

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

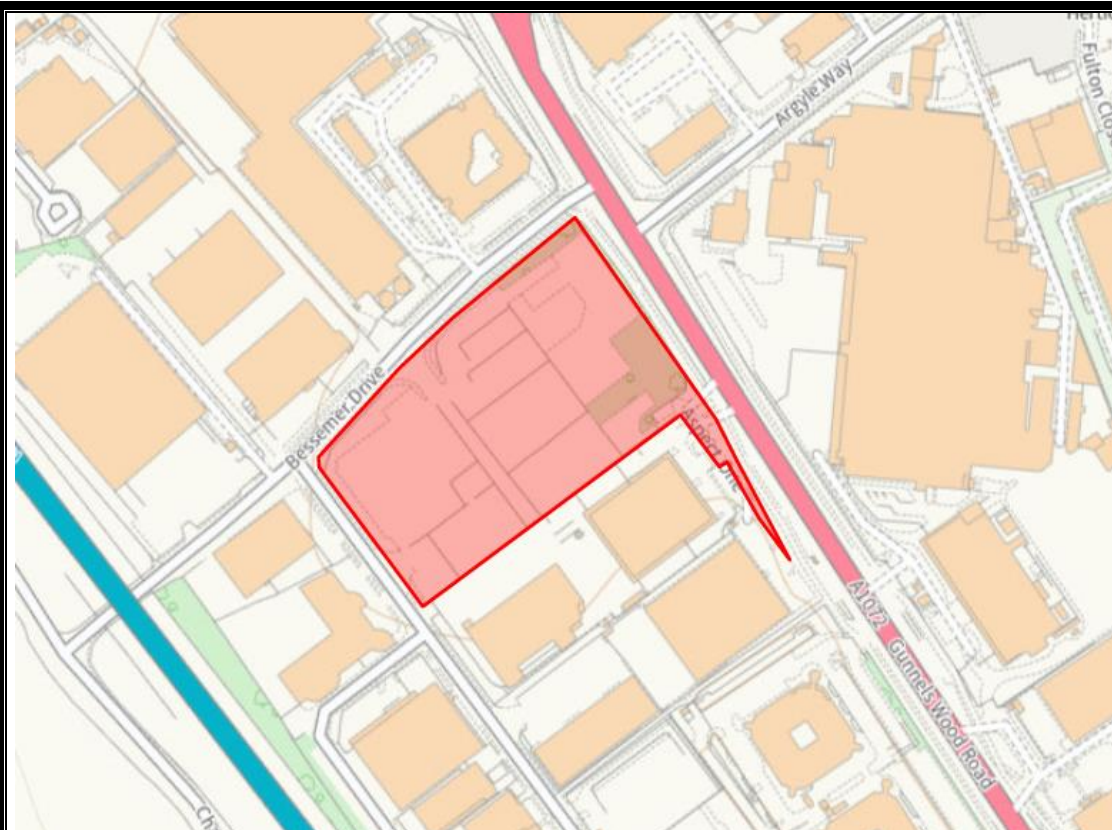
**Date:** 9 September 2025

**Author:** Rebecca Elliott

**Lead Officer:** Alex Robinson

**Contact Officer:** Rebecca Elliott

Application Nos:	25/00413/FPM
Location:	Former Kodak Site, Bessemer Drive, Stevenage.
Proposal:	Erection of 1no. detached industrial building with flexible use classes Eg(iii) and B8 uses, and 2no. semi-detached industrial buildings with flexible use classes Eg(iii), B2 and B8 uses with ancillary offices (for a total area of 11,093m2 GIA), and supporting car/cycle parking, landscaping and service yards.
Drawing Nos.	24059-HAL-PL003-O; 418.063138.00001_AT_A01; 24059-HAL-PL001-A; BEA 25-007-01; 418.063138.00001_AT_A02-REV A; BEA 25-007-02; 0527-ESS-00-ZZ-DR-E-2100 P1; BEA 25-007-04 P07; BEA 25-007-05 P02; BEA 25-007-06 P02; 24-029-IANDL-D00 P2; HAL-PL002-A; 24059-HAL-PL005-A; 24059-HAL-PL006-B; HAL-PL010-C; HAL-PL011-B; HAL-PL012-C; HAL-PL013; HAL-PL020-C; HAL-PL021-B; HAL-PL022-D; HAL-PL023-A; BEA 25-007-03 P02.
Applicant:	Mr Tom Hughes, Industrial Property Investment Trust
Date Valid:	28 May 2025
Recommendation:	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



Plan for information purposes only

## **1. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 1.1 The proposal site makes up part of the former Kodak production factory in the Gunnels Wood Employment Area of Stevenage. The south-eastern part of the former factory has been redeveloped to provide a Mercedes-Benz dealership but the proposal site, which makes up the north-western part, remains devoid of any structures, having been used informally for overflow car parking and open storage, and more recently as temporary bus parking. The site is currently being used as a HGV training centre, storage and temporary car parking area.
- 1.2 The site is bounded to the north by Bessemer Drive, the west by Caxton Way and the east by Gunnels Wood Road. Immediately to the south is the Stevenage Mercedes dealership, which the site will share car access off Gunnels Wood Road with. The site frontage on to Gunnels Wood Road faces onto the pedestrian/cycleway system that stretches along Gunnels Wood Road, with a subway access underneath Gunnels Wood Road heading east, centrally to the front of the site. There are vehicular accesses to the site off Bessemer Drive and Caxton Way. The perimeter is currently enclosed and screened by mature trees and planting.
- 1.3 The site is subject to the following Stevenage Local Plan (2019) designations:
- Allocated sites for employment development (South of Bessemer Drive, Gunnels Wood)
  - Gunnels Wood Employment Area
  - Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone
  - Green Corridor (Structurally Important Routes, Gunnels Wood Road)
  - Non-Residential Parking Accessibility Zone (Zone 2)
  - Groundwater Source Protection Zone (Zones 1 and 2)
  - Flood Zone (Zone 1)
  - There are no trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders on, or within close proximity of the site.

## **2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 2.1 There have been various permissions granted in the past for advertisements, and previous uses at the site, but these are not particularly relevant to this planning application.
- 2.2 Reserved Matters application reference 02/00122/RM for the erection of 3 detached units and 6 terraced units for B1, B2 and B8 use, with additional access from Bessemer Drive, pursuant to outline applications 2/0311/95 and 2/0314/98 was approved on 20.04.2006.
- 2.3 Planning permission reference 02/00335/FP for the variation of Condition 1 of planning permission reference 2/0279/97/FP for the erection of two 3 storey office buildings and storage building with associated car parking was approved on 23.05.2003.
- 2.4 Planning permission reference 04/00539/FP for a motor dealership for the purpose of car sales, service, parts storage, associated offices, parking and landscaping was approved on 09.02.2005.

## **3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION**

- 3.1 The proposed development seeks full planning permission for the erection of 1no. detached industrial building with flexible use classes Eg(iii) and B8 uses, and 2no. semi-detached industrial buildings with flexible use classes Eg(iii), B2 and B8 uses (for a total area of 11,093m<sup>2</sup> GIA).

- 3.2 The 11,093 m2 GIA includes ancillary office spaces for each unit. The largest detached unit would be located to the southeast of the site, utilising the Gunnels Wood Road access point to serve car parking to the front. The service yard, located to the north of the building would be served from the Bessemer Drive access. The ancillary office space here would be located on the northeastern corner of the building, fronting Gunnels Wood Road, giving the development an enhanced active frontage.
- 3.3 The smaller, semi-detached units would be sited to the rear and west of the site. The existing Caxton Road access would be closed off and the building stretching the length of the western boundary. Unit 2 to the north of the semi-detached building would have ancillary office space on the northeastern corner, and Unit 3 to the southeast corner.
- 3.4 Unit 1 would have twin pitched roof apex's with the gable measuring approximately 15.9m at the ridge, with an eaves height of approximately 13.5m. The front elevation would measure approximately 74.5m in length, and the longest side of the building, facing the Mercedes dealership and Bessemer Drive would measure approximately 97.5m. The building would be externally finished with horizontal profiled built-up steel cladding in various Tata steel Colorcoat grey colours of Orion, Zeus and Sirius on the walls and profiled built-up cladding Tata steel Colorcoat in Goosewing Grey colour on the roof.
- 3.5 Units 2 and 3, which are semi-detached would have a similar appearance with twin pitched roof apex's measuring approximately 12.9m at the ridge and with an eaves height of 10.8m. The building would sit perpendicular to Unit 1, stretching along the western boundary of the site, with the gable end being on the northern and southern sides. The building would be finished in the same external materials.
- 3.6 The proposal will utilise the existing Gunnels Wood Road and Bessemer Drive vehicular accesses to provide two separate parking and servicing areas. The car parking area to the front of Unit 1 and facing Gunnels Wood Road would only serve car parking for Unit 1. The remaining car parking for Units 2 and 3, and all servicing would be accessed via Bessemer Drive.
- 3.7 This application comes before the Planning and Development Committee as the development is classified as a major.

## **4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS**

- 4.1 Following notification of the application via letter and the erection of a three site notices and notification of the application in the local press, the following comments have been received.
- Provision of swift boxes should be secured by condition;
  - Clarification over how the access points might impact on the access and logistics associated with the neighbouring Mercedes dealership;
  - At all site entrances, priority crossing of the cycle tracks should be updated in accordance with LTN1/20 10.5 giving cyclists proceeding along the cycle track priority over vehicles entering and exiting the site.
- 4.2 Please note that the above is a summary of the comments which have been received. A verbatim copy of the relevant comments can be found on the Council's website.

## 5. CONSULTATIONS

### 5.1 Hertfordshire County Council Highways Authority

- 5.1.1 Since its closure near the turn of the century the former KODAK site has been used for various parking areas etc. The site is now the subject to a proposal for three industrial units within two buildings, totalling 119,400ft<sup>2</sup> (11,092m<sup>2</sup>) GIA, together with ancillary offices, car parking, service areas and soft landscaping. The application seeks to reopen the currently stopped up access to Aspect One (which almost immediately forms a junction with A1072 (Gunnels Wood Road), retain the Bessemer Drive access and gate off the Caxton Way access.

#### Sustainable Transport Access

- 5.1.2 In line with the Policies of HCC's 4th Local Transport Plan (LTP4, May 2018), particularly Policies 1 (the Transport User Hierarchy) and 5 (Development Management), it is essential given the declared climate emergency that the issue of sustainable access is considered first, and the appropriate infrastructure provided to unlock a site sustainably.

