
PLANNING STATEMENT

IAC Group Ltd.

**Prologis Park Birmingham Interchange
(Elmdon 3)**

January 2021

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	3
2	The Site and Surroundings	6
3	The Development	10
4	Planning Policy Framework	12
5	Planning Considerations	24
6	The Planning Balance.....	41

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by CBRE Ltd. ('CBRE') to accompany a full planning application submitted on behalf of IAC Group Ltd. ('the Applicant'). The Applicant seeks full planning permission for an additional 388 car parking spaces ('the Development'), associated sustainable urban drainage system and landscaping, to serve its manufacturing facility, Elmdon 3, at Units A and B, Prologis Way, Prologis Park Birmingham Interchange.
- 1.2 The site lies within the administrative boundary of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council ('the Council').
- 1.3 This full planning application seeks to amend the site layout approved previously under the previous outline planning permission (ref: PL/2016/02001/PPOL) and subsequent reserved matters approvals (ref: PL/2017/01509/PPRM, PL/2018/02997/PPRM) ('the Approved Development'). This Approved Development has been implemented. The Development only relates to the car parking and landscaping surrounding the two completed industrial units comprising Elmdon 3, Units A and B, and therefore Units A and B are excluded from the application site boundary.
- 1.4 IAC Group Ltd. is a long-established business in the Borough. The Applicant committed to its occupation of Units A and B at the Site in 2019, which represents a significant investment in the Borough's local economy, as well as reinforcing the West Midlands' globally competitive cluster of automotive manufacturing. The Applicant's decision to occupy the Site is driven by the need to service its growing contracts, particularly those with Jaguar Land Rover, and as part of their wider business strategy to relocate manufacturing activities from its operations in Eastern Europe back to the UK.
- 1.5 Elmdon 3 will support 1,140 full-time equivalent ('FTE') new local employment opportunities, bringing skilled jobs and high value activities to Solihull. The Applicant's decision to locate its expanded operations at the Site highlights Birmingham Business Park as a globally competitive destination for inward investment, job creation and high value manufacturing.
- 1.6 The Development will support significant social, economic and environmental benefits for the Borough and the wider West Midlands region, including the delivery of high-skilled employment, securing inward investment in the Borough's advanced manufacturing base and ecological benefits in terms of additional habitat provision and high quality landscaping.

FORM OF APPLICATION

- 1.7 The Application is submitted as a full planning application, which proposes the following description of development:

Application for full planning permission for the formation of additional car parking to serve Units A and B at Prologis Park Birmingham Interchange with associated earthworks, engineering, landscaping and sustainable urban drainage systems.

SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS

- 1.8 The Application is supported by a suite of documents, plans and drawings for information and for approval listed in **Table 1.1** below.

TABLE 1.1: DOCUMENTS AND DRAWINGS FOR APPROVAL AND FOR INFORMATION

DOCUMENT / DRAWING REFERENCE	CONSULTANT	STATUS
Application Form, CIL Additional Information Form and Certificates of Ownership	CBRE	For approval
Arboricultural Impact Assessment	Middlemarch Consulting	For approval
Biodiversity Impact Assessment RT-MME-153311-05	Middlemarch Consulting	For approval
Design and Access Statement	aja architects	For information

DOCUMENT / DRAWING REFERENCE	CONSULTANT	STATUS
Ecological Impact Assessment RT-MME-153311-04	Middlemarch Consulting	For approval
Ecological Mitigation Strategy RT-MME-153311-06	Middlemarch Consulting	For approval
Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy Report	Baynham Meikle	For approval
Lighting Statement	Ridge	For approval
Noise Impact Assessment	Sustainable Acoustics	For approval
Planning Statement	CBRE	For approval
Transport Statement	Vectos	For approval
Landscape Proposals (Sheet 1 of 6) 2136 - DL002 – 1	J B Landscape Architects	For approval
Landscape Proposals (Sheet 2 of 6) 2136 - DL002 – 2	J B Landscape Architects	For approval
Landscape Proposals (Sheet 3 of 6) 2136 - DL002 – 3	J B Landscape Architects	For approval
Landscape Proposals (Sheet 4 of 6) 2136 - DL002 – 4	J B Landscape Architects	For approval
Landscape Proposals (Sheet 5 of 6) 2136 - DL002 – 5	J B Landscape Architects	For approval
Landscape Proposals (Sheet 6 of 6) 2136 - DL002 – 6	J B Landscape Architects	For approval
IAC Bickenhill Illustrative Cross Section AA Revision B 2136-PL001-3	J B Landscape Architects	For information
IAC Bickenhill Illustrative Cross Section BB Revision B 2136-PL001-4	J B Landscape Architects	For information
IAC Bickenhill JBLA Maintenance Specification December 2020	J B Landscape Architects	For information
Proposed Drainage Plan 12992-100A	Baynham Meikle	For information
Proposed Levels Plan 12992-101A	Baynham Meikle	For information
Proposed Retaining Wall Sections 12992-102A	Baynham Meikle	For information
Proposed Earthworks Plan 12992-103A	Baynham Meikle	For information
Additional Car Parking to Utilise Existing Drainage Network 12992-104A	Baynham Meikle	For information
Location Plan as Existing 6632 – 012 1:1,250 @ A2	Aja architects	For approval
Site Plan as Existing 6632 – 013 1:500 @ A0	Aja architects	For approval
Site Layout Plan with potential additional car parking spaces OPTION 1 6632 - 01 REV F 1:1,000 @ A1	Aja architects	For approval
Tree Retention Plan C153311-02-01-RevA	Middlemarch Consulting	For approval

STRUCTURE OF THE PLANNING STATEMENT

- 1.9 This Planning Statement provides further explanation of the Development and an appraisal of the Development in terms of the planning policy framework and any other material considerations:
- **Section 2** – describes the Site and surrounding area and provides a summary of relevant planning history.
 - **Section 3** – outlines the Development.
 - **Section 4** – explains the relevant planning policy framework relevant to the Development and other relevant material considerations.
 - **Section 5** – assesses the Development against the planning policy framework and sets out the case for the Development.

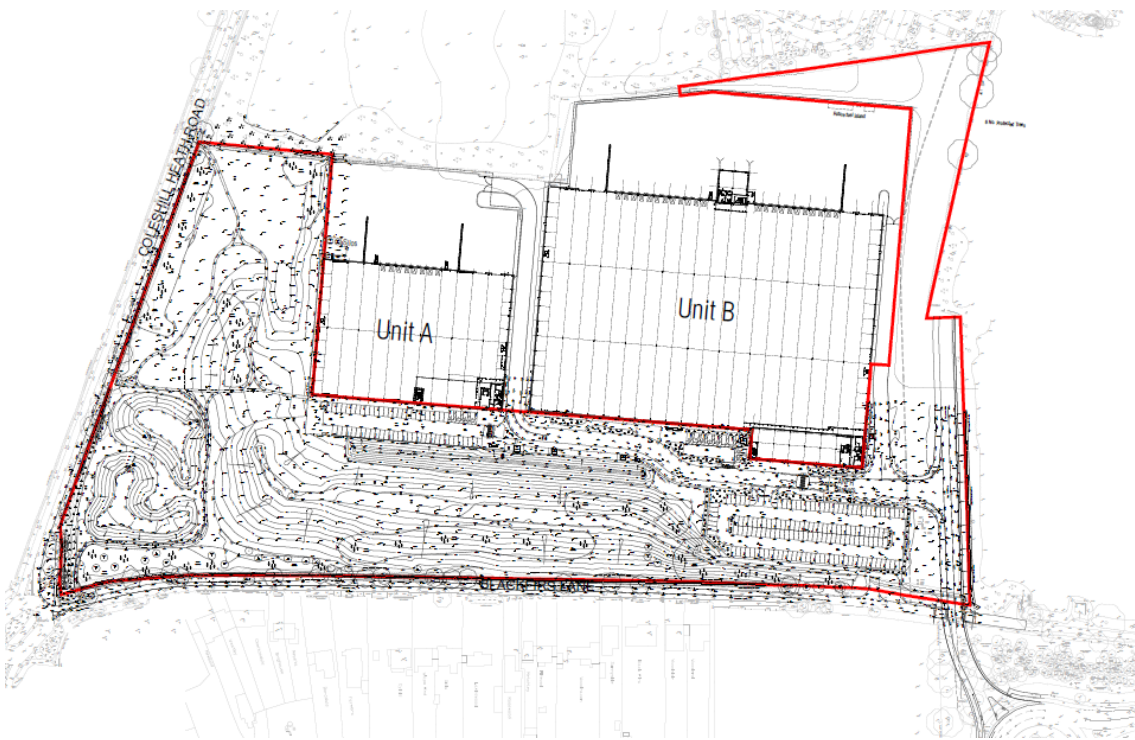
-
- **Section 6** – provides a summary of the economic, social and environmental benefits and overall planning balance in favour of the Development.

2 The Site and Surroundings

SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Site is situated within Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and is bound by Progress Way to the east, Blackfirs Lane to the south, Coleshill Heath Road to the west and Birmingham Business Park to the north.
- 2.2 The Site's context is highly mixed use in character. The Site is located at the south-western corner of Birmingham Business Park, which bounds the site to the east and north. A recently constructed industrial development has been completed at Radial Park to the immediate north of the Site, comprising 4 no. warehouse/industrial units. Rolls Royce Aero Engines occupies a substantial building to the east of the Site, comprising light industrial, office-based and general industrial activities.
- 2.3 There are existing residential properties located to the south of the Site on Blackfirs Lane, which are located circa. 90 metres south of Unit B and 60 metres south of Unit A. The visual relationship between the Site and the residential properties are screened by a circa 5m high landscaped bund, which runs along the southern boundary of the Site.
- 2.4 The Site's proximity and connectivity to its existing IAC manufacturing hub at Elmdon Trading Estate (circa. 700 metres south of the Site) is notable, which allows management and technical staff to work effectively and efficiently across the two sites to oversee the manufacturing process. This close proximity of activities is important to IAC's operational business model.
- 2.5 Of particular importance to the operations at Elmdon 3 is the Site's proximity to Jaguar Land Rover's operations at Damson Parkway (circa. 3.5 kilometres south-west of the Site), which enables the Applicant to meet 'just-in-time' and carefully sequenced logistics plans to effectively and efficiently serve Jaguar Land Rover's operations.
- 2.6 Birmingham Airport, located circa. 1.5km south-west of the Site, provides access to long and short-haul international destinations including the United States of America, the Middle East, Europe and the Far East.
- 2.7 The M42 and M6 motorways are within a short driving distance, providing access to the Strategic Road Network. Birmingham International railway station is located circa. 1.6 kilometres south-west of the Site, which is served by the suburban and national rail network.
- 2.8 There are existing bus stops within 400m of the Site on Bickenhill Parkway and Coleshill Heath Road.

FIGURE 2.1: EXTRACT OF LOCATION PLAN (DRAWING REFERENCE: 6632 – 012)



SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.9 The Site is circa. 5.82 hectares (14.38 acres) in total. It is broadly u-shaped and generally slopes down from south (around 100.5m AOD) to north (around 98.1m AOD). In addition however, there is an approximately 4m high landscaped bund which runs along the southern boundary of the Site along Blackfirs Lane, which is circa. 104.4m AOD at its highest, as compared to the existing car parking area immediately south of Units A and B which is generally at 99.7m AOD.
- 2.10 The Site directly abuts two existing industrial units (referred to as Unit A and Unit B), owned by the Applicant. The Site is bound by Progress Way to the east, Blackfirs Lane to the south, Coleshill Heath Road to the west and further employment uses within Birmingham Business Park to the north. The Site's context is highly mixed use in character. The Site is located within the south-western corner of Birmingham Business Park, which bounds the site to the east and north. A recently constructed industrial development has been completed at Radial Park to the immediate north of the Site, comprising 4 no. warehouse/industrial units. Rolls Royce Aero Engines occupies a substantial building to the east of the Site, comprising light industrial, office-based and general industrial activities.
- 2.11 There are existing residential properties located to the south of the Site on Blackfirs Lane, which are located circa. 90 metres south of Unit B and 60 metres south of Unit A. Inter-visibility between the Site and the residential properties is restricted by a circa 4m high landscaped bund, which runs along the southern boundary of the Site.
- 2.12 The Site is centred on National Grid Reference SP 18671 85192 and it is shown in Figure 1.1, appended to this screening request.
- 2.13 Vehicular access and egress to the Site is via Progress Way which connects to Bickenhill Parkway to the south and Solihull Parkway to the north. Pedestrian access is also available from this point.
- 2.14 There are no designated heritage assets within the Site boundary or within close proximity to the Site.

