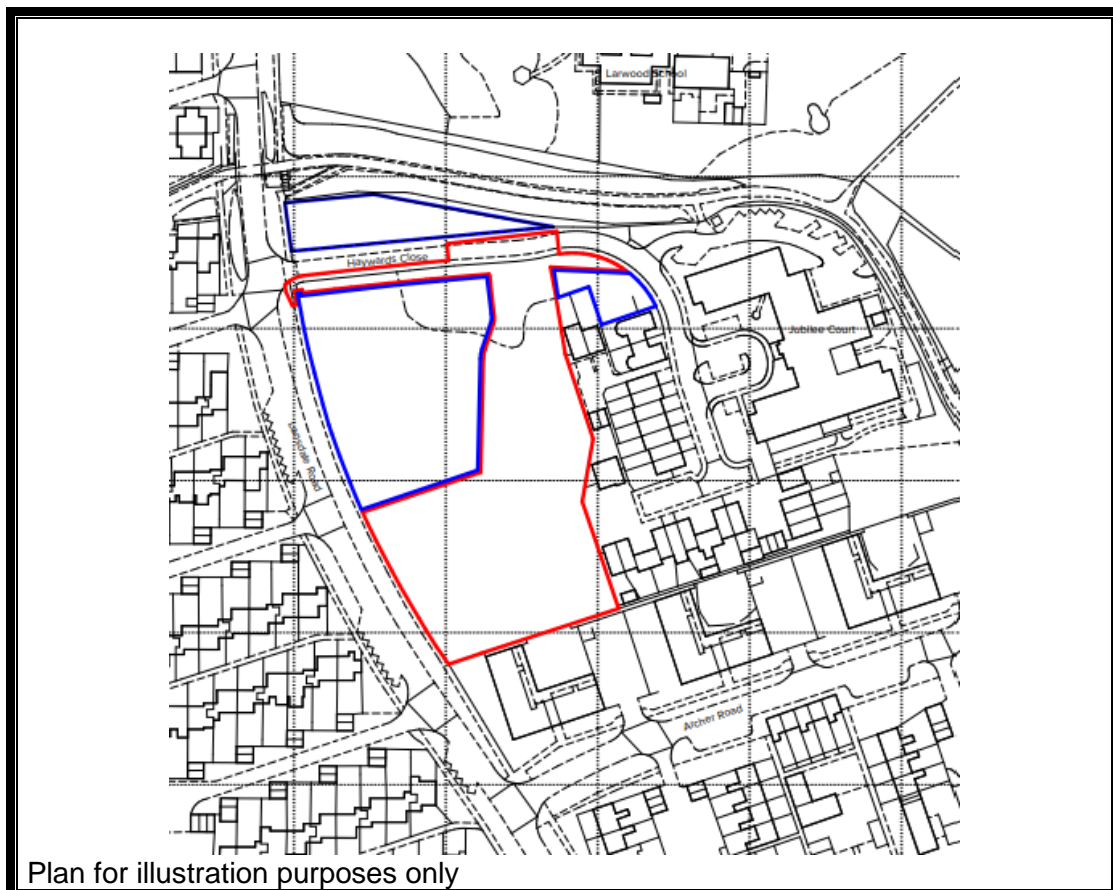


Meeting:	Planning and Development Committee	Agenda Item:
Date:	8 February 2024	
Author:	Ailsa Davis	07702 874529
Lead Officer:	Zayd Al-Jawad	01438 245257
Contact Officer:	Ailsa Davis	07702 874529

Application No :	23/00919/CC
Location :	Former Pin Green Playing Fields, Hayward Close, Stevenage
Proposal :	Full Planning application for an adult day service facility (Class E) including creation of a new vehicular access off Hayward Close, circulation area, car parking, landscaping and associated development
Drawing Nos.:	21168 Lsi A1 Xx Dr A 1170 S2 P01; 499 Sfl Ex 00 Dr L 06 P10; 1687 Kc Xx Y01revA; 1687 Kc Xx Y01rev0; 21168 Lsi A1 00 Dr A 1300 P02; 21168 Lsi A1 01 Dr A 1310 S2 P01; 21168 Lsi A1 Zz Dr A 1350 S2 P01; 21168 Lsi A1 Zz Dr A 1370 S2 P01; 21168 Lsi A1 Zz Dr A 1380 S2 P01; 211033 A1 00 Dr C 1000 P3; 21168 Lsi A1 Xx Dr A 1175 S2 P01
Applicant :	Hertfordshire County Council
Date Valid:	5 December 2023
Recommendation :	No objection to the proposed development



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The site comprises the former playing fields of Pin Green Primary School. The site is wholly in the ownership of HCC and is relatively flat, inclining slightly from east to west. The school was closed in 2005 and has since been redeveloped for housing and a care home, with this site marking the residual area that has not yet been developed. The site comprises a plot of mostly open undeveloped grassland, with some trees and hedgerows running along the borders.
- 1.2 A single vehicle width access into the site exists via Hayward Close, which links Lonsdale Road to Jubilee Court and residential properties that abut the eastern boundary. Access to the site is gained by crossing a footpath that abuts the western and northern boundary. There is an existing segregated cycleway running east to west to the north of the site beyond the tree belt. There are no known rights of way across the site.
- 1.3 To the east of the site, the built area of the former school has since been redeveloped as a care home and for housing at Jubilee Court and Hayward Close. Hayward Close is located to the north serving residential properties that abut the eastern boundary of the site. Lonsdale Road abuts the western boundary. Hedgerows demarcate the western boundary and part of the northern and southern boundaries. The eastern boundary is separated by a wooden fence line.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 There is only one relevant planning application for the site that was approved in 2006 and included two further reserved matters planning permissions, but none were implemented and have since lapsed:
- 07/00288/RM – 90 Bedroom Care Home with associated parking. Reserved matters application pursuant to Outline Permission 05/00578/OP.
 - 06/00522/RM – Residential development comprising 12 no. three bedroom and 11 no. four bedroom houses. Application for Reserved Matters consent pursuant to Outline Permission reference 05/00578/OP.
 - 05/00578/OP - Application for outline planning permission for redevelopment of part of former school site for an elderly persons care home and residential development. Granted 21st February 2006.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 To provide a Council response to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on planning reference PL/0375/23 (Stevenage Borough Council Reference:- 23/00919/CC) which is for the following proposed development:-

Full Planning application for an adult day service facility (Class E) including creation of a new vehicular access off Hayward Close, circulation area, car parking, landscaping and associated development

- 3.2 The proposal is for the development of the site for the provision of a day service facility, with the main building located in the southern half of the site. The building itself would be single storey in height and incorporate a garden area for service users as well as landscaping, parking and other associated development. Access would be created from the north onto Hayward Close. The proposals would include improvement/widening works to the highway that would include a widened road and pedestrian pathway.
- 3.3 This application comes before the Planning and Development Committee as it is a consultation from Hertfordshire County Council for a Minor Development in Stevenage.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 Hertfordshire County Council as the Local Planning Authority will have undertaken the necessary consultation with local residents. As such, all public representations will be directed to HCC as the determining authority.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 The following section contains summaries of consultation responses. Full copies of the responses are available on the Council's website.

