DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT – 12 August 2026

Application Number	3/25/1986/FUL
Proposal	Erection of 4 x industrial units (use classes E[g], B2 and B8) with associated parking and external works.
Location	Buntingford Business Park Baldock Road Buntingford Hertfordshire
Parish	Cottered
Ward	Buntingford

Date of Registration of Application	19th January 2026
Target Determination Date	20th April 2026
Reason for Committee Report	Major Application
Case Officer	James Mead

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions set out at the end of this report.

1.0 Summary of Proposal and Main Issues

1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of an industrial building, which would contain 4 x industrial units. It is proposed for these industrial units to be used for either use classes: E[g] (office/light industrial), B2 (general industrial) or B8 (storage or distribution). The scheme would also include the provision of parking areas and various landscaping works.

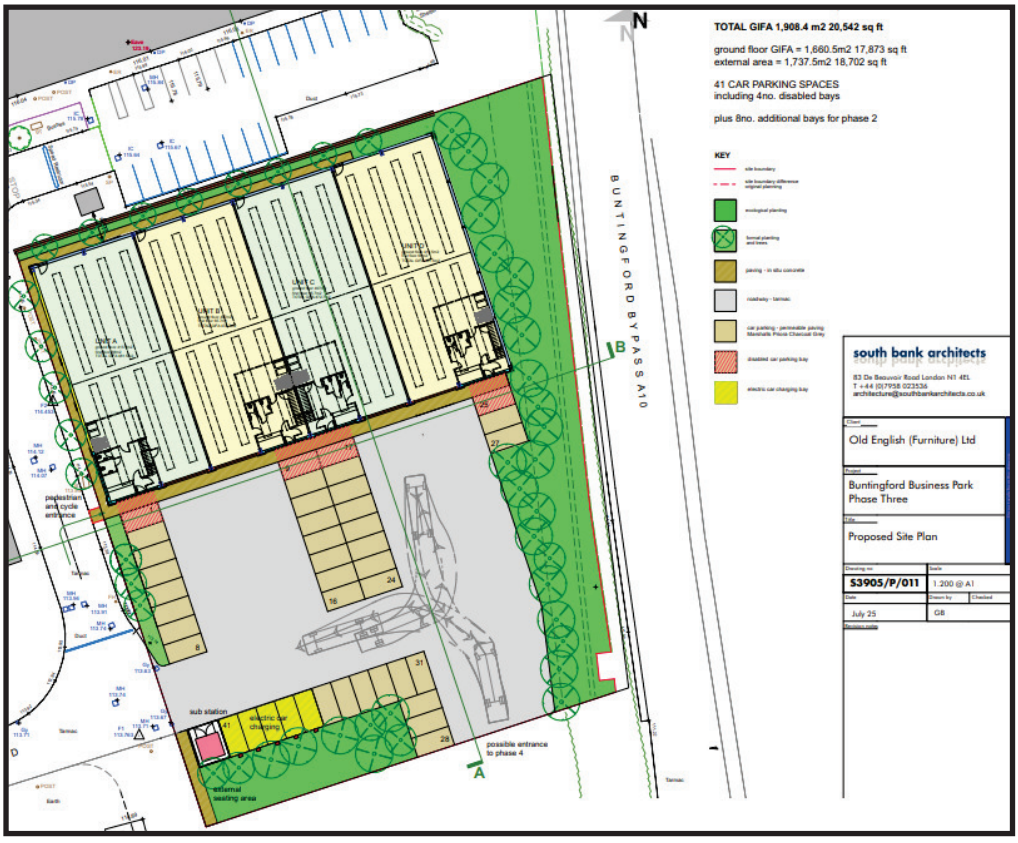
1.2 The site is located directly to the west of Buntingford, but is outside the settlement boundary of the town. Therefore, the site is part of the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The site is within Buntingford Business Park, which is a designated employment area in the East

Herts District Plan (2018). The proposals comprise the third phase, and one of the final phases, of initial development at the business park.

1.3 The proposed industrial building would be constructed on the south-eastern side of the business park. The building would be of rectangular footprint and would include floorspace at both ground and first floor levels. In total, the building would provide roughly 1,908 square metres of commercial floorspace across the 4 separate industrial units.

1.4 The vehicular access to the building would be directly off the existing access road that serves the business park. To the south of the new building a parking area, together with turning space for vehicles, would be created. This parking area would contain 41 parking spaces. A small substation building would be erected in the south-western corner of this parking area. Across the eastern side of the site, a line of trees would be planted, while additional soft landscaping would be provided across the other site boundaries.

1.5 The site layout for the proposed development is shown in the image below.



1.6 The plans submitted for approval are listed below. All these plans have been considered in the preparation of this report.

Drawing Title	Drawing Number
Site Location Plan	S3905/P/SLPD
Existing Site Plan	S3905/P/001
Existing Land Sections	S3905/P/002
Proposed Site Plan	S3905/P/011
Proposed Ground Floor Plan	S3905/P/11
Proposed First Floor Plan	S3905/P/12
Proposed Roof Plan	S3905/P/13
Proposed Elevations and Section	S3905/P/21
Proposed Land Sections	S3905/P/22
Fire Safety Plan 1 – Site Plan	S3905/P/31
Fire Safety Plan 2 – Site Plan	S3905/P/32

1.7 The documents submitted in support of this application are listed below. All these documents have been considered in the preparation of this report.

Document
Air Quality Assessment Issue No: 1 (Prepared by: Eight Versa, Dated: 08/12/2025)
Archaeological Evaluation (Prepared by: Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust, Dated: May 2000)
Drainage Strategy Report P2 (Prepared by: Parsons, Dated: 03/2026)
Energy Assessment Issue No: 1 (Prepared by: Eight Versa, Dated: 25/09/2025)
Flood Risk Assessment Issue No:1 (Prepared by: Eight Versa, Dated: 17/12/2025)
Planning, Design and Access Statement S3905 REV C
Preliminary BREEAM Assessment Issue No: 1 (Prepared by: Eight Versa, Dated: 23/09/2025)
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Issue No: 4 (Prepared by: Eight Versa, Dated: 23/02/2026)
Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Prepared by: S. Curtis BSc MSc MCIEEM)

Sustainability Checklist (Prepared by: South Bank Architects)
Sustainability Statement Issue No: 1 (Prepared by: Eight Versa, Dated: 13/10/2025)
Transport Statement (Prepared by: Highways and Transport Planning, Dated: 3 December 2025)
Travel Plan and BREAAM Input (Prepared by: Highways and Transport Planning, Dated: 3 December 2025)
Tree Schedule (BS5837) (Dated: 23/10/25)
Tree Survey (Prepared by: Tracy Clarke Tree Consultancy, Dated: Aug 2025)

1.8 The main planning issues for consideration relate to the balance between the benefits of the scheme (for example, the provision of employment floorspace within a designated employment area), weighed against any negative aspects arising from the proposals. When considering the proposed scheme, regard must be had to the policies within the East Herts District Plan (2018), the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan (2017) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), together with any other relevant material considerations.

1.9 The key issues for consideration are:

- Principle of Development;
- Design Quality;
- Landscape Character and Visual Impacts;
- Impact on Heritage Assets;
- Neighbouring Amenity;
- Access, Highways and Transport;
- Trees, Biodiversity and Ecology;
- Flood Risk and Drainage;
- Sustainable Design and Climate Change; and
- Other Matters.

2.0 Site Description

2.1 The application site comprises land within Buntingford Business Park, known as Phase 3, which formed part of the comprehensive redevelopment of the business park (a designated employment site

in the East Herts District Plan 2018). The current application site itself was subject to a previous planning approval (for industrial uses), which expired. A full site history is included in part 3 of this report.

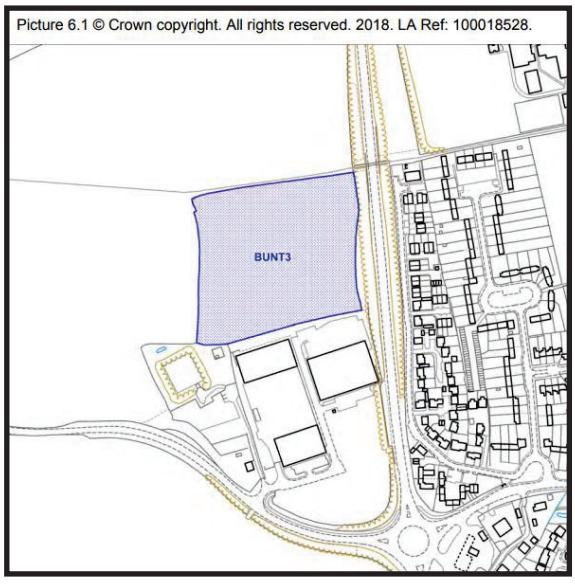
2.2 The application site is a parcel of undeveloped grassland and vegetation to the south-eastern side of Buntingford Business Park. Part of the existing access road into the business park is also within the site boundary. The full application site measures approximately 0.54 hectares in area.

2.3 The site is located west of Buntingford and is outside the settlement boundary of the town. The position of the site beyond the settlement boundary means that the land is part of the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The business park is separated from Buntingford by the A10 and the site is directly to the west of this main road. The site is also to the north of the A507 main road. A short distance to the south is the roundabout that connects the A10, A507 and B1038 roads. The vehicular access to the site is via an existing access road that extends eastwards into the business park from the A507.

2.4 Buntingford Business Park is a designated employment area in the East Herts District Plan (2018), where land is allocated for use classes: E[g] (office/light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage or distribution). Prior to its redevelopment as Buntingford Business Park, the land was historically used as a garden nursery, known as Sunnyside Nursery. The below image shows the position of the site within the designated employment area. The site is edged in red and the employment area is marked in purple.



