

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

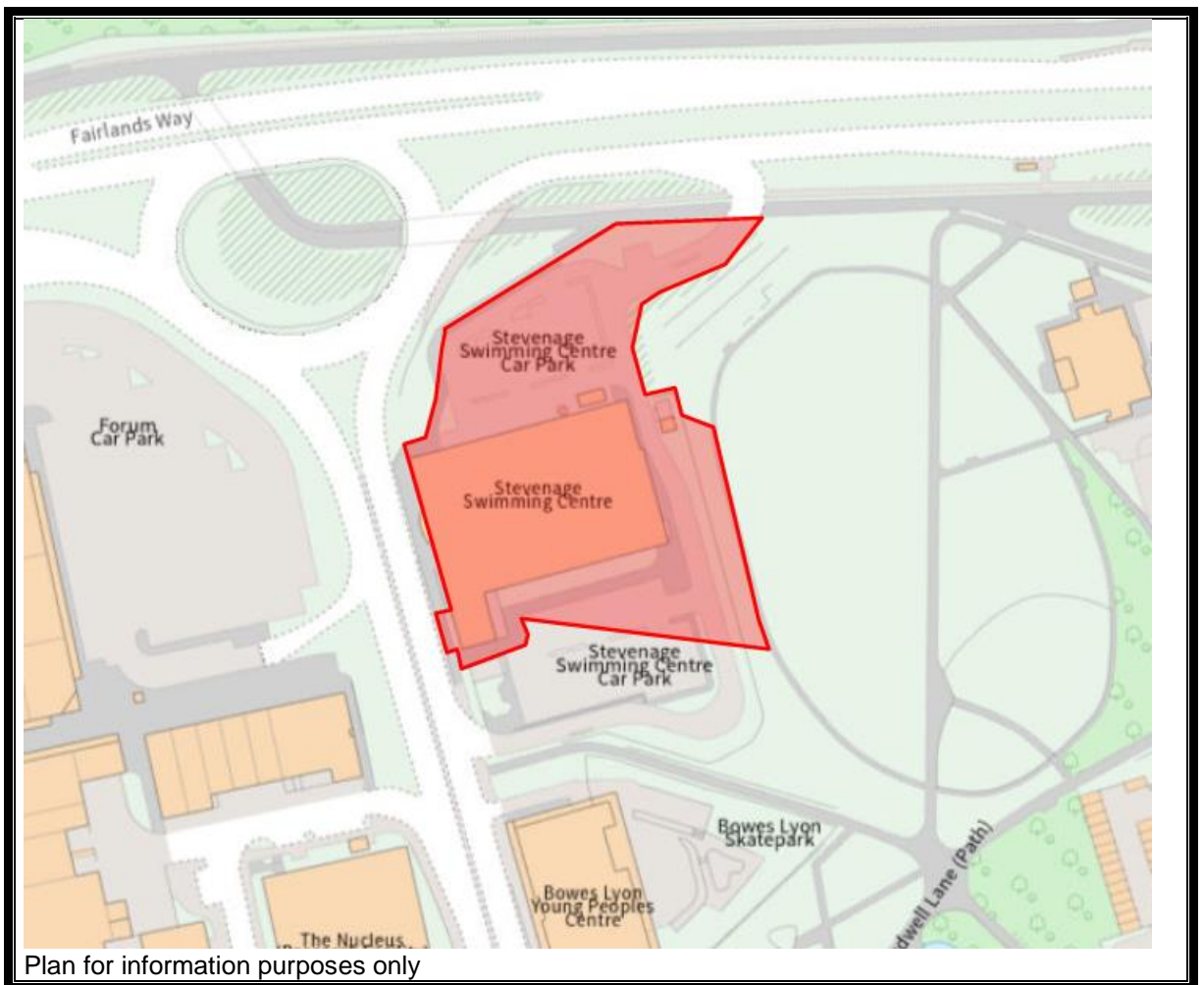
Date: **9 September 2025**

Author: **Rebecca Elliott**

Lead Officer: **Alex Robinson**

Contact Officer: **Rebecca Elliott**

Application Nos:	25/00424/FP
Location:	Stevenage Swimming Centre St. Georges Way Stevenage.
Proposal:	Demolition of existing Swimming Centre and erection of new sports and leisure centre with associated parking, landscaping and access.
Drawing Nos.	SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0163 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0164 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0140 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0142 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0141 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0143 Rev P01; FB-SK-4036-250519-AS-001; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0110 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0111 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0112 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0113 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0119 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0114 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0150 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0151 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0152 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0153 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0170 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0183 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0171 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0172 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0173 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0174 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0180 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0181 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0182 Rev P01; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0400 Rev P01; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0501 Rev P02; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0502 Rev P02; SSLH-SWH-ZZ-XX-D-C-0910 Rev P02; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0160 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0161 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0162 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0100 Rev 02; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0101 REV 02; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0102 REV 02; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0103 REV 02; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0101-S3 REV 13; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0102-S3 REV 09; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0103-S3 REV 09; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0300-S3 REV 05;
Applicant:	Stevenage Borough Council
Date Valid:	3 June 2025
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The proposal site is the existing Stevenage Swimming Centre and surrounding land. The site is located on the eastern side of St Georges Way and is bounded to the north by Fairlands Way. To the east is the Town Centre Gardens and residential flatted blocks which overlook the gardens. The Bowes Lyon Centre is sited to the south of the site, including an existing footway connecting St Georges Way to the Town Gardens. Beyond St Georges Way is the Town Centre, with the approved life sciences quarter to be immediately to the west on the site of the existing The Forum shopping area.
- 1.2 The site is accessed by vehicles coming off St Georges Way to the south of the building, entering one of the two car parks serving the centre before heading north around the eastern side of the building to the second car park to the north. The site is exited to the north on to Fairlands Way. The existing building has a larger block located centrally, with single storey elements wrapping around the front and northern side of the building.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 There have been various permissions granted in the past for advertisements, but these are not particularly relevant to this planning application.
- 2.2 Full planning application reference 99/00492/FP for the refurbishment, recladding, refacing and entrance extension was approved on 28.02.2000.

- 2.3 Planning permission reference 06/00181/FP for access road alteration, refurbishment of north car park and construction of new south car park including coach drop off point and canopy assembly point was approved on 25.06.2006.
- 2.4 Planning permission reference 09/00397/FP for retention of combined heat and power unit adjacent to the north elevation of the building was approved on 13.01.2010.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 The proposed development seeks full planning permission for the erection of a new Leisure Centre to include a 25m 10 lane swimming pool, teaching pool, splash pad, soft play, sports hall, gym and studio spaces. The building would also provide a café, as well as dry and wet mixed changing facilities.
- 3.2 The building would see the relocation of existing swimming facilities from the neighbouring Swimming Centre which is to be demolished. Furthermore, facilities currently located at the Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre off Lytton Way would also be relocated to the new Leisure Centre.
- 3.3 The proposed new building would be sited on land to the south of the existing swimming centre. The building would be approximately 19.8m in height at its highest point and would have a lower section located closest to the Town Centre Gardens with a proposed height of approximately 14.5m. The overall form of the proposed building is rectangular with clean lines and a flat roof. The modern design includes a colonnade entrance along the northern elevation marking the link between the site and the town centre to the west. The double height colonnade would have piers holding up the second and third floors above. The main entrance is located to the east of the covered walkway and provides open views through to the Town Centre Gardens because of the use of glazing.
- 3.4 The building would be three storeys at the eastern end, closest to the gardens. This would facilitate the teaching pool, splash pad, soft play and café at ground floor level. The café area is proposed to be double height to create a focal point on entrance and to provide a modern and airy space for members of the public to enjoy. Views would be east across the adjacent gardens.
- 3.5 The larger part of the centre would be four storeys and provides the floor space for the 25m 10 lane swimming pool and sports hall above. Both elements would be double height, with the sports hall sitting over the swimming pool space. Wet changing facilities would sit between the teaching and swimming pools to the south of the building. The third floor is comprised of the gym, with studio spaces and spectator seating on the first floor. Areas of dry changing would be on both these floors.
- 3.6 The building materiality would have a render over brickwork plinth up to the second floor, with aluminium curtainwall vertical cladding above. Much of the ground and first floors would have large expanses of glazing to provide views through the building. However, the elevations surrounding the sports hall and back of house areas would be fully enclosed and finished in the respective cladding.
- 3.7 Vehicular access would be off a two-way access point from Fairlands Way to the north east of the site. The access would lead to a 53 space car park, with disabled spaces, and cycle parking. The space would be landscaped around the edges, including SuDS features such as swales.
- 3.8 This application comes before the Planning and Development Committee as the development is a major strategic development submitted by Stevenage Borough Council as the applicant and landowner.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

4.1 Following notification of the application via letter to the Bowes Lyon Centre, the posting of four site notices and a press advert, the following comments have been received.

- The swimming pool should be a minimum of 2m in depth to enable the existing artistic swimming club to continue training;
- The reduction in depth of the swimming pool to 1.8m would see the closure of the artistic swimming club as there are no nearby facilities with an adequate depth pool;
- The reduction in car parking space numbers will prevent use of the centre by families, and leave the car park congested as people try to find or wait for spaces;
- The new facility would not have a dedicated indoor space for bowls, as currently available at the leisure centre.

4.2 These comments are not verbatim. Full comments can be viewed online.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Hertfordshire County Council Highways Authority

Introduction

5.1.1 This is a full planning application for redeveloping the existing Stevenage Swimming Centre (SSC) located in the corner of St. George Way and Fairlands Way. The new Leisure Centre will include swimming, studios, gym space and flexible sports facilities. The project involves the consolidation of the existing buildings onto one site and the existing Leisure Centre, and the current Swimming Centre would close following completion of the new Sports and Leisure Centre (SLC). It also proposes to change the existing site access arrangements such as, the existing access point (exit only) off Fairlands Way will be used for both in & out and the existing access (entrance only) off St. George Way will be closed permanently.

Site Description

5.1.2 The site is located to the northeast of Stevenage Town Centre and is bounded to the west by St. Georges Way and to the north by a segregated pedestrian and cycle route which runs parallel to the A1155 Fairlands Way and continues under the Fairlands Way / St Georges Way roundabout via a grade-separated network. Fairlands Way is a 40mph dual carriageway and St Georges Way, a 30mph dual carriageway. Current vehicular access to the site is via a left in (from St Georges Way) / left out access (to Fairlands Way) with two further minor access from St Georges Way to the north and south of the Bowes Lyon Centre.

Policy Review

5.1.3 The key documents used to assess the application are. • National Planning Policy Framework dated (Dec 2024) • Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan LTP4 2018 • HCC's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance adopted in March 2024 • HCC's VXO Guidance 2021 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 • SBC parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD, Adopted 2025 • Stevenage Transport Strategy 2019 • Stevenage Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP).

Vehicular Access

5.1.4 It is proposed that the existing vehicular access arrangements be modified. The submitted drawing (Ref: SSLH-SWH-01-XX-D-C-5510, Rev: P06) shows that the current entrance-only access from St. George Way will be permanently closed. On the other hand, the existing exit-only access from Fairlands Way will be converted to

accommodate both entry and exit movements. This revised access arrangement is considered to be acceptable in principle. However, several issues were identified in the submitted Stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) reports. The applicant has accepted the RSA's recommendations and agreed to address them during implementation. The applicant is advised to contact the Development Management Implementation (DMI) team to obtain full technical approval prior to implementing these changes and will be secured through conditions 1 and 2.

Swept Path Analysis

- 5.1.5 A set of swept path analysis drawings (Ref: SLH-SWH-ZZ-XX-D-C-0910, Rev: P03) has been submitted to demonstrate that large vehicles can safely enter and exit the site in a forward gear. The tracking diagrams have been reviewed and are considered acceptable from a highway perspective.

Visibility

- 5.1.6 The proposed access arrangement drawing (Ref: SSLH-SWH-01-XX-D-C-5510, Rev: P06) illustrates a visibility splay of 2.4 metres by 65 metres in both directions at the site access onto Fairlands Way. In the interest of highway safety, it is recommended that Condition 3 be imposed to secure the provision and ongoing maintenance of this visibility splay for the lifetime of the development.

Trip Generation

- 5.1.7 A Transport Assessment Addendum has been submitted, which includes the Trip Generation Forecasting Approach, Existing and Future Trip Generation, and Trip Generation Forecasting Sensitivity Tests – Vehicular Trips. Table 1B (Existing & Proposed Development – Summary Traffic Generation Sensitivity Test B, without discount in growth factor) indicates that the proposed development is expected to generate an additional 141 vehicular trips during the Saturday peak period. The Highway Authority considers that this level of additional traffic, when accounting for the omission of Bowls Club trips, the implementation of a Travel Plan, and the presence of linked trips, would not result in a significant impact on the local highway network.

Parking (Car & Cycle) & Footways / Cycleways

- 5.1.8 The submitted Transport Assessment (Section: Future Uses, page 15) outlines the proposed parking provision as follows:
- Cycle Parking: 60 short-stay spaces (30 Sheffield stands) and 8 long-stay spaces with lockers.
 - Car Parking: A total of 53 spaces, comprising 48 standard bays and 5 accessible bays.

It is noted that this represents a reduction of 38 spaces from the existing car park. However, in the context of the local light car development policy, the Highway Authority considers the proposed on-site parking provision to be acceptable.

- 5.1.9 As referenced in proposed Condition 4, all car and cycle parking bays/storage areas must be laid out, demarcated, levelled, surfaced, and drained in accordance with the approved plans, and retained for their designated use prior to first occupation of the development. Furthermore, improvements to the existing footways—agreed with Stevenage Borough Council and identified as Key 10 on the Landscape Masterplan (Ref: SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0101 Rev-P13)—must be completed prior to first use of the development. These works will deliver a shared pedestrian and cycle path connecting to the proposed toucan crossing on St. George's Way.

Travel Plan

- 5.1.10 A Travel Plan (Ref: Morgan Sindall, May 2025) has been submitted in support of the development, with the aim of promoting sustainable travel modes such as walking and cycling and reducing reliance on private car use. The plan has been reviewed by Hertfordshire County Council's Sustainable Travel Team, who have advised that the

following additional information is required to meet the standards set out in the County Council's Travel Plan Guidance:

- Confirmation of the appointed Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC).
- A statement indicating that a secondary contact will be provided to HCC once the TPC is appointed.
- An estimate of the time commitment allocated to the TPC role.
- A formal statement of senior management commitment to the implementation of Travel Plan measures.
- Clarification on whether the TPC will be based on-site or off-site, and whether the Travel Plan will be handed over to a management company.
- Additional measures to promote sustainable travel, such as the provision of personalised travel advice to employees.
- Revision of the monitoring and review schedule to annual intervals for five years post-occupation, rather than the biannual frequency currently proposed.

- 5.1.11 In light of the above, a revised Travel Plan must be submitted to address these shortfalls and ensure compliance with Hertfordshire County Council's Travel Plan Guidance. The Travel Plan must remain in place for a minimum of five years following first occupation of the development. Furthermore, a Travel Plan Evaluation and Support Fee of £1,200 per annum, index-linked to the Retail Price Index (RPI) from March 2014, should be secured through a Section 106 Agreement in accordance with the County Council's guidance.

Conclusion

- 5.1.12 In summary, the Highway Authority considers that the proposed development is unlikely to generate a significant volume of vehicular trips that would result in severe impacts on the local highway network. As such, it is not considered contrary to local or national transport policies, including LTP4 and paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024). Accordingly, the Highway Authority raises no objection to the proposed development, subject to the conditions and additional information outlined above.

5.2 Hertfordshire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority

- 5.2.1 At the time of writing this report, the Council as Local Planning Authority is yet to receive comments from the LLFA. Therefore, if comments are received prior to the meeting and/or the drainage strategy is agreed an update will be provided, otherwise it is anticipated Members will agree to delegate powers being granted to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation to impose any conditions advised on any response provided after the committee meeting.
- 5.2.2 A decision will not be issued until the Legal Agreement associated with the development has been signed, which will allow time for relevant comments to be received. Therefore, comments will be fully considered prior to a decision being issued. However, if the LLFA raise an objection to this application and their concerns cannot be overcome, then this application will be referred back to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision.

5.3 Environmental Health

- 5.3.1 I have reviewed the documentation submitted in support of the above application and make the following observations (in the interest of clarity I have presented them as regards the two distinct phases of the development – demolition/construction and its operation thereafter).

Construction phase (noise, dust, smoke, etc.)