5.2 Council's Environmental Health Section

- 5.2.1 Environmental Health recommends the following conditions are imposed / matters to be considered as part of the decision making process:-

Contaminated Land

- 5.2.2 If during the course of development any contamination is found or suspected, works shall cease and the local planning authority shall be informed immediately. The development shall not continue until any required remediation as agreed in writing by the local planning authority has been undertaken.

Dust Emissions

- 5.2.3 Dust emissions shall be controlled throughout the construction and demolition phases so as to prevent nuisance to the occupiers of neighbouring premises. The use of screening, damping down and thorough cleaning must be implemented, as well as regular wheel cleaning and monitoring of traffic by banksmen / traffic marshals.

Disposal of Waste

- 5.2.4 I note that there is a paragraph in the CEMP about disposal of waste, the Environmental Health Section would recommend adding no burning of waste to be allowed on site.

Noise

- 5.2.5 No demolition or construction works relating to this permission shall be carried out on any Sunday or Bank Holiday, nor before 07.30 hours or after 18.00 hours on any weekdays, nor on any Saturday before 08.00 hours or after 13.00 hours. In the CEMP it mentions work on Saturday until 14.00 or 15.00 – our local recommendations are that noisy works should cease at 13.00. These times apply to work which is audible at the site boundary. The proximity to adjacent residents must be considered when undertaking noisy work such as piling, which is likely to cause disruption. The mitigation procedures set out in the CEMP must be followed. Communication with local residents around scheduled noisy works is recommended.

5.3 Council's Arboriculture and Conservation Manager

- 5.3.1 No comments received to date.

6. CONSULTATION RESPONSES TO HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

6.1 Sport England

- 6.1.2 Sport England acknowledges that the site is allocated in the adopted Stevenage Local Plan for residential (site allocation policy HO1/6). However, a site-specific requirement of this housing allocation as set out in paragraph 9.9 of the Local Plan is that the loss of sports facilities will need to be mitigated. This requirement was included in the Local Plan by Stevenage Borough Council directly in response to representations on the Local Plan made by Sport England.
- 6.1.3 Sport England also acknowledges that the principle of redeveloping the site for a care home was established by outline planning permission 05/00578/OP that was granted in 2006 by Stevenage Borough Council although this permission was not implemented and has now lapsed. However, in this planning application the loss of playing fields was mitigated through the payment of a financial contribution towards outdoor sports facilities that was secured through a section 106 agreement.
- 6.1.4 When the site was allocated for development in the adopted Local Plan, Sport England made no objection to the principle of developing this site and its retention or direct replacement was not sought. However, mitigation was expected in the form of developer contributions being secured towards the enhancement of existing community playing fields in the local area as this was consistent with Stevenage Borough Council's Playing Pitch Strategy at the time. The current planning application does not propose any mitigation for the loss of the playing fields so is therefore not considered to accord with the site specific requirements for Policy HO1 of the adopted Local Plan. Furthermore, the proposal is not consistent with the approach taken to playing field mitigation in the previous outline planning permission.
- 6.1.5 In conclusion, the proposed development, without playing field mitigation, would not be considered to accord with any of the exceptions to Sport England's playing fields policy or Government policy in paragraph 99 of the NPPF. I can therefore confirm that Sport England would object if the application was approved without any playing field mitigation.

6.2 Thames Water

- 6.2.1 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 guidance under sections 167 and 168 in the National Planning Policy Framework. Where the developer proposes to discharge to a public sewer, prior approval from Thames Water Developer Services will be required. 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.

6.3 Lead Local Flood Authority

- 6.3.1 The strategy proposed to drain the site through permeable paving, rain gardens and an attenuation tank to restrict flows to a maximum of 2 l/s up to and including the 1 in 100 year + 40% climate change storm. It is proposed to discharge to the existing Thames Water surface water sewer under Lonsdale Road. A green roof is also proposed. Evidence of agreement in principle from TWUL has been provided. We are supportive of the proposed strategy however would raise the following concerns.
- 6.3.2 The proposed rain garden and permeable paving are welcomed, and we understand Phase 2 is likely to "convert" the rain garden into additional parking and replaced with permeable paving. This will reduce the amenity and biodiversity provided by the development. As a greenfield site, below-ground attenuation tanks should not be required. We strongly recommend that further consideration is given to the use of above-ground SuDS that can be retained for the lifetime of the development such as tree pits, SuDS planters, swales and small

basins, etc. The green roof is welcomed, there may be scope to revise this as a blue-green roof to provide above-ground attenuation.

6.3.3 We are pleased the access road will be drained via the permeable paving and rain gardens, with a channel drain to capture runoff at the access. We recommend that the pipe run from the channel drain is routed via the rain gardens/permeable paving such that runoff from the access benefits from treatment.

6.4 Affinity Water

6.4.1 We have reviewed the planning application documents and we can confirm that the site is not located within an Environment Agency defined groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ) or close to our abstractions. 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.

6.4.2 If any pollution is found at the site then the appropriate monitoring and remediation methods will need to be undertaken. For any works involving excavations below the chalk groundwater table (for example, piling or the implementation of a geothermal open/closed loop system), 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.

6.4.3 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. 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.

6.4.4 There are potentially water mains running through or near to part of proposed development site. If the development goes ahead as proposed, the applicant/developer will need to get in contact with our Developer Services Team to discuss asset protection or diversionary measures.

7. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

7.1 Background to the Development Plan

7.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Stevenage, the statutory development plan comprises the following documents:

- The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted 2019)
- The Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2011-2026 (adopted 2012)
- The Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011-2026 (adopted 2014)
- The Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016 (adopted 2007)

7.2 National Planning Policy Framework

7.2.1 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2023. This made significant changes to the September 2023 version and revised policy with respect to the following:

- maintaining supply and delivery of housing.
- making effective use of land with the allowance of mansard roof extensions to suitable properties.
- significant uplift in the average density of residential development can be seen as being inappropriate if the built form is out of character.
- strengthening policies around achieving well-designed and beautiful places.
- requirement for councils to prepare Local Design Codes.
- no longer a requirement to review or change Green Belt boundaries when plans are being prepared or updated.
- local planning authorities should now give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic.
- change to policies on Biodiversity.

7.2.2 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.

7.3 Planning Practice Guidance

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

7.4 National Design Guide

7.4.1 The National Design Guide (2021) is Government guidance on the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. It has the same status as the PPG and should similarly be taken into account when determining planning applications.

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

7.5.1 The policies set out below are most relevant in the determination of this application:

- Policy SP1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Policy SP2: Sustainable development in Stevenage
- Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP8: Good design
- Policy SP9: Healthy Communities
- Policy SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution
- Policy HO1/6: Housing Allocations
- Policy HO10: Sheltered and Supported Housing
- Policy IT5: Parking and Access
- Policy IT7: New and Improved Links for Pedestrians and Cyclists
- Policy GD1: High Quality Design
- Policy HC5: New Health, Social and Community Facilities
- Policy FP1: Climate Change
- Policy FP2: Flood Risk in Zone 1
- Policy FP7: Pollution
- Policy NH5: Trees and Woodland

7.6 Supplementary Planning Documents

7.6.1 The following supplementary planning documents are relevant to determining the application:

Stevenage Design Guide SPD (2023)
Council's Parking Standards SPD (2020)
The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (2021)

7.7 Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule

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

8. APPRAISAL

8.1.1 The determining issues in this application relate to the principle of development and land use policy considerations; design and layout of the development; impact on residential amenities; parking provision; highway implications; impact on the environment; trees and landscaping; biodiversity, ecology and protected species and flood risk.

8.1.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

8.2 Land Use Policy Considerations

Principle of Development

8.2.1 The site is allocated within the Local Plan for residential use under Policy HO1/6 for approximately 42 dwellings. The policy states the loss of sports facilities will need to be mitigated. The site is owned by Hertfordshire County Council. Notwithstanding the site allocation, Hertfordshire County Council is proposing an adult day care centre on the southern part of the site to replace the existing facility at Leyden House day centre on Gunnells Wood Road, which is now considered inappropriately located amongst a wider industrial area and no longer fit for purpose. The day service would provide a space for vulnerable adults to socialise, relax and enjoy activities, predominantly for individuals from Stevenage but would also be available to individuals from across the county.

8.2.2 During pre-application meetings with both SBC and HCC, officers were informed that it is currently HCC's intention to develop the remainder of site allocation for a 50-unit extra care housing (ECH) scheme, which would be the subject of a separate future planning application. Whilst the proposed day centre facility would conflict with the housing allocation HO1/6, development for market housing on the site has not been forthcoming. Notwithstanding the development of the day centre service facility, the remainder of the site has been proven to have sufficient space for the delivery of a future housing/extra care scheme and as such, the housing allocation is not considered to be undermined.

8.2.3 Since November 2018, housing delivery has been measured against the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) as set out by the Government planning policy and guidance. The results of the HDT dictate whether a local planning authority should be subject to consequences to help increase their housing delivery. Where an authority's HDT score is less than 95%, the authority should prepare an action plan to assess the causes of under delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years. Where an authority's HDT score is less than 85% of its housing requirement, the Council must incorporate a 20% buffer into its housing supply calculations in line with paragraph 79 of the NPPF. This will be in addition to the preparation

of an Action Plan. Where an authority's score is below 75%, the Council will be subject to the HDT's most severe penalty and must apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11d) of the NPPF. The latest HDT results published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in December 2023 identifies that Stevenage delivered 57% of its housing requirement.

- 8.2.4 Turning to 5-year housing land supply, the Council published an Addendum Report in May 2022. The report set out that the Borough Council could demonstrate a housing supply of 5.91 years (including 20% buffer) for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2027. However, since the Land West of Lytton Way appeal was allowed by the Planning Inspectorate for a development of 576 residential units (Appeal Reference: APP/K1935/W/20/3255692), the Council's Policy Department confirmed the Council at the time of the decision could demonstrate a housing supply of 6.68 years (including 20% buffer).
- 8.2.5 The Council, based on its HDT score is currently subject to the most severe penalty under paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF (2023). For reference, as this policy is now engaged, it means Local Plan policies would be classed as out-of-date. Consequently, Stevenage Borough Council must apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development in its decision making and give great weight towards the need to deliver housing. The Council must also apply a 20% buffer in its 5-year housing supply calculations and it also has to produce an Action Plan in order to boost housing delivery.
- 8.2.6 The Council is now commencing preliminary work into a 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. In addition, it will now prepare an updated Action Plan to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years. Moreover, the Council is also preparing updated statements with respect to 5 year housing land supply given the last monitoring report was published in 2022.
- 8.2.7 Whilst the proposed day centre is not in compliance with the housing allocation, the residual area of the site allocation could accommodate the indicative allocation of 42 dwellings, potentially delivering up to 50 extra care/market residential units as demonstrated during pre-application discussions with the landowner. The planning benefits of a new day centre on this part of the site are also a material consideration in terms of the services it would offer to vulnerable adults within Stevenage and the wider County and replacing an existing facility which is no longer fit for purpose and poorly located. On balance therefore, it is considered the partial use of the site as a day centre would be acceptable and would not compromise the remainder of the allocated site from being developed for residential use.

Loss of Playing Field

- 8.2.8 The site forms part of the playing fields of the former Pin Green School, which closed in 2005 and this part of the school has remained unused since. Under Policy HO1 of the Local Plan (2019), it states the loss of sports facilities on this site will need to be mitigated. Notwithstanding the objection from Sport England, the site comprises a disused playing field and as outlined in the NPPF and the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 Sport England should not be a statutory consultee, as the site has not been used as a playing field for more than 5 years. It is noted the site does not compromise an existing sports facility, is not allocated for use as a playing field and does not involve the replacement of an existing grass surface with an artificial pitch. On this basis, it is accepted the loss of the former playing field would not need to be mitigated.

