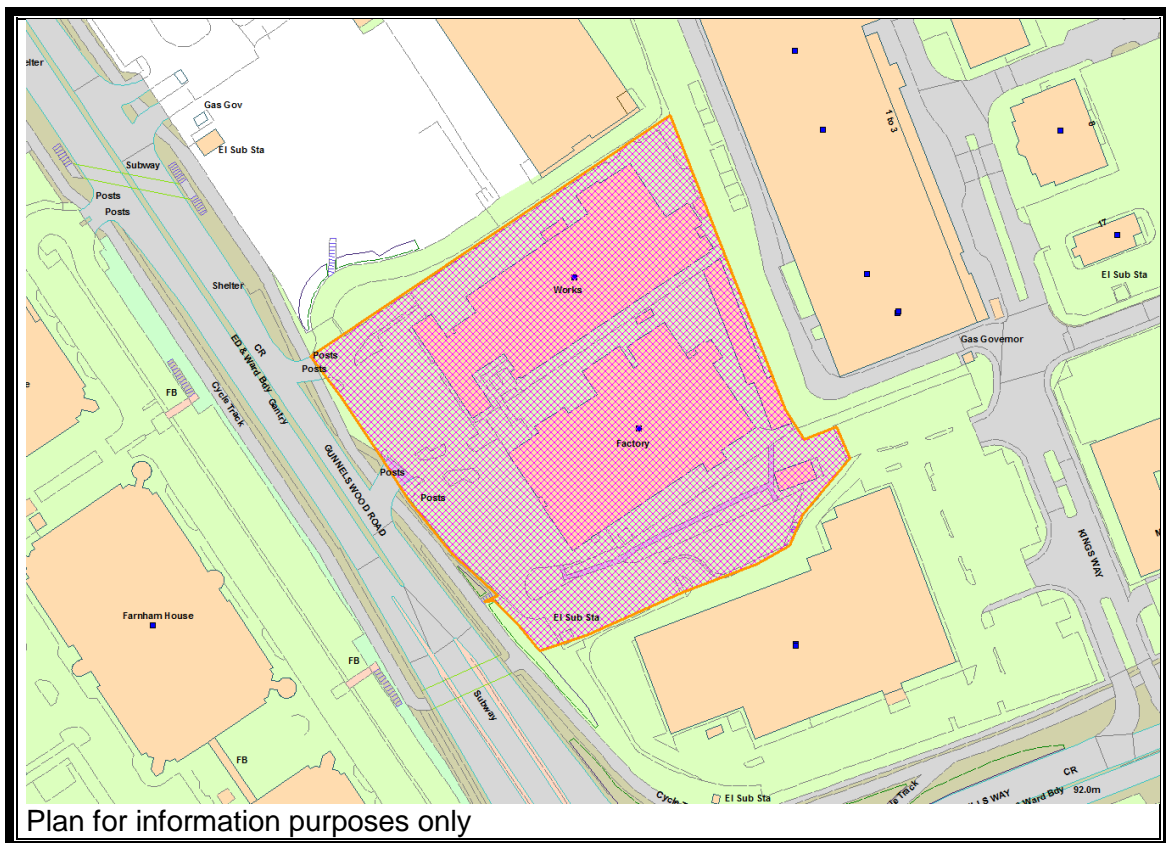


Meeting: Planning and Development Agenda Item:
Committee
Date: 5 April 2022
Author: Thomas Frankland-Wells
Lead Officer: Zayd Al-Jawad
Contact Officer: Thomas Frankland-Wells

Application No:	21/01362/FPM
Location:	Sanders Building and Gunnels Wood Building, Gunnels Wood Road, Stevenage
Proposal:	Demolition of existing buildings and structures and erection of 4no. buildings totalling 6967 sq m (GEA), (6623 sq m GIA) , for uses within Use Class E(g) (Business), B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Warehouse or Distribution) of the Use Classes Order, together with car and HGV parking, landscaping and hard surfacing as well as associated engineering works, facilities and services.
Drawing Nos.:	31366-PL-200; 31366-PL-201; 31366-PL-202; 31366-PL-203; 31366-PL-204; 31366-PL-205; 31366-PL-206; 31366-PL-207; 31366-PL-208; 31366-PL-209; 31366-PL-210; 31366-PL-211; 31366-PL-212; 31366-PL-213;
Applicant:	Legal & General Property Partners (Industrial Fund)
Date Valid:	23 December 2021
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



1.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The site is a roughly rectangular piece of land located to the east of Gunnels Wood Road and measuring approximately 1.5ha. It is occupied by two large buildings of a typical mid-twentieth century low-rise industrial design and a number of smaller outbuildings, which were most recently used for the manufacture, calibration and servicing of electronic equipment. The site frontage is mostly given over to staff car parking.
- 1.2 The site is located within the Edge of Centre Zone of the Gunnels Wood Employment Area and Non-Residential Parking Accessibility Zone 1 but is otherwise not covered by any relevant Local Plan designations. In terms of environmental constraints, it is located in Groundwater Source Protection Zone 2 (outer zone) and Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk).
- 1.3 Land uses surrounding the site are mixed, which is a reflection of its Edge of Centre designation. To the north, west and south are commercial occupiers (notably Airbus directly to the north) but a large leisure and entertainment complex lies to the east, with Stevenage Railway Station and the Town Centre beyond.

2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 52/2/0320/52 - FACTORY INCLUDING OFFICE ACCOMMODATION & BOILER HOUSE
- 2.2 53/2/0381/53 - PROPOSED FACTORY ON ROAD NO 7 FOR W H SANDERS
- 2.3 54/2/0540/54 - OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR EXT TO FACTORY FOR W H SANDERS
- 2.4 55/2/0636/55 - ADDITIONAL FLOOR TO EXISTING OFFICE BUILDING FOR W H SANDERS
- 2.5 55/2/0687/55 - TIMBER BUILDING AS EXTENSION
- 2.6 56/2/0859/56 - EXTENSION OF PERMISSION FOR TIMBER BUILDING AS FACTORY EXTENSION FOR W H SANDERS
- 2.7 56/2/0898/56 - AIR COMPRESSOR HOUSE & OIL STORE FOR W H SANDERS LTD FACTORY
- 2.8 57/2/0011/57 - LABORATORY BUILDING FOR SANDERS ELECTRONICS
- 2.9 57/2/0060/57 - EXTENSION OF PERMISSION FOR TIMBERBUILDING AS EXTENSION OF FACTORY
- 2.10 59/2/0075/59 - STORAGE SHED FOR W H SANDERS (ELECTRONICS) LTD
- 2.11 60/2/0052/60 - PROPOSED MESSROOM OVER EXISTING KITCHEN FOR W.H.SANDERS (ELECTRONICS) LTD
- 2.12 60/2/0191/60 - ADDITIONAL MESS ROOM AND LABORATORY FOR W.H.SANDERS (ELECTRONICS) LTD
- 2.13 68/2/0125/68 - GOODS INWARD INSPECTION BUILDING FOR MARCONI INSTRUMENTS LTD
- 2.14 81/2/0330/81 - EXTENSION TO MACHINE SHOP FOR MARCONI INSTRUMENTS LTD
- 2.15 84/2/0352/84 - SINGLE STOREY LABORATORY EXTENSION FOR MARCONI INSTRUMENTS

- 2.16 84/2/0391/84 - FACTORY WITH ANCILLARY OFFICES, STORAGE AND CAR PARKING FACILITIES SIX HILLS WAY, FOR MARCONI INSTRUMENTS LTD
- 2.17 85/2/0041/85 - TWO PORTAKABINS FOR OFFICE ACCOMMODATION MARCONI INSTRUMENTS LTD
- 2.18 88/2/0195/88 - CIRCULAR DOME TEST FACILITY (R.F.I. TEST BED) MARCONI INSTRUMENTS LTD
- 2.19 88/2/0237/88 - TWO SINGLE STOREY CHEMICAL STORE MARCONI INSTRUMENTS LTD
- 2.20 88/2/0457/88 - RETENTION OF TWO PORTAKABINS FOR STORAGE USE MARCONI INSTRUMENTS LTD
- 2.21 92/2/0012/92 - RETENTION OF TWO PORTAKABINS FOR STORAGE USE MARCONI INSTRUMENTS LTD
- 2.22 94/2/0368/94 - ADDITIONAL FRONTAGE CAR PARK MARCONI INSTRUMENTS
- 2.23 14/00309/FP - Installation of 2no portakabins for showers and storage

3.0 THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the complete redevelopment of the site to provide 4no. buildings to be used flexibly within Use Classes E (formerly B1), B2 and B8, together with associated facilities, including car and HGV parking. At this stage, the development is speculative insofar as the eventual occupiers are unknown.
- 3.2 The dimensions of the proposed buildings are shown in the table below.

Unit	Width	Depth	Height	Floor Area
1	38m	58m	12.5m	2,333m ²
2	45m	44m	12.8m	2,220m ²
3	39m	30m	12.1m	1,206m ²
4	30m	26m	12.1m	864m ²

- 3.3 This application comes before the Planning and Development Committee because it is a Major Commercial Scheme.

4.0 PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 The application has been publicised by neighbour letters, the posting of a site notice, and an advertisement in the local newspaper. No representations have been received.

5.0 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 UK Power Networks

- 5.1.1 No objection provided none of the build is within six metres of the David Lloyd substation.

5.2 Thames Water

- 5.2.1 Waste Comments

- 5.2.1.2 With regard to surface water drainage, Thames Water would advise that if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water we would have no objection. Management of surface water from new developments should follow Policy SI 13 Sustainable drainage of the London Plan 2021. Where the developer proposes to discharge to a public sewer, prior approval from Thames Water Developer Services will be required. Should you require further information please refer to our website.
- 5.2.1.3 We would expect the developer to demonstrate what measures will be undertaken to minimise groundwater discharges into the public sewer. Groundwater discharges typically result from construction site dewatering, deep excavations, basement infiltration, borehole installation, testing and site remediation. Any discharge made without a permit is deemed illegal and may result in prosecution under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991. Should the Local Planning Authority be minded to approve the planning application, Thames Water would like the following informative attached to the planning permission: "A Groundwater Risk Management Permit from Thames Water will be required for discharging groundwater into a public sewer. Any discharge made without a permit is deemed illegal and may result in prosecution under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991. We would expect the developer to demonstrate what measures he will undertake to minimise groundwater discharges into the public sewer. Permit enquiries should be directed to Thames Water's Risk Management Team by telephoning 020 3577 9483 or by emailing trade.effluent@thameswater.co.uk. Application forms should be completed on line via www.thameswater.co.uk. Please refer to the Wholesale; Business customers; Groundwater discharges section.
- 5.2.1.4 There are public sewers crossing or close to your development. If you're planning significant work near our sewers, it's important that you minimize the risk of damage. We'll need to check that your development doesn't limit repair or maintenance activities, or inhibit the services we provide in any other way. The applicant is advised to read our guide working near or diverting our pipes.
- 5.2.1.5 Thames Water would recommend that petrol / oil interceptors be fitted in all car parking/washing/repair facilities. Failure to enforce the effective use of petrol / oil interceptors could result in oil-polluted discharges entering local watercourses.
- 5.2.1.6 Thames Water would advise that with regard to waste water network and sewage treatment works infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application, based on the information provided.

