

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/22/03616/FULL
LOCATION	Quest Pit, Amphill Road, Houghton Conquest
PROPOSAL	Hybrid Planning Application: Development of film and TV studio campus (Use Class E (g) (i-iii) and B8) comprising film studios, sound stages, workshops, offices, warehouses, overnight accommodation, community hub, canteen/restaurant, ancillary floorspace, new access arrangements including bus interchange, car and cycle parking, landscaping, infrastructure and associated works. Comprising (i) Full application for phase 1, 1a and 1b which includes 54,334sqm of stages and workshops (E(g) (i-iii), 50sqm education hub (F.1(a)), 384sqm transport hub, (F.2(b)), 384sqm community floorspace (F.2(b)), 8,701sqm of ancillary floorspace (E(g)(i-iii) and B8) and site wide enabling works. (ii) An Outline application: Phases 2 – 3 and substation phase up to a maximum floor area of 75,000 sqm; which includes up to 38,000sqm of stages and workshops (E(g)(i-iii), up to 25,000sqm backlot, 2000sqm substation facility, 4,100sqm of ancillary overnight accommodation, a 1,200 space multi storey car park, 5900sqm of associated ancillary floorspace (E (g) (i-iii) and B8) and a 2,000 sqm substation facility. The associated backlot area will be no more than 25,000sqm. All matters reserved except access. EIA development accompanied by an Environmental Statement.
PARISH	Houghton Conquest
WARD	Houghton Conquest & Haynes
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllr Hares
CASE OFFICER	Andrew Cundy
DATE REGISTERED	04 October 2022
EXPIRY DATE	24 January 2023
APPLICANT	Quest Pit Limited
AGENT	Ms K Phillips
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	Major planning application and departure from Development Plan
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Hybrid Application - Recommended for Approval

Summary of Recommendation:

The application site falls outside of a defined Settlement Envelope and within the open countryside. The site is not allocated for development in the Local Plan and is therefore in conflict with policy SP7. Further and most significantly, this application for the provision of a new film and Tv Studio campus will cause substantial harm to a County Wildlife Site. The proposal for off-site mitigation to be secured through a S106 in parallel with the social and, economic benefits in officers view justifies the harmful impact on the County Wildlife Site.

The application will deliver a major large-scale purpose-built economic development, providing flexible space for large film and TV productions. It is considered that the proposal will deliver a number of significant economic benefits to both the local and regional economy, including

- 339 direct Full Time Equivalent jobs and 376 indirect and induced Full Time Equivalent jobs during each year of construction;
- The provision of 35 apprenticeships which would equate to 1,680 weeks of training split between sustained/existing (60%) and new apprentices (40%), on-site during construction;
- Once operational, the creation of 202 permanent Full Time Equivalent jobs per annum and support up to 1,400 value jobs associated with film production and on site during large scene shooting could amount to up to 1,850 jobs on site;
- Generate £3.5 million total net GVA (Gross Valued Added) per annum in the Local Impact Area and £4.1m total net GVA per annum in the Wider Impact Area;
- 1,400 value jobs by the studio productions would result in a gross GVA of £136m; and
- The indirect GVA generated by the supply chain supported by the studios would total £103.4m per annum.

Other harm resulting from the development has also been considered, including matters relating to flood risk and pollution. The report undertakes a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the development, and subsequent level of harm.

The following report also considers the layout and design of the proposed development, its impact upon climate change and sustainability, and matters relating to landscape character and setting, neighbouring amenity, public highways and the historic environment.

The proposed development would create two new vehicular access points. The access points have been considered by road safety audits. The audits have not raised any significant issues and the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of highways safety and capacity.

As part of the development, a new footway is proposed adjacent or parallel to the B530. The shared footway will connect to the approved Bedford Road route (associated with the Mill View/Thickthorn Park development) which in turn allows for access through the permitted residential site. The footway will be facilitated by the proposed controlled toucan pedestrian crossing, 90m to the north of the secondary access point of the site.

The site topography combined with the railway line to the western boundary, the strength of the woodland screens to the eastern, southern and northern boundaries provide limited intervisibility from the site to the surrounding area.

The proposal is also considered to be acceptable in terms of neighbouring amenity. All other material considerations are either neutral or appropriately mitigated through planning condition or planning obligation.

Following full and careful consideration of the case and, for the reasons set out, it is considered that the initial harm to the County Wildlife Site, and other harm, is on balance outweighed by material considerations which, when taken together in the overall balance of considerations, justify the grant of planning permission.

Subject to planning conditions/S106 being imposed on any permission granted to provide further details on mitigation measures, the development is considered to be compliant with and in accordance with the objectives of local and national planning policies in this regard.

Site Location:

The application site, which extends to 58 hectares (143 acres), comprises approximately two-thirds of the total area of a site known locally as 'Quest Park'. Quest Park which extends to approximately 91 hectares (225 acres)) was previously used as a clay extraction site for the brickworks located to the west of the site. The brickworks were in operation for over a century, established in 1901 and ceased operations in 2008, due to Sulphur dioxide emissions.

Quest Pit supports three habitats that are listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006. These habitats included open mosaic habitat on otherwise previously developed land; reedbed; and standing water. In 2015 Quest Pit was designated a County Wildlife Site. The County Wildlife site is recognised for its assemblage of rare breeding birds. These include little egret, lesser black-backed gull, shelduck, herring gull, gadwall, ringed plover, little ringed plover, redshank and pochard.

The pit base is about 20 metres below the level of the surrounding land. The restored part of the site lies within the southern area. The site has established perimeter planting to all boundaries with a number of mature trees along the eastern boundary with the B530. There are currently no rights of way crossing the site although it is intended that a new bridleway connection be provided across the northern section (outside the application site) as part of the Review of Old Minerals Permissions (ROMP) restoration scheme. There are two residential properties (1 and 2 Quest Bungalows) adjacent to the north-east corner of the site and a retail showroom.

Quest Pit lies just to the north-east of Stewartby village separated from it by the Midland mainline railway which runs on an embankment along the western boundary of the site. The village of Houghton Conquest lies to the east, Marston Moretaine to the south-west and Ampthill to the south.

The site lies within the Marston Vale Strategy Area and the Forest of Marston Vale. The Stewartby Conservation Area extends close to the south-west corner of the site and there are several County Wildlife Sites to the west of the site covering areas to the south of Stewartby, Coronation Pit to the west, Kempston Hardwick Pit to the north-west and the Marston Vale Millennium Country Park to the west. The site is visible from a number of points along the Greensand Ridge to the south of the site which is within the Area of Great Landscape Value. Further viewpoints lie to the east from Wilstead and the Wixams, north from Elstow and west from Cranfield.

Members will be aware that the permitted new settlement of the Wixams lies to the south of the Elstow North site, located between the A6 and the B530. This development received outline planning permission in 2006 and will provide for up to 4,500 dwellings, B1, B2, B8, A1, A2, A3 space, community and indoor sports facilities, educational facilities, open space and parkland. It is based upon a village concept, providing four village areas with local centres and a main central market square / high street to serve all villages. The permission was granted subject to a detailed legal agreement which requires, amongst other things, the provision of off-site highway works, enhancements to public transport and improvements to other non-car modes and the provision of a new train station.

The Application:

Planning permission is sought for development of a film and TV studio campus (Use Class E (g) (i-iii) and B8) comprising film studios, sound stages, workshops, offices, warehouses, overnight accommodation, community hub, canteen/ restaurant, ancillary floorspace, new access arrangements including bus interchange, car and cycle parking, landscaping, infrastructure and associated works.

The application is in two parts. Full planning permission is sought for phase 1 (Entrance Zone), 1a (Production Zone 1) and 1b (Production Zone 2) which includes 54,334sqm of stages and workshops (E(g) (i-iii), 50sqm education hub (F.1(a)), 384sqm transport hub

(F.2(b)), 384sqm community floorspace (F.2(b)), 8,701sqm of ancillary floorspace (E(g)(i-iii) and B8) and site wide enabling works.

The second part of the application is an outline application with all matters reserved except access for phases 2a (Production Zone 4), 2b (Production Zone 3) and 3 (overnight accommodation) up to a maximum floor area of 75,000 sqm; which includes up to 38,000sqm of stages and workshops (E(g)(i-iii)), up to 25,000sqm backlot, 2000sqm substation facility, 4,100sqm of ancillary overnight accommodation, a 1,200 space multi storey car park and up to 5,900sqm of associated ancillary floorspace (E(g)(i-iii) and B8)

Access to the site will be via two new access junctions to the east of the site, connecting from the B530- Ampthill Road. The roundabout which will form the main point of access and will be constructed to the southwest of the site. This main point of access will provide a gated entrance with direct views towards the waterbody.

An additional point of access is proposed via a new right turn lane priority junction, located to the northeast of the site and connecting to the B530- Ampthill Road.

A new shared footway / cycleway is proposed adjacent, or parallel to the B530. The shared footway will connect to the consented Bedford Road route (associated with the Mill View/Thickthorn Park development) which in turn allows for access through the permitted residential site. The footway will be facilitated by the proposed controlled toucan pedestrian crossing, 90m to the north of the secondary access point of the site.

The scheme proposes 1,440 parking spaces (split between the detailed and outline aspects of the application) and a minimum of 429 cycle spaces for the film and television production (provided across the detailed and outline aspects of the application). An additional 24 cycle parking spaces are provided for the community hub.

The proposed development falls within the classification of Schedule 2, 10(b) (urban development projects, including the construction of shopping centres and car parks, sports stadiums, leisure centres and multiplex cinemas where (iii) the overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (2017) (the EIA Regulations). Owing to the nature of the proposed development and, following a formal Scoping Opinion request, an Environmental Statement (ES) has been submitted in support of the application.

The ES contains chapters that consider the following impacts:

- socio-economic
- traffic/travel
- air quality
- noise and vibration
- ground conditions
- water environment
- ecology and biodiversity
- landscape and townscape
- built heritage
- climate change and energy

Further information supplementing the ES was submitted by the applicant during the course of the application, pursuant to Regulation 25 of the EIA Regulations 2017. In addition to an updated Environmental Statement Addendum – Final Issue, the following technical annexes have been updated:

- Cut and Fill Strategy
- Traffic Technical Note
- Track Changed Traffic ES Chapter
- Water Environment ES Chapter
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Landscape and Visual ES Chapter.
- Ecology and Biodiversity ES Chapter
- Additional Bat Surveys

- Supplementary Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy Report
- Updated BNG
- Appraisal of Bird Mitigation for Quest Pit

The application is also supported by the following documents:

1. Arboricultural Impact Assessment with Tree Constraint Plan;
2. Drawings package for outline component of application;
3. Drawings package for detailed component of application;
4. Design & Access Statement, including: - Secure by design, Security Statement, Lighting, Fire Safety, Landscaping and Overshadowing details;
5. Design Code;
6. Energy and Sustainability Statement;
7. Fire Statement;
8. Lighting Strategy;
9. Planning Statement;
10. Statement of Community Involvement;
11. Ventilation & Extraction Statement; and
12. Utilities Statement.

All the documents referenced above have been published on the Council's website and have been used in consideration of this application. There are no other background papers relevant to consideration of the application that have not been published on the website.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2021)

- 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 – Making effective use of land
- 12 – Achieving well designed places
- 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Central Bedfordshire Local Plan

- LP SP1: Growth Strategy
- LP SP2: National Planning Policy Framework – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- LP SP5: Preventing Coalescence and Importance Countryside Gaps
- LP SP7: Windfall Development
- LP EMP1: Employment Sites and Uses
- LP EMP3: Employment development on non-allocated sites
- LP EMP5 Significant Facilities in the Countryside and Green Belt
- LP T1: Mitigation of Transport Impacts on the Network
- LP T2: Highway Safety & Design
- LP T3: Parking
- LP T4: Public Transport Interchanges
- LP T5: Ultra Low Emission Vehicles
- LP EE1: Green Infrastructure
- LP EE2: Enhancing Biodiversity
- LP EE3: Nature conservation
- LP EE4: Trees, woodlands and hedgerows
- LP EE5: Landscape Character and Value
- LP EE14: Minerals and Waste Restoration
- LP CC1: Climate Change and Sustainability
- LP CC2: Sustainable energy development
- LP CC3: Flood Risk Management
- LP CC5: Sustainable drainage
- LP HQ1: High Quality Development

Minerals and Waste Constraints

WSP5 – Including waste management in new built developments

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Other Documents

- Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance(2022);
- Air Quality Guidance (2016);
- Local Transport Plan (2011);
- SUDs Advice Note (2021);
- Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Drainage Guidance (2015);
- Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (2015);
- Development Brief and Design Code Guidance (2020)
- Highways Development Management Handbook;
- Design Guide (2014) (noted section on larger footprint buildings);
- Forest of Marston Vale Development Design Guidance' (2022)

Relevant Planning History:

Application Number	CB/22/00713/FULL
Description	Construction of temporary site access point and temporary hard standing parking area at Quest Pit, Ampthill Road, Houghton Conquest.
Decision	Granted
Decision Date	30 th May 2022

Application Number	CB/22/041302/SCO
Description	EIA Scoping Opinion: Construct/operate a world class film and television studio campus. 29 ha studio with 4 production zones, a backlot area, office space, operation offices and warehouses.
Decision	Scoping Opinion Released
Decision Date	6 th May 2022

In 2009 the Council approved outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the Quest Pit site (MB/06/02036/OUT). The application was set to deliver approximately 174,000sqm international visitor destination and science research park, including:

- A tropical biotope
- Water adventure park
- Spa facility
- Three hotels-Conference and exhibition centre;
- Associated retail, food and drink uses; and car park and shuttle bus service

Consultees:

Ampthill Town Council (ATC)	ATC are keen to ensure that large vehicles, construction traffic etc. do not use Ampthill town centre.
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Officer response	In line with discussions with the Council's highway engineers the applicant proposes to relocate the weight restriction. Specifically, the weight restriction to be introduced immediate south of the proposed site access roundabout on the B530, ensuring that HGV traffic could then not route further south from the site via Stewartby or Ampthill.
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Houghton Conquest Parish Council (HCPC)	<u>Comments received 20th January 2023</u> Houghton Conquest Parish Council have no objection to this application. HCPC note that the highways provision remains the same as do all the other reasons they previously raised as concerns. Therefore HCPC continue to raise the concerns as
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detailed in the previous response (14/10/22 see below) for CBC to escalate and provide feedback from the developer as to how these are to be mitigated or developed out of the end design to not impact the wider communities in such negative ways

Comments received 14th October 2022

HCPC have no objection to the application but request that there are some questions that may need further direct answers or inquisition. The Council request CBC to escalate and provide feedback on from the developer as to how these are to be mitigated or developed out of the end design to not impact the wider communities in such negative ways:

- The highways provision for the whole site is from two entrances from the B530 at either end of the site. This is a highway with limited capacity and also has congestion points that are already strained when entering into and through Ampthill and through the 3 interchange park retail areas on the way through to the Cowbridge crossroads with the A6
- The wider strategy for the influx of service vehicles, employee vehicles and likely oversized vehicles with equipment for the facilitation of some filming should also be questioned as to how this will be handled.
- Hours of operation as a film service site are likely to be 24hr but in the numerous documents there is no search facility and so I have been unable to locate such feedback here.
- Light pollution and the handling of excessive rural light in this remote area should be questioned as to how this is to be mitigated as it is very difficult to reduce such impact on such a large site where health and safety will require sufficient lit routing around the site

**Stewartby & Kempston
Hardwick Parish Council
(SKHPC)**

In principal the Parish Council supports this application and welcome that it is not more housing or warehousing and that there are employment opportunities for the local community. However, we are not supporting the highways arrangements. Despite various conversations with the developer during consultation, they have still submitted plans for a new roundabout on the B530 some 250 yards from the junction with Stewartby Way.

It has been discussed for some time the need for a roundabout at the junction of Stewartby Way. SKHPC state that this is a busy junction at peaks times and right turns towards Ampthill are tricky. Given future plans for further development within Stewartby and this application with a proposed 1400 parking spaces, this junction will only get worse in its current form. The plans do provide improvements in public transport and cycle highways but the need for 1400 parking spaces is there obviously to facilitate a need.

SKHPC are aware of land ownership issues but feel strongly feel that the new roundabout should be at the junction of Stewartby Way and not in its proposed location. Access to the new site would still be possible and this would eliminate issues with Stewartby Way junction on completion and as further development takes place. Should a roundabout be placed in it proposed location, this would prohibit any future roundabout at this junction due to the space between the two.

Officer response

The comments with regards to moving the roundabout to the junction of Stewartby have been discussed at length with the developer. Unfortunately, the main site access roundabout could not be located to include the Stewartby Way junction as the land required for this is in third party ownership (outside of the ownership of CBC/Bedford Borough Council and the applicant). The developer has discussed the potential to reduce the speed limit on Stewartby Way with the Parish Council. A scheme of speed reducing measures (DLP Drawing BE5650-3PD) has been prepared along with a scheme to provide an improvement to the capacity of the Stewartby Way arm of the junction, and an improved sustainable link on Stewartby Way.

**Internal Consultees:
Archaeology**

No objection – CBC Archaeology note that Chapter 13 (Built Heritage) considers the impact of the development on Ampthill Park (HER 1369, NHLE 1000378: Registered Park and Garden), Houghton House (HER 729, NHLE 1013522: Scheduled Monument) and even the medieval moat at the Old Rectory in Houghton Conquest (HER 3236, NHLE 1009588: Scheduled Monument). Chapter 13 concludes that no significant adverse environmental effects are considered likely. On balance CBC Archaeology agree with this conclusion and agree that the impact of the development proposals on the significance of these designated heritage assets (by virtue of development within their settings) is unlikely to result in substantial harm.

Business Investment (BI)

Support - The Council's BI team are supportive of this application, given its proposal is to create a one stop operation for a film studio.

In addition to the benefits of the NNDR (National Non Domestic Rates) the BI team advise that the site is expected to:

- Create employment opportunities for local residents
- Enable the purchasing of goods and services from local suppliers and will be another new source of revenue for the area
- Provides jobs for some of the most qualified workers, therefore retaining highly skilled people who would otherwise look outside of the area
- Attract tourism

The BI team advise that the initiative is a long-term project, and it means working with the Local Authority, Job Centre Plus, Creative agencies, education establishments and other organisations to help build the skills to get the right calibre of people for the jobs. In addition due to the number of jobs anticipated, BI would expect a robust travel plan in place to ensure employees are able to get to and from work.

BI argue that Bedfordshire is home to one of the key film studios known as Cardington Studio. With Luton recently securing a Bollywood production company, a new studio of this scale in Central Bedfordshire could help complement the existing ones and be of a significant help with the economic recovery and thus contribute to the Government's ambitions to grow and develop industries UK-wide.

Conservation	No objection - Chapter 13 of the Environment Statement (ES) (Built Heritage) includes the assessment of impact upon the setting of various heritage assets. Having carefully considered the ES the Council's Conservation Officer state that the current proposal is acceptable and would not have a detrimental impact on the setting of any listed building. The Conservation Officers raise no objection on the basis that the proposal would satisfy the provisions of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as supported by the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF.
Digital Programme Officer (DPO)	It is now a requirement that all multiple unit developments have gigabit-capable broadband services available. Whilst the DPO remains agnostic about the supplier, the DPO states that developers must engage BEFORE the build begins. Given the above the DPO states that confirmation or sight of a contractual agreement for this provision should be provided before the application is approved
Officer response	Details have since been provided as part of the utilities assessment.
Ecology	Objection – The Council's Ecologists state that the proposed scheme is contrary to Local Plan Policy EE3 "Development proposals will be permitted where: They are designed to prevent any adverse impact on a. County Wildlife Sites;; d. Protected species; or e. Species and habitats of principal importance.". The scheme has identified that the proposed development will result in adverse impacts to Quest Pit County Wildlife Site, its Habitats of Principle Importance, and the protected species which the habitats support. The Council's ecologists have carefully considered the updated Ecology Chapter within the Environmental Statement. The ecology team state that adverse impacts will occur despite the 'embedded mitigation measures' proposed and in line with the impact definitions in section 11.3.30, this means that there will be a noticeable deterioration to the existing environment. In addition the Council's ecologists have noted from the ES that the proposal will have the following impacts; · Quest Pit CWS – permanent moderate adverse at county level. · Waterbody - permanent moderate adverse at local level. · Coronation Pit CWS - temporary minor adverse at local level · Reedbeds - permanent moderate adverse at local level · Plants – Common Cudweed - permanent moderate adverse at local level / New Zealand Pygmyweed permanent moderate beneficial at local level · Bats - permanent moderate adverse at local level · Birds - permanent moderate adverse at county level · Great Crested Newt - permanent moderate adverse at local level · Invertebrates - permanent moderate adverse at county level · Reptiles – permanent moderate adverse at local level The Council's ecologist accepts that some habitat management measures would provide benefits, but state that this should not come at the expense of large-scale habitat loss.

Birds

The Council's ecologists support the comments from the Bedfordshire Bird Club. Even with the proposed mitigation for species, the Council's ecologists argues that there is a significant concern that the proposed development will lead to the displacement of rare breeding birds within Bedfordshire. The officer states that this would be contrary Local Plan Policy and wholly unacceptable in the current climate.

Section 11.8.79 of the ecology chapter states that

'It is recommended that if this application were to progress, a condition be attached to any planning permission which prohibits the use of the retained CWS for any purpose besides habitat management.'

The Council's ecologist note that impacts have been assessed in line with access to the retained habitats being restricted and thus argue that the suggestion of including wellness trails/boardwalks to allow access is not supported. The ecologists advise that, if any access is to be included within the retained habitats, the assessment of impacts may need to be re-assessed against this, as it is specifically noted as embedded mitigation for fauna such as birds:

Section 11.8.119 of the ecology chapter states that

" Public access to the waterbody and associated habitats will be restricted to prevent disturbance to breeding and overwintering birds. Access will be limited to management only and details of the importance of the Site for birds will be provided on interpretation boards within the visitor centre."

As stated within the Bird Mitigation Strategy, birds such as lapwing, cuckoo, pochard and wigeon will benefit from the proposal to screen off the development from the enhanced southern half of the site as they are prone to being easily disturbed by human activities. As such, the Council's ecologist state that it is paramount that the retained areas are subject to restricted access by the public. Section 4 of the Bird Mitigation Strategy seems to question the classification of the site as a CWS due to changes in bird assemblages found in the more recent survey work. The Council's ecologist advises that this is misleading, as the 2022 survey results conclude that the site still easily meets the qualifying thresholds for a CWS based on the breeding bird assemblage associated with lowland open water and margins, for which it is already designated. From the 2022 survey results, it is also probable that the site would meet the threshold for the breeding bird assemblage associated with scrub habitats.

Great Crested Newts

It has been stated that the Nature Space District Licence Scheme is to be utilised. However, there is no evidence of the application being accepted into the scheme. The Council's ecologist states that the application must be provided prior to determination to ensure that the District License can be obtained. The Council's ecologist adds that there is also a requirement to ensure that the appropriate mitigation measures can be achieved for the assumed significant population of Great Crested Newts present on site.

Reptiles

It is stated that reptile mitigation will be provided within the mitigation strategy for GCN. The Council's ecologist asks that the mitigation measures be appropriate and specific to reptile requirements, as opposed to using generic measures aimed at GCN specific mitigation. If a translocation exercise is to be conducted the Council's ecologist adds that an appropriate receptor site be identified prior to determination.

Mitigation

The Council's ecologist states that it is vital that habitats lost are created in advance of any development to allow species to migrate to new habitats. It is unclear from the submission if this would be achieved, with the extent of species mitigation required within the timescales proposed. The Council's ecologist adds that detailed working methods within a CEMP and / or mitigation strategies for species would be required to outline the required mitigation to ensure that proposed works are ecologically sensitive.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The updated Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy Report has reclassified the waterbody as a reservoir, as opposed to an ornamental lake or pond. The re-classification of this feature results in an increase in units due to its greater condition score, resulting in a total of 730.45 units across the site. It is also recognised that this results in a net loss of 48.78% loss of habitat units. The document states that the mitigation hierarchy has been applied during scheme design, however, the Council's ecologist argues that the first stage of the hierarchy (avoidance) could only partially be applied in this case due to the large proportion of the site being required for development. The Council's ecologist states that the avoidance of harm is not achievable on the site, specifically this should have resulted in the site being scoped out of development proposals. Local Plan policy is clear that schemes with an adverse impact to County Wildlife Sites are not supported, while the CBC Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance advises that County Wildlife Sites and UK Habitats of Principle Importance should be considered as irreplaceable habitat and if included within an application site, should be retained.

Several options for off-setting have been identified and proposed, to display that the development can supply the 429.435 units required to achieve an overall 10% net gain in biodiversity. As the off-set is likely to require the purchase or lease of land, the detail is not yet known, as the applicant has not yet acquired the land. The Council's ecologist states that any off-set which is to be provided will need to be in close proximity to the development site in order to provide true compensation for the species to be displaced. The Council's ecologist adds that the off-set should ideally be within one large site, with restricted public access and with an imperative focus on wildlife. The Biodiversity Metric provided has shown the full baseline and the proposed habitats on site, along with the off-set proposed within the blue line boundary. The Council's ecologist states that the feasibility of some of the proposed habitat conditions is questioned, as the bioswale, reed beds, other neutral grassland, SUDS feature, modified grassland, green roof, and green walls are all proposed to be

to a 'good' condition. Specifically, the ecologist states that many of these features have a medium creation difficulty. The Council's ecologist states that it must be ensured that proposed habitats are scored at achievable condition levels, as this impacts the subsequent units being delivered. Critically, no justification for these condition scores has been provided within the metric, and it is therefore unclear if these habitats can adequately be created onsite to provide the proposed net gain in biodiversity.

Although a net gain in biodiversity is likely to be technically achievable by creating new habitat off-site, the Council's ecologist is not convinced that this is adequate to off-set the detrimental impacts to the County Wildlife Site, including the impacts on priority habitats and the rare and red listed species that it supports

Officer response

Birds

Following negotiation in order to protect birds on site the applicant has agreed to remove the wellbeing trail and to control public access to the nature reserve. Going forward the applicant will explore with CBC and the bird club how public enjoyment of the site could be safely and carefully managed for example through fenced off boardwalks to bird hides.

With regards to the Bird Mitigation Strategy the applicant has since clarified that whilst the site is still important for birds, it has clearly deteriorated with regard to the species originally listed on the citation. The applicant adds that this is an important point, because with a continuing lack of management the site will scrub over and become less valuable for wetland birds. The applicant states that instigating a long-term management plan for the site will allow the developer to manage the site specifically with a view to maintaining (or indeed reinstating) its value to the qualifying bird species. The long-term management plan for the site can be secured through a planning condition requiring submission of a LEMP for the retained habitats.

Great Crested Newts

The applicant has confirmed that they are progressing with Nature Space District Licence Scheme. Officers have had a sight of NatureSpace Great Crested Newt District Licensing Scheme District License Report dated 23rd May 2023. The report states that 'There will be a requirement for three planning conditions relating to the great crested newt District Licence, to be attached to the planning consent, if granted'

Reptiles

The applicant is in agreement with the CBC Ecologist's point that a specific reptile mitigation strategy will be required. Given that only small numbers of common lizards and grass snakes were recorded during the surveys (with maximum counts of seven and three, respectively, over the whole site), and that habitat enhancement proposed for the retained areas will increase their carrying capacity for reptiles, it is accepted that it is not necessary or sensible to translocate reptiles away from the site when they can be relocated within the site. The applicant adds that for later phases of the development, it is possible that their nearby offsetting site(s) will be available to

receive any further reptiles requiring translocation, assuming the habitats are deemed appropriate.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The applicant confirms that they reclassified the water body on site as 'reservoir' rather than 'ornamental lake' in their re-running of the Defra Metric. This was because they felt that the lower distinctiveness of the original classification was incorrect, given the importance of the habitat to the CWS. Further the applicants advises that the change from 591.48 units to 730.45 units is the way the Metric works rather an actual increase in the loss of habitat. What this means is that significantly more will need to be recreated at the offsetting site owing to the applicants reclassification.

