

Brookmans Park Planning Statement

Inmarsat Global Limited

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LICHFIELDS

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Inmarsat Global Limited ('Inmarsat' or 'the applicant'). It accompanies a planning application ('the application') at Brookmans Park Teleport, Great North Road, Brookmans Park, Hatfield AL9 6NE ('the site').

1.2 The proposed development ('proposed development') is to enable Inmarsat, a leading satellite service provider, to relocate its research and development activities to part of Brookmans Park Teleport. The description of development, as set out in the application forms is as follows:

Proposed Development at Brookman's Park Teleport Site comprising installation of a platform and service room for use for research and development and allow testing of new satellite technology.

Together with trenched cable linkage between data room and platform and other associated works.

1.3 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to assess the proposed development against relevant policies in the development plan alongside other relevant material planning considerations, including the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'NPPF' or the 'Framework').

Accompanying Documents

1.4 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the following application documents:

- 1 Application drawings, prepared by Modus;
- 2 Design and Access Statement ('DAS'), prepared by Modus;
- 3 Landscaping details (within DAS), prepared by Liz Lake;
- 4 Heritage Statement, prepared by Pegasus;
- 5 Very Special Circumstances Case, prepared by Inmarsat/ Lichfields;
- 6 Economic Statement, prepared by Lichfields;
- 7 Landscape Visual Appraisal, prepared by Lichfields;
- 8 Waste Management Statement, prepared by Inmarsat; and
- 9 Lighting Proposals (within DAS), prepared by Modus.

Planning Statement Structure

1.5 The remainder of this Planning Statement is structured into the following sections:

- Section 2.0 introduces the applicant, application site and its surroundings and summarises pre-application consultation;
- Section 3.0 provides a summary of the proposals;

- Section 4.0 sets out the planning policy relevant to the proposals;
- Section 5.0 contains a comprehensive assessment of the proposals in planning terms, including whether or not the development is justified by Very Special Circumstances; and
- Section 6.0 provides our conclusions.

2.0 **Background**

Inmarsat

- 2.1 Inmarsat is a leading satellite service provider and has offered mobile satellite communication services and reliable, seamless global connectivity for over 40 years.
- 2.2 Inmarsat owns and operates the world's most reliable satellite network, including its own fleets of advanced communications satellites, ground infrastructure and terminals. The business currently has 14 satellites in orbit, with a further 7 launches planned in the next 4 years. Focussed on air and maritime, Inmarsat presently connects 17,000 aircraft and 160,000 vessels, the latter protecting 1.6m seafarers every day.
- 2.3 The business is presently in the process of relocating its existing operations at 99 City Road, in the City of London. Whilst the principal office element of the business will remain in London, Inmarsat is seeking a new state-of-the-art Research and Development and testing facility for its satellite technology development.

Brookmans Park Teleport

- 2.4 The application site is located at Brookmans Park Teleport. This is situated outside the north-east edge of the settlement of Brookman's Park and approximately 3km north of Potters Bar. Brookmans Park Teleport is currently in use as offices and telecommunication uses. The site was originally established for the BBC for broadcasting. It is now used by a number of satellite/ telecoms operations.
- 2.5 As shown on Figure 2.1 at the centre of the Teleport site there is a main office building, a number of other small buildings and structures and an area of satellite equipment on hardstanding.
- 2.6 The remainder of the site, beyond the built area, is occupied by bushes and grass and houses 4 large radio masts and satellite equipment. The eastern, northern and southern boundary of the site is occupied by reasonably mature trees.
- 2.7 There is an existing vehicular access to the Teleport site, from the A1000.

Figure 2.1 Aerial View of Brookmand Teleport Site

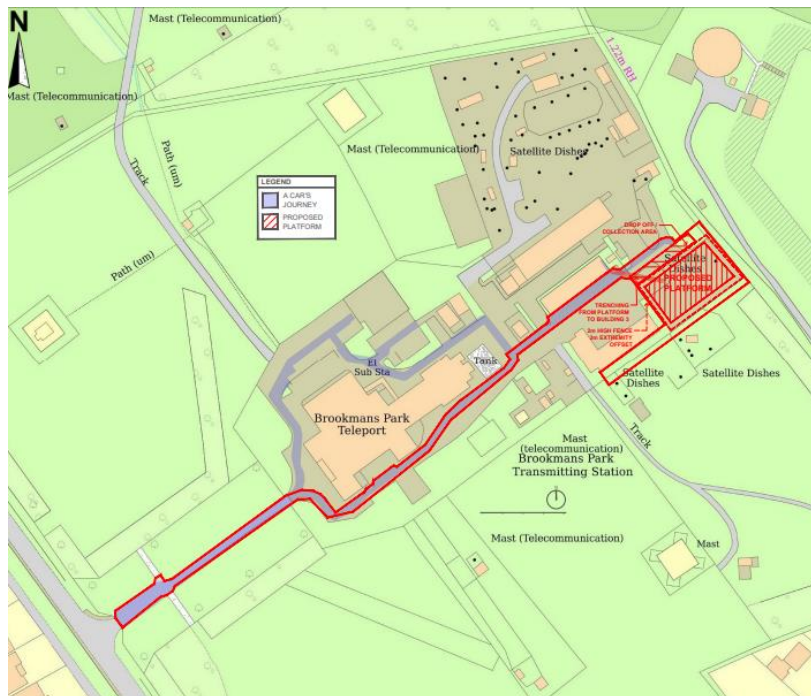


Source: Google Earth

The Application Site

- 2.8 The application site relates to part of the site that is proposed to be used by Inmarsat. This is shown on the site location plan outlined in red.