2.5 Directly to the south of the site, there is further undeveloped grassland within the employment area. Whereas, to the north and west there are three existing industrial buildings within the business park. To the north of the existing business park is an area of trees and overgrown vegetation that form part of the designated employment area. This land was allocated in the East Herts District Plan (2018) as a 3 hectare extension of the business park. The below image identifies this land. At the time of this current application, no proposals have come forward for employment uses on this land.



2.6 Beyond the designated employment area to the north and west, there are agricultural fields and open countryside land. Similarly, the land to the south, and on the opposite side of the A507, consists of open fields. To the east, and on the other side of the A10, there are residential properties within Buntingford. This includes two grade II listed buildings at How Green Farm, which are in residential use.

3.0 Planning History

Planning History at Buntingford Business Park

3.1 The following planning history at Buntingford Business Park is of relevance to this current application.

Reference	Description	Decision
3/05/0212/FP	Installation of plant/storage to service yard & mezzanine storage to warehouse. Amendment to approval granted under Ref. 3/04/1416/FP	Granted with conditions 18 March 2005.
3/04/2405/FP	Erection of B1/B2/B8 unit with associated offices & welfare with service yard & car parking.	Granted with conditions on 2 February 2005.
3/04/1416/FP	Erection of B1(c) /B2/B8 Unit with associated offices & welfare with service yard & car parking.	Granted with conditions 15 September 2004.
3/03/1159/FP	B1(c), B2 & B8 units with associated offices & welfare facility, with car parking & external works for EHDC waste management facility.	Granted with conditions on 13 August 2003.
3/03/1158/OP	B1 offices & B1(c), B2 & B8 units with associated offices and	Granted with conditions on 8

	external works.	October 2003.
3/99/0164/FN	Renewal of planning permission 3/94/0987/FN – class B1(c), B2 and B8 development.	Granted with conditions 30 June 1999.
3/94/0987/FN	Renewal of planning permission 3/2263-89FP for class B1(c), B2 and B8 Development.	Granted with conditions on 30 November 1994.
3/93/1090/OP	Foodstore (24000 sqft gross) petrol filling station employment units (B1 B2 and B8) (74250 sq ft gross) access car parking and servicing.	Refused.
3/89/2263/FP	Class B1 and B8 development – amendment layout.	Granted with conditions on 12 February 1990.
3/89/0211/FP	Light Industrial Development.	Granted with conditions on 26 April 1989.
3/87/1200/ZA	Outline application for light industrial and warehouse development – amended scheme.	Granted with conditions on 11 November 1987.

3.2 The land at Buntingford Business Park was historically used as a garden nursery, known as Sunnyside Nursery. However, various planning applications were submitted through the late 1980s and 1990s for the comprehensive redevelopment of the former nursery site to provide commercial, employment and industrial uses. It is understood that none of the approved applications from the 1980s or 1990s were implemented.

3.3 In the 2000s, the applicant set out to develop the business park in phases. There are three planning applications from the 2000s that are relevant to the growth of the business park, as detailed below.

- 3/03/1159/FP (Phase 1): Full planning permission was granted through this application for the two buildings on the western side of the business park to be used as local authority waste management facilities. These buildings continue to be occupied by local authority waste service and grounds maintenance teams today. This facility is a safeguarded waste management site under the Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012. The applicant refers to these buildings as Phase 1 of the business park.

- 3/04/1416/FP (Phase 2): Through this application, full planning permission was granted for the existing industrial building on the eastern side of the business park. It is understood that this building is currently occupied by an electrical installation company. The applicant refers to this building as Phase 2 of the business park.

- 3/04/2405/FP (Phase 3): Full planning permission was granted through this application for an industrial building on the current application site. This was proposed to be Phase 3 of the business park. However, this planning permission was not implemented and expired in 2010. No further planning applications have come forward at Buntingford Business Park for new industrial or commercial buildings, since the expiry of the Phase 3 planning permission in 2010. This application constitutes a relevant material consideration, which is taken into account in the planning assessment.

Relevant Planning History at Nearby Sites

3.4 The following recent planning history at nearby sites is also of relevance to this current application.

Reference and Site Address	Description	Decision
3/24/1255/OUT Land South of A507, West of A10, Buntingford	Outline planning application for development of employment land (flexible use B2, B8, E(c) and E(g)), informal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from A507, with all matters reserved except for access.	Refused on 6th May 2026. Appeal in Progress.
3/24/0966/OUT Land North of A507, West of A10, Buntingford	Outline planning application for development of up to 600 dwellings (C3), elderly accommodation (C3), Mixed Use Local Centre (including flexible use E, F and Sui Generis), First School, informal and formal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from the A507 and pedestrian bridge over the A10, with all matters reserved except access.	Refused on 24th October 2025. Appeal in Progress.

3.5 The above planning applications are material considerations for this current scheme, given the proximity of these proposals to the site, and the recent nature of the decisions. The application under reference: 3/24/0966/OUT is a major residential-led outline scheme covering the land to the north and west of the business park. Whereas, the application under reference: 3/24/1255/OUT is a major outline scheme for predominantly employment and commercial uses on the field to the south, and on the opposite side of the A507.

3.6 These applications were refused by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in October 2025 (reference: 3/24/0966/OUT) and May 2026 (reference: 3/24/1255/OUT). Officers have had full regard to the

reasons that the applications were refused, when preparing this committee report.

3.7 In particular, it is acknowledged that the schemes were refused, as the LPA considered that the proposals would be isolated and physically severed from Buntingford by the A10. The reasons for refusal also noted that the developments would be served by poor quality active travel connections to the town, meaning that there would be a reliance on vehicular trips and a lack of genuine alternative travel options. In addition, following the advice of the Highway Authority, the LPA have concluded that a proposed toucan crossing over the A10 to connect the sites to Buntingford would result in adverse highway safety implications.

3.8 These two applications are currently at appeal with public inquires scheduled to be held later this year.

4.0 Main Policy Issues

4.1 The main policy considerations relate to the relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (NPPF), the East Herts District Plan (2018) (DP) and the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan (2017) (BCANP).

Main Issue	NPPF Chapters	DP Policies	BCANP Policies
Principle of Development	2, 4, 6 and 9	INT1, DPS1, DPS2, GBR2, BUNT3, ED1 and TRA1	BE2
Design Quality	8, 11 and 12	GBR2, DES3, DES4 and DES5	BE2
Landscape Character and Visual Impacts	15	GBR2 and DES2	BE2 and ES1
Impact on Heritage Assets	16	HA1, HA3 and HA7	-

Neighbouring Amenity	11, 12 and 15	DES4 and EQ2	BE2
Access, Highways and Transport	9 and 12	TRA1, TRA2 and TRA3	BE2 and T2
Trees, Biodiversity and Ecology	12 and 15	DES3, DES4, NE2, NE3 and NE4	ES7 and ES8
Flood Risk and Drainage	14	WAT1 and WAT5	INFRA4
Sustainable Design and Climate Change	12 and 14	DES4, ED3, CC1, CC2 and WAT4	ES3 and INFRA5
Other Matters	2, 8, 9 and 15	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3, EQ4, DEL1 and DEL2	-

Draft Revised NPPF (2026)

4.2 A revised NPPF was recently out for consultation, with the consultation closing on 10 March 2026. This draft national policy includes specific and separate plan-making and decision-making policies. The revised NPPF is proposed to be more directive of decision-making in support of appropriate housing and commercial developments. The consultation document explains that the amended NPPF is underpinned by three principal objectives, as set out below:

- To ensure that national planning policy is accessible and understandable for everyone who uses it;
- To establish a comprehensive suite of national policies on general planning matters which will apply across the country; and
- To make the policy which it contains more 'rules-based' and certain.

4.3 While the revised NPPF is noted for information, very limited weight is currently given to this document, in light of its draft status. The

current NPPF, the DP and the BCANP continue to contain the policies most important for the assessment of this application.

Buntingford Employment Study (2025)

4.4 In May 2025, the Council endorsed the Buntingford Employment Study (2025), as part of the evidence base for the emerging East Herts District Plan. This study is a material consideration for planning applications.

4.5 The Study explains that over the period 2015 – 2022, the population of Buntingford has increased by 2,474 people, representing growth of 33.9%. This growth is considerably higher than that recorded in East Herts (5.9%), the East of England (5%) and England (4.2%). The economically active population of Buntingford is expected to have increased by 1,041 over this period, reflecting growth of 27%. This is again notably higher than East Herts, East of England and England.

4.6 Over the same period, the Study concludes that workplace employment in Buntingford has increased by 205 jobs, representing a significantly lower growth of 10.8%. Further population growth is forecasted as a result of consented planning applications in the town.

4.7 Since the previous employment study was undertaken in 2014, there have been notable losses of employment land in Buntingford, associated with the loss of the former Sainsburys Distribution Depot and the redevelopment of vacant employment land at Park Farm Industrial Estate. However, there has been an increase of ~3,000 square metres of industrial floorspace in recent years, and an additional 1,000 square metres of office space was delivered in 2017.

4.8 Market analysis demonstrates that there is no known vacant floorspace within Buntingford across office, industrial, warehousing and storage properties, while vacancy rates across East Herts are also below regional and national averages for these uses. This indicates a lack of spare capacity in the market.

4.9 The Study concludes that the disparity between population and employment growth in Buntingford, suggests a need for greater balance to support sustainable development. The loss of employment land and lack of spare capacity in the property market also supports the need for additional employment space in Buntingford.