#### Walking and Cycling Access

- 5.1.3 The site is reasonably well located in terms of the sustainable transport network with an existing segregated foot and cycle path located on the western side of Gunnels Wood Road, which further connects into the greater Stevenage network. Via the walking and cycling network, Stevenage rail station is approximately 1.2km (5 minutes) cycle from the site. The adopted Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP 2019) identifies improvements along the Gunnels Wood Road path.

- 5.1.4 The proposed access to Aspect One facilitates almost direct access for the proposed unit one of the development. The proposals put forward by SLR in the drawing 418-063138-00001-PD02 Rev A will improve the safety of the access onto Gunnels Wood Road. The Bessemer Drive access (and Units 2 and 3) will ultimately be connected by the proposals to unlock the Land West of Stevenage residential site (20/00356/FPM). If the proposed development comes forward before the Land West of Stevenage residential site the applicant should commit to the delivery of the proposals shown in the Land West of Stevenage site from (and including) the applicant's access to the Gunnels Wood Road segregated foot and cycle path to complete the unlocking of the proposal site. The proposal layout (24059-HAL-PL003 Rev K) must be updated to include these proposed junction and cycle improvements before it can be officially approved by HCC Highways.

#### Bus Access

- 5.1.5 Given the location of the proposed development HCC Highways consider the existing bus services are of a reasonable standard to facilitate the proposed development.

#### Motorised Vehicle Access

- 5.1.6 Motorised vehicle access to the site is via the aforementioned junctions on Aspect One and Bessemer Drive. Initially HCC Highways had concerns during pre application as to the reopening of the Aspect One access which almost immediately adjoins Gunnels Wood Road, however with the reduction in car parking and the improvements to the junction to improve visibility between pedestrian/ cyclists and vehicles we now find the proposal acceptable. The proposed layout should be updated to reflect the layout in the SLR Transport Assessment (24059-HAL-PL003 Rev K) before the layout can be fully accepted.

#### Highway Safety - Personal Injury Collision (PIC) Analysis

- 5.1.7 Whilst the Personal Injury Collision (PIC) analysis no serious event that could suggest there is a serious problem with the highway network which could be exasperated by the

proposed development, it did identify one slight PIC at the Aspect One/ Gunnels Wood Road junction at the cycle way crossover. It is envisaged however, that the proposed improvements associated with the application at the Aspect One/ Gunnels Wood Road junction may have prevented the event.

- 5.1.8 The applicant also commissioned a Stage One Road Safety Audit (RSA1) of their access proposals which also identified the junction inter-visibility problems at the existing Aspect One/Gunnels Wood Road junction due to vegetation and the existing central refuge and notes, " The proposed alterations will remove the existing refuge island at the access in favour of a pedestrian / cyclist priority raised crossing". HCC Highways agrees with this analysis.

#### Travel Plan

- 5.1.9 Whilst the submitted framework travel plan is acceptable for this stage in the planning process before its full acceptance in order to discharge the associated Travel Plan (TP) condition further work will be required:

- 1- A Full Travel Plan (TP) is expected to be submitted to HCC 3-6 month prior to the first occupation and NOT within 6 months of the opening of the proposed development.
- 2- TP Coordinator contact details must be provided in the Full TP stage
- 3- In the event that the developer sells the property and departs, a comprehensive management strategy must be submitted. This strategy should clearly outline who will be responsible for implementing and maintaining the TP
- 4- HCC requests that a Multi Modal survey occurs annually for 5 years post full occupation
- 5- The TP Document needs to be reviewed and updated annually
- 6- A Steering Group must be in place to rectify any difficulties
- 7- Based on the size of each unit they must submit separate TP 3 month prior to the occupation.

It should also be noted that a Travel Plan Contribution of £1200 per annum for 5 years post full occupation will be secured via S106 legal agreement.

#### Parking

- 5.1.10 It is noted that parking is to be provided at the site in accordance with the Stevenage Borough Council Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (2020) and car parking numbers have been reduced appropriately due to the sustainable location of the site. Therefore, HCC Highways consider the numbers proposed within the TA appropriate.

#### Contributions

- 5.1.11 HCC Highways operate two levels of mitigation agreements (Strand 1 and Strand 2). Strand 1 mitigation works being works that are directly required to unlock the development and solely the responsibility of the development. Strand 2 mitigation works being works that address the wider cumulative impact of the development for which the development isn't solely responsible for but does derive benefit from.
- 5.1.12 In the first instance (Strand 1) HCC would envisage that the agreed site access junctions and any potential off-site improvements are delivered through a S278 agreement, and the bus and travel plan contributions are contained in a S106 agreement.
- 5.1.13 In the second instance (Strand 2) HCC calculate an appropriate headline figure based on the findings of HCC's adopted Developers Planning Obligation Toolkit (2021). Strand 2 contributions should address the cumulative impacts of all development, large and small, facilitating delivery and enhancement of the necessary active and sustainable transport networks. These local sustainable networks must be provided in their entirety to provide the sustainable connections to the key trip generators, as such contributions

will be pooled to fund these networks within the local area subject to any legislative restrictions), as supported by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This second strand contribution is intended to help implement broader transport measures in the catchments of new development from which contributions are secured. The need for second strand contributions will be balanced against the level of first strand contributions and any other relevant planning matters.

- 5.1.14 A review of the TRICS database (considering sites within England and Wales surveyed in the last 10 years (excluding the covid lockdown period) suggested that a site of this nature could create approximately 214 jobs. The applicants TA also quotes 214 jobs. Therefore, in order to address the cumulative impact of development HCC would normally expect a Strand 2 contribution of £90,308. It is considered by HCC Highways that the access junction proposals as well as providing appropriate access to the site will benefit the wider population to a degree and a Strand 2 contribution of £67,731 (Jan 2019 index) is appropriate. The Strand 2 the SBC LCWIP 3PP and/or Package 1 (Stevenage) of the NC GTP - Gunnels Wood and Town Centre and complete the sustainable unlocking of the site.

## **5.2 Hertfordshire County Council Lead Local Flood Authority**

- 5.2.1 This is a re-consultation of a full planning application for erection of industrial buildings and associated structures. Currently the site is brownfield using mainly as parking site. We maintain the objection to this planning application in the absence of an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy or and supporting information relating to:

- The development is at risk of surface water flooding.
- The proposed SuDS are likely to increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.
- The development is not in accordance with NPPF, PPG or Stevenage DISCRICT local policies including Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone.

**Reason:** To prevent flooding in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 181, 182 and 187 by ensuring the satisfactory management of local flood risk, surface water flow paths, storage and disposal of surface water from the site in a range of rainfall events and ensuring the SuDS proposed operates as designed for the lifetime of the development.

- 5.2.2 We will consider reviewing this objection if the following issues are adequately addressed.

1. According to the latest flood map for planning, the entire site is in risk of surface water flooding. According to EA directions we should not use the depth map. Hence LLFA will rely on the flood extent from the flood map for planning. If flood depths are needed additional hydraulic / hydrological modelling needs to be undertaken. We need to ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere as part of this development.
2. We have noted that some alterations to the ground level have already been completed and the finished floor levels are 150mm above ground level. However, as mentioned in the above point, the site is affected by surface water flooding. Details of flood resistance and resilience measures for residual risk is needed considering finished floor levels for vulnerable parts of the site should be minimum 300mm above the flood level.
3. As this is a Full Planning Application, we expect there to be a detailed drainage strategy supplied. LLFA needs the following drainage calculation for the site. A drainage strategy with supporting drainage calculations including the complete pipe network to test the network for flooding using FEH rainfall parameters (either FEH13 or FEH22) is required. Other parameters to use are the CV value of 1, and the new

allowances of climate change. The rainfall simulations are expected to include 100% AEP (1 year), 3.33%AEP (30 year), 3.33%AEP (30 year) with climate change allowance, 1% AEP (100 year) and 1% AEP (100 year) with climate change allowance events. The drainage calculations must include all the SuDS features such as permeable paving and attenuation tanks. The labels in drainage drawings should match the labels in the supporting calculations.

4. The new National SuDS Standards detail the need to include multifunctional SuDS with water quality, biodiversity and amenity benefits. Above ground SuDS should be explored within the site boundary but also consider that there is water flowing on site from off site. This water would have an unknown water quality, runoff rate and volume. The drainage strategy must include how there is a benefit from the new drainage scheme from the existing flood risk.
5. We acknowledge the details given in the Intrusive Geoenvironmental and Geotechnical Site Assessment report. However, LLFA would require the details of an infiltration testing (BRE 365 or similar) to confirm the infiltration is viable or not. Infiltration testing cannot be conditioned unless an alternative drainage (Plan B) strategy is provided. For the avoidance of doubt, if the infiltration test is to be conditioned, two full drainage strategies are required. A) With infiltration assumed to work with the worst-case infiltration rate (1X10<sup>-6</sup> m/s), B) The alternative strategy connecting to a watercourse / surface water sewer.

#### Officer response

- 5.2.3 At the time of writing this report, the applicant was seeking to address the points raised by the LLFA. If updated 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. However, it should be noted the LLFA does not object to the principle of the drainage strategy.
- 5.2.4 A decision will not be issued until the Legal Agreement associated with the development has been signed, which will allow time for updated 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.

### **5.3 Environmental Health**

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

- 5.3.1 The proposed development will entail a significant period of construction and there is a clear potential for an adverse impact on local amenity/health due to demolition/construction noise, dust, fumes, etc. However, I believe that these impacts can be adequately mitigated by appropriate physical and managerial controls and therefore I recommend the following condition:

*1(a) Prior to the commencement of the development to which this permission relates (including any demolition or site clearance), a Construction Management Plan (CMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include details of:*

- *hours of working (including deliveries and waste removal);*
- *all plant necessary for construction and demolition;*
- *noise and vibration mitigation measures with particular attention paid to piling, power floating, and vacuum excavation activities where these activities are to be undertaken;*

- *dust and smoke mitigation measures;*
- *site lighting and off-site mitigation measures;*

*1(b) The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved CMP at all times.*

**REASON:** *In the interests of local amenity in accordance with Local Plan Policy FP7*

- 5.3.2 The above CMP should incorporate the mitigation measures set out in paragraph 7.1 of the *Air Quality Assessment* report prepared by Hoare Lea LLP (Project no. 34/22576, Rev. 01, dated 10/04/2025).

