outline planning permission in July 2000.
- 2.3 Reserved matters application 00/00227/RM sought approval of details Pursuant to Outline Planning Permission involving the Erection of Gateway Office Building, Two Industrial/Warehouse Buildings, a Multistorey Car Park and New Entrance/Exhibition Space to Existing Office Buildings B1 and B2. The reserved matters application was approved in July 2000.
- 2.4 Reserved matters application 00/00272/RM sought approval of details pursuant to outline planning permission involving the erection of new office and amenity buildings. The reserved matters application was approved in October 2000.
- 2.5 Reserved matters application 00/00354/RM sought approval of details for construction of new office building, two industrial units and alterations to existing industrial unit. The reserved matters application was approved in October 2000.
- 2.6 Reserved matters application 00/00468/RM sought approval of details for construction of office building and spine road. The reserved matters application was approved in December 2000.

- 2.7 Reserved matters application 01/00330/RM sought approval for the construction new fuel cell and plant unit and 2 no. electrical substations. The reserved matters application was approved in October 2001.
- 2.8 Reserved matters application 03/00264/RM sought approval for the erection of a four storey, 115 bedroom hotel pursuant to outline permission (reference number 00/00041/OP) granted 25.07.00. The reserved matters application was granted in July 2003.
- 2.9 Reserved matters application 05/00124/RM sought approval for the erection of building for B1 use on Plot 1700 and relocation of car parking to rear of Plot 1400. The reserved matters application was granted in May 2005.
- 2.10 Planning application 05/00303/FP sought permission for the removal of condition 9 of planning permission reference number 00/00041/OP which requires that 10m wide strip alongside A1(M) be retained free of development. This application was granted planning permission in August 2005.
- 2.11 Planning permission 05/00388/FP sought permission for the re-clad of the existing building and erection of a parapet wall. This application was granted planning permission in September 2005.
- 2.12 Planning permission 05/00410/FP sought permission for the erection of a temporary building for storage use. This application was granted planning permission in October 2005.
- 2.13 Reserved matters application 06/00025/RM sought approval of details for the erection of storage (Class B8)/Office (Class B1(a)) building. The reserved matters application was approved in March 2006.
- 2.14 Planning application 07/00089/FP sought permission for the erection of building with 100 square metre floorspace to accommodate a new computer suite on Plot 5000/5050 and erection of new fence around existing waste compound on Plot 1700. This application was not proceeded with and withdrawn in March 2007.
- 2.15 Planning application 07/00183/FP sought permission for the provision of fence to waste compound; Plot 5050 - erection of new computer room. This application was granted planning permission in May 2007.
- 2.16 Planning application 07/00427/FP sought permission for the erection of temporary building for office/light workshop on part of Plot 4000 and erection of 2.5m fence along northern and western plot boundaries. This application was granted planning permission in August 2007.
- 2.17 Planning application 07/00521/FP sought permission for the enclosure of open courtyard to provide presentation, display and spill out space. This application was granted planning permission in October 2007.
- 2.18 Planning application 07/00600/FP sought permission for the erection of security control room. This application was granted planning permission in November 2007.
- 2.19 Planning application 08/00547/FP sought permission for the erection of 10no. storage containers, 10no. 4.8m high floodlights, 1no. pole mounted CCTV camera and new 2.4m high fencing around storage compound. This application was granted planning permission in January 2009.