- 5.3.2 The proposed development site is located in relative close proximity to a considerable number of dwellings many of which overlook it. The demolition and construction works

associated with the redevelopment are likely to last some time and given the location of nearby housing are likely to impact on existing residential amenity if not undertaken with considerable care. I would recommend a condition as a means of controlling pollution during demolition and construction works.

Construction phase (contaminated land)

- 5.3.3 *The Report on a Ground Investigation* document prepared by Lucion Ground Engineering Limited (reference 111882, dated November 2024) satisfies, in my opinion, the requirement for a Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) as set out in Local Plan Policy FP5. The report does not propose any remediation measures and therefore the only condition that is warranted relates to unexpected contamination encountered during the course of demolition/construction works.

Operation of site (external lighting)

- 5.3.4 I note, in section 3.15 of the Design & Access Statement (FaulknerBrowns, May 2025), the comment that external lighting will be designed to meet a number of guidance documents including the ILP Guidance Note 01 - The reduction of Obtrusive Light. I welcome this approach. The ultimate detailed lighting scheme should reflect the Note's guidance regarding the environmental zone classification of the site and how it will meet the challenges of managing light spill and reflected light given the presence of dwellings overlooking the development. I would recommend a condition so that lighting of the new centre does not adversely impact on the amenity of local residents.

Operation of site (local air quality)

- 5.3.5 I understand that the existing combined heat & power plant will not be replaced as part of the proposed redevelopment of the site and therefore emissions to atmosphere associated with local combustion should not take place. Accordingly, there is no need for a specific assessment or condition as regards this aspect of local air quality management.

Operation of site (noise)

- 5.3.6 Leisure centres typically employ significant plant in connection with their operations and much of this is located externally – this can give rise to noise problems if it is poorly located and/or there is insufficient mitigation. Local Plan FP7 requires applications to be submitted with sufficient information in order to assess their likely impact as regards matters such as noise, etc. The *Noise Impact Assessment* report authored by Anderson Acoustics Limited (reference 6816, dated 3/9/2024) proposes a maximum sound pressure level approach to the control of *plant* noise as the details of external equipment has yet to be finalised. In the absence of an assessment or mitigation measures as regards non-plant noise I suggest that these issues are dealt with via a combined condition.

5.4 Active Travel England

- 5.4.1 Following a high-level review of the above planning consultation, Active Travel England has determined that standing advice should be issued and would encourage the local planning authority to consider this as part of its assessment of the application. Our standing advice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-england-sustainable-development-advice-notes>

5.5 Police Crime Prevention Officer

- 5.5.1 Thank you for inviting me to comment on the proposal to demolish the existing Swimming Centre and develop a combined Swim and Fitness Centre. I have studied the documents submitted on the Councils planning web site and have the following comments to make. I have substantive concerns that issues around crime, disorder, and the fear of crime do

not appear to have been considered within this scheme. This is contrary to National Planning Policy s 96(b) & s135(f).

- 5.5.2 Having checked on www.police.uk for both the swimming pool and the existing leisure centre over the period of the first of May 2024 to the thirty-first of April 2025 there were seventy-six crimes recorded. Of these twenty involves assault (including sexual assault), twelve involved antisocial behaviour, there were twelve cycle thefts, two burglaries, two drug related crimes, and two reports of criminal damage/arson. This issue can be easily mitigated by engagement with Hertfordshire Constabulary's Crime Prevention Design Service (CPDS) and the local Crime Prevention Design Advisor (CPDA) with a view to seeking to achieve accreditation to the Police preferred minimum security standard that is Secured by Design (SBD).
- 5.5.3 I also have substantive concerns regarding the proposed mixed changing rooms. There have already been reports of voyeurism in the existing mixed changing facilities and this could increase if mixed facilities are provided. In addition, I am unsure how this complies with both Approved Document T of Building Regulations and the recent High Court ruling regarding Biological Sex. This could be mitigated by re-designing the facilities. By doing so would also demonstrate that the issue of violence towards women and girls has been considered.
- 5.5.4 Given the concerns raised the Police are not in a position to support this application, although we do see the need for this facility. Should the project team engage with the CPDS & CPDA with a view to achieving SBD accreditation then we would be able to support it.

5.6 Stevenage Borough Council Parks and Amenities

- 5.6.1 We seek confirmation regarding the areas, if any, that are expected to be maintained by Stevenage Direct Services (SDS), as well as those areas that will be managed and maintained by the Leisure Operator or through other mechanisms.

Planting Selection

- 5.6.2 The selection of native and ornamental plants is disproportionately skewed toward perennial/herbaceous species, raising concerns regarding maintenance and the long-term aesthetic appeal of the planting. Presently, perennials constitute 65% of the selection, while shrubs account for 35%. It is imperative that the developer enhances the selection to prioritise low-maintenance shrubs as the predominant choice, targeting approximately 85% for shrubs in comparison to suitable low-maintenance perennial or herbaceous planting.
- 5.6.3 *Eupatorium cannabinum* is not recommended for this location. *Alchemilla mollis* (Lady's mantle) can spread rapidly, leading to difficulties in the establishment of other species and posing challenges in maintenance. Therefore, this species must be replaced with a more suitable alternative, such as Sweet Box (*Sarcococca confuse*).
- 5.6.4 Bulbs are not included in the preliminary planting plan. Consideration should be given to suitable naturalising bulb planting (not larger *Narcissus spp.*) to provide a burst of colour while avoiding additional maintenance challenges.

Trees

- 5.6.5 *Tillia cordata* is not a suitable tree choice for the location due to the issues caused by aphid secretions, leading to cleansing challenges of surrounding surfaces and furniture. This must be substituted for a suitable alternative.
- 5.6.6 The four newly proposed trees for the southeastern corner of the site are unlikely to establish at this location owing to the shade cast by the existing, large trees to the south.

- 5.6.7 The number of proposed new trees for this site should be decreased to provide sufficient space for their growth. Any additional trees that need to be planted can be allocated off-site, such as in nearby parks or open spaces, subject to agreement.

Material and Furniture Selection

- 5.6.8 All hard surface areas must be suitable and accessible for mechanical sweeping. The landscaping details and plans propose the use of Grasscrete; however, none of the plans clearly specify the locations of these areas. Kindly confirm the exact locations of these areas so we can assess their suitability.
- 5.6.9 We have concerns about the proposals for permeable block paving at the parking bays. While we recognise the importance of permeability, recent experience shows these areas are highly susceptible to weed growth and can appear untidy. We would welcome the opportunity to consider an alternative permeable sealed surface for these areas, such as permeable asphalt.
- 5.6.10 We have concerns regarding the proposals for wooden picnic benches. Based on our experience, we recommend using more durable materials, such as all-metal options, for enhanced durability and ease of graffiti cleaning, among other benefits. Proposals should also seek to incorporate accessible and adapted picnic benches for wheelchair users.
- 5.6.11 SDS shall not be liable for the upkeep and maintenance of the picnic tables and cafe/dining areas. We require details of proposed skate-stop features on the concrete benches to prevent use and damage by skateboarders, scooters, bikes, etc. Additionally, the concrete shall be treated with an anti-graffiti coating to enable easier removal.

Design and Access

- 5.6.12 The proposed development encroaches minimally into the Town Centre Gardens, designated as a principal park/open space in the local plan. However, upon thorough review, we do not perceive that the proposals will adversely affect the park; rather, they present an opportunity for enhancement and improved accessibility to a café facility for park's customers. The plans below highlighted in yellow indicate this encroachment.
- 5.6.13 Given the new access points, there is a need to improve the path infrastructure in the park that leads to the proposed facility. The existing crushed gravel trail is worn and insufficient for the anticipated increase in foot traffic, and its current surface will create challenges for users with mobility issues. Furthermore, there may be a necessity to construct new paths along desire lines to minimise damage.
- 5.6.14 We kindly request detailed information regarding the proposed protection measures (e.g., bollards) at strategic locations, such as the coach drop-off point, to prevent unauthorised vehicles from traversing the hard and soft landscaped areas. However, access must still be available to carry out relevant maintenance, deliveries, and other essential tasks.
- 5.6.15 We express concerns regarding the planting around the parking areas, which, based on extensive experience, leads to maintenance difficulties. We endorse the implementation of appropriate tree planting and acknowledge the requirements for SuDS; however, we request that shrub and border planting not be implemented in the car park, as it will pose maintenance challenges, be susceptible to damage from trampling, and cause difficulties and safety issues if door-swing offsets and sightlines are not adequately considered.
- 5.6.16 Certain proposed meadow areas may obstruct access for machinery needed to collect the arisings, particularly the area surrounding the proposed dry swale to the west of the

site. Consequently, the developer must ensure that any meadow is suitably designed and planted or seeded exclusively for cutting, without necessitating the collection of the arisings.

- 5.6.17 Furthermore, we advocate for the removal of the two beds (circled in yellow below) that are located to the west of the site and partially within the swales/fenced area. Due to their size, layout and location, they will cause difficulties for maintenance and shall be removed.
- 5.6.18 The axonometric plans included in the DAS (Design and Access Statement) do not accurately represent the submitted landscaping plans. For instance, the proposals indicate the presence of new paths and planting in the Town Centre Gardens, yet this information is absent from the submitted landscaping drawings. We require confirmation regarding the landscaping proposals for the Town Centre Gardens.

Swales

- 5.6.19 Please consult the Engineers regarding the design and maintenance of the proposed dry swales and their associated infrastructure, including the rain gardens, as they possess the necessary expertise in this matter. The proposals involve a timber knee rail surrounding each swale, which restricts access for the maintenance of the proposed grass, meadow, and shrubs within these areas, preventing the use of mechanical means. Consequently, it will only be feasible for SDS to conduct occasional hand cutting of the meadow and shrubs, specifically strimming once or twice per year, along with pruning once per year.
- 5.6.20 Stevenage Direct Services shall not be responsible for undertaking any additional maintenance requirements concerning the SuDS. The landscaping drawing sheets refer to the 'engineer's designs' for the swales. Could we please have sight of these? From experience, there is often a high-water table within the park, so this may require consideration for infiltration.
- 5.6.21 Drawing D10, contained within 'Landscape Details 1', displays a cross-section of a rain garden directly adjacent to the cycle stands. However, this is not represented in the landscaping sheet drawings. Could the area next to the cycle parking be clarified as to whether this is a rain garden? Any planted beds that are directly adjacent to a hard surface must be designed to prevent soil and mulch from being washed onto the surrounding surfaces.
- 5.6.22 The drawing for Landscape Sections 1 distinctly illustrates a timber kneel rail fence alongside the path and the proposed Rootlok wall. However, this information is absent from the Landscape Sheet drawings. Clarification is needed, as fencing must be installed due to the drop being immediately adjacent to the path. We advocate installing a metal knee rail instead of wood in this area for enhanced durability.
- 5.6.23 SDS shall not bear responsibility for the maintenance of the proposed Rootlok wall. It shall be the obligation of the developer to ensure proper establishment in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines (i.e., watering, weeding, managing burrowing animals, structural monitoring, etc.). SDS may occasionally be able to cut back the vegetation; however, due to the location, access will be restricted and must be conducted manually.
- 5.6.24 The proposals do not incorporate any litter bins, which, considering the design and use, will be necessary. Litter bins shall match those currently in the Town Centre Gardens, and we require details on their proposed locations. The outdoor gym equipment currently situated in the park, which is scheduled for relocation, is aged and considerably worn. Consequently, it may not be feasible to relocate this equipment without incurring damage. Therefore, it may necessitate renewal.

- 5.6.25 Although not clearly shown on the plans, the developer is responsible for ensuring that access to and from the new facility to the park is unobstructed and accessible to individuals of all abilities. Attention is drawn to the existing restrictions on cycling in the Town Centre Gardens. Although we support active travel, the developer needs to be aware of these limitations.
- 5.6.26 Given the site's close proximity to water, as well as the intention to introduce a café facility and eating areas, careful consideration must be given to designing the area to prevent rat and rodent activity. Attention is to be directed toward ensuring that planting does not encourage rodents to come close to the public, and that food and shelter areas are minimised. Although this is not my primary area of expertise, consideration could also be given to the inclusion of baiting stations or opportunities for rodent control.
- 5.6.27 We recommend that consideration also be given to the inclusion of appropriate waymarking and directional signs leading to the new facility from the park. Discussions and approvals shall be conducted with SDS prior to the procurement and installation processes. The Green Space Volunteers, who regularly care for the planting within the Town Centre Gardens, would be interested in opportunities for a rodent-proof, secure composting enclosure facility to support their activities.
- 5.6.28 While our Ecology Officer will offer additional advice and comments regarding this component (see section 5.12), we recognise the intention to meet the Biodiversity Net Gain requirements on the site. However, clarification is needed on the proposals for registering, implementing, managing, and monitoring these requirements. Any changes to the layout are likely to require a reassessment using the metric. Furthermore, once implemented, we must ensure that biodiversity enhancement targets are achieved, and it should be noted that limited or no changes to the scheme shall be permitted for at least 30 years.

5.7 Stevenage Borough Council Highways Department

- 5.7.1 No comments received at time of drafting report.

5.8 Hertfordshire County Council Growth and Infrastructure

- 5.8.1 No comments received at time of drafting report.

5.9 Stevenage Borough Council Tree Manager

- 5.9.1 I have no objection to this application.

Three points, however, still to consider and I mentioned them in a recent meeting with the developers:

1. I see Lime trees have been suggested as part of the new planting design. I would advise against this species on this site due to the sap implications near cars, café, etc.
2. The 4 new trees proposed for the south Eastern corner of the site are unlikely to thrive at this location due to the shade cast by the existing, large trees to the south.
3. In my view, the number of proposed (new) trees for this site should be reduced considerably to allow enough space for them to mature. The remaining trees still needed to be planted can be located off site, within one of the nearby parks and open spaces.

5.10.1 Cycling UK

- 5.10.1 This objection is submitted by Cycling UK Stevenage, focusing exclusively on cycling infrastructure and access provisions within this application. Given the importance of this development to our whole community, we have looked at this application in great detail. However, these comments were written and should be read in context of what they mean in reality for users of this leisure for decades to come. For a Leisure Centre development the LTN 1/20 Summary Principle “Cycle infrastructure should be accessible to everyone from 8 to 80 and beyond” is imperative.
- 5.10.2 In brief, we observed that:
- The Transport Assessment and Design and Access Statement contain significant gaps: missing cycle traffic forecasting, incomplete cycle parking specifications, and inadequate cycling-specific analyses on several points. These documents must be completed before approval.
 - Multiple elements violate established policies—including Active Travel England guidance, LTN 1/20, and local planning requirements—requiring mandatory changes before approval.
 - We welcome several positive elements of this planning application.
- 5.10.3 We welcome and approve of the amount of cycle parking, the ratio between car and cycle parking. Under important conditions we also welcome improvements to town centre accessibility, the attention to pedestrian infrastructure, the provision of secure cycle parking for staff. Active Travel England (ATE) has commented on this application, which underscores the significance of the development. Their response refers to their standing advice note. Much information is missing from the planning application, a significant part of which is stressed to be essential in the ATE advice note.
- 5.10.4 **Planning Application Assessment Toolkit missing:** 1.12 of the ATE standing advice note encourages the completion of their Planning Application Assessment Toolkit for this planning application. This has not been done, risking the quality of included walking and cycling provision.
- 5.10.5 **Cycle traffic forecasting missing:** ATE standing advice note 2.2 requires transport assessments to forecast volume and distribution of walking, wheeling, and cycling trips. It should also consider national targets when doing so. Forecasting was done for car traffic, but not for active travel. Before this is done, it cannot be assessed whether the proposed infrastructure is appropriate.
- 5.10.6 **Isochrone maps missing:** 2.5 of the ATE standing advice note states “Trip lengths to key amenities should be derived from isochrone maps using an appropriate point within the application site, rather than straight-line distances from site boundaries or main access points.” However, straight line distances are used instead
- 5.10.7 **Cycling erroneously merged with walking:** The application inappropriately merges cycling with walking in most instances. Cycles should be treated as vehicles, not pedestrians. Additionally, ATE advises in 2.4 of the standing advice note that “a qualitative analysis of local pedestrian, cycling and public transport infrastructure should be presented to inform any necessary improvements that would be compliant with current design standards.”
- 5.10.8 The following examples demonstrate that cycle access is discussed only superficially compared to other modes of transport:
1. The application fails to acknowledge that the leisure centre sits between two cycling-prohibited zones (Town Centre and Town Centre Gardens). This is a major oversight and significantly severely compromises the accessibility of the site.