Construction phase (contaminated land)

- 5.3.3 I have reviewed the *Intrusive Geoenvironmental and Geotechnical Site Assessment* report authored by TRC Companies (Project No. 590554.0000.0000, Rev. 1, dated 23/09/2024) and I believe that it meets the definition of a Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) as required by Planning Policy FP5. The report concludes that the site represents a relatively modest risk in the context of its proposed end users; however, a number of mitigation measures are proposed in paragraph 12.3.4 as well as more investigation works for part of the site. Accordingly, I recommend the following conditions:

*Prior to the commencement of the development to which this permission relates (excluding site clearance and demolition), the results of a phase 2 site investigation and full written details of any necessary remediation works or controls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details.*

**REASON:** *In the interests of human health.*

*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 full written details of any necessary remediation works or controls 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.*

**REASON:** *In the interests of human health.*

*Where any development to which this permission relates is required to be carried out in accordance with a remediation scheme approved by the local planning authority, 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.*

- 5.3.4 Contamination of controlled waters is usually a matter for the Environment Agency and so I would encourage the Local Planning Authority to consult that body, if it hasn't done so already, seeking guidance on the likely impacts of the proposed development on that receptor.

Operation of site (external lighting)

- 5.3.5 The *External Lighting Report* by Engineering Services Consultancy Limited (reference 0527/ESS/00/ZZ/RP/Z/0016, dated 27/2/2025) makes reference to an appropriate guidance document (*The Institute of Lighting Professionals: Guidance Note 01/21 for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light 2021*) and concludes that the development site falls within Environmental Zone E3. I believe this is reasonable given the circumstances.

- 5.3.6 Whilst the nearby existing land uses are generally not particularly light-sensitive, I would nonetheless suggest the condition over page so that the controls set out in the above report are implemented in practice.



*1(a) The development hereby permitted shall not come into operational use until a verification report containing evidence of compliance with the maximum off-site artificial lighting levels and temporal controls as set out in External Lighting Report by Engineering Services Consultancy Limited (reference 0527/ESS/00/ZZ/RP/Z/0016, dated 27/2/2025) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.*

*1(b) The luminaires and associated lighting equipment authorised by 1(a) above shall thereafter be retained, operated, and maintained in accordance with the above report and manufacturers' specifications.*

**REASON:** *In the interests of the amenities of nearby existing land users in accordance with Local Plan Policy FP7*

Operation of site (local air quality)

5.3.7 The *Air Quality Assessment* report prepared by Hoare Lea LLP (Project no. 34/22576, Rev. 01, dated 10/04/2025) concludes that the impact of site activity will have an insignificant overall influence on local air quality and will not result in an exceedance of any national air quality objective. Accordingly, I agree that no mitigation measures are required concerning this aspect of the proposed development.

5.3.8 The report also includes recommendations regarding the construction phase of the development and so I suggest that they are incorporated within a wider Construction Management Plan (CMP) as discussed above.

Operation of site (noise)

5.3.9 The *Noise Impact Assessment* report, also prepared by Hoare Lea LLP, (Project no. 10-16004, Rev. 01, dated 30/04/2025) concludes that noise from plant, vehicles, and break out from the proposed structures will not have a material impact on the amenity of nearby domestic occupiers. This conclusion is based on a considerable number of assumptions, unpublished noise source data (which is therefore not capable of independent verification), and a baseline background noise survey with results that appear to include typographical errors (e.g. Table 2, I believe, should read 'Attended' rather than 'Unattended' and Table 3 appears to mix up day-time and night-time background levels).

5.3.10 Notwithstanding, I do believe that this proposed development need not cause significant harm to the amenity currently enjoyed by existing domestic occupiers but basic safeguards are warranted, in my opinion. Accordingly, I recommend the following condition:

*1(a) The development hereby permitted shall not come into operational use until a verification report containing evidence that noise levels do not exceed those set out in Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7 of the Noise Impact Assessment report by Hoare Lea Acoustics LLP (10-16004, Rev. 01, dated 30/04/2025) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.*

*1(b) All external plant shall thereafter be retained, operated, and maintained in accordance with manufacturers' specifications.*

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

5.3.11 The report makes no reference to nearby non-domestic land uses and their expectations regarding the local noise climate and so I would invite the LPA to consider what level of protection, if any, should be afforded to them as the applicant does not propose any.

5.3.12 Finally, I would be grateful for the inclusion of the following Informative:

*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.*

## **5.4 Planning Policy**

- 5.4.1 No comments received at time of drafting report.

## **5.5 Police Crime Prevention Officer**

- 5.5.1 I have been working with the project team on this and as such have no concerns. The Police will support this development.

## **5.6 Thames Water**

### Waste Comments

- 5.6.1 We would expect the developer to demonstrate what measures will be undertaken to minimise groundwater discharges into the public sewer. Groundwater discharges typically result from construction site dewatering, deep excavations, basement infiltration, borehole installation, testing and site remediation. Any discharge made without a permit is deemed illegal and may result in prosecution under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991. Should the Local Planning Authority be minded to approve the planning application, Thames Water would like the following informative attached to the planning permission:

*A Groundwater Risk Management Permit from Thames Water will be required for discharging groundwater into a public sewer. Any discharge made without a permit is deemed illegal and may result in prosecution under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991. We would expect the developer to demonstrate what measures he will undertake to minimise groundwater discharges into the public sewer. Permit enquiries should be directed to Thames Water's Risk Management Team by telephoning 020 3577 9483 or by emailing [trade.effluent@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:trade.effluent@thameswater.co.uk). Application forms should be completed on line via [www.thameswater.co.uk](http://www.thameswater.co.uk). Please refer to the Wholesale; Business customers; Groundwater discharges section.*

- 5.6.2 The proposed development is located within 15 metres of our underground waste water assets and as such we would like the following informative attached to any approval granted.

*The proposed development is located within 15 metres of Thames Waters underground assets and as such, the development could cause the assets to fail if appropriate measures are not taken. Please read our guide 'working near our assets' to ensure your workings are in line with the necessary processes you need to follow if you're considering working above or near our pipes or other structures. <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/developers/larger-scale-developments/planningyour-development/working-near-our-pipes> Should you require further information please contact Thames Water. Email: [developer.services@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:developer.services@thameswater.co.uk) Phone: 0800 009 3921 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm) Write to: Thames Water Developer Services, Clearwater Court, Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 8DB*

- 5.6.3 Thames Water would advise that with regard to FOUL WATER sewerage network infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application, based on the information provided.
- 5.6.4 Thames Water would advise that with regard to SURFACE WATER network infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application, based on the information provided.

#### Water Comments

- 5.6.5 With regard to water supply, this comes within the area covered by the Affinity Water Company. For your information the address to write to is - Affinity Water Company The Hub, Tamblin Way, Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9EZ - Tel - 0845 782 3333.

#### **5.7 Affinity Water**

- 5.7.1 No comments received at time of drafting report.

#### **5.8 Stevenage Borough Council Waste Storage**

- 5.8.1 No comments received at time of drafting report.

#### **5.9 Hertfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste Authority**

##### Waste

- 5.9.1 The supporting documents to this application make no reference to the adopted Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (2012). Many of the policy requirements can be met through the imposition of planning conditions.

##### Site Waste Management Plan

- 5.9.2 Waste Policy 12: Sustainable Design, Construction and Demolition requires all relevant construction projects to be supported by a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Page 23 of the Sustainability Statement notes that a SWMP will be implemented to manage construction waste effectively. The county council welcomes this commitment.
- 5.9.3 The Waste Planning Authority would expect to see a SWMP prepared to support this application. The SWMP must be prepared and agreed in consultation with the Waste Planning Authority prior to commencement of the project. The SWMP must be implemented throughout the duration of the project, from initial site preparation works to final completion of the construction phase.
- 5.9.4 By preparing a SWMP prior to commencement, early decisions can be made relating to the management of waste arisings and building supplies made from recycled and secondary materials can be sourced, to help alleviate the demand for primary materials such as virgin sand and gravel. Early planning for waste arisings will help to establish what types of containers/skips are required for the project and when segregation would be best implemented for various waste streams. It will also help in determining the costs of removing waste from the site.
- 5.9.5 As a SWMP has not been produced at the planning application stage, the Waste Planning Authority request the following pre-commencement condition be attached to any approved planning application:

*No development shall take place until a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) for the site has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in consultation with the Waste 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. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved SWMP.*

**Reason:** *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).*

#### Safeguarded Waste Management Site

- 5.9.6 The Borough Council should also be aware of the nearby Waste Management Site, Recycling Centre Stevenage (Caxton Way), which is located less than 250m away from the development proposal. The Waste Management Site is safeguarded under Policy 5 of the adopted Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies document due to its important contribution to the strategic network of waste management provision in the county.
- 5.9.7 Adopted Policy 5: Safeguarding of Sites, states that the Waste Planning Authority will oppose development proposals which are likely to prevent or prejudice the use of land identified or safeguarded for waste management purposes unless alternative or enhanced provision is made for a facility dealing with the equivalent waste capacity or where it can be demonstrated that the need for those facilities can no longer be justified.
- 5.9.8 The relationship between any proposed development alongside a safeguarded waste facility needs to be considered carefully to ensure that the operation of the existing waste facility is not jeopardised by a conflict between differing land uses. The 'Agent of Change' principle (NPPF Dec 2024, paragraph 200) is clear that planning decisions on new developments should ensure integration with existing business such that they do not have unreasonable restrictions placed upon them.
- 5.9.9 After reviewing the details submitted with the application, the Waste Planning Authority does not consider that the proposal will prevent or prejudice the waste management site and therefore has no safeguarding concerns. The borough council would need to satisfy itself that the design of the proposed industrial building has taken into account the need to mitigate any negative impacts (such as noise, dust and odour) arising from the proximity to the existing recycling centre facility.

#### **5.10 Stevenage Borough Council Tree Manager**

- 5.10.1 In principle, I do not have any objection to the proposed development from an Arboriculture viewpoint. My only concern with this proposal is the number of trees to be replanted. The tree survey proposes that 7 trees, 4 groups and 2 partial groups are removed and a total of 11 new trees being planted (replaced).
- 5.10.2 Our Amenity Tree Management Policy dictates that any tree removed for the purpose of development should be replaced with 3 new trees. So far, the replacement proposal ratio for this application appears to be just under 1:1. If we were to consider, as a minimum, the 7 trees, 4 groups and 2 partial groups as being 13 trees altogether, we would be looking to see a total of  $3 \times 13 = 39$  new standard trees replanted.
- 5.10.3 It is possible that the 39 trees may not fit well within the proposed development, in which case, I would welcome the opportunity for the developer to fund the planting and establishment of the remaining ( $39 - 11 = 28$  trees) on publicly maintained land, in the nearby area.