- 2.20 Planning application 09/00088/FP sought permission for the erection of 9no. storage containers, 1no. modular unit, 10no. 4.8m high floodlights, 1no. pole mounted CCTV camera and new 2.4m high fencing around storage compound. This application was granted planning permission in April 2009.
- 2.21 Planning application 10/00008/FP sought permission for the erection of modular extension to temporary building on plot 4000 to house equipment associated with the site landscaping operations. This application was granted planning permission in March 2010.
- 2.22 Planning application 12/00039/FP sought permission for the erection of a single storey detached storage building. This application was granted planning permission in February 2012.
- 2.23 Planning application 16/00032/FPM for the erection of an industrial building for B1/ B2 Use Class (Business/General Industry) unit, with associated security fence, parking, and external works. This application was granted planning permission in May 2016.
- 2.24 Planning application 16/00176/FP sought permission for the relocation of existing waste storage facility including the construction of open fronted storage sheds and hardstandings for the placement of roll on, roll off skips. This application was granted planning permission in June 2016.
- 2.25 Planning application 16/00223/FP sought permission for the erection of a portable office accommodation to include welfare facilities, a new standalone hand car wash facility and parking for 65 rental spaces. This application was withdrawn in May 2016.
- 2.26 Planning application 17/00138/FP sought permission to vary condition 11 (drainage strategy) attached to planning permission 16/00032/FPM. This application was granted in April 2017.
- 2.27 Planning application 17/00501/FP sought permission for the erection of a single storey Use Class B1/B2 (Business/General Industry) unit. This application was granted planning permission in September 2017.
- 2.28 Lawful Development Certificate application 17/00632/CLPD sought to determine whether or not the construction of a mezzanine floor extension to an existing industrial unit required planning permission. This application was granted in November 2017.
- 2.29 Planning application 17/00633/FP sought permission for the installation of new windows to south western elevation. This application was granted planning permission in November 2017.
- 2.30 Discharge of condition application 18/00105/COND sought to discharge condition 13 (Landscaping) attached to planning permission number 16/00032/FPM. This application was granted in March 2018.
- 2.31 Planning application 18/00303/OP sought outline permission for the erection of a new data centre and associated infrastructure with all matters reserved. This application was withdrawn in April 2019.
- 2.32 Planning application 18/00153/FPM for the erection of a two storey modular office building with associated boundary treatments, hard landscaping and services. This application was granted temporary two year permission in March 2018.

- 2.33 Advertisement consent application 19/00471/AD seeks consent for the erection of an internally illuminated MBDA signage and alterations to existing signage. This application is pending consideration.

### **3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION**

- 3.1 An application (18/00153/FPM) was previously submitted for a two-storey modular office building. This application was granted temporary planning permission the reason being that the development was not considered to be of high quality design and it failed to meet the objectives of both the adopted Local Plan (2019) and the NPPF. However, it was appreciated that MBDA at the time had emphasised the importance of delivering this development in order to meet their business and commercial needs and to do this they advised that they needed to deliver a development within a short period of time. Consequently, a temporary permission was deemed appropriate whilst a more high quality permanent building could be provided at the site.
- 3.2 This application which has been submitted to the Council is for the proposed retention of the existing flat roof modular office building to serve MBDA. The development also seeks full permission for the erection of a first floor level extension to the modular office building combined with the installation of a horizontal brise soleil ('sun breaker') external screening system at first floor level. This application before the Council as such is seeking permission to make the modular offices on the site permanent.
- 3.3 The proposed building combined, once completed, would measure approximately 43.82m in length and span 24.93m in width with a floor area of approximately 2,142.2 sq.m over the two floors. In terms of height, the proposed building as measured from finished ground floor level would be approximately 7.37m. The proposal also comprises the erection of security fencing and additional secure cycle parking provision.
- 3.4 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, site notices 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 There are no highways issues associated with the proposed development.

#### **5.2 Lead Local Flood Authority**

- 5.2.1 It is considered that the proposed drainage scheme which has been submitted to the Council is acceptable subject to the imposition of a condition on any permission issued. This condition will require the drainage scheme to be constructed in accordance with the details submitted and to submit a management and maintenance plan.

#### **5.3 Environmental Health Department**

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

## **5.4 Thames Water**

- 5.4.1 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.

## **5.5 Affinity Water**

- 5.5.1 The proposed development site is located near an Environment Agency defined groundwater Source Protection Zone. This is a public water supply, comprising a number of chalk abstraction boreholes operated by Affinity Water. Therefore, if permission were to be granted, a number of conditions should be imposed to ensure there is no risk of contaminants entering ground water.