4.10 In order to address these issues, the Study recommends that "*existing employment sites should be safeguarded"*. The Study also encourages "*engagement with the owner of Buntingford Business Park to ensure that the site remains available for development for employment uses"*. The Study specifically notes that "*vacant land to the south-east of the business park may present opportunity for commercial development"*. This comment relates directly to the current application site.

5.0 Equality Act 2010

5.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010) confirms that a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) came into force in April 2011 and this requires the Council to consider the equality impacts on all protected groups when exercising its functions. In the case of planning, equality considerations are factored into the planning process at various stages. The first stage relates to the adoption of planning policies (national, strategic, and local) and any relevant supplementary guidance. The policies and guidance referred to in this committee report have all been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), and therefore the planning policy framework is considered to meet the first stage in the process. Officers have duly considered the equalities impacts on protected groups in the context of the development proposals.

6.0 Summary of Consultee Responses

Note: East Herts District Council (EHDC) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

6.1 HCC Highway Authority: No objection, subject to a condition securing a Construction Management Plan.

6.2 The Highway Authority notes that the development would result in an increase in vehicular movements, however the site already accommodates established industrial uses. It is also advised that the site benefits from a footway connection into Buntingford, providing links to the local bus network and access to nearby amenities.

6.3 HCC Ecology: No objection, subject to conditions regarding a Construction Environmental Management Plan and the mandatory Biodiversity Gain Plan.

6.4 The Ecology Advisor outlines that there are no records of notable ecological interest from the site. This consultee notes that the proposal would deliver 11.21% biodiversity net gain on site and there is no reason to dispute this. Therefore, it is advised that mandatory biodiversity net gain can be achieved.

6.5 HCC Growth and Infrastructure: No objection, subject to a financial contribution of £2,386 (index linked to BCIS 1Q2024) being secured towards fire and rescue services.

6.6 HCC Historic Environment Team: No objection, subject to a condition securing a programme of archaeological work.

6.7 This consultee advises that previous investigations on the site found numerous ditches, some pits and post holes, which may be prehistoric in date. It is also noted that the site is adjacent to an Area of Archaeological Significance, which denotes an area of late iron age, Roman and medieval finds. Nearby investigations have identified ditches containing Saxo-Norman pottery, an undated cremation burial and a Roman ditch system. Therefore, it is considered that the development should be regarded as likely to impact on heritage assets of archaeological interest.

6.8 HCC Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA): No objection, subject to conditions regarding details of the surface water drainage network, a SUDs maintenance/management scheme and temporary construction drainage measures.

6.9 HCC Minerals and Waste: No objection, subject to a condition securing a Site Waste Management Plan. This consultee does not consider that the development would prejudice the operation of the nearby Waste Management Site (Buntingford Depot – Sunnyside).

6.10 EHDC Conservation Officer: No objection. However, it is advised that the impact of the proposals on the setting of the grade II listed farmhouse, barn, stables and outhouse at How Green Farm should be considered.

6.11 This consultee explains that the position of the listed buildings at How Green Farm on the opposite side of the A10, taken together with the industrial context of the application site, means that the site does not contribute to the setting of these heritage assets. It is advised that the proposals would not cause harm to the setting or significance of these listed buildings. However, the Conservation Officer advises that a green buffer along the eastern site boundary would assist with screening the development.

6.12 EHDC Environmental Health (Noise and Light): No objection, subject to conditions regarding noise from plant/machinery and external lighting.

6.13 EHDC Landscape Officer: No objection, subject to a condition securing additional planting on the eastern site boundary. This consultee advises that no existing trees or important landscape features would be affected. It is explained that the development would be well screened from public views by existing vegetation.

6.14 EHDC Planning Policy: No objection. The Planning Policy Team supports the proposal, as it would contribute towards enhancing the economic potential of a designated employment site.

6.15 The Planning Policy Officer advises that the strategy for employment in Buntingford is to protect and enhance existing employment areas in the town. This consultee notes that the Buntingford Employment Study (2025) supports the principle of new

employment, and emphasises the need to develop vacant land within existing employment sites. The study identifies that Buntingford is relatively self-contained from a commercial property market perspective. It is also explained that the business base in Buntingford is dominated by microbusinesses.

6.16 The Planning Policy Officer outlines that the Buntingford Employment Study (2025) anticipates a continued demand for microbusinesses. However, this consultee notes that demand for larger units has also remained robust over the past 15 years. It is explained that the majority of demand, in terms of unit size, is expected to be within the 0 – 250 square metre range for office/light industrial, and the 0 – 1000 square metre range for general industrial and storage or distribution. This consultee concludes that the range of unit sizes proposed through this application (472 – 481 square metres) would be consistent with this demand. The Planning Policy Officer also supports the flexibility incorporated into the scheme to allow smaller or larger units to be provided, if required in the future.

6.17 EHDC Section 106 Officer: No objection. It is advised that no financial contributions are required.

6.18 Affinity Water: No objection.

6.19 Thames Water: No objection.

7.0 Town/Parish Council Representations

7.1 Buntingford Town Council has no objection.

8.0 Summary of Other Representations

8.1 The application has been advertised by neighbour consultation with notification letters sent to local residents. Press notices have been published in a local newspaper and site notices have been displayed in the locality.

8.2 Across one round of public consultation, 1 response has been received from a local resident. This comment is neutral on the application. The following matters have been raised in this comment:

- Sufficient parking on-site should be provided.
- Potential noise generation should be considered.
- Trees and wildlife must be protected.

9.0 Consideration of Issues

9.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) (as amended) and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) require decisions to be made in accordance with the development plan, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.

Principle of Development

9.2 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF outlines that decisions should help create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. This paragraph further explains that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

9.3 The overall development strategy for the District is summarised at DP Policy DPS1. This policy sets out that the Council will maximise opportunities for job growth, with the aim of achieving a minimum of 10,800 new jobs in the District up to 2033. This will include making provision for 19 – 20 hectares of new employment land.

9.4 Buntingford Business Park is a designated employment area under DP Policy BUNT3. DP Policy ED1 allocates land within designated employment areas for use classes: E[g] (office/light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage or distribution). BCANP Policy BE2 outlines that proposals to upgrade, intensify or extend designated industrial sites, such as Buntingford Business Park, will be permitted, subject to meeting the criteria of this policy.

9.5 In addition, DP Policy ED1 requires new employment uses to be in suitable locations, where access can be achieved by a choice of sustainable transport. This policy notes that employment floorspace should be of flexible design, so that it is adaptable to changing needs of occupants.

9.6 The site is also within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, which is a policy designation that covers around two-thirds of the District. In order to maintain the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt as a valued countryside resource, DP Policy GBR2 identifies certain types of development that can be permitted in this area, provided that they are compatible with the character and appearance of the rural area. Included within this list is:

> *'(c) new employment generating uses where they are sustainably located.'*

Employment Uses and Development Strategy

9.7 The proposals would deliver approximately 1,908 square metres of employment floorspace, across the 4 industrial units. The application estimates that the scheme could also create up to 112 new jobs, depending on the uses that occupy the building. Therefore, the development would contribute towards economic growth in the District and would assist in meeting the job growth targets, outlined at DP Policy DPS1. Employment uses can also be acceptable types of development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, under DP Policy GBR2(c), subject to them being sustainably located and compatible with the character of the rural area. These matters are considered later in this report.

9.8 The proposed E[g], B2 and B8 uses are appropriate within a designated employment area, in line with DP Policies ED1 and BUNT3. In addition, the principle of new employment floorspace at Buntingford Business Park is supported by BCANP Policy BE2, which allows for intensification and growth of existing designated employment sites, subject to meeting other criteria. The scheme would also address the recommendations of the Buntingford Employment Study (2025) (BEA) by bringing forward vacant land at

the business park for employment use. The provision of this employment floorspace, and the creation of the associated jobs, would assist in addressing the disparity between population growth and job growth in Buntingford, as identified in the BEA.

9.9 The scheme proposes units that range in size of between 472.2 – 481.5 square metres in floorspace. The BEA identifies a demand for units of between 0 – 250 square metres in use class: E[g], whilst in use classes: B2 or B8 a demand for units of 0 – 1,000 square meters is specified. Therefore, the proposed unit sizes would be consistent with the demand set out in the study, however the proposed unit sizes may be more suited to B2 or B8 uses.

9.10 It is not proposed to limit the use of the units to B2 or B8, even if the unit sizes are more appropriate to these uses. Instead, the scheme proposes for the units to be made available for use classes: E[g], B2 and B8. This flexibility complies with DP Policy ED1 and would enable occupation of the units to be market driven. In addition, the applicant has explained that the building would be flexible enough to allow adaptation to provide smaller or larger units, if required. This flexibility is again supported by DP Policy ED1, particularly as it could allow occupation of the building by microbusinesses, which the BEA identifies as being the most prevalent business size in the town.

Sustainability and Accessibility of Location

9.11 The above paragraphs note that the scheme would contribute towards economic and job growth in the District. These paragraphs also explain that the principle of new employment uses within designated employment areas is generally supported. However, DP Policies GBR2 and ED1 require employment uses to be in sustainable locations, while DP Policy TRA1 encourages development to be in places which enable sustainable journeys. Similarly, Paragraph 110 of the NPPF outlines that significant developments should be focused on locations, which are, or can be made sustainable through limiting the need for travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.