#### **5.11 Hertfordshire County Council Ecology**

##### Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 5.11.1 Given that this application was received and validated after the 12th of February 2024, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is expected as a planning requirement. A BNG assessment has been submitted to the LPA and is accompanied by a statutory biodiversity metric, in line with planning requirements.
- 5.11.2 A Biodiversity Net Gain has been calculated, showing a **net gain of +55.93% in hedgerow units** and a **net loss of -50.27% in habitat units**. This falls short of the legal

requirement for a 10% net gain in biodiversity. Off-site BNG has therefore been suggested within the BNG assessment.

- 5.11.3 The application is automatically subject to the general **Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) condition**, which requires the delivery of a Biodiversity Gain Plan. It is recommended that the plan provided is in line with the DEFRA Biodiversity Gain Plan template. This condition should be kept separate to the list of conditions imposed in the written notice if the LPA are minded to grant permission.
- 5.11.4 Whilst the BGP condition is a post determination matter, the present information shows a net gain below the legal minimum requirement and a lack of any existing identified off-site location. In line with government guidance, it would generally be inappropriate for concerns about the ability to discharge the condition to be used as a reason to refuse an application. However, the applicant should be made aware the BGP condition is a pre-commencement condition and that if the applicant chooses not to address these matters prior to determination they will need to do so at the post determination stage.
- 5.11.5 At the Biodiversity Gain Plan stage, an updated metric will need to be submitted showing how a net gain can be delivered using an off-site location, with the provision of the Biodiversity Gain Site Register reference number for that site. We advise in line with the principles of the use of the metric, that **any off-site location should be sought in the first instance local to the impact**. As a last resort, **if an off-site location cannot be found, Biodiversity Credits would need to be purchased**. In this latter case, the applicant must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the LPA that all other options have been fully explored and that the BNG hierarchy has been followed.
- 5.11.6 **The LPA are required to secure any off-site net gain via legal agreement whether through an S106 agreement or conservation covenant**. Any off-site land used for the purpose of achieving biodiversity units must be registered on the biodiversity gain sites register.
- 5.11.7 The claims for BNG **on-site** would be considered significant net gain. In this instance, **the LPA are advised to secure this significant net gain for the respective units via legal agreement, whether through an S106 agreement or conservation covenant**. We advise that a **Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan (HMMP) should be secured as part of the legal agreement**. This shall demonstrate how the habitat enhancement and creation on-site, and subsequent target habitat conditions will be created, enhanced, and monitored over 30 years following the completion of the capital works required to create them. It is recommended that the HMMP should be in line with the HMMP template produced by DEFRA. Considerations should also be given within any legal agreement to secure resources to allow adequate monitoring over the 30-year period.

#### Protected Species

- 5.11.8 The Ecological Appraisal listed above assessed the site for potential in supporting protected species. We advise that the proposals are unlikely to have any significant ecological impacts, therefore the application can be determined accordingly. However, in the unlikely event that protected species are found, we advise a precautionary approach to the works is taken and recommend an **informative** is added to any permission granted:

#### Species Enhancement Plan

- 5.11.9 We support the Ecological Enhancement Strategy detailed within the Bird Box Location plan listed above and advise that the recommendations for bat boxes within Sections 4.23 and 4.24 of the Ecological Appraisal should be included within this and together detailed within a Species Enhancement Plan **secured by condition**.

## **5.12 Stevenage Borough Council Business Relationship Manager**

- 5.12.1 I am fully supportive of the application, as it meets several key economic growth aims for Stevenage. Firstly, the development will go towards safeguarding existing employment land that is designated in the Local Plan. The site has remained undeveloped for several years, with space utilised for secondary uses including storage provision for businesses, rather than meeting the wider growth ambitions of local businesses. As construction activity finally takes place on site, this will support increased business confidence in the area and act as an enabler to attract further investment into the area to support local supply chains and create further conditions to support Stevenage's existing enterprising and innovative economy.
- 5.12.2 The development will directly support the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 key economic objective to help "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," by bringing forward additional employment accommodation to help create positive conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt.
- 5.12.3 It will go towards unlocking existing infrastructure to introduce and deliver much need quality industrial accommodation to support the growth aspirations of businesses both in Stevenage and Hertfordshire. The availability of industrial land for businesses with ambitious growth targets is an ongoing issue for many businesses in Stevenage and Hertfordshire and the availability of space will be very much welcomed locally and by those who are looking to invest in Stevenage to meet their growth targets.
- 5.12.4 The development is situated in Gunnels Wood, a key employment gateway in Stevenage and will provide employment space for the town's key employment sectors supporting both the increase in productivity and economic outputs. The development supports the interconnectedness of Stevenage and will assist it to make the most of its connectivity to London, Cambridge and Oxford and play to its sector strengths to leverage further investment into the area.
- 5.12.5 The development will support much needed employment accommodation to support Stevenage's and Hertfordshire's global brands and sectors of significance, including its burgeoning life sciences and advanced manufacturing sectors. The site can potentially support their growth ambitions and bring additional employment opportunities into the town. It will also help towards meeting the areas wider growth ambitions to support additional jobs for its growing population and complete the major regeneration activities which are transforming the town.
- 5.12.6 The development will also support Stevenage's ambitions of becoming a better place to live, work and play, adding support superb accommodation to the existing portfolio of quality space to attracting further investment. Therefore, continuing to promote Stevenage as a business destination and raising its profile both nationally and globally. The development will also support business growth and retention of local businesses, by strengthening local supply chain opportunities for potential services and products to be targeted at future investors to the site.
- 5.12.7 With additional homes being built across Stevenage, the development supports a sustainable location in supporting local people with local employment opportunities and reducing the overall levels of net commuting. Therefore, enabling the town to meet its climate Change Strategy aims and ambitions and reducing its overall carbon footprint. The development also helps to support the growth of Stevenage's workforce by enabling the growth of the area's current skills base, providing security of future jobs and importantly act as a conduit to create additional job opportunities for people, decreasing levels of economic inactivity and raising local aspirations.

- 5.12.8 The development will create a range of job opportunities, firstly through the construction stage and then followed by the additional industrial accommodation itself. Those working at the site will also access local services and offerings through the town's retail, leisure and hospitality provision and therefore benefitting the wider local economy.

### **5.13 Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue (Hydrants)**

- 5.13.1 No comments received at the time of drafting this report.

## **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 SP3: A strong, competitive economy

Policy SP5: Infrastructure

Policy SP6: Sustainable transport

Policy SP8: Good design

Policy SP11: Climate change, flooding and pollution

Policy EC1/2: Allocated sites for employment development

Policy EC2a: Gunnels Wood Employment Area

Policy EC2b: Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone

Policy EC5: Active frontages and gateways

Policy IT4: Transport assessment and travel plans

Policy IT5: Parking and access

Policy IT6: Sustainable transport

Policy IT7: New and improved links for pedestrians and cyclists

Policy GD1: High quality design

Policy FP1: Climate change

Policy FP2: Flood risk in Flood Zone 1

Policy FP5: Contaminated land

Policy FP7: Pollution

Policy NH3/22: Green Corridors

Policy NH5: Trees and Woodland

## 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 issues for consideration in the determination of this application are its acceptability in land use policy terms, design and appearance, flood risk and drainage, climate change mitigation, amenity, noise, highway impact, access and parking, trees, biodiversity and landscaping and planning obligations to mitigate the impact of the development.

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 site is allocated within the Local Plan (2019) as part of the Gunnels Wood Road employment area. Policy EC1 allocates sites within the Borough for employment development where typically uses B1(b) research and development (now E(g)(ii)), B1(c) light industry (now E(g)(iii)), B2 general industry and B8 storage and distribution are acceptable. The proposal site, referred to as “South of Bessemer Drive, Gunnels Wood” is allocated under reference EC1/2 for B1(a) and B1(b) development, with a target floor space provision of 12,000m<sup>2</sup>.

7.2.2 Policy EC2a defines the spatial extent of the Gunnels Wood Employment Area. The proposal site falls wholly within this area. The north-eastern part of the proposal site lies within the Gunnels Wood Edge-of-Centre Zone. Policy EC2b states that within this area, planning permission will be granted for offices and research and development, where schemes interact positively with the “Stevenage Central” area and make efficient use of sites in terms of floor space and job provision. Planning permission will only be granted as an exception to these criteria where the proposed development is ancillary to B1(a) or B1(b) uses or essential to the continued operation of an established B class use.

7.2.3 Taking all of the above into account, the only acceptable uses on the site in land use policy terms based on the currently adopted Local Plan are offices (formerly B1(a), now E(g)(i)) and research and development (formerly B1(b), now E(g)(ii)). The proposal, which would provide general industry (B2), storage and distribution (B8) and light industry (E(g)(iii)) uses, is directly contrary to these policies.

7.2.4 The council has recently carried out a partial review and update of the Local Plan. This has gone through the necessary public consultation under Regulations 18 and 19 and was submitted to the Secretary of State on Friday 15 August 2025 for full assessment. Paragraph 48 of the NPPF 2024 states that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

7.2.5 As part of the Local Plan review and update the site is proposed to have its designation amended to allow for E(g)(ii), E(g)(iii) and B8 with a target floorspace provision of 12,000 sqm. Following consultation on the review and update of the plan, there were no objections received from statutory consultees to the policy designation change for this site.