# **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 Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (2019) (Adopted Local Plan).
- 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.

## **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 District Plan**

SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development;  
SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage;  
SP3: A strong, competitive economy;  
SP8: Good design;  
SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution;  
EC1: Allocated sites for employment development;  
EC2: Gunnels Wood Employment Area and Edge-of-Centre Zone;  
EC4: Remainder of Gunnels Wood;  
EC5: Active frontages and gateways;  
IT5: Parking and Access;  
FP1: Climate Change;  
FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1;  
FP5: Contaminated Land;  
FP7: Pollution;

### **6.4 Supplementary Planning Documents**

Parking Provision SPD (2012).

## **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 amenities; parking provision; means of access and highway safety; impact on the environment and flood risk.

### **7.2 Land use policy considerations**

- 7.2.1 The application site is located within the Gunnels Wood Road Employment Area as identified in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2019). Given this, 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. Due to the site falling within a designated employment area, Policies EC1 and EC4 the adopted Local Plan (2019) apply in this instance. Policy EC1: Allocated sites for employment development identifies the application site to deliver 4000 sq.m of B1(b) Research and Development and/or B1(c) Light industry. Policy EC4 sets out acceptable uses in the employment areas. These approved uses include Use Classes B1(c) light industry, B2 general industry and B8 storage and distribution. Notwithstanding this, Policy EC4, states that planning permission for B1(a) offices will only be granted as an exception to criterion a where:-

- i. it is ancillary to a B1(b), B2 or B8 use;
- ii. essential to the continued operation of an established B1(a) use; or
- iii. a sequential test clearly demonstrates that no suitable sites are available in more accessible locations.

- 7.2.2 With regards to the proposed development, it is noted that it seeks permission for the erection of B1(a) office floorspace. Given this, the development would not technically be in accordance with Policy EC1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019). However, the principle of office development on this site has already been established under

planning permission 18/00153/FPM as it was considered essential to the continued operation of MBDA where staff were being relocated from the existing office space within the campus. The reason for this is that some of the floorspace within the campus is currently being reconfigured for specialist activities and therefore, the existing office building combined with the erection of a first floor extension (which in principle has approval) will allow MBDA to continue to operate whilst specific areas of floorspace within the campus are undergoing reconfiguration.

- 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 (2019) 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 function 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 developments 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 GD1 of the Local Plan (2019) generally reflects the above policy. Turning to Gunnels Wood Road specifically, Policy EC5: Active frontages and gateways of the Local Plan 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 The application site is located on land which is owned and operated by MBDA. The application site currently consists an existing single-storey modular office building which was implemented as part of planning permission 18/00153/FPM. The site itself is currently enclosed by a 2.5m high security fence and is bordered by a modern three-storey office building and mature landscaping which runs parallel with Gunnels Wood Road and an internal road. To the west and south-west of the application site are three-storey office buildings, business and industrial units and surface car parking.