9.12 The site is to the west of Buntingford and is separated from the town by the A10. Most residents in Buntingford are within a 20-minute

walking distance of the site. There is an uncontrolled crossing point directly to the north of the A10 / A507 / B1038 roundabout that allows pedestrians to cross the A10. A westward running footpath on the northern side of the A507 then connects this crossing point to the business park. The proximity to Buntingford, coupled with the availability of a pedestrian route, means that there would be some potential for users or visitors to access the industrial units via walking. Cycling from Buntingford to the site could also be an option, however there is no designated cycle infrastructure in the locality.

9.13 Buntingford does not contain a railway station, and therefore travelling to the site via train would not be feasible. However, there are bus stops roughly 250 metres to the east that provide access to services running to Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Stevenage and Ware. As such, there would be some scope for workers or visitors to travel to Buntingford by bus, before using the available pedestrian route to reach the site.

9.14 The availability of a pedestrian route, and the presence of bus services in the area, means that there is some potential to access the site via sustainable modes. However, the site is physically severed from Buntingford by the A10. In addition, travelling to the site via walking, cycling or bus would require use of an uncontrolled crossing over the A10, and this is not optimal for active travel. This limits the attractiveness of walking or cycling to the site. Some of the proposed uses, particularly B2 or B8, are also often car dependant, by their nature. Therefore, officers consider that the scheme would, overall, generate some unsustainable vehicular trips.

9.15 The proposal is however a modestly sized employment scheme, which would deliver one industrial building within an existing designated employment area that was subject to a previous planning permission for a similar development. The submitted Transport Statement estimates that the development could generate between 71 and 275 daily vehicular trips, depending on the specific use of the building. The highest vehicular trip generation (275 trips) would result from a full use class: E[g] occupation of the units. Whereas, if the building were used for B2 or B8 uses (which is more likely given

the size of the proposed units) vehicular trip generation would be lower ranging from between 71 – 204 trips. The level of trip generation would, overall, be limited, particularly when compared with the recently refused larger commercial scheme on the opposite side of A507 (reference: 3/24/1255/OUT).

9.16 The position of the site within a designated employment area (whereby planning policies suggest employment uses should be retained and/or enhanced) also weighs in favour of the proposals. When identifying the business park as a designated employment site, and allocating further land adjacent to it as an extension to the employment area, there would have been some recognition that future proposals would generate vehicular trips. It is also of relevance that the business park would have been (in part) on brownfield land (previously developed land), noting the previous nursery uses which existed prior to the business park. However, the business park was, nonetheless, allocated in the DP, and considered appropriate for continued and further employment use to increase job availability in Buntingford. As such, the generation of some vehicular trips is accepted, in the context of supporting the growth of a designated employment area.

9.17 Officers also note that a comparably sized industrial building was previously considered acceptable on this site through the grant of planning permission under reference: 3/04/2405/FP. This previous consent is a material consideration of some relevance for this current scheme. However, this permission has expired and was approved under a previous development plan and these are factors which have also been considered. Notwithstanding the age of the expired permission, the former consent attracts some weight in the consideration of this application, notably due to the support given to the need to retain/improve the designated employment area in DP Policies BUNT3 and ED1 and BCANP BE2. The BEA also indicates the site is suitable for expansion to meet local employment needs. These factors reinforce that the former planning approval is an important material consideration which adds further positive weight in favour of the proposals.

9.18 Overall, while the proposals would result in some unsustainable journeys, the level of new vehicular trips would be relatively low. Furthermore, the site is within Buntingford Business Park, which is a designated employment area, identified for continued and future employment use. The generation of a modest level of vehicular trips through this development is, in this instance, justified, given that the scheme would support the growth of a designated employment area.

Principle of Development Conclusions

9.19 In summary, the proposals would contribute towards the job growth targets in the District and would provide employment opportunities near to Buntingford to meet the needs of the Buntingford area. The provision of employment floorspace is also supported in principle within this designated employment area. The scheme would be an acceptable form of development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. A modest level of unsustainable vehicular journeys would be generated through the development, however this is accepted, in the context of encouraging the expansion and growth of a designated employment area.

9.20 Therefore, overall, the proposals are considered acceptable in principle, and would comply with DP Policies DPS1, DSP2, GBR2, BUNT3, ED1 and TRA1, BCANP Policy BE2, as well as Section 6 of the NPPF.

Design Quality

9.21 DP Policy DES4 notes that developments must be of a high standard of design and layout to reflect and promote local distinctiveness. This policy explains that proposals will be expected to make the best use of available land by respecting or improving upon the character of the site and the surrounding area, with reference to scale, height, massing, orientation, siting, layout, density, materials, design features and landscaping. BCANP Policy BE2 requires commercial developments to be well integrated into, and complement, existing clusters of business.

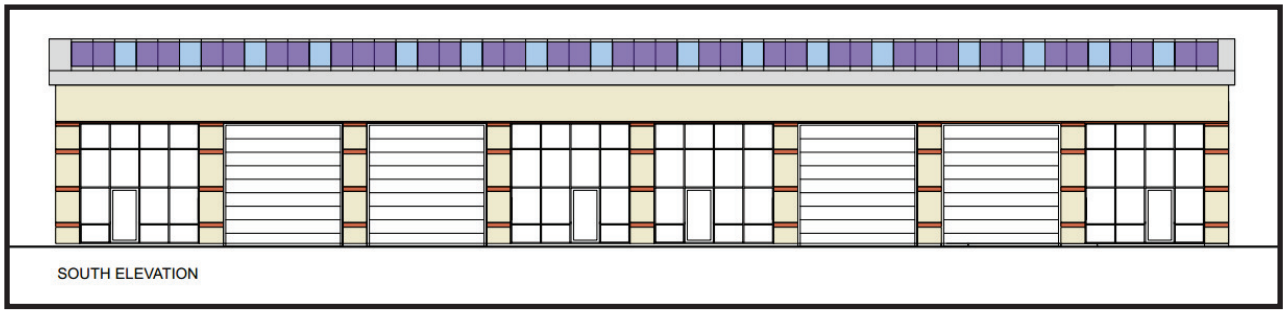
9.22 The new building would be erected towards the south-eastern corner of the business park, with existing industrial units present directly to the west and north. This positioning within the business park, and adjacent to the existing industrial units, would ensure that the development would be a well-integrated part of the employment area. In addition, the new building would be located and orientated to reflect the siting of the Phase 1 building to the west. Therefore, the proposals would respect the layout of the existing employment area.

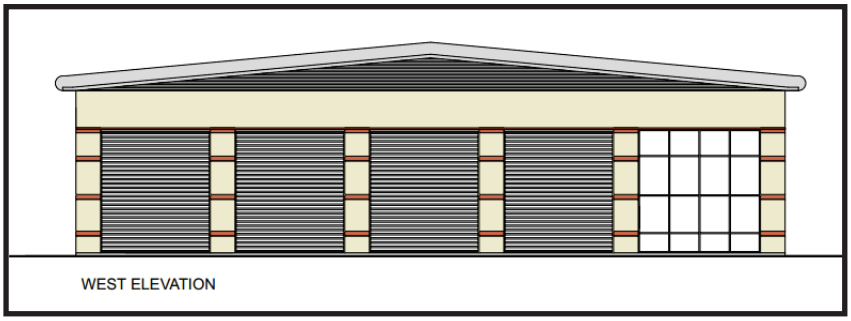
9.23 The building would sit relatively close to the A10, and as such there would be some visibility of the development from this road. However, in these views, the industrial building would be seen together with the existing Phase 2 building to the north. Therefore, the building would not appear unduly prominent or alien within the context of the A10. In addition, existing vegetation across the eastern boundary of the business park, and new planting within the site, would assist in softening some views of the building from the A10, particularly in summer months. The new building would be well set-back from the A507. This positioning, coupled with the available screening from vegetation along the southern boundary of the business park, would ensure that the development would not be highly visible or visually dominant from the A507.

9.24 The maximum height of the building would be approximately 9.8 metres, and this would enable floorspace to be provided at both ground and first floor levels. This would be a typical height for an industrial building, which would be similar to the height of existing buildings within the employment area. In addition, the footprint of the building, at approximately 1,732 square metres, would be comparable to the other industrial units. Therefore, the proposed building has been designed to reflect the size of industrial units at the business park. The new building would be appropriately proportioned and would not appear as an out of scale or overly bulky addition to the site or the setting.

9.25 Two elevations drawings of the building are shown below. From these drawings, it is evident that the building would have a pitched roof form. The main external materials would be brickwork and

metal cladding, while rooflights and solar panels would be installed on the roof. The proposed roof design and materiality would be characteristic of an industrial building and would also reflect the appearance of the existing commercial buildings at the business park. The proposed solar panels would not appear out of keeping within an industrial setting. Therefore, the proposed design and materiality would be compatible with the character of the existing employment area. Final details of the materials can be secured via condition to ensure that high-quality materiality is used.





9.26 A parking area would be created to the south of the new building. It is proposed to plant trees around the sides of this car park. This planting would appropriately soften this hard surface area. In addition, sufficient soft landscaping would be provided across the wider site to adequately green the full development. Final details of landscaping can be agreed through condition. No details of the small substation intended to be installed in the southern-western corner of the car park have been submitted. Therefore, a condition is necessary to secure details of this new structure.

9.27 In summary, the building would be a well-integrated addition to the business park, which would be positioned to respect the layout of the existing employment area. The development would also not appear overly dominant or incongruous from either the A10 or A507. The building would be suitably proportioned and would not appear as an

out of scale or overly bulky addition to the site or the wider setting. The proposed design and materiality would be acceptable, as it would be characteristic of an industrial development.

9.28 Therefore, overall, the scheme would be of good-quality design that would be compatible with the character and appearance of the site, the surrounding area, the wider setting and the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The proposals would comply with DP Policies GBR2 and DES4, BCANP Policy BE2, as well as Sections 11 and 12 of the NPPF.