5.2.2 Water Comments

- 5.2.2.1 With regard to water supply, this comes within the area covered by the Affinity Water Company.

5.3 Affinity Water

5.3.1 Water Quality

- 5.3.1.1 You should be aware that the proposed development site is located within an Environment Agency defined groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ) corresponding to our Pumping Station (STEV). This is a public water supply, comprising a number of abstraction boreholes, operated by Affinity Water Ltd.
- 5.3.1.2 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 existing pollution. If any pollution is found at the site then the appropriate monitoring and remediation methods will need to be undertaken.

- 5.3.1.3 Any works 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.
- 5.3.1.4 For further information we refer you to CIRIA Publication C532 "Control of water pollution from construction - guidance for consultants and contractors".
- 5.3.2 Water efficiency
- 5.3.2.1 Being within a water stressed area, we expect that the development includes water efficient fixtures and fittings. Measures such as rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling help the environment by reducing pressure for abstractions in chalk stream catchments. They also minimise potable water use by reducing the amount of potable water used for washing, cleaning and watering gardens. This in turn reduces the carbon emissions associated with treating this water to a standard suitable for drinking, and will help in our efforts to get emissions down in the borough.
- 5.3.3 Infrastructure connections and diversions
- 5.3.3.1 There are potentially water mains running through or near to part of proposed development site. If the development goes ahead as proposed, the developer will need to get in contact with our Developer Services Team to discuss asset protection or diversionary measures.
- 5.3.3.2 In this location Affinity Water will supply drinking water to the development. To apply for a new or upgraded connection, please contact our Developer Services Team by going through their My Developments Portal or by email. The Team also handle C3 and C4 requests to cost potential water mains diversions. If a water mains plan is required, this can also be obtained by email.
- 5.4 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust**
- 5.4.1 Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust have no comments to make on the application.
- 5.5 Herts Fire and Rescue Water Officer**
- 5.5.1 A hydrant will be required. The existing hydrant doesn't provide sufficient coverage to the furthest units.
- 5.5.2 Given that it is industrial, it may mean a private hydrant owned by the site is installed, as the mains laid may not fall under the ownership of the water undertaker.
- 5.6 Hertfordshire Constabulary Crime Prevention Design Service**
- 5.6.1 I was previously asked to comment on this at the pre-app stage and as such, had a telephone conversation with the architect regarding a couple of issues with the lay out. These comments have been taken on board and the design slightly amended to remove the possibility of a desire line developing as a short cut onto the leisure park.
- 5.6.2 Any proposed bollards must be spaced no further apart than 1.2m (when measured at a height of 0.6m) from their centres. This is to deter small vehicles, such as Smart Cars, getting between them. The bollards must be third party certified to PAS 170.

5.6.3 It would be beneficial to any future tenants of these buildings if they were constructed to the Police preferred minimum security standard that is Secured by Design (SBD). By doing this it would reduce their risk of being subject to burglary by >70%.

5.6.4 The Police Crime Prevention Design Service are not looking to object to this application, we support it, in principle, but could only fully support it should the applicant seek to achieve SBC accreditation for the development.

5.7 HCC Highways (original comments 28/01/2022)

5.7.1 Introduction

5.7.1.1 The proposed development is the demolition of two existing buildings, which comprise of 5,641sqm (GIA) of Class E, B2 and B8 use, and the erection of four industrial units (E, B2, B8 use classes) of 6,623sqm GIA with the associated access, parking and landscaping. The proposed development will result in an uplift of 982sqm (GIA). It is understood that the proposed buildings comprise of the following GIA:

- Unit 1: 2,333sqm (incl. 238 sqm of office space)
- Unit 2: 2,220sqm (incl. 371 sqm of office space)
- Unit 3: 1,206sqm (incl. 124 sqm of office space)
- Unit 4: 864sqm (incl. 124 sqm of office space)

5.7.1.2 It is noted that the Airbus Defence and Space facility located adjacent to the proposed development site recently received planning permission (ref. 19/00167/FPM) for the replacement of a former office block with a modern B1 office facility of 11,268sqm (uplift of 1,268sqm). This adjacent application has therefore been considered as part of this assessment.

5.7.2 Site Accessibility

5.7.2.1 The development site lies off Gunnels Wood Road, approximately 150m north of the Gunnels Wood Road/Six Hills Way roundabout (A1070). The site benefits from a shared footway/cycleway on both the sides of Gunnels Wood Road which continues to Six Hill Way and provides access to the town centre and multiple local amenities.

5.7.2.2 It is also noted that Stevenage Station is located c. 0.6 miles to the northeast of the site and there are multiple bus stops in the vicinity of the site. There are two bus stops located directly to the north of the site which benefit from bus services 1, 2, 40 and 50. It is understood that the bus stop located to the south site of Gunnels Wood Road is being improved and enhanced via S278 works associated with planning permission ref. 19/00167/FPM. The site is therefore deemed very accessible and there are clear public transport, pedestrian and cycle links to the station and town centre amenities.

5.7.2.3 Hertfordshire County Councils Local Transport Plan (LTP) 4 policy 5, is to 'ensure the location and design of proposals reflect the LTP Transport User Hierarchy and encourage movement by sustainable transport modes', and the proposals should reflect this within the site design.

5.7.3 Vehicular Access

5.7.3.1 Paragraph 4.2 of the Transport Statement (TS) advises that 'the site has an existing access onto Gunnels Wood Road which operates as a left in/left out arrangement' which is proposed to be retained. This is acceptable in principle as this access can accommodate two-way vehicle movements and benefits from sufficient visibility splays. Nevertheless, detailed plans showing the full dimensions of this access must be provided to clarify the proposed in/out arrangement.

- 5.7.3.2 It is however noted that the site also benefits from a northern vehicular access from Gunnels Wood Road. When assessing the submitted drawings included in Appendix D of the TA (Drawing KMC1901/TR01(1)), the drawings show articulated lorry's using this northern access point. Confirmation is required as to the ownership (or control) of this northern access (which also provides access to the adjacent site) as this will determine whether it can be used to serve the proposed development site. The applicant must confirm the full access strategy, as only reference to the southern vehicular access has been included throughout the planning submission.
- 5.7.3.3 It is noted that the site is proposed to be gated. The first set of gates are shown to be set back c. 29m from the carriageway edge. These gates are therefore set back a sufficient distance and I am satisfied that the proposed gated arrangement will not impact on the free flow of traffic along Gunnels Wood Road. Further information on the operation and nature of the gates is however required and can be secured by way of condition should this application gain approval.
- 5.7.4 Trip Generation
- 5.7.4.1 A TRICS analysis has been undertaken for the existing and proposed uses of the site. Paragraph 5.4 of the TA advises that the same trip rates have been applied to this new development as those rates agreed for a similar development site at Southdown Industrial Estate in Harpenden (application ref. 5/2021/2376). I have compared the proposed development site and the site at Southdown Industrial Estate and it is noted that the sites slightly differ in nature given that one is a key employment area and one is located on a smaller industrial estate. Nevertheless, both sites are located in close proximity to public transport links and local amenities and the principle of using the same trip rates is accepted.
- 5.7.4.2 However, the only assessment that has been undertaken in relation to the proposed trip generation relates to the site solely being within E(g)(iii) and B2 use. No assessment has been undertaken to assess the B8 element of the site. The flexibility of the site is recognised and whilst E(g)(iii) and B2 uses generally result in higher vehicle trips, B8 uses tend to result in an increase in HGVs/LGVs visiting the site. As with the proposal at Southdown Industrial Estate, an assessment of both the E(g)(iii)/B2 and B8 uses should be undertaken to ensure a robust assessment has been carried out and the potential increase in large vehicles on the highway network throughout the day has been assessed.
- 5.7.4.3 In relation to the assessment undertaken (E(g)(iii) and B2 vehicle trips against the uses on site at present), the results showed that trips will increase by eight two-way trips in the AM peak (five inbound/three outbound) and increase by six two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak (one inbound/four outbound). I am therefore satisfied that the proposed E(g)(iii) and B2 use of the site would not result in a material increase in vehicle trips and no junction modelling is required to be undertaken given the minor increase in vehicles travelling to/from the site.
- 5.7.4.4 However, as stated above, an assessment of the HGVs/OGVs visiting the site for the potential B8 use must be assessed to ensure an accurate assessment has been undertaken. Furthermore, a multi-modal assessment should be undertaken for all potential site uses.
- 5.7.5 Cycle/Pedestrian Access
- 5.7.5.1 The submitted plans show footways within the site and two pedestrian crossing points. Whilst this is welcomed, a more detailed internal layout plan must be submitted, and clear pedestrian footways must be shown connecting the site to the existing sustainable

transport infrastructure. This is vital to ensure the development complies with policy and concern is raised that this is not currently shown on the submitted plans.

5.7.6 Car Parking

5.7.6.1 The maximum parking allowance contained in the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (2020) is one space per 40sqm. Given the size of the proposed net increase of 1,033sqm, the maximum parking provision would therefore be 26 parking spaces. This requirement can be reduced to between 0 to 25% of the maximum permissible.

5.7.6.2 The submitted plans show that a total 69 parking spaces are proposed on the site. This represents c. 43% of the existing parking provision and would result in a significant net reduction in parking. I trust in Stevenage Borough Council to assess the quantum of the car parking however, I can confirm that given the on-street parking restrictions and nature of the surrounding highway nature, there are limited locations in the vicinity of the site which could accommodate displaced parking.

5.7.6.3 The SPD requires 5% of spaces to be designed as disabled bays and a total of five disabled parking spaces are required. This is in line with policy. Additionally, I am satisfied that the proposed parking bays are of sufficient size to accommodate safe vehicular movements into/out of each bay.

5.7.6.4 It is also advised that Hertfordshire County Council issued a climate emergency in 2019 and the HCC Local Transport Plan Policy 5 requires all new developments to provide EV infrastructure. Paragraph 4.20 of the TS advises that 'it is proposed to provide a minimum of 20% of parking spaces within the site with electric vehicle charging points (EVCP) which would be operational from first occupation plus all car parking spaces being supplied with ducting for future increase in ECVP provision by occupiers' and this is welcomed and in line with policy.