8.3 Design, Layout and Appearance

- 8.3.1 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that "The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should

achieve”. It goes on to state that “good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”.

- 8.3.2 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF sets out a number of requirements for new development, including that development:
- will function well and add to the overall quality of an area;
 - is visually attractive as a result of good architecture; layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - is sympathetic to local character and history;
 - establishes or maintains a strong sense of place;
 - optimises the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
 - creates places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 8.3.3 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF places great importance on the role of trees in helping to shape quality, well designed places “Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change”.
- 8.3.4 Policy SP8 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability which can deliver substantial improvements to the image and quality of the town’s built fabric. Policy GD1 of the Local Plan 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.
- 8.3.5 The Council’s Design Guide SPD (2023) generally reflects the above policies requiring development to respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, massing, height and design. As such, it encourages good design as it can enhance the appearance of places. The National Design Guide (2019) is also a material consideration in the determination of the development proposal. The scheme has been assessed against the key policy criteria on good design, as well as how it meets the four key objectives in the National Design Guide on what is considered to be a well-designed place.
- 8.3.6 Given the slightly elevated position of the site that boosts its prominence in the local vicinity, careful attention has been given to layout and massing of the proposals. The immediate surrounding vernacular is characterised by semi-detached, albeit linked, dwellings and blocks of flats with relatively short frontages and the proposed design broadly recognises this character and arrangement. The proposed day service facility would comprise a compact single storey building, maximising inclusive access located with a degree of separation to the surrounding existing dwellings to mitigate against any perceived loss of amenity.
- 8.3.7 A generous rooflight centrally positioned to the flat roof would channel natural daylight into the building and the main hall activity space. Both the main entrance and the access into the rear garden would be covered, providing a transition zone between the inside and outside, suited to people suffering from dementia. The landscaped garden would be an enclosed and private amenity space, which could function as an extension and multi-functional spill-out area to the internal activity spaces.
- 8.3.8 The positioning of the parking and surrounding layout is more legible and linear and relates well to the building. Although some parking spaces would be partially visible from the public realm, the enhancement of a landscape buffering area to the west may offer a useful design solution through the proposed landscaping scheme. In terms of materiality, it is proposed to utilise a mixture of brick, metal cladding and glazing which is considered acceptable. Overall,

it is considered the proposed day centre would represent a high-quality design in accordance with Policies SP8 and GD1 of the Local Plan.

8.4 Impact on residential amenity

Impact upon neighbouring amenity

- 8.4.1 The preservation of residential amenity is important with the positioning of the day-care centre to the south closest to the existing dwellings on Lonsdale Road and Haywards Close. The Council does not have specific policies when it comes to outlook and privacy for non-residential development. The proposed day service building would be single storey in height and as such, issues of overbearing impact, day light and sunlight and overlooking falls away. Notwithstanding this, in accordance with the Stevenage Design Guide (2023), a separation distance of approximately 25m would be employed to safeguard residential amenity and reduce impacts of any noise dissipation from the building and associated garden area from the nearest residential properties.
- 8.4.2 Tree planting to the eastern and southern boundary is proposed, which would offer a greater degree of screening and a degree of noise attenuation. Operational noise is not considered to be a concern with regards to surrounding dwellings, due to the nature of the use. Notwithstanding this, acoustic fencing is proposed at selected boundaries to the south and east, as well as planting to offset noise such as the coming and going of vehicles on nearby dwellings and to attenuate any noise from the external areas. It is recommended the details of the acoustic fencing are secured via a condition should planning permission be granted. The development is considered to satisfy Policy GD1 of the Local Plan and the Design Guide SPD regarding the protection of residential amenity.

8.5 Highways and Parking

- 8.5.1 Policy IT5 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that planning permission will be granted where proposals comply with the parking standards set out in the plan. Policy IT4 seeks to ensure application proposals are accompanied by a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement (as appropriate) and to ensure development would not have an adverse impact on highway safety. The application is supported by a Transport Statement and Travel Plan.
- 8.5.2 The site is located within the urban area of Stevenage and is relatively well served by public transport. There are two bus stops near the site. It is approximately 1.4 miles from Stevenage Train Station, which is predominantly served by Great Northern and ThamesLink services with excellent links to London, Cambridge and surrounding towns. Stevenage bus station is approximately 1.2 miles, which provides transport around Stevenage and the surrounding town and villages. It is acknowledged the site lies within a sustainable location.

Access

- 8.5.3 The site would be accessed via the creation of a new ingress/egress point on Hayward Close. The Planning Statement advises other accesses were assessed as part of pre-application discussions, with three ingress/egress points from Lonsdale Road explored, but these were considered difficult to implement given the level changes and the preference of the Highway Authority to secure access from minor roads.
- 8.5.4 Notwithstanding, access would be taken from the northeast and works to widen the road are to be undertaken and visibility splays incorporated. This is so that the new ingress/egress would take into account vehicular speed on Hayward Close and removes existing vegetation for safe vehicular manoeuvring out of the site. The access road includes an 'island', which facilitates a one-way vehicle routing, acting as a turning head and to enable safe and efficient drop-off and pick-up of service users via the minibus bays that surround the island. It also has

been designed to accommodate larger vehicles including a 12m long refuse collection vehicle and future use of the adjacent land for residential.

Trip Rates

- 8.5.5 The accompanying Transport Statement provides an overview of the likely trip rates resulting from the development. In assessing existing peak AM and PM trips from the extant facility at Leyden House and applying these to the site, 14 would arrive in the morning (20 total two-way trips), with six departures, with only four leaving in the evening (four total two-way trips), which is considered negligible in the context of Lonsdale Road and the surrounding highway network. The Transport Statement confirms junction modelling has been undertaken and has demonstrated that the Hayward Close/Lonsdale Road junction would operate within capacity. The Transport Statement should be reviewed by Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority as consultee to this application. At the time of writing this report, it is noted no response has been provided to date.