2.The Transport Assessment Final Report states “The Town Centre and the surrounding area has an established network of footways and cycleways which provide access across the town centre, including to Stevenage Bus and Rail stations.” While correct for walking, cycling is banned in most of the town centre which makes this statement incorrect.

3.Where access for pedestrians, using public transport, and for motor-vehicles is discussed, only cycle parking is mentioned without discussing access.

4.Where active travel routes are discussed, ‘pedestrian and cycle routes’ connections are stated to have direct connectivity, but the report does not mention that for cycling this is only the case for 1 of the 4 routes listed.

5.While the new toucan crossing is mentioned to also be for cycling, the report merges cycling and walking in such a way that it is unclear whose connectivity between the town centre and Town Gardens is improved. A map with a provided overview of “key access requirements for Pedestrians and Cyclists” is not usable without distinguishing between walking and cycling.

- 5.10.9 **Information about cycle parking cover missing:** The cycle parking is mentioned to be covered but the specifics are not discussed. The cover is also not visible on the 3D renders. Without specifics it is not possible to evaluate whether the cover is appropriate (accessible design, sufficiently lit, sufficiently high), whether it interferes with the trees that are planned between the cycle parking, and whether it protects the cycles from the trees.
- 5.10.10 **Details on cycle lockers missing:** Details on the specifics of the stands and the cycle lockers are missing and must be provided. HCC policy states that “The final design for cycle parking should form an integral part of any full or reserved matters planning application. Full details of the location, type of rack, spacing, numbers, security, method of installation and access to cycle parking should be submitted for approval.” This includes a confirmation of Secured by Design level 2 certification and a 10-year warranty.
- 5.10.11 **Cycle access from the south not discussed:** Cycling access to and from the south (or the lack thereof) is not discussed, despite being a known issue and being featured in the LCWIP (see 8.4 for more on this). It is a known problem and St George’s Way features prominently in the LCWIP in the context of missing links and the potential to improve this as a part of the wider town centre regeneration. In sufficiently thorough planning application of a development of this size, this issue would be recognised and discussed.
- 5.10.12 **Non-compliance with relevant policies** Point 1-7 focussed on where the information provided by the applicant is insufficient or missing. The following points lay out elements of the application that are not conform relevant policies and should be addressed before full planning approval is granted.
- 5.10.13 **Plans to improve cycle access from south needed:** Direct cycling accessibility from the South of Stevenage and from Bedwell and the east is not discussed or improved. Consideration should be given to improvements. The current arrangement can be argued to be sub-optimal based on the local plan, LTN 1/20, Manual for Streets 2. Changes to accessibility to the leisure centre from the east can address missing links and improve accessibility to sports for an area with high levels of deprivation (Bedwell)
- 5.10.14 ATE also points out that in 2.3 that “measures to improve the accessibility of the location (such as provision/enhancement of nearby footpath and cycle path linkages) where these are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms” should be considered when formulating Transport Assessments. The toucan crossing does not improve accessibility to the leisure centre that start outside of the town centre as the town centre is not a cycling through route. Where the application identifies 4 pedestrian

routes, only 1 route is of use to cycling. While this route is qualitative improvement over the current cycle access, quantitatively there is still only 1 route for cycling.

- 5.10.15 There is no direct pedestrian link from Bedwell to the leisure centre. The local plan prioritizes the addressing of missing links¹¹ and notes that Stevenage has areas of serious deprivation, particularly Bedwell.
- 5.10.16 The cycle ban in the town gardens is against current best practice and planning should consider changes to this, now or in the near future. ATE states in 2.11 “the development should provide / safeguard pedestrian and cycling connections to neighbouring sites including future phases of development”. LTN 1/20 (section 1.4.1) states “Design should begin with the principle that all potential cyclists and their machines should be catered for in all cycle infrastructure design.”
- 5.10.17 LTN 1/20 (section 7.4.3) states “There should always be a preference for allowing cyclists to access VRAs unless there is good evidence that this would cause significant safety problems. However, the possible impacts on pedestrians, and disabled people particularly, must be considered carefully. Visually impaired people, in particular, may not feel comfortable sharing a pedestrianised area with cyclists” and in 7.4.5 that “Pedestrian and cyclist flows, street widths, the availability and safety of alternative cycle routes and the demand for cycling through the area should be considered when deciding whether including cyclists in the restrictions is justified. Where they are judged necessary on safety grounds, restrictions on cycling may only be appropriate at certain times of day. For example, permitting cycling before 10am and after 4pm may enable commuter cycling, while avoiding the busiest periods of pedestrian activity. Cycling should not be restricted during any times when motor vehicles are permitted.”
- 5.10.18 Manual for Streets 2 states in 2.3.11 “Where there are proposals to introduce vehicle restricted or pedestrianised areas, the starting position should be that cyclists are allowed to continue to use the streets concerned. If there are concerns about conflict between cyclists and pedestrians, the preferred approach is to allow cycling from the outset on the basis of an experimental traffic regulation order and only restrict access when and if the need has been demonstrated.” And continues in 2.3.12 with “Advice on this issue is set out in TAL 9/93 'Cycling in Pedestrian Areas'. This emphasises that, on the basis of research, there are no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas and that cycling can be widely permitted without detriment to pedestrians. This was confirmed by TRL report 583 'Cycling in Vehicle Restricted Areas' (2003)¹¹ which established that cyclists alter their behaviour according to the density of pedestrian traffic by modifying their speed or dismounting.”
- 5.10.19 Work on a new LCWIP is expected to start imminently. It will likely identify the cycle ban in the Town Gardens as a barrier to cycling whose removal is recommended.
- 5.10.20 The new leisure centre will not have direct access to it from the south. Traffic free routes will require a considerable detour, while a low traffic route is complicated and indirect. Consideration should be given to how acceptable access from the south should be implemented.
- 5.10.21 ATE states in 2.7 that off-site infrastructure to amenities and the cycle network should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive. This reinforces the LCWIP, which identifies in 3.7.3 that St. George’s way is a missing link. The leisure centre, as a major destination, must address this problem in its plans.
- 5.10.22 A new lay-by is to be created along St George’s Way. Sport England expressed concerns regarding the deliveries of pool chemicals needing to take place across the public realm. ¹³ The applicant must address any potential conflict that this might cause

in the implementation of plans laid out in the LCWIP to add a cycleway to St George's Way.

- 5.10.23 **Shared use path against govt policy:** The cycle access to the site from Fairlands Way should not be shared use but should physically separate walking and cycling. In 2.8 ATE points out that "The development should not be reliant on shared use routes in full or intermittently, which conflicts with the government's clear position in paragraph 1.6.1 (2) of LTN1/20 that cycles must be treated as vehicles and not as pedestrians." And in 2.12 ATE states "Alongside this, shared use routes for pedestrians and cyclists should only be proposed where these meet the limited situations listed in paragraph 6.5.6 of LTN1/20. Where shared use routes are acceptable, their widths should be at least 3m (<300 cyclists per hour) or 4.5m elsewhere, as per Table 6-3 of LTN1/20." The exceptions that LTN1/20 mentions are not applicable or not shown to be applicable by the applicant. The specifications of the path are also not provided.
- 5.10.24 **Buffer between cars and cycles missing:** The path to be used by people cycling is not fit for purpose because it will lead to the path running directly alongside St George's Way. This is unsafe and uncomfortable for the groups expected to use the leisure centre, particularly if this path is to be shared use.
- 5.10.25 ATE states in 2.7 that off-site infrastructure to amenities and the cycle network should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive. The volume of traffic on St George's way makes it that there should be a buffer space between the cycle path and the motor traffic, which is preferred in LTN 1/20. The leisure centre is designed to be suitable for all visitors. The importance of this destination for vulnerable groups such as children and young people, and people with mobility issues who might be using adapted cycles means that safe access should be prioritised. Cycle infrastructure must be accessible to all and must be safe and perceived to be safe.
- 5.10.26 **Access to cycle parking is indirect:** The route of the access path for cycling to the cycle parking must be made more direct. The proposed route is less direct than the route for cars. People cycling will need to curve around the car park and circumvent obstacles, to reach the cycle parking. It should be changed so that cycling is "at least as direct – and preferably more direct – than those available for private motor vehicles" to be compliant with LTN 1/20 and ATE advice note 2.11. The shortest route for people cycling is to enter the car park and cycle straight to the cycle parking. According to LTN 1/20 indirect routes causes people cycling to choose alternative routes, even if these are less safe

5.11 Sport England

- 5.11.1 The planning application involves the redevelopment of the Stevenage Swimming Centre site in Stevenage town centre to provide a new leisure centre that would replace the existing swimming centre and the indoor sports facilities provided in the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre. The new leisure centre would be built on the site of the existing swimming centre's car park and a new car park would be sited on the swimming centre's building following its demolition. The existing swimming centre would remain operational until the new leisure centre is completed and operational.
- 5.11.2 The new leisure centre will include the following facilities:
- 10 lane 25 x 21 metre main swimming pool
 - 17 x 10 metre teaching pool
 - Sauna and steam room
 - 6 court sports hall
 - Gym
 - 3 x activity studios
 - Spin studio

- Ancillary facilities including wet changing village, dry changing facilities, café, pool spectator seating and soft play centre.

- 5.11.3 The existing Stevenage Swimming Centre includes a 33 x 12m 6 lane main pool, a 25m 6 lane swimming pool and a 12 x 7 metre teaching pool. The facility was built in 1962 and last had a major refurbishment in 2001. Due to its age it was not designed to meet current design guidance and is reaching the end of its lifespan. In particular, there is a need to renew the services and the building is not energy efficient. It is the only swimming facility in the Stevenage area that is publicly accessible (without the need for membership) and therefore plays a strategic role in meeting the community's swimming needs.
- 5.11.4 The new swimming pools would offer a significant net increase (from 480 sq.m to 695 sq.m in total) in water space capacity Sport England's Facilities Planning Model spatial planning tool indicates that due to the capacity and age of the existing Swimming Centre pools, only 57% of demand from Stevenage Borough residents for swimming pool water space is met by the existing facilities within the Borough. If the new leisure centre is built this figure is estimated to increase to 80% by 2031. In addition, the quality of the swimming pools and supporting changing facilities would be significantly improved as they would be modern and designed broadly in accordance with Sport England's design guidance.
- 5.11.5 However, as set out below in Swim England's feedback, the depth of the proposed main pool would be 0.2 metres less than the minimum required for artistic swimming training. The club that currently uses the existing pool for artistic swimming training would therefore not be able to use the new facility and would be displaced.
- 5.11.6 The existing Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre includes an 8 court sports hall, 6 squash courts, a gym, an activity studio and supporting facilities. The facility was built in 1975 and has similar issues with the services and energy efficiency as the swimming centre and is reaching the end of its lifespan. The new sports hall would be designed to meet current Sport England design guidance and would be intended for sports including badminton, netball, basketball, volleyball, trampolining, gymnastics and football/futsal. As well as a large new gym there would be two additional activity studios and a new dedicated spin studio would be provided in response to community demand.
- 5.11.7 There would be a reduction in capacity in the sports hall from 8 courts in the existing leisure centre to 6 courts in the new facility. This is understood to be due to insufficient space to provide an 8 court hall on the application site. This would reduce sports hall capacity in Stevenage by two courts and would mean that current users of the sports hall that use all 8 courts at the same time would have less courts. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model indicates that despite the net reduction in courts, 97% of demand for sports halls from Stevenage residents would still be satisfied by the supply of sports halls both within and outside of Stevenage after the development was implemented which would be the same as the existing level of satisfied demand being met.
- 5.11.8 Other mitigating factors are that:
- At present, a large proportion of weekend use of the Arts & Leisure Centre sports hall for much of the year is for events/functions which results in sports use being severely restricted. In the new facility, the sports hall would be dedicated to sports use at weekends. While the number of courts available at the same time would reduce, the overall capacity on a weekly basis to meet local sport related demand would be increased as there would be a significant net increase in capacity of the hall in terms of the hours available over a week.
 - While the reduction in the number of courts may have some impact on current users who book all 8 courts, Everyone Active has advised that Stevenage

Pickleball Club who book the sports hall for two hours per week would be the only regular user of the sports hall affected. A futsal club and a karate club use all 8 courts for competitions but this is only for up to six times per year. Everyone Active has advised that they will offer the affected clubs longer blocks of time, more weekend slots and use of the activity studios to help mitigate the impacts.

- 5.11.9 While the new leisure centre would not replicate all of the facilities of the existing Stevenage Swimming Centre and Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre in terms of capacity or design and would clearly have impacts on some sports like artistic swimming and squash, these impacts need to be considered in the context of the significant investment proposed into the new leisure centre with modern facilities that would address the qualitative deficiencies of the facilities that they would replace as well as providing a financially sustainable leisure centre to operate over a long term period. The existing facilities are reaching the end of their lifespan and without significant investment into modernisation would be unlikely to be financially sustainable for a local authority to continue to operate over a long term period. Furthermore, as set out above as well as the improvements in design and quality, some of the facilities which are the most in demand by the community such as the swimming pools and activity studios would substantially increase in capacity.
- 5.11.10 The design of the supporting facilities in the new leisure centre should also not be underestimated in relation to the impact that this will have on participation in sport and physical activity, especially from under-represented groups. The wet changing village, dry changing facilities, toilets, etc have all been designed to maximise inclusion. Sport England's general experience is that when new leisure centres such as that proposed open they attract and retain significantly greater numbers of users than the older facilities that they replaced, much of which is due to the enhanced quality of the sports and ancillary facilities as well as the facility mix being more responsive to current demands.
- 5.11.11 A further benefit of the project is that it consolidates Stevenage's two principal indoor sports facilities into a single facility which offers benefits for users (as they have greater choice of facilities to use e.g. family members can participate in different activities at the same time within the same building) as well as operational efficiencies due to the duplication in ancillary facilities, energy costs, staffing etc associated with operating two separate facilities. The central location of the facility within Stevenage combined with the proposed access improvements to the town centre will also help support access to the facility by users especially under-represented groups in sport/physical activity that are less likely to have access to their own vehicle. The improved pedestrian access offered by the proposal to the Town Gardens and the café facilities offered by the leisure centre would also be expected to support greater use of the Town Gardens for physical activity.

Sports National Governing Body Feedback

Swim England

- 5.11.12 The loss of deep water provision in the proposed main swimming pool is identified as an issue because a minimum of 2.0 metres depth is required in the deep end to meet Swim England's design guidance <https://swimming.org/library/documents/5843/download> for training for artistic swimming (synchronised swimming) and 3.0m is required for competition. Swim England support the local artistic swimming club's (Aqualina Artistic Swimming Club) requirement for this depth as this would allow the club to stay in Stevenage and continue to serve the local community. There is no suitable alternative provision available nearby and there is potential that the club would have to close therefore. The Inspire: Luton Sports Village has an area of the 50m pool which is up to 5m deep but access to the pool is very restricted and the costs are high. The Council is recommended to discuss the matter further with the club and Swim England's Eastern Region team in advance of the application being determined.

Badminton England

- 5.11.13 While there was initial concern about the reduction of the sports hall from 8 courts to 6 courts, this is not expected to significantly impact badminton usage. The badminton clubs currently based at the facility are relatively small, and the 6- court provision in the new leisure centre should be sufficient to meet their needs. The proposed sports hall colours are appropriate and align with Sport England design guidance. Badminton England are satisfied with the design approach.

England Netball

- 5.11.14 The sports hall will accommodate a full sized netball court with run-off areas that align to England Netball's technical guidance.

Football Foundation (representing the FA and Hertfordshire FA)

- 5.11.15 Having reviewed the submitted floor plan, it is currently unclear which set of line markings are for futsal (due to the number of sports markings and the lack of colour coding). A plan showing the dimensions and run-offs for each sport would be helpful to allow informed comment to be made on their alignment with published guidance. The penalty spots are also not identified on the plan. It is recommended that these matters are addressed when the detailed specifications for the sports hall are prepared. Reference should be made to the FA Futsal Facilities Guide <https://www.thefa.com/-/media/files/pdf/get-into-football/small-sided-football/fa-futsal-facilities-guidance-resource.ashx> to inform the detailed specifications.