Policy EE3 does not automatically prohibit any development within a CWS. The policy states "Development will be permitted where..." therefore not a presumption against any development. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that valuable habitats and species are protected, maintained and enhanced. Given that the aim (once the habitats have developed properly) is to designate the offsetting site as CWS, there will be a net increase in the amount of CWS in CBC going forward. This report will present four options for off site offsetting (the location of these site are anonymous, owing to commercial and other sensitivities). Whilst it may not be possible to secure one land parcel large enough to create all the habitat in one place, the four options are close enough together, and to Quest Pit

Green Infrastructure Co-ordinator (GIC)

It is acknowledged that the proposals aim to provide mitigation for loss of biodiversity on the site through offsite BNG provision, although its location is yet to be secured.

The GIC states that in order to provide any level of compensation, any offsite provision should be secured for perpetuity with an agreed long term management plan with associated funds. The GIC adds that if third parties are responsible for the management/ownership of the site, they should be required to work with CBC officers to ensure the long term objectives of the management plan.

Officer response

This report will present four options for off site offsetting (the location of these site are anonymous, owing to commercial and other sensitivities). Offsetting will be secured through a S106

Highways

No objection subject to a series of planning conditions and a S106. The proposed access works have been through an initial stage of design and safety auditing, with the identified safety audit concerns having been addressed by the applicant team.

Proposals to make the site accessible by sustainable modes have been discussed at length between the applicant team and Officers, resulting in works adjacent, or parallel to, the B530 to provide for pedestrian and cycle access, in combination with measures to reduce speeds along the frontage of the site. The Council's highway engineers state that the proposals for public transport access are supported, providing a comprehensive service for staff and visitors,

associated with some more limited upgrades to existing infrastructure.

Officers had expressed concerns over the potential impacts of construction traffic and HGV traffic on the surrounding communities and have proposed a series of conditions to control this.

The proposed offsite mitigation is considered to be proportional to the scale of impact, subject to the other sustainable measures proposed by the applicant team being fully implemented.

Whilst initial concerns were raised with regards to some aspects of the proposed development layout, Highways Officers were content that the imposition of appropriate conditions could address these.

Landscaping

No objection subject to a S106 (to secure 30% canopy cover) and conditions (Lake not to be used as a shoot location, boundary treatment (including securing fencing and acoustic fencing), existing woodland management programme, Habitat creation, enhancement works and management, Provision of Covered Cycle stands and cycle shed, hard and soft landscaping (Soft Details inclusive of species, name, size and number Planting specification inclusive of subsoil and topsoil plan · Maintenance and management programme - 30 years as per planning statement), SUDs & drainage, Lighting, CCTV and Substation

The Council's Landscape officer states that their concerns with regards to use of the lake, height and massing of the buildings, landscape character, views and visual amenity, landscaping, access, design code, connection to landscape wellness trail have been addressed.

With regards to proposed cut and fill, the revised drawing (0600P02) indicates that the majority of existing tree planting adjacent to B530 to be removed. The Landscape officer asked that the applicant revisits the drawing and protects existing vegetation.

Officer response

The Cut and Fill comment above has been discussed with the applicant. Following negotiation the applicant has updated the cut and fill at the site entrance around the substation to ensure that the existing trees along the Ampthill Way are maintained.

Minerals and Waste (MW)

No objection - The Council's MW Officer states that the proposal will not sterilise any minerals as they have already been worked from the site. MW adds that there are not significant volumes of waste to deal with at the construction stage. Notwithstanding the MW Officer advises that the development will impact on the restoration of the site to nature conservation but this is an issue that the MW team have deferred to others to comment on. The MW Officer states that the large numbers of HGVs will have a highways impact, especially at the site entrance. The MW Officer states that their main concern is that the proposal only affects just over half of the site with an artificial barrier running through a water area. Specifically, it's not clear how initial engineering works will take place without draining the lake first.

Officer response

The comments above have been discussed with the applicant. The applicant agrees that the contractor will need to mark the boundary of the site physically onsite at the start of construction. The applicant adds that this would be completed with marker posts either side of the existing waterbody and at 20m centres on the dry land and will be maintained by the contractor while earthworks operations are ongoing. In terms of the initial infill works the applicant has advised that the area of infill will be cofferdamed using sheet piles or large sand bags. The applicant adds that the area inside this cofferdam will then be over-pumped into the southern section of the lake (area within the ownership of the applicant). On completion of this stage it is understood that infill works will then commence and be built up in stages. The applicant has clarified that the cofferdam will be removed on completion of the infill.

Pollution (PO)

No objection subject to conditions (noise limit, lighting, contamination)

Dust and Air Pollution

The Pollution officer acknowledges that dust will elevate during construction and mitigation measures are planned to reduce the likelihood of these. Whilst (during adverse weather conditions) the applicant points out that mitigation cannot be wholly effective the PO is satisfied that overall or longer term effect are 'not significant'

The PO notes that air quality within Air Quality Management Areas and at other sensitive receptors would elevate by a 'negligible magnitude of impact' but that this will not exceed nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter limits.

The PO notes that construction dust from site and vehicular emissions from construction related road traffic have been assessed and effective management is relied upon.

Noise

The PO notes that during operation, development related road traffic would elevate road side noise by a 'negligible magnitude of impact'. Regarding premises noise emissions from the site itself in operation, the PO advises that the premises will need to be designed to ensure the Rating Level of noise impact at offsite dwellings is not more than ten decibels lower than the existing Background Sound Level. The PO states that the Environmental Statement is not quite correct or clear on this and recommends inclusion of a premises noise limit planning condition.

Lighting

The PO states that for a development of this size, a scheme wide design including design criteria should be submitted for the Local Planning Authority's approval. The PO recommends that this be secured by a planning condition.

Contamination

The PO notes that further investigation is planned by the applicant. The PO asked for a planning condition to be appended to secure these detail.

Public Art

No objection subject to a condition (public art plan)
The public art officer states that the concept of embedding public art within the landscape and public realm across the whole site area is welcomed. The officer adds that the inclusion of graphics to built elevations is exciting and, if animated, these could be even more dynamic and impactful. In addition, the Public Art officer states that the concept of extending public art out into the landscape and public realm would need to be considered further and included in the submitted Public Art Strategy / Public Art Plan. The public art officer adds that the submission should include bespoke designs, stand-alone features, sequences of interventions, way marking, street furniture, lighting, wall-scapes / floor-scapes, landscaping and water features.

Public Transport (PT)

– No objection – PT are pleased to see that the applicant is taking a serious commitment to sustainable travel in particular through bus service provision, especially as the site is geographically remote from established towns and residential areas.

PT highlights a discrepancy on Table 3, Page 15 of the Travel Plan where it states that the Grant Palmer Service 42 passes the site every hour Mondays to Saturdays. The PT states that this is not the case as the majority of Service 42 journeys operate via Houghton Conquest village and as such do not directly pass the site location or the Stewartby Turn stops. PT states that this needs to be revised within the Travel Plan as it creates the view of a higher level of bus services passing the site than actually do. (Service 42 journeys generally only pass the site earlier and later in the day).

In respect of the proposed bus interchange PT welcome this provision and would request that if any bus real time screens are to be installed, these are to the current Central Bedfordshire specification in order that they integrate with the existing back office system. PT are also keen that any displays in bus shelters are to CBC standards so that corporate bus service information can be installed in them to ensure that bus service information is the same as the wider network across CBC.

With regard to bus shelters, PT appreciate that the applicant may wish to procure their own shelters, but would encourage them to discuss this with PT team if possible.

With regard to the proposed ZEV shuttle service, again PT welcome this in principle, but would be keen to see how this service may be integrated into the wider bus network across Central Beds and Bedford Borough, in particular whether it could be made available to all passengers. Mention is made of linking into railway stations and that the service would be available to both employees and visitors. However, PT would be keen to understand whether this service could potentially bring additional sustainable transport benefits to residents of adjacent local villages, linking those more regularly to the Interchange Retail Park, for example. While mention is made of the service potentially linking the development to new residential sites, PT feel that consideration should also be given of supporting and improving links from existing Central Bedfordshire towns and villages such as Marston Moretaine,

Flitwick and Ampthill, as employees may prefer to look at existing housing stocks in these areas, rather than moving into new build sites.

PT would also like to understand more about the potential working hours of the site and what provision for public bus services would be made at evenings and weekends, when current bus services do not run. If, for example, the site is regularly going to be operational up to 10pm or midnight, it is much less likely that employees will use active sustainable modes such as walking and cycling during the hours of darkness, especially in winter when darkness comes much earlier. PT ask whether the ZEV shuttle operate at these times too, or could provision be made through a S106 contribution to enhance the existing bus services that operate near the site.

Officer response

With regards to the comments on Service 42 and all public services, the applicant has agreed to review and submit an updated travel plan (to be secured by S106).

The applicant advises that CBC Public Transport Team will be consulted as part of the detailed design of the internal public transport interchange and real time information screens will be provided to an appropriate specification to ensure they are compatible with existing CBC provision. The applicant also adds that the form of the proposed shelters associated with the public transport interchange will also be discussed with CBC at the detailed design stage and secured by planning condition and/or via the later reserved matters submissions.

The applicant advises that the ability for the EV shuttle services to be opened up to the wider public and not just those associated with the site would require the services to be registered with the Traffic Commissioner and could reduce the flexibility required to ensure that it operates efficiently for its primary purpose, which is to transport staff and visitors to and from the Quest Pit site. Notwithstanding this, the applicant has agreed to further investigate the potential to carry the wider public and that this will be undertaken as part of the final Travel Plan.

Finally, the applicant advises that the EV shuttle buses will operate at all times when the site is operational albeit likely with reduced frequency when staff levels are lower and demand is reduced.

Rights of Way (ROW)

Paragraph 6.7.5 of document 06 ES Transport Rev 02 mentions proposals to link the site to the new walking/cycling route at Thickthorn Park. From the Annex B2 Travel Plan this appears to relate to "providing a footway/cycleway link from the development to the downgraded Bedford Road." Whilst this is something RoW would support it falls a long way short of accommodating a footway/cycle route through the development to link FP 3 with FP A10. With a relatively large site ROW argue that a linking path between the two rights of way would be an asset for those commuting to the studio as well as a safe off-road rights of way route for those passing through. ROW add that the delivery of this path would link well with CBC Policy EE12 and paragraph 100 of the NPPF

Officer response

The comment above has been discussed with the developer. FPA10 terminates on land outside of the application area and on land not controlled by the applicant. To route FPA10 through the site from the northern side of the B530 Ampthill Road would require a third party land owner, unconnected to the proposed development to agree to an extension of the PRow. The applicant adds a PRow route can't be provided through the site due to land ownership, security, operational requirements and biosecurity. The proposed link between Thickthorn Park and Wixams to the north east and the existing footway on Stewartby Way to the south provides a significant benefit when compared to the existing situation.

Suds Management Team

No objection subject to a planning condition

Sustainability manager (SM)

No objection subject to a planning condition - Should planning permission be granted, the SM asks for a suitably worded condition relating to CC1 and CC2 of the local plan be appended. SM adds that this should include the following; 'A reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by at least 10%, based on emissions rates determined by Part L of the Building Regulations applicable at the time of the application.

Trees

No objection to the proposal

**External Consultees:
Anglian Water**

Assets Affected – Anglian Water advise that there are no assets owned by Anglian Water or those subject to an adoption agreement within the development site boundary.

Wastewater Treatment – Anglian Water advise that the foul drainage from this development is in the catchment of Bedford Water Recycling Centre which currently does not have capacity to treat the flows from the development site. Notwithstanding Anglian Water advise that they are obligated to accept the foul flows from the development with the benefit of planning consent and would therefore take the necessary steps to ensure that there is sufficient treatment capacity should the LPA grant planning permission.

Used Water Network – Based on the submitted drainage strategy PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-RP--0002 19.08.22; Anglian Water advise that the proposed connection is acceptable

Surface Water Disposal – Anglian Water advise that the preferred method of surface water disposal would be to a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) with connection to sewer seen as the last option. From the details submitted to support the planning application the proposed method of surface water management does not relate to Anglian Water operated assets. As such, Anglian Water are unable to provide comments on the suitability of the surface water management/disposal. Accordingly Anglian Water ask the LPA to seek the advice of the Lead Local Flood Authority or the Internal Drainage Board. The Environment Agency should be consulted if the drainage system directly or indirectly involves the discharge of water into a watercourse.

No objection subject to a S106 - BBC confirm that TN03 does assist in addressing the Wixams Park Sustainable Travel and to/from the site through the Wixams area. BBC ask for this to be part of a S106 obligation BBC (western half) to detailed routes and Wixams Meadows Road be defined where ongoing information on staff travel or demand origin and destinations has been obtained from travel surveys collected by a Travel Plan Coordinator included as a requirement of a Travel Plan Condition. Notwithstanding BBC would like the applicant to consider including Wixams, Stewartby and Bedford railway stations, the major residential areas of Bedford, Kempston, Wixams, Wootton, Stewartby, Shortstown, the CBC developments at Cranfield, Lidlington/Brogborough etc. where there is existing and further planned growth in both BBC and CBC local Plans.

BBC state that they would prefer the narrowing under the bridge being less than 3.0m or greater than 3.9m to avoid cyclists who do decide to cycle on carriageway being 'squeezed' by a vehicle trying to get through at the same time as advised by LTN 1/20 7.2.9. BBC would be happy for a S106 Obligation for works to be carried out under a S278 based on a final plan, or a condition requiring a scheme of works.

In addition to the above BBC would like to see the following secured by condition/obligation:

- Inclusion of the following in the Travel Hub:
 - Electric bicycle and scooter hire, charging and parking (additional to that to provide for on-site bikes/scooters for use internal to the site as proposed) to encourage EV travel mode use/ interchange to/from external locations to the site particularly locations where similar hubs are being promoted within BBC (and CBC) i.e. Wixams Station, Stewartby Station, Wixams, Ampthill Road, Shortstown, Bedford and beyond.
- Parcel delivery access and storage lockers for staff use
- Off-site highway measures to address capacity issues to match those secured from Wixams Park/Thickthorn Farm should they not be delivered prior to the start of works of this proposal, if it should get approval, at:
 - B530/Manor Road
 - C94/Manor Road
 - Cow Bridge area (capacity or mode shift)
- A contribution to additional cycle hire both standard and electric and additional parking and charging for both to be in at first occupation at Wixams Station (or as soon as the Station opens, whichever is the sooner).
- EV car parking and charging on site

Following discussion with CBC, BBC are fully supportive of the measures proposed since submission

- Speed limit reduction on B530 from B530/ Meadow Road roundabout (or nearest point south where speed limit change occurs)
- 3-3.5m (the widest that can be achieve within land under the applicants control or highway) Footway/cycleway along B530 western verge within frontage of site to/from B530 controlled

Bedford Group of Drainage Boards (BGDB) Object - BGDB are concerned that their comments and requirements (matters relating to Harrowden Brook, specifically relating to additional culverting, the proposed presence of a footpath and cycleway inside their 9 m maintenance easement and their refusal to permit fencing on the bank top which would interfere with essential maintenance) do not appear to have been considered when Annex L.2 was prepared.

In addition BGDB note within Annex M.2 that the modelling has included a "Flood Wall", with no exact location defined. Without further information, including the purpose of this feature and its proximity to Harrowden Brook, the Board advise that they will not accept its installation.

Annex M.2's modelling discussions include reference to an exceedance culvert being installed to the South. If the purpose of this is to prevent flooding to the Northeast, BGDB would question its utility, especially as it is proposed to connect the Southern and Northern ends of the Pit via a 200 m long 900 mm diameter culvert.

Officer response Flood wall will follow the location of the retaining wall proposed along the eastern boundary, this is shown on drawing no. PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0005 (it will essentially be a parapet for the retaining wall!). This additional information has been shared with BGDB. No further response has been received.

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce (BCC) Support - BCC believe that the proposals present an exciting opportunity to build on Bedfordshire's rich history of film production whilst delivering a significant benefit to local communities. BCC add that the scheme will not only deliver on a range of jobs for local people, both directly and indirectly, but has the potential to inspire the next generation to take up highly skilled roles in the area that would be traditionally fulfilled outside of the county. BCC supports the applicant's ambitions to create a long term, sustainable relationships with schools, colleges, and universities to generate a pool of talent from the area and recognise that this aligns with the governments skills for jobs: Life long learning for opportunity and growth' white paper (2021) and the forthcoming local skills improvement plans. BCC state that the application will attract further investment in Central Bedfordshire and with the presence of Cardington Hangars in Bedford and Bollywood studio in Luton provides the chance to create a world leading cluster in the county. BCC state that all of the above will make a positive contribution to the local area.

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service No objection subject to a condition

Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board (BRIIDB)

Object

1. BRIIDB state that they must keep the maintenance of Harrowden Brook, an arterial watercourse in-house.
2. Whilst the applicant has committed to a plus-10% increase in net biodiversity the Board argue that the applicant has not provided evidence as to how this will be achieved. The Board add that Culverting 200 m of watercourse will require a 200 m open section of watercourse to be created.
3. Should this length of watercourse be culverted BRIIDB advise that the agreement must include payment of a

commuted sum to enable periodic inspection and jetting of the culvert by the Board's operatives.

4. The BRIIDB state that such a long section of watercourse being culverted will reduce the amount of water infiltrating from Harrowden Brook and will convey more water downstream.

The Board request details of how this will affect base flows in the Brook and what effect it will have downstream in the currently under development Wixams area of Bedfordshire.

5. The BRIIDB argue that the applicant has provided no evidence to rule out its effect on infiltration and thus the quantity of water conveyed within the channel of Harrowden Brook. The BRIIDB require further details on this proposal, which should include ground investigation.

6. The Board has not requested that the applicant deal with 1-in-200-year storm event, only that they do not increase flood risk downstream. This is the reason for BRIIDB, for Land Drainage consent purposes, restricting pump site discharge to greenfield rates. The board advise that wherever this requirement came from, during such an event, rain will be falling at an intense rate across the catchment. As such BRIIDB opinion is that this measure has the potential to increase flood risk inside the site.

7. The BRIIDB argue that the applicant has not demonstrated or recorded what existing water levels are in the pit, nor of the pits stability. BRIIDB state that it is therefore uncertain: a. what effect the construction of the buildings' foundations will have on the water table and thus the requirements of finished floor levels of the building. b. what effect in turn this will have on the zone of influence of Harrowden Brook's infiltration into the subsoil.

8. The BRIIDB state that the Brook is not an impermeable channel and thus it is reasonable to assume that a large structure on a saturated piece of ground will force water upwards, reducing infiltration from the Brook. The BRIIDB add that both of these factors may increase flood risk and change the hydrology of the Brook's catchment. The Board ask that, more investigation be done to determine the extent of these effects.

For the above reasons, in the absence of further information, the Board continues to object to this application.

Officer response

The applicant has confirmed that they are happy to work with the IDB during the detailed design to ensure their maintenance requirements are met. In addition the applicant agrees to cover fair and reasonable costs for periodic inspection and jetting of the culvert by the IDB's operatives. The applicant has also submitted an updated BNG strategy detailing what will be secured on site and also how the min 10% will be secured off site.

With regards to point 4 above the applicant advises that further ground investigation works are planned (as set out within the EIA) to confirm the infiltration potential and any impact of culverting; this will be confirmed via further ground investigation during the next stage of development and as a pre-commencement necessity.

Due to the existing site conditions (point 5), it would not make sense to undertake this large intrusive survey prior to planning permission being granted. Therefore, in accordance with comments from CBC pollution officers, it is agreed that the

ground investigation is a pre-commencement condition.

With regards to point 6 the applicant advises that the pump discharge rate has been designed to meet greenfield runoff for the development and the previous discharge rate from the site location that was used during clay extraction. The applicant adds that all onsite drainage has been designed to ensure no predicted flooding on a 1 in 100 year plus climate change design storm event in accordance with industry best practice for film studios with ground levels falling away from buildings.

With regards to point 7, the applicant advises that, prior to commencement of development, a ground water modelling exercise will be completed based on the ground investigation.

With regards to point 7 and 8 the applicant advises that Harrowden Brook will have limited infiltration. This is due to the ground condition and soil type as confirmed with soilscape mapping data and hydrological catchment descriptors supplied by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. This additional information has been shared with the IDB. No further response has been received.

**Bedfordshire and River
Ivel Internal Drainage
Board Ecologist
(BRIIDBE)**

BRIIDBE argue that:

1 - A lack of baseline hydrological data will affect the accurate prediction of the likely zone of influence for ecological studies. Specifically, that potential receptors could be missed as impacts could include matters such as changing water levels in other pits and changing ground and water levels affecting ephemeral ponds and watercourses.

2 - There can be no assessment of impact or development of appropriate mitigation. or enhancement measures without baseline data. The BRIIDBE add that it will be the fully ecologically mitigated scheme that has to be assessed by the Board for its consenting purposes and thus this information is required. The boards ecologist adds that there is no consideration of the potential impacts of water vole and otter within the watercourses. (Otter have been recorded within 2 km of the site.)

3 - In order to properly undertake the BNG calculation, BRIIDBE advise that the final schemes are needed. For the river component, this will require the drainage strategy (including culverting, floodwalls, pumps), and details of planting and any other works to identify encroachment. BRIIDBE argue that it cannot be left to condition the drainage strategy as appropriate habitat enhancement/ creation will not have been designed and the BNG will not be correctly assessed.

Officer response

The applicant has since submitted an updated BNG strategy detailing what will be secured on site and also how the min 10% will be secured off site. This additional information has been shared with the IDB. No further response has been received.

Bedfordshire Police (BP)

No objection - BP have previously liaised with CPTED-UK regarding this development and have been appraised of measures to prevent crime and disorder. BP conclude that all, of which, have been considered to their satisfaction.

**Environment
(EA)**

Agency

No objection subject to a condition. Following the submission of a revised Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and revised

proposals, the EA are in a position to remove their objection regarding this proposal. The FRA has demonstrated that the part of the Lake not under the applicants ownership has been isolated, utilising a flap valve. The EA state that this removes the third-party impact of the development. In addition, the EA state that the FRA has provided further information regarding the access and escape routes, demonstrating that dry access can be achieved. The EA recommend that the LPA considers applying a condition to the permission regarding the submission and approval of a detailed emergency plan. The EA add that the FRA has demonstrated that there may be some significant positive impacts on flood risk downstream of the site.

Forest of Marston Vale (FMV)

The development site is located within the Forest of Marston Vale and relevant to a Central Bedfordshire Council planning policy regarding the 30% woodland cover target. FMV state that delivering 30% of woodland or canopy cover could be achieved by any or a combination of the options below:

1. Plant a single area of new woodland of the required size;
2. Plant several areas of new woodland totalling the required size;
3. Integrate extensive individual and group tree planting into the development, over and above normal landscaping requirements and sufficient to ultimately yield >30% canopy cover utilising:
 - a) street/garden trees
 - b) substantial tree planting to public realm/open space, including creation of woodland belts and trees within landscaping schemes
 - c) planting of new hedgerows with hedgerow trees
 - d) creation of woodlands as part of sustainable drainage (e.g. wet woodlands)
 - e) creation of community orchards

FMV state that the proposed development and intended use are very in-keeping with the aspirations, aims and objectives of the Forest Plan in terms of sustainable development/transport, employment, woodland creation and increasing non-motorised links and connectivity.

FMV state that they have met with the applicants' agents regarding the creation of the Forest and the 30% canopy cover target. FMV state that a further meeting is due to discuss the delivery of the canopy cover target both on and off site. The application Planning Statement refers to a tree planting target totalling 53% of the red line area which is to be commended and as mentioned above will be delivered both on and off site. FMV state that the inclusion of green and brown roofs (50%) is also welcome as the Trust have promoted this type of construction on many commercial applications within both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

FMV state that the inclusion of a cycleway along the B530 is welcome especially if it can link into existing and proposed new networks of public access routes proposed as part of development and mineral site restoration schemes.

FMV are aware that this development will also disturb existing habitat and do not fully support the comments made by the Wildlife

trust regarding this matter

Officer response

30% canopy cover will be secured both on (c.15% on site) and off-site. Fall back being a contribution as allowed in the policy scope.

Greensand Trust (GT)

GT objects to the above application on the basis of the significant adverse impact on the Quest Pit County Wildlife Site.

GT, argue that it is not consistent with Local Plan Policy EE3 (Nature Conservation). GT advise that the site has developed significant interest in terms of wetland habitats and bird species present (including the bearded tit, a Schedule 1 species).

Should the authority be minded to approve the application, GT state that it is vital that:

- A significant habitat creation takes place elsewhere on the site, recreating the habitats lost, in advance of any development, allowing species to migrate to new habitats;
- A new habitat to be created and developed to a minimum of County Wildlife Site standard. GT add that the new habitat should be subject to a long-term (30 years+) fully-funded management agreement, supported by a Conservation Management Plan, and delivered by an appropriate body (such as the Forest of Marston Vale Trust).
- The ability to manage water levels primarily for the benefit of nature conservation must be included;
- A plan is clearly identified demonstrating how any habitats/species present will not be adversely affected by the day-to-day operation of the proposed facility.
- A minimum of 20% Biodiversity Net Gain be secured, consistent with the "Arc Environment Principles" signed up to by CBC;
- Biodiversity Net Gain must be delivered on-site wherever possible. If off-site BNG is required, then sites in close proximity to the application site must be favoured, in order to minimize the impacts on, and allow for the movement of, species in the affected habitats;
- The development and any water level management does not adversely impact the Harrowden Brook, and enhancements are delivered in line with the Upper and Bedford Ouse Catchment Partnership's Strategic River Restoration Plan.

Officer response

The applicant proposes a combination of on-site habitat enhancement within the retained areas of Quest Pit and a very extensive habitat creation at the offsetting site (starting before construction on site commences). These are both covered in the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP). In addition, the Applicant has committed to a minimum 10% BNG, in line with the forthcoming legislation (this is beyond what CBC, has committed to). Importantly almost three times as much habitat as is due to be lost will be created nearby. .Further, wetland habitat creation will be created as a result of the Applicant's financial contribution to NatureSpace (and their partners, the Newt Conservation Partnership).

Ministry of Defence (MOD)

No objection - This application relates to a site outside of MOD safeguarding areas. MOD confirm that they have no

safeguarding objections to this proposal.

National Highways

No objection

Natural England (NE)

No objection - NE considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites.

**Naturespace Partnership
Bedfordshire Newt
Officer (NS)**

In line with the guidance from Natural England (Great crested newts: District Level Licensing for development projects, Natural England, March 2021), NS advise that there is a reasonable likelihood that great crested newts will be impacted by the development proposals and therefore, the applicant must either:

- Submit a Nature Space Report or Certificate to demonstrate that the impacts of the proposed development can be addressed through the Council's District Licence (more details can be found at www.naturespaceuk.com); or
- Provide further information (updated population size class assessments for GCN), in line with Natural England's Standing Advice, to rule out impacts to great crested newts, or demonstrate how any impacts can be addressed through appropriate mitigation/compensation proposal

Officer response

The applicant has Submitted a Nature Space Report to demonstrate that the impacts of the proposed development can be addressed through the Council's District Licence. This is the applicants statement of intent to join the scheme after planning approval Officers have had a sight of NatureSpace Great Crested Newt District Licensing Scheme District License Report dated 23rd May 2023. The report states that 'There will be a requirement for three planning conditions relating to the great crested newt District Licence, to be attached to the planning consent, if granted'

Network Rail

No objection subject to conditions and informatives.

Wildlife Trust (WT)

Object - The WT are deeply concerned about this proposal and its impact on Quest Pit County Wildlife Site (CWS). The WT object for the following reasons:

- Chapter 11 of the Environmental Statement identifies Important Ecological Features (IEF's) and their level of importance (Reedbeds, Open Mosaic Habitat, and Waterbody are identified of being of Regional Importance, while Quest Pit CWS as a whole, the Bird population, GCN population, and Invertebrate population are of County Importance) The WT state that the IEF's are considered to be impacted by the development during the construction and operation phase.
- the indirect impact on the adjacent Coronation Pit CWS and Rookery Pit CWS, which are also determined to be impacted during the operational phase of the development due to light, noise, shading, and pollution (e.g. surface run-off, contamination, and littering)
- 29% (20 Ha) of Quest Pit CWS will be destroyed
- will result in a net loss of 37.56% of habitat units composed largely of Habitats of Principle Importance listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006.