Landscape Character and Visual Impacts

9.29 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF explains that developments should protect and enhance valued landscapes, and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. DP Policy DES2 notes that proposals must demonstrate how they conserve, enhance or strengthen the character and distinctive features of the District's landscapes. BCANP Policy ES1 sets out that developments should maintain the Rib Valley setting of the neighbourhood plan area.

Landscape Character

9.30 The Landscape Character Assessment SPD identifies that the site is within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 141 – Cherry Green Arable Plateau. This LCA covers a large expanse of countryside to the west and south-west of Buntingford. The site is on the eastern edge of this LCA. The SPD describes this LCA as a 'principally open arable landscape with extensive views over a gently undulating plateau'. This LCA is not considered a 'valued landscape' for the purposes of Paragraph 187 of the NPPF.

9.31 The site is within an existing business park and is bound by industrial units to the west and north, and the A10 to the east. Therefore, the land sits in an industrial and commercial setting, and is spatially separated from the arable landscapes to the north, west and south. Due to the position of the site within an existing employment area, the proposed development would not detract from any of the key characteristics of the rural landscape within LCA 141, nor the setting

of the Rib Valley. As such, there would be no conflict with DP Policy DES2, BCANP Policies BE2 or ES1, nor Section 15 of the NPPF.

Visual Impacts

9.32 As discussed earlier in this report, the presence of vegetation around the boundaries of the business park would ensure that the development would be well screened and softened in views from the A10 and A507. Where visibility is possible from these roads, the proposals would be viewed in the context of an existing employment area, containing industrial units. Therefore, the development would not appear unduly prominent in close distance views.

9.33 The development would also generally be well screened in any longer distance views towards the site. There is a public footpath directly to the north of the designated employment area (Cottered 040) and a byway a short distance to the west (Cottered 046). From these public rights of way, and in any longer distance views from the north or west, the development would be obscured by existing industrial buildings and areas of vegetation. In addition, there would be minimal visibility of the proposals in longer distance views taken from the south, due to screening provided by intervening vegetation and landscapes.

9.34 Overall, the proposed scheme would be well screened in close distance views, whilst there would be limited visibility of the development in any longer distance views. As such, the proposals would not result in material adverse visual effects on either the immediate setting or the wider area. There would be no conflict with DP Policy DES2, BCANP Policies BE2 or ES1, nor Section 15 of the NPPF.

Impact on Heritage Assets

9.35 Paragraph 212 of the NPPF notes that when considering the impacts of a development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

9.36 DP Policy HA1 outlines that proposals should preserve, and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment. DP Policy HA7 also explains that developments should preserve the setting of listed buildings. This policy reflects Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting.

Setting of Listed Buildings at How Green Farm

9.37 To the east of the site, and on the opposite side of the A10, there are grade II listed buildings at How Green Farm (farmhouse, stables, outhouse and barn). The Conservation Officer notes that the historic agricultural setting of these heritage assets has been lost over time, following the introduction of housing development to the north and east. This consultee also explains that the separation between the business park and How Green Farm, provided by the A10, means that the site does not contribute to the setting or significance of these listed buildings.

9.38 The proposed development would be over 35 metres from the heritage assets at How Green Farm and would be separated from the listed buildings by the A10. This separation means that the proposals would not impact on any important views of the listed buildings, nor detract from any aspects of the setting of these heritage assets. As such, there would be no impact on the setting of these listed buildings. The setting and significance of these heritage assets would be preserved, in accordance with DP Policies HA1 and HA7, Section 16 of the NPPF and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Archaeology

9.39 DP Policy HA3 outlines that where development is permitted on sites containing archaeological remains, conditions should be applied requiring appropriate investigation and recording.

9.40 There is an Area of Archaeological Significance a short distance to the south of the site. Therefore, HCC Historic Environment Team were consulted on the application. This consultee notes that previous

investigations at the business park indicated some potential for archaeological remains. In addition, there are records of iron age, Roman and medieval finds in the area. As such, HCC Historic Environment Team consider that there is some archaeological potential on site and recommend a condition requiring a programme of archaeological works. This condition is included as part of this recommendation.

Neighbouring Amenity

9.41 DP Policy DES4 notes that proposals should avoid significant detrimental impacts on the amenity of neighbours, and ensure that environments are not harmed by inadequate daylight, privacy or overshadowing. DP Policy EQ2 requires developments to minimise impacts of noise on the surrounding environment.

9.42 The proposals would be well separated from the closest residential neighbours, which are found on the opposite side of the A10 (Skipps Meadow, Tylers Close and How Green Farm). Due to this separation, these neighbours would not be adversely impacted by losses of light, overshadowing, restriction of outlook, overbearing effects or overlooking. The amenity of these neighbouring properties would be maintained, in accordance with DP Policy DES4 and BCANP Policy BE2.

9.43 A local resident has outlined that noise impacts need to be considered. The proposed employment uses can be noise generating (particularly use classes: B2 or B8). However, the development would be over 30 metres from the nearest noise sensitive uses (i.e. dwellings on the opposite side of the A10). The A10 would also sit between the site and these neighbours providing a buffer. Due to this separation, it is not considered that the amenity of these nearby properties would be materially impacted by noise from the development. This position is backed up by the Environmental Health Officer, who has not objected to the scheme. There would be no conflict with DP Policies DES4 or EQ2, nor BCANP Policy BE2.

9.44 The Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition securing details of any plant or machinery that is installed at the site. Officers consider that this condition is necessary, in order to ensure that any machinery provided is sensitive to the acoustic environment in the area and does not cause any noise disturbance for nearby properties.

Access, Highways and Transport

Trip Generation

9.45 DP Policy TRA2 and Paragraph 116 of the NPPF note that proposals should only be prevented on highways grounds, if residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe.

9.46 The application is supported by a Transport Statement (TS), which contains a trip generation calculation. This calculation estimates that the proposals would generate between 71 – 275 daily vehicular trips, depending on the uses that occupy the units. The TS also suggests that vehicular movements associated with the development in both the AM and PM peaks would be low.

9.47 The Highway Authority have reviewed the application and have not raised any concern with the level of vehicular trips generated by the development. Officers agree with this position, as the increase in vehicular movements associated with the business park would be limited. Therefore, the proposals would not materially impact the functioning of the local highway network, nor result in a severe impact in terms of traffic flow or congestion. There would be no conflict with DP Policy TRA2, nor Paragraph 116 of the NPPF.

Access Arrangements and Highways Safety

9.48 DP Policy TRA2 outlines that proposals should provide safe and suitable access for all users. This policy and Paragraph 116 of the NPPF note that developments should not result in unacceptable impacts on highways safety.

9.49 Vehicles would access the proposed development by using the existing access point from the A507 and travelling along the internal access road that serves the business park. The Highway Authority has reviewed the application and has not raised any concerns with this access arrangement. Officers are content that this access is suitable, and highways safety would not be compromised. There would be no conflict with DP Policy TRA2, BCANP Policy BE2, nor Paragraph 116 of the NPPF.

9.50 The TS explains that refuse collections would be undertaken by a private contractor, and therefore local authority refuse vehicles would not have to enter the site. Nonetheless, the site layout includes a hard surfacing area to the south of the building. Tracking drawings have been provided within the TS to demonstrate that large vehicles would be able to manoeuvre and turn within this hardstanding area. The Highway Authority has not raised any concerns with these tracking drawings or the internal highway layout. As such, it is considered that the scheme has been designed to allow suitable manoeuvring of vehicles, in accordance with DP Policy TRA2.

9.51 The pedestrian route to the site for those travelling from Buntingford would involve using the uncontrolled crossing point over the A10 directly to the north of the A10 / A507 / B1038 roundabout. The appeal schemes on the land to the north/west (reference: 3/24/0966/OUT) and the land to the south (reference: 3/24/1255/OUT) include proposed upgrades to this A10 crossing to provide a toucan crossing. The LPA, following the advice of the Highway Authority, have determined that this proposed toucan crossing would be unacceptable in highway safety terms. The LPA will be seeking to maintain and defend this position through the appeals.

9.52 While the LPA's position on the appeals is acknowledged, the current scheme does not include any upgrades to the existing crossing point over the A10. Therefore, the assessment of this application scheme must be made on the basis of whether, or not, the existing uncontrolled crossing of the A10 is safe, in the context of the current proposals.

9.53 This uncontrolled crossing has been part of the pedestrian route to the business park for many years and available data indicates that over this time there have been limited accidents in this locality. The scheme is for a modestly sized addition to the established business park and does not propose the creation of a completely new employment area. In addition, the proposal is a significantly smaller development, when compared with the appeal schemes. Due to the limited scale of the development, it is anticipated that there would not be more significant or intensified levels of pedestrian movements across the A10. In addition, the proposals would be unlikely to materially increase the number of vulnerable pedestrians crossing the A10, due to the employment nature of the use (which would not give rise to additional children or families with young children (with pushchairs/buggies etc) using the crossing).

9.54 The limited records of accidents in this area indicates that the quantum of development and uses within the existing business park do not result in a significant highway safety concern at the A10 crossing point. This existing context, coupled with the only limited increase in pedestrian movements across the A10, means that it is anticipated that there would not be a material increase in adverse highway safety impacts resulting from this development. This position is backed up by the Highway Authority, who have not raised concern with the proposals on highway safety grounds. There would be no overall conflict with DP Policy TRA2, BCANP Policy BE2, nor Paragraph 116 of the NPPF.