Design and Layout Considerations

- 5.11.16 Sport England was engaged for pre-application advice by the applicant and feedback regarding facility design and layout considerations was provided. This feedback was considered by the applicant and several amendments have been made in response which have been incorporated into the submitted plans which is welcomed by Sport England. The design and layout is considered to broadly accord with Sport England's design guidance but as set out above it is requested that the feedback from the sports governing bodies is considered before the application is determined. Sport England's pre-application advice did not account for the comments of the governing bodies.
- 5.11.17 In view of the above assessment, I am of the view that the proposal would provide sports facilities of strategic importance that would offer potential to make a significant contribution towards meeting community sport and physical activity needs in the Stevenage area for the reasons set out above. The proposals are considered to meet the above 'PROVIDE' objective therefore Sport England would wish to confirm its support for the principle of the proposed development as a non-statutory consultee.
- 5.11.18 It is requested that the Council gives consideration to the issues and concerns raised by the sports governing bodies relating to design and layout matters prior to the determination of the planning application. While the detailed design of the leisure centre is intended to accord with Sport England's design guidance, it is requested that that an informative is added to the decision notice if planning permission is forthcoming to help ensure that the detailed design specifications (such as flooring, lighting, finishes) accord with the relevant guidance in practice.

5.12 Stevenage Borough Council Ecology Officer

- 5.12.1 There is a concern that within the 30-year BNG Gain Plan there is a good possibility of changes either to the proposed building or by adding extra sports facilities out with the proposed building. This would then affect the Gain Plan and infringe the pre-commencement condition. Although the previous building has stood for 60 years, there is a possibility that changes will be made to the site within the next 30 years. Advice on changing the Gain Plan post-commencement from CIEEM is below:

5.12.2 **[Biodiversity Net Gain FAQs | CIEEM](#) states:**

In principle, if the development has not commenced, it would be possible to amend this through re-applying to discharge the condition requiring the approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, effectively substituting a previously approved gain plan for another (assuming this is approved by the LPA).

5.12.3 Alternatively, should an application be granted to vary a permission under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, this may trigger the requirement for an updated Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted – as set out within Paragraph 016 of the Planning Practice Guidance, if any conditions attached to the new planning permission granted under section 73 do affect the post-development biodiversity value, then a Biodiversity Gain Plan for the new permission must be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of the permission.

5.12.4 It should be noted that a section 73 permission cannot be used to vary or remove the biodiversity gain condition. In cases where a development has commenced, there is currently no mechanism in place within the statutory framework that would allow for these changes to be made, as BNG requirements are implemented through a pre-commencement condition. There is an expectation that these details are finalised prior to the commencement of development. Due consideration should be given to the possibility and legality of changing anything to this site that would affect the BNG Gain Plan within the next 30 years.

5.12.5 There is a concern that an area of the site that is within the red line boundary was not considered in the ecological/botanical survey, which in turn informs the metric, (see Fig 1 below). This area was to the east of the site next to the present southern car park and exit road and is marked in green on Fig 1.

5.12.6 All the grassland in the submitted metric is classed as modified grassland. The grassland immediately to the east of the car park and exit road and before the fence line has been examined by me, on 20.6.25 and it is agreed that this is probably modified grassland. Although it is difficult to assess as it is only 1cm high vegetation.

5.12.7 The area to the east of the fence line to the border of the path (coloured green), which according to the site plan is still within the red line boundary, has been examined at the same time. The area is approx. 0.033ha. The plants found in this area on 20.6.25 are in table 1 below. This may not be a comprehensive list. These species along with the other UKHab criteria such as >20% cover of broadleaved herbs present, >1 species of grass not sown for agricultural production and cover of Rye-grasses, and White Clover is <30%, indicates it is other neutral grassland. It is either poor or more likely moderate condition. I haven't carried out a quadrat survey of this area and therefore I cannot state categorically that this is what is there according to UKHab and the Statutory BNG condition assessment.

Table 1 *Plant species found in the area between fence and path in the east of the site on 20.6.25*

Scientific Name	Common Name
Bryonia sp	Bryony sp.
Galium album	Hedge Bedstraw
Centaurea nigra	Lesser Knapweed
Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-grass
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire Fog
Lotus corniculatus	Common bird's-foot-trefoil
Dactylis glomerata	Cocksfoot
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle
Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley
Knautia arvensis	Field Scabious

<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed
<i>Papaver somniferum</i>	Poppy
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel
<i>Achillia millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	Smooth Hawksbeard
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Timothy
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Bramble
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain



Fig. 1 site plan

- 5.12.8 This area should be confirmed to be within the red line boundary and if so, surveyed by the ecologist and the area entered into the metric to provide an accurate BNG metric calculation. There are no comments in the comments section of the metric and no post-development BNG habitat map supplied except for the site plan.
- 5.12.9 The comments section should state the date of the botanical survey and the criteria which the relevant habitats passed or failed to achieve the condition for that habitat. This should be done on baseline, created and enhanced areas. On the baseline map there was no information on which area on the map was represented by which line in the metric and no post-development BNG habitat map. This gives the person reviewing the application metric complete transparency and an accurate overview.
- 5.12.10 A BNG map should be submitted for both baseline and post development showing which line of the metric is represented by which area of the maps.
- 5.12.11 The above concerns should preferably be addressed prior to approval along with delivery of a draft management plan. An agreed Statutory Metric, Biodiversity Gain Plan and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan for the site will be supplied before commencement of the development.

6 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1 National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.1.1 The latest revision of the NPPF was published in December 2024. The policies it contains are material considerations which will be taken into account in dealing with applications. Due weight will be given to development plan policies according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.
- 6.1.2 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 Planning Practice Guidance

- 6.2.1 The Planning Practice Guidance ("PPG") is an online resource containing guidance supplementing the NPPF. The PPG is a material consideration which should be taken into account in determining planning applications.

6.3 National Design Guide

- 6.3.1 The National Design Guide 2019 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.

6.4 The Development Plan

- 6.4.1 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 development plan comprises the following documents:
- Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031
 - Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies DPD 2011-2026
 - Waste Site Allocations DPD 2011-2026
 - Minerals Local Plan Review 2002-2016
- 6.4.2 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in 2019. The council concluded a full review of the plan in 2024, as required by regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 6.4.3 In response to the review, the council has completed a partial update of the local plan and this is now with the Secretary of State for assessment. Weight will be given to emerging policies according to:
- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan;
 - b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the policies; and
 - c) the degree of consistency between the policies and the most recent revision of the NPPF.
- 6.4.4 In determining applications, regard will be had to other material considerations, including (but not limited to):
- The Planning Practice Guidance;

- The National Design Guide;
- Written ministerial statements and directions;
- Guidance published by Hertfordshire County Council;
- Stevenage Borough Council supplementary planning documents.

6.4.5 Where there are emerging policies which are relevant to the application, these will be highlighted in the main body of this report. 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 SP5: Infrastructure:

Policy SP6: Sustainable transport:

Policy SP8: Good design:

Policy SP9: Healthy communities:

Policy SP11: Climate change, flooding, and pollution:

Policy SP12: Green infrastructure and the natural environment:

Policy SP13: The historic environment:

Policy TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area:

Policy IT3: Infrastructure:

Policy IT4: Transport assessments and travel plans:

Policy IT5: Parking and access:

Policy IT6: Sustainable transport:

Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists:

Policy IT8: Public parking provision:

Policy HC6: Existing leisure and cultural facilities:

Policy HC7: New and refurbished leisure and cultural facilities:

Policy GD1: High quality design:

Policy FP1: Climate change:

Policy FP3: Flood risk in Flood Zones 2 and 3:

Policy FP7: Pollution:

Policy FP8: Pollution sensitive uses:

Policy NH3: Green corridors:

Policy NH5: Trees and woodland:

Policy NH7: Open space standards:

Policy NH09: Areas of archaeological significance.

6.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

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

Parking Provision SPD (2025)

Stevenage Design Guide SPD (2025)

Developer Contributions SPD (2025)

6.6 Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule

6.6.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule in 2020. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location and floorspace of a development. This proposal would be CIL liable at £0/m².

7 APPRAISAL

7.1.1 The main considerations in assessing the proposals are the acceptability in land use policy terms, siting and scale, design and visual impact, loss of green space, impact on

the local highway and parking, impact on flooding/drainage, impact on trees and landscaping, impact on biodiversity, impact on climate change, impact on heritage assets and other matters.

- 7.1.2 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.

7.2 Land Use Considerations

- 7.2.1 The redevelopment of the existing leisure facilities in Stevenage, including the swimming centre and Gordon Craig Theatre is designated in Local Plan Policies SP9: Healthy Communities and TC7: Marshgate Major Opportunity Area.

Policy SP9 states that -

We will provide community facilities that meet the needs of local residents and those living in the area around Stevenage. We will:

f. Support the provision of leisure and cultural facilities to reflect the distribution of the existing and future population, by protecting and enhancing existing facilities and helping to deliver new facilities, particularly:

i. A new wet and dry leisure facility to replace the Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre within the town centre.

- 7.2.2 Furthermore, Policy TC7 of the Local Plan relates to the Marshgate Major Opportunity Area and states that planning permission will be granted for 'New Use Class D1 and D2 (Now Use Class E and F.2) leisure, cultural and civic uses'. It further states that applications should address the following design and land use principles –

- A new sports/swimming complex with an interactive frontage onto Town Centre Gardens;
- Creation of a critical mass of uses and activities to stimulate greater day-to-day and event use of Town Centre Gardens.

- 7.2.3 The proposed new sports and leisure facility would see the relocation of facilities currently located in the Arts and Leisure Centre off Lytton Way, as well as swimming facilities from the adjoining Swimming Centre. The facilities available in the new facility consist of a 25m 10 lane swimming pool with spectator seating, a teaching pool, splash pad, soft play area, 6 court sports hall with provision for badminton, basketball, netball (list not exhaustive), gym, spin class space, studio spaces, changing facilities and a café.

- 7.2.4 The design approach has carefully considered the functionality of the building in respect of opening up and engaging with the Town Centre Gardens. Located due east of the site, they are currently cut-off from the existing swimming centre and Bowes Lyon Youth Centre (which will not be affected by the proposed development) by fencing and largely blank rear elevations. The proposed eastern elevation of the proposed centre is predominantly glass allowing views into and out from all floors of the centre facing the gardens. These spaces encompass the teaching pool, splash pad, café, gym and studio spaces.

- 7.2.5 Outside the eastern entrance to the building the landscaping would provide an external seating area focussed towards the Town Centre Gardens. The proposals therefore make positive moves to fulfill the policy requirement for engagement with the gardens and the likelihood to stimulate further use of the gardens. The proposal in terms of land use policy is therefore considered acceptable.

7.3 Character and Appearance

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

- 7.3.1 Chapter 12 Achieving well-designed places of the NPPF (2024) stipulates that the creation of high quality, sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. 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. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process. Where development is not well designed, permission should be refused.
- 7.3.2 The National Design Guide 2019, which was published by the Government, is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It states 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.
- 7.3.3 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.

Development Plan

- 7.3.4 Whilst the policies contained in the Local Plan have limited weight, Policy SP8 generally reflects the requirements of the NPPF in that it requires new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability. In addition, 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.
- 7.3.5 In the emerging local plan partial review and update, criterion (e) of Policy GD1 is updated to refer to “unacceptable” adverse impacts. The intention behind the change is to make clear that in some circumstances, an adverse impact might still fall within acceptable bounds and that this is a matter of judgement for the decision maker. Policy GD2 is a new policy emerging from the local plan partial review and update. It states that proposals which demonstrate they have been designed to achieve a rating of excellent or higher against a relevant BREEAM standard and/or to achieve the BRE Home Quality Mark will be strongly supported. Having regard to paragraph 49 of the NPPF, this emerging version of the policy is afforded moderate weight in the assessment of the application.

- 7.3.6 This part of the application has been assessed against the key policy criteria on good design, as well as how the scheme meets the four key objectives in the National Design Guide on what is considered as a well-designed place.

Layout

- 7.3.7 The site layout has been designed to maximise site efficiency, accommodating existing constraints, especially the existing swimming centre, location of the Bowes Lyon building and proximity of the Town Centre Gardens. The orientation and shape of the building is considered to make best use of the space chosen for the proposal (when considering the required phasing of the development) and its integration between St Georges Way and the Town Centre Gardens. The building position and layout would ensure it has a prominent frontage on to both Fairlands Way and St Georges Way. The proposed siting of the new building to the south of the existing swimming centre has largely been led by the necessity to build the new facility while the existing centre is still in use. Preventing a loss of the facility for any period of time.
- 7.3.8 Once the new centre is built the existing facility would be demolished and the proposed car park layout completed, including additional areas of useable open space to the north of the building. These would include the café outdoor seating area to the northeast of the building and the hard landscaping provision providing access to the cycle parking, car park beyond, and various areas of grass and landscaping. The layout would also encompass SuDS features in the form of swales to the northwest and southeast of the building.
- 7.3.9 The siting of the new facility and the colonnade along its northern edge has been aligned with the approved highway works on St Georges Way which will provide a new level signalised crossing point. This is being delivered as part of the Life Sciences Quarter development approved within The Forum and works are due to start imminently. This will be a key new route for opening up the eastern side of the Town Centre with the Town Gardens.
- 7.3.10 The footpath currently sited between the swimming centre and the Bowes Lyon building which provides access to and from the Town Centre Gardens and St Georges Way, will be permanently closed, with the new building being built over it. The footpath has some historic significance as an old farm lane and the design of the Town Centre Gardens by Gordon Patterson included this lane as one of the three primary design principles. Therefore, whilst the lane does not have any formal designation, its loss should be considered as part of the heritage asset assessment. This is discussed further below in this report. However, the loss of this Town Centre Gardens access point will be replaced by the new colonnade and footpath to the north of the new building.
- 7.3.11 Constrained by the available space between the two existing buildings of the swimming centre and Bowes Lyon Centre, the building layout has been carefully designed to provide the required facilities from an operations standpoint, but also by prioritising its engagement with the Town Centre Gardens. The layout has also carefully considered the operations of the building in terms of the location and layout of the plant and machinery needed for the pools and utilities.
- 7.3.12 A new substation is required to power the proposed building. This would be located to the southwest of the site and would be a detached ancillary building. The provision of this substation does not form part of the application proposals as it can be provided under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order as permitted development.
- 7.3.13 In conclusion, the layout is considered to be acceptable. It has been reliant on working around the continued operations of the existing building, whilst prioritising the need to

provide a certain level of facilities within the building and providing positive engagement with the Town Centre Gardens. It is considered the proposed layout has done this well, creating a good balance between each element.

Scale, Massing and Form

- 7.3.14 The site is located on the northeastern outskirts of the Town Centre. The area is made-up of a variety of key character points, the residential flats to the east of the site which are 17 storeys tall, open green spaces at the Town Centre Gardens to the east and King George V Recreation Ground to the north of Fairlands Way, and multi-use buildings to the west in the Town Centre. The nearest buildings here vary from three to six storeys in height, with a varying palette of materials. The Bowes Lyon Centre to the south is two storeys in height at the closest point to the site, increasing to three storeys at its southern half.
- 7.3.15 Re-development of The Forum shopping area and its car park has been approved and would consist of a Life Sciences Quarter, with a variety of high quality buildings ranging from three to six storeys in height.
- 7.3.16 The Design and Access Statement clearly outlines the evolution of the scheme and the influences on the end design. The proposed building would be predominantly four storeys in height with basement areas to accommodate the swimming pools and associated plant. The main bulk of the building is the area that contains the 25m 10 lane swimming pool and 6 court sports hall above. The height of the building scales down at the eastern end, closest to the Town Centre Gardens, and at the southern side towards the Bowes Lyon Centre to three storeys.
- 7.3.17 The building is obviously large in overall scale, needing to provide high level facilities to cover a variety of sport and recreational uses. The orientation has the main entrance on the northern elevation fronting the car park and Fairlands Way. The northern and southern elevations would be the longest measuring approximately 70m in length, with 40m of this being the full four storeys. The east and western elevations being the shorter sides of the rectangular layout would have a width of approximately 43m. There would be a step-in of the fourth storey off the southern elevation by approximately 7m.
- 7.3.18 Given the proposed use of the building, the scale and mass are expected. The existing swimming centre is up to three storeys in height with some single storey elements. The additional facilities proposed in the new Leisure Centre have been carefully sited internally to ensure the building is not too large and out-of-keeping in its setting.
- 7.3.19 The proposed building is considered to take positive cues from its surrounding environment and from the varying built form in the northeastern corner of the Town Centre. The scale and mass are respectful of the immediately neighbouring buildings whilst ensuring the building will fulfill its purpose. The scale, mass and form are therefore considered acceptable and will result in a high quality and statement building in this prominent location.

Appearance and Materiality

- 7.3.20 The existing swimming centre is finished in horizontal white sectional cladding, with a blue painted single storey extension to its front and western elevation. The Bowes Lyon Centre is a typical New Town building completed in dark brown mix brick work with flat roof and a cantilever front canopy finished in white. Newer buildings in the area, such as Autolus which has sectional cladding and glazing and new residential buildings introduce more modern brickwork and render forward in varying colours.