- 7.2.6 Further, the proposed loss of office space on the site reflects the rationalisation of office space across Stevenage, as recognised within the Employment Technical Paper (2024) (Appendix 2) which supports the Local Plan review (Source: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/local-plan-partial-review-files-august-2025/ed3-employment-technical-paper-2024.pdf>). The same document also recognises the greater need for the proposed uses and a deficit of 9.81ha of employment land supply across Stevenage. As such, bringing into full use largely vacant sites such as the application site is critical to ensuring full economic use of employment land available across Stevenage.
- 7.2.7 Based on the above it is officer's opinion that the proposals can be supported with significant weight being applied to the Local Plan update in line with the NPPF. Furthermore, the proposals would see the development of an existing undeveloped site with much needed and high-quality flexible use warehousing and industrial uses in an acceptable employment location in the Borough.
- 7.2.8 The Written Ministerial Statement from the 30 July 2024 is capable of being considered as a material planning consideration (see *Cala Homes (South) Ltd, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor* [2011] EWCA Civ 639 (27 May 2011) (bailii.org)). The statement recognises that logistics and freight are part of the nation's critical infrastructure and more will be done to support this sector as part of the engine of the economy. As such, this also highlights there is a need nationally for such developments as to what has been proposed for this application site.
- 7.2.9 Turning now Policy EC5 of the plan, this seeks active frontages and gateways on certain roads within the Gunnels Wood Employment Area, including Gunnels Wood Road and Bessemer Drive. The policy states that planning permission for the (re-)development of sites with a frontage along one or more of these roads will be granted where:
- Proposals face directly onto the identified road(s) and provide active frontages and natural surveillance;
  - Buildings are not set back significantly from the identified road(s);
  - Car parking and service areas are located away from the street frontage of the identified road(s); and
  - On corner plots, where these roads intersect, schemes incorporate landmark architecture and gateway features wherever this would be compatible with the proposed use(s).
- 7.2.10 The proposals would see Unit 1 as the largest building of the two facing on to Gunnels Wood Road with active ancillary office space and natural surveillance across the frontage. Surveillance on to Bessemer Drive would be provided, and the glazed office spaces of units 1 and 2 would partially face on to this secondary road.
- 7.2.11 There would be reasonable set back of Unit 1 from Bessemer Drive, simply because of the siting of the service yard and turning spaces for HGVs. The layout has largely been influenced by an existing right of way for the Mercedes dealership leading from the Bessemer Drive entrance running straight southwest to an existing deliveries gate on the northwest boundary of the Mercedes site. Therefore, whilst the set-back and servicing yard location does not fully accord with criteria b and c above, on balance the scheme would see the site come forward for re-development with high quality warehousing and industry which is much needed.
- 7.2.12 Taking the above assessment into consideration, it is considered that on balance, the proposed development for uses E(g)(iii) Industrial Processes, B2 General Industry and B8 Storage or Distribution are considered to be acceptable in principle subject to satisfying other material planning considerations.

## 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, accommodate existing constraints, and create good natural surveillance and positive frontage to Gunnels Wood Road. As existing the site is largely laid to concrete hardstand with various self-seeded trees in the northeastern corner, where there are also substantial levels changes from the surrounding highway/footway. A mature existing tree belt encloses the northern boundary, with some of the western boundary also enclosed. The existing vegetation along the Gunnels Wood Road boundary will be managed and enhanced to retain this green frontage.
- 7.3.8 The proposed development would see the frontage of the site behind this green area opens to a car parking and the office area of the building. Unit 1 would sit further forward than the existing front elevation of the neighbouring Mercedes dealership. This is largely due to the existing right of way through the site that is to be retained. The BTC building on the corner of Bessemer Drive and Gunnels Wood Road to the north of the site also sits forward of the proposed development, highlighting the stagger of buildings along this stretch of road.
- 7.3.9 The service yard for Unit 1 would be positioned within the northern part of the site, adjacent Bessemer Drive. Existing trees along the boundary are retained outside the visibility splays, with additional native shrub mix planting proposed. This will reduce the visual impact along the highway. It is noted that given the existing situation on site with no permanent buildings present, any introduction of buildings, especially industrial ones will have a visual impact on the wider area. The service yard of Unit 1 would be enclosed with 2.4m high security fencing.
- 7.3.10 Unit's 2 and 3 sit at the rear of the site, adjacent the Caxton Road boundary. The ancillary office areas would be on the respective front corner of each unit, providing good surveillance. Areas of trees and greenery are to be retained along the boundaries with these units. The buildings are set close to the boundary to allow for parking and servicing within the site and accessed off the main Bessemer Drive vehicular access.
- 7.3.11 In conclusion, the layout is considered be acceptable having identified key landscape features and has worked to retain these, whilst working around site constraints, access points and seeking to reduce visual impact of the buildings due to their size.

#### Scale, Massing and Form

- 7.3.12 The existing make-up of this area of the Gunnels Wood Road employment area is predominantly brick built offices and buildings to the north of Bessemer Drive, albeit there is the Europe Snacks site to the northwest which is a three-storey tall steel clad factory building. Along Gunnels Wood Road itself there is a mixture of glass fronted car dealership, flagship office/industrial buildings for companies such as Airbus (located to the east of the site) and three storey brick offices. Caxton Road to the west and rear of the site, is a mix of small industrial buildings/warehouses, with some elements of brick offices, with some large glazed sectional facades. These buildings range from two to three storeys.
- 7.3.13 The introduction of any building on the site would have a visual impact given the existing lack of permanent buildings. Considering then the scale typically required for warehousing and industrial buildings, the proposals will significantly affect the

appearance of the area, however the existing character would not be detrimentally affected given the employment nature of the area and existing mix of buildings.

- 7.3.14 The height of unit 1 at a maximum ridge of approximately 15.9m and a height of three storeys within the office area, the building will have a significant visual impact on the street scene simply because of its scale and massing. However, the roof orientation and slope do seek to reduce this and draw the eye away when viewing the site from the south or north as vehicles drive along Gunnels Wood Road.
- 7.3.15 As an allocated site for 12,000 sqm, the principle of larger industrial type buildings has already been given, and thus the impact, whilst significant to a certain point given the scale and massing, is not of sufficient harm to warrant a refusal. The building design and type takes design features from nearby buildings, including Centric located adjacent to Airbus and fronts onto Gunnels Wood Road which comprises of three large mixed-use building, and thus the overall height is not significantly above nearby buildings. Consequently, the proposals are considered acceptable.

#### Appearance and Materiality

- 7.3.16 The proposed building is partially concealed from the main highway and pedestrian routes by existing mature landscaping and trees, however, given its height views above the tree line will be visible. However, careful attention has been given to its identity within the surrounding environment, while appreciating that the building serves a specific purpose. The office areas of each unit would feature large expanses of glazing that marks the buildings' entrances, creating visual interest, especially on the most prominent side of unit 1 visible from Gunnels Wood Road. Activating all sides poses a unique challenge, especially with industrial structures where opportunities for diversity in form and materiality are limited.
- 7.3.17 In warehouse buildings, elements like windows, which typically break up material transitions, are often minimal. To overcome this, the facade would be activated using varied materials, colours, and textures. Profiled metal panels of varying grey colours would serve both functional and aesthetic purposes. Predominantly horizontally laid cladding would be broken up by a metal feature channel to add some texture across the facade. Projecting eaves would extend outward, reflecting the surrounding buildings' characteristics and enhancing the design's contextual connection.
- 7.3.18 The proposed development has been supported by a BREEAM Pre-assessment to lead to an application for BREEAM 'Excellent'. This accords with the emerging Policy GD2, subject to the Local Plan review, to encourage BREEAM Excellent developments in the Borough.

#### Conclusion

- 7.3.19 Overall, it is considered the proposed development would have a high-quality finish and has been designed to assimilate itself with the wider area with the careful use of materials and finishes to give the building architectural interest and to reduce the perception of bulk. The scale of the building is considered acceptable for this employment area, despite its obvious visual impact on the vacant site. The layout of the proposed development has been well considered and considers the need for satisfactory access and site constraints. 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 Impact on the Environment and Neighbouring Occupiers

### National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

- 7.4.1 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

- 7.4.2 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.
- 7.4.3 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.
- 7.4.4 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.

### Contamination

- 7.4.5 The Intrusive Geo-environmental and Geotechnical Site Assessment by TRC Companies submitted with the application advises the generic risk assessments undertaken indicate the site represents a relatively moderate risk in the context of its proposed end users. Further investigation works for part of the site are advised and the Assessment proposes several mitigation measures. The Council’s Environmental Health Officer has advised three conditions relating to results of the phase 2 site investigation and full details or any required remediation works; unidentified contaminated land discovered be covered by full investigation and remediation; and submission of verification reports should any remediation be required.

### Noise Pollution

- 7.4.6 The application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment by Hoare Lea LLP. 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 noise from the proposed development would achieve a condition of ‘low impact’ at the

nearest existing residential properties at all times and would be unlikely to give rise to noise disturbance. According to British Standard (BS) 4142: 2014+A1: 2019 'Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound' (BS 4142), "low" impact development would indicate that no adverse effects would be present, day and night.

- 7.4.7 Notwithstanding this, noise sources at the site may cause some level of nuisance to neighbouring non-residential buildings/businesses. However, the Noise Impact Assessment does not cover this as the British Standards are typically to safeguard residential uses. The proposed use of the site would have the potential to result in offsite effects comprising HGVs arriving, manoeuvring and departing, loading / unloading of HGVs and fixed mechanical services (such as heating or ventilation) operated on site. With regards to fixed mechanical services, a condition has been agreed to limit the rating level of noise emitted by any or all fixed plant. With this planning condition in place, there would be no observed adverse effects from noise from this source.
- 7.4.8 Furthermore, it is noted that the site use and location is in an existing industrial and employment area, where numerous existing similar uses can be seen. Therefore, it is likely to be difficult to discern exact sources of noise disturbance beyond each use and site. It is noted that the location of unit 1 will shield the Mercedes dealership from much of the operational noise on site. To the north the offices of the BTC are set off the boundary with Bessemer Road, as is unit 1 on site. The existing tree belt being retained will also serve to provide a level of noise screening.
- 7.4.9 The proposed mitigation measures proposed in the Noise Impact Assessment have been agreed with the Council's Environmental Health Officer and can be secured by condition. It is considered the agreed mitigation measures would negate the requirement for the submission of a Noise Management Plan detailing site specific measures to control noise from outside areas. This will not be subject to condition, as it is not considered necessary. Subject to conditions, it is considered the proposal would accord with Local Plan Policy FP7 in terms of noise.

#### Light Pollution

- 7.4.10 The application is supported by an External Lighting Report by Engineering Services Consultancy Ltd. The report details the lighting scheme, which covers all areas surrounding the building including external areas to the access road, walkways, car parking and service yard. The scheme is based on the use of LED luminaires fixed to the building façades and on lighting columns, as detailed on drawing 0527-ESS-00-ZZ-DR-E-2100 P1. The proposed lighting is proposed as LED low energy lighting sources which gives better control of the lighting distribution on site and controls any upward light spill. The lighting solution has been designed in accordance with the technical lighting guides published by CIBSE (Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers) and the Guidance Notes for the reduction of obtrusive light published by ILP (Institution of Lighting Professionals).
- 7.4.11 The lighting will be controlled by a timeclock and photocell control. This will enable the lighting to be controlled during the operating hours of the premises. Further, this will adjust in line with the seasons, preventing unnecessary operation during daylight and the summer months. Subject to a condition limiting maximum illumination levels to those stated in the report, it is considered the proposal would accord with Local Plan Policy FP7 in terms of external light.