- 2.15 The Site is situated in Flood Zone 1 and is located in an area of very low surface water flooding risk, according to the EA Flood Map for Planning.
- 2.16 Outline planning permission (ref: PL/2016/02001/PPOL) and subsequent reserved matters approvals (ref: PL/2017/01509/PPRM, PL/2018/02297/PPRM) was granted for 2 no. industrial units (Units A and B) to provide circa. 28,800 sqm of industrial floorspace, as well as associated car parking, manoeuvring areas/service yards and landscaping (henceforth the 'Approved Development'). This development has been implemented. The Site for this application excludes Units A and B and their associated servicing areas but is proposed for use in association with this development. The eastern part of the Site comprises the 212 no. car parking spaces that have been constructed in accordance with the Approved Development, as well as the access road off Progress Way, which connects the car parking and service areas to the rear of Units A and B to Progress Way.
- 2.17 A number of tree saplings have recently been planted on-site, in accordance with the Approved Development. This includes the formation of the landscaping bund along the southern boundary of the Site.
- 2.18 The western part of the Site comprises an area reserved for landscaping, which will be an attractive area of grassland and planting to which the public will be admitted by permission, providing an area of amenity for local residents for activities such as dog walking.
- 2.19 The habitat within the site consists of the existing car parking area and other areas of hard standing which include small areas of amenity grassland and decorative borders of introduced shrub. The remainder of the site comprises the landscaping scheme for the Approved Development. The south and west of the site consist of formal landscaping comprising mixed plantation woodland and species poor semi-improved grassland. A large proportion of the Approved Development landscaping scheme has been overtaken by tall ruderal growth. In the south west corner of the site two large depressions form a sustainable urban drainage ('SuDS') scheme.
- 2.20 The SuDs currently comprise bare earth and lack aquatic vegetation. Species poor defunct hedgerows with trees run along the southern and western boundaries of the study area. A small area of standing water is present in the north east corner of the site. The water body is shallow and its water quality very poor, with very few aquatic invertebrates present. No emergent aquatic vegetation is present, either within the water body or along its bankside margins, suggesting the standing water is highly temporal in nature and annually would dry out on multiple occasions.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.21 The planning history for the Site has been obtained using the Council's online planning register. The relevant planning history summarised in **Table 2.1** below relates to the initial grant of outline planning permission in 2016 and subsequent applications for determination of reserved matters and details pursuant to other planning conditions.

TABLE 2.1: OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PLANNING REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	DECISION STATUS
PL/2016/02001/PPOL	Outline application for the erection of buildings within use classes B1a office, B1b R&D, B1c light industrial, B2 general industrial, and B8 storage and distribution with associated access, earthworks, engineering, landscaping, car parking and amendments to existing highway to create a new turning head. With all matters reserved apart from access.	Approved
PL/2016/03135/VAR	Vary conditions 1, 5, 13 and 15 and remove condition 26 on planning approval PL/2016/02001/PPOL	Withdrawn

PL/2017/01509/PPRM	Reserved matters (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) pursuant to condition 3 of outline planning permission PL/2016/02001/PPOL	Approved
PL/2017/02284/DIS	Discharge of condition 12 (i), (ii) and (iii) of planning permission PL/2016/02001/PPOL	Approved
PL/2018/00237/DIS	Discharge of condition 19a of planning permission PL/2016/02001/PPOL	Approved
PL/2018/02297/PPRM	Reserved matters (for revised landscaping) pursuant to condition 3 of outline planning permission PL/2016/02001/PPOL	Approved
PL/2018/02996/DIS	Discharge of conditions 17, 18, 20 and 23 of planning permission PL/2016/02001/PPOL	Approved
PL/2019/01488/DIS	Discharge of condition 8 of planning permission PL/2016/02001/PPOL	Approved
PL/2020/02388/ADV	Consent to install 4 No. externally illuminated wayfinding totems and 3 No. internally illuminated wall-mounted signs.	Approved
PL/2020/02389/PPFL	Retrospective planning application for 2 No. silos and 2 No. vehicle barriers	Approved

2.22 The Development falls within the relevant thresholds identified as Category 10(a) industrial estate development projects or Category 10(b) urban development projects in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The Applicant submitted a request for an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion, which was validated on 06 January 2021.

3 The Development

OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the formation of 388 No. additional car parking spaces in three new car parking areas as follows:
- **Area 1:** Immediately south of Units A and B and immediately east of Unit B (100 No. spaces); and,
 - **Area 2:** West of Unit A (No. 90 spaces);
 - **Area 3:** South of existing car parking areas, adjacent to landscaping bund (198 No. spaces due to loss of 3 no. existing spaces).
- 3.2 Whilst the Site totals 5.82ha, only 0.59ha of new additional built form is proposed, with the remainder of the Site comprising the existing 212 no. car parking spaces, associated access and landscaped area.
- 3.3 The new parking area to the west of Unit A is proposed where wildflower meadow and an area of mixed native planting to the north was approved under reserved matters application reference: PL/2018/02997/PPRM. In order to drain this part of the car park, an attenuation pond is proposed to the north of the car park. The outlet of the pond has been designed to allow for 200mm of standing water, creating new habitat to support biodiversity.
- 3.4 The new car parking area immediately south of Units A and B is proposed in areas where footpath or paved area for the servicing of Units A and B was approved under PL/2017/2297/PPRM. Re-provision of the previously proposed shelter for 20 no. cycles opposite Unit A is proposed close to its existing location.
- 3.5 The new car parking area immediately east of Unit B is proposed where new trees were proposed and an area of wildflower meadow planting were approved under reserved matters application reference: PL/2018/02997/PPRM.
- 3.6 The new car parking area to the south of existing car parking areas and the swale is proposed in areas where native mixed planting and native and conifer trees were approved under reserved matters application reference: PL/2018/02997/PPRM. The new car parking area necessitates the creation of a retaining wall with a gabion wall face along the northern part of the landscaped bund.
- 3.7 Where existing tree saplings need to be relocated to provide space for the additional car parking area, one-for-one replacement is proposed to ensure the equivalent level of tree cover as per the Approved Development.
- 3.8 Vehicle access will not be altered as part of the proposals. The servicing and delivery arrangements will also remain unchanged. As set out in the Transport Statement and in the Transport section of this document, the AM and PM peak traffic generation approved for the Approved Development remains valid (ref: PL/2016/02001/PPOL), as the vehicle trips of the majority of employees will be spread across three staggered shifts (06:00-14:00, 14:00-22:00 and 22:00-06:00).

RATIONALE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

- 3.9 As the Site is intended to operate on a 24-hour basis, supporting 1,140 full-time equivalent ('FTE') employees in total, with 870 of these employees working across three different shifts, the current level of car parking is inadequate to support the effective operation of the Site. Consideration has been given as to how shift patterns over different parts of the operation could be staggered, to reduce the peak demand for car parking as much as practicable. In addition, sustainable modes of travel are being promoted by the Applicant as much as practicable.
- 3.10 The Applicant has reviewed the potential for off-site car parking in a number of locations, including a neighbouring site at Birmingham Business Park, a site at the National Exhibition Centre and land to the

east of the Site adjacent to Progress Way. However, none of these local alternative sites provide feasible or reasonable alternatives for the on-site expansion of car parking provision.

- 3.11 It is unavoidable that peaks in parking demand will result at shift changeovers. In order to avoid congestion associated with vehicles seeking a parking spaces and vehicles leaving the car park at shift changeover, and the potential for vehicles to queue onto Progress Way or attempt to park in the surrounding area, there is an operational demand for additional car parking on-site.

4 Planning Policy Framework

THE PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) require that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (published February 2019) reconfirms the statutory requirement set out in Section 38(6) relating to the determination of planning applications and also confirms that the NPPF must be taken into account as a material planning consideration in planning decisions (paragraphs 2 and 212).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.3 In addition, although not part of the statutory Development Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') sets out Government policy and should be considered in the determination of this Application.

The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 4.4 The presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF. Paragraph 8 sets out the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across the objectives. The NPPF states that:

"...decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area."

- 4.5 Paragraph 11 sets out that local planning authorities should approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless any adverse benefits of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the NPPF as a whole.

Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

- 4.6 Paragraph 80 of the NPPF states that 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. The approach 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 to capitalise on their performance and potential."

- 4.7 The Government's Industrial Strategy is referred to in footnote 40 of the NPPF.
- 4.8 Paragraph 81 of the NPPF requires planning policies to set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies. In this instance, the relevant Local Industrial Strategy is the West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy ('WMLIS'), which was published in May 2019. In addition, complementary Strategic Economic Plans have been prepared, which are also important in setting out the economic aims and objectives for the West Midlands.
- 4.9 Paragraph 82 of the NPPF requires decisions to recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors, including making provision for clusters of high-technology industries.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 4.10 Paragraph 102 requires transport issues to be considered in development proposals, so that opportunities from existing or proposed infrastructure can be realised in the scale, location and density of development that can be accommodated. Opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use should be pursued, with patterns of movement, streets, parking and other considerations being integral to scheme design.
- 4.11 Paragraph 109 states that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 4.12 Paragraph 110 requires that developments should give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, within the scheme and with surrounding areas; address the needs of people with reduced mobility; create places that are safe, secure and attractive; allow for the efficient delivery of goods and access by service and emergency vehicles; and, be design to enable charging of ultra-low emission vehicles.

Achieving Well-Designed Places

- 4.13 Paragraph 127 requires planning decisions to ensure that developments will function well and add to the quality of the local area over the lifetime of the development; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history while not preventing appropriate change; establish a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate an appropriate amount and mix of development; and, create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, promoting health and wellbeing.
- 4.14 Paragraph 131 requires that great weight should be given to proposals which help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

Green Belt

- 4.15 Paragraph 144 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 4.16 Paragraph 145 notes that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt but lists a number of exceptions to this. Paragraph 146 goes on to list certain other forms of development which are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These, inter alia, include: engineering operations; local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location; and material changes in the use of land.

Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

- 4.17 Paragraph 155 states that development should be directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding.
- 4.18 Paragraph 163 requires that flood risk is not increased elsewhere, as demonstrated in a site-specific flood risk assessment. Paragraph 165 requires major developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence this would be inappropriate.

NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

- 4.19 The Government has also published National Planning Policy Guidance ('NPPG') notes to support the NPPF, providing high level guidance on specific planning issues and processes. NPPG notes are referenced where applicable in this Statement.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 4.20 Section 38(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) defines the Development Plan as:
- the Development Plan documents (taken as a whole) which have been adopted or approved in relation to that area; and
 - b) the neighbourhood development plans which have been made in relation to that area.
- 4.21 Although not part of the statutory Development Plan, the NPPF sets out Government policy and should be considered in the determination of this Application.
- 4.22 In this instance, the current adopted Development Plan for the Site comprises the Solihull Local Plan adopted December 2013 ('Local Plan').
- 4.23 NPPF paragraph 48 sets out that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to: the stage of plan preparation (the most advanced, the greater the weight that may be given); the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and, the degree of consistency of relevant policies to the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 4.24 The Council published the Regulation 19 Draft Submission Version of the Solihull Local Plan Review ('LPR') for public consultation, which ran from 30 October 2020 until 14 December 2020. The LPR was subject to two previous rounds of Regulation 18 consultation, between December 2016 – February 2017 and January 2020 – March 2020. The LPR has therefore been revised in response to consultation undertaken at Regulation 18 stage, however, the LPR has not yet responded to Regulation 19 stage consultation nor has it been at Examination in Public. In terms of principle of land use, the LPR's policies (e.g. Local Plan Policy P17) are similar to that of the Development Plan.
- 4.25 Accordingly, it is considered that limited weight can be given to the relevant policies of the LPR, but it is nevertheless a material consideration.

Local Plan

Economic Development

- 4.26 **LP Policy P1** identifies Solihull's key economic assets and growth drivers as being the 'M42 Economic Gateway', which supports more than 100,000 jobs and has strong potential for further sustainable growth.
- 4.27 **LP Policy P1 Part B)** sets out that the Council will support and encourage the development of Birmingham Business Park within its boundary to support its role as a prime employment location and enhance its important role as a high quality business park. This includes B1 and B2 development, which is expected to progress in a well-planned way that will maintain the attractiveness of the business park to investors and protect and enhance the natural environment.
- 4.28 **LP Policy P1 Part D)** identifies Jaguar Land Rover ('JLR') as important to the national, regional and local economy.
- 4.29 **Supporting text at paragraph 7.2.12** identifies that business class uses other than Class B1 should be enabled at Birmingham Business Park to secure good quality employment opportunities, including local employment opportunities.
- 4.30 **Supporting text at paragraph 7.2.13** identifies that a 9ha site at the south-west of Birmingham Business Park is allocated for development with a buffer zone of green space between the business park and

residential development along Coleshill Road and Blackfirs Line, which is to be positively managed and enhanced.