The WT state that these combined factors are in direct contradiction to the ecological mitigation hierarchy and policy

EE2 of the Local Plan. The WT add that this scheme is also contrary to Local Plan Policy EE3 which states that "Development proposals will be permitted where: They are designed to prevent any adverse impact on: a. County Wildlife Sites;; d. Protected species; or e. Species and habitats of principal importance.". Specifically the scheme has been identified to result in adverse impacts to Quest Pit CWS and its Habitats of Principle Importance. This will inevitably impact the protected species which these habitats support

Officer response

Given the proposal to develop on a County Wildlife Site the Wildlife Trust's position is understandable. Notwithstanding, since submission of this consultation response officers have secured very extensive on-site and offsite habitat creation and enhancement proposals which are set out in this report.

Other Representations:

Rt Hon Nadine Dorries

I am writing to you in support of Home of Production's (HOP) application for a new film and television studio in Stewartby (CB/22/03616/FULL). The proposals will deliver a range of jobs for local people. The studio will be serviced by local tradesman and services providers, creating a range of job opportunities. It will also generate training and apprenticeship opportunities, creating a pool of talent from the local area. HOP's ambitions to create long term relationships with schools, colleges and universities will encourage students to remain in the area to prevent talent being lost to London and other areas. The application will attract direct investment in Central Bedfordshire. This includes money towards funding and supporting local infrastructure and services. HOP has also proposed a comprehensive strategy to manage to the ecology on the site for the long term. By only occupying half of the waterbody they have been able to increase the overall amount of habitats to support existing wildlife and encourage new species to live here. All of the above will make a positive contribution to the local area. I hope that you approve the application so these benefits can be delivered.

**Bedfordshire Bird Club
(BBC)**

Object
BBC

- state that the development with all the associated noise, dust, fumes and general disturbance of development will have an impact far-reaching outside the immediate development area.
- question why they even consider that some of the retained land will actually be retained land in the future
- accept that the water needs managing, but state that this needs to be done in consultation with experienced ornithologists and ecologists.

BBC argue that Quest Pit CWS is a unique habitat in Bedfordshire created over some 30 years and there are no other sites available (or could be created to this level of maturity) within the county to create 110% of BNG.

BBC add that on-site mitigation is impossible as the development seeks to destroy a large part of the area concerned (which cannot be conveniently segregated as the report has sought to do) and also disregards the small matter that HOP do not own some of the retained land areas (albeit these in themselves are existing areas and therefore cannot be

included in any calculation of BNG in any case).

BBC argue the EA (section 1.2.8) ignores the fact that once wildlife is disturbed to such an extent as the proposed development will cause, it tends not to return for a long time, if ever, especially in regions where there are no similar areas to flee to.

In addition, the BBC state that the survey was undertaken at the wrong time of day – this is important as few gulls are present during mornings and early afternoons, numbers can build into the hundreds and thousands as the day wears on into evening and night.

BBC are critical of the ES (Specifically Section 4.5.5) which advises that the main breeders were outside of the proposed development area. BBC argue that this does not mitigate the fact that disturbance and probable non-breeding will result if the development is permitted. BBC add that this is especially true of Bearded Tits, for which Quest Pit CWS was the only breeding site in Bedfordshire for the species in 2022.

BBC states that the ES (Section 4.5.6) fails to mention that the site is noted as a site of national importance for wintering Pochard with a significant population using the site, counts often can exceed 200 birds.

BBC advise that the birds would take many years to return, or may never return.

BBC state that the host of mitigation measures at section 6 are broadly unacceptable and do not address the fact that the destruction of the development areas will adversely affect the bird and wildlife present.

BBC accept that sites do evolve and agree that some water-level management would be beneficial to the site, however they argue that it is entirely untrue to state that, "as bird species are highly mobile and the site is set within a surrounding landscape context of similar sites that will facilitate the movement of birds into the proposed development post construction" specifically BBC state that there are no similar sites to Quest Pit CWS.

Officer response:

The comments from Bedfordshire Bird Club have been discussed with the applicant. The applicant has since responded point by point to comments made for the Bird Club. (Letter dated 30th March 2023) This additional information has been shared with the Bird Club. No further response has been received.

Neighbours

In addition to an advert in the local paper and site notices 76 Local Residents were formally consulted on the planning application. 77 letters have been received. 64 of those letters raise comments in support of the application 12 letters have been received objecting to the application and 1 letter with general comments.

Summary of representations in support of the application

- Makes good use of land that has no other development use

- Encourage the provision of other facilities in the area
- Provide employment opportunities for younger people who have moved into the area – employment both in building and the long term running of HOP - The studio will be serviced by local tradesman and services providers, creating a range of job opportunities.
- Brings well needed skilled jobs
- Pre-pandemic, the creative industries was working £111.5bn a year and was the fastest growing sector in the UK
- The media production industry in the UK is currently experiencing tremendous growth and it would be remiss of CBC not to take advantage of this fact
- Recent reporting indicates media production will contribute in excess of £7Billion per annum, to the UK economy and Bedfordshire would be a prime location to take advantage of this increased spend
- The potential for local job generation, benefit to regeneration and investment for Stewartby and the surrounding area, and links to existing facilities at Cardington hangers means that the potential growth of industry skilled and subsidiary jobs is very high
- The application will attract direct investment in Central Bedfordshire. This includes money towards funding and supporting local infrastructure and services
- My business supplies transport solutions to the industry which will be in great demand - would allow me to expand my workforce within the local community, training staff to provide professional, highly qualified support roles to media production.
- At the moment we only have warehouses being built - the jobs that this kind of development will be jobs for future generations.
- Bring another studio into Bedford for filming is a positive for hotels, tourism
- The potential for ground breaking training, apprenticeship and education pipelines for local young people could really put Bedford on the map in terms of opportunities, access and social mobility for young people and communities - will encourage students to remain in the area to prevent talent being lost to London and other areas
- I am a fully qualified teacher and I am currently on secondment in a local Bedfordshire Academy Trust. Here too, the creation of a new studio complex by HoP, would provide excellent career prospects for young people in Bedfordshire.
- Putting Bedford on the map is key - thinking about what a film like Lord of the Rings did for New Zealand and Game of Thrones did for Ireland - can only be seen as a positive
- We do not have anything like this in Bedford or close by
- Will bring a new «branding » of the area becoming a more desirable area to live
- With Cardington Studios just down the road it would make Bedfordshire the filming capital of the UK
- Will compliment the nearby Millbrook test track very well (a location that is often used for filming - most notably some James Bond stunt sequences
- HOP has also proposed a comprehensive strategy to manage to the ecology on the site for the long term. By

only occupying half of the waterbody they have been able to increase the overall amount of habitats to support existing wildlife and encourage new species to live here.

- Its well located for access from the M1
- The plans are beautiful and considerate of so many current environmental responsibilities as well as crew well-being and performance assistance
- It would be a wonderful location to work as Oakley to Stewartby is a short journey and it would reduce my carbon footprint and impact on my family when I am working.
- As a local company that supplies rigging services to the Live Event, TV and Film Industries all over the UK, I have seen how beneficial film studios can be to the local area. It would be a fantastic opportunity for the local community to be involved in this industry.
- If this Film and television studio gets approved, I know that without a shadow of a doubt, I would apply to work there. I know that after a long day, I would stop for dinner or drinks in a Bedfordshire pub/restaurant. If things were needed on set, the studio would look to local shops to purchase items, local tradesmen to both build and maintain the lot.... It's already known that high end films get made at the Cardington Hangars and that the production teams for this stay in Bedfordshire hotels and drink in Bedfordshire bars.
- Having attended two meetings in Stewartby it was apparent that HOP were prepared to listen to local people and to take their views seriously.
- Excellent use of an otherwise ugly unused former industrial site
- This sounds like a great opportunity for filmmakers and we wanted to express our support for this project to go forwards. - Currently, we are struggling to find studios near us that we can collaborate with for our projects.
- Tidy the area up and prevent the possible dumping of materials - We already have part of the area dealing with waste material
- As an audio technology teacher, this project would benefit and inspire young people in the local area to pursue a career in media if they know that world-class facilities are straight to their doorstep.
- Huge job opportunities not just the original construction, but continuous employment for hundreds of different trades
-

Summary of representations in objection to the application

- The current infrastructure is not sufficient enough to support this and feel that this will be at the cost of the local villages
- We are advised that this will be operational 24/7, what about the increased noise and light pollution
- Given its location what will be stopping the increased construction traffic using the village of Stewartby as a shortcut - what will be in place to stop employees/ people visiting the site using the surrounding streets of Stewartby
- Does not take into account excess traffic, noise and pollution on poorly accessible roads with low bridge for railway

- Traffic will go through village increasing risks of speeding, accidents and injury
- The application neglects to address the impact on Ampthill Town Centre regarding increased traffic. This is particularly important as (1) From the M1 South the route through Ampthill is the shortest route to the site and is still showing on Google maps even though this was supposed to be addressed by CBC (2) By rail, from London it is quicker to alight at Flitwick and take a taxi through Ampthill to the site than going on to Bedford. Both of these points have been conveniently missed from the reports.
- Roads already heavily over utilised and poorly maintained
- Inappropriate development in a County Wildlife Site which contains rare and red-listed and Schedule 1 breeding birds which will be adversely affected if the scheme goes ahead. These include (red listed) Pochard, Skylark, Starling, Yellowhammer, Grasshopper Warbler, Lapwing, Turtle Dove and Cuckoo and (schedule 1 breeders or potential breeders) Marsh Harrier, Bittern, Bearded Tit, Red Kite.
- Inappropriate development in a County Wildlife Site which contains amber listed birds such as Wigeon, Gadwall, Shoveler, Sedge Warbler, Willow Warbler, Reed Bunting, Meadow Pipit and Dunnock, all of which would be adversely impacted by the scheme if it were to progress;
- Quest pit is the best site in the county for breeding Little Grebe.
- Quest Pitt is the best site in the county in the spring for Migratory Falcon
- The reedbed habitat is a scarce and threatened habitat, not only in Bedfordshire, but in neighbouring counties which provided valuable breeding facilities not only for birds but also for water voles, great-crested newts as well as larger mammals such as Otter
- The new environment act of 2021 requires developers to demonstrate that they can create a similar habitat to that they are about to destroy
- There are no plans to provide additional habitat caused by the loss of habitat which would be caused by the proposed scheme
- The mitigation hierarchy has not been followed by the applicant
- There is a statement made by the applicant (HOP has also proposed a comprehensive strategy to manage the ecology on the site for the long term. By only occupying half of the waterbody they have been able to increase the overall amount of habitats to support existing wildlife and encourage new species to live here) which is misleading in the extreme as the applicant has only purchased half the pit with the remainder being retained by the vendor, so there is no control by the applicant over what would happen in the future
- There is no realistic plan to deal with the water levels in the pit. The applicant intends to create a bund and pump out millions of gallons of water (to where ?)
- The applicant has already started to fell trees and clear scrub (where birds have historically bred, some which are Schedule 1 breeders) - Would like to see an

immediate cessation of any works and the applicant ordered to return the land to its original condition with any infrastructure created removed

- Would question how many local people will actually be employed here
- Right plans being proposed in absolutely the wrong place
- Question whether there is a need for such a facility - with the recent approval of the scheme at Hatfield airfield, the existing facilities available via the Cardington hangers (where a number of films have been made)
- My only concern is the large multi-storey car park and quite a bit of accommodation, it would be good if there is some sort of incentive or requirement around using local crewing, rather than shipping in large amounts of crew either foreign or further away in the UK
- Why can't this development be built on the derelict brickwork site which is less than a mile away on the other side of the village of Stewartby
- Mostly specialist skill set suggesting influx of commuters on daily basis
- Out of setting for environment
- The northern boundary of the application site crosses through the middle of an existing waterbody. The FRA identifies several mitigation measures (p.30) which are aimed at addressing potential flooding on the application site and downstream, resulting from the development. The FRA states that these measures would increase water levels within the northern part of the quarry pit - object to any of the applicant's proposals which would increase flood depths upon the adjoining land. – Further there is no landowner agreement in place for the increase in water levels
- The Council's attention is drawn to the Environment Agency's ('the EA') response to the planning application (dated 25/10/2022) which queries the relationship and correctly identifies that this approach is contrary to the NPPF
- I am getting sick of seeing greenspace and farmland, being built on for more overpriced houses or oversized warehouses or things like this.
- The area especially to the south of Quest Pit (Amphill) is already a traffic bottleneck and with the new Wixham development increasing the traffic volume it is already getting excessive through local minor roads
-

General comments received

- Need to make sure that there is adequate parking
- Amphill is an AQMA and CBC have a legal duty to reduce the pollution. As the applicant has failed to include the impact on Amphill in their reports there is no way to assess the impact on the town and therefore no way for residents to make to support or object to the application.
- The approach to security and vehicular access could result in queuing on Amphill Road
- Landowners have not been approached to discuss the potential to connect the new bridleway to FP3

Determining Issues:

As set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is reiterated within paragraphs 2, 11, 12 and 47 of the NPPF 2021. Under Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in dealing with planning applications the local Planning authority shall regard to the provisions of the development plan so far as material to the application and any other material considerations. The development plan is defined in Section 28(3) (b) of the 2004 act as, the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area.

In Central Bedfordshire the Development Plan consists of: The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (CBLP) 2021

The main issues to consider in assessing the application are whether there is any conflict with development plan policies. If there is any conflict whether the application can be considered to be in accordance with the development plan when taken as a whole. If the application is not in accordance with the development plan, whether there are any material considerations including the NPPF 2021 which indicate that planning permission should be granted. With that in mind the main considerations of the application are;

1. The principle of development
2. Environmental Impact Assessment
3. Impact on the Natural Environment (landscape character and setting, trees Forest of Marston Vale, ecology and biodiversity)
4. Impact on employment and economic objectives
5. Access and transport
6. Flood risk
7. Other considerations (air quality, amenity, contamination, energy efficiency, environmental code of practice for developers and contractors, equality and human rights, fire hydrants, historic environment, S106)
8. Summary of Sustainability
9. Conclusion

Considerations

1. Principle of development

- 1.1 The application site falls outside of a defined Settlement Envelope and is therefore set within open countryside. In such cases, Policy SP7 of the CBLP advises that the Council will recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and only particular types of development will be permitted. The site is not allocated for development in the Local Plan and accordingly there is conflict with policy SP7. Considerations of the harm to the countryside setting are set out in section 3 of the report.
- 1.2 Members will be aware from the planning history section above that planning permission has previously been granted for development at this site comprising of a 174,000sqm international visitor destination and science research park, including: a tropical biotope; water adventure park; spa facility; three hotels-Conference and exhibition centre; associated retail, food and drink uses; and car park and shuttle bus service.
- 1.3 This planning permission (MB/06/02036/OUT) was never implemented and thus expired on 23 September 2014. Given that this permission has expired, this permission does not represent a fall back and thus attracts very little weight can be afforded in the planning balance.
- 1.4 The site was identified within the site Allocations Document (Site Allocations Document (adopted 2011) as "NIRAH, Houghton Conquest" (Policy EA8). This Allocations document has since been replaced with the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2021 and

thus no weight can be afforded to the historic allocation in the planning balance. The adopted Local Plan states that the planning permission has lapsed and Policy EA8 is “out of date”.

- 1.5 It is also important to recognise that the Council, in its preparation of the draft Local Plan, undertook a Call for Sites process. The application site consisted of one submission during the Call for Sites consultation for the 2021 Local Plan which was allocated the reference ‘ALP065’ (albeit for a larger area compared with the application site in this application) which is relevant to this application.
- 1.6 The aforementioned call for site was proposed for a mixed use development but did not however succeed in passing the Council’s site assessment process, the key reason for this being that the site would coalesce Stewartby and Wixhams.
- 1.7 In light of the foregoing, the principle of the proposed development is not supported by the CBLP SP7. Notwithstanding consideration should be given to CBLP EMP3, EMP4 and EMP5 and to NPPF para 84-85. These policies promote economic growth in the countryside, specifically the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business should be supported in rural areas. This along with the harm to the County Wildlife Site are considered at length in the proceeding sections 3 and 4 of the report.

2. Environmental Impact Assessment

- 2.1 The Environmental Statement (ES), submitted in support of the application, is a detailed assessment of the environmental impact that would occur as a result of the proposed development, and sets out the measures that are necessary to mitigate any effects arising.
- 2.2 The ES is a significant document and contains the following key chapters:
 - Chapter 5: Socio-economic
 - Chapter 6: Traffic and Travel
 - Chapter 7: Air Quality
 - Chapter 8: Noise and Vibration
 - Chapter 9: Ground Conditions
 - Chapter 10: Water Environment
 - Chapter 11: Ecology & Biodiversity
 - Chapter 12: Landscape & Townscape
 - Chapter 13: Built Heritage
 - Chapter 14: Climate Change and Energy
- 2.3 The ES identifies the existing (baseline) environmental conditions, and the likely environmental impacts (including magnitude, duration, and significance) and identifies measures to mitigate any adverse impacts.
- 2.4 Before determining the application, the Council must consider the environmental information contained in the Environmental Statement (ES), including further information submitted, as well as representations from consultees about the environmental effects of the development.
- 2.5 The ES itself does not necessarily consider compliance with planning policies and so planning permission does not have to be granted or refused based on its findings, but they are nonetheless material considerations. Where significant adverse effects are found, consideration will need to be given to mitigation and then ultimately as to whether any remaining impact (significant or otherwise) warrants refusal of planning permission or if such harm is outweighed by other benefits. Each chapter is summarised as follows:

2.6 Socio-economic

The Socio-economic chapter assesses the potential effect of the proposed development on socio economic conditions and uses a local impact area (LIA) namely the area covered by Houghton Conquest and Haynes, Elstow and Wilshamstead wards, and the wider impact area (WIA) comprising the administrative areas of Central Bedfordshire and Bedford.

2.7 Baseline conditions are formed looking at the site and surrounding area; the population, employment, economic activity, unemployment, qualifications and occupation, earnings, local businesses, commuting, deprivation, healthcare facilities, and community facilities.

2.8 During the construction phase it is assessed that there will be a temporary (short-term), major beneficial, significant effect arising from direct and supply chain employment generation in the LIA. During each year of construction (2.8 years), 339 direct Full Time Equivalent jobs and 376 indirect and induced Full Time Equivalent jobs will be supported. In addition, around 35 apprenticeships will be provided which would equate to 1,680 weeks of training split between sustained/existing (60%) and new apprentices (40%) on-site during construction.

2.9 During the operational phase, the assessment has shown that once the project is complete and occupied it will result in significant beneficial effects in relation to employment generation, deprivation and local facilities provision in the local impact area. Specifically, it will create 202 permanent Full Time Equivalent operational jobs per annum. In addition, the Project will support up to 1,400 value jobs associated with film production, including actors, directors, writers, producers, and specialist technicians. On site during large scene shooting could amount to up to 1,850 jobs on site.

2.10 Overall, based on the above, the residual effects of the socio-economic assessment are anticipated to be **significant beneficial**, with no adverse effects to be considered.

2.11 Traffic and Travel

The Traffic and Travel chapter considers the impact of the development on traffic and travel. The chapter identifies study areas, including a number of junctions potentially affected by the proposed development. This chapter brings together technical studies supporting the proposed development which includes a Transport Assessment (TA). It provides a comprehensive review of the impacts of the proposed development in the context of the current and future transport provision, including consideration of mitigation measures to achieve sustainable development outcomes.

2.12 Baseline conditions have been identified by using existing traffic levels and traffic flows, looking at existing site conditions, the surrounding pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, Public Rights of Way and public transport. Proposed vehicle trip generation for the site has been based on that of other existing film studio developments.

2.13 A range of measures have been built into the proposed development to assist in mitigating its environmental impact upon the local transport network and infrastructure. Specifically:

- A new footway and footway/cycleway link is to be provided to connect the site to the wider provision linking Stewartby to the residential developments to the north east
- A free EV shuttle bus will be provided for staff which will pick up and drop off at the key public transport interchanges to encourage sustainable travel to and from the site.
- Cycle parking will be provided throughout the site to accommodate demand and allow cyclists to park close to their place of work.
- Provision of electric vehicle charging points

2.14 A Travel Plan (TP) has also been prepared setting out how visitors and employees

can access the application site by sustainable forms of transport.

- 2.15 The Key conclusions from the ES is that, subject to the above and to a series of junction improvements, the development traffic will have no material negative impact during the operational and construction phases.
- 2.16 Having due regard to the NPPF, this appraisal has clearly demonstrated that a safe and suitable access could be provided, and that the development would not lead to a 'severe' impact on the surrounding highway network.
- 2.17 Given the above it is considered that the impacts are **not considered to have significant adverse effects. Some of the sustainable improvements will be beneficial.**
- 2.18 Air quality
The Air Quality chapter considers the impact of the proposed development on air quality during the enabling and construction phase of development including an assessment of dust emissions and emissions from construction vehicles. The chapter also considers the impact of operational development, the key considerations of which are the impact of emissions from additional traffic generation.
- 2.19 Baseline conditions have been established by utilising existing air quality monitoring that has been carried out by both Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and Bedford Borough Council (BBC), whilst background pollutants have been defined by utilising national pollution maps published by Defra. Data for 2019 has been used rather than 2020 as this is the most recent year of representative monitoring data (i.e. prior to the Covid-19 pandemic). Future baseline conditions have been predicted using computer modelling (the 'ADMS-Roads dispersion' model/ Defra's Emission Factor Toolkit (EFT) (v11.0)).
- 2.20 The Site is located approximately 3.5km north of the Ampthill Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The EA outlines a proposal to move the environmental weight restriction on the B530 further south. This would mean any HGVs routing south from the site, via either Stewartby or Ampthill would be in breach of the revised restriction.
- 2.21 Given the mitigation proposed, the assessment has shown that the impacts of emissions as a result of additional traffic generated during the construction phase will be negligible at existing, cumulative scheme and proposed receptors, and the effects will **not be significant**.
- 2.22 The assessment has shown that the impacts of emissions as a result of additional traffic generated during the operational phase will be negligible at existing, cumulative and proposed receptors, and the effects will **not be significant**.
- 2.23 The EA recognises that construction work has the potential to create dust. During construction it will therefore be necessary to apply a package of mitigation measures to minimise dust emissions. With the implementation of mitigation measures (to be secured through the CEMP) construction activities will **not have a significant effect** on air quality. In addition the operational phase of the project is **not considered to have significant adverse effects** on air quality.
- 2.24 Noise and Vibration
The Noise and Vibration Chapter assesses the likely effects of noise impacts arising from the proposed development.
- 2.25 During construction it is anticipated that there will be an increase in noise and vibration from construction activities. During the operational phase it is anticipated that there will be an increase in noise due to increased vehicle use on roads.

- 2.26 The impact of vibration during construction is predicated to be **moderate adverse** in a worst-case scenario. Specifically, there is the potential for significant effects due to construction vibration at two receptors, R1 and R2 (two residential properties adjacent to the north-east corner of the site). Given that the impact will be temporary, and that the developer is committed to informing residents of the nature of works and duration in advance this is **not expected to constitute a significant effect**.
- 2.27 The change in road traffic noise due to the additional traffic flows during construction has the potential to affect receptors located along existing roads used by these vehicles. Again, given the temporary nature and controls to be negotiated through CEMP that this is **not expected to constitute a significant effect**.
- 2.28 With regards to operational impacts the EA sets out that all plant will be designed in compliance with noise thresholds and that sounds from plant will be controlled through sound mitigation measures eg. screening and sound attenuators. In addition the EA states that a 2.5 m high acoustic screen will provide additional protection to the two nearest dwellings. To reduce noise impacts from workshops to more appropriate levels workshop doors will remain closed during working periods, particular during periods of workshop activity
- 2.29 Subject to the mitigation outlined above the proposed development is **not likely to result in any significant effects** during the operation phases.
- 2.30 Ground Conditions
The Ground Conditions chapter assesses the likely significant effects of the project on the environment in respect of Ground Condition. The chapter is informed by desk-based research and a ground investigation undertaken across the Site in 2017. The findings are detailed in two reports produced by Sweco UK Ltd and G&J (Annex E.1 and E.2). The Sweco report presents a Preliminary (Phase I) Risk Assessment, and the G&J report presents a combined Phase I and Phase II assessment.
- 2.31 The baseline conditions have been established through review of the Phase I assessments and the Phase II investigation data. Together this comprises published information with regards to the site setting, such as geological records, hydrogeological records and historical maps, and investigation data from 2017 including exploratory hole logs, laboratory analysis results and gas and groundwater monitoring data.
- 2.32 Significant contamination which could contribute to an accumulation of soil, groundwater or ground gas contamination from other development sites has not been identified at the Site. The risks from cumulative effects are considered to be negligible and mitigation measures associated with cumulative effects are not considered to be necessary. Given the above it is considered that the impact is **not significant**.
- 2.33 Water Environment
The water environment chapter assesses the potentially significant effects of the project's construction and operation phases on the water environment. A desk based review of all publicly available information was undertaken to assess the baseline conditions of surface water and groundwater receptors within the site and its area of influence This assessment includes a consideration on flood risk to the site and surrounding area and impact of the surface water drainage strategy proposed. The assessments in the chapter are supported by a Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy Report (FRA).
- 2.34 A significant area of the site lies within Flood Zone 3 and is therefore at high risk of flooding. The Environment Agency (EA) explains that the majority of the flood extent lies within Quest Pit. Due to its low lying topography relative to the surrounding land any flooding will be as a result of the accumulation of rainfall in the pit.
- 2.35 The potential effects of the project on the surface water environment during construction include the loss of flood storage (the construction phase of the Project would require the partial infilling of Quest Pit at the centre of the site), the redirection

of surface water flow routes and increased surface water run off rates and volumes. Further additional structures installed during the construction phase could impede existing surface water flow pathways, increasing flood risk. The EA states the above may lead to an increase in downstream flood risk. Further the EA states that Construction works could increase the risk of polluting the water environment. The risk of pollution from accidental spillages and pollution incidents remains during the operational phase of the project.

- 2.36 During operation a series of flood mitigation measures have been designed. The EA sets out that this would involve construction of a flood wall along the Site's eastern boundary, a flood relief culvert, and a flow restriction on the south entrance culvert. Further the EA states that the implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems will reduce the volume of surface water generation and improve water quality. In addition the EA sets out that the creation of reedbed habitats would also remediate the pollution of surface waters and could reduce the risk of flooding at the Site. The EA adds that excavation works and below-ground structures, such as foundations and piles, will be appropriately designed to minimise disruption to groundwater flow and that a groundwater monitoring plan will also be prepared.
- 2.37 It is accepted that through the adoption of a CEMP, there will be no adverse effects on surface water and groundwater receptors during construction. The operation of the Site will also include measures such as underground services inspection and maintenance.
- 2.38 Subject to the implementation of a CEMP and a series of planning conditions (surface water drainage/contamination) potential flood risk / pollution concerns will be mitigated for the life of the development.
- 2.39 Following the implementation of the recommended mitigation and design interventions, **no significant adverse effects** are predicted during the construction or operational phases of the Project.
- 2.40 Ecology & Biodiversity
The ecology and biodiversity chapter assesses the likely effects of the proposed development on biodiversity and ecology.
- 2.41 Baseline conditions have been established through a desktop survey, review of a series of data sources, review of previous phase 1 surveys, field-based ecological survey work undertaken in 2022.
- 2.42 Three significant residual effect have been identified, including the impacts to the CWS, impacts to the open mosaic habitat and waterbody. The Project has sort to retain as much of the CWS as possible, whilst providing suitable management in order to maintain these habitats on Site for the long term.
- 2.43 The EA confirms that there will be some adverse impacts as a result of the project, however recognises that there will also be positive long-term effects through the management of the CWS, retained habitats on site, provision of insect hotels, log piles, and bat and bird boxes.
- 2.44 Notwithstanding the above the EA confirms that the project will not achieve biodiversity net gain on site. Accordingly, the EA advises that the **significant adverse** residual effect will be reduced through offsite compensation measures.
- 2.45 Landscape & Townscape
The Landscape and Townscape chapter of the EA evaluates the effect of the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development. The assessment is informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).
- 2.46 Land Use & Vegetation
Land use adjoining the project site is a mixture of agricultural and residential uses. To the north the land use comprises the further extents of clay pit outside the site

boundary, a linear woodland block and a small area of agricultural land. Beyond this is the new settlement of Harrowden Green at 680m distance. To the east beyond Ampthill Road the land use is largely agricultural, some small woodland blocks with the nearest residential settlement being Houghton Conquest at 850m distance from the site boundary. To the south the land use is largely agricultural with some small woodland blocks framing parcels of land along Ampthill Road. To the south west the land use comprises land associated with Rookery South Power Station at 980m distance beyond which there is Marston Vale Nature Reserve at approximately 1.9km distance. To the west the site is bound by the Midland Main Line railway. Beyond this the land use comprises residential in the form of the model town of Stewartby at 150m distance and a former gravel extraction pit. Beyond Stewartby is land associated with the old London Brick Works at 1km distance.