#### Air Quality

- 7.4.12 Looking at air quality and air pollution specifically, the Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2019 by Stevenage Borough Council identifies that the development site is not

located within or in close proximity to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). This generally indicates that the air quality in the area is within national guidelines.

- 7.4.13 The application has been supported by an Air Quality Assessment report prepared by Hoare Lea LLP. This concludes that the impact of site activity will have an insignificant overall influence on local air quality. The report has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health Officer and they agree with the findings and that no mitigation measures are required concerning air quality.

#### Privacy, Overbearing Impact and Daylight

- 7.4.14 The site is not in close proximity of any residential properties, with existing neighbouring industrial or office buildings located between them. As such, there would be no adverse impact on the amenities of existing residential properties in the wider area.

#### Demolition and Construction Impacts

- 7.4.15 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.
- 7.4.16 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

- 7.4.17 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. In these respects, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies FP5, FP7 and GD1 of the Local Plan.

### **7.5 Parking**

#### National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

- 7.5.1 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*".
- 7.5.2 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

- 7.5.3 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.
- 7.5.4 With regard to parking, the Council's parking standards include reductions in provision based on Accessibility Zones. The site is located in Non-Residential Accessibility Zone 1 which will allow for an adjusted parking provision of 0-25%.
- 7.5.5 Looking firstly at car parking provision, the SPD seeks 1 space per 40 sqm for Business Parks which have mixed use B2, B8 plus appropriate class E uses (where individual land use components are unknown and/or use is flexible). As such the below table outlines the maximum provision required for each unit, which is also the amount proposed on site.

Unit	GFA (sqm)	B2/B8/E(G)iii (1 per 40sqm)	As per SPD 25%
Unit 1	6,791	170	42
Unit 2	1,821	46	11
Unit 3	2,480	62	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,092</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>69</b>

- 7.5.6 The development proposes a policy compliant level of disabled parking and electric vehicle charging points (EVCP). There are also bus stops adjacent to the site providing access to bus services that serve a large area of Stevenage, which also connect with the bus station and train station. Furthermore, the existing pedestrian and cycle connections to nearby residential areas and the town centre means that a high number of potential employees at the site could live within an accessible walking or cycling distance with facilities provided to promote and encourage travel by these modes. The implementation of the Travel Plan for the site would also encourage non-car travel meaning that parking demand could be lower than the standards permit.
- 7.5.7 In terms of HGV parking the SPD (2025) advises that the need for lorry parking spaces for non-residential development will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. However, it does state that for B2 general industry and B8 storage and distribution uses, lorry parking should usually be provided at a rate of between 1 space per 200 sqm and 1 space per 1,000 sqm. The below table, taken from the submitted Transport Assessment shows the proposed HGV parking provision.

Unit	GFA (sqm)	Proposed HGV Parking / Loading Bays	Level of Provision
Unit 1	6,791	9	1 space per 755sqm
Unit 2	1,821	2	1 space per 910sqm
Unit 3	2,480	3	1 space per 827sqm
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,092</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1 space per 792sqm</b>

7.5.8 The above figures accord with the SPD requirements and would cover the proposed flexible uses of the units. Whilst the parking requirements of developments in the Borough fall to the Borough Council, the local highway authority have advised that the parking levels appear acceptable and would be unlikely to lead to off-site parking.

7.5.9 In terms of cycle parking, cycle standards require 1 space per 500 sqm for long term stay and 1 space per 1,000 sqm for short term stay. This provision is for B2 general industry, B8 storage and distribution and E(g) business. The below table shows the proposed cycle parking provision, which is in excess of the minimum requirements, plus based on an anticipation of 214 jobs at the site, the minimum level of provision aligns with a 10% target for cycle users.

Unit	GFA (sqm)	Long Stay 1 per 500sqm	Short Stay 1 per 1,000sqm	Proposed Cycle Parking Provision
Unit 1	6,791	14	7	14 long stay + 8 short stay
Unit 2	1,821	4	2	4 long stay + 2 short stay
Unit 3	2,480	5	2	6 long stay + 2 short stay
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,092</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>24 long stay + 12 short stay</b>

7.5.10 Details of the proposed cycle storage has not been provided at this time and it is therefore considered reasonable to impose a condition requiring details of secure covered cycle storage to be agreed prior to installation and use of the development. Additionally, each building has provision of showers for employees choosing to cycle to work to be able to shower on arrival.

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

## 7.6 Highway Safety

7.6.1 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

7.6.2 It is proposed to retain the existing site accesses off Gunnels Wood Road and Bessemer Drive, with all HGV access off the Bessemer Drive access point. The Gunnels Wood Drive access would serve car parking for unit 1 only. The existing access point on Caxton Road would be closed but retained and gated for emergency access.

- 7.6.3 The primary site access off Bessemer Drive is as an existing junction built with sufficient parameters to allow for HGV swept paths and adequate visibility in both directions. The junction / access is overgrown within the site boundaries and where necessary the vegetation will be cleared and road markings refreshed. The access junction also accommodates pedestrian activity with dropped kerbs, tactile paving and a pedestrian refuge island with illuminated bollards.
- 7.6.4 The secondary access off Gunnels Wood Road would be via the existing Aspect One access. This will utilise this existing access point, shared with Mercedes, providing car parking for the staff of unit 1. The junction is a left-in / left-out arrangement onto the northbound carriageway of Gunnels Wood Road. There is an existing pedestrian refuge island between the exit and egress points.
- 7.6.5 Improvements to the junction are proposed to enhance pedestrian and cyclist visibility. The existing island would be removed and the junction width reduced as a result. This would help prioritise pedestrians and cyclists using the adjacent cycleway along Gunnels Wood Road. The improvements would see a new footpath from the cycleway to the site installed. The Transport Assessment clearly shows that access to Aspect One would not be impinged and existing users entering the junction to access the Mercedes dealership and business to the south of this can still do so safely.
- 7.6.6 Appropriate swept path analysis has been submitted to support the access arrangements and on-site manoeuvrability. The local highway authority has confirmed that with the proposed access junction improvements proposed off Gunnels Wood Road, as well as the reduced parking the proposals are acceptable.
- 7.6.7 A Stage One Road Safety Audit (RSA) was undertaken for the access proposals which identified the junction inter-visibility problems at the Gunnels Wood Road access junction as existing because of vegetation and the existing central refuge. The Audit notes “the proposed alterations will remove the existing refuge island at the access in favour of pedestrian / cyclist priority raised crossing”. The local highway authority confirms it agrees with his analysis.

#### Trip Generation

- 7.6.8 The trip generation is shown in Table K of the Transport Assessment and identifies the worst-case scenario for total vehicle trips. These would be 133 trips during AM Peak (8:00 – 9:00) and 139 trips during PM Peak (17:00 – 18:00). Hertfordshire County Council as local highway authority has not raised any objections in respect of the predicted trip generation numbers for the development. The site is currently used for various storage purposes utilising the access points off Bessemer Drive and Caxton Way.

#### S106 Contributions

- 7.6.9 HCC highways operate two levels of mitigation agreements, with Strand 1 mitigation works being works that are directly required to unlock the development and solely the responsibility of the development. Strand 2 mitigation works are works that address the wider cumulative impact of the development for which the development isn't solely responsible for but does derive benefit from.
- 7.6.10 In respect of Strand 1 requirements for this development, the applicant will enter into a S278 agreement with the highway authority for the agreed site access and any potential off-site improvement, and also the bus and travel plan contributions to be contained in a S206 agreement.
- 7.6.11 The local highway authority is seeking Strand 2 contributions for the development to the sum of £67,731 (Jan 2019 Index). The Strand 2 contribution would be for the SBC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 3PP and/or Package 1 (Stevenage) of

the North Central Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan (GTP) – Gunnels Wood and Town Centre, to complete the sustainable unlocking of the site. Based on the information contained in the LCWIP and GTP which seek to facilitate access by sustainable modes within the Gunnels Wood area, the specific need identified is considered sufficient in this case to agree the Strand 2 contributions sought. The applicant has also confirmed their acceptance of the contribution requirement.

- 7.6.12 In addition to the above, whilst the comments regarding cycle connections needing to meet LTN1/20, any works which are to be undertaken on the highway, including any new cycle connections and improvement works would be covered under a Section 278 agreement with Hertfordshire County Council as Highways Authority. Moreover, the strand 2 financial contribution would be utilised by the Highways Authority to deliver wider local cycle and walking improvements on the nearby network. This will also address any concerns raised from the local cycle group with respect to this development.

#### Land West of Stevenage

- 7.6.13 As advised by the Highways Authority (paragraph 5.1.4), the Bessemer Drive access (and Units 2 and 3) will ultimately be connected by the proposals to unlock the Land West of Stevenage residential site (20/00356/FPM). In that regard, the Highways Authority has recommended that if the proposed development comes forward before the Land West of Stevenage residential site, the applicant should commit to the delivery of the proposals shown in the Land West of Stevenage site from (and including) the applicant's access to the Gunnels Wood Road segregated foot and cycle path to complete the unlocking of the proposal site. The proposal layout (24059-HAL-PL003 Rev K) must be updated to include these proposed junction and cycle improvements before it can be officially approved by HCC Highways.
- 7.6.14 Following a review of this request by the Highways Authority, it would fail to meet Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations. First of all, it is not deemed necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. This is because the development would look to connect into the existing pedestrian and cycle network along with the delivery of improvement works at the junction with Bessemer Drive. In addition, is not deemed to be reasonable in scale and kind as the proposal is for a mixed unit employment based development which would generate significant impacts on the highway network. Especially as the site is accessible to alternative forms of transportation combined with the fact the development would require a detailed travel plan to demonstrate a modal shift towards active travel etc.
- 7.6.15 In addition to the above, it also not deemed reason given the fact there are legal obligations as detailed in the s.106 agreement attached to planning permission 20/00356/FPM on the developers for Land West of Stevenage to deliver the highway improvement works in paragraph 7.6.13. As such, the Highways Authority cannot legally require two developments to deliver the same pieces of infrastructure as it would be classed as double counting.
- 7.6.16 Further to the above, persons employed within the application are unlikely to travel west along Bessemer Driver towards Land West of Stevenage because it has not yet been delivered. This is because they are most likely going to travel east towards the existing cycle track / pedestrian network on Gunnels Wood Road. Consequently, this would also fail the key tests under the CIL Regulations as again, it is not deemed necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. As such, it is recommended that if permission is granted, that the applicant would not be duty bound to deliver the improvement works which form part of the Land West of Stevenage development.