5.7.6.5 The details of the car park surfacing should be secured by a planning condition.

5.7.7 Motorcycle Parking

5.7.7.1 Policy 1 of the LTP4 and Paragraph 14.3 of the Roads in Hertfordshire Guidance requires provision for the adequate and secure parking of powered two wheelers as described in Traffic Advisory Leaflet 02/02 'Motorcycle Parking' and the Institute of Highway Engineers (IHIE) 'Guidelines for Motorcycling'. Parking for powered two wheelers should be protected from the elements and provide a means for securing the vehicle such as rails, hoops or posts. A footprint of 2.0m x 0.8m should be allowed for each vehicle.

5.7.7.2 Para 4.23 of the TS states that motorcycle parking will be in line with the Stevenage parking SPD (2020), which advises that 'developers will be expected to allow for around 5% of the total stock of publicly accessible vehicle parking spaces to be for motorcycle use'. The plans show that a total of seven spaces will be provided, which exceeds the standards and is welcome.

5.7.7.3 The motorcycle provision should be secured by a planning condition.

5.7.8 Cycle Parking

5.7.8.1 The provision of well-located, safe and secure cycle parking is a key factor in encouraging people to cycle as an alternative to using the private car. The high-quality cycle parking is also necessary in order to meet the LTP4 Policy 8 (Active Travel-cycling).

- 5.7.8.2 Stevenage's cycle parking standard is one long stay space per 500sqm plus one short stay space per 1,000sqm, leading to a requirement of 14 long stay spaces and seven short stay spaces.
- 5.7.8.3 The TS states that 36 spaces will be provided in total, which is welcome and exceeds the minimum standards. The cycle parking is shown to be designed as Sheffield stands and split between each unit. However, concern is raised that the Sheffield stands are not designed in accordance with standards as there must be at least 1.0m between each stand and at least 0.6m between each stand and the edge of the cycle parking shelters. Furthermore, there must be at least a 1.2m aisle between each of the cycle parking shelters and highway.
- 5.7.8.4 Paragraph 7.6 of the Stevenage Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (2020) requires that covered cycle parking areas are provided for employment premises to allow for weather and security protection. This can be accommodated through the use of cycle lockers or secure cycle sheds. For employment premises, shower facilities should also be provided in conjunction with these facilities. Furthermore, the 'Cycle Infrastructure Design' Local Transport Note 1/20 July 2020 states that 'as with car parking, a proportion of the cycle parking (typically 5%) should be provided for non-standard cycles to accommodate people with mobility impairments'. It is vital that the cycle parking is updated to comply with this guidance.
- 5.7.8.5 Not all of these requirements have been clearly shown on the plans and the details of the design and materials for cycle parking (including non-standard cycle parking spaces) and shower and changing facilities should be secured by a planning condition to ensure the development complies with policies 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of Hertfordshire's 4th Local Transport Plan.
- 5.7.9 Servicing
- 5.7.9.1 The submitted plans show that all of the four units benefit from a dedicated delivery and servicing area and all servicing will be undertaken within the site. Whilst this is acceptable in principle, further details on the proposed numbers of large vehicles anticipated to serve the site must be provided. This is essential to ensure that the allocated delivery and servicing arrangement is sufficient and will not result in large vehicles waiting on the highway.
- 5.7.9.2 Furthermore, it is noted that the delivery and servicing areas associated with Units 3 and Units 4 are located in very close proximity to the car parking area. It is advised that these areas are redesigned to mark out the servicing vehicle parking bays to ensure large vehicles do not block access to the car parking spaces.
- 5.7.9.3 The submitted plans include swept path analysis drawings showing a 16.5m articulated HGV accessing and manoeuvring safely within the site. The principle of the servicing and delivery arrangements are therefore acceptable however further details are required, as set out above, to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- 5.7.10 Refuse Collection
- 5.7.10.1 It is my understanding that refuse and recycling collection will take place from the internal service areas within the site. Each unit is shown to benefit from dedicated refuse and recycling stores. The TS advises that refuse vehicles will collect the refuse and recycling from within the servicing areas. This is acceptable in principle and will ensure that no waste will be left on the highway for prolonged periods of time and refuse vehicles can safely serve the site.

5.7.11 Construction

5.7.11.1 A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been submitted with this application. Whilst the general construction principles are acceptable, a considerable amount of additional information is required in relation to the construction process and must be included within a Full CTMP which can be secured by condition. In particular, the following elements are required:

- Submission of a clearer, more detailed site plan
- Details of the maximum number of vehicles visiting the site per vehicle type
- Confirmation that construction vehicles will not serve the site within the peak hours
- Details of a construction worker travel plan
- Confirmation that the wheel wash will be located within the site for the extent of the construction works.

5.7.12 Travel Plan

5.7.12.1 A Framework Travel Plan has been submitted with this application. This Framework Travel Plan has been assessed by the Sustainable Transport Team and detailed comments have been forwarded onto the case officer separately. The applicant is advised that the Full Travel Plan will be required to be in place from first occupation until 5 years post full occupation. A £1,200 per annum index-linked RPI March 2014 Evaluation and Support Fee should be secured by section 106 agreement in accordance with Hertfordshire County Council's Travel Plan Guidance. This should incorporate measures to promote sustainable transport, an appointed travel plan co-ordinator and an appropriate monitoring programme.

5.7.13 CIL Contributions

5.7.13.1 SBC operate CIL charging which may be directed towards wider sustainable transport provision serving the development and with the exception of the aforementioned Travel Plan, the Highway Authority do not wish to seek any further direct mitigation under S106.

5.8 HCC Highways (updated comments 11/03/2022)

5.8.1 Introduction

5.8.1.1 The Highway Authority provided comments on this application on the 28th January 2022 and requested further information in relation to the access arrangement, servicing trip rates, pedestrian footways and cycle parking. The applicant has submitted an updated Technical Note addressing these concerns and it is this Technical Note (TN) on which the following comments have been made.

5.8.2 Site Accessibility

5.8.2.1 In my previous comments, further details were requested on the proposed pedestrian footways and cycleways within the site and the associated links to existing active travel infrastructure in the vicinity of the site.

5.8.2.2 The submitted TN includes an updated site drawing, clearly showing the proposed pedestrian footway at the southern access linking to the existing footway/cycleway on Gunnels Wood Road. It is understood that there is no proposed footway running alongside the northern access. The proposed footways are shown to be 1.5m wide with two crossing points located within the site. Whilst 2.0m footways would be preferable, given the low footfall and limited vehicle movements through the site, the proposed 1.5m footways are accepted.

5.8.2.3 Paragraph 5 of the TN advises that 'cyclists will use the internal site access roads to access the cycle parking.' Given the nature of the site, the location of the cycle parking stores and the existing shared cycleway/footway fronting the site, this is accepted. No objection is raised in relation to policy 1 of the LTP4.

5.8.3 Access

5.8.3.1 The proposed access strategy set out in the Transport Statement (TS) submitted with the application was unclear. The newly submitted TN confirms that the existing in/out arrangement using both the northern and southern accesses is proposed to be retained and that both of the accesses are in the applicant's control. It is noted that the Airbus site to the north of the proposed development site can be accessed via the northern access, however the TN advises that this access is currently gated and can only be used following permission from the client at the development site.

5.8.3.2 Drawing 18081_001 Rev A shows the northern access to measure c. 6.6m in width and the southern access to measure c. 7.6m. The submitted Swept Path Analysis drawings within the TS confirm that these accesses are sufficient to accommodate the large articulated vehicles predicted to visit the site. Regarding visibility, it is noted that the submitted access drawing indicates that the southern access benefits from a visibility splay of 2.4m x 120 to the north. Given that the Gunnells Wood Road is a one-way road, this visibility splay is accepted.

5.8.3.3 The existing accesses are therefore deemed acceptable in principle subject to a condition ensuring further information regarding the operation and nature of the gates.

5.8.4 Trip Rates

5.8.4.1 In my previous comments, I requested that an assessment of the B8 trip rates be undertaken. This information is required given the proposed flexible use class and the potential for B8 uses to generate a greater quantum of large vehicles visiting the site than E(g)(iii) and B2 uses.

5.8.4.2 The TN provides an updated trip rate assessment which includes the B8 use. The same B8 trip rates have been used as that agreed for the Southdown Industrial Estate in Harpenden and these rates are agreed. The results of this assessment show that the B8 use would generate 20 vehicle movements in the AM peak, of which seven would be expected to be OGVs and 19 vehicles in the PM peak, including seven OGVs.

5.8.4.3 Considering the existing use of the site and the strategic nature of Gunnells Wood Road, I am therefore satisfied that the potential increase in large vehicles visiting the site will not have a material impact on the local highway network. Furthermore, the site provides space for the safe vehicular parking of nine OGVs at one time and is therefore designed to safely accommodate the large vehicles associated with all potential use classes.

5.8.4.4 It is noted that the E(g)(iii) and B2 uses will still generate a greater amount of vehicles visiting the site, with an increase in eight two-way trips in the AM peak and increase by six two-way vehicle trips in the PM peak compared to the existing use of the site. It is however agreed that the proposed new development will only result in a minor increase in vehicles travelling to/from the site and I am satisfied that the applicant has undertaken an assessment of all the potential uses on the site.

5.8.4.5 The TN also includes the predicted modal split for the site. The applicant is advised that more ambitious mode share targets should be set and this can be amended as part of the Travel Plan.

5.8.5 Cycle Parking

5.8.5.1 The updated layout plan now includes 18 Sheffield stands designed to safely accommodate cycle parking. All the stands are shown to be located within cycle parking shelters, with a 1.2m aisle between the cycle parking shelters and highway. The plan now also includes one cycle parking space for non-standard bicycles, in line with LTN 1/20.

5.8.5.2 I am therefore satisfied that the proposed cycle parking is in line with guidance and will facilitate safe cycle parking.

5.8.6 Conclusion

5.8.6.1 The submitted TN includes all the additional requested information. No objection is therefore raised to the proposed development subject to the conditions, informatives and S106 obligation above.

5.9 HCC Environment and Transport (Travel Plan)

5.9.1 Site Details

5.9.1.1 Reference to National and Local Planning policies should be included in the text of the Framework Travel Plan.

5.9.2 Travel Plan Management

5.9.2.1 Details of Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC), or interim TPC should be included within the amended text of the document.

5.9.2.2 Need secondary contact details or text inserted within the document to say that a secondary contact to the TPC will be provided to HCC, upon their appointment.

5.9.2.3 An explicit statement of commitment from the developer is required to fully implementing the Travel Plan (TP) for at least five years following full occupation to ensure the objectives of the TP are achieved. If future occupiers are unknown, a statement of commitment is needed to reflect commitment from the developer to transfer responsibility of the Travel Plan to the occupier once this is known; details of this should be shared with HCC three months prior to occupation.