- 2.47 The vegetation structure comprises hedgerows and mature trees in hedgerows along field boundaries, a number of small woodland blocks and linear tree belts and areas of native scrub along roads, namely Ampthill Road, Stewartby Way and Bedford Road; as well as the Midland main line railway.

2.48 Public Rights of Way

The Site is privately owned with no existing Public Right of Way (PROW) within its boundary. There is a well-connected network of paths and public rights of ways within the immediately adjacent parcels of land including:

- A PROW extending south east from Stewartby towards Manor Farm connecting to Ampthill Road south of Millbrook Road;
- A PROW extending north-north east from Wootton Broadmead towards Kempston Hardwick, adjoining another PROW extending east west between Kempston Hardwick and the A421;
- A PROW extending south from Bedford Road terminating at The Church of All Saints in Houghton Conquest; and
- A PROW extending south from Thickthorn Lane, terminating at Chapel End Lane, east of Houghton Conquest.

2.49 Topography

The existing site levels range from 26m AOD at water level to 36m AOD at the adjacent ground level. Immediately surrounding the site, the land displays a relatively flat topography, with higher areas noted at West Bedford Ridge to the west and Greensand Ridge to the south and east. To the south east the land rises gently towards Houghton Conquest at 58m AOD and then more steeply towards the A6 at 103m AOD. To the south west land rises gently towards Millbrook Technology Park at 56m AOD and then more steeply to Ampthill Park at 124m AOD. To the west and south west the land rises gently towards Marston Thrift at 59m AOD and then more steeply to Cranfield at 110m AOD.

2.50 Designations

The Site is designated as a County Wildlife Site (local designation) but is not within the Green Belt.

- 2.51 The Site lies within the Nationally designated Community Forest of the Forest of Marston Vale.

- 2.52 At a National Level the Site is located within the NCA Profile 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands. Key characteristics include gently undulating, lowland plateau divided by shallow river valleys that gradually widen as they approach the Fens in the east. The Brickfields of the Marston Vale area form a distinctive post-industrial landscape with man-made water bodies and landfill sites. Restoration of former sand and gravel workings has left a series of flooded and restored water bodies within the river valleys.

- 2.53 At a County level the Site is located in the north east part of 5D: North Marston Clay Vale. Key characteristics include, a large scale, open vale, located between the elevated landscapes of the Wooded Greensand Ridge and the Cranfield to Stagsden

Clay Farmland that provide a sense of containment.

- 2.54 In a very localised context, the project would have a major adverse effect on the landscape character of the site with change in land use and loss of areas of wetland, open water and scrub. However, this is limited to the immediate site within the application boundary and not adjacent areas.
- 2.55 Effects to the wider landscape character at a regional and national level have been assessed to be at most moderate-minor, which are not significant. Notwithstanding the localised impact which is to be mitigated the EA states that the effects on visual receptors are assessed to be moderate-minor or minor and therefore **not significant**.
- 2.56 In addition, subject to mitigation secured through a series of planning conditions **no significant adverse effects** are anticipated on the character of the night-time landscape and appreciation of the night sky.
- 2.57 Built Heritage
The Built Heritage chapter considers the impact of the proposed development on built heritage.
- 2.58 There are no direct impacts as there are no heritage assets within the site. This assessment, therefore, considers the indirect effects (i.e., effect on settings) of surrounding heritage assets. The closest listed building is the Grade II listed 'Sir Malcolm Stewart Trust Common Room, Stewartby' located approximately 600m to the west on 'The Crescent'
- 2.59 It is clear from the EA that construction activity will have the potential for the most significant effects to occur to those listed buildings closest to the site:
- Stewartby Conservation Area, Sir Malcom Stewart Trust Homes (Grade II) and Common Room (Grade II) and the Grade II listed assets at the Stewartby Brickworks (the chimneys and internal elements of the kilns were demolished in 2021).
 - Church of All Saints (Grade I).
- 2.60 Taking into account the railway along the western boundary, tree screening and distance between the site and the historic assets there would be a limited visual effect from any construction activity and there would be no direct (vibrations, proximity of traffic) effects.
- 2.61 The assessment has shown that the project would result in nil or neutral effects to the setting and heritage significance of heritage assets during construction and operation. Given the above it is considered that the impacts are **not significant**
- 2.62 Climate Change and Energy
The Climate change and energy chapter considers the impact of the proposed development on climate change and energy.
- 2.63 During construction, embodied carbon emissions would be emitted from construction materials. Additional emissions would occur from the use of plant on site, and the transport of materials to site. The construction phase will result in 121,283 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e). Emissions arising from operational use of electricity and water will result in a project lifetime total of 21,991 tCO₂e.
- 2.64 Of all receptors considered within the assessment, biodiversity was the only receptor identified to be sensitive to climate change.
- 2.65 Aside from the impact of climate change on biodiversity which will be mitigated, the overall magnitude of impact (subject to implementation of good practice for construction, the adoption of the energy hierarchy in operation and the use of low carbon / renewable technologies with the aim to achieve net zero in operations to the project's resilience to climate change) is expected **to not be significant**.

2.66 Concluding Summary

Having reviewed and assessed the content and considered the advice from consultees throughout the application and up to drafting of this report, officers are satisfied that the ES (taken together with the further information received pursuant to Regulation 25) has adequately considered the potential environmental impacts of the development.

3. Impact on the Natural Environment

3.1 Large and complex development will always result in notable impacts upon environmental measures, and in this case in particular, the impacts are added to because of the designation of the site as a County Wildlife Site. This section considers in detail the impact on both the character and appearance of the area followed by an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on this important and special natural asset.

3.2 Policies EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4 and EE5 of the CBLP set out the importance of intrinsic character, scenic beauty and perceptual qualities of the landscape, green infrastructure, trees, and onsite ecology across Central Bedfordshire.

3.3 Policy EE5, focuses on landscape character and value and sets out that all development proposals need to have regard to the key characteristics and sensitivities of its site and setting as set out in the Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). Furthermore, the policy requires development to respect, retain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local landscape by reflecting the local character and distinctiveness in terms of the scale and pattern of the surrounding landscape and existing settlement form; and integrating on-site mitigation sympathetic to local character in scale with the landscape setting as well as the scale of the development.

3.4 Local policies are supported by the NPPF, which sets out at para. 174 that planning policies and decisions should seek to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan) and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.

3.5 Landscape, Character and Setting

The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies that the application site falls within Character Area 5D: North Marston Clay Vale. This is described as a large scale, open vale, located between the elevated landscapes of the Wooded Greensand Ridge and the Cranfield to Stagsden Clay Farmland that provide a sense of containment. The overall strategy for the LCA is to continue to enhance/renew the landscape of the Marston Clay Vale. In addition, the LCA adds that the history of mineral extraction provides opportunities to continue to create new landscape character - as is evident through large scale restoration.

3.6 In addition, Character Area 6B: Mid Greensand Ridge is located to the south of the site and contributes to the site's overall character. Character Area 6B is described as a dramatic, elevated landscape – forming part of the Lower Greensand that crosses diagonally across the north of Central Bedfordshire, forming a large scale ridge. The LCA adds that the land use comprises a consistent and recognisable pattern of woodland blocks interspersed with expansive tracts of arable cultivation - creating changes in viewing experience from enclosed to open. The overall strategy for the LCA is to conserve and enhance the landscape of the Mid Greensand Ridge. The LCA adds that the area should continue to provide a strong wooded backdrop and undeveloped skyline in the view from much of Bedfordshire.

3.7 The Site lies within the Parish of Houghton Conquest in the Central Bedfordshire

district of Bedford. Land use adjoining the site is a mixture of agricultural and residential uses. To the north the land use comprises the further extents of clay pit outside the site boundary, a linear woodland block and a small area of agricultural land. Beyond this is the new settlement of Harrowden Green at 680m distance. To the east beyond Ampthill Road the land use is largely agricultural, some small woodland blocks with the nearest residential settlement being Houghton Conquest at 850m distance from the site boundary. To the south the land use is largely agricultural with some small woodland blocks framing parcels of land along Ampthill Road. To the south west the land use comprises land associated with Rookery South Power Station at 980m distance beyond which there is Marston Vale Nature Reserve at approximately 1.9km distance. To the west the site is bound by the Midland Main Line railway. Beyond this the land use comprises residential in the form of the model town of Stewartby at 150m distance and a former gravel extraction pit. Beyond Stewartby is land associated with the old London Brick Works at 1km distance. It is also important to have regards to the new Wixams settlement coming forward to the east and the impact this permission will have on the local character/area in general., (This development is located to the south of the Elstow North site, located between the A6 and the B530 received outline planning permission in 2006 and will provide for up to 4,500 dwellings, B1, B2, B8, A1, A2, A3 space, community and indoor sports facilities, educational facilities, open space and parkland. It is based upon a village concept, providing four village areas with local centres and a main central market square / high street to serve all villages)

- 3.8 The industrial use of clay extraction at the site has created a dip within the site's topography, which, over the past decade has been infilled with water. The topography of the former pit slopes up towards the perimeter of the site, with an average elevation of 12 metres below the surrounding landscape. The former pit slopes towards existing tree lined access roads located along the western, eastern, and southern perimeters.
- 3.9 There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that pass through the site. Further pedestrian access to and from the site is currently limited as there are no footways on the B530 Ampthill Road adjacent to the Site. The existing footway network commences approximately 65m to the south on Stewartby Way (a footway is provided on Stewartby Way to the south of the Site, which links the existing bus stop on the B530 Ampthill Road with the village of Stewartby) and approximately 800m to the north of the northern boundary of the site at the existing Wixams residential development site access.
- 3.10 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been submitted in support of the application, which acknowledges the position of the application site within the North Marston Clay Vale/ Mid Greensand Ridge Character Areas.
- 3.11 The LVIA is comprehensive and appraises the proposed development from 8 varying viewpoints within the surrounding landscape. These 8 viewpoints were agreed with the Council's Landscape Officer.
- 3.12 The proposed development would result in wholesale change across the site through site clearance works (involving the removal of some trees and hedgerows) and introducing development along two thirds of the south eastern boundary. The accompanying Parameter Plan for Building Heights indicates that the tallest building (a type A studio) will be 25 metres high. Given that the average ground level is 12 metres below the site boundary the tallest buildings will appear no higher than approximately 13 metres with the surrounding landscape. Taking this into account, that the majority of trees and hedgerows along the boundary are to be retained and, subject to a strict control over the external appearance of the buildings (to be secured by condition) that the built development would not appear significant in scale.
- 3.13 It is evident from the LVIA that the landscape and character of the area will fundamentally and inevitably change by reason of the current open nature of the

application site being replaced with significant built development, with the main effects occurring at views nearer to the site. This will be most apparent at Year 1 (at completion), whilst additional planting is establishing. However, as planting matures the magnitude of change will decrease, and thus reducing the significance of effect by Year 15.

- 3.14 The Council's landscape officer has carefully reviewed the LVIA. It is clear from the submission that landscape design will play a significant role in creating an appropriate setting. Given the strategic landscaping approach proposed, which will include substantial and dense woodland planting within the landscape, the Landscape Officer is generally in agreement with the mitigation proposed and conclusions reached in the LVIA. It is acknowledged that, whilst due to the nature of the proposed development there will be a localised significant landscape impact, the proposed development can, over the medium to long term, be integrated into the area without detriment. Indeed, in the longer term (in order to achieve the desired setting, time will be required for any landscaping scheme to mature, which would be a period of approximately 10 to 15 years) the proposal will provide some benefit to the landscape character and visual amenity of the local area (one example being the increase in tree coverage).
- 3.15 As the application is submitted part full / part outline the detailed landscaping proposals for a large part of the site are a matter reserved for future consideration. Nevertheless, the landscape strategy set out in the application is considered to be robust and will ensure that the development can contribute positively to the setting to be created within the site, whilst at the same time mitigating the impact of the development on the wider landscape.
- 3.16 Overall, the landscape strategy is considered to be in general conformity with the objectives of Policies EE1, EE4, EE5 and EMP5 of the CBLP.
- 3.17 Trees
Policy EE4 is supportive of proposals that retain existing trees and planting within a proposal but does not seek to resist development that identifies trees for removal. The policy does support proposals where mitigation is provided in the form of replacement planting of an equivalent scale and character.
- 3.18 As set out previously, the proposed development would result in wholesale change across the site through site clearance works, which includes removal of some existing trees and hedgerows.
- 3.19 Given the level of clearance that is required, the application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), which includes a detailed survey of existing landscape features. In total 36 no. individual trees and 6 no. groups of trees have been surveyed. The survey did not identify any ancient woodland, aged or veteran or any other Category A (High Quality / Value) tree or groups of tree on the site.
- 3.20 Due to the proposed layout, the survey concludes that 30 no. individual trees and 3 no. groups of trees would need to be removed from site. Importantly those trees identified for retention are set close to the boundary, where there will be additional planting to create a green corridor. The level of removal / retention of tree planting on-site is similar to that approved previously as part of the approved 2006 permission '(MB/06/02036/OUT).
- 3.21 The Council's Tree Officer has reviewed the application proposals and has raised no objection to the loss of the trees.
- 3.22 Given the quality of tree/groups of trees to be removed and the additional tree planting proposed, it is considered that the proposed development would not be contrary to Policy EE4. Indeed, what is clear is that as indicated in the landscape strategy is that the site will benefit from replacement and additional planting.

3.23 Forest of Marston Vale

In addition to the paragraphs above there is a requirement under Policy EE9, (supported by the Forest of Marston Vale Design Guide SPD (2022)), for developments falling within the Forest of Marston Vale, to deliver a net increase in tree canopy cover. Both Policy EE9 and the SPD seeks a tree canopy coverage of 30% as part of development proposals, which can be a combination of existing and proposed trees on site.

3.24 With regards to commercial developments, the SPD requires that a minimum 30% of the gross development area provide a canopy coverage, which slightly expands upon the 30% requirement set out in Policy EE9 by defining the area to be applied.

3.25 The SPD sets out that on-site planting is the default requirement and there is the expectation that all planting should be achieved within the gross development area. It states that the local planning authority will expect developers to have considered and provided for the requirement in their land budgeting and initial development design processes and that developers will need to satisfy the local planning authority in any cases where meeting the on-site requirement is not possible, before considering the alternative approaches.

3.26 In this case, the applicant has identified that they are prepared to meet the policy requirements set out in EE9 (and supported by the SPD). They have confirmed that 15% will be provided on site with the additional 15% to be provided off site.

3.27 In its consultation response, The Forest of Marston Vale Trust state that the proposed development and intended use are in-keeping with the aspirations, aims and objectives of the Forest Plan in terms of sustainable development/transport, employment, woodland creation and increasing non-motorised links and connectivity. The trust add that they have met with the applicants' agents regarding the Policy support for the creation of the Forest and the 30% canopy cover target and a further meeting is due to discuss the delivery of the canopy cover target both on and off site. This is a matter that can be secured through a S106 agreement.

3.28 Ecology and Biodiversity

With respect to ecology and biodiversity associated with the proposed development, the application should be assessed against the objectives of Policies EE1, EE2, EE3 and EE4 of the CBLP. Most importantly and relevant to this section of the report are CBLP Policies EE2 and EE3.

3.29 Policy EE2 seeks to enhance biodiversity through the conservation, restoration, enhancement and creation of ecological networks and that adverse impacts must be mitigated. Similarly, Policy EE3 requires that important habitats are protected, maintained and enhanced. The policy adds that surveys and mitigation will be sought.

3.30 These policies are supported by Para. 174 of the NPPF. This requires planning decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other criteria, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils and minimising impacts on biodiversity. Each of these policies seek to ensure that:

- development proposals have a positive impact upon the natural environment
- development proposals seek to preserve and enhance features of ecological value (including designated sites) and
- achieve biodiversity net gain.

3.31 As set out previously in the report, the Environmental Statement (ES) supporting the application has considered the impact of the proposals on a wider geographical area, which includes a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and County

Wildlife Sites (CWS).

- 3.32 Neither the site nor the immediate context is subject to any international designated sites for nature conservation. There is one nationally important statutory designated site within 2km of the site, namely Kings Wood and Glebe Meadows SSSI.
- 3.33 There are two local non statutory designated site for nature conservation present within and adjacent to the site boundary. Quest Pit County Wildlife Site comprises the whole development boundary, measuring 68.88 hectares and has in 2015 been selected for supporting rare breeding bird species. Coronation Pit County Wildlife Site is located to the west of the site boundary and is designated for its water bodies and neutral and calcareous grasslands. In addition, there are five County Wildlife Sites located within 2km of the Site boundary. These includes Rookery Clay Pit CWS;, Kempston Hardwick Pit CWS;, Stewartby Lakes CWS,; Millbrook Pillinge Pit CWS; and Kings Wood and Glebe Meadows CWS.
- 3.34 The applicant has submitted an ecology appraisal within their Environmental Impact Assessment (Chapter 11). The appraisal assesses the impact on the SSSI and the seven other sites of nature conservation interest within a 2km zone. Natural England have considered Chapter 8 of the EIA and are satisfied that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on the statutorily protected nature conservation sites.
- 3.35 Quest Pit CWS supports three habitats that are listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006. These habitats are open mosaic habitat on otherwise previously developed land; reedbed; and standing water. In 2015 Quest Pit was designated a County Wildlife Site. The County Wildlife site is recognised for its assemblage of rare breeding birds. These include little egret, lesser black-backed gull, shelduck, herring gull, gadwall, ringed plover, little ringed plover, redshank and pochard.
- 3.36 The proposal results in the loss of the Central Part of the County Wildlife site, some 29% of the CWS area and a net loss of 730.45 habitat units (Metrics assign every habitat on a site a 'unit value' according to its relative value for biodiversity. This enables a comparison between the existing value of a site and what will be delivered through development or management).
- 3.37 The retained CWS in the southern part of the site has the potential to be impacted through indirect impacts including surface water run- off, dust deposition, and disturbance. During construction the wildlife site will also be impacted through noise, vibration and lighting (this is particularly evident when you take into account that if planning permission is granted a total of 9687 (number quoted here is a total figure. Once phase 1 is complete and operational, HGV activity will move away using second access, so removed from the retained CWS area) HGV loads of stone will be delivered to the site – this is in addition to other construction activity). Ultimately breeding birds within these habitats are likely to be displaced. Given the above the proposal development conflicts with CBLP policies EE2 and EE3.
- 3.38 Paragraph 179 of the NPPF seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity. It also seeks to promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats. Paragraph 180 goes onto state that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
- 3.39 The applicant states that the mitigation hierarchy referred to in paragraph 180 has been applied during scheme design and are set out below.
- 3.40 Avoidance (to try to avoid impacts on IEFs (Important Ecological Features), through the design or by developing an alternative site)

- 3.41 In accordance with criteria B of CBLP policy EMP3 the applicant undertook a thorough 18- month site selection process to consider alternative sites for the proposed development. The applicant considered alternative sites at Wixams, Houghton Conquest, Ampthill and Stewartby. Each of these sites (these sites were either not available and/or, did not contain an existing or allocated site, or existing building which would be suitable, achievable, or viable for the scale / size proposed and required for the film and television studio campus and/or contained a rich ecological woodland, reedbed and grassland environment and / or would result in large buildings dominating the skyline) were discounted.
- 3.42 Even with the CWS designation the applicant states that the subject site still presented the best and most appropriate location given its history (the applicant argues that the consented Nirah scheme set a precedent for development on this site albeit this was before it became designated as a CWS) and context.
- 3.43 It is clear from the applicants submissions that other sites were searched for however given that the applicant has failed to avoid development on the CWS, it would be wrong of your officers agree with the applicant's assertion that they have followed three step hierarchy system. The is a view shared by the Council's ecology officer who also adds that the proposal fails to avoid development on a CWS and thus the scheme is, contrary to CBLP Policy EE3 which states "Development proposals will be permitted where: They are designed to prevent any adverse impact on: a. County Wildlife Sites;; d. Protected species; or e. Species and habitats of principal importance."
- 3.44 Mitigation – (negative impacts to the IEFs should be mitigated for, e.g. timings of works that would cause the least impact to IEFs)
- 3.45 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:-
- Erection of protective and screening fencing to avoid potential construction impacts on habitats important for breeding birds.
 - Reedbed habitats to be removed outside of breeding season.
 - Sensitive lighting strategy to reduce impacts where practicable.
 - Directional lighting to keep light spill off water/ wetland edge habitats
- 3.46 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation:-
- Sensitive lighting strategy to reduce impacts where practicable.
 - Directional lighting to keep light spill off reed/bed, wetland habitat.
 - Sound proof buildings and measures to prevent noise impacts.
 - A 30years + Management of retained and created habitats on site through implementation of Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)
- 3.47 Compensation – (where there is still a negative impact of the IEFs following mitigation, this will be offset by appropriate compensation measures, e.g. creation of new habitat)
- 3.48 The applicant recognises that the loss of part of the CWS has significant ecological impacts and states that these will be comprehensively addressed. In addition to mitigation proposed above, the applicant states that to compensate for the loss of habitats on site they will create a variety of replacement habitats at an off-site location (or locations). Included in Appendix A to this report are four nearby land options for creating the habitats required. For reasons of commercial sensitivity, the land parcels have been anonymised; however, each has the potential to provide most or all of the land required to deliver the net gain. It is anticipated that at least one of these options will have been secured via an Options Agreement prior to the Planning Committee Meeting.
- 3.49 Importantly, and in addition to the need to create replacement open water, reedbed and open mosaic habitats to achieve the required minimum 10% BNG, the applicant has also confirmed that they will be creating and managing the habitats specifically

for the benefits of the bird species associated with the CWS designation (both qualifying species and other key species that have since moved in). The applicant adds that a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) is already being drafted for the offsetting site (and indeed for the areas to be retained on-site at Quest Pit) specifically with the purpose of ensuring that the habitats are optimised for the key bird species. It is the applicant's intention that the offsite habitat will, at a point in time, secure CWS status. The applicant proposes that this be secured through a S106 agreement.

- 3.50 The offer of all of this replacement habitat offsite will lead to an opportunity for the future, and a significant increase in biodiversity (almost three times as much being created as will be lost through this development proposal at the application site). Not only will there be a total of approximately 70ha of biodiverse habitat created and managed in perpetuity (in contrast to the 27ha being lost), and the fact that none of the remaining habitat at Quest Pit would be managed for biodiversity without the scheme – but these areas will provide an invaluable educational and recreational resource for local people and school children. Boardwalks and bird hides will be provided (both at Quest Pit and at the offsetting site) to allow managed access, thus allowing people to enjoy the wildlife without disturbing the birds.
- 3.51 Whilst the offer of a replacement habitat could lead to an opportunity for the future, the bottom line is that the proposed scheme fails to follow the ecological mitigation hierarchy namely avoid and mitigate ahead of compensate. Accordingly, the harm to the County Wildlife Site substantially weighs against the application.
- 3.52 Other CWS –
Whilst there is an obvious impact on the Quest Pit CWS consideration needs to be given to the impact the proposal will have on the 5 other CWS within 2km of the subject site.

Name of CWS	Relationship to site	Characteristics
Coronation Pit	Adjacent to western boundary	A large disused brick pit recognised for water bodies and neutral and calcareous grassland
Rookery Clay Pit	179m south-west	The pit contains three large pools and is recognised for the presence of these waterbodies
Kempston Hardwick Pit	503.5m north	An area of Kempton brick pit recognised for its habitat mosaic of woodland, scrub, semi-improved neutral grassland and open water.
Stewartby Lake	1.3km west	The CWS is designated for the presence of calcareous grassland, neutral grassland and ponds

Millbrook Pillinge Pit	1.83km south-west	A water filled Oxford clay pit recognised for a habitat mosaic containing semi-improved grassland, ruderal vegetation, mature trees, scrub, hedgerows, swamp and open water.
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- 3.53 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:-
- Erection of protective fencing to avoid potential construction impacts.
 - Implementation of CEMP including following best practice measures for cleaning machinery.
 - Utilising material on site to prevent high vehicle movement within the locality.
- 3.54 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation:-
- Sensitive lighting strategy to reduce impacts where practicable.
 - Directional lighting to keep light spill off reed/bed, wetland habitat.
 - Sound proof buildings and measures to prevent noise impacts.
- 3.55 Badgers
Badgers and their setts receive protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- 3.56 The ecology survey identifies that the site offers some opportunities for foraging and commuting badgers. The survey adds that the adjacent railway embankment to the east provides suitable sett building habitat, though no setts have been found during surveys to date. The applicant's ecologist advises that precautionary measures during construction will need to be implemented to prevent injury/death to badgers during the construction phase and a walkover of the site should be undertaken within six weeks prior to commencement of construction to confirm that no new badger setts have established on site in the intervening period between pre-planning submission surveys and construction commencement.
- 3.57 Since there are no badger setts within the site, no setts will be damaged or lost as a result of construction works. The one sett identified outside the Site boundary is at sufficient distance from works for there to be no potential for disturbance of badgers occupying the sett.
- 3.58 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:-
- Erection of protective fencing around construction zone to allow badger to move across remaining Site.
 - CEMP to include measures such as regular inspections of site to ensure badger do not become trapped in construction zone.
- 3.59 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation:-
- Management of retained habitats, to provide connectivity to adjacent habitats and include maintenance of fruiting trees and deadwood, through implementation of LEMP.
 - Sensitive lighting strategy to reduce impacts where practicable.
 - Directional lighting to keep light spill off woodland edge habitats.
- 3.60 Bats
All species of British bat and their roosts are afforded strict protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Additional protection for bats is also afforded under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and a subset of the British bat assemblage are listed as Priority Species.

- 3.61 Bat activity transect surveys (undertaken between April and October 2022) have recorded seven species and genera of bat on site (common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule, serotine, nyctalus species, long eared species and myotis bats foraging and commuting across the Site. The applicant's ecologist advises that key foraging areas include the woodland plantation along the eastern and southern site boundary and the open mosaic habitat along the western site boundary. The applicant's ecologist adds that no bat roosts were identified within the buildings on site.
- 3.62 Despite the avoidance measures and embedded mitigation, there would still be a net loss of foraging habitat for bats. Once the Project is operational, there will be additional lighting across areas of the site.
- 3.63 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:
- Sensitive lighting strategy to reduce impacts where practicable.
 - Reduction of footprint of building as much as possible to keep land take to a minimum.
 - Directional lighting to keep light spill off woodland edge habitats and waterbody.
 - Erection of protective fencing to avoid potential construction impacts on habitats important for foraging and commuting bats.
- 3.64 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation:
- Sensitive lighting strategy to reduce impacts where practicable.
 - Directional lighting to keep light spill off woodland edge habitats and wetland
 - Management of retained and newly created habitats for foraging bats, through implementation of LEMP.
- 3.65 Birds
All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with certain species afforded additional protection measures.
- 3.66 A total of eighty bird species were recorded on site in 2022 during the breeding bird survey. This is in addition to the 66 bird species that were recorded on site during the winter bird surveys (2021/2022). 11 birds recorded during the breeding bird surveys are listed as Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red list species, including pochard skylark and grasshopper warbler and 22 were listed on the amber list including reed bunting and mallard. 21 species recorded are those listed on the criteria for designating a site as a CWS, including bearded tit great crested grebe and tufted duck.
- 3.67 The Project will result in the loss of habitats which are used by nesting and overwintering birds, as well as the displacement and disturbance of these above bird species.
- 3.68 During the construction phase the displacement of birds is likely to arise. Birds will no longer be able to nest or overwinter within habitat within the construction footprint, or whilst new habitats are being created. Once the development is operational, there will be additional lighting across areas of the site. The development will result in an increase in noise levels which has the potential to impact overwintering and breeding birds.
- 3.69 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:-
- Clearance of reedbed habitat will be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season and before the overwintering season (i.e. September/ October).
 - Clearance of nesting habitat (ie woodland/ trees/grassland) will be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (ie undertaken from September to February inclusive) where possible. Where this is not possible the applicant states that these habitats must be checked for nests by a suitably qualified ecologist shortly prior to clearance. If an active nest is found, the applicant advises that work will stop and a 5m no-works buffer zone be put in place until chicks have fledged.