9.55 Cumulatively, if all developments were built out there could be a material adverse impact on highway safety, as set out in the appeal and application scheme LPA statements relating to the adjoining and adjacent sites. However, the application site is not a decisive contributor to this impact and so officers do not consider a refusal is merited on the grounds of highway safety for the reasons set out above.

9.56 In terms of highway safety during the construction phase, the Highway Authority have recommended a condition securing a Construction Traffic Management Plan. Officers consider this to be

necessary, given that the site would be accessed via major roads throughout the construction phase. Through this condition, it can be ensured that construction activities and vehicular movements do not compromise highway safety.

Car and Cycle Parking

9.57 DP Policy TRA3 outlines that vehicle parking should be assessed on a site-specific basis, taking into account the SPD 'Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development'. This policy also requires cycle parking facilities to be provided for commercial developments.

9.58 The SPD contains individual parking standards for use classes: E[g], B2 and B8. Applying these standards, the proposals would give rise to a demand for between 25 – 64 parking spaces, depending on the uses that occupy the units. The requirement for 25 parking spaces reflects full occupation for B8 uses, whereas the need for 64 parking spaces relates to full E[g] use of the building. The scheme would provide 41 on-site parking spaces in the area to the south of the proposed building. This level of parking would fall within the range of parking provision required under the SPD for the proposed uses.

9.59 It is unlikely that the building would be fully occupied for E[g] use, given that the proposed unit sizes are more suited to B2 or B8 use. Therefore, it would be unreasonable to expect the upper level of 64 parking spaces to be provided. The parking standards for B2 and B8 uses require between 25 – 39 parking spaces to serve a development of this size. The scheme would provide a level of parking in excess of these requirements. As such, officers are content that a sufficient number of parking spaces would be provided to accommodate the likely parking demand associated with the development. The proposals would comply with DP Policy TRA3.

9.60 The plans do not show parking spaces for lorries, as the TS explains that lorry parking spaces are not anticipated to be required. However, regardless of this, the parking layout of the site could reasonably be altered, at a later date, by the landowner to provide lorry parking spaces, if they are required by a future occupant.

Therefore, officers are satisfied that the scheme would be capable of providing parking for all relevant vehicles that may enter the site.

9.61 The scheme proposes to provide 5 electric vehicle charging points in the parking area. Officers accept that this is a modest supply of charging points across the whole site. However, there is no policy basis with the DP, the BCANP or the NPPF to require further charging points. Therefore, the provision of this number of electric vehicle charging points is considered acceptable and would encourage use of electric vehicles. Details of the charging points can be secured via condition.

9.62 It is proposed to supply cycle parking for 4 bicycles within the internal areas of each of the units (16 cycle parking spaces in total). This level of cycle parking is supported and would promote this active mode of travel, in accordance with DP Policies TRA1 and TRA3. A condition is recommended to ensure that this cycle parking is delivered.

Trees, Biodiversity and Ecology

Trees

9.63 DP Policy DES3 requires proposals to demonstrate how they would retain, protect and enhance existing landscape features of amenity and biodiversity value. DP Policy NE3 explains that development, which would result in the loss of, or significant damage to, trees or hedges should be resisted.

9.64 The site does not contain any trees, apart from a small number of specimens found within the line of scrub along the eastern site boundary. There are however some trees directly to the north of the site, adjacent to the Phase 2 building at the business park.

9.65 This scheme does not include any tree removal. Instead, it is proposed to retain and enhance the existing scrub and trees along the eastern site boundary. In addition, the proposed building and associated hardstanding would be fully located outside the root protection areas of both on-site and off-site trees. As such, the

proposals would not compromise the long-term retention of existing trees. There would be no conflict with DP Policies DES3 or NE3.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

9.66 The Environment Act (2021) introduced a statutory requirement for 10% BNG to be delivered through new developments. This legislation states that every planning permission granted is subject to the biodiversity gain condition. DP Policies NE2 and NE3, and BCANP Policy ES7, expect biodiversity net gains to be achieved on site.

9.67 The application site is largely made up of sparsely vegetated land, together with a line of scrub along the eastern site boundary, a small area of scrub on the western side, a limited number of trees and the hard surfacing of the access road. Therefore, the existing site contains habitats of modest biodiversity value.

9.68 The proposed scheme would introduce a new building and further hard surfacing onto the site, with the sparsely vegetated land and the western area of scrub lost. Therefore, the proposals would result in the loss of some on-site habitat. However, the scheme seeks to offset these losses through new habitat creation, including the planting of 42 trees and the provision of areas of modified grassland, as shown on the below Habitat Plan. In addition, it is proposed to retain and enhance the line of scrub along the eastern site boundary. The submitted BNG Metric indicates that this habitat creation and enhancement would result in a BNG of 11.21% in habitat units.



9.69 HCC Ecology have reviewed the submitted BNG Metric and the BNG Assessment submitted by the applicant. This consultee has not questioned any of the results. Therefore, officers are content that the scheme would provide a BNG in excess of the mandatory 10%. Therefore, the requirements of mandatory BNG would be satisfied. The final BNG would be secured through the biodiversity gain condition. The provision of this BNG also ensures compliance with DP Policies NE2 and NE3, as well as BCANP Policy ES7.

9.70 HCC have recently published the Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This document is a guide that can be used to assist with nature recovery. Site-specific and area-specific actions for nature recovery are also shown on the LNRS mapping. Officers have reviewed the LNRS and its associated mapping and there are no habitat or wildlife related actions that are relevant to the current proposals.

Protected Species and Wildlife Enhancements

9.71 DP Policy NE3 notes that protected species should not be adversely impacted by proposals. This policy and BCANP Policy ES8 require integrated features for wildlife to be provided in new developments.

9.72 The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), which has considered the likelihood of protected species using or occupying the site. This PEA has also assessed whether, or not, any protected species would be impacted by the proposals.

9.73 The PEA generally concludes that occupation of the site by protected species is likely to be limited. HCC Ecology have reviewed the PEA and agree with this conclusion. Therefore, officers are content that protected species are not a constraint to the development.

9.74 While this is noted, the PEA has acknowledged that there is some low potential for species (i.e. badgers, foraging bats, breeding birds and reptiles) to intermittently use the site, particularly the line of scrub along the eastern boundary. In order to ensure that no species are impacted during construction, HCC Ecology have recommended that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) be secured

via condition. This condition forms part of this recommendation, and through the CEMP it can be ensured that appropriate measures are put in place to avoid risks to protected species at the construction phase. Subject to this condition, protected species would not be harmed by the proposals, and there would be no conflict with DP Policy NE3.

9.75 The PEA recommends that wildlife features such as bat boxes, bird boxes, swift bricks, log piles and invertebrate boxes be incorporated into the scheme. Officers support the provision of these features, which would appropriately create opportunities for wildlife, in line with DP Policy NE3 and BCANP Policy ES8. However, no specific details of these wildlife enhancements have been provided. Therefore, it is recommended that the provision of these features be secured as part of a Species Enhancement Plan required via condition.

Flood Risk and Drainage

Flooding and Surface Water Drainage

9.76 DP Policy WAT1 notes that developments should not increase the likelihood or intensity of any form of flooding, both on-site and off-site. DP Policy WAT5 requires the most sustainable forms of drainage systems to be used, in accordance with the SUDs hierarchy.

9.77 The site is fully within Flood Zone 1, and therefore is at low risk of fluvial flooding. However, parts of the site are at low to high risk of surface water flooding, as shown in the below image. In addition, the land directly to the west of the site is at high surface water flood risk.

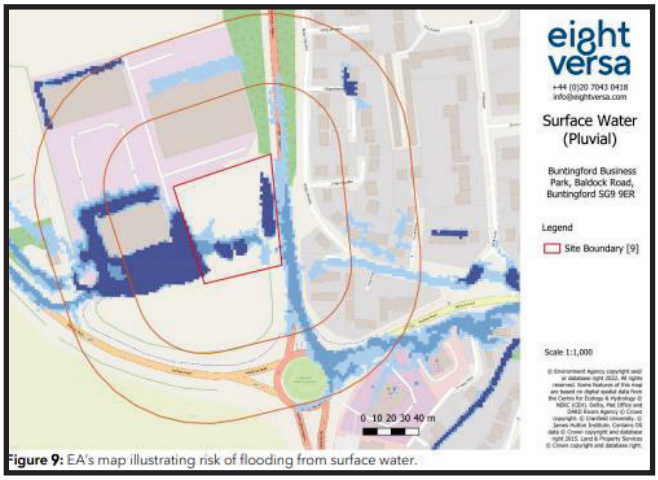
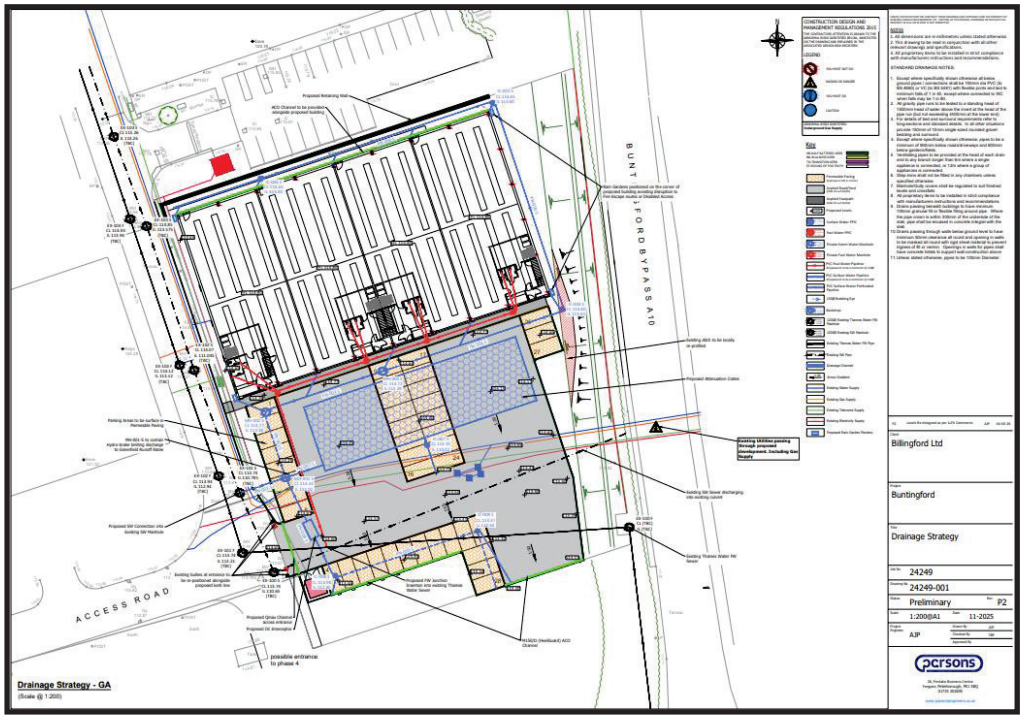


Figure 9: EA's map illustrating risk of flooding from surface water.