5.9.2.4 Provide details of TPC's time allocated to the role together with frequency on site.

5.9.2.5 Is there a steering group? Provide details within amended document.

5.9.2.6 Are there any partnerships involved in helping achieve the objectives of the TP? Please provide details if any.

5.9.3 Package of Measures

5.9.3.1 Are there any planned improvements to public transport provision? Please provide details.

5.9.4 Targets, Monitoring and Action Plan

5.9.4.1 Estimated baseline data and modal shift target should be established based on the latest information available.

- 5.9.4.2 Monitoring methodology and surveys should be agreed with HCC council, a sample survey is therefore expected to be included within the amended Travel Plan Framework.
- 5.9.4.3 Please insert a text within the amended document to reflect that surveys, monitoring reports and review of the Travel Plan should be undertaken and submitted to HCC on an annual basis for the first five years following full occupation.
- 5.9.4.4 An annual Evaluation and Support fee of £1,200.00 is required for a period of five years post full occupation. Acknowledgement of this is currently missing within the document.
- 5.9.5 Recommendations for Inclusion in S106
- 5.9.5.1 A Full Travel Plan will be required to be in place from first occupation until 5 years post full occupation. A £1,200 per annum index-linked RPI March 2014 Evaluation and Support Fee should be secured by section 106 agreement in accordance with Hertfordshire County Council's Travel Plan Guidance. This should incorporate measures to promote sustainable transport, an appointed travel plan co-ordinator and an appropriate monitoring programme.

5.10 HCC Waste and Minerals Unit

- 5.10.1 I am writing in response to the above planning application insofar as it raises issues in connection with waste matters. Should the Borough Council be minded to permit this application, a number of detailed matters should be given careful consideration.
- 5.10.2 Government policy seeks to ensure that all planning authorities take responsibility for waste management. This is reflected in the County Council's adopted waste planning documents. In particular, the waste planning documents seek to promote the sustainable management of waste in the county and encourage Districts and Boroughs to have regard to the potential for minimising waste generated by development.
- 5.10.3 The NPPF recognises waste as a strategic issue and specific national policy is set out in the National Planning Policy for Waste (October 2014) which states the following:
- 5.10.4 'When determining planning applications for non-waste development, local planning authorities should, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities, ensure that:
- *the likely impact of proposed, non- waste related development on existing waste management facilities, and on sites and areas allocated for waste management, is acceptable and does not prejudice the implementation of the waste hierarchy and/or the efficient operation of such facilities;*
 - *new, non-waste development makes sufficient provision for waste management and promotes good design to secure the integration of waste management facilities with the rest of the development and, in less developed areas, with the local landscape. This includes providing adequate storage facilities at residential premises, for example by ensuring that there is sufficient and discrete provision for bins, to facilitate a high quality, comprehensive and frequent household collection service;*
 - *the handling of waste arising from the construction and operation of development maximises reuse/recovery opportunities, and minimises off-site disposal.'*
- 5.10.5 In particular, you are referred to the following policies of the adopted Hertfordshire County Council Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2012 which forms part of the Development Plan. The policies that relate to this proposal are set out below:
- Policy 1: Strategy for the Provision for Waste Management Facilities. This is in regards to the penultimate paragraph of the policy;

- Policy 2: Waste Prevention and Reduction: &
- Policy 12: Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition.

5.10.6 In determining the planning application, the Borough Council is urged to pay due regard to these policies and ensure their objectives are met. Many of the policy requirements can be met through the imposition of planning conditions.

5.10.7 Waste Policy 12: Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition requires all relevant construction projects to be supported by a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP). This aims to reduce the amount of waste produced on site and should contain information including types of waste removed from the site and where that waste is being taken to. Good practice templates for producing SWMPs can be found at: <http://www.smartwaste.co.uk/> or <http://www.wrap.org.uk/category/sector/waste-management>.

5.10.8 SWMPs should be passed onto the Waste Planning Authority to collate the data. The county council as Waste Planning Authority would be happy to assess any SWMP that is submitted as part of this development either at this stage or as a requirement by condition and provide comment to the Borough Council.

5.11 SBC Environmental Health

5.11.1 Noise Impacts

5.11.1.1 Noise is a material planning consideration that can have a significant impact not only on the amenity of residential occupiers, but can also have commercial implications for businesses if not suitably considered and controlled at the planning and development stage. It is therefore essential to ensure that any significant noise sources that could have an adverse noise impact on the amenity of residential occupiers or potentially restrict commercial operations are robustly considered and assessed as appropriate. In considering the potential impacts of noise on the proposed development, the Environmental Health Service will have due regard to relevant policy, standards and guidance, which include:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- The Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE);
- Planning Policy Guidance - Noise.
- Pro-PPG Guidance 2017
- BS4142:2014
- BS8233:2014

5.11.1.2 Please note that this is not an exclusive list and other standards and guidance may be appropriate in given situations. As part of the planning process you will be required to provide a Noise Impact Assessment report.

5.11.2 Contaminated land

5.11.2.1 A watching brief must be kept during initial site preparation works to identify any potentially contaminated land or materials likely to be present. In the event contamination is found during site clearance and/or construction phase of the development, undertake an appropriate investigation and provide, in writing, a suitable and sufficient remediation strategy for Stevenage Borough Council to agree before commencement of any remedial action.

5.11.3 Construction Impacts

5.11.3.1 Construction activities, both on and off site, by their nature can be noisy and intrusive for neighbouring occupiers, particularly in terms of noise, vibration, air quality (dust), smoke,

odour and light and other possible matters, including construction vehicle parking or movements, or damage to neighbouring properties, services and facilities.

- 5.11.3.2 Noise and vibration can arise in particular from piling operations, groundworks and excavations, and plant or machinery and their associated use. Early morning deliveries can also give rise to disturbance if not properly controlled and managed.
- 5.11.3.3 Dust from site operations can also be an issue, particularly during periods of sustained dry weather.
- 5.11.3.4 Environmental Health expect developers to control the impact from the construction phase of their development by implementing suitable mitigation measures and following best practices in accordance with BS5228:2009 Part 1 (noise) and Part 2 (vibration), where appropriate.
- 5.11.3.5 Environmental Health also seek to ensure that the environmental impacts of demolition or construction works are suitably controlled. Where control is not appropriate, measures under Part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (statutory nuisances) or section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 will be used. In the latter case, hours of work for noisy construction works are limited to the following times only:
- 7:30am to 6:00pm on Weekdays
 - 8:00am to 1:00pm on Saturdays
 - At no times on Sundays or Public Holidays
- 5.11.3.6 Where considered appropriate due to the scale of the development and construction project, the Developer may be required to formulate and implement a Construction Management Plan before commencement of any works.

5.11.4 Pest Control

- 5.11.4.1 Construction sites may cause the disturbance of rats and other vermin. Developers have a duty to manage the treatment of rats, vermin and pests on the site. Where suitable controls are not in place Prevention of Damage by Pest Act 1949 and nuisance and public health legislation will be used.

5.12 SBC Arboriculture and Conservation Manager

- 5.12.1 I have looked into this application and can confirm that I have no objection to the proposed development from an Arboriculture view point.
- 5.12.2 However, I do have concerns about the effect of the construction works on the mature Oak tree just outside this site, located by the entrance from Gunnels Wood Road. With this in mind and to compensate for any likely disturbance of the ground within the RPA, I would suggest that the developer organises a 25% crown reduction to this tree before the commencement of the building works.

5.13 SBC Planning Policy

- 5.13.1 SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage
- 5.13.1.1 SP2 works to make developers work within the principles of sustainable development, while providing a net benefit to the towns' social, economic and/or environmental state. The proposed development will lead to the removal of two principal industrial buildings and several smaller buildings. The current occupants recognise the outdated nature of the existing development; the proposal would help meet modern standards and operating requirements without a change or expansion in land-use. The proposed development has potential to promote economic growth and reinvestment.

5.13.2 SP3: A Strong Competitive Economy

5.13.2.1 Policy SP3 requires new developments to contribute towards employment growth. The Local Plan specifically cites the remodelling of Gunnels Wood as a key objective (SP3(c)), the proposed development intends to deliver a high quality industrial site that meets the needs of modern businesses in a key employment area of Stevenage. The Construction Employment Strategy details how the developers will work with SBC in order to attract local employment during the development process.

5.13.3 SP5: Infrastructure

5.13.3.1 SP5 defines the need for ensuring new developments fairly contribute toward the infrastructure demands that they will create. The developers have included a utilities assessment, which states the intention for a new water main to each of the units. The schemes external lighting also complies with guidelines. There is little about how the proposal will contribute to the external infrastructure of Stevenage, considering the size of the site it would be a positive to have some proposals as to how they will contribute to current infrastructure surrounding the site.

5.13.4 SP6: Sustainable Transport

5.13.4.1 Policy SP6 establishes the need for an increase in walking, cycling, passenger transport. It also encompasses adequate car parking on new developments. The proposed development intends to have electrical charging points available at all parking spaces, with nine charging posts available upon completion. The local plan states SBCs desire for pedestrian and cycle links between Gunnels Wood and the Town Centre specifically (SP6(a)(ii)), the development proposal shows how the site is within easy walking distance of the Town Centre and within cycling distance of most of Stevenage. The plan states that the site is well supported by bus and train links and substantial bicycle storage will be provided on site.

5.13.5 SP8: Good Design

5.13.5.1 Policy SP8 seeks to achieve high standards in design and sustainability. The development will enable the site to keep up with modern demands, and therefore the layout will also be modern and 'good'. The small office space included above the industrial site will be fronted on Gunnels Road, creating an active fronting with natural surveillance. The developers intend to use high quality materials that will stand the test of time.

5.13.6 SP11: Climate Change, Flooding and Pollution

5.13.6.1 SP11 seeks to limit the negative impacts of climate change flood risk and pollution. The proposed development has a full flood risk analysis, which acknowledges it is in the lowest flood risk zone, but describes the need for a new drainage solution due to the material underground. Several trees will have to be removed for the plans, but new ones are intending to be replanted. The development is predicted to reduce the carbon emissions of the site by 21%. The site incorporates the use of solar-panels, heat pumps, low-energy technology.

5.13.7 EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge of Centre Zone

5.13.7.1 Policy EC2b relates to land-use change within Gunnels Wood. The officers examining the pre application found the land use of B1, B2 and B8 to be acceptable over offices, due to the historic nature of the site and office space having always been ancillary to the industrial use of the land. An Industrial and Warehouse market data report identified that there was a shortage of industrial and warehousing stock.

5.13.8 EC5: Active Frontages and Gateways

5.13.8.1 The policy EC5 refers to Gunnels Wood Road specifically, it requires the development of frontage. The proposal acknowledges this by purposefully angling the office ancillary space on the road side of the development. It adds visual interest and natural surveillance as required.