- 7.3.5 The existing warehouse and industrial buildings are generally uniform in design, constructed from profiled sheet metal cladding and windows which run horizontally within the elevations. The buildings also have roller shutters on the western elevation. The existing offices within the MBDA campus are generally modern in design and articulated in built form, constructed from either brick or steel cladding, with large areas of glazing and full height glazed entrance features.
- 7.3.6 The development site is located in close proximity to the modern three-storey office building, approximately 41m from the cycle track which runs along the edge of Gunnels Wood Road. The development, where the principle of a two-storey office building has already been established, seeks the erection of a first floor extension to the existing detached single-storey modular office building. The dimension of the development as combined is specified under paragraph 3.2 of this report. The extension to the modular offices would be constructed in similar materials to the existing modular build which is powder coated steel with the roof finished in a single-ply membrane. The rainwater good and guttering would be PVC finished in black and grey PVCu windows and steel doors.
- 7.3.7 However, in order to improve the visual appearance of the modular offices, the applicant is looking to install a brise soleil louvers (finished in grey, silver, green and yellow) screening system at first floor level. The screening system would wrap around the southern, eastern and western elevations. The northern elevation of the development would not be screened with the brise soleil as this elevation is not readily visible from the public realm. In addition, the applicant is also looking to install fibre cement cladding with a vertical striped texture to further improve the architectural composition of the building. Additionally, the brise soleil system would also make the development more sustainable as it would help to control heat levels within the building which would help to reduce the requirement of utilising air conditioning units in the warmer months.
- 7.3.8 The utilisation of the brise soleil combined with the textured fibre cement cladding to the building would significantly improve its visual appearance. This is because it would give the building a temporary modern appearance and would help to break up visual mass. In addition, the use of the contrasting colours of the brise soleil louvers also helps to add variety and interest into the visual appearance of the building. In addition, the colours adopted for the Brise Soleil give the building a softer appearance. Following negotiations with the applicant, they are also seeking to improve soft landscaping as part of this development in accordance with Policy EC5. As such, through enhancements to existing soft landscaping combined with additional soft landscaping would help to better define the site's boundary with Gunnels Wood Road. Additionally, the provision of an enhanced landscape strategy would further help to soften the appearance of the building.
- 7.3.9 In addition to this, and through negotiations with the applicant, they have also submitted an advertisement consent application (19/00471/AD) to improve signage at the site's entrance of Gunnels Wood Road in accordance with Policy EC5. Whilst this application has not been determined, it shows the applicant has been willing to work with the Council in order to overcome its original concerns over the appearance of the modular offices as detailed under temporary permission 18/00153/FPM.
- 7.3.10 Given the aforementioned assessment, it is considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the site or the visual amenities of the area. Therefore, it would be in accordance with Policies GD1 and EC5 of the adopted Local Plan (2019), the NPPF (2019) and PPG (2014).

## **7.4 Impact on residential amenity**

- 7.4.1 The application site is located within the established employment area of Gunnels Wood Road. Given this, combined with the fact that the nearest residential properties in Norton Green are located 430m away and positioned the other side of the A1(M), the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the residential amenities of the nearest residential properties.

## **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 30m<sup>2</sup> of gross floor area. In this regard, a maximum of 72 spaces would be required to serve the proposed development. However, given the application site is located within a non-residential accessibility zone, the requirement can be reduced to between 75% and 100% of the maximum giving a requirement of between 54 spaces to 72 spaces.
- 7.5.2 The proposed development does not seek to create any additional employment. This is because the proposed development, as set out in paragraph 7.2.2, will provide office space for existing staff who are being relocated from within the existing MBDA campus. This is due to some existing office space being reconfigured for specialist activities which are to be conducted on the site and which would be occupied by existing staff. Notwithstanding this, there is a significant amount of off-street parking (including disabled parking) available within the MBDA campus which would be accessible to persons who will be working within the new office building. In terms of the siting of the building itself, this is on an area of unused brownfield scrub land and therefore, it does not result in the loss of any existing parking within the site.
- 7.5.3 In terms of cycle parking, the Parking Standards SPD requires 1 short-term space per 500m<sup>2</sup> of gross floor area plus 1 long-term space per 10 full time staff. Taking this into consideration, there would be a requirement of 4 cycle spaces. The proposed would be served by 48 additional secure cycle parking spaces to the north of the existing office building as detailed on the submitted drawings. The additional cycle parking provision was secured as a requirement under planning permission 18/00153/FPM. This secure cycle parking area has now been implemented as part of the aforementioned permission.
- 7.5.4 In addition, the applicant has also provided shower facilities within the offices. Given this, whilst the applicant is not providing any additional off-street parking, they have sought to encourage staff to cycle to the offices in order to encourage a modal shift from the private car to create a sustainable form of development.