- Planting of reed beds/ wetland habitat will mitigate for the loss of breeding habitat on site.
 - Planting of native trees such as hawthorn, crab apple and other fruit/berry producing species, and managing in a wildlife-friendly cutting regime will mitigate for the loss of foraging habitat on Site.
- 3.70 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation:-
- Management of habitats in a wildlife-friendly regime ie Cutting will be outside of the breeding bird season in late winter (February) and only once every two or three years to allow fruiting and flowering of the hedge to provide foraging resources for birds.
 - Sensitive lighting strategy to reduce impacts where practicable.
 - Directional lighting to keep light spill off reedbed and wetland.
 - Management of retained and newly created habitats
 - Management and monitoring of birds on Site, through implementation of LEMP
- 3.71 Chinese water deer
The applicant's ecologist also advises that during the survey visits the presence of Chinese water deer. Chinese Water Deer are listed in Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which makes it illegal to kill or capture the mammal.
- 3.72 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:-
- Fencing to prevent mammals entering construction zone as detailed within CEMP.
 - Retained foraging and commuting routes across the site throughout construction.
 - CEMP to include measures such as regular inspections of site to ensure deer do not become trapped in construction zone.
- 3.73 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation
- Management of retained and created habitats providing connectivity across the site and into adjacent habitats, through implementation of LEMP
- 3.74 Hedgehog
Hedgehogs are listed on schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) which makes it illegal to kill or capture wild hedgehogs. Hedgehogs are also listed under the wild mammals protection act (1996) which prohibits cruel treatment. Under the NERC Act, hedgehogs are also listed as a species of 'principal importance'. The applicant has not undertaken a survey for hedgehog. Notwithstanding suitable hedgerow and woodland habitat is present within the site and as such presence is considered likely.
- 3.75 Invertebrates
About 400 out of the approx 2000 different invertebrates are listed as protected or priority species under EU or UK law. A total of 406 invertebrate species have been recorded across the Site. This includes 20 species with a conservation designation. It can be concluded from the invertebrate survey that the waterbody and associated wetlands support a very rich assemblage which is clearly of regional importance. The applicants ecologist advises that the reed fringed margins yielded the first county records for the bee *Hylaeus pectoralis* and the whirlygig *Gyrinus paykulli* (which was new for Bedfordshire in 2016).
- 3.76 The Project will result in the loss of suitable habitat to support important invertebrates which are associated with the open mosaic habitat, reed beds and waterbody on site. Further potential impacts on notable invertebrate species during the operational phase could be caused by inappropriate management of suitable habitats including the removal of deadwood over management or grassland habitat and under management of open mosaic habitat.
- 3.77 Mitigation
The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:
- Important features for invertebrates to be retained wherever possible.
 - Important habitats for invertebrates to be retained will be protected.
 - Erection of protective fencing to avoid potential construction impacts on habitats important for invertebrates.

- Retention of deadwood within woodland habitats
- The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation:
- Important features for invertebrates will be retained / created and a management regime implemented to ensure these features remain favourable for invertebrates, through implementation of LEMP.
 - Provision of mixed stages of reedbed succession to support important invertebrate communities, and recreation of shallow pools.

3.78 Reptiles and Amphibians

All species of widespread reptile (including common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*)), receive at least limited protection from harm under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Great Crested Newts are fully protected under UK and European legislation Bern Convention 1979 Appendix II Strictly Protected Fauna Species Wildlife and Countryside Act (as Amended) 1981. Six adult common lizards and three juvenile grass snakes were found during reptile presence/absence surveys indicating a good population of common lizards and a low population of grass snakes present on site

- 3.79 There will be a loss of suitable foraging and basking habitat during the construction period which will displace a good population of common lizards and a low population of grass snake into the surrounding habitats.

3.80 Mitigation

The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:-

- Erection of protective fencing to avoid potential construction impacts on habitats important for reptiles.
- Translocation of reptiles out of construction zones into retained habitat.
- Planting of wetland, trees, scrub and grassland habitat to mitigate for loss of suitable reptile habitat.
- Installation of hibernacula and loggeries

3.81 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation:-

- Important features for reptiles will be retained/created and a management regime implemented, through implementation of LEMP.
- Cutting of reed and leaving in piles to provide egg laying areas.
- Monitoring of species to determine successful habitat management.

- 3.82 Great crested newt is known within the area and part of the site is identified within the impact risk zone in accordance with Nature Space. Specifically, it is noted that Great Crested Newts were recorded in all waterbodies across Quest Pit. The waterbodies are all within 250 metres of each other and are considered to form a collective habitat network that supports a breeding population of Great crested newt. The Project will result in the loss of terrestrial and aquatic habitat which supports a medium population of great crested newts.

3.83 Mitigation

The applicant proposes the following mitigation during construction:

- Mitigation measures to be implemented via one of two approaches: a District Level Licensing (DLL) approach or a more conventional approach (using Natural England's PEPS licensing policies 1, 3 and 4).
- Erection of protective fencing to avoid potential construction impacts on habitats important for great crested newt.
- Ecological clerk of works during top soil removal and dismantling of hibernation features.
- Directional lighting to keep light spill off waterbody.
- Planting of reed beds/ wetland habitats to mitigate for the loss of aquatic habitat.

3.84 The applicant proposes the following mitigation during operation:

- Important features for great crested newt will be retained/created and a management regime implemented, through implementation of LEMP.

- 3.85 Water vole and otter
The water vole is fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a priority conservation species.
- 3.86 A water vole and otter survey conducted in April and July 2022 and did not record any field signs of either species within the waterbody or ditch. Water vole and Otter are therefore considered in all probability to be absent from the site.
- 3.87 **Conclusion**
Paragraph 179 of the NPPF seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity. It also seeks to promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats. Paragraph 180 goes on to state that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Evidence has been provided and your officers are satisfied that this is the only available site able to accommodate the proposed TV/Film Studio campus.
- 3.88 The section of the report recognises that the scheme includes plans to manage the remaining CWS (which is not currently managed), significant mitigation, as well as a proposal to create a replacement habitat at an off site location.
- 3.89 Notwithstanding the above there is a clear tension between the proposals, including the off-site mitigation strategy and the strong objections from Bedford Bird Club, Greensand Trust, Wildlife Trust and the Council's own ecology officers. Specifically it must be recognised that the proposal will result in the loss of priority habitats adversely impacting on protected species within the central part of the CWS (loss of some 29% of the County Wildlife Site)
- 3.90 Given that the proposal results in the loss of the CWS and a loss of priority species, the proposal will cause substantial harm to a County Wildlife Site. The proposal in terms of on site mitigation and a replacement habitat, will, over the longer term (as the mitigation/compensation establishes) reduce the level of harm to point where the it will achieve a neutral impact. However, given the initial substantial impact to the CWS it would be wrong to afford any environmental weight to the proposed development.
- 3.91 Given the above the construction and operation of a film studio on this very sensitive site is contrary to Local Plan Policies EE2, EE3, Chapter 15 of the NPPF and the Environment Act. The impact in your officers view would be substantial and would weigh heavily against the application.

4. Employment and Economic Impact of the development

- 4.1 The adopted Central Bedfordshire Local Plan's spatial strategy aims to build on emerging and existing economic strengths in key sectors and deliver a minimum target of 24,000 jobs from 2015 to 2035. The Local Plan and supporting documents produced as part of the Plan's evidence base (Employment Technical Paper (2020) and Employment Land Update Note (2020)) emphasise the requirement of CBC to undertake a flexible approach towards economic development to ensure both strategic and local employment opportunities (based on market demand) are met to facilitate the shortfall of 27ha of employment provision within the authority. This flexible / positive position towards generating economic growth on unallocated sites to adapt to market change is reflected within Policy EMP3 and Policy EMP5
- 4.2 Policy EMP3 states that outside settlement envelopes, proposals for new employment uses will be supported where:
a-The site is not in the Green Belt
b-There are no comparable existing or allocated sites or comparable existing buildings that are available, suitable, achievable and viable within the settlement envelope or within another closely related settlement.
c-For proposals to extend existing businesses onto adjoining land evidence is provided that intensification within the existing site is not possible or practical.

d-Evidence is provided of the significant economic benefits that would flow from the proposal

e-The size and scale of the development proposed is appropriate to its location.

f-The location is appropriately accessible, and the proposal would not result in unacceptable levels of traffic generation

g-Any identified adverse impacts on historic and natural environment including designated sites and landscapes can be appropriately mitigated.

- 4.3 Outside settlement envelopes proposals for new employment uses will be supported where in addition to the above criteria

a-They are on previously developed land

b-Will not have an add unacceptable adverse impact on local environment and residential amenity

- 4.4 Policy EMP5 (Significant Facilities in the Countryside and Green Belt) is also relevant and supports the principle of significant employment generating uses within the countryside. Policy EMP5 (Significant Facilities in the Countryside and Green Belt) states that, where major new sites emerge in Central Bedfordshire of similar importance in terms of employment or research once built (the policy makes reference to Cranfield University, Rookery South Resource Recovery Facility, Shuttleworth College, Millbrook Proving, RSPB Sandy, DISC Chicksands, RAF Henlow, WSL Whipsnade, Woburn Safari Park, Centre Parcs, Toddington Motorway Services Area, Faldo Road Industrial Estate, Tempsford Hall, Lockheed Martin Ground) they will be considered under this policy as well as other relevant policies within the Plan. Notwithstanding the above Policy EMP5 states that any development would be assessed against the following criteria:

1 Impact on the open countryside and any heritage assets

2 Provision of sustainable transport

3 Justification

4 Scale, layout and design – which must be appropriate to the establishment and its setting

- 4.5 Given that the proposal relates to a new build and not an extension to an existing business and that the site is not within a Green Belt, Criteria 1 a and b of policy EMP3 are not relevant to this application. In addition given that site restoration has taken place Criteria 2a (employment use of previously developed land) is not applicable. Accordingly no weight or support can be applied in this regard. With regards to Criteria 1b it is noted from the submission that the applicant undertook a thorough 18- month site selection process to consider alternative sites for the proposed development. The applicant considered alternative sites at Wixams, Houghton Conquest, Ampthill and Stewartby. Each of these sites (these sites were either not available and/or, did not contain an existing or allocated site, or existing building which would be suitable, achievable, or viable for the scale / size proposed and required for the film and television studio campus and/or contained a rich ecological woodland, reedbed and grassland environment and / or would result in large buildings dominating the skyline) were discounted. It is accepted that (in accordance with criteria b Policy EMP3), there are no “comparable existing or allocated sites” that are either “available, suitable, achievable and viable” within “another closely related settlement”.

- 4.6 It is noted from the application submission, which has been considered by the Council's Business Investment Manager that the proposed development will deliver a number of significant economic benefits for the Bedfordshire area. Namely:-
- creating 1,200 construction jobs;
 - supporting an additional 880 FTE jobs during the construction phase in services and other businesses from the wage spending of construction workers and supplier sourcing;
 - creating 5,500 onsite jobs during the operation phases (1,400 high value jobs associated with film production, including actors, directors, writers, producers and specialist technicians) -supporting indirect employment (those working in its supply chain and wage spending of staff);

-generating £136million of direct GVA and £104 million indirect GVA through the supply chain once the scheme is operational.
Given the above it can be concluded that (in accordance with criteria d Policy EMP3) that significant economic benefits would flow from the proposal.

- 4.7 It is noted from the application submission, which has again been considered by the Council's Business Investment Manager that:
- The UK film and high-end television production industry is growing rapidly (Demand for 6 million sqft of new sounds stage space within the UK by 2026)
 - There is significant support from Central Government for growth within the TV and Film industry (specifically the government have introduced tax relief schemes)
 - Regionally - Bedfordshire is located within the Oxford- Cambridge Arc which contains some of the UK's most productive and innovative towns and cities that deliver growth and prosperity for the whole country.
 - Locally, CBC seeks to deliver 24,000 news jobs which require 240,000m2 of new floorspace, by 2039.
 - The majority of development within the surrounding area has provided housing; this has seen a 41% increase of the resident population in the local impact area since 2011. This is expected to increase by 6.4% (12,000 core working age population increase) by 2025.
 - That there is current skills drain and skills deficiency within CBC with 40% of the working population leaving the area to work.
- 4.8 Given the above it can be concluded that (in accordance with criteria 3 Policy EMP5) that there is justification for the proposed development.
- 4.9 To avoid repetition criteria 1 e, f, g, 2 b of policy EMP3 and criteria 1, 2 and 4 of policy EMP5 have/will be considered at length in sections 3 above and in sections 5 through to 7 of this report.
- 4.10 The NPPF provides further support for sustainable economic development. Paragraph 81 states *"Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. 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"*. Further in paragraph 81 the NPPF, states that planning decision should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able capitalise on their performance and potential.
- 4.11 Given that the proposal relates to development in the open countryside NPPF para 84-85 are also relevant in that it promotes economic growth in the countryside, specifically that the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business should be supported in rural areas.
- 4.12 Having regard to the above considerations, there are substantial economic benefits associated with the proposed development. Economic benefits clearly supported by Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, the Councils Business Investment Manager, the local MP and various other third party representations in support of the application. This is a matter which weighs very substantially in favour of the application.
- 4.13 Conclusion
Consideration of policy EMP3 is relevant insofar that it relates to employment development on an unallocated site. It is clear from the policy wording that (as the site is not on previously developed land criteria 2a) that (subject to consideration of the impact on the local environment/residential amenity) little support can be afforded to the proposed development on this site. However, more applicable to this application is how the proposal development performs against Policy EMP5. It is noted that Policy EMP5 (Significant Facilities in the Countryside and Green Belt) is positively worded

and recognises that there are opportunities to develop significant employment generating uses within the countryside. The proposal will deliver a next generation TV and Film studio campus within Central Bedfordshire. Considering the scale, high tech nature, economic and significant employment generating benefits of the proposed TV/film studio campus, the proposal, in your officers view, (subject to consideration of the impact on the open countryside and any heritage assets, provision of sustainable transport and design as discussed in sections 3 and in sections 5 through to 7 of this report.) fully accords with policy EMP5.

5. Access and transport impacts

5.1 The Transport and Access section considers the impact of the development on traffic and transport.

5.2 Sustainable Modes of Travel

NPPF Paragraph 105 states that significant development should be focussed on locations which are, or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. Further NPPF Paragraph 112 states that developments should be located and designed to:

- Give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and within neighbouring areas; and secondly, so far as possible to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use.

5.3 The CBCLP has two policies concerned with sustainable transport. The first, policy T1, requires Travel Plans to be submitted for most major applications. This will need to outline how the development will reduce the need to travel and secure a modal shift towards sustainable forms of transport (i.e. prioritising walking and cycling routes, and providing adequate public transport services). The second, policy T5, requires the provision of active charging points for Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles

5.4 Securing a high standard of sustainable access to and from the site is therefore considered to be essential particularly given the opportunity for the development to make full use of its proximity to a number of residential areas (existing and proposed), as well as relatively direct access to a number of rail stations , including the new Station at Wixams when this comes forward.

5.5 Given the above it is, therefore, important that consideration is given to pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport.

5.6 Walking and Cycling

There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that pass through the site. Further pedestrian access to and from the Site is currently limited as there are no footways on the B530 Ampthill Road adjacent to the Site. The existing footway network commences approximately 65m to the south on Stewartby Way (a footway is provided on Stewartby Way to the south of the Site, which links the existing bus stop on the B530 Ampthill Road with the village of Stewartby) and approximately 800m to the north of the northern boundary of the site at the existing Wixams residential development site access.

5.7 With regards to cycling a distance of 5km is considered to be a reasonable travel distance. Stewartby, Wilstread, Houghton Conquest, Marston Moretaine, Wootton and Kempston are considered to be accessible within a 5km (15 minute) cycling journey. In addition, cycling is well suited to form part of longer journeys made by public transport. Therefore, it is important to note that Stewartby Train Station, which is situated approximately 2km to the north and west of the site, is accessible within a 9 minute cycle.

- 5.8 In addition to the current provision there are a number of developments with planning consent in the immediate area of the Site. One in particular, 'Thickthorn Park' is to be provided immediately to the northeast of the site and will provide a footway/cycleway link on the downgraded Bedford Road, through the development and then on to the verge adjacent to the B530 Ampthill Road. This provision will facilitate a link between Bedford Road (immediately to the south of the northeastern corner of the Site) and the existing provision at the Wixams roundabout to the northeast. The applicant proposes to link the site to this committed walking/cycling route. Specifically, a new footway is proposed adjacent, or parallel to the B530. Within LTN 1/20, a shared footway/cycleway is considered to be appropriate for up to 300 pedestrians and 300 cyclists per hour, with the proposed route connecting to the consented Bedford Road route (associated with the Mill View/Thickthorn Park development) which in turn allows for access through the permitted residential site. The footway will be facilitated by the proposed controlled toucan crossing, 90m to the north of the secondary access point of the site. This is a matter which can be secured by planning condition.
- 5.9 With regards to cycle parking the detailed element of the application provides 269 cycle parking spaces, which would provide sufficient parking for circa 35% of all on site staff, which officers consider to be acceptable. With regards to the outline element of the application a condition requiring any subsequent reserved matters applications to be in accordance with the Councils cycle parking standards is recommended.
- 5.10 Public transport
The nearest bus stop to the site is Stewartby Turn located at the B530 junction. The bus stop is located approximately 400 metres to the south of the site. The bus stop provides services (Service 42) to Bedford, Flitwick, Dunstable, Kempston, Stewartby and Ampthill earlier and later in the day.
- 5.11 The applicants have agreed to upgrade the 2 nearest B530 bus stops with raised kerbs, shelters, real-time information screens. and the provision of a surfaced link on the eastern side of the B530. This is a matter which can be secured through the S106.
- 5.12 With regards to the provision of Public Transport Access to the site, the applicant is proposing a bespoke service, which would be free at the point of use for all staff and visitors to the site. The proposed level of service is outlined in the document Technical Note BE5650-SPD TN-03, and proposes the following:
- Route 1: Running between Bedford Bus / Rail Station and the site at a frequency of between 20 and 30 minutes during the period 06:00-22:00, with on demand services outside of those times.
 - Route 2: Running between Stewartby Rail Station and the site at a 30-minute frequency during the period 06:00-22:00, with on demand services outside of those times.
 - Route 3: Running between the new Wixams Rail Station and the site at a 30-minute frequency during the period 06:00-22:00, with on demand service outside of those times.
 -
- 5.13 It is understood that the services outlined above are to be delivered from the first occupation of Phase 1 of the site, with the potential to scale up the service in terms of vehicle sizes rather than frequencies, should demand require (and as further phases of development are delivered), and will operate 7 days a week.
- 5.14 The proposals have been reviewed by the Councils Public Transport Team, who consider them to be acceptable.
- 5.15 Given that the public transport proposals are fundamental to the sustainability of the site, officers recommend that securing the ongoing provision of the bus service/s as laid out above and in the submitted shuttle bus technical note, be secured through the S106 agreement, providing for a 7 days a week service for the lifetime of the development.

- 5.16 In addition a condition is recommended to ensure that real time displays at the studios are compatible with the Council's infrastructure. It is considered the recommended condition meets the 6 tests set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF namely, necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.
- 5.17 The closest railway station to the site is Stewartby Station, situated to the north and west of the site. The station lies approximately 2km (30 min walking distance or 9 min cycle distance) from the centre of the site. The station provides links to Bedford to the north along with other urban areas to the south. Bedford Borough Council have requested a contribution towards a Bike hire facility at a new Wixams Station if and when it becomes operation. This can be secured through a S106 agreement. The development proposals provide for improved pedestrian, cycle, and public transport links to these stations.
- 5.18 Parking
The submitted transport assessment outlines the expected parking requirements for the proposed development, in terms of both the full build out of the site, and the requirements related to Phases 1, 1A & 1B, which are proposed to be delivered prior to the multi-storey car park on the site's eastern boundary. Due to the non-standard nature of the development in question, the parking numbers proposed are based upon the expected staff numbers at the site, with an allowance for non-car travel and visitor parking.
- 5.19 The proposed parking levels equate to 1,440 spaces for the full build of the site, with a proposed initial (Phases 1, 1A & 1B) provision of 691 spaces. This is based upon an assumed staff demand of 643, with a further allowance for visitor parking.
- 5.20 Whilst there is no specific guidance on parking for film studio uses, officers have reviewed the parking ratios applied to two previous film studio applications at Pinewood and Shepperton Studios respectively. The parking ratio at Pinewood was one space per 49m², with Shepperton providing one space per 76m². The Quest Pit proposals provide one space per 68m², and so falls between the two, albeit closer to the Shepperton parking levels. As such the parking proposals appear broadly comparable to other, relatively recent applications for comparable uses. The majority of the parking provision for the full build is expected to be accommodated within the proposed multi-storey car park (1,200 spaces). Whilst the multi-storey is currently detailed as four-storey, once an allowance is made for ramps, stairwells, barriers and pedestrian routes, it is likely that the car park would need to be a minimum of 5 stories to accommodate the number of spaces proposed.
- 5.21 The peak parking demand for the site is likely to arise during the construction of Phase 2, prior to the provision of the multi-storey car park, when there will be a need to accommodate both employee and construction parking. The applicant has identified areas within the site which could be used for temporary surface car parking (plan ref. BE5650-021 – Phased Parking provision). Officers consider that there is sufficient space within the site to accommodate the levels of parking outlined within the submitted TA. Notwithstanding this, a condition requiring the submission and agreement of a car parking plan for each phase of development (to include details of predicted parking demand, location and numbers of car parking spaces, details of surfacing, lighting, pedestrian routing, and access / egress arrangements) is recommended. This is particularly relevant to the proposed car parking arrangements within the parcel of land proposed for the multi-storey car park, as at present there is no continuous pedestrian or cycle route from the northern access (and associated cycle parking). As such any applications for either the temporary or permanent use of this area for car parking would also have to include safe pedestrian access through the car park to the rest of the site.

- 5.22 It is noted that the multi-storey car park proposals (albeit not included within the detailed element of the application), show barriers at the car park entrance. In previous responses the Council's highway engineers have expressed some concern that, at peak times, this may result in queuing back of traffic onto the B530. Given these concerns a condition preventing any gates, barriers, or other measures to prevent traffic from entering the site, without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority is recommended.
- 5.23 Finally, with regards to parking, the applicant has agreed to provide electric vehicle charging points on site. A policy compliant number of vehicle charging points can be secured by condition.
- 5.24 **Layout** -
It is noted that the site is proposed to be fully private, with no public access outside of arranged visits. Based upon the nature of the development and the private status of the access roads, the applicant has confirmed that any refuse collection would be via a private contract, rather than delivered by CBC. It is also noted that, upon completion of construction, the levels of traffic circulating within the site are expected to be minimal. Notwithstanding that, Officers are mindful that, in the short term (prior to the construction of the multi-storey car park), car parking will take place within the site, leading to higher levels of on-site traffic. The Council's Highway engineers had previously raised a number of concerns with regards to the safety of users of the proposed development, including:
-A concern that the assumed design speed of 15mph would not be self-enforcing within the site.
-A lack of pedestrian provision on the southern boundary of the site, including crossing points from the proposed car parking areas.
-A lack of a defined pedestrian route from the car park to the proposed office and creche towards the southern end of the site.
- 5.25 The Council's highway engineers advise that the latest submitted plans go some way towards addressing those concerns, including a revised plan showing visibility splays (forward and junction) for a 20mph design speed, which Officers consider to be more appropriate. The proposals also provide increased pedestrian areas on the southern boundary, with identified crossing points, and securing of visibility splays to / from points where pedestrians are expected emerge from buildings or cross areas of carriageway.
- 5.26 Given the private status of the roads and footways within the site, the Council's highway engineers raise no objection to the layout, but request that a series of conditions be appended to:
- secure the improved levels of visibility and pedestrian provision shown on the most recent plans;
-secure the submission and agreement of a scheme to manage speeds within the site;
- ensure a one-way circulation around the perimeter road as outlined within the submitted transport work;
- secure a number of minor changes to the pedestrian linkages between the car parking areas and the proposed office / creche.
- 5.27 It is considered the conditions stipulated by the highway engineers meet the 6 tests set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF namely, necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.
- 5.28 **Access** -
The proposals will provide two new access points to the east of the site, connecting from the B530/Amphill Road.

5.29 Main access point

The roundabout will form the main point of access and will be constructed to the southwest of the site. The proposal of a roundabout junction follows the previously approved scheme (MB/06/02036/OUT). This main point of access will be a key route for those accessing the site, specifically the bus network for the transport interchange. It is acknowledged that Stewartby & Kempston Harwick Parish Council feel strongly that the new roundabout should be at the junction of Stewartby Way and not as proposed. This has been explored with the applicant. After careful consideration it is accepted that the main site access roundabout could not be located to include the Stewartby Way junction as the land required for this is in third party ownership (outside of the ownership of CBC/Bedford Borough Council and the applicant).

5.30 Second access point

An additional point of access is proposed via a new right turn lane priority junction, located to the northeast of the site, again connecting to the B530/Ampthill Road. This secondary access will provide a further link to the on-site staff multi-storey car park as well as providing a further emergency vehicle route. The provision of two junctions into the site ensures that the development can remain operational if the main vehicle access is blocked for any reason.

5.31 It is noted that the visibility requirements associated with the two access junctions will require the removal or clearance of a reasonable amount of planting, either within the site or the adjacent public highway.

5.32 It is noted that visitors to the site will only be allowed access from the main entrance and will then be directed to the 57 dedicated car spaces at the front of the main Admin office building.

5.33 Subject to a series of planning conditions to secure detailed design and the associated technical and safety audit processes the Councils highway engineers are of the opinion that the proposed access junction arrangements provide a safe and appropriate level of capacity.

5.34 **Trip Generation and distribution**

Paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets the test that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of the development would be severe. The main issue is whether there would be any severe adverse effects on highway safety and traffic flow arising from the proposed creation of a film and tv studio campus on this site.

5.35 In determining whether the development would have a severe residual cumulative impact, the Council's Highway Engineers have carefully considered comments from the Parish Councils in particular concerns from Houghton Conquest Parish Council that the highway has limited capacity and have carefully reviewed the submitted Transport Assessment. Both CBC and BBC Highway teams are satisfied that the Transport Assessment (TA) accompanying the planning application takes a robust approach to the likely level of vehicle trip generation.

5.36 The applicants have based their trip generation for the site upon an average of the trip rates applied to the Pinewood and Shepperton film studio planning applications. This results in a total predicted trip generation of 477 trips in the morning peak hour (380 arrivals and 97 departures) and 467 trips in the evening peak hour (96 arrivals and 371 departures).

5.37 Trip distribution is based upon local ward census data, with a comparator output area on the Bedford Borough boundary used to distribute trips to and from the site. The majority of traffic is forecast to route north, towards the A421 and Bedford (68% of all traffic routing north from the site), with the remainder routing south. Of the northbound traffic, 14% is predicted to route via Houghton Conquest towards the A6; 5% to the Wixams area and the remaining 49% to the A421/A6 and Bedford. Of the southbound traffic, 21% was predicted to route via Stewartby in order to access the A421 via

Green Lane, and 11% to route towards Ampthill and Flitwick. All HGV traffic is forecast to route to the north via the B530 to the A421 / A6.