5.13.9 IT5: Parking and Access

5.13.9.1 Policy IT5 refers to complying with Parking Provision SPD requirements. The proposed development will have adequate parking facilities with routes to move between Gunnels Wood Road and the site. The parking spaces will have the option to become EV charging points in the future, and secure bicycle storage is also provided.

5.13.10 GD1: High Quality Design

5.13.10.1 See SP8

5.13.11 FP1: Climate Change, FP2: Flood Risk in Flood Zone 1

5.13.11.1 See SP11

5.13.12 FP7: Pollution

5.13.12.1 The site is not expected to cause additional pollution. A light pollution survey has been carried out, however a noise pollution survey could be carried out.

5.13.13 NH5: Trees and Woodland

5.13.13.1 Policy NH5 states that any ancient/irreplaceable woodland should not be removed unless with good reason, and any removed trees should be similarly replaced. The proposed development does plan on removing trees, but also on planting new ones especially around the edges of the site.

5.13.14 NPPF Paragraph 8(a)

5.13.14.1 Paragraph 8 a) is an economic objective of planning; that it should help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy. The planned development states that it does this.

5.13.15 Conclusion

5.13.15.1 The planned development of Gunnels Wood Road industrial site would be beneficial for Stevenage. The land-use of the area would not change, while at the same time making it more suited for modern needs and reducing emissions. It would not require major infrastructure demands, and is well placed to be served by pre-existing public transport routes and walking/cycling.

5.13.15.2 The development will provide employment and attract investment in a key employment area of the town. A flood and pollution survey has been carried out.

5.13.15.3 One concern may be the land-use; it is not exactly what was asked for in the local plan with office space being preferred. However, the pre application was given favourable opinion due to the historic nature of the ancillary office space and primary industrial space.

5.14 Wood Group UK (Flood Risk and Drainage Consultant)

- 5.14.1 The full consultation response has not yet been received and will be published as an update in advance of the Committee meeting.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 Background to the Development Plan

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

- The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2019)
- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and 2014); and
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 (adopted 2007).

6.2 Central Government Advice

- 6.2.1 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021. This largely reordered the policy substance of the earlier 2012 version of the NPPF albeit with some revisions to policy. The Council are content that the policies in the Local Plan are in conformity with the revised NPPF and that the Local Plan should be considered up to date for the purpose of determining planning applications. The NPPF provides that proposals which accord with an up to date development plan should be approved without delay (para.11) and that where a planning application conflicts with an up to date development plan, permission should not usually be granted (para.12). This indicates the weight which should be given to an up to date development plan, reflecting the requirements of section 38(6) of the 2004 Act.

- 6.2.2 The Council will be commencing preliminary work into a potential review of its Local Plan, last adopted in May 2019. This is to ensure the policies within the Local Plan are up to date in accordance with the NPPF as well as ensuring the Council is delivering a sufficient supply of housing and employment.

6.3 Planning Practice Guidance

- 6.3.1 The PPG contains guidance supplementing the NPPF and with which Members are fully familiar. The PPG is a material consideration to be taken into account together with the National Design Guide (2021) which has the same status as the PPG.

6.4 Stevenage Borough Local Plan

SP1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SP2 Sustainable Development in Stevenage
SP3 A Strong, Competitive Economy
SP5 Infrastructure
SP6 Sustainable Transport
SP8 Good Design
SP11 Climate Change, Flooding and Pollution
EC2b Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone
EC5 Active Frontages and Gateways
IT4 Transport Assessments and Travel Plans
IT5 Parking and Access
IT6 Sustainable Transport
GD1 High Quality Design
FP1 Climate Change

FP2 Flood Risk in Flood Zone 1
FP5 Contaminated Land
FP7 Pollution
NH3 Green Corridors
NH5 Trees and Woodland

6.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (2020)
Developer Contributions SPD (2021)
The impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (2020)

6.6 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule in 2020. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location and floor space of a development. The proposal would be liable for CIL, however it would be zero rated because the proposal is neither for residential nor retail development.

7 APPRAISAL

7.1 The main issues for consideration in this case are: its acceptability in land use policy terms; design, layout and the impact on the character and appearance of the area; the impact on the amenities of neighbouring landowners; the impact on highway safety and parking; the impact on flood risk and drainage; land and water supply contamination; and trees.

7.2 Land Use Policy Considerations

7.2.1 The NPPF (July 2021) is clear in its aim to build a strong and competitive economy. Paragraph 81 states that Local Authorities should do this by creating the conditions in which businesses can invest and adapt, with significant weight being given to the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

7.2.2 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (2019) clearly sets out the need to intensify and remodel B-class employment areas, including Gunnels Wood. However, the range and intensity of uses that can sustainably be supported depends on accessibility, with the most accessible areas being able to support the most employment intensive uses, such as offices and research and development.

7.2.3 The application site falls within such an area, being very well connected to passenger transport services and the amenities of the town centre. Accordingly, the area is defined as the “Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone” by Policy EC2b of the Local Plan (2019) and allocated for office and research and development uses that make efficient use of sites in terms of floor space and job provision, and interact positively with the “Stevenage Central” area. The policy states that planning permission will only be granted as an exception to these criteria where the proposed development is ancillary to office or research and development uses or is essential to the continued operation of an established B-class use.

7.2.4 The existing use of the application site is varied. The northern part of the site is occupied by Trescal and primarily comprises industrial space (Class B2), with a lesser amount of ancillary office space (Class E(g)(i)). In contrast, the southern part of the site is now vacant, having most recently been occupied by Marconi for a mixture of industrial (Class B2), storage (Class B8) and research and development (Class E(g)(ii)) purposes, again with ancillary office space.

- 7.2.5 The proposal would see the site entirely redeveloped to provide 4no. buildings to be used flexibly for general industry (Class B2), storage and distribution (Class B8), offices (Class E(g)(i)), research and development (Class E(g)(ii), and light industry (Class E(g)(iii)). These would be laid out as a typical small scale industrial/business estate, with large areas given over to manoeuvring space for lorries, resulting in a relatively low plot ratio¹ of approximately 45%.
- 7.2.6 The proposed flexible use is clearly inconsistent with the more limited range of uses envisioned for the area under Policy EC2b and the density is below the desired level according to the subtext to the policy (a plot ratio of 50% to 100% is desired). The development would also be speculative insofar as the eventual occupiers are currently unknown and it is understood that Trescal will vacate the part of the site that they currently occupy, having secured a lease on new premises at the Gunnels Wood Industrial Estate. It would therefore not be essential to the continued operation of an established employment use, nor would it be ancillary to office or research and development uses.
- 7.2.6 In light of the above, it can only be concluded that the proposal would conflict with Policy EC2b. However, the weight to be attributed to this conflict requires further consideration, in particular of the likelihood of a fully policy compliant scheme coming forward.
- 7.2.7 To aid this assessment, the applicant has presented a report on recent conditions in the commercial property market in Stevenage. This shows that Stevenage, whilst an established office location, is characterised by a lack of demand. In Q3 2021, approximately 9,000m² of office space was available, whilst average annual take-up from 2018-2020 was roughly a quarter of that figure, at approximately 2,250m².
- 7.2.8 The market for research and development space is similar. Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst is home to over 40 companies and GSK have announced plans for a life science campus but there is otherwise little in the development pipeline.
- 7.2.9 The result of this is that the level of demand for office and research and development space is such that speculative development for these uses in Stevenage is unlikely to be viable, with development instead being driven by investment by established employers. With this in mind, the likelihood of a high density office/research and development scheme coming forward for the site in the near future is considered to be low. Consequently only moderate weight is attached to the conflict between the proposal and Policy EC2b.
- 7.2.10 On the other hand, demand for industrial and warehouse space in Stevenage is high. At the time the applicant's report was prepared, seven industrial and warehouse properties were available, of which five were under offer. The report also states that ten separate organisations were actively seeking up to 12,000m² of industrial and warehouse space at that time.
- 7.2.11 The report goes on to state that the constrained supply of warehouse and industrial space in Stevenage has caused businesses looking to expand to seek that space elsewhere. It lists Zeus Packaging (9,060m²) and Airbus (930m² to 1400m²) as recent examples.
- 7.2.12 Therefore, the available evidence points to a need for additional industrial and warehouse space within the Borough. The provision of such space should then be seen as a benefit to the proposal, both in terms of the NPPF objective of supporting economic growth and the Local Plan objective of remodelling Gunnels Wood to meet modern requirements and provide a high quality and attractive business destination. This carries significant weight in favour of the proposal.

7.3 Design and Visual Amenities

¹ The plot ratio is the amount of floor space provided as a proportion of the total site area.

- 7.3.1 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF 2021 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.
- 7.3.2 Paragraph 134 goes on to say that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:
- development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
 - outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.
- 7.3.3 Policy SP8 of the Local Plan requires new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability. Policy GD1 generally requires all forms of development to meet a high standard of design which includes form of built development, elevational treatment and materials along with how the development would integrate with the urban fabric, its relationship between buildings, landscape design and relevant aspects of sustainable design.
- 7.3.4 The National Design Guide (2019) which was published by National Government is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It sets out that Buildings are an important component of places and proposals for built development are a focus of the development management system. However, good design involves careful attention to other important components of places. These include:
- the context for places and buildings;
 - hard and soft landscape;
 - technical infrastructure – transport, utilities, services such as drainage; and
 - social infrastructure – social, commercial, leisure uses and activities.
- 7.3.5 A well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including:
- the layout;
 - the form and scale of buildings;
 - their appearance;
 - landscape;
 - materials; and
 - their detailing.
- 7.3.6 The Guide further iterates that all developments are made up of these components put together in a particular way. As such, the choices made in the design process contribute towards achieving the ten characteristics and shape the character of a place. For reference, these ten characteristics are as follows:
- Context – enhances the surroundings;
 - Identity – attractive and distinctive;
 - Built form – a coherent pattern of built form;

- Movement – accessible and easy to move around;
- Nature – enhanced and optimised;
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive;
- Uses – mixed and integrated;
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable;
- Resources – efficient and resilient;
- Lifespan – made to last.

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

7.3.8 In addition to the above general policies and guidance, Policy EC5 of the Local Plan 2019 sets out particular requirements for sites with frontages along certain roads in the Gunnels Wood Employment Area. It states that planning permission for the (re-)development of sites with a frontage along one or more these roads will be granted where:

- Proposals face directly onto the identified road(s) and provide active frontages and natural surveillance;
- Buildings are not set back significantly from the identified road(s);
- Car parking and service areas are located away from the street frontage of the identified road(s); and
- On corner plots, where these roads intersect, schemes incorporate landmark architecture and gateway features wherever this would be compatible with the proposed use(s).