## **7.6 Means of access and highway safety**

- 7.6.1 The application site would be served by the existing 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.
- 7.6.2 Turning to highway safety, the existing access currently has sufficient vehicle-to-vehicle visibility due to the road's industrial design. The access road also comprises the combined verge and cycleway/footway which runs parallel with Gunnels Wood Road. Again, due to the design of this road, there is currently a wide envelope that provides an acceptable level of pedestrian visibility. Taking this into consideration, the

existing arrangement as considered by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) as the Highways Authority accords with the standards set out in the Manual for Streets.

- 7.6.3 Turning to the traffic generation from the development, the applicant has confirmed that the proposed development will not generate any additional employment. The proposed development is only to support the existing operations of the MBDA site. Taking this into consideration, the proposed development would not change the level of traffic which is currently generated from the application site.
- 7.6.4 In terms of access for emergency vehicles, it is considered that all parts of the building are within 45 metres from the principal road or internal access road. In addition, the geometrical layout of the internal roads would be able to accommodate the safe manoeuvrability of emergency vehicles within the site without prejudicing highway safety. In relation to pedestrian access, the proposed development seeks to retain the existing access point from Gunnels Wood Road. Therefore, persons cycling to work would still be able to access the site from Gunnels Wood Road.
- 7.6.5 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 operation of the highway network.

## **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 stipulating that during the construction phase of the development, if any contamination is identified they will be required to undertake an investigation and to provide any relevant remediation measures which has to be agreed in writing by the Council. This will ensure that in the event any potential contaminants are identified, they are mitigated against and that the health of person(s) working on-site (both construction contractors and office workers) the wider environment and buildings are protected.
- 7.7.2 Separate to the above, it is recommended that a condition be imposed restricting the hours of construction on-site. This is to ensure that the amenities and operation of nearby businesses are protected during the construction phase of the development.

## **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 The Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy (SuDS) would comprise of an underground attenuation tank with a controlled discharge system in place. The system has been designed to ensure that surface water run off generated on site can be managed within the boundary without causing flooding on and off site for rainfall events up to 1 in 100 years plus 30% for climate change, with greenfield discharge rates to the surface water sewer of 1.9 l/s for the site.
- 7.8.3 Following consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), they have advised that the applicant has provided an appropriate sustainable drainage scheme.

Furthermore, the LLFA has also recommended that a condition be imposed to require the development to be carried out in accordance with the drainage strategy.

## **7.9 Trees and Landscaping**

7.9.1 There are currently no trees or areas of substantial soft landscaping within the development site which would be affected by the development. However, there is a mature hedgerow which runs along the western boundary of the MBDA site which forms a natural screen. This hedgerow will be retained as part of the development to ensure that it is generally screened from the public realm.

7.9.2 In addition to the above, the applicant has detailed in the application submission the provision of additional soft landscaping including new trees in order to soften the appearance of the development as viewed from Gunnels Wood Road. As such, if permission was to be granted it is recommended a condition be imposed requiring full details of the landscaping strategy which would be utilised as part of the development.

## **7.10 Other matters**

### Sustainable construction and climate change

7.10.1 Policy FP1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) 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 confirmed that due to the modular construction of the building and its design, it would achieve high levels of air tightness and thermal insulation. The development would have a suitable sustainable drainage system in order to reduce the risks of surface water flooding. In addition, the building would utilise energy efficient lighting and water efficient systems with the toilets and shower rooms. Furthermore, the installation of the brise soleil screening system would also help to control thermal comfort levels within the building and would help to reduce energy consumption. Given the aforementioned measures, the proposed development would be considered to be adaptable to climate change and would be a sustainable form of development.

## **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. In addition, the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the site and the visual amenities of the wider area.