9.78 The position of parts of the site within areas of high surface water flood risk means that the sequential test could be applicable to this application. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states that the aim of the sequential test is to steer development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding. This paragraph then notes that proposals should not be permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the development in areas with lower flood risk. However, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) explains that the sequential test need not be applied, if a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) demonstrates that the users of the development would remain safe from surface water flood risk, without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

9.79 This scheme is supported by an FRA and a Drainage Strategy Report. The Drainage Strategy Report explains that it is proposed to divert surface water into an existing surface water sewer network at the business park via permeable paving, drains and an attenuation tank. Surface water would then be discharged at a controlled rate to a sewer network on the eastern side of the A10. The drainage strategy plan for the site is provided below. The LLFA have reviewed the drainage scheme and are content that it would appropriately manage surface water, without increasing flood risk either on-site or off-site. This consultee recommends conditions to secure final details of drainage proposals, and these are included as part of this recommendation.



9.80 The FRA also provides details of flood resistance measures that would be incorporated into the scheme, including waterproof construction methods, positioning electrical equipment above flood levels, installing flood resilient doors/barriers and adopting of a flood response/evacuation plan. Officers consider that these measures are appropriate and would ensure that the development would be resistant to flood risk. A condition is recommended requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the advice provided within the FRA.

9.81 Overall, it is considered that an appropriate surface water drainage strategy would be adopted on the site. Suitable flood resistance measures would also be provided to ensure that the development would be suitably resilient in a flood event. Therefore, officers are content that flood risk would not be increased either on-site or off-site. As such, there is no requirement for a sequential test, as the development would remain safe from surface water flood risk, without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The proposals would comply with DP Policies WAT1 and WAT5, as well as Section 14 of the NPPF.

Foul Water Drainage

9.82 DP Policy WAT6 and BCANP Policy INFRA4 note that developments must ensure that adequate wastewater infrastructure is available.

9.83 The Drainage Strategy Report explains that new foul water sewer pipes would be provided within the site. These sewers would then connect into the public foul water network at a position close to the southern site boundary. Thames Water have not objected to this arrangement. Therefore, officers are content that the foul water drainage proposals are acceptable and that sufficient capacity exists within the public foul water network to accommodate the development. There would be no conflict with DP Policy WAT6, nor BCANP Policy INFRA4.

Sustainable Design and Climate Change

9.84 DP Policy CC2 requires developments to minimise carbon emissions, taking into account the Energy Hierarchy. DP Policy CC1 sets out that

proposals should demonstrate how the design, materials and operation of the development would limit overheating. BCANP Policy ES3 supports green energy principles in new developments, where appropriate. DP Policy WAT4 encourages use of mains water to be minimised, while BCANP Policy INFRA4 outlines that commercial schemes should achieve BREEAM 'excellent' rating for water usage.

9.85 The application is supported by an Energy Assessment (EA), which sets out the proposed approach to minimising carbon emissions through the development, following the 'be lean, be clean and be green' hierarchy. The EA explains that, in terms of built fabric, the proposals would be designed to deliver optimised u-values and low air permeability. In addition, high efficiency lighting and mechanical ventilation would be provided. The scheme would also incorporate renewables in the form of solar panels on the roof of the building and air source heat pumps to provide hot water and heating. The ES concludes that through these measures the development would achieve a 55.6% carbon reduction beyond Building Regulations. Therefore, the proposals would appropriately minimise carbon emissions, in accordance with DP Policy CC2 and BCANP Policy ES3.

9.86 The EA outlines that the scheme would incorporate solar control glazing and mechanical ventilation to enable overheating risk to be avoided and addressed. In addition, it is proposed to insulate the roof of the building, so that there would be minimal penetration of heat through the roof. The EA also explains that the high ceilings of the building would assist in reducing overheating risks. Officers are content that the stated measures would suitably minimise instances of overheating, in line with DP Policy CC1.

9.87 A Sustainability Statement (SS) has also been submitted with this application. This document explains that water usage would be minimised through installation of water efficient components and fittings. However, the submission does not confirm that the development would achieve BREEAM 'excellent' rating for water usage, as required by BCANP Policy INRA5. Therefore, a condition is recommended to ensure that the scheme meets this water usage standard.

Other Matters

Financial Contributions

9.88 The EHDC Section 106 Officer has commented on the application, noting that East Herts Council does not normally collect financial contributions from commercial developments of this nature. Therefore, no financial contributions are to be secured towards East Herts related infrastructure or facilities.

9.89 HCC Growth and Infrastructure Team have requested a financial contribution of £2,386 (index linked to BCIS 1Q2024) towards fire and rescue services. The comments from HCC note that this contribution would go towards 'new appliances and/or equipment necessary to support additional fire and rescue service delivery at Buntingford Fire Station'. Officers have carefully considered this request in the context of DP Policy DEL2, Paragraph 58 of the NPPF and Regulation 122 of the CIL Regs. These require planning obligations to be:

(a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
(b) directly related to the development; and
(c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

9.90 In this instance, significant weight is given to HCC's position on reference: 3/24/1255/OUT, which is the major employment scheme to the south, currently at appeal. This proposal on a nearby site could deliver 25,512 square metres more commercial floorspace, when compared with the current scheme. However, HCC did not request a financial contribution towards fire and rescue services through that application. Officers are not aware of any changes to policy or guidance that would justify HCC taking a different approach on the current scheme. Given this context, officers do not consider that it is reasonable to secure a fire and rescue service contribution as part of this modest employment proposal. The contribution is not considered to be *'fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development'*.

9.91 It is also understood that there is no current building project in Buntingford to expand fire and rescue services. HCC instead suggest that the contribution would be used to fund *'new appliances and/or*

equipment'. This appears to be a generic request that is not specifically related to the current proposals or a particular project. Officers are therefore not convinced that the contribution is specific enough to be *'directly related to the development*'. In addition, HCC have not indicated that there is a shortage of appliances or equipment that could lead to issues with managing a fire incident at the site. Therefore, it has not been demonstrated that the requested contribution is *'necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms*'.

9.92 In summary, HCC's position on a much larger adjacent scheme is given significant weight in considering the reasonableness of securing a financial contribution from this application. Officers are also not convinced that the requested contribution is specific enough to the current scheme, whilst there is a lack of information to demonstrate that the funds are needed to mitigate the impact of this development. As such, it is not considered that the requested contribution is *'fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development*'. There are also further doubts as to whether the contribution is *'necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms'* and *'directly related to the development*'.

Therefore, overall, the requested contribution is not considered to pass the tests at DP Policy DEL2, Paragraph 58 of the NPPF and Regulation 122 of the CIL Regs. The contribution is not included as part of this recommendation.

Minerals and Waste

9.93 HCC Minerals and Waste Team were consulted on this application. This consultee has not raised any concerns with potential sterilisation of mineral resources. However, a condition has been recommended requiring submission of a Site Waste Management Plan. This condition is considered necessary, in order to ensure that suitable waste management arrangements are adopted on site, in accordance with the Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD (2012).

10.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

10.1 This report provides a comprehensive officer consideration of this application and its supporting documentation, including the further/ additional information submitted and all representations received. The report has considered the proposals, in light of the DP, the BCANP and the NPPF 2024, together with all other relevant material considerations.

10.2 The proposed scheme would contribute towards job growth targets identified in the DP, whilst also encouraging economic growth in the District. The provision of this employment floorspace within a designated employment area is supported in principle by the DP and BCANP. The proposals would also assist in addressing the disparity between population growth and job growth in Buntingford over recent years. The scheme would be an appropriate form of development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. Therefore, the principle of development is considered acceptable.

10.3 It is acknowledged that the scheme would generate a modest level of new unsustainable vehicular trips. However, this is accepted, in the context of supporting the expansion and growth of a designated employment area.

10.4 The proposed development would be a well-integrated addition to the existing business park. The new building would be of good quality design that would be compatible with the character and appearance of the site, the immediate surroundings, the wider setting and the nearby rural area. The proposals would not detract from landscape character, nor result in any material adverse visual effects. The setting and significance of the nearby listed buildings at How Green Farm would be preserved. The amenity of neighbouring properties would also be maintained.