7.3.9 The area surrounding the site is distinctly commercial but otherwise lacks a cohesive character, with buildings being of a broad range of ages, styles and finishes, with inactive frontages and set well back from the street. Gunnels Wood Road itself contributes to this issue, as its broad carriageway and street furniture dominates the area, forming a significant barrier between buildings on its north-eastern and south-western sides.

7.3.10 The subtext to Policy EC5 underlines this issue, noting that Gunnels Wood currently contains very few businesses that face directly onto the street, while some have large parking areas located at their frontage and buildings are generally set back from the road, giving a lack of definition and activity. It goes on to say that there is generally a poor sense of arrival into the area and that this is evident along many of the key routes within the employment area. Blank facades and buildings set back from the street provide a passive and uninviting street scene.

7.3.11 The existing buildings on the site are the product of a 1950's factory development and incremental extensions from then until the mid-1990's. While they are in relatively good condition considering their age, they are not of any particular architectural merit, nor do they make an especially positive contribution to the character of the area. For these reasons, it is considered that their demolition would not have any adverse impact on visual amenities.

7.3.12 The proposed development would involve the construction of four warehouse-style buildings, arranged around central access, parking and manoeuvring areas. They would be finished in a mixture of metal and composite cladding (predominantly grey in colour but with blue detailing) and they would be topped by metal profiled dual pitched roofs with the eaves set at a little over 9m above ground level, rising to a ridge at approximately 13m. They would therefore appear as relatively typical industrial buildings in terms of scale, form and materials and this is considered to be an appropriate response to the character and function of the area. It is also considered that they would sit comfortably amidst surrounding buildings, falling between the heights of the Airbus building to the north and the VIAMI building to the south, once the fall in land levels to the south-east is taken into account.

- 7.3.13 In terms of layout, it is noted that Unit 1 would be set back from Gunnels Wood Road, which Policy EC5 seeks to avoid. However, this set back would ensure a consistent building line with the Airbus site to the north and is also necessary to ensure safe access for OGVs, as well as adequate parking and manoeuvring spaces. Unit 2 would be set much further forward, in close proximity to the front boundary of the site, which is consistent with the aims of Policy EC5. In both cases, the buildings would feature a large amount of glazing on their south-western elevations (fronting Gunnels Wood Road), which would ensure an active frontage.
- 7.3.14 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would be high quality, sympathetic to surrounding development and would make a positive contribution to the vibrancy of the Gunnels Wood Employment Area. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with policies SP8, GD1 and EC5 of the Local Plan 2019.

7.4 Neighbouring Amenities

- 7.4.1 Policy FP7 of the Local Plan requires all development proposals to minimise, and where possible, reduce air, water, light and noise pollution. Planning permission will be granted when it can be demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable impacts on general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider area.
- 7.4.2 The application site is located in the established Gunnels Wood Employment Area and is bounded by the Airbus site to the north, the leisure park to the east, the VIAVI site to the south, and Gunnels Wood Road to the west. Having regard to this, as well as the nature of the proposed uses and the scale and layout of the proposed buildings, it is considered that the proposed development would not have any material adverse impact on the operations of neighbouring businesses.
- 7.4.3 In terms of residential amenities, it is considered that the proposed development would not have any material impact, since there are no residential buildings in the vicinity of the site (the nearest is approximately 350m away). For the same reason, a noise impact assessment is not considered to be necessary in this instance.
- 7.4.4 Notwithstanding the above, it is recommended that the hours of construction work be restricted in order to safeguard the working conditions at neighbouring sites whilst works are ongoing. This would be achieved by the imposition of a suitably worded condition.

7.5 Parking

- 7.5.1 Car Parking
- 7.5.2 Policy IT5 of the Local Plan requires development proposals to comply with the parking standards set out in the Stevenage Borough Council Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD 2020. According to these standards, one car parking space should be provided per 50m² gfa of general industry (Class B2), per 75m² gfa of storage and distribution (Class B8), per 30m² gfa of offices (Class E(g)(i)), and per 35m² gfa of research and development or light industry (Classes E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii)). This would mean the proposed development providing approximately 220 car parking spaces.
- 7.5.3 However, the site is located within Non-Residential Accessibility Zone 1, which reflects the fact that the site has good access to public transport services. In this zone, the requirement for car parking can be reduced to between 0% and 25% of the usual figure, in the interests of sustainability (i.e. making better use of public transport). The proposed development could therefore provide between zero and 55 car parking spaces.

- 7.5.4 The development would in fact provide 69 spaces, which is slightly above the range set out above. However, it is a significant reduction from the 161 spaces currently on the site and should be seen as an overall benefit. Although there could be additional benefits in limiting the amount of car parking on the site further, the level proposed is considered to be appropriate, noting that surrounding roads have limited capacity to accommodate any overspill car parking.
- 7.5.5 Disabled Parking
- 7.5.6 The Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD requires 5% of all car parking spaces to be provided for disabled motorists. In this case, that would amount to four spaces.
- 7.5.7 The proposal would provide a total of five disabled car parking spaces, which is one more than is required. These would be distributed evenly throughout the individual parking courts for the proposed units (with Unit 1 benefiting from two spaces and Units 2, 3 and 4 benefiting from one space each) and located within 10m of the main pedestrian entrance to each building. The local highway authority has also confirmed that the spaces are of a sufficient size to accommodate safe vehicle movements into and out of each bay.
- 7.5.8 Electric Vehicle Charging Points
- 7.5.9 The Council is committed to supporting the transition to electric vehicles. Accordingly, development proposals are expected to adhere to the following principles:
- All new car parking should be designed to fulfill a Passive Electrical Vehicle Charging Point standard. This will mean that the underlying infrastructure is provided for connection to the electricity network but it will need to be activated through the installation of a charge point to be used in the future as technologies evolve and uptake increases.
 - The blend of access to charging points provided within new developments (i.e. public, restricted access, open access, shared) should be determined having regard to a travel plan.
 - A minimum of 20% of new parking on a site should have access to an active EV charging point.
 - A flexible approach to the requirement for speed of charging will be taken due to the pace of change of this technology. Ultra-fast charging points will become expected at short term, non-residential parking spaces as technology improves to make the use of electric vehicles more efficient.
- 7.5.10 The proposed development would provide 20% of spaces with active charging points from the outset, with the underlying infrastructure provided for all other spaces to meet a passive charging point standard. This is in line with the requirements of the SPD.
- 7.5.11 Motorcycle Parking
- 7.5.12 The Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD requires applicants to allow for around 5% of the total stock of publicly accessible vehicle parking spaces to be for motorcycle use. The proposed development would provide four motorcycle parking spaces, which equates to a little over 5% of the total number of parking spaces.
- 7.5.13 Cycle Parking
- 7.5.14 The standard for cycle parking is for one long-term space to be provided per 500m² gfa and one short-term space to be provided per 1000m² gfa. This applies to all of the proposed uses and results in a requirement for a total of 13 long-stay spaces and 7 short-stay spaces.

7.5.15 The submitted site layout shows the provision of 18 Sheffield stands, which would accommodate two cycles each. The proposed number of cycle parking spaces is therefore well above the required level. Additionally, the local highway authority has advised that these spaces would be sufficiently safe and secure.

7.5.16 Overall

7.5.17 Having regard to the above, the proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD in terms of the overall level of car parking, facilities for disabled motorists, electric vehicle charging points, motorcycle parking, and cycle parking. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy IT5 of the Local Plan 2019, which requires development proposals to comply with the SPD. It is recommended that conditions be imposed on any grant of planning permission to secure the provision of the various parking spaces and electric vehicle charging infrastructure prior to occupation of the site.

7.6 Highway Safety

7.6.1 Policy IT4 of the Local Plan 2019 states that planning permission will be granted where development would not have an adverse impact on highway safety.

7.6.2 The proposed development would retain the two existing accesses leading off Gunnels Wood Road in an in/out arrangement. The local highway authority has confirmed that these are of a sufficient width to accommodate OGVs and that the southern access benefits from a sufficient visibility splay to ensure safe egress. The proposed access arrangements are therefore considered to be acceptable.

7.6.3 In terms of trip generation, it is noted that the proposed general industry and light industry uses would generate a greater number of vehicle movements than the existing use. Additionally, the proposed storage and distribution use would generate a greater number of OGV movements in particular. However, the local highway authority is satisfied that these additional vehicle movements will not have a material impact on the highway network, noting that the site would provide parking for nine OGVs at any one time.

7.6.4 Having regard to these considerations, as well as the conclusions reached in the previous section regarding the level of car parking (and the consequent low likelihood of overspill car parking), it is considered that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on highway safety. It follows that the proposal is in accordance with Policy IT4 of the Local Plan 2019.

7.7 Other Transport Considerations

7.7.1 The application is supported by a Framework Travel Plan, which has been assessed by HCC Environment and Transport. They highlight a number of issues in their response but do not raise any fundamental objections. Accordingly, it is considered appropriate for these issues to be addressed in a detailed travel plan, which would be secured by condition.

7.7.2 Once approved, the detailed travel plan would be monitored by HCC, with the cost covered by the developer in the form of a sum of £1,200 per annum for a period of five years from the date of the first occupation of any unit on the site. This would be secured by a S106 agreement.

7.8 Flood Risk and Drainage

7.8.1 Policy FP2 of the Local Plan requires applications for major development in Flood Zone 1 to be accompanied by an appropriate flood risk assessment. Given that the site has an area of

more than one hectare, a flood risk assessment is required in this case and one has been submitted.

7.8.2 The flood risk assessment must demonstrate, as a minimum:

- An estimate of how much surface water runoff the development will generate;
- Details of existing methods for managing surface water runoff, e.g. drainage to a sewer; and
- Plans for managing surface water and for making sure there is no increase in the volume of surface water and rate of surface water runoff.

7.8.3 Policy FP2 also requires that the use of SuDS is maximised on site so as not to increase flood risk and to reduce flood risk wherever possible. As a major development involving SuDS, HCC as Lead Local Flood Authority is a statutory consultee for the current application.

7.8.4 However, the LLFA have resourcing and workload issues, such that they are not responding to any new consultation requests. As a result, the Council have employed the drainage consultant Wood Group to advise them on matters covered by the LLFA for major developments.

7.8.5 The full consultation response from Wood Group was not available at the time of drafting the report. This response, together with any recommended conditions, will be published as an update in advance of the Committee meeting.

7.9 Contamination

7.9.1 Policy FP5 of the Local Plan requires development proposals to be supported by an appropriate preliminary risk assessment (PRA), demonstrating that any necessary remediation and subsequent development poses no risk to the population, environment or groundwater bodies.