## **7.7 Ecology**

- 7.7.1 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 does not show signs of Badgers, Bats and Great Crested Newts. The existing hedgerows identified along the boundaries, which are being retained were identified as being of principal importance. These habitats are suitable to support protected and notable fauna including birds and hedgehogs. The proposed lighting strategy has also been designed under guidance from the project ecologist.
- 7.7.2 The provision of a suite of bat boxes across the site is recommended to deliver an uplift in bat roosting opportunity. The boxes should be placed 3-4 m apart of the trunks of mature trees. Each tree identified should have three boxes installed on the north, south-east and south-west sides, all at the same height. Integrated boxes on the buildings would not be appropriate in this case. Furthermore, following comments received in support of the proposal, a suite of 10 swift boxes is also proposed. The boxes would be appropriately installed on the exterior of the building, under the eaves.
- 7.7.3 Hertfordshire County Council Ecology Team have reviewed the application and relevant assessments and supporting information and raise no objections. They have advised that the proposals are unlikely to have any significant ecological impacts, therefore the application can be determined accordingly. However, in the unlikely event that protected species are found, they advise a precautionary approach to the works is taken and they have suggested an informative to this effect.
- 7.7.4 Furthermore, in terms of species enhancement, HCC confirm they support the Ecological Enhancement Plan Strategy submitted and the recommendations for bird and bat boxes. They advise that a Species Enhancement Plan be secured by condition to ensure the provision of these features.
- 7.7.5 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on ecology. In this respect, the proposal accords with Policy SP12 of the Local Plan.

## **7.8 Biodiversity Net Gain**

### The Environment Act

- 7.8.1 The Environment Act received royal assent 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.

### National Planning Policy Framework and the Development Plan

- 7.8.2 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.
- 7.8.3 The application is 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 net loss in habitat units of 48.18% and a 56.44% net gain in hedgerows. Therefore, the proposed development would not deliver a 10%

net gain within the site itself. To achieve a net gain in habitat units, a total of 1.97 off-site biodiversity habitat units are required to be provided, including the required increase for habitat trading.

- 7.8.4 Subsequently, the application is automatically subject to the general Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) condition, which requires the delivery of a Biodiversity Gain Plan. The Hertfordshire County Council Ecology Officer recommends that the plan provided is in line with the DEFRA Biodiversity Gain Plan template.
- 7.8.5 Whilst the BGP condition is a post determination matter, the present information shows a net gain below the legal minimum requirement and a lack of any existing identified off-site location. In line with government guidance, it would generally be inappropriate for concerns about the ability to discharge the condition to be used as a reason to refuse an application. However, the applicant has been made aware the BGP condition is a pre-commencement condition and that if the applicant chooses not to address these matters prior to determination they will need to do so at the post determination stage.
- 7.8.6 The Ecology Officer advises that in line with the principles of the use of the metric, that any off-site location should be sought in the first instance local to the impact. As a last resort, if an off-site location cannot be found, Biodiversity Credits would need to be purchased. In this latter case, the applicant must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the LPA that all other options have been fully explored and that the BNG hierarchy has been followed. The exact location of any off-site provision cannot be controlled through the application or by the LPA.
- 7.8.7 Consequently, the proposed BNG provisions on and off-site to ensure a 10% net gain is considered acceptable and can be appropriately secured by conditions and a S106 legal agreement.

## **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 Full landscaping details have been submitted as part of this application. Currently, the majority of the existing landscaping features are located around the boundary of the site. The proposal would retain these key hedgerow/tree belt features; however, areas of self-seeded landscaping are proposed to be removed to allow for full use of the site internally.
- 7.9.3 A total of 15 new trees are proposed to be planted throughout the site, primarily located around the perimeter but also as feature landscaping at each entrance point. These new trees would be supplemented by several other landscaping features, including native mixed hedgerow, ornamental hedgerow, grass seeding, wildflower grass and ornamental shrubs. This replacement planting would offset the removal of 7 trees, 4 groups of trees and 2 partial groups of trees (primarily category U and C).
- 7.9.4 The Council's Tree Officer has highlighted that the number of replacement trees is lower than the Council's general 3:1 replacement ratio. However, this figure does not make up

part of the Development Plan and so is difficult to secure through planning. The Local Plan review proposes the introduction of Policy NH5a; Trees and Woodland, which states –

All development proposals which involve works to, or within the vicinity of, existing trees or woodland must be accompanied by an arboricultural impact assessment (AIA) at the application stage.

Development proposals resulting in harm to the health or longevity of existing individual trees which are worthy of retention (Defined as category C or above according to BS 5837:2012 or equivalent) will be refused unless:

- a. The harm is demonstrated to be unavoidable;
- b. Replacement trees would be planted in accordance with Table 6 below; and
- c. Any replacement trees would be of an appropriate size and species and planted in an appropriate location.

- 7.9.5 The emerging Policy continues to state that post-permission, conditions will be used to secure any replacement planting and safeguard any retained trees. The below table is proposed as part of the merging condition wording –

Trees Felled		Replacements
Category	Diameter at Breast Height	
Small	Less than or equal to 30cm	2
Medium	Greater than 30cm and less than or equal to 60cm	5
Large	Greater than 60cm and less than or equal to 90cm	10
Very Large	Greater than 90cm	21

**Table 6 – Individual tree replacement standard**

- 7.9.6 The Council's Tree Manager has confirmed identified locations where replacement tree planting off site could be sited and the cost associated with this. The applicants have been open to discussing this. However, as replacement tree planting forms the majority of the BNG calculation, and due to the wording of the BNG legislation on how off-site gain is to be provided it would not be possible to secure the replacement tree planting on Council owned land.
- 7.9.7 The applicant must provide the 10% net gain of BNG, and the provision of replacement trees on Council land would mean they are not fulfilling the BNG requirements, and thus the proposal would not be acceptable. Consequently, in this case, the replacement tree planting will take place off-site as part of the BNG provision. It is not reasonable to seek replacement planting on Council land, and for the developers to also provide a 10% net gain which includes the level of replacement planting.
- 7.9.8 It is considered the overall landscaping and tree strategy is high quality and 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**

- 7.10.1 A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy 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 flood risk

from fluvial and surface water flooding is low, albeit there are isolated areas on site at risk of flooding for the 1 in 100 year events as identified by Hertfordshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority. The development of the site for an employment use is therefore appropriate as set out by the 'flood risk vulnerability classification' contained within the Planning Practice Guidance. The Drainage Strategy sets out details in respect of surface water and foul water drainage.

- 7.10.2 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.
- 7.10.3 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.
- 7.10.4 The drainage strategy advises that the site lies within a groundwater source protection zone 1, associated with the underlying Chalk Aquifer at the site. As such the possibility of using soakaways on the site is not possible. Furthermore, in line with the SuDS hierarchy the nearest watercourse is over 1km from the site and is not therefore a viable option for drainage. The existing foul water drains into the public sewer network. In terms of surface water, as noted above, the strategy has considered the most appropriate drainage options, including ground conditions, ensuring efficient use of brownfield land and the SUDS hierarchy. The proposed strategy includes the use of porous paving to car park areas and underground restricted attenuation.
- 7.10.5 Whilst above ground solutions (swales, rain gardens, etc) have been considered, the site is also a brownfield site with no existing SUDS features. The NPPF (paragraph 124) and Local Plan both recognise the need to prioritise the use of brownfield land. NPPF paragraph 125 (c) is clear that substantial weight must be given to the reuse of brownfield land to meet identified needs, proposals should therefore be approved unless substantial harm would be caused. This is key, as whilst it is recognised that the Lead Local Flood Authority would prefer to see above ground SUDS features, this must be weighed against the substantial weight afforded to brownfield developments to meet identified needs (i.e. need for industrial and logistics land in Stevenage). The proposed drainage strategy does not result in increased flood risk on-site or off-site and instead would have a 75% reduction to the existing 100 year rate.
- 7.10.6 At the request of HCC as Lead Local Flood Authority, additional information has been submitted to address the issues they have raised and updated comments are awaited. At the time of writing this report no comments have been received. 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. However, it should be noted the LLFA does not object to the principle of the drainage strategy.
- 7.10.7 A decision will not be issued until the S106 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 Lead Local Flood Authority 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.

## **7.11 Sustainable Construction and Climate Change**

- 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.
- 7.11.5 A Sustainability Strategy 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 proposed development could achieve carbon and energy reductions through the inclusion of energy efficient measures and Low and Zero Carbon technologies including air source heat pumps and solar panels. The development would

achieve an EPC A rating, as such, it is in accordance with Policy SP2 by taking a positive approach to energy use and with Policy FP1 by incorporating measures to address adaption to climate change.

- 7.11.6 An Energy Statement has also been submitted which sets out the existing utilities on the site. The statement concludes that there should be sufficient capacity within the gas and water networks to support the proposed development. The applicant has committed to a minimum of BREEAM 'Excellent', which complies with emerging Local Plan policy GD2 'Design certification'.
- 7.11.7 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 Planning Obligations

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

- Requirement to enter into a S278 Agreement of the Highways Act 1980 (covering access works)
- Strand 2 Highways works equivalent to £67,731
- £6,000 Travel Plan evaluation and support fee (to cover 5 years)
- Local Employment and Apprenticeships
- Monitoring fee
- Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan (HMMP) for on-site BNG

7.12.2 The above obligations have been agreed with the applicant and Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority (where relevant) and would be secured via a Section 106 Agreement, subject to planning permission.

## 7.13 Other Matters

### Community Infrastructure Levy

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

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

7.13.2 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.

- 7.13.3 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.