- 4.31 **Supporting text at paragraph 7.2.14** sets out the rationale for the allocated release of the site from the Green Belt, identifying that the development is capable of implementation that is sensitive to and enhances landscape features, sensitive to local amenity, retains and important green corridor and minimises adverse effects on Green Belt objectives.

Green Belt

- 4.32 **LP Policy P17** is concerned with development in the countryside and in the Green Belt. Regarding development in the Green Belt, the policy states that:

“The Council will not permit inappropriate development in the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances. In addition to the national policy, the following provisions shall apply to development in the Borough’s Green Belt:

- Development involving the replacement, extension or alteration of buildings in the Green Belt will not be permitted if it will harm the need to retain smaller more affordable housing or the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
 - Limited infilling will not be considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt settlements, providing this would not have an adverse effect on the character of the settlements. Limited infilling shall be interpreted as the filling of a small gap within an otherwise built-up frontage with not more than two dwellings.
 - **The reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt will be allowed where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured** (our emphasis).
 - Where the re-use of buildings or land is proposed, the new use, and any associated use of land surrounding the building, should not conflict with, nor have a materially greater impact on, the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and the form, bulk and general design of the buildings shall be in keeping with their surroundings.
 - Where waste management operations involving inappropriate development are proposed in the Green Belt, the contribution of new capacity towards the treatment gap identified in the Borough may amount to very special circumstances, providing the development accords with the waste management policy of this Plan.
-

- 4.33 The policy needs to be read in conjunction with national Green Belt planning policy included in the NPPF.

Transport

- 4.34 **LP Policy P8** requires development proposals to have regard to transport efficiency and highway safety, setting out at Part A) that:
- i. Development will not be permitted which results in a significant increase in delay to vehicles, pedestrians or cyclists or a reduction in safety for any users of the highway or other transport network;
 - ii. Travel demands associated with development should be managed to minimise detrimental impact to the efficiency of the highway network;
 - iii. Ensure new development reduces the need to travel;

-
- iv. Provision for parking and servicing will be required in accordance with a SPD on managing travel demands associated with development.

4.35 **LP Policy P8 Part B)** requires sustainable modes of transport to be promoted and encouraged in all developments.

Ecology

4.36 **LP Policy P10** requires developments to undertake a full ecological survey and to deliver a net gain or enhancement to biodiversity.

4.37 **LP Policy P11** requires development to incorporate sustainable drainage systems, which are also expected to contribute towards wider sustainability considerations including amenity, recreation, biodiversity and landscape character, as well as flood alleviation and water quality control. On all development sites larger than one hectare, surface water discharge rates shall be limited to the equivalent site specific Greenfield run off rate.

Design Considerations

4.38 **LP Policy P14** sets out how the Council will seek to protect and enhance the amenity of existing and potential occupiers. The following parts of **Policy P14** are relevant to the Development; the Council will:

- i. *Permit development only if it respects the amenity of existing and proposed occupiers and would be a good neighbour;*
- iv. *Safeguard important trees, hedgerows and woodlands, encourage new and replacement tree and hedgerow planting and identify areas that may be suitable for the creation of new woodlands. Priority will be given to locations that enhance or restore the green infrastructure network and to the planting of species characteristic of the Arden Warwickshire landscape;*
- v. *Encourage better air quality in and around the Borough through the adoption of low emission zone initiatives such as those involving the use of electric vehicles for freight and public transport. Development that would contribute to air pollution, either directly or indirectly, will be permitted only if it would not hinder or significantly harm the achievement of air quality objectives or any relevant Air Quality Management Plan, and it incorporates appropriate attenuation, mitigation or compensatory measures;*
 - v. *Require proposals for development on land known or suspected to be contaminated to include appropriate information to enable the potential implications to be assessed and to incorporate any necessary remediation;*
 - vi. *Seek to minimise the adverse impact of noise. Development likely to create significant noise will be permitted only if it is located away from noise sensitive uses or it incorporates measures to ensure adequate protection against noise. Noise sensitive development will be permitted only if it is located away from existing sources of significant noise, or if no suitable alternatives existing, the development incorporates measures to reduce noise intrusion to an acceptable level;*
 - ix. *Protect those parts of the countryside in the Borough that retain a dark sky from the impacts of light pollution. Development involving external lighting outside established settlements will be permitted only where significant lighting already exists or the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impact of the lighting on the countryside. Any lighting scheme should be the minimum required for the purposes of the development and should avoid light spillage and harmful effects on biodiversity; and,*
 - x. *Protect the tranquil and locally distinctive areas in the Borough by guiding new development, particularly those that will create significant noise, either directly or through associated transport, to locations that will avoid or minimise adverse impacts.*

-
- 4.39 Supporting text paragraph 10.12.9 identifies that the Council will limit lighting schemes to the minimum required for the purposes of the development and outside urban areas to locations where lighting already exists to protect the character and quality of residential areas and the countryside from light pollution. The text states that **LP Policy P14** will not prevent essential security lighting that is well designed and installed, but will help to minimise energy use and contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions
- 4.40 **LP Policy P15** requires development at key economic assets within the M42 Economic Gateway, including Birmingham Business Park, to be of the highest quality to reflect their strategic importance and requires development to achieve good quality, inclusive and sustainable design which:
- i. *Conserves and enhances local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and ensures that the scale, massing, density, layout, materials and landscape of the development respect the surrounding natural, built and historic environment;*
 - ii. *Ensures that new development achieves the highest possible standard of environmental performance through sustainable design and construction and layout of the development in accordance with the guidance provided in Policy P9;*
 - iii. *Secures the sustainable long-term use of new development through flexible, robust and future-proofed design e.g. high-speed digital connectivity;*
 - iv. *Makes appropriate space for water within the development, using sustainable drainage (SuDS) principles, to minimise and adapt to the risk of flood. Further guidance is provided in Policy P11;*
 - v. *Conserves and enhances biodiversity, landscape quality and considers the impact on and opportunities for green infrastructure at the earlier opportunity in the design process. Further guidance is provided in Policy P10;*
 - vi. *Integrates the natural environment within the development through provision of gardens, quality open space and/or improved access to, enhancement or extension of the green infrastructure network. Further guidance is provided in Policy P20; and,*
 - vii. *Creates attractive, safe, active, legible and uncluttered streets and public spaces which are accessible, easily maintained and encourage walking and cycling and reduce crime and the fear of crime.*

Draft LPR

Economic Development

- 4.41 Part of the site is allocated as SLP 31 as part of the UK Central Solihull Hub Area.
- 4.42 **Draft LPR Policy P1** sets out that the Hub Area offers the greatest potential for growth in the Borough and will make a significant contribution to the wider West Midlands economy, including Birmingham Business Park. The Plan seeks to support the future aspirations of the key economic assets (i.e. including Birmingham Business Park) in a holistic, well connected way. Development proposals within the Hub will be expected to demonstrate how they achieve the following key objectives:
- i. *Contribute towards sustainable and inclusive economic growth, the continued success of the key economic assets, and Solihull's attractiveness to investment in high value added activities, including low carbon technologies and services;*
 - ii. *Maximise connectivity within and beyond the site through integrated movement and transport networks (including sustainable and active modes of travel), capitalising on the infrastructure advantages of the location with its major new transport hub; contribute to and coordinate transport, energy, power and digital infrastructure provision;*

-
- iii. *Do not impede the provision of infrastructure necessary to support development elsewhere in the Hub Area, or otherwise prevent or hinder development occurring in other parts of the Hub Area;*
 - iv. *Encourages the use of modes of travel other than the private car;*
 - v. *Deliver a high quality strategic green and blue infrastructure network across the Hub area to enhance natural assets;*
 - vi. *Create distinct and unique places with a strong sense of identity, incorporating high quality design and innovation for development and the public realm, whilst maximising the efficient use of land;*
 - vii. *Support inclusive economic growth by supporting employment and supply chain opportunities that benefit businesses and residents across the Borough and by supporting vibrant and sustainable communities, with an emphasis on health and wellbeing, including those working, living in and visiting the Hub Area; and,*
 - viii. *Encompasses sustainability principles minimising the use of natural resources and incorporating low (zero) carbon and renewable energy principles.*
- 4.43 **Draft LPR Policy P1 Part xii.** Identifies that the Council will support JLR to compete and further its success in the global vehicles industry.
- 4.44 **Draft LPR Policy P1** provides the following specific guidance in relation to Birmingham Business Park:
- xvi. *The Council will support and encourage the development of Birmingham Business Park within its boundary defined in this Local Plan to support its role as a prime employment location and enhance its important role as a high quality, managed business park.*
 - xvii. *Development will be supported that includes offices, light industrial, general industrial and warehousing uses. The Council will expect development to progress in a well-planned way that will maintain the attractiveness of the business park to investors and that will protect and enhance the environment including the natural environment.*

Green Belt

- 4.45 **Draft Policy P17** is concerned with development in the countryside and in the Green Belt. It is broadly similar to the adopted Policy P17 albeit more explicitly confirming which factors may constitute very special circumstances in a local Solihull context. In relation to the Green Belt, it states that:

Inappropriate development will not be permitted in the Solihull Green Belt, unless very special circumstances have been demonstrated in accordance with the NPPF

- 4.46 The draft Policy also goes on to note that:

“In considering proposals for inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the following factors may be taken into account as very special circumstances:

a. The reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt will be allowed where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured.

- 4.47 Development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt must not harm the visual amenity of the Green Belt by reason of siting, materials or design.

Transport

- 4.48 **Draft LPR Policy P8** sets out that the Council will support development proposals which:

-
- i. *Are located in accordance with the spatial strategy in seeking to reduce the need to travel and that essential travel can be met by forms of sustainable transport in addition to the private car;*
 - ii. *Promote linked trips by encouraging mixed use development where appropriate;*
 - iii. *Do not have an unacceptable impact on public highway safety;*
 - iv. *Takes an evidence-based approach to demonstrate car parking provision, taking account of location, trip rates and, where relevant, travel plan targets and forecast levels of car ownership.*

Ecology

4.49 **Draft LPR Policy P10** sets out that the Council will seek to protect, enhance, restore, increase and connect the natural environment and secure measurable net gains in biodiversity. Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in developments will be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity. Developers are required to undertake an ecological survey, proportionate to the scale and type of development. Development will be required to demonstrate how it will secure a 'net gain' in biodiversity of at least 10% compared with the pre-development baseline. The policy requires development proposals to demonstrate that they:

- i. *Consider the context and setting, including local distinctiveness, natural and historic landscapes and character, and impact on tranquillity;*
- ii. *Identify likely visual impacts on the local landscape (and townscape) and its immediate setting and undertake appropriate landscape design and mitigation to reduce these impacts;*
- iii. *Aim to conserve, enhance and/or restore important landscape features in accordance with the latest local and national guidance, ensuring their long term management and maintenance;*
- iv. *Address the importance of habitat biodiversity features, including aged and veteran trees, ancient woodland trees and hedges and their contribution to landscape character, where possible enhancing these features through means such as buffering and reconnecting fragmented areas.*

Design Considerations

4.50 **Draft LPR Policy P11** all development to include the use of above ground sustainable drainage systems and requires disposal of surface water to comply with the following hierarchy:

- i. *Recycling/reuse;*
- ii. *Discharge into the ground by infiltration;*
- iii. *Discharge to a surface water body or watercourse;*
- iv. *Discharge to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;*
- v. *Discharge to a combined sewer.*

4.51 **Draft LPR Policy P14** requires new development to safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupiers. In determining planning applications, the Council will:

- i. *Permit development only if it secures high quality design whilst respecting the amenity of existing and future occupiers; and the character of the surrounding area;*
- ii. *Expect developers to locate and design new developments so as to minimise adverse visual and other amenity impacts, whilst making efficient use of land;*
- iii. *Seek to safeguard important trees, hedgerows, natural habitats and woodlands, and will require new and replacement tree and hedgerow planting; and where, appropriate, new woodlands;*