7.9.2 The application site has been in use as a factory or for other industrial purposes since the early 1960's and the land therefore has the potential to be contaminated. It is also located within the outer source protection zone for the Broomin Green Pumping Station, which is a public water supply comprising a number of chalk abstraction boreholes. Given that the proposed uses are industrial or commercial in nature (and therefore not especially sensitive to land contamination), the main risk associated with the development is the mobilisation of contaminants to a greater depth, which could impact the chalk aquifer underlying the site.

7.9.3 The application is accompanied by a PRA, which identifies a need for site-specific phase one and phase two geo-technical and geo-environmental ground investigations to establish the extent of contamination across the site. It is understood that work on these reports is already underway.

7.9.4 The Council's Environmental Health officers have been consulted on the application and raise no objection to the development on grounds of contamination. Likewise, neither Affinity Water (the operator of the Broomin Green Pumping Station) nor Thames Water (the statutory undertaker for waste water for the site) object to the application. However, they have advised that the construction works should be carried out in accordance with relevant British Standards, that any works involving excavations below the chalk groundwater table (e.g. piling) should ideally be avoided, and that petrol/oil interceptors be installed in all vehicle parking, washing and repair facilities on the site.

7.9.5 In light of the above, it is recommended that the following conditions be imposed on any grant of planning permission, to cover the following:

- Submission and approval of the outstanding phase one and phase two reports prior to commencement of the development
- Submission and approval of a remediation strategy (if identified as necessary) prior to the commencement of the development
- Submission and approval of a method statement (if works below the chalk groundwater table are deemed unavoidable) prior to commencement of the relevant works
- Provision of petrol/oil interceptors in all vehicle facilities

7.9.6 Subject to the above conditions, it is considered that the development would not have any unacceptable adverse impacts as a result of land or groundwater contamination. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy FP5 of the Local Plan 2019.

7.10 Trees and Landscaping

7.10.1 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF is clear that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments, that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.

7.10.2 Policy NH5 of the Local Plan states that development proposals will be expected to protect and retain individual trees within development sites and should include new planting where appropriate.

7.10.3 The proposed development would involve the removal of 26 trees from the site, which are located towards the southern boundary of the site. The Council's Arboriculture and Conservation Manager has not raised any objection to these removals.

7.10.4 Concerns have instead been raised about disturbance of ground within the root protection area of an off-site oak tree, which is located adjacent to the southern entrance to the site leading off Gunnels Wood Road. To compensate for this disturbance, the Arboriculture and Conservation Manager has suggested a 25% crown reduction to this tree prior to commencement of the building works.

7.11.5 However, the tree is located on land that is not controlled by the applicant and a condition requiring works on that land would be unreasonable. Instead, it is recommended that a tree protection plan condition be imposed, which would leave open the possibility of mitigation being carried out on the applicant's land.

7.11.6 In terms of replacement planting, the submitted landscaping and planting plan proposes the planting of 52 new trees (i.e. a two-for-one replacement of felled trees) and a significant number of shrubs, with the effect that almost the entire eastern, southern and western boundaries of the site would be lined with trees and hedges. It is considered that this would soften the visual impact of the development when approaching from the south and serve to limit the overall presence of hardstanding in the Gunnels Wood Road street scene. For these reasons, it is considered that the impact of the proposed development on trees and landscaping would be acceptable. It follows that the proposal is in accordance with Policy NH5 of the Local Plan 2019.

7.11 Climate Change

7.11.1 Policy FP1 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for developments that can incorporate measures to address adaptation to climate change. New development, including building extensions, refurbishments and conversions will be encouraged to include measures such as:

- Ways to ensure development is resilient to likely future 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; and
- Using or producing renewable or low carbon energy from a local source.

7.11.2 The application is accompanied by an energy strategy, which sets out the proposed methods of heating, cooling and powering the development. It also contains an assessment of the associated CO₂ emissions, with regard to Part L of the Building Regulations 2013 and the Energy Hierarchy.

7.11.3 According to the Energy Hierarchy, the first priority should be to reduce emissions through passive design measures (e.g. by incorporating high levels of insulation in the fabric of buildings). Following this, the priority should be to exploit any local energy resources (e.g. secondary heat / district heating networks) and to supply energy efficiently and cleanly. Finally, opportunities to use renewable energy technology on-site should then be maximised.

7.11.4 The submitted energy strategy proposes the use of high performance glazing and building fabric, low energy lighting and automatic lighting controls to improve the energy efficiency of the development. These measures alone would result in CO₂ emissions 23.5% below the requirements of the Building Regulations.

7.11.5 Local energy resources are then considered, in the form of connection to a district energy network, provision of a decentralised energy centre, combined heat and power, and combined cooling heat and power. These were all considered either impractical or unviable because of the nature of the proposed uses, issues with distributing power fairly to the various elements of the scheme, or a lack of necessary local infrastructure.

7.11.6 The development would, however, incorporate on-site renewable energy technology, in the form of photovoltaic panels atop the roofs of units 2, 3 and 4, as well as air source heat pumps to meet the heating and cooling demands of all four units. This would result in all of the proposed units achieving EPC A and BREEAM “Excellent” ratings.

7.11.7 Taking the above into account, the proposed development would, overall, emit 40.15% less CO₂ than would be permissible under the Building Regulations, which equates to a saving of approximately 68 tonnes of CO₂ per year. It is therefore considered that the development would incorporate satisfactory measures to adapt to climate change, in accordance with Policy FP1 of the Local Plan 2019. It is recommended that conditions requiring adherence to the submitted energy strategy be imposed on any grant of planning permission.

7.12 Crime Prevention

7.12.1 Policy GD1 of the Local Plan requires developments to create safe environments that design out crime. Hertfordshire Constabulary’s Crime Prevention Design Officer has been consulted on the application and does not raise any objections, noting that the proposed layout would not allow a desire path to form between the site and the adjacent leisure park. However, the applicant is strongly encouraged to seek Secured by Design accreditation and an informative is recommended to this effect.

7.13 Developer Obligations and CIL

7.13.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule on 1 April 2020. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location and floor space of a development, in line with the rates shown in the table below.

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

- 7.13.2 The proposed development would be liable for CIL but would fall into the “all other development”, which is zero rated. Therefore, no CIL payment would be required.
- 7.13.3 However, the developer would have bespoke obligations, to be secured by a S106 agreement between the landowner, the Council, and Hertfordshire County Council.
- 7.13.3 The first of these obligations would be to pay a sum of £1,200 per annum for a period of five years from the date of the first occupation of any unit on the site, to cover travel plan monitoring work by Hertfordshire County Council.
- 7.13.4 The second obligation would be to attempt to employ Stevenage residents in 5% to 10% of on-site construction jobs and to pay a one-off sum of £4,000 per job shortfall.
- 7.13.5 The third and final obligation would be to attempt to employ one Stevenage resident or student as an apprentice for every ten on-site construction jobs (up to a maximum of ten apprenticeships) and to pay of one-off sum of £2,250/£1,250 per placement.
- 7.13.6 The applicant has agreed to these obligations and the process of drafting the requisite S106 agreement is ongoing. It is recommended that any resolution to grant planning permission be subject to the completion of this agreement.

7.14 Biodiversity

- 7.14.1 The NPPF and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance requires the Council to achieve measurable net gains in biodiversity at development sites across the Borough. To achieve a biodiversity net gain, a development must deliver a minimum of 10% net gain post development, when compared with the pre-development baseline. The Council’s recently adopted Biodiversity SPD (2021) requires all major and minor applications other than the following exemptions currently suggested by the Government to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity:
- i. Permitted development;
 - ii. Householder development, including extensions;
 - iii. Nationally significant infrastructure, which falls within scope of the Planning Act 2008;
 - iv. Some brownfield sites with marginal viability and substantial constraints. It is expected that full details to be set out in secondary legislation, but considerations are likely to include where sites contain a high proportion of derelict land and buildings and only a small percentage of the site is undeveloped, land values are significantly lower than average, and the site does not contain any protected habitats; and
 - v. Developments that would not result in measurable loss or degradation of habitat, for instance change of use or alterations to buildings
- 7.14.2 In this case, the application site, which is a brownfield site, is almost entirely developed, with only small areas of amenity grass and limited tree cover. The trees provide some limited

opportunities for foraging and nest building for bird species but are not of any significant ecological value. The site does not contain any protected habitats, nor is it within close proximity to any statutory or non-statutory designated conservation sites.

7.14.3 In light of the above, the proposal is considered to fall within exemption (iv) and it is not necessary to demonstrate a measurable net gain in biodiversity in this instance. Nonetheless, it is clear that the proposal would result in a significant increase in tree and shrub cover across the site, which would be a modest benefit in ecological terms.

7.15.4 The submitted preliminary ecological appraisal did not find any evidence of protected species on the site, other than common species of wild birds (all of which are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981). It recommends a series of precautionary measures to limit disturbance to any present species and these measures would be secured by condition. Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust were consulted on the application and had no comments to make.

7.25 Other Matters

Air Quality

7.15.1 Policy FP7 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that all development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce air, water, light and noise pollution. Looking at air quality and air pollution specifically, the development is not located within or in close proximity to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Therefore it was not necessary for the application to be supported by an air quality assessment. It is noted that there would be activities which will affect local air quality during demolition of the existing building and construction of the development. These include dust emissions and exhaust emissions from plant, machinery and construction traffic.

7.15.2 In order to mitigate the construction phase, details of control of dust emissions shall be approved as part of the Construction Management Plan (CMP) to be secured by condition. The Council's Environmental Health Section has confirmed that the operational aspect of the development would not have a detrimental impact in terms of air quality.

External lighting

7.15.3 In terms of light pollution, Policy FP7: Pollution of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires all development proposal should minimise and, where possible, reduce light pollution. Applications for development where pollution is suspected must contain sufficient information for the application to make a full assessment on impacts. Planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have unacceptable impacts on:

- a. the natural environment, general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider area which includes light pollution;
- b. health and safety of the public; and
- c. The compliance with statutory environmental quality standards.

7.15.4 The application is supported by an external lighting assessment, which shows that there would be some light spillage beyond the site boundaries, in particular in the areas adjacent to the proposed parking courts. However, this would be at a very low level of illuminance (typically 1-5 lux). The lighting scheme has also been designed such that there would be no UV output and no upward output, both of which can have ecological impacts.

7.15.5 Neither Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust nor Environmental Health have raised any objection to the application on grounds of external lighting. It is therefore recommended that the presented external lighting scheme be secured by condition, with any future additions or alterations to the scheme to be subject to approval by the Council.

Fire Safety

- 7.15.6 Fire safety is a material consideration. However, since the application does not propose any dwellings, educational facilities or tall buildings, a fire safety statement is not required in this instance.
- 7.15.7 Nevertheless, the Herts Fire and Rescue Water Officer was consulted on the application. They advised that the existing hydrant would not provide sufficient coverage for the furthest units and recommends the installation of an additional hydrant. Given the industrial use of the site, it is recommended that a private hydrant be secured by condition.