- 5.38 The forecast assessment identified development traffic impacts at a number of offsite junctions, with the level of predicted impact at the following junctions considered significant enough to merit mitigation.
- Beancroft Road / Bedford Road
 - Stewartby Way / B530
 - Chapel End Road / A6
- 5.39 The proposed mitigation scheme at the junction of Beancroft Road would provide a longer section of 2 lane approach on the Bedford Road arm of the junction. This scheme could, if required, be delivered in advance of any wider scheme associated with the Marston Vale allocation, or the payment of a comparable contribution. Whilst the applicant has submitted a cost estimate for these works, the sum has not yet been agreed. The figure will need to be finalised as part of any Section 106 agreement.
- 5.40 The proposed mitigation scheme at the junction of Chapel End Road with the A6 would provide a longer section of two lane approach on the Chapel End Road arm of the junction. This scheme could be delivered in advance of, or following the other works proposed at the junction associated with the allocations to the south of Wixams. The scheme does not fully mitigate the impacts of additional development traffic on the Chapel End Road arm of the junction, but does result in a change in the capacity of the left turn from 95% of capacity used to 82% of capacity used (reducing the queue length by 4 vehicles) and a change in the capacity of the right turn from 93% of the capacity used to 91% of the capacity used (reducing the queue length by 1 vehicle). In light of the above, and to further discourage routing through Houghton Conquest, the Council's Highway engineer have requested a traffic calming contribution of £144,000. The traffic calming sum (to be secured through the S106) is to pay for the installation and maintenance of a 2 camera average speed camera system, although the wording of any obligation should allow for an alternate use of the monies if the camera system cannot be implemented. The obligation is considered necessary as the highway works at the Chapel End junction do not fully mitigate the development impacts, so a further measure to discourage routing through Houghton Conquest is considered appropriate. In addition, the applicant only has to implement the mitigation works in the event that traffic levels meet those predicted within the TA, so if the speed camera system is effective, in discouraging through traffic they may not need to carry out the physical highways improvement works.
- 5.41 The proposed mitigation at the Stewartby Way junction would provide a longer section of two-lane approach on the Stewartby Way arm of the junction, providing separate lanes for right and left turns onto the B530. Whilst the proposed mitigation would not bring the junction back within reasonable capacity in the forecast year (2035) when also including committed development traffic associated with the Marston Vale development, the applicant has demonstrated that the proposed scheme does mitigate the additional impacts attributable to the Quest Pit development. It is recommended that a condition be included which would secure this mitigation.
- 5.42 The applicant team have expressed the view that due to the length of time before the impacts in question are forecast to be realised, and the associated likelihood that other major allocations will also be delivering mitigation at the junctions in question, that these be subject to a 'monitor and manage' approach. The monitor and manage approach will reassess specified junctions at phased points throughout the build out of the Quest Pit development, and the works, or an equivalent financial contribution will be called upon if the operation of the junction needs improving. This approach can be secured through the S106 legal agreement.

5.43 In addition, the Councils highway engineers request a Section 106 obligation requiring the monitoring of traffic from the site at set periods throughout the phasing of the development, with the associated ability to call upon funding for traffic management works in the event that the distribution of traffic to the south (towards Ampthill) is higher than forecast.

5.44 Bedford Borough Council have been consulted on the application. Bedford Council have requested a contribution toward the most immediately impacted junctions within their network. (see section 8 of the report with regards to agreed S106 heads of terms) Given that the Bedford Highway Network is predicted to accommodate the majority of the traffic impacts related to this development (both construction and operational phase) it can be considered that these requests are reasonable and necessary.

5.45 **Construction Phase Impacts**

The proposed development involves filling in part of the lake to create a proposed development platform. Accordingly, this will require a substantial number of HGV movements to import fill material to site, roughly estimated at 19,340 movements (9,670 arrivals and 9,670 departures). This is in addition to trips associated with the above ground construction of the site. It is noted that Ampthill Parish Council are keen to ensure that large vehicles, construction traffic etc do not use Ampthill town centre. The applicant has taken on board these concerns and advises that, due to the sensitivities of the surrounding road network and, in order to protect local communities from the impacts of construction phase traffic, these movements will all route to the north on the B530. Notwithstanding this, the Council's Highway Engineers have requested a series of measures (a CTMP, a revision to the existing environmental weight restriction on the B530 (moving the restriction south would mean any HGVs routing south from the site, via either Stewartby or Ampthill would be in breach of the revised restriction) and provision of ANPR cameras to monitor construction traffic routing) to be secured by planning conditions. It is considered that the condition would meet the 6 tests set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF namely, necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects

5.46 **Conclusion**

Whilst there will be a noticeable change to traffic levels, Officers consider that the proposal, subject to a number of hard and soft measures to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport (as outlined above) and a series of planning condition/planning obligations will not have a severe impact on the network. Accordingly, the proposal is not contrary to Paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. Flood Risk

6.1 Policy CC3 of CBLP states that a proposal that increases the risk of flooding on or off the development site will not be permitted. The overall approach to flooding is given in paragraphs 159 to 169 of the NPPF. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF supports CBLP CC3 and states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Paragraphs 159 to 169 of the NPPF set out a sequential risk-based approach to the location of development. This approach is intended to ensure that areas at little or no risk of flooding are developed in preference to areas at higher risk. It involves applying a sequential test to steer development away from medium and high flood risk areas (flood zone 2 and 3) to land with a low probability of flooding (flood zone 1).

6.2 According to the Environment Agency (EA) online Flood Map tool, the majority of the site is located in Flood Zone 3 (land assessed as having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of flooding). The concentration of Flood Zone 3 within the site reflects the accumulation of heavy rainfall in filling the topography of the pit and the bank flow from the Harrowden Brook to the east of the site. Other parts of the site are in flood zone 2. It is noted that the FRA provides correspondence with the EA confirming that the site is

to be reclassified as Flood Zone 2 later this year. At the time of drafting the report the EA have not confirmed that this has happened.

- 6.3 Table 2 of the Planning Practice Guidance (Reference ID: 7-079-20220825) identifies the flood risk vulnerability classifications for development. In relation to this application the proposed use of the scheme falls within the 'less vulnerable' classification, which is considered appropriate for Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3, without the need to apply the Exception Test as part of the sequential assessment. However, there are a number of ancillary uses (the education/community hub and ancillary overnight accommodation) which are considered to be 'more vulnerable' and are therefore required to satisfy the Exception Test. Given the above both a sequential and exception test must be submitted and passed if development is to be permitted.
- 6.4 With regards to a sequential test the applicant undertook a thorough 18 month site selection process to consider alternative sites for the proposed development. This site selection process demonstrated that there are no 'comparable existing or allocated sites' that are either 'available, suitable, achievable and viable' within 'another closely related settlements'. Key conclusions from this site selection process are highlighted in the table below.

Location	Reasons for discounting
Wixams to the northeast of the site	Due to existing masterplan allocations and development within the Wixams settlement, a review of this area demonstrates that the settlement does not contain an existing or allocated site, or existing building which would be suitable, achievable, or viable for the scale/ size proposed and required for the film and television studio campus.
Houghton Conquest	No available sites/ buildings which are allocated or could accommodate the size and scale required for the proposed development.
Amphill	No available sites/ buildings which are allocated or could accommodate the size and scale required for the proposed development.
Stewartby Way southern boundary	-Discounted as containing a rich ecological woodland, reedbed and grassland environment and choosing to build in this location leaving an open expansive waterbody would deprive the site of an established landscape -Land is also elevated at a level with Stewartby and surrounding farmland and would result in large buildings dominating the skyline such as Cardington Studios which can be seen from a much wider context; whereas the chosen location for the studios is within a valley setting.

- 6.5 Given the above it is considered that there are no comparable existing or allocated sites that are either available, suitable, achievable and viable within another closely related settlement for the scale and use of development proposed in areas with a lower probability of flooding. For the reasons above the sequential test has been satisfied.
- 6.6 Having undertaken the sequential test and established there are no alternative sites, the Exception Test must be addressed. Paragraph 164 of the NPPF provides guidance on the application of the exceptions test and states that to pass the test it

- should be demonstrated that
- a) the development would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk; and
 - b) the development would be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and where possible reduce flood risk overall
 - c)
- 6.7 The NPPF states that both elements of the exception test should be satisfied for development to be permitted
- 6.8 With regards to criteria a it is considered (as outlined in section 3 and 4 of this report) that there would be wider sustainability benefits to the community. Namely significant socio-economic benefits, e.g job creation and enhanced economic output to the benefit of the local labour market; provision of a public transport interchange which will service an EV bus shuttle; provide significant levels of cycle parking and enhance cycling / walking routes from the north to the south of the site. The first part of the exception test is therefore considered to be passed.
- 6.9 In accordance with paragraph 164 of the NPPF (part B) of the Exception Test has been informed by an Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The FRA considers the proposal in the context of vulnerability to flooding from all sources; protection of users of the new development, and likelihood of increased flood risk to third parties as a result of the development.
- 6.10 The FRA hydraulic assessment has considered several mitigation measures which will prevent the site from flooding and reduce maximum flood levels downstream of the site. The following mitigation measures have been tested and will be incorporated within the scheme:
- Provision of a 200mm high flood wall along parts of the eastern boundary of the site to prevent the overland flow of flood waters to/from Harrowden Brook;
 - Provision of a flood relief culvert diverting flood from Harrowden Brook into the southern half of the existing quarry pit; and
 - Provision of flow restriction 'throttle' on the southern access road culvert in order to hold back flow and enable better functioning of the flood relief culvert.
- Importantly the FRA demonstrates that the part of the lake not under the applicants ownership will be isolated, utilising a flap valve. This removes the third-party impact of the development.
- 6.11 Following negotiation the applicant has also provided further information regarding the access and escape routes, demonstrating that dry access can be achieved.
- 6.12 Subject to the mitigation proposed the FRA concludes that future occupants and users of the proposed development will be exposed to a low risk of flooding.
- 6.13 The FRA has been considered by the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the Council's SUDs Management Team and the internal drainage board.
- 6.14 Having initially objected to the application, the Environment Agency, on submission of a revised FRA, now raise no objection subject to a planning condition. Likewise, the Council's SUDs Management Team have raised no objection subject to a suitably worded condition relating to CC1 and CC2 of the local plan.
- 6.15 It is noted that the Bedford Group of Drainage Boards (BGDB) and Bedfordshire and River Ivel Internal Drainage Board (BRIIDB) (Each internal drainage board (IDB) is a public body that manage water levels in an area, known as an internal drainage district, where there is a special need for drainage) have raised concerns. IDBs undertake works to reduce flood risk to people and property and manage water levels

for agricultural and environmental needs within their district. BGDB concerns relate to additional culverting, proposed presence of a footpath and cycleway inside their maintenance easement and inclusion of a Flood Wall. BRIIDB concerns relate to future impact on/maintenance of Harrowden Brook, the applicants failure to evidence net gain (net gain is discussed in part 3 of your report) and commuted sum payments.

- 6.16 Planning Legislation is separate to Land Drainage Legislation and cannot override it. Irrespective of any planning permission obtained, if the proposed development (as it does in this case) affects the Board's access or operations it will be subject to obtaining the prior agreement and consent from the relevant drainage board.
- 6.17 Anglian Water have been consulted in relation to this development and the capacity of foul water drainage. Anglian Water have raised no objection to the proposed development. Ultimately developers having the right to connect to the public network. Any site with permission can submit an application to connect to their network and Anglian Water cannot stop this connection on the grounds of capacity. This matter will be considered further at the building regulation stage.
- 6.18 Given that the Environment Agency, Council SUD's Management Team and Anglian Water have raised no objection to the proposed flood risk mitigation and that the applicant is committed to resolve the outstanding issues directly through the Land Drainage Consent process, it is considered that planning permission should not be withheld on flood risk grounds.
- 6.19 Given the above it can be concluded that measures to be taken will make the development safe for its lifetime. For this reason, it is considered that the second part of the exception test is passed.
- 6.20 Subject to implementation of the proposed flood mitigation measures alongside conditions regarding foul and surface water drainage, Officers are satisfied that the development can be made acceptable in flood risk terms. Accordingly, the proposal accords with the requirements of policies CC3 of the CBLP and the NPPF with regards to the sequential and exceptions test.

7. Other considerations

7.1 Air quality

The NPPF requires that planning policies and decisions should sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values of national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's) and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas. Central Bedfordshire District Council is responsible for the management of air quality in the vicinity of the proposed development site. The site is not situated in or close to any Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA). There are currently three AQMA's in CBC and the closest AQMA to the Site is in Ampthill.

- 7.2 With regards to air quality the applicant states that a range of measures to minimise or prevent dust and dirt from construction activities would be set out in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).
- 7.3 The Council's Public protection officer has considered Chapter 7 of the Environmental Statement and agrees with the conclusions. In line with the recommendations in the Chapter 7 and comments from the Council's Pollution Control officer, Officers recommended that the S106 agreement include a requirement for the developer to comply with the Council's Construction and Environmental Code of Practice including dust monitoring and audit to control the adversity of emissions.
- 7.4 Notwithstanding consideration should be given to the application of good design and good practice measures i.e ensuring good cycling and walking infrastructure to reduce reliance on vehicle use (see Sustainable Modes of Travel section above), and the

provision of electric vehicle rapid charge points. Accordingly, it is considered necessary and reasonable to include a condition requiring the imposition of a scheme for the provision of electric vehicle charging points on the site to future proof the development and ensure that it accords with Policy T5 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and paragraph 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Taking into account the comments above it can be concluded that the proposed development will not lead to unacceptable risk from air pollution or to any breach in national objectives.

7.5 **Amenity**

The NPPF and HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan seeks to ensure developments do not have an unacceptable impact upon residential amenity for both existing and future occupiers, the NPPF within the core principles states that planning should "always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings"

- 7.6 There is a retail showroom and two residential properties adjacent to the north-east corner of the site. Other existing neighbouring residential developments consist of Stewartby (which provides local services and facilities within walking distance from the site), Wixams (located directly northeast of the site), Houghton Conquest (0.8km east of the site) and Ampthill (c.3.3km south of the site). The site is also located approximately 8.8km southwest of Bedford town centre.

7.7 Visual amenity

It is considered that the site is of a scale that a development could be designed without causing significant harm to residential amenity and living conditions. Specifically, development phases closest to the two nearest dwellings are reserved for future Approval. Given the distances involved in conjunction with the site levels the built form proposed is not, as a matter of principle, considered to result in significant harm to the living conditions of neighbouring properties in terms of visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overlooking or loss of light. Accordingly, officers are satisfied that the proposed development will continue to provide an acceptable level of amenity to living conditions.

- 7.8 The proposal has been considered by the public protection team. The pollution team raise no objection to this outline subject to conditions. For the reasons outlined above it is considered that the proposed outline element could be acceptable in the context of Policy HQ1 of Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework subject to details of reserved matters.

7.9 Noise and disturbance

Noise associated with the proposed development, is a key issue requiring very careful consideration. The impact of noise upon the surrounding environment has been assessed against Policy CC8 of the CBLP. The policy advises that development will only be permitted where, amongst other things, measures can be implemented to minimise the impacts of pollution to an acceptable level without compromising the quality of life for users and occupiers.

- 7.10 Policy CC8 is supported by the NPPF (2021). Specifically, the NPPF requires that new development be appropriate to its location when considering the effects of pollution sources including noise and vibration (Paragraph 174). Consequently, planning applications should demonstrate that potential noise sources can be successfully mitigated and/or reduced to minimise potential impacts.

- 7.11 The ES demonstrates that the proposed development is unlikely to result in any significant residual effects during either the construction or operation phases. It is recommended however, that mitigation measures will need to be incorporated to reduce noise and vibration from particular activities, for example during construction. With regards to the operation phase, and in line with comments from the pollution team it is recognised that the premises will need to be designed to ensure rating level

of noise impact at offsite dwellings is not more than ten decibels lower than the existing Background Sound Level. It is recommended that a noise limit condition be appended accordingly. It is considered the recommended condition meets the 6 tests set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF namely, necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

7.12 Contamination

The Council public protection have carefully considered the application and are satisfied that if permission is granted this can be controlled by a planning condition. It is considered the recommended condition meets the 6 tests set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF namely, necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

7.13 Energy Efficiency

Policy CC1 requires that a sustainability statement be submitted with all major applications.

The application is supported by an Energy and Sustainability Statement. In addition to the ecology and transport initiatives detailed in the report the Statement outlines the applicant's commitment to:

- a development powered by 100% renewable energy (at least half of this generated on-site through solar (PV) panels) and battery back-up storage technology
- Heating requirements being generated on site by heat pumps
- a Zero requirement for gas/diesel onsite as a deliberate measure to eradicate fossil fuel consumption in operation
- Site-wide reduction measures for the consumption of water and energy
- The use of low-carbon materials for construction, sourced locally wherever possible to limit vehicle movements
- A Highly dynamic management of all high carbon generating installations, for example HVAC, with proactive 'hibernate' strategy for any fallow facilities for the time they are fallow
- Maximise natural lighting opportunities, therefore reducing energy use associated with lighting systems, including highly flexible presence detection systems
- Onsite waste storage to encourage recycling, and reduce waste to landfill
- achieve energy efficiency, accreditation through a BREEAM Excellent rating
- Building Management Systems designed to provide real time visibility and control over energy use

- 7.14 This statement has been submitted and reviewed by the Council's Sustainable Growth Officer. The officer raises no objection subject to one condition to secure additional information on preventing risk of overheating occurring and a second condition to secure a post-construction verification report that demonstrated that all buildings are delivered to the agreed policy compliant standards. It is considered the recommended condition meets the 6 tests set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF namely, necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

7.15 Environmental Code of Practice for Developers and Contractors

In order to minimise the impact of development on natural features, the Council has endorsed an Environmental Code of Practice for Developers and Contractors. Should permission be granted, it is recommended that the S106 include a requirement for the developer to comply with the requirements set out in this document.

7.16 Equality and Human Rights

Based on information submitted there are no known issues raised in the context of Human Rights / The Equalities Act 2010 and as such there would be no relevant implications.

7.17 Fire Hydrants

The Bedfordshire Fire Service has identified that new developments should allow for the provision of fire hydrants and appropriate access. This is a matter than could be

secured by condition. In addition, officers are satisfied that fire trucks can enter and turn within the site. It is considered the recommended condition meets the 6 tests set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF namely, necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

7.18 Historic environment

The Local Plan sets out several policies relating to the management of the Historic Environment: Policy HE1: Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments; HE2 Historic Parks and Gardens; HE3 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. These policies align with the requirements set out by the NPPF, the aim of which is to preserve or where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets. Policy HE1 states that development proposals which result in substantial harm to the significance of heritage assets, or their setting, will be refused unless the harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the previously mentioned impacts.

7.19 Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments

CBC Archaeology have carefully considered Chapter 13 (Built Heritage) of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The Assessment rightly considers the impact of the development on Houghton House (HER 729, NHLE 1013522: Scheduled Monument) and the medieval moat at the Old Rectory in Houghton Conquest (HER 3236, NHLE 1009588: Scheduled Monument). Chapter 13 concludes that no significant adverse environmental effects are considered likely. CBC Archaeology agree with this conclusion. Specifically, that the impact of the development proposals on the significance of these designated heritage assets (by virtue of development within their settings) is unlikely to result in substantial harm. Notwithstanding it is considered that the public benefits outweigh the limited impacts to the historic assets. Accordingly the proposal conforms with local plan policy HE1.

7.20 Historic parks and gardens

CBC Archaeology and Conservation officers have carefully considered Chapter 13 (Built Heritage) of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The Assessment considers impact of the development on Ampthill Park (HER 1369, NHLE 1000378: Registered Park and Garden). Chapter 13 concludes that no significant adverse environmental effects are considered likely. CBC Conservation Officers agree with this conclusion and agree that the impact of the development proposals on the significance of these designated heritage assets (by virtue of development within their settings) is unlikely to result in substantial harm. Notwithstanding it is considered that the public benefits outweigh the limited impacts to the historic assets. Accordingly, the proposal conforms with local plan policy HE2.

7.21 Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

The Council is required by Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the settings of listed buildings and the character and appearance of a Conservation Area.

7.22 CBC Conservation officers have carefully considered Chapter 13 (Built Heritage) of the Environmental Impact Assessment and accompanying LVIA. The Assessment considers impact of the proposal on the 6 listed buildings (Sir Malcom Stewart Trust Homes (Grade II) and Common Room (Grade II), Stewartby Brickworks (Grade II), Church of All Saints (Grade I), 16 and 17 How End Road (Grade II), Ampthill Park House (Grade II*)) which are within 4km of the site. Chapter 13 concludes that no significant adverse environmental effects are considered likely. CBC Conservation agree with this conclusion and agree that the impact of the development proposals on the significance of these designated heritage assets (by virtue of development within their settings) is unlikely to result in substantial harm. Notwithstanding it is considered that the public benefits outweigh the limited impacts to the historic assets. Accordingly, the proposal conforms with local plan policy HE2.

7.23 Stewartby Conservation Area (within BBC Authority Area) is situated 150 metres to the west of the site boundary. The Conservation Area's Special Interest derives from

the architectural and historic importance of the village as an example of a carefully planned model-village and a large and significant brickworks. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area is one of a low density, carefully planned village with well-preserved historic bungalows that retain their original detailing. The open spaces and overall plan of the village is an important part of the Conservation Area's significance. Given that the raised railway between the two acts as a strong visual and physical barrier, officers agreed with the conclusions in Chapter 13 that the proposal will not impact on this heritage asset. Accordingly the proposal conforms with local plan policy HE3. BBC have raised no conservation related concerns

- 7.24 Given the above the proposal would, therefore, satisfy the provisions of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as supported by the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF.

7.25 **Planning Obligations**

Significant weight should be given to the National Planning Policy Framework, which calls for the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Policy HQ2 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. This states that developers are required to make appropriate contributions as necessary to offset the cost of providing new physical, social, community and environmental proposals. Policy HQ2 is in accordance with Paragraph 57 of the NPPF which states:

Planning obligations must only be sought where they meet all of the following tests:

- (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

These tests are also set out by Regulation 122(2) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).

- 7.26 Following negotiation, the applicant has agreed to the following (which meet the above tests) being included in the S106

A - Delivery, phasing and long term management and monitoring of both on and off-site BNG for a minimum 30 year period

B - Ecological mitigation and enhancement (Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)): a min 70+ha to be secured off site to deliver a minimum 10% net gain

C - Employment and training plan – the applicant is committed to work with local education centres to support training of future workforce.

D - Forest of Marston Vale tree cover contribution: financial contribution payable towards off-site tree planting. The calculation and contribution will take into account any off site provision (including that within the off-site BNG delivery strategy).

E - Travel Plan. Preparation and implementation of the travel plan will be required prior to first occupation of the facility. This part of the S106 will include a financial contribution towards the monitoring of the travel plan.

F - Off-site footway/cycleway improvements (linking the site to the Wixhams/Thickthorn Park development)

G - Bike hire contribution: Contribution to cycle hire facilities at Wixhams Station (when operational)

H - Shuttle bus provision for the lifetime of the development, in accordance with the level of service detailed within the submitted Technical Note BE5650-SPD TN-03, Table 6.1. Importantly the service to operate 7 days a week, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Authority.

I - Upgrade of the 2 nearest bus stops (on B530) with raised kerbs, shelters, real-time information screens including the provision of a surfaced link on the eastern side of the B530.

J - A Contribution towards traffic calming measures for Houghton Conquest of £144,000.

K – Updated transport report. Each application associated with phases beyond Phase 1a and 1b of the application shall be associated with an updated Transport Report, in which the impact of development traffic on the junctions at Beancroft Road / Bedford Road, and Chapel End Road / A6 shall be reported. The report shall also detail the proportion of development traffic routing south on the B530. As a minimum each Transport Report shall include:

1-Updated traffic data for the junctions and routes in question (baseline and forecast)

2-Assessment of the number of development trips utilising the routes / junctions in question, based upon ANPR surveys.

3-Updated transport modelling for the junctions in question.

4-A comparison against the forecast impacts contained within the original Transport Assessment.

Should the Transport Report identify a level of impact equal to, or greater than that identified in the original Transport Assessment, then the need for either works or a comparable contribution would be triggered. Should the Transport Report identify a level of traffic routing south on the B530 above that predicted in the submitted TA, then an agreed sum per additional trip will be payable towards traffic management measures to the south of the site.

L - Contribution of £550,000 towards offsite mitigation works at both ends of Manor Road

M - Contribution of £200,000 towards off site mitigation works in the Cow bridge area

N - Offsite mitigation works at A421 / Beancroft Road, as shown indicatively on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-014 – to be provided as either works or equivalent contribution, with the trigger for works to be based upon an updated transport report to be submitted with each phase reserved matters application.

O - Offsite mitigation works at Chapel End Road / A6, as shown indicatively on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-019 – to be provided as either works or equivalent contribution, with the trigger for works to be based upon an updated transport report to be submitted with each phase reserved matters application.

P - The funding/delivery of a scheme to revise the environmental weight restriction on the B530, moving the existing restriction to the immediate south of the southern access roundabout. (involves the making of a revision to the existing Traffic Regulation Order and associated signage) This to be implemented prior to any construction, major earthworks, or materials import / export.

Q - The funding/delivery of a scheme (including the associated traffic regulation order) to extend the 40mph limit to a location south of the proposed northern site access junction. This to be implemented prior to the commencement of development, including any major earthworks or the import or export of materials.

R - The funding/delivery of a scheme (including the associated traffic regulation order) to implement a 50mph limit, running between a point south of the Stewartby Way junction and the extended 40mph limit to the north. This to be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development.

8. Summary of Sustainability

- 8.1 The NPPF identifies at para. 7 and 8 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, namely economic, social and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

8.2 Economic

Policy SP1 of the CBLP sets out the Growth Strategy for Central Bedfordshire Council and identifies a target to deliver 24,000 new jobs and 240,000sqm of new commercial floorspace over the plan period 2015 to 2035. The policy is supported by the NPPF, which at para. 81 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. 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.”

- 8.3 The application proposals represent a major new development within Central Bedfordshire. The development will provide 139,000sqm of new floorspace. The construction period alone is expected to span across a number of years (6 years) and will require an eclectic mix of skilled tradesman to carry out various elements of the proposed development. Approximately 1200 temporary construction jobs will be created for the on-site works. Given the anticipated level of employment to be created during this period, it is highly conceivable that local businesses and supply chains and the local economy in general will benefit from the development.
- 8.4 As has been set out already, once the development becomes operational, up to 5,500 new jobs are to be created at the proposed facility. 1,400 of those jobs will be high value jobs associated with film production, including actors, directors, writers, producers and specialist technicians. In addition, the proposed development will generate the need for skilled technicians and fitters, engineers across a wide variety of different disciplines, specialist and wider support roles and managerial and senior leadership roles.
- 8.5 From the application submission, it is clear that education is very important to the applicant and this is reflected in its commitment to create direct education opportunities with local schools and colleges including establishment of work experience opportunities, apprenticeships and curriculum development. Introducing apprenticeships within this environment would be hugely beneficial and would provide wider opportunities for joined up working and upskilling of the future workforce.
- 8.6 The application estimates that the new jobs created and the economic benefits that they will bring to the prosperity of Central Bedfordshire and the surrounding areas could be to the region of £104 million per annum and will contribute to it becoming a more attractive place to live and work.
- 8.7 The Council's Business Investment Team has reviewed the application and has advised that is supportive of the proposals from an Inward Investment perspective, with there being a clear alignment with the Council's Economic Strategy (2021), which in its 'Supporting our Businesses' theme states:

“...we also want to attract new innovative businesses to the area who will invest in Central Bedfordshire, employ local people and bring vibrancy to our market towns and attract a range of businesses, of different sizes, in different sectors.”