-
- iv. *Ensure development does not have a significant adverse impact on local air quality, either directly or indirectly resulting in unacceptable effects on human health, local amenity and the natural environment;*
 - v. *Requires proposals for development known or suspected to be contaminated to include appropriate information to enable the potential implications to be assessed;*
 - vi. *Seek to minimise the adverse impact of noise and vibration. Development likely to create significant noise or vibration effects will be permitted only if located away from sensitive uses unless measures can be incorporated to adequately protect against such impacts;*
 - vii. *Protect residential areas from the introduction of incompatible development that may jeopardise amenity. Development that presents a likelihood of significant harm because of impacts from noise or atmospheric pollution will not be permitted unless they can demonstrate appropriate attenuation, mitigation or remediation measures to adequately control and limit those impacts identified;*
 - viii. *Consider the impact of light spillage and pollution from artificial light on local amenity, nature conservation and those parts of the countryside in the Borough that retain an intrinsically dark sky. Development proposals should ensure that light impacts are fully assessed as necessary, and that any adverse impacts are limited or can be satisfactorily mitigated; and,*
 - ix. *Protect the tranquil and locally distinctive areas in the Borough by guiding new development to locations that will avoid or minimise adverse impacts.*
- 4.52 **Draft LPR Policy P15** requires proposals to contribute to high quality places and spaces which have regard to local distinctiveness and achieve inclusive and sustainable design, and are expected to:
- i. *Conserve and contribute positively to local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and ensure that the scale, massing, density, layout, territory, materials and landscape of the development is sympathetic to the surrounding natural, built and historic environment;*
 - ii. *Ensure new developments provide public open spaces that will benefit people, wildlife and provide flood storage and carbon management;*
 - iii. *Secure the sustainable long-term use of new development through flexible, robust and future-proofed design and layout (including through low carbon technologies);*
 - iv. *Make appropriate provision for water management within development, with SuDS responding to landscape character and urban design;*
 - v. *Conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity;*
 - vi. *Respect and enhance landscape character and quality, including trees, hedgerows and other landscape features.*
- 4.53 All developments should comply with urban design principles set out in the National Design Guide, Urban Design Compendium, Manual for Streets 1 and 2, Building for Life 12 and Secured by Design Principles.

OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Supplementary Planning Documents / Guidance

- 4.54 The Vehicle Parking Standards and Green Travel Plans Supplementary Planning Document ('SPD') was adopted as an SPD in June 2006 and is therefore a material consideration in decision-making.
- 4.55 The SPD was produced to support the superseded Solihull Unitary Development Plan 2006, but remains a material planning consideration.

West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy

- 4.56 The West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy ('WMLIS') was published in May 2019. The WMLIS sets out the region's priorities for increasing the productivity of the West Midlands and the national economy. In particular, the West Midlands aims to drive growth to meet the Government's Future of Mobility Grand Challenge. As required by NPPF paragraph 81, planning policies should have regard to Local Industrial Strategies.

Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (2016) A Greater Birmingham for a Greater Britain: Strategic Economic Plan 2016-30

- 4.57 The Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership ('GBSLEP') published its Strategic Economic Plan ('SEP') in 2016.
- 4.58 The SEP sets out the GBSLEP vision and strategy for delivering sustainable, more inclusive growth across the wider West Midlands city region and the UK as a whole. It also identifies an industrial strategy for realising the potential of strengths and assets in key sectors and technologies. This includes a focus on enabling the area's advanced manufacturing and engineering industry at the heart of the Midlands' automotive cluster, which makes a major contribution to foreign direct investment ('FDI') attraction into the UK.

West Midlands Combined Authority Strategic Economic Plan

- 4.59 The West Midlands Combined Authority ('WMCA') published a SEP for the WMCA area in 2016. The SEP intends to complement the GBSLEP SEP, setting out outstanding challenges to be tackled up to 2030; including the need to reduce reliance on foreign located supply chains: "The challenge for the area is to re-shore a significant proportion of the supply chain, seeking to secure a significant share of, for example, the £6bn additional supply chain opportunities identified by the Automotive Council.¹" The SEP aims to tackle these challenges by focussing on eight priority actions, one of which includes: "harnessing the biggest concentrations of high value manufacturing businesses in Europe and their supply chains.²"
- 4.60 The SEP sets out specific objectives in relation to supporting the 'new manufacturing economy' in order to exploit the position of the West Midlands as one of the largest concentrations of high value manufacturing in Europe, with global companies being supplied by clusters of local businesses:
- Retain and support the growth of Original Equipment Manufacturers ('OEMs');
 - Enable innovation and its commercialisation;
 - Strengthen supply chain links and re-shore activity to the region;
 - Secure further inward investment.

¹ West Midlands Combined Authority (2016) Strategic Economic Plan, p.21

² West Midlands Combined Authority (2016) Strategic Economic Plan, p.8

Recharge the West Midlands: Kickstarting the West Midlands Economy – Our investment case to government (June 2020)

- 4.61 In response to the economic downturn driven by the on-going impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the West Midlands Combined Authority submitted the 'Recharge the West Midlands' business case to Government in June 2020, which sets out a requirement for £3.2 billion of Government investment in projects that will deliver an immediate positive economic impact. Signatories included the Leader of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.
- 4.62 'Recharge the West Midlands' sets out that the region's exposure to sectors particularly impacted by the current crisis, including automotive and manufacturing, mean the region's economic performance will be disproportionately impacted. The document seeks to leverage private sector investment to complement any public sector investment, including cementing the region's leading position as a centre for automotive innovation and the associated supply chain.

High Court Decision in relation to Solihull Local Plan Policy P17

- 4.63 As noted, a legal decision which considered the application of Local Plan Policy P17 was made in July 2015 [Case No C/5740/2014 (Pertemps Investments Limited versus SSCLG and Solihull MBC)]. The case related to a dismissed planning appeal for the erection of an office building in the Green Belt. A key matter considered by the decision was whether, in consideration of the Green Belt issue, the Appeal Inspector misapplied Policy P17 of the Solihull Local Plan, and in particular, the third provision of the policy which relates to the "reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt".
- 4.64 Paragraphs 32 – 34 of the judgement are of particular relevance, with relevant sections outlined below for ease of reference:

"32. The third provision (of Policy P17), relating to the "reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt . . .", is also consistent with national Green Belt policy in the NPPF. It lends the support of the development plan, in principle, to proposals which would enable the reasonable expansion of an established business on a site in the Green Belt in the metropolitan borough of Solihull, so long as the qualifying criteria are met. . . . Under paragraph 87 of the NPPF such (inappropriate) development should not be approved "except in very special circumstances". The provision of Policy P17 does not alter or compromise that principle. But it does prescribe, at local level, a positive approach to any proposals which would make possible the expansion of an established business in the Green Belt, even where the proposed development would be, by definition, inappropriate under both national and local policy."

"33. No doubt there will be some cases where it weighs in favour of a proposal for development that is not inappropriate in the Green Belt. But there will be others where it strengthens – perhaps decisively – an applicant's argument that the proposed development, though in principle inappropriate, is justified by very special circumstances and ought therefore to be approved – or, as the policy puts it, "allowed". It will add extra force to such an argument – as it evidently did with Jaguar Land Rover's proposal – if the expansion of the business in question is "reasonable", if the contribution the development will make to the local economy or to employment is "significant", and if the mitigation is "appropriate". All of these questions are, of course, matters of planning judgment for the council as local planning authority, or for the Secretary of State or his inspector on appeal."

"34. The last two sentences of paragraph 11.6.7 refer to Jaguar Land Rover and Whale Tankers as established businesses within or adjacent to the Green Belt in the council's area and the reasonable expansion of such businesses being allowed "where justified". Those are examples of "established businesses" whose "reasonable expansion" into the Green Belt may

be “justified” under this provision in Policy P17, but not the only ones. The encouragement for “reasonable expansion” is available to other companies as well.”

4.65 From the above decision, it was concluded that:

- There is a need to apply a policy principle that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should not be approved except in very special circumstances but that Policy P17 defines a positive approach to any proposal, even inappropriate development, which would make possible the expansion of an established business in the Green Belt;
- This Policy, notably the provision encouraging the expansion of an existing business within the Green Belt, will strengthen an applicant’s argument (perhaps decisively) that very special circumstances exist; and
- The key matters to be considered under this aspect of Policy P17 are that: the expansion of the business is ‘reasonable’; the contribution of the development to the local economy or employment is ‘significant’; and that mitigation is ‘appropriate’.

5 Planning Considerations

INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 This section sets out a review of the Development against national and local planning policies set out in the Local Plan, emerging draft LPR, NPPF and the Vehicle Parking Standards and Green Travel Plans SPD.
- 5.2 To avoid undue repetition, the key planning policy considerations contained within each planning policy document have been identified below and grouped into key themes.
- 5.3 Other material considerations have also been reviewed and are considered below where applicable.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT AND VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Relevant Development Plan Policies

- 5.4 The following adopted Development Plan policies are considered relevant to the principle of development:
 - **Local Plan:** Policies P1, P17
- 5.5 The following Draft LPR policies are considered relevant to the principle of development:
 - **Draft LPR:** Policies P1, P17
- 5.6 The Site is located at Birmingham Business Park, which Policy P1 seeks to support as a prime employment location and high quality business park. Draft Policy P1 seeks to support the future aspirations of Birmingham Business Park, including its contribution to sustainable and inclusive economic growth, its continued success and continued attractiveness to investment in high value added activities.
- 5.7 As explained in Section 2, the Development is necessary to enable IAC to operate its new Elmdon 3 site effectively and to best realise its investment in high value added manufacturing at the Site, which includes operating to its full capacity and facilitating the travel of its employees.
- 5.8 The Site is predominantly located within the West Midlands Green Belt. Paragraph 133 of the NPPF sets out that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent sprawl by keeping land permanently open, with the essential characteristics of openness and permanence.
- 5.9 Pre-application discussions held with the Local Planning Authority have confirmed that whilst the landscaping proposal constitutes appropriate development that is acceptable in the Green Belt, the 0.59ha of car parking area constitutes inappropriate development (as defined in the NPPF).
- 5.10 LP Policy P17 and Draft LPR Policy P17 state that inappropriate development will only be permitted by the Council in very special circumstances. In addition to the NPPF requirement for very special circumstances to be demonstrated, Policy P17 and Draft Policy P17 provide specifically for the reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt, where the proposal will make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured. A legal judgement in relation to the application of adopted Policy P17 has confirmed that the provision encouraging the expansion of an existing business within the Green Belt, will strengthen an applicant's argument (perhaps decisively) that very special circumstances exist.

Green Belt Harm

- 5.11 The section of the Statement provides an assessment of the harm arising from the proposed car parking component of the Development on the five purposes of the Green Belt defined in NPPF paragraph 134, drawing on the Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment produced by Atkins on behalf of the Council in July 2016 ('the 2016 GBA').

-
- 5.12 NPPF paragraph 134 defines the five purposes of the Green Belt as:
- a. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas ('Purpose 1');
 - b. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another ('Purpose 2');
 - c. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment ('Purpose 3');
 - d. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns ('Purpose 4'); and,
 - e. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land ('Purpose 5').
- 5.13 The 2016 GBA assessed the performance of Green Belt parcels against Purpose 1-4; Purpose 5 was excluded from the assessment, given that all Green Belt land makes an equal contribution to this purpose.
- 5.14 The Green Belt falling within the Site comprises the southern part of Parcel RP08 ('Land immediately east of Birmingham Business Park').

Purpose 1

- 5.15 The 2016 GBA assessed Parcel RP08 as 'moderately performing' in terms of Purpose 1, identifying the eastern boundary bordering Birmingham Business Park as weak, a stronger border along the Coleshill Heath Road boundary and no development being present within the parcel.
- 5.16 The introduction of built area within the south of the parcel would introduce built development and therefore cause harm to Purpose 1, as this would constitute sprawl into the parcel. The harm would be limited given that it would be attached to the existing large built-up area, and the parcel would largely remain intact.

Purpose 2

- 5.17 The 2016 GBA identified that Parcel RP08 does not perform Purpose 2 in respect of preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another, as the parcel is located within the existing urban area; Chelmsley Wood and Birmingham Business Park comprise part of the same urban area. It therefore does not prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- 5.18 The introduction of built area within the south of the parcel would not therefore cause harm to Purpose 2, as the Green Belt already does not perform the function of preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another.

Purpose 3

- 5.19 The 2016 GBA assessed Parcel RP08 as 'moderately performing' in terms of Purpose 3, identifying that the parcel is entirely contained within the urban area, but contains agricultural land, trees and open spaces.
- 5.20 The introduction of built area within the south of the parcel would cause harm to Purpose 3, as this would introduce built development into a landscaped area. Arguably, the impact in terms of reduction of openness would be limited, given the limited visual impact of creating additional surface car parking (i.e. new urban massing is not being introduced into the parcel) and the introduction of sensitively designed lighting columns.