Parking

- 8.5.6 Regarding parking, provision for the day centre would be 24 spaces, of which four would be for disabled access. Additional bays for minibuses would be located towards the centre of the site to allow collective pick up and drop off in the local community. Regarding the future development of the remainder of the site, the 'rain garden' areas located in the central island and eastern boundary would be made of permeable surface material, which would allow for easy conversion to parking spaces as part of the implementation of any future housing scheme should Hertfordshire County Council bring this forward. Cycle parking would also be provided, with designated cycle shelter located towards the building entrance to the north, providing eight spaces in total.
- 8.5.7 In terms of parking requirements, the Council's Parking SPD (2020) advises for an adult day service facility (Class E) a total of 1 space per 2 staff members plus 1 space per 3 persons attending; or 1 space per 9m² gfa should be provided. The Transport Statement advises there are currently 25 staff at the existing Leyden House facility. The gross internal floor space would be 921m². The application site is not within an accessibility zone where reduced parking provision would be encouraged; therefore, maximum provision should be provided. It is assumed there would be no reduction in staff at the new centre and therefore there would be a requirement to provide 12.5 spaces (rounded up to 13) for staff. It is not specified how many people would attend the centre, but a total provision of 24 spaces plus parking for 3 minibuses and a drop off facility outside the entrance would be sufficient. It is considered the proposed parking provision is acceptable.
- 8.5.8 In terms of cycle parking, parking would be provided within a designated cycle shelter located towards the building entrance to the north, providing eight spaces in total. The Parking Provision SPD (2020) does not advise on standards for a day service facilities. The closest use is for health centre or dentist which states 1 long stay space per 5 staff and 1 short stay space per 3 staff, giving a total requirement of 13 spaces (5 long stay and 8 short stay). Given cycle parking requirements are not stated for day centres within the Council's SPD, it is considered 8 spaces would be acceptable, however it is recommended a planning condition is added seeking further details i.e., type of bike stands, enclosure etc prior to occupation.
- 8.5.9 With regards to electric vehicle provision, the SPD states the Council would like new developments to provide car parking designed to fulfil a Passive Electrical Vehicle Charging Point standard; and a minimum of 20% of new parking on a site should have access to an active EV charging point. Given Building Regulations requirements for EV parking are more stringent, the Local Planning Authority is leaving it to be considered at that stage of the process, however, it is noted 5 Electric Vehicle charging facilities would be provided, with the remaining 19 to have access to passive charging infrastructure which is welcomed.

- 8.5.10 With regards to disabled parking, the plans include 4 disabled spaces amounting to 6% of provision which is in accordance with the Parking Provision SPD (2020).

Travel Plan

- 8.5.11 A Travel Plan is submitted as part of the application and details both 'hard' and 'soft' measures to encourage sustainable modes of transport. Hard measures include improvements to the surrounding public realm by widening the footway and cycleway along Hayward Close leading to Lonsdale Road and traffic calming measures, as well as cycle provision and EV charging points. Soft measures would include welcome packs to staff and visitors that would promote cycling and walking along with details of public transport routes around the site, as well as key services to limit trip rates by private vehicle. Whilst most visitors to Leyden House arrive by mini-bus, promotion would be made of local transport routes with facilities for disabled and impaired people where possible to do so. Finally, staff would be recruited from the local area as much as practically possible, again to limit private car usage.
- 8.5.12 The Travel Plan should be reviewed by Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority as consultee to this application. At the time of writing this report, it is noted no response has been provided to date.
- 8.5.13 The Transport Statement demonstrates that the proposals would deliver a safe and suitable access from Hayward Close following upgrading works and improvements to visibility splays. Transposed trip rates from the existing facility at Leyden House would not cause an unacceptable impact on the surrounding highway network and parking (including cycle and disabled) is considered sufficient given existing needs, including mini-bus pick-up and drop-off bays. Travel Plan initiatives would seek to encourage sustainable modes of transport to the site. As advised above, Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority should review and confirm their agreement to the conclusions of the Transport Statement and Travel Plan prior to planning permission being granted. However, Stevenage Borough Council as Local Planning Authority are satisfied the parking provision is acceptable, subject to a cycle parking condition.

8.6 Impact on Trees

- 8.6.1 Policy NH5 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) states that development proposals will be expected to protect and retain individual trees within the development site and should include new planting where appropriate. The site contains several trees, mostly to the northern and southern boundaries. It should be noted that none of these are subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) and generally vary in quality between Grades B (moderate value) and C (low value) as confirmed by the Tree Survey and Impact Assessment that is submitted with this application.
- 8.6.2 The access is proposed in the northeast corner of the site, leading from Hayward Close. To create the access, the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) advises it would require the loss of trees from a small copse that lies to the south of Hayward Close. Referring to the submitted Tree Protection Plan, it would be necessary to remove trees 19, 20 and a selection of smaller stems from tree group 15. Tree 19 is a Zelkova that has partially fallen in the past before the two main stems have reverted to a more upright stance. Tree 20 is a lime that, typical of its species, has developed tight unions between its stems. These unions render the stems more susceptible to failure. The AIA advises trees within group 15 are diminutive with no individual tree of any great merit. None of these stems are of sufficient quality and value to constrain the scheme and their loss can be offset by the proposed understorey planting of the retained tree group to the east.
- 8.6.3 The visibility splay and pathway arrangement on either side of the proposed access would also require the loss of hedgerows 13 and 26, a small section of hedgerow 9, as well as five further

stems from tree group 15. Hedgerow 13 would be replaced with a new hedgerow set further from Haywards Close and would be complete, rather than having a large gap where the existing gateway is located. Hedgerow 26 is not proposed to be replaced but enhancements of the retained tree group are proposed to offset the loss.

- 8.6.4 As the access proceeds into the site, it would result in no impact to existing trees. The car park provision, proposed garden and Day Centre building would require the loss of a small group of planted trees (trees numbered 6 to 8 in the schedule). The AIA advises there is limited collective merit in the group of trees, but none of the individual trees are good examples. Their loss would be offset by a more formal style of tree planting in keeping with the proposed use.
- 8.6.5 The proposed building would also require the loss of tree 10, a small Norway maple. The tree is multi-stemmed with tight unions between those stems. The AIA advises the tree is not suited to long term retention given its form. New tree planting, including understorey planting, is proposed in the same location to provide replacement tree cover. The hedgerows (numbered 5 and 9 in the tree schedule) on the southern and western boundaries would be retained and are unaffected (apart from the small loss of the northern tip of hedgerow 9) by the proposed layout.
- 8.6.6 In light of the above, it is considered the proposals accord with Policy NH5 of the Local Plan, in demonstrating that there is sufficient land reserved for replacement planting and landscaping and the category C and U trees that would be lost are being replaced by those of better quality, using locally native species of similar maturity. Whilst not in the Local Plan, Stevenage Borough Council has a parks and amenities policy that requires 3 trees to be planted for every tree lost, at a ratio of 3:1. It is recommended the standard tree protection and replacement planting conditions are added and that replacement tree planting should be secured at a ratio of 3:1.