- 8.8 The Business Investment Team go on to advise that Bedfordshire is home to one of the key film studios known as Cardington Studio and with Luton recently securing a Bollywood production company, a new studio of this scale in Central Bedfordshire could help complement the existing ones, be of significance to help with the economic recovery and contribute to the Government's ambitions to grow and develop industries UK-wide.
- 8.9 With regard to the Economic strand of sustainability, the jobs to be created will be diverse, highly skilled and will provide a notable boost to local employment and the local economy.
- 8.10 Based on the foregoing, the proposed development would afford very significant economic benefits to the area, which is afforded significant weight in the consideration of the application
- 8.11 Social
The Economic benefits set out above would, in turn, provide social benefits. Specifically, job creation often improves income distribution, reduces inequality and results in decreased crime rates.
- 8.12 The application proposes off-site improvements to local footpaths, which will strengthen connectivity between the application site and the Mill View/Thickthorn Park development.
- 8.13 This will make wider services more accessible to future employees and will improve sustainable travel mode choices for employees living in proximity to the site. The provision of the proposed footpath/cycle link will also lead to significant improvements in highway and pedestrian safety. These are matters which attract positive weight.
- 8.14 The proposed development will generate increased traffic movements in and around the site and mitigation will be provided in the form of upgraded highway junction arrangements and in places, a reduction in speed limits. Whilst these changes will predominantly mitigate the impact of the development, they will result in some minor social benefits and as such, they carry limited weight in favour of the proposals.
- 8.15 Para. 95 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to development that will widen choice in education. It goes on to advise that to achieve this, they should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications. As set out previously, the applicant will introduce an annual intake of apprenticeships. This would contribute to strengthening the broad range of education available in the immediate area and the wider Central Bedfordshire catchment and attracts positive weight.
- 8.16 Based on the foregoing, the proposed development would result in demonstrable social benefits to the area, which cumulatively are given slightly more than moderate weight in the consideration of the application.
- 8.17 Environmental
The foregoing report has carefully considered matters relating to flood risk, pollution, impact upon climate change and sustainability, and matters relating to the natural and historic character. Each of these elements have, subject to a planning obligation/ planning condition, been found to be acceptable and policy compliant. Accordingly, the impact with regards to these elements will be a neutral.
- 8.18 There are however clear and considerable environmental improvements (positive contribution towards the Forest of Marston Vale, the integration of a strategic drainage scheme including various SuDS measures, various upgrades to the local highway network, notable improvements to pedestrian and cycle connectivity and through a strong intention to reduce the impact of the ground operations associated with the business on climate change) being generated by the proposals. These improvements

will not only benefit the future operations of the proposed development but will also extend to environmental improvements to the local area. This weighs in favour of the application.

- 8.19 Notwithstanding the above large and complex development will always result in notable impacts upon environmental measures. Most significantly, this application for the provision of a new film and Tv Studio campus will cause harm to a County Wildlife Site. The impact to this designation will initially / in the short term be substantial and this weighs heavily against the development proposal. The applicant recognises that the loss of part of the CWS has significant ecological impacts. Notwithstanding the mitigation set out in the report, the applicant states that to compensate for the loss of habitats on site they will create a variety of replacement habitats at an off-site location (or locations).
- 8.20 Importantly, and in addition to the need to create replacement open water, reedbed and open mosaic habitats to achieve the required minimum 10% BNG, the applicant has also confirmed that they will be creating and managing the habitats specifically for the benefits of the bird species associated with the CWS designation (both qualifying species and other key species that have since moved in).
- 8.21 The replacement habitat will instigate a significant increase in biodiversity (almost three times as much being created (70ha) as will be lost (27ha)). Just as importantly both the replacement site and the remaining habitat at Quest Pit will be managed going forward.
- 8.22 In addition to the above, it is recognised that these on site and off site areas will provide an invaluable educational and recreational resource for local people and school children. Boardwalks and bird hides will be provided (both at Quest Pit and at the offsetting site) to allow managed access, thus allowing people to enjoy the wildlife without disturbing the birds.
- 8.23 Given the initial substantial impact to the CWS it could be argued that no environmental weight should be apportioned to the proposed development. However on the basis of the foregoing discussion, over the medium to longer term (as the off-site habitat establishes) the ecological benefits are considered to counterbalance the harm to the CWS. Taking into account the cumulative harm and benefits listed above, officers are of the view that when considered in the whole, there will be environmental benefits in the medium to long term.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The planning application raises a number of planning issues for consideration, which has demanded a difficult and complex evaluation of many impacts arising from the proposed development, both positive and negative. This assessment has taken into account relevant policies of the CBLP, the NPPF and the information set out in the Environmental Statement.
- 9.2 Most importantly the application must be considered against section 38 (6) of the planning and compulsory purchase act 2004 namely, that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Throughout this report any conflicts with the development plan and the NPPF 2021 have been identified. The conflicts are summarised below.
- 9.3 Policy SP7 of the CBLP advises that the Council will recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and only particular types of development will be permitted. The site is not allocated for development in the Local Plan and accordingly there is conflict with policy SP7. Given that Policy EMP5 (Significant Facilities in the Countryside and Green Belt) supports the principle of significant employment generating uses within the countryside it is considered that this conflict is minor but nonetheless weighs against the proposal.

- 9.4 Policy EE2 of the CBLP seeks to enhance biodiversity through the conservation, restoration, enhancement and creation of ecological networks and that adverse impacts must be mitigated. Similarly, Policy EE3 requires that important habitats are protected, maintained and enhanced. The policy adds that surveys and mitigation will be sought.
- 9.5 These policies are supported by Para. 174 of the NPPF. This requires planning that decisions contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst other criteria, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils and minimising impacts on biodiversity. Each of these policies seek to ensure that:
- development proposals have a positive impact upon the natural environment. The loss of 29% of the County Wildlife Site is clearly at odds with these policies and in the short term the harm significantly weighs against the proposal. However, taking account the proposed mitigation and compensation it is considered that the degree of impact will reduce overtime. In the medium/longer term, it is your officer view that the mitigation/compensation will counterbalance the short term harm and at a point in time (given that both nature reserves will be managed) there will be a benefit to local ecology.
- 9.6 The proposed development of a film and TV studio campus in the district is considered to have substantial economic and social benefits. The proposals will create employment opportunities and would indirectly support other associated business activities in the area. Safe access to the development could also be achieved by motorised and non motorised transport. The economic and social roles of sustainable development as defined in the NPPF would thus be supported and this attracts significant weight.
- 9.7 In relation to environmental considerations the visual and landscape impacts of the proposals are considered to be localised and not significantly adverse as these will be mitigated by the layout and design of the scheme and proposed landscaping. Existing valuable landscape features could be retained and (even taking into account the impact on the CWS) there would be a net gain in biodiversity value. The proposals would not result in any significant adverse effects on the amenity of local residents. The harm to the historic assets would be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal.
- 9.8 Having fully assessed all three dimensions of sustainable development economic environmental and social within this report it is concluded that the development of this site will subject to the recommended conditions
- Provide a needed film studio
 - provide a design of development that is acceptable
 - not cause significant detrimental impact to amenity of users of the development or neighbouring activities and users
 - not cause a severe highway impact
 - promote biodiversity
 - minimise pollution and contamination manage flood risk and drainage effectively
 - provide public benefits that outweigh harm to the historic assets.
- 9.9 Based on the overall assessment of the proposed development, which has regard to all information submitted with the application, all consultation responses and third-party representations received, it is concluded that the balance of arguments falls in favour of the proposed development. The site is suitable for the proposed uses and there are no effects which count significantly against the proposal or which outweigh the economic and social benefits of the development. Great consideration is given to the impact on the county wildlife site however taking into account the economic social and long term environmental benefits of the development the short term harm can be justified. Whilst it is accepted that the proposal conflicts with a number of planning policies in local plan there are material considerations identified throughout the report that justify your officers recommendation to approve the application. Importantly the proposed development would not conflict with the

development plan or the NPPF 2021 when taken as a whole and is acceptable. There are no overriding material considerations that indicate that permission should not be granted in this instance.

- 9.10 As such the proposed development is considered to comply with the objectives of Policies SP1, SP5, SP7, EMP1, EMP3, EMP5, T1, T2, T3, T5, EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE9, CC1, CC3, CC4, CC5, CC6, CC8, HQ1, HQ2, HQ5, HQ7, HQ9, HE1, HE2 and HE3 of the CBLP (2021), and the NPPF (2021). The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the stated planning conditions and a S106 legal agreement.

Recommendation:

The Planning Permission be APPROVED subject to the signing of a legal agreement and to the following planning conditions:

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS / REASONS

- 1 **Conditions relating to the FULL planning permission**
The full element of the development hereby permitted (phase 1 (Entrance Zone), 1a (Production Zone 1) and 1b (Production Zone 2) which includes 54,334sqm of stages and workshops (E(g) (i-iii), 50sqm education hub (F.1(a)), 384sqm transport hub (F.2(b)), 384sqm community floorspace (F.2(b)), 8,701sqm of ancillary floorspace (E(g)(i-iii) and B8) and site wide enabling works.) shall begin no later than five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plan numbers:
PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0600, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0611, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0612, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0613, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0001, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0003, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0004, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0005, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0006, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0010, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0011, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0210, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0211, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0212, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0213, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0214, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0215, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0216, PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-DR-C-0217, PALM1-SBR-S00200 Overall Masterplan, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80120, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80101, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80102, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80103, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80104, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80105, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80106, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80109, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80111, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80119, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80112, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80113, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80114, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80115, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80116, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80117, PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80118, PALM1-SBR-S01-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-S01-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-S01-00-DR-A-83102, PALM1-SBR-S01-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-S01-00-DR-A-84102, PALM1-SBR-S02-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-S02-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-S02-00-DR-A-83102, PALM1-SBR-S02-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-S02-00-DR-A-84102, PALM1-SBR-S03-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-S03-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-S03-00-DR-A-83102, PALM1-SBR-S03-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-S03-00-DR-A-84102, PALM1-SBR-S04-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-S04-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-S04-00-DR-A-83102, PALM1-SBR-S04-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-S04-00-DR-A-84102, PALM1-SBR-S05-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-S05-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-S05-00-DR-A-83102,

PALM1-SBR-S05-00-DR-A-84101 PALM1-SBR-S05-00-DR-A-84102
 PALM1-SBR-S08-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-S08-00-DR-A-83101,
 PALM1-SBR-S08-00-DR-A-83102, PALM1-SBR-S08-00-DR-A-84101,
 PALM1-SBR-S08-00-DR-A-84102, PALM1-SBR-S13-00-DR-A-83100,
 PALM1-SBR-S13-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-S13-00-DR-A-83102,
 PALM1-SBR-S13-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-S13-00-DR-A-84102,
 PALM1-SBR-W01-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-W01-00-DR-A-83101,
 PALM1-SBR-W01-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-W02-00-DR-A-83100,
 PALM1-SBR-W02-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-W02-00-DR-A-84101,
 PALM1-SBR-W03-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-W03-00-DR-A-83101,
 PALM1-SBR-W03-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-W04-00-DR-A-83100,
 PALM1-SBR-W04-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-W04-00-DR-A-84101,
 PALM1-SBR-W05-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-W05-00-DR-A-83101,
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 PALM1-SBR-W07-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-W07-00-DR-A-83101,
 PALM1-SBR-W07-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-W17-00-DR-A-83100,
 PALM1-SBR-W17-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-W17-00-DR-A-84101,
 PALM1-SBR-W18-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-W18-00-DR-A-83101,
 PALM1-SBR-W18-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-OA1-00-DR-A-83100,
 PALM1-SBR-OA1-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-OA1-00-DR-A-84101,
 PALM1-SBR-OA2-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-OA2-00-DR-A-84101,
 PALM1-SBR-OA3-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-OA3-00-DR-A-83101,
 PALM1-SBR-OA3-00-DR-A-83102, PALM1-SBR-OA3-00-DR-A-84101,
 PALM1-SBR-C01-00-DR-A-83100, PALM1-SBR-C01-00-DR-A-83101,
 PALM1-SBR-C01-00-DR-A-84101, PALM1-SBR-H01-00-DR-A-83100,
 PALM1-SBR-H01-00-DR-A-83101, PALM1-SBR-H01-00-DR-A-84101,
 PALM1-SBR-V01-00-DR-A-83100

Reason: To ensure that the development is consistent with the approved permission, and to ensure a satisfactory impact occurs on the surrounding environment. To accord with the objectives of Policies EMP5, T2, EE5, and HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) and the NPPF.

3 **Conditions relating to the OUTLINE planning permission**

No development, in relation to that part of the site for which Outline planning permission is granted, apart from enabling works, earthworks and access works, shall commence before detailed plans showing the layout, scale and external appearance of the buildings to be constructed and landscaping to be implemented (hereinafter referred to as "the Reserved Matters") for the relevant phase have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: To comply with Part 3 Article 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015.

4 Applications for the approval of the Reserved Matters shall be made to the Local Planning Authority not later than 5 years from the date of this permission. The development hereby permitted in Outline form shall be begun not later than 5 years from the date of this permission, or not later than two years from the date of approval of the last Reserved Matters, whichever is the later.

Reason: To comply with Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

5 The Outline element of the application shall be carried out in accordance with: i. the design principles contained in section 5 of the Design and Access Statement Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-RP-A-80001 and Design Code Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-RP-A-80002;

ii. the mitigation requirements set out in Table 16.1 of the Environmental Statement dated August 2022

iii. in substantial compliance with the following plans: Palm1- SBR-ZZ-00-DR-A-00200, ,Overall Masterplan Rev C08, Palm1-EXX-00DR-A-80109 Phasing Plan Rev C05, Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80114 Parameter Plan A Rev C06, Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80111 Parameter Plan B Rev C06, Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80112 Parameter Plan C Rev C05, Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80113 Parameter Plan D Rev C05, Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80115 Parameter Plan F Rev C05, Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80116 Parameter Plan G Rev C05, Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80117 Parameter Plan H Rev C05

Reason: To ensure that the detailed development is consistent with the Approved Outline permission, and to ensure a satisfactory impact occurs on the surrounding environment. To accord with the objectives of Policies EMP5, T2, EE5, and HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) and the NPPF.

- 6 Notwithstanding the information contained on drawing Palm1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80109 Phasing Plan Rev C05 alongside the submission of the first reserved matters application, a Site Wide Phasing Plan shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. This shall include the broad sequence of the following elements and a mechanism for the review and amendment of the phasing plan:

- the Development Parcels
- major on-site and where relevant off-site infrastructure works
- on-site parking
- sustainable drainage systems

No development other than on phase 1 shall commence until the Site Wide Phasing Plan has been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any subsequent changes to the approved Site Wide Phasing Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the phasing contained within the approved Phasing Plan.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate standard of development and to provide understanding and control of the phasing timetable.

- 7 For the avoidance of doubt finished building heights shall not exceed those indicated on drawing no. PALM1-SBR-EXX-00-DR-A-80111 Rev C06- Parameter Plan B - Proposed Height.

Reason: This matter is fundamental to the acceptable delivery of the permission to safeguard the amenities of nearby properties and to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.

8 **Conditions relating to the entire development site**

The maximum cumulative floorspace of the buildings hereby approved (which, for the avoidance of doubt includes any mezzanine floor areas) shall not exceed 139,000sqm square metres gross internal floor area. Phase 1 shall comprise no more than 64,000sqm (54,334sqm E(g) (i-iii) Stages & Workshops, 50sqm F.1(a) Education Hub, 384sqm F.2(b) Transport Hub, 384sqm F.2(b) Community Hub, 8,701sqm E(g)(i-iii) & B8 ancillary floorspace) and phase 2 and 3 shall comprise no more than 75,000 sq metres of floor space overall within the use classes E(g) (i-iii) & B8 for Stages, Workshops and Storage, and ancillary overnight accommodation, 1,200 space multi storey car park and other associated ancillary floorspace.

Reason: To control the cumulative floor area of the proposed development and to ensure that the site is not overdeveloped to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area.

- 9 The film and tv studio campus buildings including overnight accommodation and education/community uses hereby permitted shall be for those uses only and for no other purposes unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To control the future use and activities of the buildings in the development

- 10 Prior to the commencement of development including site clearance, earthworks, or the import and export of materials a Construction Traffic, Environment, Waste and Soil Management Plan shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority for each phase. The Construction Traffic, Environment, Waste and Soil Management Plan shall be informed by the Construction Environment Management Plan (Framework). The Construction Traffic, Environment, Waste and Soil Management Plan shall include site procedures to be adopted during the course of construction for the relevant part of the development to which it relates. This shall include:
- Details of ANPR monitoring to monitor and manage the routing of construction phase traffic.
 - Proposed means of construction access, including appropriate visibility;
 - The parking of vehicles; Loading and unloading of plant and materials used in the development;
 - Storage of plant and materials used in the development;
 - The erection and maintenance of security hoarding / scaffolding affecting the highway if required;
 - Wheel washing facilities;
 - Measures on site to control the deposition of dirt / mud on surrounding roads during the development;
 - Footpath/footway/cycleway or road closures needed during the development period;
 - Traffic management needed during the development period;
 - Times, routes and means of access and egress for construction traffic and delivery vehicles (including the import of materials and the removal of waste from the site) during the development of the site;
 - Details of escorts for abnormal loads;
 - Temporary removal and replacement of highway infrastructure and street furniture; temporary (or otherwise) widening of roads to accommodate vehicles along construction access routes;
 - The reinstatement of any signs, verges or other items displaced by construction traffic;
 - Banksman and escort details; and
 - Tracking diagrams.
 - a dust management plan
 - noise and vibration management plan
 - location of site compound
 - loading and unloading of plant and materials
 - the erection and maintenance of security fencing/hoardings and lighting
 - parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
 - storage of waste and streaming of waste for recycling
 - control of construction hours
 - Details of the protection of habitats and protected species to include full details of a site resurvey for protected species in advance of development in sufficient time to modify plans and / or acquire relevant licences and details of how the status of protected species within the site will be kept under review during construction.
 - Details of retained tree and hedge areas and measures for their protection.

The construction of the development of each Development Phase shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Construction Traffic, Environment, Waste and Soil Management Plan for that Development Phase.

Reason: In order to minimise the impact of construction work on the highway network, the amenities of nearby residential properties and on existing trees, landscape features and biodiversity (Section 12 and 15, NPPF) This information is required prior to the commencement of the works to ensure the construction operations do not have an adverse impact on the highway network, the amenities of nearby residential properties and on existing trees, landscape features and biodiversity

- 11 Prior to the commencement of development of each phase a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority for that Development Parcel or Infrastructure Parcel. The submitted Landscape and Ecology Management Plan shall be informed by the Biodiversity Net Gain Plan and shall include the following:
- Description and evaluation of features to be managed
 - Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management
 - Aims and objectives of management
 - Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives (to include but not limited to a woodland management program and habitat creation and enhancement works)
 - Prescriptions for management actions
 - Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period)
 - Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan
 - Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures
 - The legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery
 - Details of how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme
- The development of each Development Phase shall take place in accordance with the approved Landscape and Ecology Management Plan for that Development Phase.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area including the intrinsic character and beauty of the Countryside, to ensure that the appearance of the development would be acceptable, as well as to ensure a net gain for biodiversity, in accordance with Policies EE1, EE2, EE4, EE5, EE13 and HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021).

- 12 Prior to the commencement of development of any phase excluding Enabling Works, a Site Wide Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy to include an updated Biodiversity Net Gain metric shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Site Wide Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy shall include:
- The baseline biodiversity position for each phase
 - In broad strategic terms, how 10% biodiversity net gain over the baseline position will be achieved across the development

Reason: To ensure a net gain for biodiversity is achieved from the development, to accord with the objectives of Policies EE1, and EE2 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021). This information is required prior to the commencement of the works to ensure the site operations do not have an adverse impact on any natural features to be retained

- 13 Prior to the commencement of development excluding Enabling Works, a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan shall be submitted to and to be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority for that phase of development. The specific Biodiversity Net Gain Plan will accord with the approved Sitewide Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy. The Biodiversity Net Gain Plan shall include:
- Details on how the proposed development has taken steps to avoid and minimise impacts on biodiversity
 - Details of the on-site biodiversity measures that are to be undertaken, the pre-development and post-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitats for that Development Parcel
 - Details of off-Site biodiversity measures
- The development of each Development phase shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Net Gain Plan for that phase.

Reason: To ensure a net gain for biodiversity is achieved from the development, to accord with the objectives of Policies EE1, and EE2 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021). This information is required prior to the commencement of the works to ensure the site operations do not have an adverse impact on any natural features to be retained

- 14 Prior to the commencement of development on any phase which contains or is in close proximity to any tree, full details of Tree Protection Measures to be implemented, including a Tree Protection Plan showing substantial protective fencing for the protection of all trees to be retained on that phase, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved Tree Protection Measures for a development phase shall be installed and maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from that phase of development. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any protected fenced area in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those protected fenced areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made except as permitted by the relevant Tree Protection Plan.

Reason: To safeguard the existing trees on the site in the interests of visual amenity. To accord with the objectives of Policy EE4 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) This information is required prior to the commencement of the works to ensure the site operations do not have an adverse impact on any natural features to be retained

- 15 No phase of development hereby approved shall be occupied until details of external artificial lighting have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. Lighting contours shall be submitted to demonstrate that the vertical illumination of neighbouring premises is in accordance with the recommendations of the Institution of Lighting Professionals in the 'Guidance Note 01/20: Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light'. Details should also be submitted for approval of measures to minimise use of lighting and prevent glare and sky glow by correctly using, locating, aiming and shielding luminaires. Colour of lighting shall appear warm and not exceeding 3000 kelvin (K) and be compatible with landscape and background light conditions. Approved details shall be implemented prior to occupation of the development and thereafter be permanently retained Internal Lighting (light pollution emitted through glazing/ membrane) eg. Air Halls. The development shall take place in accordance with the Lighting Scheme approved.

Reason: To protect the amenity of existing local residents, to minimise impact on biodiversity and the adjacent railway. To accord with the objectives of Policies CC8 and HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) and the NPPF.

- 16 Prior to the commencement of any above ground construction works for any building hereby approved, details of the external building materials to be used for the external windows (glazing detail shall include mitigation measures to minimise light trespass, glare and sky glow from internally transmitted or reflected artificial light), doors, walls, roofs and rainwater goods of that proposed building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The buildings shall thereafter be constructed in accordance with the approved external building materials details.

Reason: To protect the amenity of existing local residents, to minimise impact on biodiversity and the adjacent railway and to ensure a high standard in the quality of the development in accordance with the objectives of Policies CC8 and HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) and the NPPF.

- 17 No building shall be occupied until the developer has formally submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority a finalised 'Maintenance and Management Plan' for the entire surface water drainage system, inclusive of any adoption arrangements and/or private ownership or responsibilities, and a Verification Report that the surface water drainage scheme has been correctly and fully installed as per the final approved details. The surface water drainage shall be constructed to manage surface water runoff from the development for up to and including the 1 in 100+40%CC rainfall event, via release to lake and controlled (inactive high flow pump) discharge from lake. The final detailed design shall be based on the agreed Drainage Strategy (Ref: PALM1-SWE-XX-XX-RP—0002 19/8/2022) and DEFRA's Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (March 2015) and shall be implemented and maintained as approved. Maintenance will ensure the system functions as designed for the lifetime of the development. Any variation to the connections and controls indicated on the approved drawing which may be necessary at the time of construction would require the resubmission of those details to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The discharge rate from the development will be agreed by the Bedford Group of Internal Drainage Boards. The applicant should address points 1 to 6 (Informative 1) when submitting details to discharge the condition:

Reason; To ensure the approved system will function to a satisfactory minimum standard of operation and maintenance and prevent the increased risk of flooding both on and off site, in accordance with CBC Local policy CC3 to CC5 and NPPF Paras 159 to 169 inclusive of foot notes 54 to 56 and its supporting technical guidance.

- 18 The development hereby permitted must not commence (excluding enabling works) until such time as a scheme to:
- Provide detailed designs of the alterations to the Harrowden Brook and the Lake
 - provide model files and outputs to update the flood map for planning (rivers and Sea). (These will be based upon the detailed design of the development and alterations of the Harrowden Brook.)
- has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The scheme shall be fully implemented and subsequently maintained, in accordance with the scheme's timing/phasing arrangements

Reason: To ensure that there are no detrimental impacts to flood storage or flood flow routes. This condition is pre-commencement as it is likely to require groundworks prior to any construction works commencing.

- 19 Prior to commencement of development above slab level on each Development Phase, excluding Enabling Works, details of Carbon Reduction / Sustainability Strategy demonstrating how that Development Phase will comply with the objectives set out in Policy CC1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall include:

a-How a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by at least 10% against Building Regulations, Part L 2013 will be achieved.

b-How the design maximises opportunities for inclusion of renewable energy generation.

c-How a higher water efficiency standard (110 litres per person per day as a minimum) shall be achieved.

d-How a water sensitive approach has been taken, including the incorporation of measures such as grey water recycling and water butts, that further promote water efficiency and aim to achieve water neutrality.

The development of each phase shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved Carbon Reduction / Sustainability Strategy for that Development Phase.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability and to minimise the impact of the development on climate change, in accordance with Policies CC1, EE2, EE4, CC3, CC5 and HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan

- 20 Within 3 months of practical completion of each Development Phase, a Verification Survey for that Development Phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, which confirms that the measures set out in the Carbon Reduction / Sustainability Strategy to address climate change and sustainability in the development, have been implemented in full.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability and to minimise the impact of the development on climate change, in accordance with Policies CC1, EE2, EE4, CC3, CC5 and HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan

- 21 Prior to commencement of development above slab level on each development phase, details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council, of the external sound level emitted from premises and plant/ machinery/ equipment and mitigation measures as appropriate. The measures shall ensure that the external sound level emitted from plant, machinery/ equipment shall not exceed existing background sound level in order to prevent any adverse impact. 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 occupation of each specific phase of development and thereafter be permanently retained.

Reason: To protect the amenity of existing local residents

- 22 Prior to commencement of development above slab level on each development phase, details of anti-vibration measures including a timetable for implementation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The measures shall ensure that machinery [plant/ equipment] [extract/ ventilation system and ducting] are mounted with proprietary anti-vibration isolators and fan motors are vibration isolated from the casing and adequately silenced. Approved details shall be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable of implementation and thereafter permanently retained.

Reason: To protect the amenity of existing local residents

- 23 Prior to commencement of development above slab level on each development phase, details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council, of the installation, operation, and maintenance of the odour abatement equipment and extract system, including the height of the extract duct and vertical discharge outlet,

in accordance with the EMAQ+ publication Control of Odour and Noise from Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Systems. Approved details shall be implemented prior to the commencement of the use and thereafter be permanently retained.

Reason: To protect the amenity of existing local residents

- 24 No development (with the exception of enabling and relevant investigation works) shall commence until a site investigation undertaken in compliance with the approved site investigation scheme, and a quantitative risk assessment report is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This report shall: assess the degree and nature of any contamination identified on the site through the site investigation; include a revised conceptual site model from the preliminary risk assessment based on the information gathered through the site investigation to confirm the existence of any remaining pollutant linkages and determine the risks posed by any contamination to human health, controlled waters and the wider environment. All works must be carried out in compliance with and by a competent person who conforms to Land Contamination Risk Management (LRCM) Guide (Environmental Agency 2020) or the current UK requirements for sampling and testing.

Reason: To protect the amenity of future occupiers and the environment. This condition is pre-commencement as it is likely to require groundworks prior to any construction works commencing.

- 25 In the event that contamination is discovered, works shall immediately cease on site. No development shall commence again until, a remediation method statement is submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. This statement shall detail any required remediation works and shall be designed to mitigate any remaining risks identified in the approved quantitative risk assessment. All works must be carried out in compliance with and by a competent person who conforms to Land Contamination Risk Management (LRCM) Guide (Environmental Agency 2020) or the current UK requirements for sampling and testing. Unless the Council agree in writing, no development shall recommence until the approved remediation method statement has been carried out in full and a verification report confirming these works has been submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Council. This report shall include: details of the remediation works carried out; results of any verification sampling, testing or monitoring including the analysis of any imported soil; all waste management documentation showing the classification of waste, its treatment, movement and disposal; and the validation of gas membrane placement. If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site, the Council is to be informed immediately and no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Council) shall be carried out until a report indicating the nature of the contamination and how it is to be dealt with is submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Council. Any required remediation shall be detailed in an amendment to the remediation statement and verification of these works included in the verification report. All works must be carried out in compliance with and by a competent person who conforms to Land Contamination Risk Management (LRCM) Guide (Environmental Agency 2020) or the current UK requirements for sampling and testing

Reason: To protect the amenity of future occupiers and the environment.