#### Human Rights and Equalities

- 7.13.4 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.
- 7.13.5 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.
- 7.13.6 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.
- 7.13.7 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 development would not 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 1 no. detached building for Use Classes E(g)(iii) and B8 (flexible) use and 2 no. semi-detached buildings for Use Classes E(g)(iii), B2 and B8 (flexible) use, including access, servicing, parking, hard and soft landscaping, and associated works. The site is located within the designated employment area of Gunnels Wood, which is identified to deliver industrial and logistic uses. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in principle.
- 8.2 The proposal would contribute to modernising the employment floorspace in Stevenage, helping to address the identified shortfall in floorspace being delivered over the Local Plan period by redeveloping the site for the proposed uses. The buildings have been designed to create a high-quality frontage, particularly at the southwestern corner to provide a positive design feature and creating an active frontage along Gunnels Wood Road. Additional landscaping would be incorporated throughout the site and the proposals would meet BREEAM Excellent and EPC A standard. 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 S106 Agreement to secure/provide contributions towards:
- S278 Agreement (covering access works)
  - Strand 2 Highway works (£67,731)
  - £6000 Travel Plan evaluation and support fee
  - Local Employment and Apprenticeships
  - Monitoring fee
  - Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan (HMMP) for on-site BNG
- 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:  
24059-HAL-PL003-O; 418.063138.00001\_AT\_A01; 24059-HAL-PL001-A; BEA 25-007-01; 418.063138.00001\_AT\_A02-REV A; BEA 25-007-02; 0527-ESS-00-ZZ-DR-E-2100 P1; BEA 25-007-04 P07; BEA 25-007-05 P02; BEA 25-007-06 P02; 24-029-IANDL-D00 P2; HAL-PL002-A; 24059-HAL-PL005-A; 24059-HAL-PL006-B; HAL-PL010-C; HAL-PL011-B; HAL-PL012-C; HAL-PL013; HAL-PL020-C; HAL-PL021-B; HAL-PL022-D; HAL-PL023-A; BEA 25-007-03 P02.

**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 commence until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, including elements of the CLOCS standards as set out in the Highway Authority's Construction Management template. 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:
- Construction vehicle numbers, type and routing.
  - Access arrangements to the site.
  - Traffic management requirements.
  - Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading / unloading and turning areas).

- Siting and details of wheel washing facilities.
- Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway.
- Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times.
- Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities.
- Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway.
- 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 which must be kept within the site boundary, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements.
- Phasing plan.
- Hours of working (including deliveries and waste removal).
- All plant necessary for construction and demolition.
- Noise and vibration mitigation measures with particular attention paid to piling, power floating, and vacuum excavation activities where these activities are to be undertaken.
- Dust and smoke mitigation measures.
- Site lighting and off-site mitigation measures.

**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. Prior to the first occupation / use of the development hereby permitted the vehicular access shall be completed and thereafter retained as shown on drawing number (418-063138-00001-PD02 Rev A) in accordance with details/specifications to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the highway authority. Prior to use appropriate arrangements shall be made for surface water to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge from or onto the highway carriageway.

**REASON:** To ensure satisfactory access into the site and avoid 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).

5. 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).

6. Prior to the first occupation / use of the development hereby permitted a visibility splays measuring 31metres shall be provided to each side of the access where it meets the Cycle Track on Bessemer Drive and such splays shall thereafter be retained at all times free from any obstruction between 600mm and 2m above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.

**REASON:** To ensure that the level of visibility for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles is satisfactory in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Part 3, Chapter 8, page 153 of Hertfordshire's Place & Movement Planning and Design Guide.

7. Prior to first occupation / use details of the secure and covered cycle parking storage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The cycle parking shall thereafter be constructed and laid out in accordance with the agreed details and completed prior to occupation of the development hereby approved and shall thereafter be retained, maintained, and kept available for the occupants of the development at all times.

**REASON:-** To ensure the provision of adequate cycle parking that meets the needs of occupiers of the proposed development and in the interests of encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport in accordance with Policies 1, 5 and 8 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

8. Prior to the first occupation / use of the development hereby permitted the car parking layout including servicing bays shall be installed in accordance with the approved detailed technical plans and thereafter retained and maintained at all times at the position shown.

**REASON:-** To ensure satisfactory access into the site and avoid 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).

9. Prior to the commencement of the development to which this permission relates (excluding site clearance and demolition), the results of a phase 2 site investigation and full written details of any necessary remediation works or controls shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:** To ensure that the site does not pose any risk to human health and to ensure that the development does not contribute to unacceptable concentrations of pollution posing a risk to public water supply from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site and to prevent deterioration of groundwater and/or surface water by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is completed.

10. 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 full written details of any necessary remediation works or controls 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.

**REASON:-** To ensure that the site does not pose any risk to human health and to ensure that the development does not contribute to unacceptable concentrations of pollution posing a risk to public water supply from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site and to prevent deterioration of groundwater and/or surface water by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is completed.

11. Where any development to which this permission relates is required to be carried out in accordance with a remediation scheme approved by the local planning authority, 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:-** To ensure that the site does not pose any risk to human health and to ensure that the development does not contribute to unacceptable concentrations of pollution posing a risk to public water supply from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site and to prevent deterioration of groundwater and/or surface water

by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is completed.

12. The development hereby permitted shall not come into operational use until a verification report containing evidence of compliance with the maximum off-site artificial lighting levels and temporal controls as set out in External Lighting Report by Engineering Services Consultancy Limited (reference 0527/ESS/00/ZZ/RP/Z/0016, dated 27/2/2025) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The luminaires and associated lighting equipment authorised shall thereafter be retained, operated, and maintained in accordance with the above report and manufacturers' specifications.

**REASON:** In the interests of the amenities of nearby existing land users in accordance with Local Plan Policy FP7.

13. The development hereby permitted shall not come into operational use until a verification report containing evidence that noise levels do not exceed those set out in Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7 of the Noise Impact Assessment report by Hoare Lea Acoustics LLP (10-16004, Rev. 01, dated 30/04/2025) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. All external plant shall thereafter be retained, operated, and maintained in accordance with manufacturers' specifications.

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

14. The development to which this permission relates shall be carried out in accordance with the external materials specified on drawing numbers HAL-PL012-C and HAL-PL022-D submitted as approved or any alternative to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

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

15. All soft landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details as shown in drawing number BEA 25-007-04 P07 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. 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.

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

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

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

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

19. The measures to address adaptation to climate change as set out within the Energy and Sustainability Strategy and BREEAM Pre-Assessment by Engineering Services Consultancy Ltd 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.

20. Prior to the first occupation / use of the approved development a Species Enhancement Plan/Report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan/Report from an appropriately qualified ecologist shall confirm that all the proposed species enhancement features as identified and approved in the Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Enhancement Strategy produced by FPCR Environment and Design (specifications and locations), have been installed, together with photographic evidence, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The species enhancement features once completed shall be permanently maintained in accordance with the approved details.

**REASON:-** To enhance the ecological value of the site.

21. At least 3 months prior to the first occupation / use of the approved development a detailed Travel Plan for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highways Authority. The approved Travel Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable and target contained therein and shall continue to be implemented as long as any part of the development is occupied subject to approved modifications agreed by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority as part of the annual review.

**REASON:** To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised to be in accordance with Policies 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

### **Pro-active Statement**

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage and during the determination process which lead to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

### **INFORMATIVES**

1. Extent of Highway: Information on obtaining the extent of public highway around the site can be obtained from the HCC website:  
[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/changes-to-your-road/extent-of-highways.aspx](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/changes-to-your-road/extent-of-highways.aspx)
2. 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/highways-development-management.aspx](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx)

3. Obstruction of highway: It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the County Council website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx>
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Works within the highway (section 278): The applicant is advised that in order to comply with this permission it will be necessary for the developer of the site to enter into an agreement with Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the satisfactory completion of the access and associated road improvements. The construction of such works must be undertaken to the satisfaction and specification of the Highway Authority, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements. Further information is available via the County Council website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.
7. 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>

8. Abnormal loads and importation of construction equipment (i.e. large loads with: a width greater than 2.9m; rigid length of more than 18.65m or weight of 44,000kg - commonly applicable to cranes, piling machines etc.): The applicant is directed to ensure that operators conform to the provisions of The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 in ensuring that the Highway Authority is provided with notice of such movements, and that appropriate indemnity is offered to the Highway Authority. Further information is available via the Government website [www.gov.uk/government/publications/abnormal-load-movements-application-and-notification-forms](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/abnormal-load-movements-application-and-notification-forms) or by telephoning 0300 1234047.
9. 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](mailto:travelplans@hertfordshire.gov.uk)
10. A Groundwater Risk Management Permit from Thames Water will be required for discharging groundwater into a public sewer. Any discharge made without a permit is deemed illegal and may result in prosecution under the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991. We would expect the developer to demonstrate what measures he will undertake to minimise groundwater discharges into the public sewer. Permit enquiries should be directed to Thames Water's Risk Management Team by telephoning 020 3577 9483 or by emailing [trade.effluent@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:trade.effluent@thameswater.co.uk). Application forms should be completed on line via [www.thameswater.co.uk](http://www.thameswater.co.uk). Please refer to the Wholesale; Business customers; Groundwater discharges section.
11. 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](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL) or by contacting the Council's CIL Team at [CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk).
12. The proposed development is located within 15 metres of Thames Waters underground assets and as such, the development could cause the assets to fail if appropriate measures are not taken. Please read our guide 'working near our assets' to ensure your workings are in line with the necessary processes you need to follow if you're considering working above or near our pipes or other structures. <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/developers/larger-scale-developments/planning-your-development/working-near-our-pipes>. Should you require further information please contact Thames Water. Email: [developer.services@thameswater.co.uk](mailto:developer.services@thameswater.co.uk) Phone: 0800 009 3921 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm) Write to: Thames Water Developer Services, Clearwater Court, Vastern Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 8DB

13. 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.
14. To obtain advice regarding current Building Regulations please contact Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd. by emailing us at [building.control@hertfordshirebc.co.uk](mailto: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).

15. 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>.

16. If European Protected Species (EPS), including bats and great crested newts, or evidence of them, are discovered during the course of works, work must stop immediately, and advice sought on how to proceed lawfully from an appropriately qualified and experienced Ecologist or Natural England to avoid an offence being committed.

To avoid the killing or injuring of wildlife during development, best practice should keep any areas of grass as short as possible and any longer, ruderal vegetation should be cleared by hand. To avoid creating refugia that may be utilised by wildlife, materials should be carefully stored on-site on raised pallets and away from the boundary habitats. Any trenches on site should be covered at night or have ramps to ensure that any animals that enter can safely escape, and this is particularly important if excavations fill with water. Any open pipework with an outside diameter greater than 120mm must be covered at the end of each working day to prevent animals entering / becoming trapped.

In order to protect breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young, demolition or vegetation clearance should only be carried out during the period October to February inclusive. If this is not possible then a pre-development (i.e. no greater than 48 hours before clearance begins) search of the area should be made by a suitably experienced ecologist. If active nests are found, then works must be delayed until the birds have left the nest or professional ecological advice taken on how best to proceed.

## **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.
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.