8.7 Landscaping

Access Road and Parking

- 8.7.1 Access to the site off Hayward Close aims to establish a clear circular route which allows for easy drop off and pick up for the Day Centre. Whilst some of the existing trees would have to be removed the majority along with the existing hedge would be retained along the northern boundary of the site. An island of new trees and shrubs would form a central focus around which parking and drop off areas are located. These northern parking spaces are envisaged as eventually primarily serving any development on the remainder of the site. This shared central drop off zone is therefore designed with an emphasis on ensuring an inclusive and welcoming domestic character with reduced kerb heights and small unit paving to all parking areas.
- 8.7.2 Parking would be set back from the eastern boundary to ensure there is enough space for tree and shrub planting to provide for the necessary privacy for existing residents. This zone is also carefully dimensioned to allow for refuse and emergency vehicle turning around the central island. The bin store would be located adjacent to the central loop to ensure easy daily access by staff and weekly pick up. Minibus parking would be located at the south-eastern side of the central zone. Cycle parking stands would be provided under the canopy at the main entrance with accessible parking spaces also located adjacent to the building entrance at the northern end of the finger of parking dedicated to the Day Centre which would extend south, between the Day Centre and the eastern site boundary.
- 8.7.3 All surfaces and levels would be carefully considered to ensure these busy public areas are as inclusive as possible. Groups of trees to the centre of this area and along its southern boundary are intended to contain views in and out of this part of the site. An important northern corridor of planting extends east/west providing a sense of separation and privacy between the Day Centre and any future development to the north. Overall, the layout has been carefully considered to establish a coherent sense of arrival in an attractive landscape setting with a

focus on the Day Centre entrance. The new planting would frame views and the carefully chosen block paving would create a more domestic character at the drop off area and building entrance.

Western Lonsdale Road Boundary

- 8.7.4 The Day Centre building would be set back to a line marking the top of the existing bank (circa 2m high) which runs along the western boundary following the line of the existing hedge. The existing hedge would be retained connecting to the hedges on the southern and northern boundaries. The bank would be seeded and managed as native meadow/grassland with native trees and understory planting framing views out from the Day Centre whilst also breaking up the visual impact of the building views from the north and south along Lonsdale Road.

Day Centre Gardens

- 8.7.5 The landscape layout illustrates the potential of the site to deliver the aspirations of service users and staff. There would be strong visual and physical connection into the garden space on the south side of the building from the main social and activity spaces within the new building. A circular path would link a large patio area with other garden activities which include covered seating areas, a kitchen garden with garden shed and raised planters. A central lawn would offer an opportunity for more informal small-scale recreation surrounded by planting which is intended to create a year-round sensory experience with a domestic garden character.
- 8.7.6 A brick wall designed as part of the wider architectural strategy would reinforce the sense of a walled garden whilst also creating a secure and private boundary. External planting around the southern garden boundary is designed to prevent unauthorised access between the wall and existing hedge. When combined with the existing hedge, this landscape corridor would also provide enhanced privacy between the Day Centre and residents to the south.
- 8.7.8 The proposed landscaping strategy has been well considered, taking into account the constraints of the site and the proposed development would sit within a high quality and attractive landscaped setting in accordance with policies SP12 and NH5 of the Local Plan (2019). It is recommended landscaping condition(s) are imposed requiring compliance with the submitted details.

8.8 Ecology and Biodiversity

- 8.8.1 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). The site predominantly comprises unkempt amenity grassland with scattered trees and shrubs on the borders, which are generally considered to be of low ecological significance. The PEA advises proposals to develop the site are unlikely to impact on any important or protected species or habitats. However, the trees are considered to have some value to nesting birds. Regarding protected species, various invertebrates and hedgehogs have been recorded at or in close proximity to the site, but it is unlikely that its condition would be conducive to insects in light of its mowed character and urban location. However, given the presence of trees and hedgerow, the site could support common nesting birds but again, offering negligible value.
- 8.8.2 Whilst it is regrettable that trees, hedgerow and shrubs would be lost as part of the proposals, the PEA confirms that the site is of negligible ecological value and as such, does not have a significant impact on protected species. In compensation, the development would include modified grassland, native scrub, wildflower meadow and a biodiverse green roof that would offer an appropriate environment for vertebrate and invertebrates via a varied planting structure. Replacement tree planting (29 trees) would be planted throughout the site, replenishing those that have been lost and securing a net gain.
- 8.8.3 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements arising from the Environment Act (2021) are due to come into law from 12 February 2024 for major sites and from 2 April 2024 for other qualifying

smaller developments. The government has confirmed that 10% BNG will be a mandatory requirement for those applications that meet the set thresholds. As such, whilst it is not currently mandatory to do so, the applicant has taken steps to ensure that the proposals go above and beyond what would be required under impending national regulations and the Council's Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (2021), which seeks 10% net gain on qualifying applications.

- 8.8.4 It is acknowledged that the site mostly comprises unkempt grass and some trees to the northern and southern boundaries and hedging to the north and west, but it is located in an urban setting surrounded by existing development. Indeed, existing habitat conditions on the site are considered to be of low quality, scoring 1.69 baseline habitat units. Notwithstanding, the proposals would deliver a substantial BNG score of 15% net gain given the introduction of new grassland, a green roof, urban trees and native hedgerow replanting/strengthening which is welcomed.
- 8.8.5 With the implementation of appropriate ecological mitigation, compensation and the proposed biodiversity enhancement into the development design and landscaping, it is considered that the development proposals would result in an overall enhancement to the biodiversity and ecological value of the application site, improve access to nature and ensure compliance with Section 15 of the NPPF and policies SP12 and NH5 of the Local Plan (2019). Compliance with the proposed ecological and BNG enhancements should be secured via planning condition.