- 26 Unless the Council agree in writing no development shall commence until an onward long-term monitoring methodology report is submitted to and approved in writing by the Council where further monitoring is required past the completion of development works to verify the success of the remediation undertaken. A verification report of these monitoring works shall then be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council when it may be demonstrated that no residual

adverse risks exist. All works must be carried out in compliance with and by a competent person who conforms to Land Contamination Risk Management (LRCM) Guide (Environmental Agency 2020) or the current UK requirements for sampling and testing.

Reason: To protect the amenity of future occupiers and the environment.

- 27 Development shall not commence until a construction methodology has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Authority. The construction methodology shall demonstrate consultation with the Asset Protection Project Manager at Network Rail. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved construction methodology unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To minimize impact on the adjacent railway. This information is required prior to the commencement of the works to ensure the construction operations do not have an adverse impact on the adjacent railway

- 28 No development above slab level shall commence until there's been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority
- a plan indicating the type (positions design materials) of boundary treatment to be erected
 - full details of an acoustic fence
 - suitable trespass proof fence adjacent to Network Rail's boundary including details of its- provision and for its future renewal and maintenance
 - timetable for implementation.
- The boundary treatment shall be in completed in accordance with the timetable for implementation

Reason: to protect the visual appearance of the area, to protect the flora and fauna and to minimise the potential of trespass on to the railway

- 29 No development above slab level shall commence until full details of hard landscape and soft landscape works, (to include but not be limited to)
- a-soft landscaping shall include planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); - schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes at the time of their planting, and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;
 - b-Full details of a 30 year landscape maintenance regime after completion of works.
 - c-An implementation programme (including a timetable) for the landscape works.
- have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These shall be carried out in full in accordance with the approved details and the timetable for implementation. Any trees or plants planted in connection with the approved soft landscape details which within a period of 5 years from planting die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the local planning authority gives written approval to any variation.

Reason: To ensure the development is satisfactorily assimilated into the area to enhance biodiversity and to minimise any impact on the railway

- 30 Prior to commencement of development above slab level on each Development phase, details of a Public Art Scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Public Art Scheme shall include:
- Brief for involvement of artists, site context, background to development, suitable themes and opportunities for public art
 - Management - who will administer the commission and contact details.

- Time scales / programme
- Method of commissioning artists / artisans, means of contact, selection process / selection panel and draft contract for appointment of artists
- Community engagement to be undertaken by artists.
- Funding - budgets and administration.
- Future care and maintenance.

Following commencement of development of each Development Phase the approved Public Art Scheme for that Development Phase shall be implemented in full accordance with the programme approved as part thereof.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity, promoting local distinctiveness and creating a sense of place, in accordance with Policy HQ7 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021).

- 31 Prior to commencement of development on each phase a scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority for the provision of fire hydrants at the development. Prior to the first occupation of any of the buildings hereby approved the fire hydrants serving that building shall be installed as approved. Thereafter the fire hydrants shall be retained as approved in perpetuity.

Reason: The condition must be pre-commencement to ensure that any ground works do not prejudice the appropriate siting of fire hydrants, in the interests of fire safety and providing safe and accessible developments.

- 32 Prior to the occupation of the relevant phase, a scheme for the provision of waste receptacles for each building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. No building shall be occupied until the waste receptacles for that building have been provided in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of amenity and to reduce waste generation in accordance with the Councils' Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2014, Policy WSP5 and the adopted SPD "Managing Waste in New Developments" (2006).

- 33 Details of full fibre broadband connections to all proposed buildings shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The infrastructure serving each building shall be installed prior to occupation of that building and made available for use immediately on occupation of that of that building in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure the provision of broadband infrastructure in accordance with Local Plan Policy HQ5.

- 34 No laying of services, creation of hard surfaces or erection of a building on a on a Development Phase shall take place until a detailed design of the Foul Water Drainage System for that Development Phase has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such design shall include details of connection points and discharge rates to the public network and full details of a Management and Maintenance Plan of the foul water system. The development of each Development Parcel or Infrastructure Parcel shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved Foul Water Drainage System for that Development phase.

Reason: To prevent environmental and amenity problems arising from flooding. To accord with the objectives of Policy CC6 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021). This condition is pre-commencement as it is likely to require groundworks prior to any construction works commencing.

- 35 The overnight accommodation, canteen/ restaurant, cinema, gym shall only operate as an ancillary use to the main film studio and shall not be open to the general public.

Reason: To minimise additional traffic movements to the main Quest Pit site in the interests of highway safety and convenience and to minimise the impact on site wide ecology

- 36 Prior to commencement of development above slab level on each Development phase, a scheme of measures and other facilities to ensure the safety and security of the site. These shall include CCTV, lighting, boundary treatments and details of security management. The approved scheme shall be Approved details shall be implemented prior to occupation of each specific phase of development and thereafter be permanently retained.

Reason: To minimise the opportunity for crime and to provide a safe environment

- 37 Prior to first occupation of any building on each phase, a scheme for the charging of electric and ultra-low emission vehicles to serve that building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall accord with Policy T5 of Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and the Electric Vehicle Charging: Guidance for New Developments – SPD (2022) and shall include the following:
-Details of active charging posts or passive provision such as cabling and electricity supply for each space provided
-timescales / triggers for implementation of the scheme.
The development shall be completed in accordance with these approved details including the agreed timescales / triggers.

Reason: To assist with the transition to low-emission vehicles in line with Policy T5 of the CBLP, the Electric Vehicle Charging: Guidance for New Developments – SPD (2022), and paragraph 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 38 Notwithstanding the details hereby approved, the lake shall not be used as a shoot location.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area including the intrinsic character and beauty of the Countryside and to minimise the impact on biodiversity.

- 39 Prior to occupation of any development phase details of flood resilience measures including a detailed emergency evacuation plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority the measures hereby approved shall remain in place during the lifetime of the development

Reason In order to safeguard future occupiers in the event of flooding

- 40 Prior to the occupation of each phase, details of secure and covered cycle parking facilities (in accordance with the Councils adopted standards) for the occupants of and visitors to that building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved facilities shall be fully implemented and made available for use prior to the occupation of that building and shall thereafter be available for use at all times.

Reason: To ensure that satisfactory facilities for the parking of cycles are provided and to encourage travel by means other than private motor vehicles

- 41 No on-site development shall commence, including, excavation works, or the import or materials until the northern site access junction, including the associated right turn lane, and extension to the 40mph speed limit, as shown indicatively on plan ref: BE5650-3PD-010 Rev D – Proposed Ghost Island Access, , has been constructed in accordance with the approved details, amended as necessary by the relevant detailed design, technical and safety audit processes, and opened to traffic.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway. The condition is pre commencement to ensure that the development has no adverse impact on the local highway network

- 42 Before either of the two new vehicular accesses are brought into operational use, any existing access within the frontage of the land to be developed, not incorporated in the accesses hereby approved shall be closed in a manner to the Local Planning Authority's written approval and constructed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of road safety and to reduce the number of points at which traffic will enter and leave the public highway.

- 43 No part of the development shall be occupied, until the southern site access junction roundabout, as shown indicatively on ref. BE5650-3PD-008 Rev E – Proposed Roundabout Access has been constructed in accordance with the approved details, amended as necessary by the relevant detailed design, technical and safety audit processes, and opened to traffic.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 44 The visibility splays shown on plan refs:
- i. BE5650-3PD-008 Rev D – Proposed Roundabout Access
 - ii. BE5650-3PD-010 Rev D – Proposed Ghost Island Access
 - iii. BE5650-3PD-012 Rev C – Visibility to Signal Head
 - iv. BE5650-3PD-013 Rev C – Visibility at Pedestrian Crossings
 - v. BE5650-3PD-024 – Visibility splay PT Hub
- Shall be provided prior to each access, junction, or crossing point in question being first brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained and be kept free of any obstruction for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To provide adequate visibility between the existing highway and the proposed access(es) and crossing points, to make the access(es) and crossing points safe and convenient for the traffic which is likely to use it (them).

- 45 Prior to commencement of development (with the exception of enabling and relevant investigation works) details of the proposed walking / cycling improvements on, or parallel to, the B530, (inclusive of the proposed controlled pedestrian crossing), and speed reduction measures on the B530, as shown indicatively on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-007 Rev C – Proposed Improvements on B530 shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details to include:
- i. Routing
 - ii. Width
 - iii. Surfacing
 - iv. Lighting
 - v. Measures to promote user safety and security
 - vi. In addition to the works detailed, the provision of a paved footway (circa 75m in length) on the eastern side of the B530, running between the location of the

proposed cycle refuge north of the Stewartby Way junction to the southbound bus stop opposite the Stewartby Way junction - subject to detailed design demonstrating that such a scheme can be delivered.

vii. Agreement from the relevant bodies for any culverting works required.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 46 No part of the development shall be brought into use until the walking / cycling improvements on, or parallel to, the B530, (inclusive of the proposed controlled pedestrian crossing, and with the additional footpath connection to the southbound bus stop opposite the Stewartby Way junction), and speed reduction measures on the B530, as shown indicatively on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-007 Rev C – Proposed Improvements on B530, updated in accordance with condition 44 and 45 and amended as necessary by the relevant detailed design, technical and safety audit process, have been delivered and opened for use.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 47 No part of the development shall be brought into use until one of the footpath and cycleway options detailed indicatively on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-007 Rev C. have been designated and secured for public use and access. These shall thereafter remain open to public use for the lifetime of the development. For the avoidance of doubt this would include leaving the pedestrian and cycle routes ungated.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 48 No part of the development shall be brought into use until the works to Stewartby Way as shown indicatively on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-006 – Potential Improvements along Stewartby Way and plan ref. BE5650-3PD-020 – Mitigation at Stewartby Way Junction have been constructed in accordance with the approved details, amended as necessary by the relevant detailed design, technical and safety audit processes with the relevant local authorities, and opened to traffic.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 49 Notwithstanding the submitted details, prior to the commencement of development amended proposals for the Transport Hub (including the associated access, parking, and circulation area) as shown indicatively on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-024 – Visibility splay PT Hub) shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Local Planning Authority, with the updated design taking into account the potential interactions between users of the Hub, to be informed by a Safety Audit process. The Transport Hub shall be constructed in accordance with the updated design and fully opened for use prior to any part of the development being brought into use.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway. This condition is pre-commencement as it is likely to require groundworks prior to any construction works commencing.

- 50 Visibility splays shall be provided at all road junctions, access points, and bends within the site. The minimum dimensions to provide the required splay lines for junctions and access points shall be 2.4m measured along the centre line of the side road from its junction with the channel to the through road and 25m measured from the centre line of the side road along the channel of the through road. The

minimum forward visibility at bends shall be 25m, as detailed indicatively on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-015 Rev A – Internal Layout Swept Path Analysis. The vision splays required shall be provided and defined on the site by or on behalf of the developers and remain free of any obstruction exceeding 0.6m in height

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 51 Visibility splays shall be provided at all defined pedestrian crossing points, or points where pedestrians emerge onto the internal private road. The minimum dimensions to provide the required splay lines shall be 1.5m measured along the centre line of the pedestrian crossing point measured back from the adjacent carriageway and 25m measured from the centre line of the pedestrian crossing point along the channel of the adjacent carriageway. The vision splays required shall be provided and defined on the site by or on behalf of the developers and remain free of any obstruction exceeding 0.6m in height.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the development

- 52 Prior to the first occupation of development, a scheme to manage speeds within the site shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in full prior to any part of the development being brought into use

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the development

- 53 Prior to the first occupation of development, a scheme to manage and enforce the proposed one-way routing on the perimeter site road shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in full prior to any part of the development being brought into use

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the development

- 54 Prior to the first occupation of development, details of the proposed on site bus stop infrastructure, including realtime displays, seating and shelters shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Local Planning Authority, the agreed infrastructure shall be provided in full prior to any part of the development being brought into use.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 55 Prior to the first occupation of development, details of the pedestrian route from the northern access to the internal perimeter road, including any routing through the car park identified on plan as Phase 2a, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Local Planning Authority, the agreed infrastructure shall be provided in full prior to any part of the development being brought into use.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 56 No barriers, gates, or other measures to prevent vehicular access, outside of those associated with the southern gatehouse, shall be permitted on any access points or car park entries, without the prior written approval of the Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt, this would prevent any barriers or gates associated with the northern site access, and the associated car park entries. Should any reserved matters application include gates or barriers, they must be supported by a technical report demonstrating whether sufficient barrier capacity is available to prevent queuing back onto the B530.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 57 No individual phase of development shall commence until a car parking plan for the phase in question has been submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Planning Authority. As a minimum each car parking plan should include:
- Location and number of spaces (construction and operational), including provision of EV and accessible standard spaces
 - Access, including appropriate construction details and visibility splays
 - Surfacing
 - Pedestrian access and through routes
 - For the car park within Phase 2a, this should include a connecting pedestrian route from the proposed covered cycle parking to the remainder of the site (also providing for onward pedestrian access for pedestrians arriving via the northern access).

Reason: In ensure appropriate parking provision is in place and thereby protect the interests and safety of users of the site. This condition is pre-commencement as it is likely to require groundworks prior to any construction works commencing.

- 58 No construction, ground clearance, excavation, or other preparatory works shall commence upon each phase until the construction phase parking agreed under the relevant phase of the car parking phasing plan has been fully constructed and opened for use.

Reason: In ensure appropriate parking provision is in place and thereby protect the interests and safety of users of the site. This condition is pre-commencement as it is likely to require groundworks prior to any construction works commencing.

- 59 No phase of development shall be occupied until the operational car parking provision agreed under the relevant phase of the car parking phasing plan has been fully constructed and opened for use.

Reason: In ensure appropriate parking provision is in place and thereby protect the interests and safety of users of the site.

- 60 Notwithstanding the submitted details, the internal layout of the site shall include the amendments detailed on plan ref. BE5650-3PD-025 – Pedestrian Crossing Adjacent to W17.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 61 Prior to the first occupation of development, a scheme for directional signage to the proposed development shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented in full prior to the first occupation of the site.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway

- 62 No development hereby permitted shall take place except in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Council's Organisational Licence (WML-OR112, or a 'Further Licence') and with the proposals detailed on plan "Quest Pit: Impact plan for great crested newt District Licensing (Version 4)", dated 23rd May 2023.

Reason: In order to ensure that adverse impacts on great crested newts are adequately mitigated and to ensure that site works are delivered in full compliance with the Organisational Licence (WML-OR112, or a 'Further Licence'), section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This information is required prior to the commencement of the works to ensure the site operations do not have an adverse impact on Great Crested Newts

- 63 No development hereby permitted shall take place unless and until a certificate from the Delivery Partner (as set out in the District Licence WML-OR112, or a 'Further Licence'), confirming that all necessary measures regarding great crested newt compensation have been appropriately dealt with, has been submitted to and approved by the planning authority and the authority has provided authorisation for the development to proceed under the district newt licence. The delivery partner certificate must be submitted to this planning authority for approval prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved.

Reason: In order to adequately compensate for negative impacts to great crested newts, and in line with section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This information is required prior to the commencement of the works to ensure the site operations do not have an adverse impact on Great Crested Newts

- 64 No development hereby permitted shall take place except in accordance with Part 1 of the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Principles, as set out in the District Licence WML-OR112 (or a 'Further Licence') and in addition in compliance with the following:
- Works to existing ponds onsite may only be undertaken during autumn/winter, unless otherwise in accordance with the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Principles

Works which will affect likely newt hibernacula may only be undertaken during the active period for amphibians.

- Capture methods must be used at suitable habitat features prior to the commencement of the development (i.e., hand/destructive/night searches), which may include the use of temporary amphibian fencing, to prevent newts moving onto a development site from adjacent suitable habitat, installed for the period of the development (and removed upon completion of the development).
- Amphibian fencing and pitfall trapping must be undertaken at suitable habitats and features, prior to commencement of the development.
- The recommendations in report "Quest Pit District Licence HMMP – Red Line and Blue Line (Version 5)", dated 23rd May 2023 and on plan "Quest Pit: HMMP Map for great crested newts District Licensing (Version 3)", dated 23rd May 2023 provided as part of the planning application must be complied with.

Reason: In order to ensure that adverse impacts on great crested newts are adequately mitigated and to ensure that site works are delivered in full compliance with the Organisational Licence (WML-OR112, or a 'Further Licence'), section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Circular 06/2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This information is required prior to the commencement of the works to ensure the site operations do not have an adverse impact on Great Crested Newts

- 65 Prior to the commencement of development on a Development phase (other than Enabling Works) full details of the existing and final ground levels and slab levels for buildings / structures for that Development Phase shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include a detailed topographical survey of the site and adjacent land. The development of each Development Parcel or Infrastructure Parcel shall thereafter be carried out in full accordance with the approved Site Levels for that Development Phase.

Reason: To ensure that an acceptable relationship results between the new development and adjacent buildings, public amenity spaces and public areas, in accordance with Policy HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) and the NPPF.

INFORMATIVE NOTES TO APPLICANT

1.
 1. Any watercourses within or adjacent to the site should be included in the maintenance and management plan, even if there is no discharge to them. This would be a riparian ownership issue but leaving it as such is no longer acceptable.
 2. Under Central Bedfordshire Council and IDB bylaws, any watercourse within or adjoining the site boundary will maintain a 9m development free easement (on the development side), unless otherwise agreed with the relevant drainage authority. This applies to all watercourses, where water is present for all or some of the year, including those not clearly stated on mapping, topography or planning documents.
 3. Permeable block paving should be laid to CIRIA C768 "Guidance on the construction of SuDS" guidelines. This guidance also stipulates following Interlay guidance.
 4. The Council does not, and is not required to, adopt any SuDS feature. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the surface water drainage system, in its entirety, will be effectively maintained in the long-term. We therefore expect confirmation of the proposed arrangements for maintenance to be provided with the final detailed design, including the future maintenance and operational needs and the responsible bodies for undertaking maintenance (for all public and private drainage components).
 5. The final detailed design including proposed standards of operation, construction, structural integrity and ongoing maintenance must be compliant with the 'Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems' (March 2015, Ref: PB14308), 'Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Drainage Guidance' (Adopted April 2014, Updated May 2015), and recognised best practise including the Ciria SuDS Manual (2016, C753).
 6. Land drainage Consent under the Land Drainage Act 1991 must be secured to discharge surface water to an existing watercourse/ditch, and details of this provided with the full detailed design. An easement should be provided on the developable side of the watercourse to allow for access for maintenance, this should be 9m.
2. This permission relates only to that required under the Town & Country Planning Acts and does not include any consent or approval under any other enactment or under the Building Regulations. Any other consent or approval which is necessary must be obtained from the appropriate authority.

3. **Fail Safe Use of Crane and Plant**
All operations, including the use of cranes or other mechanical plant working adjacent to Network Rail's property, must at all times be carried out in a "fail safe" manner such that in the event of mishandling, collapse or failure, no materials or plant are capable of falling within 3.0m of the nearest rail of the adjacent railway line, or where the railway is electrified, within 3.0m of overhead electrical equipment or supports. With a development of a certain height that may/will require use of a crane, the developer must bear in mind the following. Crane usage adjacent to railway infrastructure is subject to stipulations on size, capacity etc. which needs to be agreed by the Asset Protection Project Manager prior to implementation.
4. **Excavations/Earthworks**
All excavations/ earthworks carried out in the vicinity of Network Rail property/ structures must be designed and executed such that no interference with the integrity of that property/ structure can occur. If temporary works compounds are to be located adjacent to the operational railway, these should be included in a method statement for approval by Network Rail. Prior to commencement of works, full details of excavations and earthworks to be carried out near the railway undertaker's boundary fence should be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority acting in consultation with the railway undertaker and the works shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details. Where development may affect the railway, consultation with the Asset Protection Project Manager should be undertaken. Network Rail will not accept any liability for any settlement, disturbance or damage caused to any development by failure of the railway infrastructure nor for any noise or vibration arising from the normal use and/or maintenance of the operational railway. No right of support is given or can be claimed from Network Rail's infrastructure or railway land.
5. **Security of Mutual Boundary**
Security of the railway boundary will need to be maintained at all times. If the works require temporary or permanent alterations to the mutual boundary the applicant must contact Network Rail's Asset Protection Project Manager.
6. **Demolition**
Any demolition or refurbishment works must not be carried out on the development site that may endanger the safe operation of the railway, or the stability of the adjoining Network Rail structures. The demolition of buildings or other structures near to the operational railway infrastructure must be carried out in accordance with an agreed method statement. Approval of the method statement must be obtained from Network Rail's Asset Protection Project Manager before the development can commence.
7. **Vibro-impact Machinery**
Where vibro-compaction machinery is to be used in development, details of the use of such machinery and a method statement should be submitted for the approval of the Local Planning Authority acting in consultation with the railway undertaker prior to the commencement of works and the works shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement.
8. **Scaffolding**
Any scaffold which is to be constructed within 10 metres of the railway boundary fence must be erected in such a manner that at no time will any poles over-sail the railway and protective netting around such scaffold must be installed.

9. **Bridge Strikes**
Applications that are likely to generate an increase in trips under railway bridges may be of concern to Network Rail where there is potential for an increase in 'Bridge strikes'. Vehicles hitting railway bridges cause significant disruption and delay to rail users. Consultation with the Asset Protection Project Manager is necessary to understand if there is a problem. If required there may be a need to fit bridge protection barriers which may be at the developer's expense.
10. **Abnormal Loads**
From the information supplied, it is not clear if any abnormal loads will be using routes that include any Network Rail assets (e.g. bridges and level crossings). We would have serious reservations if during the construction or operation of the site, abnormal loads will use routes that include Network Rail assets. Network Rail would request that the applicant contact our Asset Protection Project Manager to confirm that any proposed route is viable and to agree a strategy to protect our asset(s) from any potential damage caused by abnormal loads. I would also like to advise that where any damage, injury or delay to the rail network is caused by an abnormal load (related to the application site), the applicant or developer will incur full liability.
11. **Two Metre Boundary**
Consideration should be given to ensure that the construction and subsequent maintenance can be carried out to any proposed buildings or structures without adversely affecting the safety of, or encroaching upon Network Rail's adjacent land, and therefore all/any building should be situated at least 2 metres from Network Rail's boundary. This will allow construction and future maintenance to be carried out from the applicant's land, thus reducing the probability of provision and costs of railway look-out protection, supervision and other facilities necessary when working from or on railway land.
12. **ENCROACHMENT**
The developer/applicant must ensure that their proposal, both during construction, and after completion of works on site, does not affect the safety, operation or integrity of the operational railway, Network Rail and its infrastructure or undermine or damage or adversely affect any railway land and structures. There must be no physical encroachment of the proposal onto Network Rail land, no over-sailing into Network Rail airspace and no encroachment of foundations onto Network Rail land and soil. There must be no physical encroachment of any foundations onto Network Rail land. Any future maintenance must be conducted solely within the applicant's land ownership. Should the applicant require access to Network Rail land then must seek approval from the Network Rail Asset Protection Team. Any unauthorised access to Network Rail land or airspace is an act of trespass and we would remind the council that this is a criminal offence (s55 British Transport Commission Act 1949). Should the applicant be granted access to Network Rail land then they will be liable for all costs incurred in facilitating the proposal
13. **Access to the Railway**
All roads, paths or ways providing access to any part of the railway undertaker's land shall be kept open at all times during and after the development.
14. **Standard Drainage Requirements**
We ask that all surface and foul water drainage from the development area be directed away from Network Rail's retained land and structures into suitable drainage systems, the details of which are to be approved by Network Rail before construction starts on site. Water must not be caused to pond on or near railway land either during or after any construction-related activity. The construction of

soakaways for storm or surface water drainage should not take place within 20m of the Network Rail boundary. Any new drains are to be constructed and maintained so as not to have any adverse effect upon the stability of any Network Rail equipment, structure, cutting or embankment. The construction of soakaways within any lease area is not permitted. The construction of surface water retention ponds/tanks, SuDS or flow control systems should not take place within 20m of the Network Rail boundary where these systems are proposed to be below existing track level. Full overland flow conditions should be submitted to Network Rail for approval prior to any works on site commencing. The construction of surface water retention ponds/tanks, SuDS or flow control systems should not take place within 30m of the Network Rail boundary where these systems are proposed to be above existing track level. Full overland flow conditions should be submitted to Network Rail for approval prior to any works on site commencing. If a Network Rail-owned underline structure (such as a culvert, pipe or drain) is intended to act as a means of conveying surface water within or away from the development, then all parties must work together to ensure that the structure is fit for purpose and able to take the proposed flows without risk to the safety of the railway or the surrounding land.

15. Wayleaves and or easements for underline drainage assets
The position of any underline drainage asset shall not be within 5m of drainage assets, sensitive operational equipment such as switches and crossings, track joints, welds, overhead line stanchions and line side equipment, and not within 15m of bridges, culverts, retaining walls and other structures supporting railway live loading. Protection of existing railway drainage assets within a clearance area
There are likely to be existing railway drainage assets in the vicinity of the proposed works. Please proceed with caution. No connection of drainage shall be made to these assets without Network Rail's prior consent to detailed proposals. Any works within 5m of the assets will require prior consent. There must be no interfering with existing drainage assets/systems without Network Rail's written permission. The developer is asked to ascertain with Network Rail the existence of any existing railway drainage assets or systems in the vicinity of the development area before work starts on site. Please contact Asset Protection (assetprotectioneastern@networkrail.co.uk) for further information and assistance
16. The applicant is advised that, whilst the plans associated with this permission detail the principles of the highways works associated with the development in question, any works within the Highway are subject to separate legislation under Section 278 and / or Section 38 of the Highways Act 1980, under which a separate and detailed technical and safety review and approvals process is required, the outcomes of which would take precedence over the indicative plans referred to.
17. The applicant is advised that in order to comply with those conditions which involved highways works it will be necessary for the developer of the site to enter into an agreement with Central Bedfordshire Council as Highway Authority under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the satisfactory completion of the access and associated road improvements. You are advised to contact the Highways Agreements Team, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ. E-mail highwaysagreements@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
18. The applicant is advised that the requirements of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 will apply to any works undertaken within the limits of the existing public highway. The applicant is advised to make early contact with the Councils Streetworks Team – email Streetworks@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

19. The applicant is advised that parking for contractor's vehicles and the storage of materials and deliveries associated with this development should take place within the site and not extend into within the public highway without authorisation from the highway authority. If necessary, the applicant is advised to contact The Street Works Co-ordinator, Central Bedfordshire Highways, by contacting the Highways Helpdesk 0300 300 8301. Under the provisions of the Highways Act 1980 the developer may be liable for any damage caused to the public highway as a result of demolition/construction of the development hereby approved
20. The applicant is advised that no private surface water drainage system designed as part of a new development, will be allowed to enter any existing highway surface water drainage system.
21. The applicant is advised that the discharge of conditions related to the securing of footpaths and cycleways for public use may require the application of the appropriate sections of the Highways Act 1980 and the Cycle Tracks Act 1984.
22. The applicant is advised that any temporary construction access works would require entering into a licencing agreement with the Highways Agreements Team.
23. It is recommended that the NatureSpace Best Practice Principles are considered and implemented where possible and appropriate. It is recommended that the NatureSpace certificate is submitted to this planning authority at least 6 months prior to the intended commencement of any works on site. It is essential to note that any works or activities whatsoever undertaken on site (including ground investigations, site preparatory works or ground clearance) prior to receipt of the written authorisation from the planning authority (which permits the development to proceed under the District Licence WML-OR112, or a 'Further Licence') are not licensed under the great crested newt District Licence. Any such works or activities have no legal protection under the great crested newt District Licence and if offences against great crested newts are thereby committed then criminal investigation and prosecution by the police may follow. It is essential to note that any ground investigations, site preparatory works and ground / vegetation clearance works / activities (where not constituting development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) in a red zone site authorised under the District Licence but which fail to respect controls equivalent to those in the condition above (relating to the use of best practice and measures outline in the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Principles) would give rise to separate criminal liability under District Licence condition 12 (requiring authorised developers to comply with the District Licence) and condition 17 (which requires all authorised developers to comply with the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Principles) (for which Natural England is the enforcing authority); and may also give rise to criminal liability under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and/or the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (for which the Police would be the enforcing authority).

Statement required by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 - Part 6, Article 35

The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage and during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively to secure a sustainable form of development in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