- 7.3.21 There is therefore a wide variety of examples for the proposal to take cues from. The Design and Access Statement identifies the prominence of buildings which have a 'plinth' on the lower half of the building's elevations completed in a different material or texture to the upper storeys. This is visible on St Andrew and St George Church further south along St Georges Way. The Grade II Listed church has a striking flint panelling plinth with turquoise weathered copper roof. The building provides numerous horizontal and vertical design features and influences.
- 7.3.22 Paragraph 3.10.1 gives a strong declaration of the vision for the materiality for the proposed leisure centre. It states 'The new Leisure Centre presents an exciting opportunity to deliver a contemporary architectural response that reflects its civic significance as a key community facility. It is considered to do this.
- 7.3.23 The ground and first floors are clearly identified by the lighter coloured panelling, the exact colour and material to be agreed. The second and third floors would incorporate an aluminium curtain wall finish, taking cues from the modern additions nearby. Again, the exact colour and finish are to be agreed but it gives a good visual representation of the proposed finish of the building. The metallic finish on the upper level has also been proposed because of its ability to take on a reflective nature in terms of colours and how that could be presented on the building. This could include taking green hues from the nearby mature trees in the Town Centre Gardens when in full canopy bloom, to taking in pink and red hues from sunsets, etc. It would give the building a very different dynamic from its surrounding environment.
- 7.3.24 Utilising and promoting contemporary architectural design, the building proposes large amounts of full height glazing, with the key principle of having views into and through the building. This is to emphasise the facilities inside, but to also engage with the Town Centre Gardens, a key requirement of Policy TC7 of the Local Plan. The large, glazed panels would provide views into the main swimming pool. Whilst the internal pool space is two storey's in height, the upper floor would be finished in the render panelling. The glazing continues on the north eastern end of the front elevation and along the eastern end elevation of the building. The glazing here opens up across all three floors where the café, teaching pool, gym and studio spaces would be located.
- 7.3.25 The introduction of the colonnade on the northern elevation is considered to offer a functional but expressive design feature. It provides shelter to those entering and leaving the building to and from St Georges Way, whilst also providing an important architectural structure which at double height encompasses the importance of the building and instils its modern appearance in the wider area.
- 7.3.26 The Design and Access Statement identifies that the colonnade would not just be an architectural feature for visual aesthetics, but, would also provide a threshold and gathering space. It mediates a space between external and internal and becomes the embodiment of civic ideals of openness, inclusivity and permanence.
- 7.3.27 In terms of the loss of the existing swimming centre facility, this is considered acceptable despite the visual impact it would have on the existing landscape. Policy clearly outlines the Town's plans to update key leisure and cultural facilities by way of re-provision. The existing facility has come to the end of its life and the cost to upgrade would not be feasible. The existing building is not considered to positively contribute to the character and appearance of the area. It is of its time architecturally, with minimal views into the building, and thus the elevations are plain and uninteresting. Its replacement in this respect is welcomed.

Conclusion

- 7.3.28 Overall, it is considered the proposed development would have a high-quality finish and has been carefully designed to integrate itself with the wider area whilst systematically presenting a standout contemporary building and establishing its civic use in this prominent space. Whilst final materials are to be agreed, the proposals identify the key design principles in terms of the materiality of the proposed building and how it would be expressed in its siting. The proposed building would in officer's opinion would enhance the character and appearance of the area and would be a significantly positive impact on the town. The proposed development is therefore, considered acceptable in accordance with the policies on design in the adopted Local Plan (2019), the Design Guide SPD (2025), the NPPF (2024) and PPG.

7.4 Loss of Green Space

- 7.4.1 Policy NH1 of the Local Plan (2019) relates to Principal Open Spaces in the borough, with the Town Centre Gardens being specified under NH1/2 as a Principal Park. The policy states that planning permission will be granted where proposals:
- a) Would not result in the loss of any part of a Principal Open Space;
 - b) Would not have an adverse impact upon any Principal Open Space within, or adjacent to, the application site; and
 - c) Reasonably provide, or reasonably contribute towards the maintenance or improvement of, Principal Open Spaces and allotments.
- 7.4.2 Paragraph 14.1 of the Local Plan (2019) states that the Principal Open Spaces are sites that:
- Have a significant draw within Stevenage or their neighbourhood;
 - Are destinations in their own right, places where people would go to spend time with a specific purpose;
 - Are not incidental open space;
 - Are not principally defined by organised sports activities; and
 - May contain a variety of facilities and attractions aimed at a wide demography.
- 7.4.3 Based on the proposed site layout plan, the new building footprint sits up to and possibly slightly over the policy designation line for Policy NH1/12 for the edge of the Town Centre Gardens. It is not possible to be absolutely definitive on this because of the rudimentary policy map features. Notwithstanding this, the significance and function of the Town Centre Gardens would not be compromised. The proposals would see an improved relationship between the built form and the gardens through the introduction of the community spaces outside the building, as well as the building design and interaction with the Principal Open Space.
- 7.4.4 Additional areas of green are proposed around the car park area, especially following demolition of the existing swimming centre and the remedial works to provide a greater landscaped area to the pool's frontage. It is considered the public benefit derived from the provision of this facility greatly outweighs the minimal impact on the Town Centre Gardens.

7.5 Impact on the Environment and Neighbouring Occupiers

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

- 7.5.1 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2024) sets out that planning decision should ensure create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future residents. Paragraph 124 of the National Design Guide states that "*Good design promotes quality of life for the occupants and users of buildings. This includes function – buildings should be easy to*

use. It also includes comfort, safety, security, amenity, privacy, accessibility and adaptability". Paragraph 126 of the National Design Guide also emphasises that "well-designed homes and communal areas within buildings provide a good standard and quality of internal space. This includes room sizes, floor-to-ceiling heights, internal and external storage, sunlight, daylight and ventilation. The quality of internal space needs careful consideration in higher density developments, particularly for family accommodation, where access, privacy, daylight and external amenity space are also important".

Development Plan

- 7.5.2 Whilst the policies contained in the Local Plan have limited weight, Policies SP8 and GD1 of the Local Plan (2019) which generally reflect the good design principles outlined in the NPPF and National Design Guide, require that development does not adversely impact the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. In the emerging Local Plan review and partial update, criterion (e) of policy GD1 is updated to refer to "unacceptable" adverse impacts. The intention behind the change is to make clear that in some circumstances, an adverse impact might still fall within acceptable bounds and that this is a matter of judgement for the decision maker. This emerging policy carries significant weight under paragraph 49 of the NPPF.
- 7.5.3 Policy FP5 of the Local Plan requires development proposals to consider contamination and 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.
- 7.5.4 Policy FP7 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.
- 7.5.5 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. Other possible matters can also cause nuisance including construction vehicle parking or movements, or damage to neighbouring properties, services and facilities.
- 7.5.6 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. Dust from site operations can also be an issue, particularly during periods of sustained dry weather.
- 7.5.7 The nearest residential properties are contained to the east with Brent Court and Harrow Court, and also to the west of the site off Marshgate. The nearest buildings due west of the site, side facing on to St Georges way appear to be offices above existing retail and commercial premises. The known residential properties are at least 90m or more away from the nearest respective edge of red line plan.

Noise Pollution

- 7.5.8 The application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment by Anderson Acoustics Ltd. Noise survey work was undertaken to determine baseline noise levels in the vicinity of the site. Assessment of activity noise levels in accordance with BS 4142 indicates that the impact of noise externally will be related to any proposed plant equipment. The final details of this plant have not yet been confirmed.

- 7.5.9 The NIA advises that at the time of conducting the noise survey there is not sufficient information available to predict noise emissions from proposed plant. The report summary continues, stating that 'experience indicates that noise levels from these sources will not give rise to a significant impact if they are controlled to a BS4142 rating that is 5db below the lowest measured background level'. Officers agree and it is considered reasonable to impose conditions to this extent, to ensure the proposed plant, once details are known, does not exceed this measurement. Also, that where necessary sufficient screening and mitigation can be secured prior to first use of the facility. The Environmental Health Officer has confirmed this position and suggested conditions for imposition.

Contamination

- 7.5.10 The application has been submitted with a Ground Investigation Report by Lucion Ground Engineering Ltd. The report findings advise that the made ground is suitable for use within the context of the commercial swimming pool development, and that there is no indication of contamination.
- 7.5.11 It is considered reasonable to impose standard conditions relating to any future contamination found as works on site progress, and measures to ensure remediation as required.

Light Pollution

- 7.5.12 The Energy Statement Report submitted advises that only LED lighting will be used on site. Furthermore, it is noted that in section 3.15 of the Design and Access Statement the comment that external lighting will be designed to meet a number of guidance documents including the ILP *Guidance Note 01 – The reduction of Obtrusive Light*. This approach is welcomed. No specific details of the proposed lighting have been provided at this stage. The ultimate detailed lighting scheme should reflect the Note's guidance regarding the environmental zone classification of the site and how it will meet the challenges of managing light spill and reflected light given the presence of dwellings overlooking the development. It is considered reasonable that these details can be adequately secured by the imposition of conditions.

Air Quality

- 7.5.13 Looking at air quality and air pollution specifically, the Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2024 by Stevenage Borough Council identifies that the development site is not located within or in close proximity to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). This generally indicates that the air quality in the area is within national guidelines.
- 7.5.14 Environmental Health Officers note that the application essentially seeks permission to replace the existing swimming centre and therefore the impact on local air quality associated with future users is unlikely to be significantly different to the current position.

Privacy, Overbearing Impact and Daylight

- 7.5.15 The proposed building is located a sufficient distance from neighbouring residential properties to not cause any adverse impact on privacy, daylight or be considered overbearing.

Demolition and Construction Impacts

- 7.5.16 The disruptive effect of demolition and construction work is a material consideration. Some disruption is inevitable, insofar as vehicle movements and noisy work would be necessary to complete the development. However, the impacts can be mitigated, for

example by employing dust suppression techniques, limiting the hours when deliveries can be made, and limiting the hours when work can be carried out.

- 7.5.17 To this end, it is recommended that a construction management plan be secured by condition. Subject to this condition, it is considered that the impacts of demolition and construction could be mitigated to an acceptable degree.

Conclusions on Environment and Neighbouring Occupiers

- 7.5.18 Having regard to the above, it is concluded that the proposed development would not result in any fundamentally unacceptable impacts on the environment and has been designed in such a way as to ensure acceptable living conditions for neighbouring occupiers. The application has been assessed by the Environmental Health Team and conditions suggested where necessary. In these respects, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies FP5, FP7 and GD1 of the Local Plan.

7.6 Parking

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

- 7.6.1 Chapter 9 'Promoting Sustainable Transport' of the NPPF (2024) sets out a requirement to consider transport issues, which includes parking, at the earliest stages of a development proposal. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024) states "*Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios*".
- 7.6.2 Taking this into consideration, paragraph 117 of the NPPF (2024) stipulates that applications for development should:
- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
 - b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;
 - c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
 - d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
 - e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

Development Plan

- 7.6.3 Policy IT5 of the Local Plan requires development proposals to comply with the parking standards set out in the Council's Parking SPD (2025) and has not been updated by the Local Plan (LP) Review. Policy SP6 Sustainable Transport has been reordered to reflect the priority of sustainable transport consistent with NPPF under the LP Review and the amended policy carries significant weight. This policy requires, amongst other things, for developments to demonstrate they are in a sustainable location and will promote active travel by non-car modes of transport by providing appropriate cycle parking and prioritise public transport.

- 7.6.4 Based on the SPD the maximum parking standards for swimming pools and fitness centres/indoor leisure centres is 1 car parking space per 15 sqm. As the site lies on the outskirts of the Town Centre, it is in a highly sustainable location and falls within the SPD non-residential accessibility zones for parking provision. Non-Residential Map 2 – Town Centre (W) in the SPD shows the site within the Town Centre Zone, and immediately adjacent Zone 1. Where sites fall within the Town Centre zone provision shall be calculated on a site-by-site basis and assessed via a Transport Assessment. This is to allow significant reductions in numbers where applicable but also acknowledges that some uses will attract the need for on-site parking despite the sustainable location.
- 7.6.5 It is also worth noting that the immediately adjacent non-residential accessibility zone is Zone 1 which allows a 0-25% provision, again due to its sustainable location. The proposed building would equate to a total floor area of 5,875 sqm which would require a maximum parking provision of between 0 and 100 spaces when taking the requirements of Zone 1.
- 7.6.6 The existing surface car parks provide 91 car parking spaces, 32 in the north car park and 53 in the south car park and 6 faded out spaces to the east of the building and off the northern access road. The proposed site layout plan shows the provision of 53 car parking spaces, 5 of which would be disabled spaces, with provision for motorised two-wheelers within this total. Electric Vehicle Charging Points are being provided in accordance with the SPD and this is also covered by Part S of the Building Regulations. There would therefore be a net loss of 38 spaces on site.
- 7.6.7 The SPD states that in respect of the loss of existing parking spaces equivalent replacements should be provided within a reasonable proximity (200m for car parking, 80m for cycle parking) to the destinations they serve unless it can be demonstrated that the parking is no longer required. For reference, the proposed car parking area would be within 200m of St Georges multi-storey car park (MSCP) site, The Forum car park, and ultimately the approved multi-storey car park at the life sciences development on The Forum.
- 7.6.8 The existing leisure facilities in the Arts and Leisure Centre rely on public car parking in the Town Centre, with spaces also available at the Train Station MSCP. Users are required to park and walk to the facility, however. Similarly, existing overspill of users at the swimming centre would need to make use of other public car parks in the town centre, like St Georges Way MSCP and The Forum surface car park.
- 7.6.9 The peak average number of daily visitor for the swimming centre typically shows greater numbers than car park space numbers. The reduction of the number of spaces proposed will of course exacerbate this, especially as the new centre will include leisure facilities not currently available at the swimming centre site.
- 7.6.10 However, as per the Council's Local Plan policies and SPD, greater emphasis is being placed on modal shift from the private motor car, and the proposal, accompanied by a Travel Plan seeks a reduced target car driver modal split of 40 percent. The numbers proposed in the Transport Assessment submitted take account of the loss of squash courts and the dedicated Bowls space from the existing leisure facilities. Furthermore, given the facilities for swimming and leisure/sports will now be in the same space there will be some level of overlap for trips, with people using the facility for both as opposed to having to visit two separate venues.
- 7.6.11 The site is well connected to non-car modes of transport, including several nearby bus stops along Fairlands Way, and immediate connectivity to the foot and cycle network to the north of the site. Pedestrian access to the Town Centre is currently via underpass to the south of the site, however, the new at-level Toucan crossing to the west of the site will provide direct access from the building frontage to The Forum and Town Centre

beyond. The prohibition of cycling through the town centre and the Town Centre Gardens is noted, as raised by Cycling UK in their objection. Notwithstanding, this crossing provides direct access across St Georges Way with the allowance that cyclists can dismount and walk the approximately 600m to the train station or bus interchange. Moreover, it is for the Council as landowner and not the Council as Local Planning Authority to determine whether or not the cycle prohibitions are to be lifted with respect to the Town Centre and Town Centre Gardens.