Purpose 4

- 5.21 The 2016 GBA identified that Parcel RP08 does not perform Purpose 4 in preserving the setting and special character of historic towns, as it is not located within or adjacent to a Conservation Area or historic town.
- 5.22 In summary, the Green Belt within the Site does not perform Purposes 2 and 4, and is moderately performing in terms of checking unrestricted urban sprawl of urban areas (Purpose 1) and protecting the countryside from encroachment (Purpose 3).
- 5.23 The introduction of built area in the form of surface car parking and associated additional lighting columns would cause harm to Purpose 1, as the additional built area constitutes urban sprawl, and to Purpose 3, by introducing development within the parcel, which is currently characterised by open land.
- 5.24 Whilst the degree of harm is likely to be limited, as identified above, NPPF paragraph 144 requires LPAs to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt. As a result, 'very special circumstances' are demonstrated in this Statement, alongside mitigation of any other potential harm resulting from the Development, which clearly outweigh the identified potential harm to the Green Belt.
- 5.25 In line with national and local planning policy and also the High Court Judgement in relation to Solihull Local Plan Policy P17, the following section sets out the justification for very special circumstances in this case. Based on the context explained previously, it is considered that the following the proposals are justified by very special circumstances and therefore ought to be approved in the context of Green Belt policy.

Purpose 5

- 5.26 The 2016 GBA did not assess Green Belt parcels in relation to their contribution towards assisting urban regeneration. The Development does not propose additional floorspace and therefore does not represent a potential loss of development opportunity for brownfield sites and will not discourage the recycling of derelict and other urban land elsewhere. The Development does however maximise the employment generation and use of the adjacent industrial units, thereby making an efficient use of land and limiting potential pressure and need to release Green Belt land elsewhere to accommodate new jobs for the Borough.

Reasonable Expansion of the Business

The Business Need for the Development

- 5.27 As a long-established local business, the Applicant already has well-established operations at Elmdon Trading Estate. However, in order to service growing contracts and to deliver a wider business strategy to relocate certain manufacturing activities to the site from other locations in Europe and in the UK, IAC has sought to locate at the Site in order to remain in close proximity to its Elmdon site, as well as remaining within close working proximity to JLR operations, which is the primary client of IAC's products.
- 5.28 IAC has won significant new business from Jaguar Land Rover to engineer, design, manufacture and supply interior trim components for numerous new vehicles ('the Programme'). IAC operated from existing premises on Elmdon Trading Estate since 1996, however, the scale and scope of the new business has created a need for additional operational floorspace.
- 5.29 Should the Development not be permitted, the opportunity costs are set out in the section on 'Consequences of Failure to Increase Car Parking Provision' at paragraph 5.76 below.
- 5.30 By way of comparison, planning permission was granted in September 2012 for the construction of the Rolls-Royce Aero Engine Controls Facility at a neighbouring site on Solihull Parkway (ref:

PL/2012/02186/FULM). The Facility comprises some 25,903sqm of employment floorspace in a hybrid of Class B1a, B1b, B1c and B2 uses.

- 5.31 The Rolls-Royce Aero Engine Controls Facility houses an advanced engineering operation comprising a comparable proportion of office-based design and development jobs, alongside advanced manufacturing facilities. It was estimated that circa. 1,460 permanent staff would be employed on-site, necessitating 940 parking spaces (64% provision).
- 5.32 Whilst this was recognised to conflict with the Development Plan and Solihull Vehicle Parking Standards and Green Travel Plans SPD (2006), the officer noted that the NPPF allows for a scientific, evidence-based approach to be applied when assessing parking, rather than applying arbitrary maximum standards. As defined in the Transport section of this Statement, the proposed level of car parking falls within the maximum parking standards defined in the SPD. The proportion of proposed car parking provision compared to on-site staff equates to circa. 10% less than the Rolls-Royce level of provision, at circa. 53% (1,140 FTE vs. 600 total spaces).

The Locational Business Need

- 5.33 Proximity to customers is a central factor in IAC's decision on where to locate its additional facility. It is vital to IAC's competitiveness that this additional facility is located in close proximity to Jaguar Land Rover at Elmdon. Central to IAC's contract to supply with Jaguar Land Rover with car parts is its ability to:
- Manufacture and deliver car parts in accordance with Jaguar Land Rover's 'just-in-time' delivery schedule; and,
 - Deliver these car parts in the correct sequence to feed into Jaguar Land Rover's production sequence.
- 5.34 In practice, this means that IAC will have circa. 4-6 hours to complete the manufacturing of the items and deliver to Jaguar Land Rover. Successful fulfilment of this contract is dependent on IAC's ability to work within these timescales.
- 5.35 Equally, the IAC management and technical support teams involved in the manufacturing and logistics processes will be based at both the existing manufacturing hub on Elmdon Trading Estate and the new additional facility. Therefore, the effectiveness of the staff to work across both locations is dependent on their ability to travel between the existing and additional manufacturing facilities; minimising travel times will contribute to the productivity of IAC as a business.
- 5.36 The selection of the site at Birmingham Interchange is therefore been driven by:
- Proximity and connectivity to the Jaguar Land Rover operations supplied by IAC, in order to meet 'just-in-time' and carefully sequenced logistics plans; and,
 - Proximity and connectivity to the existing Elmdon manufacturing hub, to allow management and technical staff to work effectively and efficiently across the two sites to oversee the manufacturing process.

Lack of Local Site and Parking Alternatives to Service the Need

- 5.37 The Applicant has investigated reasonable alternatives to delivering additional car parking on land close to the Site on land that is not located within the West Midlands Green Belt, in order to meet operational requirements without expanding parking provision on-site. The site locations are identified on **Figure 5.1** below.

FIGURE 5.1: POTENTIAL PARKING SITE ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED³



Option A) Leasing Rolls-Royce Expansion Land

5.38 The Applicant’s property agents have approached neighbouring Rolls-Royce to propose leasing some of their expansion land, which is not situated in the West Midlands Green Belt and comprises circa. 3ha. However, Rolls-Royce is not willing to do so and hence this land is not available. As set out in the Planning Statement accompanying the full planning permission for the development of the Rolls-Royce Aero Engine Controls Facility (ref: PL/2012/02186/FULM), the land has the capacity to accommodate up to 11,000 sqm of additional floorspace associated with the facility, and could therefore accommodate the future expansion of the business. The use of the expansion land for car parking would therefore preclude a more productive use of the land adjacent to the existing facility and potentially stymie future expansion.

Option B) Land Adjacent to Progress Way

5.39 There is a strip of land adjacent to Progress Way, which currently comprises greenfield land outside the West Midlands Green Belt. This site could theoretically accommodate some of the additional car parking provision required. However, this land cannot be used as currently subject to safeguarding for a future public transport corridor. The use of this land for car parking would therefore conflict with other planning policies, and potentially preclude the delivery of the public transport corridor through Birmingham Business Park and towards Birmingham International.

Option C) Plot 6700, Birmingham Business Park

- 5.40 Plot 6700 on Solihull Parkway comprises a vacant development plot at the heart of Birmingham Business Park. The Applicant has previously approached the landowners to explore leasing the land for the construction of a surface car park. Plot 6700 is located circa. 800m from the entrance to the Site, and is therefore not ideally situated for IAC employees, but is within reasonable walking distance.
- 5.41 Plot 6700 currently has extant reserved matters permission for the development of two detached office buildings, which were proposed to deliver circa. 14,700sqm of high-quality office accommodation alongside 321 car parking spaces. Given the inherent development value of Plot 6700, the cost of leasing the land for surface car parking is prohibitive. Additionally, the delivery of a surface car park on Plot 6700 does not represent an optimal use of a prominent development site at the centre of Birmingham Business Park, particularly given the opportunity to deliver two high quality office buildings on Plot 6700.
- 5.42 As indicated on Figure 5.1, Plot 6500 (south of Plot 6700) was recently developed as the new head office for Sulzer which opened in November 2020. This means that Plot 6500 is currently the last undeveloped plot on Birmingham Business Park.

Option D) Land at the National Exhibition Centre

- 5.43 The Applicant's property agents have approached the National Exhibition Centre ('NEC') to propose leasing some of their existing surface car parking area(s), which are situated to the south of B4438 Bickenhill Parkway. However, given that the purpose of the existing surface car parking areas is to enable the NEC to respond to short-term demands for additional car parking or outdoor events space associated with its core activity as an eminent conferencing and events venue, it was not possible to reach agreement on an acceptable leasing arrangement with the NEC. The Applicant requires certainty that the car parking would be available for the medium-/long-term in order to effectively manage its operations and workforce, however, the NEC's need to be flexible and respond to opportunities at short notice conflicts with this.
- 5.44 Additionally, both LP Policy P1 and Draft LPR Policy P1 seek to support proposals at the NEC that contribute to wider placemaking objectives, including commercial and residential development and other business uses; in particular, where it can be demonstrated that development makes more efficient use of the site, such as the use of decked parking. A long-term agreement to use part of the current temporary NEC surface car parking area as off-site car parking for IAC may prejudice potential future plans for redevelopment of surface car parking, and therefore restrict the opportunity for achieving the placemaking objectives set out in Policy P1. Aspirations for the redevelopment of the surface car parking to the north of the NEC is identified in the NEC: City Masterplan (2018) and UK Central Hub plans.

Significant Contribution to the Local Economy and Employment

Contribution to Delivery of Economic Strategy and Objectives

- 5.45 Paragraph 7.1.2 of the adopted Local Plan sets out that Solihull has the most productive economy in the Midlands, attributing this to its key assets such as JLR; which is seen as having been key to the Borough's success in attracting investment, particularly in high value sectors including automotive manufacturing.
- 5.46 Sustainable economic growth in Solihull is recognised as contributing to economic recovery and employment generation across the GBSLEP area and wider West Midlands. Paragraph 7.1.4 of the adopted Local Plan recognises that achieving further sustainable economic growth will depend on the continued competitiveness of its key economic assets, including JLR, and safeguarding the Borough's attractiveness to live, study, visit and invest.

-
- 5.47 Recognising the Borough's role in supporting sustainable economic growth in the GBSLEP area and wider West Midlands, it is pertinent to consider the strategic objectives of the GBSLEP SEP. The SEP seeks to ensure that the area's advanced manufacturing supply chain, particularly for transport technologies including automotive, continues to be globally competitive as part of a wider Midlands offer⁴. The SEP also seeks to develop and promote these supply chains, by engaging with Original Equipment Manufacturers⁵. The retention of and fostering growth of Original Equipment Manufacturers is a particular objective of the WMCA SEP.
- 5.48 The retention and enabling of IAC's operations within the Borough, as an Original Equipment Manufacturer that plays a major role in the region's automotive supply chain, therefore strongly accords with the vision set out in both SEPs.
- 5.49 The SEP identifies that FDI has predominantly been driven by the advanced manufacturing centre, which represented 31% of all FDI projects in the LEP area in 2015/16. One of the key challenges identified in the SEP for growing inward investment is continuing to develop GBSLEP area's supply chain strengths and resilience, particularly in those sectors (such as automotive) in which we currently have, or have the potential for, global competitive advantage.
- 5.50 This economic strategy aligns with paragraph 80 of the NPPF, which encourages 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 to capitalise on their performance and potential.
- 5.51 The WMLIS sets out how the West Midlands is well placed to respond to the UK Industrial Strategy's Future of Mobility Grand Challenge, building on its significant existing strengths in research and firms operating in existing automotive supply chains.
- 5.52 In addition to complementing the GBSLEP SEP's strategy outlined above, the WMCA SEP also explicitly aims to 're-shore' advanced manufacturing jobs back to the West Midlands. As set out in the section on the Locational Need for the Development above, the expanded car parking provision at the Site would enable IAC to maintain and expand its Solihull operations, including through locating manufacturing activities currently undertaken outside of the West Midlands and the UK, in accordance with the re-shoring objective pursued by the WMCA SEP.
- 5.53 As a long-standing regional actor in the automotive supply chain, IAC can be seen to help ensure that the GBSLEP area's advanced manufacturing supply chain remains globally competitive. IAC's on-going business relationship with JLR reinforces this competitiveness and its continued successful operation in the West Midlands is conducive to future economic development.
- 5.54 In accordance with paragraph 80 of the NPPF, 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.
- 5.55 The Programme represents a significant investment in the West Midlands economy, comprising circa. £94 million of investment with a £1.4 billion sales forecast across the period 2021-2028.
- 5.56 If IAC is able to remain on-site in the longer-term, the Site provides a platform for IAC to potentially supply other firms within the West Midlands region and nationally, including Aston Martin, Bentley,
-

⁴ GBSLEP (2016) Strategic Economic Plan 2016-30, p22

⁵ GBSLEP (2016) Strategic Economic Plan 2016-30, p24

Nissan, BMW and Toyota. It is vital that IAC is able to maximise its manufacturing activities at the Site, to ensure it remains commercially competitive. This necessitates the associated large labour force that needs to travel to and from the Site.