8.2 In terms of impact on residential amenity, due to the development's siting and position and separation distance to the nearest residential properties in Norton Green, the proposal would not harm the amenities of residential properties. In addition, the proposed development would not prejudice the safety and operation of the highway

network. Further to this, the proposed development, subject to appropriate conditions, would ensure that land contamination, if found, can be adequately controlled by the Council. Finally, in relation to sustainable drainage, 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.

- 8.3 Given the above, the proposed development accords with the Policies contained within the adopted Local Plan (2019), the Council's Supplementary Planning Documents, the NPPF (2019) and PPG (2014).

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That planning application be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

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

A010 P2; A011 P2; A012 P2; A013 P2; A014 P2; A015 P2; A016 P2; A017 P2; A018 P2.

**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. The materials to be used in the construction of the development hereby permitted shall be in accordance with the details as specified in the application submission unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**REASON:-** To ensure the temporary developments visual impact on the street scene of Gunnels Wood Road is minimised.

4. In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority. An investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of this condition which are as follows:-

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

Where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme must be prepared in accordance with the requirements of condition 5, which is subject to the approval of the Local Planning Authority. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme a verification report must be prepared, which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority in accordance with condition 6.

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

5. In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified, a detailed remediation scheme to bring the site to a condition suitable for the intended use by removing unacceptable risks to human health, buildings and other property and the natural and historic environment must be prepared, and is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. The scheme must include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, timetable of works and site management procedures. The scheme must ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation.

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

6. In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified, the approved remediation scheme must be carried out in accordance with its terms prior to the re-commencement of any development other than that required to carry out remediation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority must be given two weeks written notification of commencement of the remediation scheme works. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme, a verification report that demonstrates the effectiveness of the remediation carried out must be produced, and is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

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

7. No demolition or construction works relating to this permission shall be carried out on any Sunday or Bank Holiday, nor before 07.30 hours or after 18.00 hours on any weekdays, nor on any Saturday before 09.00 hours or after 13.00 hours. The hours specified relate to works which are audible at the site boundary.

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

8. The development permitted by this planning permission shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Statement, prepared by AVIE Consulting Ltd dated 20.04.18, Rev No. A, and the following mitigation measures:

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 + 30% for climate change event.
2. Implement drainage strategy based on restricted surface water discharge at 1.9l/s and an attenuation tank as indicated on the Proposed Drainage Layout, Drawing No. P2484-01-01, Rev C.

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

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

9. 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.

10. The construction works and operation of the proposed development site should be done in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Best Management Practices, thereby significantly reducing the groundwater pollution risk. It should be noted that the construction works may exacerbate any pollution. If any pollution is found at the site then the appropriate monitoring and remediation methods will need to be undertaken.

**REASON:-** In order to protect groundwater from potential contamination which may be present in the application site.

11. If contamination is found on or nearby the site, the disposal of surface water via infiltration is not recommended.

**REASON:-** In order to protect groundwater from potential contamination which may be present in the application site.

12. Any work involving excavations 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 to identify appropriate techniques and to avoid displacing any shallow contamination to a greater depth, which could impact the chalk aquifer.

**REASON:-** In order to protect groundwater from potential contamination which may be present in the application site.

13. 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 the risk. The applicant would need to give Affinity Water 15 days prior notification in advance of any such work, in order to intensify Affinity Waters monitoring and plan potential interruption of the service.

**REASON:-** In order to protect groundwater from potential contamination which may be present in the application site.

14. Prior to the erection of the first floor extension to the modular office building, the applicant is to notify in writing the Local Planning Authority the date of commencement of works. Within six months from the date of the notification, the applicant is to install the Brise Soleil screening system as detailed in the approved drawing.

**REASON:** In order to enhance the appearance of the building and to ensure the development does not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area.

15. Within six months of implementation of development a scheme of soft landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details of all existing trees on the land and details showing all

trees to be removed (if any) together with details of all new planting to take place including species, size and method of planting. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping scheme shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the completion of the development.

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

16. Any trees or plants 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.

#### **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.