- 7.6.12 The existing foot and cycleway provision to the north of the swimming centre will be unchanged, with the proposed public realm improvements and foot/cycle connections from the building frontage to the Fairlands Way connections considered a positive improvement over existing arrangements.
- 7.6.13 Comments from Cycling UK that infer continued poor connectivity to the south of the site are noted. However, improvements along St Georges Way to the south would be significant and as existing restricted by the physical limitations along the footpath. It would be unreasonable in officer's opinion for the development itself to seek these changes. The local highway authority has also fully assessed the application and have raised no objections or requirements for improvements of these nature.
- 7.6.14 Furthermore, in respect of points raised by Cycling UK in respect of Active Travel England's (ATE) advice, this is 'standing advice' only. ATE have not provided detailed comments on the applications. It is noted that elements of ATE's standing advice have not been undertaken as part of this application. However, this in itself is not a reason for objection or refusal.
- 7.6.15 The allowance of planning judgement when determining planning applications falls with the local planning authority, and the planning balance must be fully considered in cases such as these. Officer's take note of the small shortcomings of the development as raised by third party comments on the application.
- 7.6.16 However, the development as a whole must be considered. The proposed Sports and Leisure Centre is a Local Plan designated, Corporate strategic project that will provide significant new facilities to the town. The public benefits that will be realised through its provision by far outweigh the shortcomings in respect of connectivity and missed information stated.
- 7.6.17 The loss of car parking on site is unfortunate. However, to provide additional parking in the re-aligned parking area to the north of the new building would significantly impact the level of public realm, landscaping (some of which is required for BNG purposes), cycle parking, foot/cycleway connections and SuDS features proposed. This would be to the detriment of each of these elements but also to the overall positive and well considered design of the development.
- 7.6.18 Therefore, in respect of car parking provision, the proposed 53 spaces are considered to be acceptable. There is adequate alternative public parking available within 200m of the proposed development in accordance with the SPD.
- 7.6.19 In respect of cycle parking, the required provision would be 1 long stay space per 8 staff and 1 short stay space per 100 sqm, equating to a required provision of 65 spaces on site. The proposed Transport Assessment and site layout plan shows the provision of 60 short stay cycle parking spaces (30 Sheffield stands) and 8 long stay cycle parking lockers (details to be agreed).
- 7.6.20 The level of cycle parking is therefore policy compliant, and details of the long stay lockers / covered spaces can be secured through condition. An area has been identified for the provision of 6 Beryl bikes given the schemes launch in the Borough should it be

felt advantageous to follow this-up. However, given recent vandalism to this initiative it will not be taken any further forward as part of this application. Officers did suggest the provision of a small scooter area for children's scooters, given the provision of children's facilities inside the new building and the likelihood for families to use the centre. Unfortunately, this has not been taken on. However, it is not a policy requirement and thus does not have any weight on securing cycle parking on-site.

- 7.6.21 Having regard to the above, the proposed car and cycle parking arrangements are considered to be acceptable. In this respect, the proposal accords with Policy IT5 of the Local Plan.

7.7 Highway Safety

- 7.7.1 Policy IT4 of the Local Plan has been amended under the LP Review by substituting the word "adverse" with "unacceptable" to align with the NPPF and to the travel plan threshold to align with HCC Highways policy. The amended policy carries significant weight. It states that planning permission will be granted where development will not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan.

Access

- 7.7.2 It is proposed to undertake works to the existing exit only junction onto Fairlands Way to create an 'in' 'out' access at this location. This is historically how the swimming centre car park was accessed. The siting of the new building eradicates the existing St Georges Way access to the south of the existing swimming centre building. These works, whilst shown on the proposed plans, are being undertaken under the Council's statutory permitted development rights. They do not therefore form part of the assessment of this application.
- 7.7.3 Given the proposed phasing of the development, the construction of the new access will be fundamental to the continued use of the existing centre whilst the new building is constructed. The closure of and phasing of the car park areas for use when works start is also an important matter to outline and have agreed.
- 7.7.4 The surface-level signalised crossing to the west of the site has been approved and is being delivered across St Georges Way as part of the life sciences quarter on The Forum site. This will provide a much-needed West – East pedestrian and cycling access between the Town Centre and Town Centre Gardens, that is not reliant on the existing subway network. This connection is identified in Local Plan Policy IT7 for new and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.7.5 Connections to and from the eastern side of this crossing will be important, so the scale of the hardstand access along the northern side of the proposed Leisure Centre, and its design to include landscaping and cycle parking are welcomed. The demolition of the existing building and siting of the proposed leisure centre will also open the views and general accessibility of the site across and into the Town Centre Gardens from wider vistas than existing. This is considered to be hugely beneficial on multiple levels

Trip Generation

- 7.7.6 The Transport Assessment submitted in support of the application (including the addendum) outlines the trip generation of the existing swimming centre and leisure centre, and then the proposed trip generation of the new leisure centre.
- 7.7.7 Table 1B (Existing and Proposed Development – Summary Traffic Generation Sensitivity test B, excluding the reduction factor of 0.85) of the TA addendum indicates

that the proposed development is expected to generate an additional 50 vehicular trips during weekday AM peak period, 157 vehicular trips during weekday PM peak period and 141 vehicular trips during the Saturday peak period. The highway authority considers that this level of additional traffic, when accounting for the omission of the Bowls Club trips, the implementation of a Travel Plan, and the presence of linked trips, would not result in a significant impact on the local highway network.

7.8 Biodiversity and Ecology

- 7.8.1 The Environment Act received royal ascent in 2021. Within the legislation is the requirement for proposals to bring about a positive net gain in biodiversity. The regulations make a 10% net gain a statutory requirement (with a standard condition). The requirement and the ways in which this gain is measured apply to planning applications for major development submitted after the regulations came into force on 12 February 2024. The NPPF and accompanying PPG require the Council to achieve measurable net gains in biodiversity at development sites across the Borough unless they are exempt. Policy SP12 of the Local Plan requires the protection of assets of ecological and biodiversity value. This policy has not been amended by the Local Plan Review and carries significant weight.
- 7.8.2 The application is supported by an ecological appraisal. No statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations are present within the site, all designations in the wider area are physically separated from the site and therefore are unlikely to be adversely affected by the proposals. The extended Phase 1 habitat survey established that the site, given the presence of the existing swimming centre and levels of hardstanding from the car parks only provides possible bat roosting in nearby trees. The site does not show signs of Badgers or Great Crested Newts. Furthermore, the ornamental pond in the Town Centre Gardens given its manmade structure and the presence of numerous waterfowl birds is not suitable for Great Crested Newts.
- 7.8.3 The line of trees south of the site that adjoins the existing footpath access from St Georges Way to the Town Centre gardens were identified as having low bat roosting potential, specifically in trees marked T12 and T13 in the Arboricultural Report. The Ecology Report advises mitigation measures to provide opportunities for enhancement of ecology on site. In this case they include bird and bat boxes to be installed on new buildings and in established retained trees respectively. This can be secured through condition.
- 7.8.4 The application is also supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment which has considered the landscape proposals using the latest statutory metric. Based upon the metric, the proposals would result in a total net change of 26.60% for habitat units reflecting a significant gain of 0.36 habitat units as a result of the landscaping proposals being implemented. Therefore, the proposed development would be able to deliver the 10% net gain on site. Comments received by the Ecology Officer are being considered by the applicant and respective consultants. Final details to confirm the correct assessment has been undertaken and to confirm the BNG position will be secured prior to any decision being made.
- 7.8.5 The BNG Report does go on to state that in order to achieve these results the condition of retained trees must be enhanced from poor to moderate and 56 new small trees must be planted. The Council's Tree Officer has raised some concerns over the total number of trees being shown for planting, in particular a group of four trees in the south east corner. The Tree Manager advises that these four trees are unlikely to thrive because of their proximity under the canopies of the existing mature trees to the south of the site.
- 7.8.6 Some concerns have also been raised over the planting of Lime trees around the car park area because of their likelihood to drop sap near cars and the café. The revision of

tree species proposed is being looked in to. The comments in relation to tree planting numbers are also being considered by the applicant's consultants. The implications for a reduced planting schedule are that a 10% net gain cannot be provided on site. The Council's BNG Officer has also raised concerns over the 30-year management of these spaces given their siting and proximity to hard standing areas and uses associated with the new Leisure Centre.

- 7.8.7 Subject to the agreement of further details relating to final landscaping details (which can be agreed through the imposition of conditions) and to clarify the applicants position on the 30-year management and maintenance of the landscaping areas, the proposals for landscaping and ecology are considered acceptable in principle. The BNG net gain on site is secured by the imposition of standard conditions in line with the relevant national legislation.
- 7.8.8 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on ecology and biodiversity. In this respect, the proposal accords with Policy SP12 of the Local Plan.

7.9 Trees and Landscaping

- 7.9.1 Policy NH5 of the 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. In the Local Plan review and partial update, policy NH5 is replaced by two new policies: Policy NH5a, which relates to trees and woodland; and Policy NH5b, which relates to tree-lined streets. Policy NH5a continues to provide a general presumption against the loss of healthy trees but also introduces a new tree replacement standard and offsetting mechanism where replacement planting cannot be provided on site. This emerging policy currently has limited weight. Policy NH5b requires new streets to be tree-lined, mirroring paragraph 136 and footnote 53 of the NPPF. This emerging policy carries significant weight, however, is not relevant to this application proposal.
- 7.9.2 Despite the site being adjacent the Town Centre Gardens, there are only four main areas of trees/landscaping within the red line plan. The line of trees to the south of the site and running along the existing footpath between the swimming centre and Bowes Lyon Centre, the small cluster of trees and shrubs just north of the existing St Georges Way vehicular access, the line of shrubs and three trees to the south of the existing building and the area of grass running along the eastern boundary of the site.
- 7.9.3 The proposals would see the retention of the southern tree belt, with only three trees from this area proposed to be removed. Four other trees are proposed to be removed, and they are contained in the landscaping beds in the south car park. These require removal because of the siting of the proposed building. Six of the seven trees proposed for felling are category C and U, with only one category B tree.
- 7.9.4 The proposed landscaping would see the planting of 56 small trees. As advised in Section 7.9 of the report the Council's Tree Manager has some concerns over tree species, tree placement and overall numbers of trees proposed to be planted. A response to this is anticipated from the agent imminently. Notwithstanding this, final landscaping details, including species and numbers can be secured by the imposition of condition.
- 7.9.5 It is considered the overall landscaping and tree strategy would create an attractive landscaped setting for the proposed buildings, with clear biodiversity and visual amenity benefits in accordance with policies SP12 and NH5 of the Local Plan (2019).

7.10 Flood Risk and Drainage

Development Plan

- 7.10.1 Policy FP2 of the Local Plan requires applications for major development in Flood Zone 1 to be accompanied by an appropriate flood risk assessment. The Policy 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.
- 7.10.2 In the emerging local plan review and partial update, flood risk and drainage policies are significantly revised. Existing policy FP1 is replaced by a new sustainable drainage policy, which places an emphasis on the use of the most sustainable SuDS features and methods of surface water discharge. Meanwhile, existing policies FP2 and FP3 are combined into a new, more comprehensive flood risk policy, which largely reflects national flood risk policies but also seeks to protect watercourses and flood defences. Having regard to paragraph 49 of the NPPF, these emerging policies carry significant weight in the assessment of the application.
- 7.10.3 Drainage strategies should adhere to the Sustainable Drainage Strategy (SuDS) hierarchy provided in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2 (2019). The hierarchy identifies that living roofs and walls are the most-sustainable SuDS features, followed by ponds and basins, infiltration devices and permeable surfaces. Tanked and piped systems are identified as the least sustainable, providing no pollution reduction nor biodiversity benefit.
- 7.10.4 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report (FRA) accompanies the application. The report reviews the drainage and flood risk issues associated with the proposed development and sets out how surface water run-off would be accommodated. The report states that the application site is located within Flood Zone 1 and that based on the 'flood risk vulnerability classification' contained within the Planning Practice Guidance table 2 the development would be 'Less Vulnerable' and so the leisure use is appropriate for the site.
- 7.10.5 The Report advises that the site is underlain by a principal bedrock aquifer and is in Source Protection Zone (SPZ) 3. SPZ zones 1-3 show the risk of contamination from potential pollution. Development or works to land within a Zone 1 SPZ pose the greatest risk of pollution to the water supply (used for public drinking water supply). SPZ3 specifically is an area around a supply source within which all groundwater is presumed to end up at the abstraction point. The report advises that in the case of SPZ3 the source catchment area may extend quite a long distance from the source.
- 7.10.6 Extensive assessments of the sites infiltration characteristics of the ground have been undertaken. Paragraph 2.12 of the Report states that because of the underlying soil make-up infiltration via traditional soakaways is not feasible as a means of discharging surface water.

Flood Mitigation

- 7.10.7 Located in Flood Zone 1 the site would not be considered at risk of flooding from fluvial sources. Flood mitigation measures are required on site because of the proposed development to reduce downstream flood risks.
- 7.10.8 The surface water flood map shows there is a very low to low risk of flooding at the location of the new building. Areas to the north of the building, where the car parking is proposed, shows low, medium and high risk of flooding. The FRA states that "surface water flood risk here is assessed to be 'site generated'". Notwithstanding the above, the FRA identifies that the site is within a Surface Water Hotspot. This is an area where properties have been identified as most at risk of surface water flooding.

- 7.10.9 The surface water flood risk assessment within the FRA has calculated the 1 in 1000 surface water flood level to be approximately 88.0m above ordnance datum (AOD). Consequently, the proposed development would have a proposed finished floor level of approximately 88.6m AOD, taking account of the finished floor level 600mm minimum as prescribed in BS8533:2017 'Assessing and managing Flood Risk in New Development – Code of Practice'.
- 7.10.10 In terms of groundwater flooding mitigation, it has been recorded that groundwater seepages have occurred approximately 6m below ground level. The proposed pool basements would be 4m below ground level. The FRA advises that basement installation will be constructed using waterproof concrete and has been designed to withstand full hydrostatic pressure. The basement would also be lined with a waterproof membrane to reduce the risk of groundwater ingress.

Surface Water Drainage

- 7.10.11 The Planning Practice Guidance states that types of sustainable drainage system to consider will depend on the proposed development and its location, as well as any planning policies and guidance that apply locally. It continues that preference should be given to multi-functional SuDS, and to solutions that discharge surface water according to the following hierarchy –
1. Into the ground (infiltration);
 2. To a surface water body;
 3. To a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;
 4. To a combined sewer.
- 7.10.12 Based on the ground investigations carried out, infiltration at the site is not possible. Furthermore, there are no watercourses near the site. The existing site discharges into a Thames Water culvert on the western boundary of the site. Given the calculated existing impermeable areas the combined 1 year discharge rate to the culvert is calculated to be 50.1l/s. Consequently, the surface water drainage for the proposed development would discharge to the culvert mimicking existing drainage arrangements.
- 7.10.13 A variety of SuDS features are proposed for the site based on the above assessments. These are swales, rain gardens, permeable paving and underground cellular tanks.
- 7.10.14 At the time of writing this report no comments have been received by Hertfordshire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority. If comments are received prior to the meeting and/or the drainage strategy is agreed an update will be provided, otherwise it is anticipated Members will agree to delegate powers being granted to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation to impose any conditions advised on any response provided after the committee meeting.
- 7.10.15 A decision will not be issued until the Legal Agreement associated with the development has been signed, which will allow time for comments to be received. Therefore, comments will be fully considered prior to a decision being issued. However, if the LLFA continues to raise an objection to this application and their concerns cannot be overcome, then this application will be referred back to the Planning and Development Committee for its decision.
- 7.10.16 It is important to stress that whilst comments have not yet been received, Planning Practice Guidance makes clear that statutory consultee are to inform the Local Planning Authority (LPA) without delay, if they require additional information, and that they have procedures in place to enable this to occur as soon as possible after they receive a consultation. The guidance also states that it is not acceptable for a statutory consultee to wait until the 21-day period where it believes it does not have enough information (Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 15-012-20190722).

7.10.17 Given the Council as LPA has not received any comments from the LLFA within the 21 day consultation period, PPG clearly states and quote “*Local planning authorities are expected to determine applications for planning permission, within a time period of 5, 8, 10, 13 or 16 weeks (depending on the type of development). Statutory consultees should be aware of the risk that, should they fail to respond within a specified time period, a local planning authority may proceed to decide the application in the absence of their advice*” (Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 15-016-20190722). Taking this into consideration, the Council is within its right to make a decision in the absence of any comments being received by the LLFA. With that in mind, this is why the application is being referred to the Planning and Development Committee for a decision as we are required to make decisions without delay.

7.11 Sustainable Construction and Climate Change

Development Plan

7.11.1 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.

7.11.2 Under the Local Plan review, Policy FP1 has been revised to cover sustainable drainage and Policy SP1: climate change is the new relevant policy in this regard. The fundamental objective of Policy SP1 remains the same as previous policy FP1, however, it sets out in more detail the objectives to adapting to climate change. This policy requires, amongst other things the off-setting of emissions targets if not met on site, water usage targets, rainwater harvesting, grey water recycling, use of sustainable materials and practices on site, ultra-low and zero carbon combined heat and power systems and urban greening (green roofs and walls).

7.11.3 This policy is further supported by a suite of new climate change policies, CC1 through CC7 which cover a broad range of topics. However, it should be noted that Policies CC1 and CC2 require only major planning applications to provide an energy statement. Emerging policy GD2 ‘Design certification’ strongly supports development proposals which demonstrate that they have been designed to achieve a rating of excellent or higher against the relevant BREEAM standard.