- 5.57 Therefore, in terms of Development Plan policies, WMLIS and SEP, the expansion of car parking at the site to secure IAC's operation contributes to the delivery of the following:
- Supporting the cluster of original engineering manufacturers (i.e. Jaguar Land Rover) around Birmingham Airport, in line with NPPF paragraph 82 requiring planning decisions to recognise the specific locational requirements of sectors, including high technology industries;
 - Supporting inward investment and re-shoring of economic activity, with the transfer of headliner substrate manufacture and cut/sew processes from the Czech Republic to the West Midlands;
 - Supporting resilience of the UK automotive industry supply chain to post-Brexit trade disruption by supporting a local supply chain; and,
 - IAC will continue to investment in the latest manufacturing techniques, including robotics, automation of control systems at its existing and future site, contributing to the West Midlands as a globally competitive location for automotive manufacturing.
- 5.58 This represents a significant contribution to the local economy, as to be considered in the context of Policy P17 in relation to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Level and Nature of Additional Job Creation

- 5.59 The proposed expansion of the car park from 212 spaces to 600 spaces is necessitated by the high jobs density of on-site employment and the limitation of moving shift worker trips to public transport and other travel modes.
- 5.60 It is anticipated that 27 of these car parking spaces will be reserved to service visitors from other IAC plants, clients and suppliers. This demand is driven by the plant's role as a UK centre and in some instances, the European centre for IAC Group operations, which drives visitor travel by hosting meetings, training events and seminars involving UK-based and European visitors associated with the IAC Group's operation. This is in addition to the site's role as IAC Group's main hub for customers, suppliers and contractors.
- 5.61 In a scenario where IAC is able to obtain planning permission for the expansion of car parking, the IAC plant is estimated to support circa. 1,140 FTE jobs, with a significant proportion of its staff involved in the design, development, manufacturing and qualification of components.
- 5.62 In a scenario where IAC is unable to obtain planning permission for the expansion of car parking, IAC will likely need to consider sub-letting units DC1 / DC2 to an alternative occupier or using them for storage purposes with the proposed higher value manufacturing operations needing to be undertaken outside of Solihull MBC and the West Midlands.
- 5.63 Considering the limited parking in this scenario, an alternative occupier would be similarly limited in the number of employees it could have on-site. Therefore, it is likely that an alternative occupier would not comprise a comparable advanced manufacturing operation to IAC, rather, it would most likely be a warehousing operation which would likely support a much lower density and therefore lower quantum of employment.
- 5.64 For illustrative purposes, a comparison of the estimated quantity of employment (full time equivalent, 'FTE') is provided in Table 5.1 below. The IAC as occupier scenario has been calculated using the most

recent best practice guidance, on the basis of Class B2 industrial and manufacturing use⁶. The alternative occupier scenario has been calculated using the most recent best practice guidance, assuming the alternative occupier would be a Regional Distribution Centre⁷.

TABLE 5.1: COMPARISON OF ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTED IN ALTERNATIVE OCCUPIER SCENARIO

	ESTIMATED FTE – IAC AS OCCUPIER	ESTIMATED FTE – REDUCED ACTIVITY ON-SITE
Nature of employment supported	<p>Circa. 270 FTE as highly skilled jobs involved in programme management, commercial and engineering departments.</p> <p>Circa. 870 FTE as skilled and semi-skilled manufacturing jobs.</p>	<p>Circa. 465 FTE - small proportion of Class B8 logistics jobs assumed to be supporting office roles.</p>
Total FTE supported	1,140 FTE	465 FTE

- 5.65 The Programme to be delivered across the existing Elmdon and additional Birmingham Interchange facilities will provide a broad range of jobs, accessible to all levels of the local and regional labour market. In particular, the Programme will be delivered using Manufacturing Execution Systems reliant on highly qualified employees, including software engineers.
- 5.66 High quality manufacturing jobs will be created, including quality engineers, manufacturing engineers and logistics planners.
- 5.67 Support staff will also be employed to serve the business, including roles in finance, HR, procurement and IT.
- 5.68 This contribution should be considered in the current economic climate, where supporting investment and employment growth in advanced manufacturing, including automotive, is central to the Borough's and region's economic recovery. This accords with the 'Recharge the West Midlands' business case for the West Midlands' economic recovery, submitted by the WMCA to central Government in June 2020, which Solihull MBC is a constituent part of.
- 5.69 This represents a significant contribution to employment, as to be considered in the context of Policy P17 in relation to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Support for Jaguar Land Rover

- 5.70 Jaguar Land Rover ('JLR') is identified in the adopted Local Plan as one of the key major economic assets in the Borough, forming part of the M42 Economic Gateway, which in turn is a major growth driver in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP area.
- 5.71 Paragraph 5.5.4 of the adopted Local Plan identifies how the Plan's spatial strategy can enable the M42 Economic Gateway to contribute to economic growth by:
- "Supporting and encouraging a broad range of development at Jaguar Land Rover to facility its function as a major vehicle manufacturer and providing opportunities for the location of supply chain businesses within the Borough.*

⁶ Homes and Communities Agency (2015) Employment Density Guide, 3rd Edition

⁷ Homes and Communities Agency (2015) Employment Density Guide, 3rd Edition

-
- 5.72 *Recognising and facilitating the potential of other businesses within the Corridor to contribute to economic growth and employment.*"
- 5.73 Paragraph 7.1.10 of the adopted Local Plan recognises that JLR is one of the most important businesses in driving economic recovery at the regional and national level, as an advanced manufacturing firm developing leading technologies, including in low emissions vehicles. Paragraph 820 of the Draft LPR recognises that the Lode Lane plant in Solihull provides circa. 7,300 jobs and is expected to increase its workforce to 9,000 following substantial new investment in Solihull.
- 5.74 The Development Plan is clearly supportive of enabling JLR, stating at paragraph 7.1.10 of the adopted Local Plan that: *"It is critical that JLR is able to continue to secure and develop its activities in the Borough."* Local Plan Policy P1 part d) specifically supports JLR, as it is important to the national, regional and local economy and is a major employer. Part d) also supports the reasonable expansion of Jaguar Land Rover into the Green Belt, which *"...will be given positive consideration where economic need can be demonstrated and appropriate mitigation can be secured."* This is complemented by the positive provision in Policy P17 for other established businesses, enabling reasonable expansion into the Green Belt where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment.
- 5.75 IAC is a leading global supplier of automotive components and systems. IAC is an important part of the supply chain for Jaguar Land Rover; one of the supply chain businesses supporting JLR in its function as a major vehicle manufacturer that is to be provided the opportunity to be located in the Borough, as inferred by paragraph 5.5.4 of the Solihull Local Plan 2013. Whilst IAC is not specifically addressed in Local Plan Policy P1, consideration of its role in supporting the competitiveness of JLR and its operation through its role in the JLR supply chain should be given due consideration.

Consequences of Failure to Increase Car Parking Provision

- 5.76 IAC has made contingency plans in the event that the necessary additional car parking cannot be delivered at Birmingham Interchange. The most likely outcome of not being able to increase car parking, in light of no reasonable alternatives for car parking nearby, would be only undertaking the existing Programme at the Site, with future expansion and investment being directed to other UK plants. This would represent a loss of future investment and supply chain benefits from Solihull and the wider West Midlands. This would also undermine the aims of the Local Plan and WMLIS objectives of maintaining Solihull's and the region's position as a key focus for FDI and investment in advanced manufacturing.
- 5.77 Without additional car parking, the constraint of existing car parking would prevent for IAC to support the full level of employment proposed. This would likely result in the Site being underutilised, with one of the units potentially used for warehousing of parts rather than manufacturing. This would result in a lower jobs density. As indicated in Table 5.1, this could result in the Site supporting circa. 675 fewer jobs in a warehousing scenario than if IAC remained the long-term tenant.
- 5.78 In summary, the opportunity costs of not granting planning permission, in terms of supporting sustainable economic development and the growth of the local supply chain, would likely comprise:
- Lost opportunity to strengthen the cluster of high technology automotive manufacturing within the M42 Economic Gateway and wider West Midlands;
 - Lost opportunity to create more and higher skilled jobs and investment in future-proof manufacturing and logistics processes; and
 - Lost opportunity to support the quality and competitiveness of Jaguar Land Rover's and overall automotive supply chain.

Appropriate Mitigation

- 5.79 The subsequent sections of this Statement provide an overview of how appropriate mitigation is provided for in the design of the Development, in terms of transport and highways, amenity of nearby residential properties, flood risk and surface water drainage, ecology and trees.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

- 5.80 The following adopted Development Plan policy is considered relevant to transport matters:
- **Local Plan:** LP Policy P8
- 5.81 The following Draft LPR policies are considered relevant to transport matters:
- **Draft LPR:** Draft LPR Policies P1 and P8
- 5.82 The following SPDs/SPGs are also material considerations:
- Vehicle Parking Standards and Green Travel Plans SPD
- 5.83 As set out in NPPF paragraph 109, development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.84 The Transport Statement ('TS') has been prepared by Vectos in liaison with the Council as the Local Highway Authority. The TS includes a traffic impact assessment, which assesses the impact of the proposals on the local highway network and provides justification for the proposed level of car parking.
- 5.85 Based on the total existing floor area at the site (28,800sqm), the standards set out in the Vehicle Parking Standards and Green Travel Plans SPD would allow for up to 720 car parking spaces. The Development proposes 600 car parking spaces, which is below this maximum threshold.
- 5.86 Additional traffic on local roads will be generated temporarily during the construction phase. However, the number of construction vehicle movements associated with the works is not expected to be substantial. Measures will be put in place to reduce potential impacts. During the works, the number of vehicular movements will be minimised as much as possible and trips will be timed to avoid peak traffic periods and to avoid vehicles having to wait to gain access onto site. Measures to control construction traffic will be detailed within the CEMP. With these measures in place, significant impacts on local road traffic levels would not be anticipated during the construction phase.
- 5.87 The Transport Statement includes a traffic impact assessment, which considers the impact of vehicle movements associated with the 870 employees who will be split across the three staggered shifts (06:00-14:00, 14:00-22:00 and 22:00-06:00) in addition to the 270 primarily office-based employees who will generally work from 07:30-16:00. The Applicant has sought to stagger the shifts in order to reduce the traffic impact on the local road network and the requirement for car parking as far as practicable.
- 5.88 The Statement concludes that, based on the proposed shift patterns, the Development is likely to result in peak movements between 14:00-15:00, outside of the assessed AM and PM peaks. Therefore, the traffic impact assessment of AM and PM peaks undertaken in the TA supporting re: PL/2016/02001/PPOL remains valid, and it has been assessed that the Development will result in a negligible increase in vehicle trips during the highway network AM and PM peaks.
- 5.89 It is acknowledged that LP Policy P8 and Draft LPR Policies P1 and P8 seek to encourage the use of modes of travel other than the private car. As set out above and elsewhere in this Statement, the quantum of car parking sought by the Applicant is limited to that deemed absolutely necessary for the effective operation of the Site, considering the operational requirement for shift working during hours where public transport options are unavailable or unfeasible to consider. The Applicant will continue to liaise with its employees to maximise uptake of sustainable modes of travel as far as practicable.

5.90 In summary, the Development accords with LP Policy P8 and Draft LPR Policies P1 and P8.

DRAINAGE AND FLOOD RISK

5.91 The following adopted Development Plan policies are considered relevant to flood risk matters:

- **Local Plan:** Policies P11 and P15

5.92 The following Draft LPR policies are considered relevant to flood risk matters:

- **Draft LPR:** Policies P11 and P15

5.93 A Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy Report has been produced by Baynham Meikle.

5.94 The FRA sets out the proposed approach to SuDS on-site, as well as how the surface water drainage strategy will be able to meet the target greenfield runoff rate, in accordance with LP Policy P11 and Draft LPR Policy P11.