10.5 There would not be a severe impact on the local highway network and highway safety would not be materially compromised, as a result of the modest trip generation and anticipated increase in pedestrian movements. A biodiversity net gain would be delivered on site and

protected species would not be adversely affected. Instances of flooding would be managed by a suitable drainage strategy, ensuring that there would be no increased flood risk either on-site or off-site. The scheme would also be designed to minimise carbon emissions and reduce water usage.

10.6 Through the appeals on the adjacent sites, the LPA have accepted that the employment policies within the development plan are out of date, as they are over 5 years old. Therefore, Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF and the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' are relevant. These outline that where the policies which are most important for determining an application are out of date, permission should be granted unless:

i) the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

10.7 No areas or assets of particular importance would be harmed by this proposal. As such, there is not a strong reason for refusing this development under Paragraph 11(d)(i). There would also not be adverse impacts resulting from this scheme of such weight that they would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of this development (principally the delivery of employment floorspace within a designated employment area). Therefore, in applying the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development and the tilted balance of Paragraph 11(d)(ii), officers consider that the scheme should be supported.

10.8 Overall, the proposals would be in accordance with the development plan, as a whole. There are no material considerations which would

indicate taking a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. As such, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

11.0 Recommendation

11.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to conditions.

CONDITIONS

Three Year Time Limit

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this notice.
   Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (As Amended).

Approved Plans

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans listed below:
   - S3905/P/SLPD
   - S3905/P/001
   - S3905/P/002
   - S3905/P/011
   - S3905/P/11
   - S3905/P/12
   - S3905/P/13
   - S3905/P/21
   - S3905/P/22
   - S3905/P/31
   - S3905/P/32

   Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans, drawings and specifications.

Use Class Restriction

3. The use of the building hereby approved shall be restricted to use classes: E(g), B2 and B8 only. The building shall not be used for any other purposes in the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).
   Reason: To ensure that the building used is for a purpose that is appropriate to the designated employment area, in accordance with Policy ED1 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Sustainable Drainage Details

4. Prior to the commencement of any development hereby approved, construction drawings of the surface water drainage network, associated sustainable drainage components and flow control

mechanisms and a construction method statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall then be constructed as per the agreed drawings, the Drainage Strategy Report P2 (Prepared by: Parsons, Dated: 03/2026) and the drainage strategy drawing (Drawing Number: 24249-001 Rev P2) and remain in perpetuity for the lifetime of the development unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No alteration to the agreed drainage scheme shall occur without prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.
Reason: To ensure that appropriate drainage infrastructure is provided, in accordance with Policies WAT1 and WAT5 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Method Statement for Construction Drainage

5. Prior to the commencement of any development hereby approved, details and a method statement for interim and temporary drainage measures during the demolition and construction phases shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This information shall provide full details of who will be responsible for maintaining such temporary systems and demonstrate how the site will be drained to ensure that there is no increase in the off-site flows, nor any pollution, debris and sediment to any receiving watercourse or sewer system. The site works and construction phase shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with approved method statement, unless alternative measures have been subsequently approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
Reason: To ensure that appropriate drainage infrastructure is provided, in accordance with Policies WAT1 and WAT5 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Construction Traffic Management Plan

6. Prior to the commencement of any development hereby approved, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CTMP 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) to avoid school pick up/drop off times;
- on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities;
- post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway;
- the site layout on the highway including extent of any hoarding, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements (where required); and
- a phasing plan.

Thereafter, the construction phase of the development shall only be carried out in full accordance with the approved CTMP.

Reason: To minimise the impact of construction on the local highway network, in accordance with Policy TRA2 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Construction Environmental Management Plan (Ecology)

7. Prior to the commencement of any development hereby approved, an Ecological Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Ecological CEMP shall outline the mitigation measures that will be implemented on site to avoid impacts on notable and protected species during the construction phase. Thereafter, the development shall only be carried out in full accordance with the approved Ecological CEMP.

   Reason: To ensure that impacts on protected species are avoided, in line with Policy NE3 of the East Herts District Plan (2018).

Site Waste Management Plan

8. Prior to the commencement of any development hereby approved, a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The SWMP shall

aim to reduce the amount of waste produced on site and shall 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, in accordance with Policy 12 of the Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2012.

Programme of Archaeological Works

9. No development shall take place within the proposed development site until the applicant, or their agents, or their successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This condition will only be considered to be discharged when the Local Planning Authority has received and approved an archaeological report of all the required archaeological works, and if appropriate, a commitment to publication has been made.
Reason: To secure the protection of any archaeological remains, in accordance with Policy HA3 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Plant and Machinery

10. No external plant or machinery (including air source heat pumps) shall be installed until details of the external sound level emitted from the plant or machinery, together with any necessary mitigation measures, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The measures shall ensure that the external sound level emitted from plant or machinery will be lower than the lowest existing background sound level by at least 5dBA. The assessment shall be made in accordance with BS4142:2014 at the nearest and/or most affected noise sensitive premises, with all machinery operating together at maximum capacity. A post installation noise assessment shall be carried out where required to confirm compliance with the sound criteria and additional steps to mitigate noise shall be taken, as necessary.

Approved details shall be implemented prior to first use of the development and thereafter be permanently retained.
Reason: To ensure adverse noise impacts are avoided, in accordance with Policy EQ2 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

External Materials

11. Prior to the commencement of any above ground construction works for the development hereby approved, details and specifications of all the external materials of construction shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
Reason: In the interests of good design, in accordance with Policy DES4 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Substation Details

12. Prior to the commencement of any above ground construction works for the development hereby approved, detailed scaled drawings of the proposed substation, as shown on drawing number: S3905/P/011 shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the substation shall be constructed in accordance with the approved details.
Reason: In the interests of good design, in accordance with Policy DES4 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Landscaping

13. Prior to the commencement of any above ground construction works for the development hereby approved, full landscaping details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include:
    - Hard surfacing materials;
    - Soft landscaping proposals;
    - Retained landscape features;
    - Planting plans detailing schedule of plants, species, planting sizes and density of planting; and
    - An implementation timetable.

Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in full accordance with the approved details and timetable

Reason: In the interests of good design, in accordance with Policies DES3 and DES4 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Species Enhancement Plan

14. Prior to the commencement of any above ground construction works for the development hereby approved, a Species Enhancement Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Species Enhancement Plan shall provide details of the location, number and type of wildlife enhancements to be provided on site, including:
    - 3 x bat boxes installed on the new building or on trees;
    - 3 x integrated swift bricks installed within the fabric of the building;
    - 2 x bird boxes installed on the new building or on trees;
    - Log piles;
    - Invertebrate boxes; and
    - Any other wildlife features.

    The approved development shall not be used until the wildlife enhancements have been installed in accordance with the approved details. Thereafter, the enhancements shall be retained for the lifetime of the development.
    Reason: To create opportunities for wildlife, in accordance with Policy NE3 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Maintenance of Sustainable Drainage

15. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, details of the maintenance and management of the sustainable drainage scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage scheme shall be implemented prior to the first use of the development hereby approved and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details in perpetuity. The Local Planning Authority shall be granted access to inspect the sustainable drainage scheme for the lifetime of the development. The details of the scheme to be submitted for approval shall include:
    (i) a timetable for its implementation;

(ii) details of SuDS features and connecting drainage structures and maintenance requirements for each aspect including a drawing showing where they are located; and

(iii) a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public body or statutory undertaker, or any other arrangements to secure the operation of the sustainable drainage scheme throughout its lifetime. This will include the name and contact details of any appointed management company.

Reason: To ensure that appropriate drainage infrastructure is provided, in accordance with Policies WAT1 and WAT5 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

External Lighting

16. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, details of any external lighting proposed in connection with the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and prior to first use.

Reason: To minimise light pollution, in accordance with Policy EQ3 of the East Herts District Plan (2018).

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

17. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, details of the siting, type and specification of electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved development shall not be used until the EVCPs have been installed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to promote the use of electric vehicles, in accordance with Policy TRA1 of the East Herts District Plan 2018

Parking

18. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, the parking spaces as shown on the approved plans shall be provided in full.

Reason: To ensure the provision of an appropriate level of parking, in accordance with Policy TRA3 of the East Herts District Plan (2018.)

Cycle Parking

19. Prior to the first use of any of the units hereby approved, the cycle parking facilities for that unit, as shown on the approved plans shall be provided in full.
Reason: To promote active travel, in accordance with Policies TRA1 and TRA3 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

Solar Panels

20. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, the pv panels, as shown on the approved plans, shall be installed and operational at the site.
Reason: To minimise carbon emissions, in accordance with Policy CC2 of the East Herts District Plan.

Air Source Heat Pumps

21. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, details of the model and siting of air source heat pumps (ASHPs) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be used until the ASHPs are installed and operational in accordance with the approved details.
Reason: To minimise carbon emissions, in accordance with Policy CC2 of the East Herts District Plan.

Water Usage

22. Prior to the first use of the development hereby approved, the building shall be fitted out to enable it to achieve BREEAM 'excellent' rating for water usage.
Reason: To minimise water usage, in accordance with Policy INFRA5 of the Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan 2017.

Flood Risk Assessment

23. The development hereby approved shall be carried out and shall operate in accordance with the recommendations of the Flood Risk Assessment Issue No:1 (Prepared by: Eight Versa, Dated: 17/12/2025).

Reason: To ensure that the development is resistant to flooding, in accordance with Policy WAT1 of the East Herts District Plan 2018.

INFORMATIVES

1. Justification (Grant)
2. Other Legislation
3. Storage of Materials on Highway
4. Obstruction of Highway
5. Debris on Highway
6. Groundwater Risk Management Permit