7.11.4 The Council’s Design Guide SPD (2025) sets out additional requirements with respect to climate change. The guide states that all developments are required to make efforts to minimise energy usage and to incorporate methods of using renewable energy, including:-

- reducing energy demand
- using passive environmental systems, e.g. natural ventilation
- daylighting and passive solar gains
- using high levels of insulation and air tightness in the fabric of the building
- specifying energy efficient services, controls and appliances
- implementing water recycling and the provision of water butts
- using renewable energy
- using low/zero carbon technologies to provide as much of the energy load as is technically and economically feasible, minimising use of fossil fuels; and

- using efficient fossil fuel technologies, such as Combined Heat and Power and condensing boilers.

Sustainability and Energy Strategies

- 7.11.5 A Stage 3 Energy Strategy Report by Environmental Mechanical Electrical Consultancy has been submitted with the application which outlines the key measures to be incorporated within the design in regard to sustainability, carbon emissions, renewable energy and environmental impacts of the development. The report confirms that the applicant wishes for the proposed development to follow a fabric first approach, therefore reducing demand on the national grid as reasonably possible.
- 7.11.6 The proposal would utilise an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) for its hot water and heating, which is found to be the most appropriate in this case given the high levels of heated water required. The ASHP also lends itself to the lowest carbon emissions, which have been calculated to exceed the requirements of current Building Regulations, thus improving upon the baseline carbon emissions.
- 7.11.7 The scheme would also utilise sustainability measures such as high specification building fabric, energy efficient electric panel heaters, variable refrigerant flow systems and highly efficient LED lighting. The applicant has also committed to a minimum of BREEAM 'Excellent', which complies with emerging Local Plan policy GD2 'Design certification'.
- 7.11.8 Given the above, and subject to conditions securing the measures identified to address adaptation to climate change, the development would exceed the requirements of the existing policy FP1, with the emerging policies carrying moderate weight.

7.12 Impact on Heritage Assets

Planning Act and Case Law

- 7.12.1 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* imposes several 'statutory duties' for decision-makers, all of which are applicable to the proposed development:
- "Section 16(2): In considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".
 - "Section 66(1): In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses".
 - "Section 72: In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area".
- 7.12.2 Case law (South Lakeland, 1992) has determined that 'preserve' means 'to do no harm'. However, if harm is identified, the NPPF provides a means of weighing either 'substantial harm' or 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 7.12.3 In doing so, case law has emphasised the need to give "considerable importance and weight" to preserving listed buildings or the character and appearance of conservation areas (Barnwell Manor, Case No: C1/2013/0843). However, the presumption 'to preserve' is not irrebuttable and "can be outweighed by material considerations powerful enough to do so" (Forge Field (Case Nos: CO/735/2013; CO/16932/2013) and a decision

maker that has followed the process set out in the NPPF, in respect to weighing harm and benefits, can reasonably be expected to have complied with the 'statutory duties' of the 1990 Act (Mordue, Case No. C1/2015/1067).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 7.12.4 Paragraph 203 of the NPPF (2024) states that 'in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
 - c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.'
- 7.12.5 As established through case law, if there is *any* harm to designated heritage assets, great weight must be given to it. Paragraph 212, it stipulates that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss, or less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 200 sets out that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.
- 7.12.6 Paragraph 214 sets out that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.
- 7.12.7 Paragraph 215 sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. In undertaking this balance, considerable importance and weight must be attached to the less than substantial harm.
- 7.12.8 Paragraph 217 sets out that Local Planning Authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred. With respect to paragraph 218, this sets out that Local Planning Authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible. However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.
- 7.12.9 In considering public benefits, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2019) (Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723) sets out that the National Planning Policy Framework requires any harm to designated heritage assets to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in paragraph 8 of the NPPF. For reference, paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that "Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.

7.12.10 The planning practice guidance goes on to state that public benefits should flow from the development. They should be of a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just private benefit. However, benefits do not always have to be accessible to the public in order to be genuine public benefits, for example, works to a listed building which secure its future as a designated heritage asset could be a public benefit. Consequently, while a range of benefits that help deliver sustainable communities could be relevant, the PPG provides examples of heritage based public benefits, as follows:

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

Development Plan

7.12.11 Turning to the adopted Local Plan, Policy SP13 relates to the historic environment. This states that the council will preserve and enhance the most important area and characteristics of Stevenage. The policy goes on to state that the Council will:-

- a. Have carried out Heritage Impact Assessments for development sites within, or adjacent to, conservation areas. Site specific mitigation measures have been incorporated to minimise the impacts of development.
- b. Will use national guidance and legislation to review, designate and determine planning applications affecting heritage assets.
- c. Will protect areas of archaeological importance and other relevant heritage assets by applying the detailed policies set in this plan.

7.12.13 Finally, Policy NH10 Conservation Areas states that development proposals within, or affecting a conservation area should have regard to the guidance provided by the relevant Conservation Area Management Plan Supplementary Planning Document.

Impact on Heritage Assets

7.12.14 The site is in close proximity to the Town Centre Conservation Area and Grade II listed Parish Church of St Andrew and St George located due south of the site at the junction of St Georges Way and Cuttys Lane. The Grade II listed 'Scenes of Contemporary Life' sculptural wall mural by William Mitchell is also in close proximity within the St Georges Way underpass to the south west of the site.

7.12.15 The application has been supported by the submission of a Heritage Statement which identifies the local Heritage Assets which would be impacted by the development.

Looking firstly at the Town Centre Conservation Area, this largely covers Town Square and Queensway and extending down Market Place to the border with St Georges Way and opposite the Church of St Andrew and St George. Therefore, given the proximity of the Conservation Area from the site and the presence of multiple built forms, including the St Georges Multi-storey Car Park and the Park Place development, the proposed new Leisure Centre is considered to have a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

- 7.12.16 The Grade II listed Church of St Andrew and St George is prominently located further south on St Georges Way. The 1950s church comprises of reinforced concrete frame with precast concrete flint-faced wall panels, buff brick to narthex and copper covered barrel roofs. The layout is traditional in plan with a rectangular, aisled space with the altar against the east wall. The church is visually recognised because of its circular tower. The tower is comprised of a reinforced concrete frame with six uprights and five stages plus a spire, formed of the convergence of the upright members.
- 7.12.17 Given the proposed re-siting of, and scale of the new Leisure Centre, there will be greater views of the building from the church than the existing swimming centre. It is noted that the Bowes Lyon Centre provides a visible buffer between the site and the church, however some level of harm will be caused by the new building. Notwithstanding this, given the presence of the Bowes Lyon building and in considering the high quality design of the new building which has taken lots of cues from the church, the level of harm is considered less than substantial and at the lower end of the scale.
- 7.12.18 Furthermore, the public benefit that stems from the proposals is clearly significant in this case and would in officer's opinion outweigh the limited impact on the Grade II listed building.
- 7.12.19 The site lies due north of the Grade II Listed William Mitchell wall mural 'Scenes of Contemporary Life' which is located in the northern subway providing pedestrian and cyclist access from the Town Centre to the Town Centre Gardens under St Georges Way. In this case, the mural is already well screened and protected from built form due to its location 'underground'. As such, the impact on this heritage asset is also considered to be less than substantial and at the lower end of the scale. The public benefits would again outweigh the impact.
- 7.12.20 Lastly, the proposed siting of the new building would result in the loss of the existing footpath from St Georges Way to the Town Centre Gardens that sits just north of the Bowes Lyon Centre. The footpath has been identified as a historic farm access and was an important factor in the design of the Town Centre Gardens by landscape architect Goerge Patterson. It therefore has some historic value. However, despite this, the provision of a new multi-purpose leisure centre in this siting is a key part of Stevenage's redevelopment. The site constraints, including the need to keep the existing swimming centre operational during construction have led to the proposed siting of the building. When considering the public benefits of the development, including the new and improved pedestrian and cyclist access to the Town Centre Gardens to the north of the proposed building far outweighs any impact on the loss of this footpath.

7.13 Loss of Existing Facilities

- 7.13.1 Local Plan Policy SP9 Healthy Communities under criteria (f) clearly outlines that a new wet and dry leisure facility is to be provided to replace the Arts and Leisure Centre and Stevenage Swimming Centre within the town centre. The loss of these facilities is therefore agreed in principle.
- 7.13.2 The Design and Access Statement submitted to support the application goes in to detail the existing provision within these buildings, and the proposed new facilities. This has

been strongly guided by the Council's Leisure Facilities Team in terms of demand and operations.

- 7.13.3 The proposed Leisure Centre would see the specific loss of the existing squash courts, indoor 6 rink bowls facility and two courts within the sports hall. In respect of the water facilities, the total provision in the new facility is increased, including the new splash pad. However, the overall depth of the main pool would be 1.8m. The existing main pool has a maximum depth of 3.8m because of the former diving platforms/boards.
- 7.13.4 The reduced pool depth as proposed and the loss of the indoor dedicated Bowls area at the Arts and Leisure Centre have received a large quantity of objections to the proposals. In particular the reduced depth of the new swimming pool to 1.8m has also raised an objection from Swim England. The objection specifically relates to the 1.8m depth proposed meaning the local Artistic Swimming Club will no longer be able to utilise the pool as they require a minimum depth of 2m for training.
- 7.13.5 The majority of objections received relate to this issue. Swim England have advised that there are no nearby facilities that have a pool of sufficient depth for training and therefore competitions as well.
- 7.13.6 The proposed depth of 1.8m has come from a constructive overview of proposed uses, an analysis of existing users/groups and how often/how long they require the space, and also a cost analysis of providing the new leisure centre. The addition of a further 20cm of depth across just half of the pool would equate to a further 52.5 cubic metres of excavation and heated water required to fill the space.
- 7.13.7 Stevenage Borough Council as the applicant have advised that *'increasing the depth to 2 metres would incur substantial additional construction costs and raise ongoing operational expenses, without proportionate benefit to the wider user base. Given the availability of alternative deep-water pools in the region, the investment cannot be justified within the project's budget constraints or the Council's responsibility to deliver best value for the community'*.
- 7.13.8 The Council as the developer for this project has engaged in substantial community consultation. They have advised that they have *'engaged constructively with the club to understand its requirements, details of which are set out in the Statement of Community Involvement. It is noted that Stevenage is not the only pool that they use for training; they also have weekly sessions at Monks Walk School in Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield Swimming Centre, pools which remain available to them'*.
- 7.13.9 Sport England have provided detailed comments on the proposals and in principle are supportive of the development. They highlight the benefits of consolidating both the facilities of the Arts and Leisure Centre and the Swimming Centre in a single facility offering benefits to users, as well as having operational efficiencies due to the existing energy costs, staffing demands etc of running two separate facilities.
- 7.13.10 The central location of the facility combined with the proposed access improvements to the town centre, would, according to Sport England *'help support access to the facility by users especially under-represented groups in sport/physical activity that are less likely to have access to their own vehicle'*. They continue to advise that the improved pedestrian access along the side of the building and into the Town Centre Gardens, including the new café facilities offered as part of the proposals, would likely support greater use of the gardens for physical activity.
- 7.13.11 The existing swimming centre is the only publicly accessible swimming facility in the area and is therefore an important facility. The swimming pools proposed in the new Leisure Centre would provide a significant net increase in water space capacity, increasing from

480 sqm. to 695 sqm. Sport England's Facilities Planning Model spatial planning tool indicates that due to capacity and age of the existing Swimming Centre pools, only 57% of demand from Stevenage Borough residents for water space is met by the existing facilities.

7.13.12 Sport England's figures suggest that by 2031 this figure is estimated to increase to 80% if the new leisure centre facility is built. This would largely be due to the increased quality of the swimming pools and supporting changing facilities.

7.13.13 In respect of the 1.8m depth, this has been deemed most appropriate operationally. Swim England's Guidance on Water Depths. Diving Entries and Competitive Starts document has the following entries –

- Local aquatics club – practice and to become competent at race starts requires a minimum depth of 1.8m;
- Entry level Artistic Swimming training sessions – preferred 0.9m plus depth;
- Artistic Swimming training – preferred 2.0m or minimum 1.8m deep and preferred depth at shallow end of 1.2m;
- Entry level/novice/low level artistic swimming competition aimed at individuals under the age of 16 – 1.5m plus depth;
- Artistic Swimming, higher standard of swimmer above training or other low-level competition – minimum 2m deep.
- Water polo. Adult training – preferred 1.8m deep;
- Water polo Local league – preferred 2.0m or minimum 1.8m deep and preferred minimum depth at shallow end of 1.2m;
- Water polo entry level/novice/low level water polo competition aimed at individuals under the age of 16 – 0.9m plus depth;
- Water polo, higher standard of play above training, local league or other low-level competition – 2.0m deep throughout the playing area is required.
- Lifesaving and practice – 1.8m deep.

7.13.14 The above clearly outlines that a level of training for Artistic swimming and other water sports can be carried out in 1.8m deep pools as per Swim England's guidance. It is important in respect of the overall depth of the pool that it is clearly emphasised that this is an operational issue. SBC as the developer have undertaken significant consultation and dialogue with many existing groups of users and have proposed a facility that provides greater and better facilities in general than the existing swimming centre and leisure centre.

7.13.15 It is only for the planning assessment to determine whether the provision of this new facility is acceptable. Whilst the type and number of facilities within the building will be important as part of officer's considerations, the operational decision to provide a 1.8m over a 2m pool is not a material planning consideration. Furthermore, it is not for the planning process to seek an increase in the depth of the pool.

7.13.16 The applicant has identified that the facility as designed but with a 2m deep pool would not be viable given additional construction costs, and then ongoing maintenance and upkeep costs. The provision of a new Swimming and Leisure Centre in the proposed location would be a huge benefit to the residents of Stevenage and beyond. The public benefits of a new, modern, efficient facility, in officer's opinions far outweighs the objections to the depth of the pool. Especially given the pool depth being in compliance with Swim England's own supporting guidance.

7.13.17 Looking at the dry facilities of the centre, the proposals would see a reduction in sports hall courts of 8 to 6, loss of squash courts and also the loss of the six rink indoor bowls facility. The loss of these facilities is due to the constraints of needing to fit the building in the space between the existing swimming centre and Bowes Lyon Centre and also having to consider the overall scale and mass of the proposed buildings.

- 7.13.18 Whilst these facilities would be lost, Sport England has confirmed that despite the net loss their Facilities Planning Model indicates that 97% of demand for sports halls from Stevenage residents would still be satisfied. This would be from the supply of sports halls both within and outside of Stevenage after the development was implemented which would be the same as the existing level of satisfied demand being met.
- 7.13.19 In respect of the Bowls facilities, the town has outdoor provision for the sport. Whilst this may limit play during the winter months, facilities are still available. As with the loss of the squash courts and 1.8m pool depth, the impacts of these individual elements need to be considered in the context of the significant investment proposed into the new leisure centre. A centre that will have modern facilities addressing the qualitative deficiencies of the facilities that they would replace as well as providing a financially sustainable leisure centre to operate over a long-term period.
- 7.13.20 Furthermore, Sport England also advise that some of the facilities which are most in demand by the community such as the swimming pools and activity studios would substantially increase in capacity, to the benefit of a greater number of users.
- 7.13.21 Therefore, in conclusion the loss of the existing facilities, including specific elements such as squash courts and indoor bowls, and subsequently the loss of a single water based club at the facility is acceptable in principle. This is because of the significant benefits that will come from consolidating the two existing facilities into a single building, with greatly improved swimming, sports and leisure facilities which would see a net increase in users, and more inclusive wet and dry changing facilities.

7.14 Planning Obligations

7.14.1 The following planning obligations would be attached to any planning permission:

- £6,000 Travel Plan evaluation and support fee (to cover 5 years)
- Local Employment and Apprenticeships
- Monitoring fee

7.14.2 The above obligations have been agreed with the applicant and Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority (where relevant) and would be secured via a Unilateral Agreement, subject to planning permission.

7.15 Other Matters

Community Infrastructure Levy

7.15.1 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

7.15.2 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.

7.15.3 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. The development would be CIL liable at £0/m².

Police Crime Prevention Officer

7.15.4 Concerns have been raised by the Police Crime Prevention Officer in respect of crime and fear of crime, mixed changing facilities and Secure by Design. The mixed changing facilities concern is covered later in this report. In terms of the other matters the applicants have since confirmed in writing that they will pursue the development being secure by design approved.

7.15.5 The building itself has been designed to ensure high levels of natural surveillance and inclusivity. In respect of the crime figures presented, these relate to two separate facilities, both of which have poor outward surveillance, and, with the Arts and Leisure Centre having the main pedestrian thoroughfare for connecting the Town Centre and Railway Station. There is a presumption therefore that many of the reported crimes would not be directly related to the sports facilities themselves.