8.9 Development and Flood Risk

- 8.9.1 A Drainage Strategy for the site has been prepared and is submitted with this planning application. An intrusive ground investigation has confirmed that the site is made of clay-with-flints at depths of circa 2m and is for the most part impermeable. This and the absence of nearby watercourses significantly dictates the drainage strategy for the proposals. Whilst the site is in Flood Zone 1 and there are no issues with regards to surface water flooding, the sustainable management of surface water runoff has also been identified as the key issue to be investigated and addressed as part of this FRA.
- 8.9.2 Given the impermeable nature of the site at a relatively shallow level and the presence of underlying chalk, infiltration methods have been discounted. Instead, the proposals would incorporate several measures to restrict peak discharge into the sewage system, alleviating pressure on the local drainage system in times of heavy rainfall. The proposals would include SuDS via the incorporation of a biodiverse roof on the day service facility, measuring approximately 750m² in size, at a varying depth of 60-100mm, reducing run-off by 50%. Further measures include permeable paving for the parking and pick-up drop off areas and raingardens (located in the 'island' and eastern boundary of the site), which could be converted into parking spaces if required.
- 8.9.3 Run-off from the access roads would be routed via permeable paving and/or rain gardens and would be directed to a geo-cellular attenuation tank located to the north of the building, adjacent to the main entrance. This feature would have a capacity of 221m³ and would include a hydro-brake system that would restrict peak discharge rates into the sewage system to 2l/s for 1 in 100-year storm events, with a 40% allowance for climate change. Pre-treatment of water is proposed via catch pit manholes upstream from the attenuation tank to reduce pollution and sediment depositing into the SuDS system and the wider drainage system.
- 8.9.4 Exceedance flows would utilise the existing and proposed topography so that excess water would leave the site via an overland flow south-west towards Lonsdale Road, away from the proposed day service facility. Foul water would be disposed of by a private gravity system that would connect with the existing foul sewage system to the southwest located on Lonsdale/Archer Road.

8.9.5 HCC as the determining planning authority would need to ensure that the development has an acceptable drainage strategy through consultation with HCC as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). In addition, it would need to impose appropriate conditions to ensure that the drainage strategy as agreed by the LLFA is put in place prior to first occupation of the development.

8.10 Impact on the environment

Contamination

8.10.1 The application is supported by a Phase 1: Desktop Study and Preliminary Risk Assessment, which assesses the contamination potential of the site. The report advises the site is located within an area of chalk mining activity, however there are no potentially contaminative land uses associated within the site or in the immediate surrounds. The site has never been developed. Therefore, the report does not recommend any further investigation works are carried out. However, it does recommend that a watching brief be undertaken, and any suspected contamination should be reported for further investigation. The standard contamination conditions should be applied if planning permission is granted requiring remediation if necessary.

Groundwater

8.10.2 The application site is not located within a Source Protection Zone and no concerns had been raised by Thames Water or Affinity Water with respect to potential impact from the development.

Air Quality

8.10.3 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 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2019 by Stevenage Borough Council identifies that the development site is not located within, or near, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

8.10.4 In order to mitigate the construction phase, it is recommended a condition is imposed on any permission issued. This condition would require the applicant to adhere to an approved Construction Management Plan which should detail measures on controlling levels of dust and air pollutants which are generated during the construction phase of development.

8.10.5 With regards to the operational aspect of the development, due to its limited scale, the proposed development would give rise to a very small increase in NO₂ emissions which, in accordance with IAQM/EPUK guidance, is identified as having a negligible impact at all receptors in the area. As such, the need for additional mitigation is not required.

Noise Pollution

8.10.6 With respect to noise, Policy FP8: Pollution Sensitive Uses stipulates that planning permission for pollution sensitive uses will be granted where they will not be subjected to unacceptably high levels of pollution exposure from either existing, or proposed pollution generating uses.

8.10.7 Dealing firstly with the impact of noise from the construction phase of the development, detailed measures should be set out in the Construction Management Plan (CMP) to be approved via condition. Through the CMP the hours in which noisy activities take place are to be controlled along with the imposition of relevant mitigation measures being put in place to minimise the impact of noise from construction activities. With regards to noise which could arise during the operational phase of development, if any complaints arose, these would be dealt with by the Borough Council's Environmental Health department.

Light Pollution

8.10.8 In terms of light pollution, Policy FP7: Pollution of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires all development proposals should minimise, where possible, 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.

8.10.9 Turning to the operational side of the development, as no details have been provided as to the design, location and intensity of illumination of any external lighting, a condition should be imposed to any permission issued. This would ensure that any external lighting system does not harm the amenities of the occupiers of the residential properties close to the site. In terms of lighting associated with the construction aspect of the proposed development, this should be dealt with as part of the approved Construction Management Plan (CMP).

8.11 Archaeology

8.11.1 The site is not located within a locally defined Area of Archaeological Significance; however, the application is accompanied by an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment. The report concludes the proposed development would not impact on any designated archaeological assets and identifies a low archaeological potential for evidence of occupation and settlement dating to all past periods of human activity. A moderate potential is considered for Medieval land division and agricultural activity. If present, the report advises any remains would most likely be of local significance only. Past ground disturbance is likely to have been widespread, but shallow as a result of historic agricultural activity.

8.11.2 Overall, the report concludes the site retains a limited archaeological potential, and it is unlikely that the proposed development would have either a significant or widespread archaeological impact. No further archaeological works are recommended in advance of development, however given the site's previously undeveloped nature, the County Archaeologist may take a precautionary approach and request a programme of archaeological work. If required, the principle of development has already been established by the allocation of the site for development in the Stevenage Local Plan (2019) and therefore further work could be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition attached to the granting of planning consent.