5.95 The FRA assesses that the overall risk from tidal, fluvial, surface water, ground water, artificial drainage related and overland flow related flooding is low. It is proposed that 97 of the 388 No. proposed parking spaces drain into the existing swale feature, with the remaining parking spaces draining into the new attenuation pond to the west of Unit A and north of Area 2. Porous paving is proposed in the majority of the parking aisles, to ensure the water is treated prior to entering the proposed storage feature.

5.96 The Phase 2 ground investigation identified cohesive soils within the underlain strata, therefore, infiltration techniques are not considered feasible for the Development.

5.97 In summary, the Development incorporates appropriate blue infrastructure in the form of SuDS, complies with the surface water drainage hierarchy and accords with Policies P11 and P15 and Draft LPR Policies P11 and P15.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

5.98 The following adopted Development Plan policies are considered relevant to natural environment matters:

- **Local Plan:** Policies P10, P11, P14 and P15.

5.99 The following Draft LPR policies are considered relevant to natural environment matters:

- **Draft LPR:** Policies P1, P14, P15

Trees

5.100 The Arboricultural Impact Assessment ('AIA') submitted with this Application provides an overview of the condition of the trees located on-site. The Report identifies that the Development will not require the removal of any developed trees within the site, and no aspects of the Development are expected to require works within the Root Protection Areas of established trees.

5.101 The AIA identifies that a number of newly planted trees will need to be removed within the Site, which were planted in accordance with reserved matters approval reference: PL/2018/02297/PPRM. As set out in the landscaping proposals for approval, one-for-one replacement is proposed; transplanting existing saplings where possible and replacing existing saplings where necessary.

5.102 The AIA sets out preliminary recommendations for mitigation during the construction phase of the Development; detailed measures such as an Arboricultural Method Statement may be required, and could be secured by means of a planning condition.

-
- 5.103 The AIA summarises that, the retention of trees along the site boundaries, combined with the proposed soft landscaping works around in the southern and western parts of the Site will directly improve the overall tree stock and visual amenity of the Site.
- 5.104 New tree planting within the Site and retention of existing trees has been carefully incorporated within the Development, supporting their ecological and amenity value and reducing visual impacts on the landscape. This accords with LP Policies P10, P14, P15 and Draft LPR Policies P10, P14, P15.

Ecology

- 5.105 An Ecological Impact Assessment ('EclA'), Biodiversity Impact Assessment ('BIA') and Environmental Management Strategy ('EMS') have been submitted with this Application.
- 5.106 The EclA assesses existing habitats and the potential ecological effects of the Development, assessing the scheme against baseline conditions. The desk study exercise identified no European statutory designated sites within 5km of the survey area, five UK statutory designated sites within 5km and 14 non-statutory sites within 1 km.
- 5.107 The EclA assesses that all habitats currently on-site are considered to be in a poor ecological condition and provide little opportunity for protected and priority species with the possible exception of limited usage for invertebrates and feeding bats. The Development is considered to be of a type and scale that is considered highly unlikely to result in an impact (alone or in-combination) on European, UK statutory designated sites or local wildlife sides. With the exception of a loss of poor quality standing water, the Development is not considered likely to impact upon any protected habitats or species during operation.
- 5.108 The main predicted construction phase impacts are associated with direct habitat loss and potential harm to, or displacement or disturbance of, existing common species on site. The Ecological Mitigation Strategy (RT-MME-153311-06) details how the impacts during the construction phase of the development could be avoided or mitigated by adhering to best practice methods e.g. Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) and pollution prevention measures to avoid any significant ecological impacts.
- 5.109 The design of the landscaping scheme has been informed by ecological considerations, to maximise the biodiversity benefits of the landscaping. Measures include:
- Retention of established mixed plantation woodland.
 - Management of retained species poor semi-improved grassland and tall ruderal to allow succession into semi-improved neutral grasslands, which is a habitat of higher ecological value.
 - Creation of a new pond to the west of Unit A with 200mm of standing water, as part of a multifunctional SuDS feature.
- 5.110 The BIA has been undertaken using the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Habitat Impact Assessment Calculator, which demonstrates that a biodiversity net-gain of 11.65 Biodiversity Units can be achieved, which more than compensates for the residual adverse effect arising from the combined loss of some plantation woodland, standing water and species poor semi-improved woodland. This represents a 55% net gain to biodiversity compared to the hypothetical value of the Approved Development landscaping scheme. (ref: PL/2018/02297/PPRM).
- 5.111 The proposed net gain in biodiversity accords with LP Policies P10 and P15 and exceeds the 10% net gain requirements set out in Draft LPR Policies P10 and P15. This demonstrates the multiple benefits secured by the proposed green infrastructure, including SuDS, in accordance with LP Policies P11 and P14. The Development enhances the natural environment at Birmingham Business Park, in accordance with Draft LPR Policy P1.

-
- 5.112 For further details, refer to the Ecological Impact Assessment, Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Ecological Management Strategy. In light of the above, the Development will make a positive contribution to the protection, enhancement and creation of biodiversity habitats.

VISUAL IMPACT

The following adopted Development Plan policy are considered relevant to visual impact:

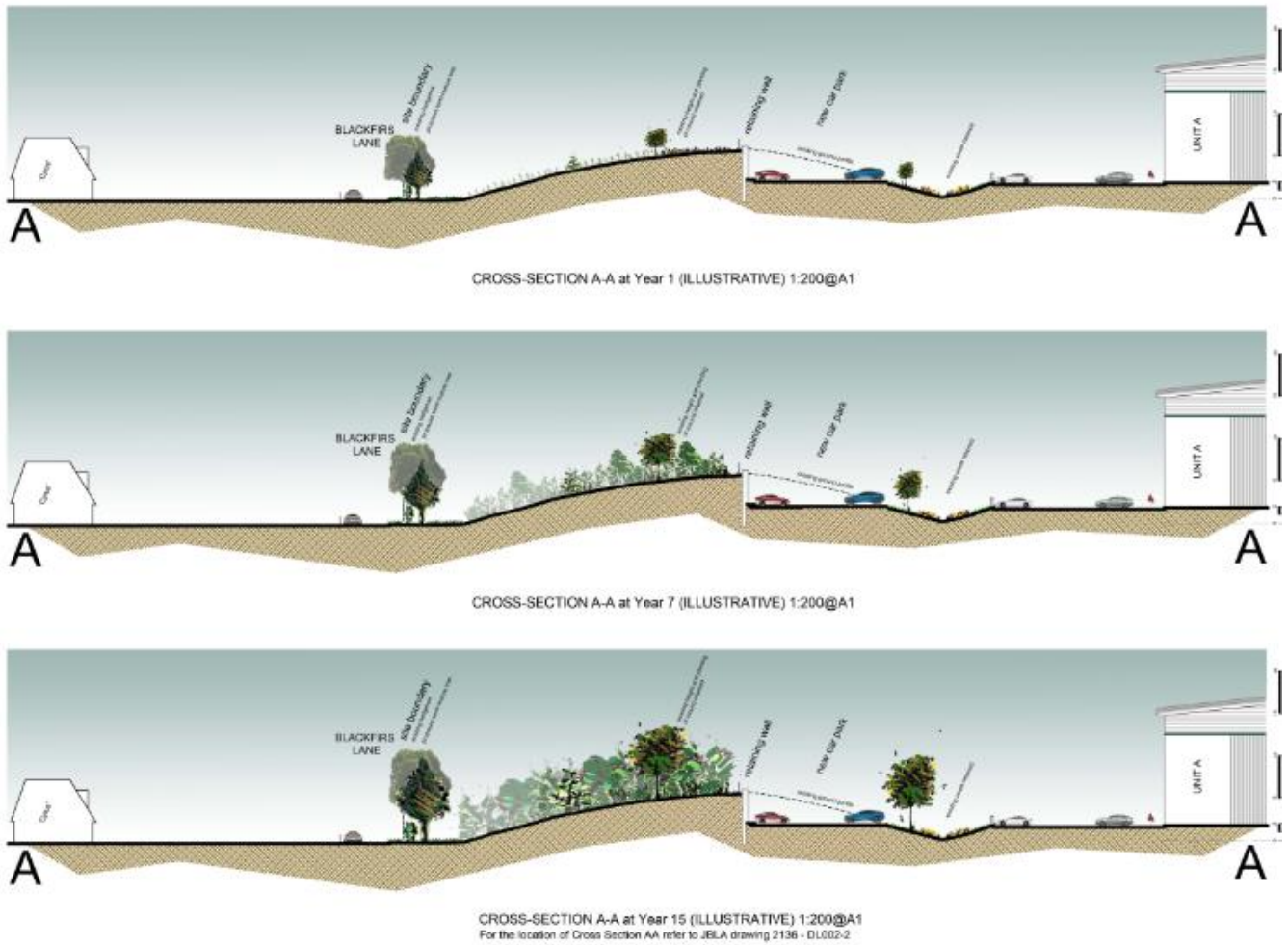
Local Plan: Policy P14

The following Draft LPR policy is considered relevant to visual impact:

Draft LPR: Policy P14

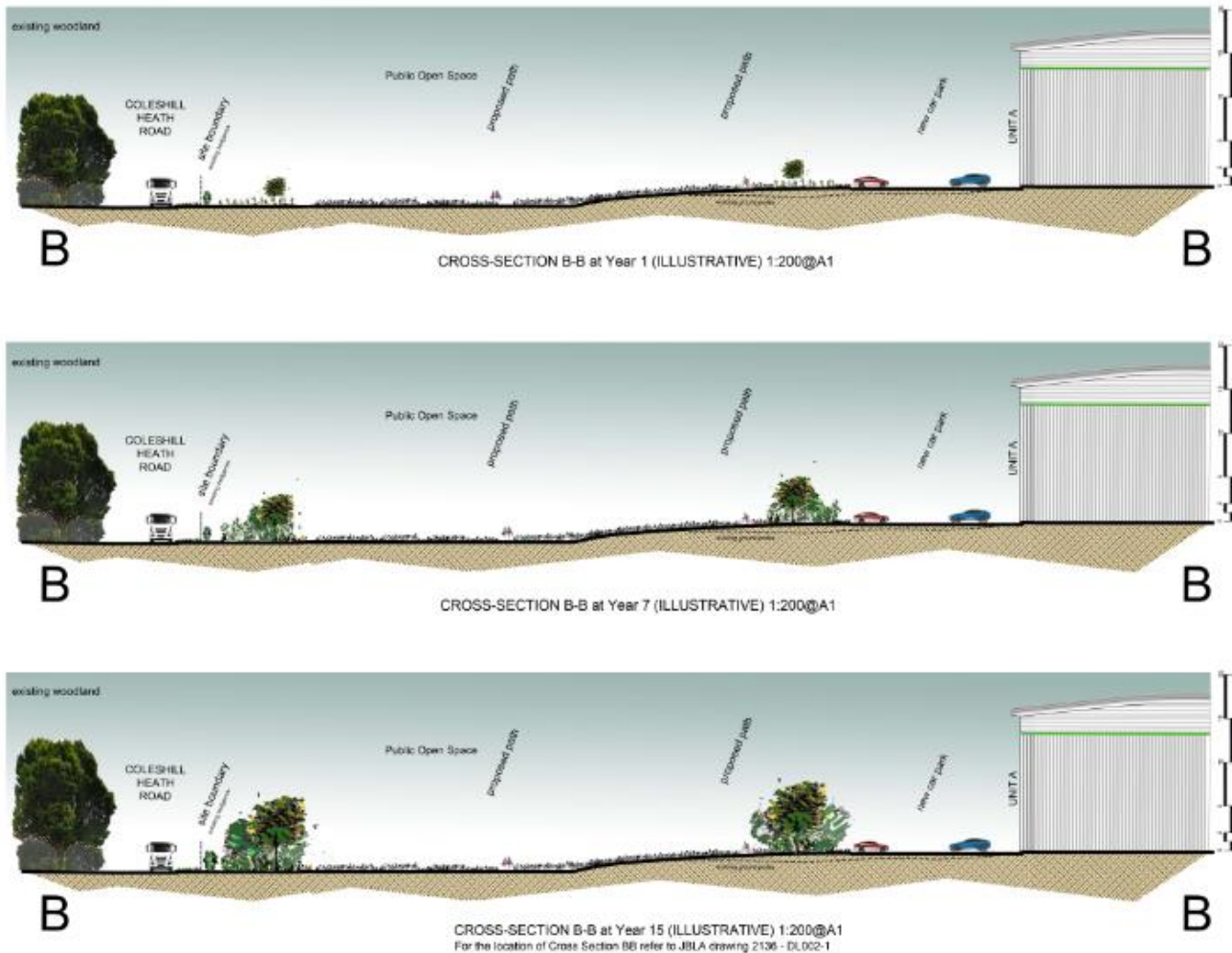
- 5.113 A Lighting Statement has been produced by Ridge, which sets out the proposed external lighting strategy and provides a lighting calculation. As set out in the Lighting Statement, additional external lighting is required to ensure the safety of the users of the additional car parking areas, particularly given IAC's 24-hour operation.
- 5.114 In accordance with Policy P14 and Draft LPR Policy P14, the proposed extent of additional lighting represents the minimum required for safe operation. The IAC site is already lit by a combination of wall-mounted and column-mounted lighting. Where possible, the existing wall-mounted lighting is proposed to be replaced to reduce the need for column-mounted lighting around the edges of the additional car parking areas.
- 5.115 The lighting calculation demonstrates that there is no additional light spill compared with the Lighting Statement supporting the Approved Development (ref: PL/2016/02001/PPOL). From an ecological perspective, this means there is no additional ecological impact on habitats, including the proposed pond to the west of Unit A.
- 5.116 From an amenity perspective, this means that the amenity of residents living south of Blackfirs Lane will not be adversely impacted by the proposed external lighting scheme.
- 5.117 The design of the additional lighting columns along the proposed southern and western boundaries of the additional car parking areas matches the existing design on-site and are slender in appearance. The height of the lighting columns (5m) will be screened mostly by the existing landscaped bund, and entirely screened when the vegetation on the bund has matured.
- 5.118 The visual impact of the proposed additional car parking to the west of Unit A is proposed to be mitigated by the introduction of new tree planting and mixed native planting to the west of the new car park boundary.
- 5.119 As illustrated in cross-section shown in Figure 1 below, the combination of an elevated ground profile and planting within the proposed public open space and along the Coleshill Heath Road boundary should adequately screen the additional car parking.
- 5.120 The proposed landscaping scheme ensures the replacement of previously permitted planting, thereby mitigating any ecological impact that the proposed car parking would have.