Human Rights and Equalities

- 7.15.8 Consideration has been given to Articles 1 and 8 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is not considered that the decision would result in a violation of any person's rights under the Convention.
- 7.15.9 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking. Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equalities Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers
- 7.15.10 The Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.15.11 The proposal would provide disabled parking positioned in close proximity to each of the buildings, together with level access. Aside from this, it is considered that the proposed development would not impact persons with any of the protected characteristics listed under the Equalities Act.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The proposed development would involve the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the construction of a series of new warehouse-style buildings in a low density configuration to be used flexibly for general industry, light industry, storage and distribution, research and development, and offices. This is at odds with the vision for the Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone set out in Policy EC2b of the Local Plan 2019 and its supporting text, which seek high density developments of offices and research and development uses that reflect the accessibility of the area and the nearby amenities in Stevenage Town Centre.
- 8.2 However, the current market conditions for commercial property in the Borough are such that the likelihood of a fully policy compliant scheme coming forward in the near future is considered to be low. Consequently, while the proposal is contrary to Policy EC2b, only moderate weight is attached to this harm.
- 8.3 The development has the potential to provide a number of significant benefits, chief among them a long-term uplift in the number of jobs supported by the site. At present, the site has a potential yield of approximately 115 employees, although due to the condition of the

buildings, this is unlikely to be realised (currently there are only 30 employees working at the site). The proposal, if implemented, would see this yield increase to approximately 135 employees.

- 8.4 It would also provide short-term opportunities in the form of construction work. The applicant has agreed to attempt to fill 5% to 10% of these jobs with Stevenage residents, alongside providing up to ten apprenticeship opportunities.
- 8.5 Furthermore, the supply of industrial and warehouse space within the Borough is constrained, whilst demand is high. The proposed development would help to meet this need, albeit on a somewhat limited scale.
- 8.6 Finally, the existing development on the site is now many decades old and would benefit from investment in terms of improving its appearance and its adaptability to climate change. The proposed development would also significantly reduce the carbon dioxide emissions arising from the site.
- 8.7 Taking all of the above into account, it is considered that the benefits of the scheme would outweigh the adverse impacts of the conflict with policy EC2b, having regard to the emphasis the Local Plan as a whole places on employment and sustainability. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the development plan and in the absence of any other material considerations indicating that permission should be refused, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions and the transfer of the signed S106 legal agreement which has secured and/or provides:
- Travel Plan Monitoring
 - Employment and Apprenticeship Opportunities
- 9.2 With delegated powers be given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee to negotiate and secure the financial and non-financial obligations detailed above (including triggers where appropriate) as part of the Section 106 Agreement in order to mitigate the developments impact on infrastructure as well as secure the planning benefits which this scheme seeks to deliver. In addition, the imposition of suitable safeguarding conditions, with authority given to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee, to amend or add to the suggested draft conditions set out in this report, prior to the decision notice being issued, where such amendments or additions would be legally sound and most effectively deliver the development that the Planning Committee has resolved to approve.

Conditions

General

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 31366/PL/200; 31366/PL/201 A; 31366/PL/202; 31366/PL/203; 31366/PL/204; 31366/PL/205; 31366/PL/206; 31366/PL/207; 31366/PL/208; 31366/PL/209; 31366/PL/210; 31366/PL/211; 31366/PL/212; 31366/PL/213; KMC18081 / 001.

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. Notwithstanding Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) and Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), the development to which this permission relates shall be used for purposes falling within Classes E(g)(i), E(g)(ii), E(g)(iii), B2 and B8 of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended) (or within any provision equivalent to those Classes in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

REASON:- To prevent the site being used for purposes that would have a detrimental impact on the economic function of the area.

4. No site clearance or construction work relating to this permission shall be carried out except between the hours of 0730 and 1800 on Mondays to Fridays and between the hours of 0800 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.

5. No external lighting shall be installed on the site other than in accordance with External Lighting Assessment dated November 2021 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON:- In order to protect the amenities and operations of neighbouring properties, to ensure any external lighting does not prejudice highway safety and in the interests of minimising light pollution.

6. 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 and where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme must be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme a verification report must be 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 and to ensure that the development does not contribute to unacceptable concentrations of pollution posing a risk to public water supply from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site and to prevent deterioration of groundwater and/or surface water by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is completed.

7. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the recommendations set out in Sections 6.17 and 6.20 of Preliminary Ecological Appraisal dated December 2021 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON:- In the interests of the protection of important species and to promote biodiversity.

Prior to Commencement

8. No development shall take place (including site clearance) until a construction management plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved plan. The construction management plan shall include details of the following:
- a) Construction vehicle numbers, type, routing;
 - b) Access arrangements to site;
 - c) Traffic and pedestrian management requirements;
 - d) Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading / unloading and turning areas);
 - e) Siting and details of wheel washing facilities;
 - f) Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway;
 - g) Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times;
 - h) Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities;
 - i) Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway;
 - j) Where works cannot be contained wholly within the site, a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway including extent of hoarding, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements;
 - k) A Site Waste Management Plan including mechanisms to deal with environmental impacts such as air quality and dust control measures, noise and vibration restriction measures, light and odour and predicted and latterly actual waste arisings and how this is to be managed and where it is sent to.
 - l) Dust control measures during demolition and construction from plant and machinery, and vehicles.

REASON:- In order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way, in the interests of amenities of neighbouring properties, to ensure suitable, safe and satisfactory planning and development, in order to reduce the level of waste generated during groundworks and construction phases of development and to recycle all waste materials where possible.

9. No development shall take place (including site clearance) until a tree protection plan, which provides for the protection of the off-site oak tree located adjacent to the southern vehicular access to the site, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved plan.

REASON:- To protect trees worthy of retention.

10. No development shall take place (including site clearance) until the full site-specific phase 1 & 2 Geo-technical and Geo-environment ground investigations, as recommended by Section 9 of Land Quality Assessment reference 12937/EB/LQA, and a risk assessment, identifying both the aquifer and the local abstraction points as potential receptors of contamination, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To mitigate the risk of displacing any shallow contamination to a greater depth and to prevent and/or minimise any potential migration of pollutants to a public water supply abstraction.

11. Should the ground investigations and/or risk assessment as set out in the condition above reveal that remediation is necessary, a remediation scheme must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Once the approved remediation scheme has been implemented, a verification report must be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Both of these steps must be carried out prior to commencement of the development (including site clearance).

REASON:- To mitigate the risk of displacing any shallow contamination to a greater depth and to prevent and/or minimise any potential migration of pollutants to a public water supply abstraction.

12. If works below the chalk groundwater table are to be carried out, a method statement, detailing the type of work (e.g. piling) to be undertaken and their depth, including mitigation measures (e.g. appropriate piling design) to prevent and/or minimise any potential migration of pollutants to public water supply, must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works must then be undertaken in accordance with the terms of the approved method statement.

Prior to Work above Slab Level

13. 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 and hard landscaping of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and permanently retained as such thereafter.

REASON:- To ensure the development has a high quality appearance.

14. No development shall take place above slab level until details of the specification and siting of the low and zero carbon technologies to be provided in accordance with Section 6.09 of Energy Assessment dated November 2021 have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details must demonstrate that the development will meet the regulated carbon dioxide savings detailed in Section 8.00 of that same report. The approved technologies shall then be installed in full prior to beneficial occupation of the development and permanently retained as such thereafter.

REASON:- To ensure the development is adaptable to climate change through provision of energy efficiency measures and to ensure these technologies have an acceptable appearance within the development.

15. No development shall take place above slab level until details of the refuse stores as shown on the approved plans have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved refuse stores shall then be installed in full prior to beneficial occupation of the development and permanently retained as such thereafter.

REASON:- To ensure the proper disposal of waste for the lifetime of the development

16. No development shall take place above slab level until details of the cycle parking stands as shown on the approved plans have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved cycle stands shall then be installed in full prior to beneficial occupation of the development and permanently retained as such thereafter.

REASON:- To ensure adequate secure and covered cycle parking provision is available at all times to promote sustainable modes of transport.

17. No development shall take place above slab level until details of the specification and siting of the active electric vehicle charging points (EVCP) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved EVCPs shall be installed in full prior to beneficial occupation of the development and permanently retained as such thereafter.

REASON:- To ensure adequate provision of active EVCPs within in the development and for all types of drivers is available at all times to promote sustainable modes of transport.

18. No development shall take place above slab level until a scheme for the provision of petrol/oil interceptors in all vehicle parking and servicing areas within the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall then be implemented prior to beneficial occupation of the development and permanently retained thereafter.

REASON:- To mitigate the risk of pollutants entering the public water supply.

19. No above ground works shall take place until a scheme for the provision of adequate water supplies and fire hydrants, necessary for firefighting purposes at the site, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be occupied until the scheme has been implemented in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure adequate water infrastructure provision is made on site for the local fire service to discharge its statutory firefighting duties

Prior to Occupation/Completion

20. Prior to occupation of the development an updated Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No part of the development shall be occupied until implementation of the approved Travel Plan. Those parts of the approved Travel Plan that are identified therein as being capable of implementation after occupation shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable contained therein and shall continue to be implemented as long as any part of the development is occupied.

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

21. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted a visibility splay shall be provided in full accordance with the details indicated on the approved drawing number 18081_001 Rev A. The splay shall thereafter be retained at all times free from any obstruction between 600mm and 2m above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.

REASON:- To ensure that the level of visibility for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is satisfactory in the interests of highway safety.

22. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted the proposed access arrangements, on-site car, motorcycle and cycle parking, servicing, loading, and turning areas shall be implemented in accordance with the approved drawing number 31366/PL/201 A and retained thereafter available for that specific use.

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

23. All planting and other soft landscaping as shown on drawing numbers 827.10.01, 827.19.01 and 827.29.01 shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, or the completion of the approved development, whichever is the sooner.

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

Post Occupation/Completion

24. 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.

25. No tree shown on the 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.

Informatives

1. The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence. Further information is available via the County Council website at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx>

or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

2. It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the County Council website at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx>

or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

3. It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit compost, dung or other material for dressing land, or any rubbish on a made up carriageway, or any or other debris on a highway to the interruption of any highway user. Section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible.

Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development and use thereafter are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available by telephoning 0300 1234047.

4. The proposed development should achieve Secured by Design (SBD) accreditation in order for it to comply with current Building Regulations. The Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor can be contracted by telephone on 01707 355227

Pro-active Statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage and during the determination process which lead to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 38) 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. The Stevenage Local Plan 2011-2031.
4. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (2020); Developer Contributions SPD (2021); The impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (2020).
5. Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan LTP4 2018-2031
6. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 and the National Planning Practice Guidance.
7. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.