8.12 Other Matters

Community Infrastructure Levy

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

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

Extra care housing	£40/m ²
Retail development	£60/m ²
All other development	£0/m ²

- 8.12.2 CIL is a non-negotiable charge. The exact charge will be determined by the Council's CIL officer after an application has been granted in accordance with the CIL Charging Schedule and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). Opportunities for relief or exemption from the CIL charge exist and will be taken into account in the calculation of the final CIL charge.
- 8.12.3 CIL replaces the need for S106 agreements to specify financial and/or land contributions for non-site-specific infrastructure projects. This allows infrastructure to be planned on a borough-wide scale rather than on a site-by-site basis as mitigation against the impacts of individual proposals. A CIL Form 1: Additional Information has been submitted along with the application.
- 8.12.4 Whilst the proposed development as a day centre is not CIL liable, it does fall within the same use class as retail – use class E 'commercial, business and service use' which is CIL liable at £60/m². To exempt the applicant from paying CIL for retail and prevent an unrestricted change of use to another use within class E, the use of the building should be restricted to day centre use class E(f) of the Town and County Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020. This should be secured by way of a planning condition, should planning permission be granted.

Sustainable construction and climate change

- 8.12.5 Policy FP1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) stipulates that planning permission will be granted for development that can incorporate measures to address adaptation to climate change. New developments will be encouraged to include measures such as:
- Ways to ensure development is resilient to likely variations in temperature;
 - Reducing water consumption to no more than 110 litres per person per day, including external water use;
 - Improving energy performance of buildings;
 - Reducing energy consumption through efficiency measures;
 - Using or producing renewable or low carbon energy from a local source; and
 - Contributing towards reducing flood risk through the use of SuDS or other appropriate measures.
- 8.12.6 The Day Centre has been designed around a comprehensive sustainability strategy, aiming for a low climate impact building with high wellbeing performance for building users. The building would provide comfort by balancing good daylight provision against overheating risk by checking the design's performance against future climate scenarios. The applicant has high aspirations for material efficiency for low embodied carbon and low operational energy consumption in use. The design process has incorporated Passivhaus designer advice to inform the building fabric and services choices. This has resulted in the incorporation of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery in some spaces, to reduce heat loss in cold weather. The high thermal mass of the walls and floor slab has been implemented as a passive strategy for delivering thermal comfort year-round. Natural ventilation would be available in all regularly occupied spaces for comfort in warmer weather.
- 8.12.7 The Design and Access Statement advises embodied carbon is being analysed as the design progresses and where possible, low embodied carbon materials have been prioritised; the building is a simple loadbearing masonry structure with relatively short spans to minimise material for the roof structure. The use of steel in the structure has been minimised where possible, with only the central hall requiring some steel framing to support the longer spans.

8.12.8 Furthermore, the Design and Access Statement advises progress has been tracked against a comprehensive set of bespoke sustainability targets, based on BREEAM criteria. These targets have ensured the project addresses energy efficiency, passive design principles, low carbon materials, health and wellbeing, future climate scenarios, community and local area, water consumption, responsible material sourcing, waste minimisation and post occupancy aftercare.

8.12.9 It is considered the above sustainability strategy is acceptable and meets the objectives of Local Plan policy FP1. The measures seeking mitigation and adaptation to climate change should be secured as part of a planning condition should planning permission be granted.

Waste and Recycling

8.12.10 The Design Guide (2023) states provision should be made within new development for the storage and collection of waste from a site. The application submission states waste and recycling would be stored within external open air refuse and recycling bins. Access to the bin store would be from the northeast, and integrated into the brick garden wall. Refuse and recycling containers would be stored in a secure brick walled compound, with a locked closed boarded timber gate. A timber pergola is proposed on top of the bin store to give the impression of a garden feature of the garden beyond.

8.12.11 The enclosure is large enough to accommodate 6 no. lockable refuse and recycling containers. The general waste collection is weekly and recycled waste is fortnightly. The unused medication would be taken to a local pharmacy for disposal. The County Council would need to ensure that there is sufficient waste and recycling facilities to serve the Day Centre and condition the details proposed to ensure they are delivered as part of any planning permission.

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

8.12.12 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.

8.12.13 When considering proposals placed before the Council as Local Planning Authority, it is important that it is fully aware of and has themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking. Therefore, rigorous consideration has been undertaken by the Council as the Local Planning Authority to ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of the proposed development on the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

8.12.14 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.

8.12.15 In terms of inclusive access, the proposed building has been designed to be fully accessible and inclusive. All spaces in the new building would be accessible; the floors and thresholds would be level. The routes into the building would be clear and signed and demarcated appropriately using landscape treatments. There would be no abrupt changes in levels on the approach to the proposed building. Disabled parking spaces would be provided close to the entrance. The design proposals have been developed with reference to Approved Document Part M (AD-M) and BS8300:2018 'Design of an Accessible and Inclusive Built Environment.'

- 8.12.16 Level access would continue to be provided to the development at all pedestrian access points. The design of the scheme provides a safe, secure and attractive environment. The immediate connectivity of a development site includes factors that relate to pedestrian and cycle access as well as access by wheelchair users. In terms of pedestrian facilities in the area, footways are generally of a high standard, are level / trip free and well lit.
- 8.12.17 It is considered that the decision has had regard to this duty. The development would not conflict with either Stevenage Borough Council's Equality Policy or the commitments set out in our Equality Objectives and would support the Council in meeting its statutory equality responsibilities.

9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 In summary, and subject to the imposition of appropriately worded conditions set out in this report, the proposed Day Centre would provide a high-quality facility for vulnerable adults within Stevenage and wider County. Whilst not in accordance with the designation of the site for housing, it would not compromise the remainder of the site from being developed for residential use at a later date. The planning benefits it would bring in terms of providing a valuable service to residents and replacing an existing facility which is poorly located and not fit for purpose are a material planning consideration in favour of granting planning permission.
- 9.2 The proposed building would be of a high-quality, sustainable design bringing significant landscape and biodiversity benefits to the site. Furthermore, the proposal would not have a significant detrimental impact on trees, ecology or residential amenity. Moreover, the proposed development would not cause issues of flooding or generate environmental issues such as noise and air pollutants.
- 9.3 Given the aforementioned assessment, it is considered that on balance, the proposed development accords with the Council's adopted Local Plan (2019), the Council's Supplementary Documentation, the NPPF (2023) and PPG.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That the Council raises **No Objection** to the proposed development. However, this is subject to the County Council ensuring the proposed development does not prejudice highway safety and has an acceptable drainage strategy. Furthermore, the Council recommends that appropriately worded conditions are imposed to any permission issued as specified in this report.

11 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.
2. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD 2020; Design Guide SPD 2023.

3. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 adopted 2019.
4. Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4 adopted May 2019.
5. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.
6. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 and Planning Policy Guidance.