7.15.6 The building has been designed with natural surveillance / open in design which ensures crime has been designed out in line with planning policy. Further, with inclusion of secured by design the development is considered to be acceptable in this respect. All other matters relating to designing out crime would also be covered under Building Regulations as well.

Human Rights and Equalities

7.15.7 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.

7.15.8 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.

7.15.9 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.

- 7.15.10 The proposal would provide disabled spaces in the most accessible carpark location, level access to all parts of the site and disabled toilets / internal lift to ensure the site is accessible to all. The proposed mixed dry and wet changing facilities are largely in accordance with Sport England's requirements. However, concerns were raised by the Police Crime Prevention Officer in terms of the mixed changing areas.
- 7.15.11 In response to this a Safeguarding Report and Secure By Design Statement have been submitted in support of the proposals. In particular the Safeguarding Report identifies that the development has been designed in accordance with Sport England guidelines 'Accessible and inclusive sports facilities (AISF)'. The AISF guidance aims to:
- Increase awareness and use of inclusive design principles;
 - Support approaches to design that can reduce or remove barriers to more being active;
 - Encourage best-practice approaches to creating and maintaining well-designed sports and leisure facilities from point of concept through to day-to-day occupation.
- 7.15.12 The guidance goes on to expand on this by stating - *Usually found in swimming pool environments, changing villages consist of a matrix of all-gender changing cubicles and clusters of adjacent lockers. Cubicles provide privacy and sizes usually vary to cater for 1-2 persons, families or larger groups. The numbers and location of the components are subject to consultation and management requirements to meet programming needs - see also Table D1 for minimum provision. The circulation routes are usually open to allow a level of natural surveillance and safeguarding with sightlines from adjacent spaces.*
- 7.15.13 It is considered the proposed changing village area at the new facility provides an effective design solution and follows best practice guidelines. The proposed development is not considered therefore to have any material impact on persons with any of the protected characteristics listed under the Equalities Act.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This application seeks planning permission for the construction of new Swimming and Leisure Centre, with phased demolition of the existing swimming centre. The proposed facilities would meet the Local Plan designation for a new mixed dry and wet facility on the site proposed. The facility would also provide greater functioning facilities, with an increased total swimming pool provision. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in principle.
- 8.2 The proposal would contribute to the redevelopment of the Town Centre, by providing this much needed modern facility within the identified Marshgate Major Opportunity Area. The proposals would positively engage with and increase access to the Town Centre Gardens. The building scale, mass and design is considered to be high quality and positively contributes to the area. Additional landscaping would be incorporated throughout the site and the proposals would meet BREEAM Excellent. Further, the proposal has been carefully designed so as to not cause undue harm to nearby residents and would not prejudice highway safety.
- 8.3 Having regard to the above, the proposal is considered to accord with the development plan when read as a whole. In the absence of any other material considerations which indicate 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 applicant having first entered into a Unilateral Undertaking to secure/provide contributions towards:

- £6000 Travel Plan evaluation and support fee
- Local Employment and Apprenticeships
- Monitoring fee

- 9.2 The detail of which would be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning and Regulation in liaison with the Council's appointed solicitor, along with the recommendations of the Lead Local Flood Authority, as well as the imposition of suitable safeguarding conditions.
- 9.3 Authority would be 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. These suggested conditions are as follows:

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
 SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0163 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0164 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0140 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0142 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0141 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0143 Rev P01; FB-SK-4036-250519-AS-001; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0110 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0111 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0112 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0113 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0119 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0114 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0150 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0151 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0152 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0153 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0170 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0183 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0171 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0172 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0173 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0174 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0180 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0181 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0182 Rev P01; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0400 Rev P01; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0501 Rev P02; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0502 Rev P02; SSLH-SWH-ZZ-XX-D-C-0910 Rev P02; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0160 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0161 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0162 Rev P01; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0100 Rev 02; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0101 REV 02; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0102 REV 02; SSLH-FBA-01-ZZ-D-A-0103 REV 02; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0101-S3 REV 13; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0102-S3 REV 09; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0103-S3 REV 09; SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0300-S3 REV 05;

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

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

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

3. No development shall take place (including demolition and 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:
- a. Construction vehicle numbers, type, routing.

- b. Access arrangements to the site for traffic associated with the construction works.
- c. Measure to minimise dust, noise machinery and traffic noise impacts during construction.
- d. Screening and hoarding details to protect neighbouring residents.
- e. Traffic management requirements, including the location of routes and from the site, details of their signing monitoring and enforcement measures.
- f. Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading /unloading and turning areas);
- g. Siting and details of wheel washing facilities.
- h. Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway including end of day tidying procedures to ensure protection of the site out the hours of construction. The construction activities shall be designed and undertake in accordance with the code of best practice set out in BS 5228 1997 and the agreed details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA and Highways.
- i. Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times.
- j. Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities.
- k. Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway.
- l. 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.
- m. hours of working (including deliveries and waste removal);
- n. all plant necessary for construction and demolition;
- o. noise and vibration mitigation measures with particular attention paid to piling, power floating, and vacuum excavation activities where these activities are to be undertaken;
- p. dust and smoke mitigation measures;
- q. site lighting and off-site mitigation measures;
- r. vermin control.

REASON:- In the interests of local amenity and in order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way in accordance with Local Plan Policy FP7 and Policies 5, 12, 17 and 22 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

4. No development shall take place until a detailed Phasing Plan for the development hereby approved has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall include details of car park closures, access arrangements to the existing Swimming Centre during construction, access arrangements to the new Leisure Centre during demolition of the existing Swimming Centre and during construction of the car park following demolition.

REASON:- In the interests of public health and safety during the construction and demolition phases of the development on site.

5. The Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be prepared in accordance with the Biodiversity Net Gain Report dated May 2025 and prepared by Richard Graves Associates.

REASON:- To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site.

6. No development shall take place until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan and including:
 - (a) a non-technical summary;
 - (b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
 - (c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;

(d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
(e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved HMMP.

REASON:- To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site.

7. Notice in writing shall be given to the Council when the:
- (a) HMMP has been implemented; and
 - (b) Habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the HMMP have been completed.

REASON:- To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site.

8. No development shall take place above slab level until a full schedule and samples (where applicable) of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the approved Leisure Centre hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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

9. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, the existing entrance only access off St. Georges Way shall be closed off permanently and reinstate all footways/ green verge in accordance with the technical approval issued by the HCC's Development Management Implementation (DMI) team and thereafter retained at the position as indicated on the approved plan drawing number (Ref-SSLH-SWH-01-XX-D-C-5510, P06).

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018) and Roads in Hertfordshire, Section 4, 2.3.

10. Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted a visibility splay shall be provided in full accordance with the details indicated on the approved plan number (SSLH-SWH-01-XX-D-C-5510, P06). The splay shall always thereafter be maintained free from any obstruction between 600mm and 2m above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018) and Roads in Hertfordshire, Section 4, 2.3.

11. Within six months of the first use of the new leisure facility hereby permitted all proposed onsite car, coach & cycle parking, and turning areas including shared cycle path as shown on the landscape masterplan (Ref- SSLH-WWA-ZZ-ZZ-D-L-0101 Rev-P13) shall be laid out, demarcated, levelled, surfaced, and drained in accordance with the approved plan and retained thereafter available for that specific use, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

12. Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted, arrangement shall be made for surface water from the proposed development to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge onto the highway carriageway.

REASON:- To avoid the carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

13. Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted, full details of the proposed secure covered / cycle lockers shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to first use of the development and permanently maintained and retained.

REASON:- To ensure satisfactory and adequate long stay secure and covered cycle parking is provided and made available at all times to promote sustainable modes of transport.

14. Prior to first use of the development hereby approved, full details of the proposed bin store shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to first use of the development and permanently maintained and retained.

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

15. Prior to first use of the development hereby permitted, full details of all soft landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Details shall take account of the comments made by the Council's Green Spaces Officer and Tree Officer. The soft landscaping shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details to a reasonable standard in accordance with the relevant British Standards or other recognised Codes of Good Practice.

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

16. Prior to the first use of the approved development the details for the provision of swift boxes and bat boxes within the site, on the buildings or on the trees respectively, as identified in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Roosting Features Report produced by Richard Graves Associates dated May 2025 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The bird and bat boxes shall be installed prior to first use of the development and permanently maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To minimise harm to biodiversity and enhance the ecological value of the site.

17. Prior to the first use of the development, details of protection measures against the access of unauthorised vehicles within the proposed public realm areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the restriction of unauthorised vehicles in the interests of public safety and good design.

18. Prior to demolition of the existing swimming centre, a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) for the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The SWMP should aim to reduce the amount of waste produced on site and should contain information including estimated types and quantities of waste to arise

from construction and waste management actions for each waste type, plus mechanisms to deal with environmental impacts such as air quality and dust control measures, noise and vibration restriction measures, light and odour. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved SWMP.

REASON:- To protect the amenities of local residents during demolition and to promote the sustainable management of waste arisings and contribution towards resource efficiency, in accordance with Policy 12 of the Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2012).

19. Prior to the installation of any external plant, an Operational Noise Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan shall detail siting of the plant and demonstrate its conformity with the plant noise objective set out on section 5 of the Noise Impact Assessment report by Anderson Acoustics Limited (reference 6816, dated 3/9/2024)(plant noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive receptors should not exceed 55 dB LAeq,Tr during the day and 52 dB LAeq,Tr during the night, when assessed in accordance with BS 4142) and how noise from non-plant sources will be mitigated. The approved plan shall then be implemented prior to the beneficial occupation of the development and permanently retained as such thereafter.

REASON:- In the interests of the amenities of nearby existing residential occupiers in accordance with Local Plan Policy FP7.

20. Prior to the implementation of any public realm works, details of the proposed furniture to be used within the public realm areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Details shall include the picnic benches, concrete benches and measures to protect them against grinding by skateboards, bikes and scooters, and graffiti, and any refuse receptacles. The furniture shall be installed prior to first use of the development and permanently maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance, and the furniture is durable for the longevity of the development.

21. Prior to the installation of any external lighting associated with the development hereby permitted, a written scheme for the provision of external lighting together with an Artificial Lighting Assessment including the design, size, and illuminance of all lighting and its impact having regard to relevant national guidance shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON:- In the interests of the amenities of nearby existing residential occupiers in accordance with Local Plan Policy FP7

22. Prior to the construction of any of the Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) swales and rain gardens proposed, details of their final design shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Details shall include engineer drawings and measures to ensure protection and maintenance. The SuDS features shall thereafter be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the development delivers appropriate SuDS features and for their longevity within the site.

23. In the event that any previously unidentified ground contamination is discovered on the site, no further construction work may be carried out in the affected area until a remediation strategy 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

remediation strategy. Where any development to which this permission relates is required to be carried out in accordance with a remediation strategy, a verification report (setting out the remedial measures actually undertaken on the site) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to the beneficial occupation of the development.

REASON:- In the interests of human health.

24. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the completion of the development.

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

25. The measures to address adaptation to climate change as set out within the Energy Strategy Report by Environmental Mechanical Electrical Consultancy dated 15 May 2025 and the Planning Statement by WSP dated 2 June 2025 shall be implemented and permanently maintained in accordance with the approved details.

REASON:- To ensure the development is adaptable to climate change through provision of energy and water efficiency measures.

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 led 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.

INFORMATIVES

1. Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence. Further information is available via the website: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highwaysdevelopment-management.aspx>
2. Debris and deposits on the highway: 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.
3. Avoidance of surface water discharge onto the highway: The applicant is advised that the Highway Authority has powers under section 163 of the Highways Act 1980, to take appropriate steps where deemed necessary (serving notice to the occupier of premises adjoining a highway) to prevent water from the roof or other part of the premises falling

upon persons using the highway, or to prevent so far as is reasonably practicable, surface water from the premises flowing on to, or over the footway of the highway.

4. Construction Management Plan (CMP): The purpose of the CMP is to help developers minimise construction impacts and relates to all construction activity both on and off site that impacts on the wider environment. It is intended to be a live document whereby different stages will be completed and submitted for application as the development progresses. A completed and signed CMP must address the way in which any impacts associated with the proposed works, and any cumulative impacts of other nearby construction sites will be mitigated and managed. The level of detail required in a CMP will depend on the scale and nature of development. The CMP would need to include elements of the Construction Logistics and Community Safety (CLOCS) standards as set out in our Construction Management template, a copy of which is available on the County Council's website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>
5. Street works licence (New Roads and Street Works Act - Section 50): The applicant is advised that they are not authorised to carry out any work within the Public Highway and that to do so they will need to enter into a legal agreement with the Highway Authority (NRSW agreement). This consent is separate and additional to any planning permission that may be given. Before proceeding with the proposed development, the applicant shall obtain the requirements and permission for the associated placement of apparatus within the adjacent highway as part of the proposal via the County Council's website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/permit-scheme/east-of-england-permit-scheme.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234 40047. This should be carried out prior to any new apparatus is placed within the highway.
6. Travel Plan (TP): A TP, in accordance with the provisions as laid out in Hertfordshire County Council's Travel Plan Guidance, would be required to be in place from the first occupation/use until 5 years post occupation/use. A £1,200 per annum (overall sum of £6000 and index-linked RPI March 2014) Evaluation and Support Fee would need to be secured via a Section 106 agreement towards supporting the implementation, processing and monitoring of the full travel plan including any engagement that may be needed. Further information is available via the County Council's website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-anagement/highways-development-management.aspx> OR by emailing travelplans@hertfordshire.gov.uk
7. Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule at Full Council on 27 January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 01 April 2020. This application may be liable for CIL payments and you are advised to contact the CIL Team for clarification with regard to this. If your development is CIL liable, even if you are granted an exemption from the levy, please be advised that it is a requirement under Regulation 67 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) that CIL Form 6 (Commencement Notice) must be completed, returned and acknowledged by Stevenage Borough Council before building works start. Failure to do so will mean you risk losing the right to payment by instalments and a surcharge will be imposed. NB, please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions if relief has been granted.

Stevenage's adopted CIL Charging Schedule and further details of CIL can be found on the Council's webpages at www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL or by contacting the Council's CIL Team at CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk.

8. The applicant is advised of the Council's powers under Part III of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to prohibit nuisances arising from noise, artificial light, and a range of other pollutants that may arise from commercial premises.
9. To obtain advice regarding current Building Regulations please contact Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd. by emailing us at building.control@hertfordshirebc.co.uk or phoning us on 01438 879990.

To make a building regulations application please apply through our website portal at <https://www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk/contact-us/payment> can be made online or by phoning the above number after the application has been uploaded. Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control for fees guidance on 01438 879990.

Hertfordshire Building Control can also be contacted by post at Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6AE.

Once a building regulations application has been deposited with relevant drawings and fee building work may commence. You will be advised in their acknowledgement letter of the work stages we need to inspect but in most instances these are usually:

Excavation for foundations
Damp proof course
Concrete oversite
Insulation
Drains (when laid or tested)
Floor and Roof construction
Work relating to fire safety
Work affecting access and facilities for disabled people
Completion

Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control on 01438 879990 before 10.00am to ensure a same day inspection (Mon - Fri).

10. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:
 - a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
 - b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be Stevenage Borough Council.

Based on the information available, this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

Where the local planning authority considers that the permission falls within paragraph 19 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the permission which has been granted has the effect of requiring or permitting the development to proceed in phases. The modifications in respect of the biodiversity gain condition which are set out in Part 2 of the Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Modifications and Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024 apply.

Biodiversity gain plans are required to be submitted to, and approved by, the planning authority before development may be begun, and, if subject to phased development, before each phase of development may be begun (Phase Plans).

If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans. The Biodiversity Gain Plan must include, in addition to information about steps taken or to be taken to minimise any adverse effect of the development on the habitat, information on arrangements for compensation for any impact the development has on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat.

The planning authority can only approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if satisfied that the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat is minimised and appropriate arrangements have been made for the purpose of compensating for any impact which do not include the use of biodiversity credits.

More information can be found in the Planning Practice Guidance online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>.

11. The applicant is advised that the design and layout of the leisure centre should comply with the relevant industry Technical Design Guidance, including guidance published by Sport England and, National Governing Bodies for Sport. Particular attention is drawn to Sport England's "Accessible and Inclusive Sports Facilities", "Sports Hall Design & Layouts" and "Swimming Pools" design guidance notes <https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance>

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 (2019) and Stevenage Local Plan Partial Review (2024).
3. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Parking Provision SPD (2025); Developer Contributions SPD (2025); Design Guide SPD (2025).
4. Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan LTP4 2018-2031
5. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and the National Planning Practice Guidance.
6. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.