FIGURE 5.2: ILLUSTRATIVE CROSS-SECTION OF ADDITIONAL CAR PARKING TO SOUTH OF UNITS A AND B



5.121 The additional car parking proposed to the south of Units A and B has been designed in order to remain visually contained by the bund along the site boundary with Blackfirs Lane. The proposed landscaping scheme ensures the replacement of previously permitted planting on a one-to-one basis. As illustrated in Figure 5.2, the visual impact of the additional car parking will be contained, with a retaining wall to be provided on the northern side of the bund to maintain its current height. The appearance of the bund when viewed from the south (Blackfirs Lane) would not be materially different to the current situation. Refer to the photos of the existing site in the DAS for further details.

FIGURE 5.3: ILLUSTRATIVE CROSS-SECTION OF ADDITIONAL CAR PARKING TO WEST OF UNIT A



- 5.122 Revised landscaping to the west of the Site will ensure that the proposed westward extension of the car park will be well-screened from Coleshill Heath Road. In the context of the visual impact of the western elevation of Unit A (Approved Development), the introduction of car parking to the west of Unit A remains well-screened, as illustrated in Figure 5.3 above.
- 5.123 In summary, the visual impacts arising from the Development are negligible and therefore the design accords in respect of lighting and visual impacts with the requirements of LP Policy P14 and Draft LPR Policy P14.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

- 5.124 The following adopted Development Plan policy is considered relevant to noise and vibration matters:
 - **Local Plan:** Policy P14
- 5.125 The following Draft LPR policy is considered relevant to noise and vibration matters:
 - **Draft LPR:** Policy P14
- 5.126 A Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted with this Applicant, which provides an assessment of noise arising from vehicle movements within the Site, car parking noise (e.g. slamming doors) within the

Site the Development and noise arising from vehicle movements off the Site (i.e. at the roundabout where Progress Way and Bickenhill Parkway intersect). The Noise Impact Assessment assesses the degree of change above the previously assessed noise impact of the Approved Development.

5.127 The noise modelling demonstrates that:

- Noise arising from associated off-site movements generally are observed to be no more than circa. 1dB different to those assessed in the previous Noise Impact Assessment submitted with the Approved Development.
- Noise arising from car park movements falls significantly below the existing maximum noise levels already occurring, with potential for a low adverse effect. It is considered the existing landscaped bund demonstrates that noise impact has been mitigated and minimised as far as practicable.

5.128 As the Development will involve structural alterations to the existing landscaped bund along the south of the Site, the Noise Impact Assessment also confirms that the introduction of a retaining wall along the northern side of the bund would still act as a good acoustic barrier.

5.129 The existing planning permission has already established that the use of the industrial units can take place on a 24 hour basis without unacceptably impacting on nearby residents.

5.130 In accordance with Policy P14 and Draft LPR Policy P14, the design of the Development has sought to minimise any adverse impact arising from noise. As demonstrated by the Noise Impact Assessment, it is considered that no adverse impact on residential amenity is caused by associated on-site or off-site noise arising from the Development.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY ('CIL')

5.131 The Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule in April 2016, however CIL is not chargeable on the Development, as it does not constitute floorspace.

6 The Planning Balance

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by CBRE to accompany a full planning application submitted on behalf of IAC Group Ltd. The Applicant seeks full planning permission for an additional 388 car parking spaces, associated sustainable urban drainage system and landscaping, to serve its manufacturing facility, Elmdon 3, at Prologis Park Birmingham Interchange.

GREEN BELT IMPACTS

- 6.2 The proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and this definitional harm must be given substantial weight, in accordance with paragraph 144 of the NPPF. The Statement has however identified the limited harm to the West Midlands Green Belt arising from the proposed car parking component of the Development; the harm to Purposes 1 and 3 is described in reference to the Council's assessment of the performance of the relevant Green Belt parcel, set out in its 2016 GBA. Due to the nature of proposals, which is for new car parking spaces and excludes any new buildings, impacts on the openness of the Green Belt are also limited.

VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND BENEFITS

- 6.3 The Statement has set out the rationale for 'very special circumstances' arising in the case of the Development, in accordance with the requirement set out in NPPF paragraph 143 for inappropriate development in the Green Belt not to be approved except in very special circumstances. The Statement has demonstrated how the potential harm to the Green Belt, as well as any other harm resulting from the Development is clearly outweighed by significant economic and social benefits, as well as environmental benefits.

Economic and Social Benefits

- 6.4 The proposals will support **1,140 FTE jobs**, with a significant proportion of its staff involved in the design, development, manufacturing and qualification of components. They will also support £94 million of wider investment by the business which also aligns very well with the area's economic growth strategies. In the absence of the Development, these economic (and other) benefits will not be realised.
- 6.5 The proposal will also result in social benefits from employment generation such as improved living standards, social cohesion and health benefits. Overall, the economic benefits of the Development should be given very significant weight.

Local Plan Policy P17

- 6.6 The Statement has also addressed the key relevant provision in LP Policy P17 (and Draft LPR Policy P17), which assists with the identification of very special circumstances in the locally specific context:

The reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt will be allowed where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured.

- 6.7 As set out in a decision in respect of Local Plan Policy P17 was made in July 2015 [Case No C/5740/2014 (Pertemps Investments Limited versus SSCLG and Solihull MBC)], the case for 'reasonable expansion' is to be interpreted as being available to other businesses than those explicitly referred in Policy P17.
- 6.8 The key matters to be considered under this aspect of Policy P17 are that: the expansion of the business is 'reasonable'; the contribution of the development to the local economy or employment is 'significant'; and that mitigation is 'appropriate'. As summarised below, the Development meets each of these requirements and it is recognised that this is capable of amounting to very special circumstances.

Expansion of the IAC car parking is reasonable

- 6.9 The expansion of car parking is driven by the business need for the site's location, as the scope and scale of new business with Jaguar Land Rover has given rise to a need for additional floorspace in close proximity to the Jaguar Land Rover site, as well as IAC's existing manufacturing hub at Elmdon.
- 6.10 The expansion of car parking is justified by providing a proportionate quantum of additional car parking to the employees on-site; such an evidence-based approach was taken in agreeing the level of car parking provision to be delivered on the neighbouring Rolls Royce site, where permission was granted for a level of car parking not in accordance with the Development Plan or Solihull Vehicle Parking Standard SPD, but in accordance with the NPPF's discouragement of applying arbitrary parking standards.
- 6.11 The car parking would facilitate the effective working of employees to be based across both the Birmingham Interchange site and existing manufacturing hub at Elmdon.
- 6.12 IAC has explored reasonable alternatives for off-site car parking, but these alternatives have not proven to be feasible.

The contribution to the local economy and employment is significant

- 6.13 The expansion of car parking will enable IAC to use the Birmingham Interchange site as part of its Programme, comprising £94 million of investment, delivering an estimated £1.4 billion of sales across 2021-2028. This will support the cluster of original engineering manufacturers around Birmingham Airport and involve investment in high-tech, productivity-enhancing manufacturing processes and technology; strengthening the West Midlands cluster of advanced automotive manufacturing, particularly in Solihull MBC.
- 6.14 The Programme to be delivered across the Elmdon manufacturing hub and Birmingham Interchange site includes the re-shoring of existing operations from the Czech Republic. The location will enable IAC to operate optimally as part of the Jaguar Land Rover supply chain, delivering quality inputs into the carefully-organised production process. This represents a strengthening in the global competitiveness of the West Midlands advanced manufacturing supply chain, particularly Jaguar Land Rover, as supported by LP Policy P17.
- 6.15 This contribution should be considered in the current economic climate, where supporting investment and employment growth in advanced manufacturing, including automotive, is central to the Borough's and region's economic recovery. This accords with the 'Recharge the West Midlands' business case for the West Midlands' economic recovery, submitted by the WMCA to central Government in June 2020, which Solihull MBC is a constituent part of.
- 6.16 In a scenario where IAC is able to obtain planning permission for the expansion of car parking, the IAC plant is estimated to support circa. **1,140 FTE jobs**, with a significant proportion of its staff involved in the design, development, manufacturing and qualification of components.

Proposed mitigation is appropriate

- 6.17 In order to mitigate any other harm arising from the proposed development, mitigation is proposed to safeguard residential amenity in terms of additional vehicular road noise and the visual impact of additional car parking, as well as mitigating the highways impact of the proposed development and supporting sustainable modes of travel.

Environmental Benefits

- 6.18 The Development will provide environmental benefits in the form of increased biodiversity on-site, as demonstrated by the 55% net biodiversity gain compared with the Approved Development's landscaping

scheme. This includes provision of the new standing water habitat to the west of Unit A and improved management to allow succession into semi-improved neutral grassland habitat. This environmental benefit should be afforded moderate weight.

- 6.19 The expansion of on-site SuDS, careful landscaping, sensitive external lighting scheme ensure that any potential adverse drainage, visual and amenity impacts have been mitigated and adverse residual effects are negligible.
- 6.20 In terms of noise impact, and continued acoustic protection provided by the existing landscaped bund, it is assessed that it is not considered likely that there will be any adverse residual impact on neighbouring residential properties to the south of Blackfirs Lane.
- 6.21 Similarly, the staggered shift pattern of IAC employees means the previously assessed trip generation during the AM and PM peaks remains valid, and there are no likely adverse impacts on the highway network.
- 6.22 Therefore as part of the planning balance in regard to 'very special circumstances' as set out in NPPF paragraph 144, other harm arising from the Development (notwithstanding harm to the Green Belt) has been minimised by appropriate mitigation and is negligible.

CONCLUSIONS

- 6.23 In accordance with NPPF paragraph 144, the above justification made specifically in light of LP Policy P17 provides material considerations that clearly outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of the inappropriateness of the proposed development, as well as any other harm resulting from the proposal. In accordance with NPPF paragraph 144, substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. In this case however, it is important to acknowledge that the level of harm to Green Belt purposes and to its openness is, in overall terms, limited. The economic and social benefits of the development should be given very significant weight. The Development will also deliver environmental benefits such as a net biodiversity gain of circa. 55% compared to the Approved Development, which should also be given weight in support of the Development.
- 6.24 It has been demonstrated that whilst the Development is by definition inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it accords with the Development Plan when read as a whole, particularly LP Policy P17, as well as other relevant material considerations, including the NPPF, PPG, locally adopted SPD and the Government's Industrial Strategy and West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy. It is considered the harm caused to the Green Belt, as well as any other harm arising from the Development, is considerably outweighed by the wider benefits of the scheme, which carry very significant weight. In this case, very special circumstances have been shown to exist. The Development secures net gains across the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development enshrined in the NPPF. Accordingly, planning permission should be granted without delay.