Figure 2.2 Site Location Plan



Source: Modus

- 2.9 The site area is 3,618 sqm is the total area. The application site relates to an area of external space currently a concrete pad in disrepair. The site is not located in a Conservation Area

and presently contains no Listed or Locally Listed buildings. There is a current application to Historic England to assess Brookman’s Park transmitting station for listing. The potential listing is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.0 of this Report and in the separate Heritage Statement submitted with the Planning Application.

- 2.10 The site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore at low risk of flooding. A small part of the Brookmans Park Teleport site (to the south east outside the application site) has a high risk of surface water flooding; and the grassed area to the north of the built area has areas of low risk surface water flooding – these areas do not impinge on the application site.

Surrounding Area

- 2.11 The application site itself is surrounded by the Brookmans Part Teleport site which it sits within. The immediate surrounding context is therefore characterised by the functioning teleport site – including buildings, satellite antennae and supporting infrastructure.
- 2.12 The wider Brookmans Park Teleport site is bound to the west by the A1000 beyond which are residential properties on Upland Drive within the Brookmans Park settlement boundary; to the south there are residential properties and Kentish Lane; to the east fields and Kentish Lane, and to the north fields with a satellite and radio masts in, beyond this is farmland. Surrounding the site is a mix of greenfield land and residential and commercial uses, some of which is located within Brookman’s Park development boundary to the east.
- 2.13 There is a public footpath (North Mymms 037), which runs along the north boundary of Brookmans Park Teleport site from the A1000, and to the south of the wooded area before continuing north/east through farmland beyond the site boundary.
- 2.14 There is a group TPO on the wider Brookmans Park Teleport site protecting the area of trees, located at the junction of the A1000, along the site’s boundary and access road. There is also a TPO covering the triangular wooded area at the north of the wider site. The proposed development does not affect any trees, including those subject to TPO.
- 2.15 The nearest Listed building is 56 Bell Lane (Grade II Listed) and Carpenters Cottage (Grade II Listed), which is situated approximately 450 metres west of the site. Due to the distance these are not affected by the proposed development.
- 2.16 Northaw Great Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest is situated approximately 1.5km metres south-east of the site. The site is within the SSSI risk zone.

Planning History

- 2.17 There are a number of applications relating to the site’s use for radio broadcast use since before 1 July 1948, including applications for masts, aerials, minor works and tree works. More recent history is listed here:
- 17/0206/F | Change of use of 895 square metres of ancillary office accommodation to Class B1 (Office) use. Status: Application granted (19/04/2017).
 - S6/2011/2770/LUP | Certificate of lawfulness for the proposed use of part or all of the existing equipment buildings for a data centre that will be connected near continuously to a live electronic communications network for the purpose of storing, processing,

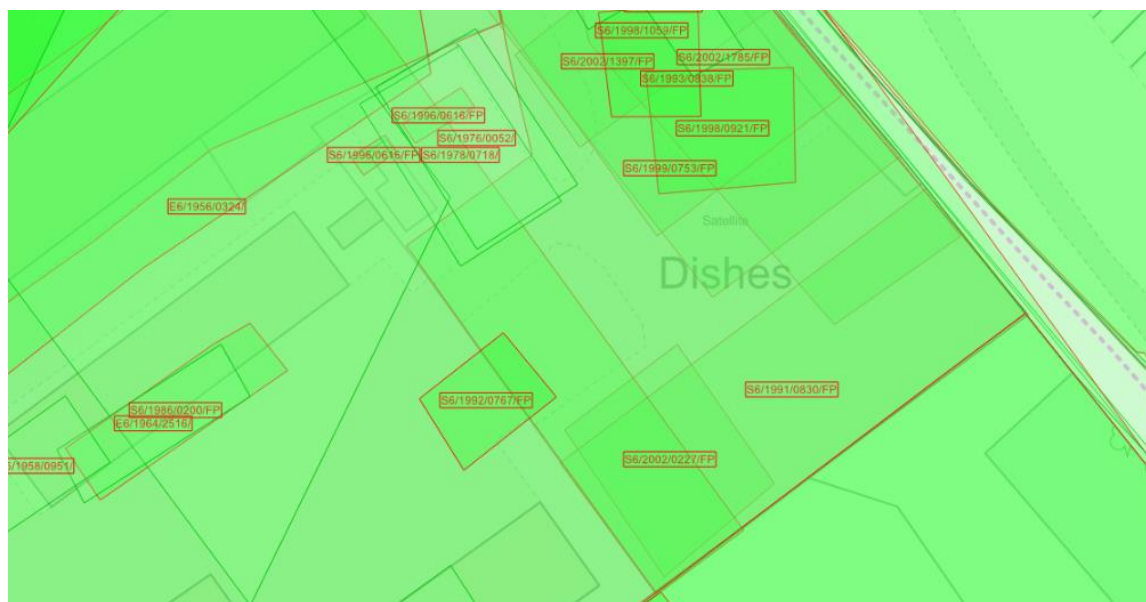
updating, transmitting and receiving data by electronic means. Decision: Approved (08/02/2012)

- 04/1751/FP | Extension to existing car parking area. Decision: Withdrawn (04/02/2005).
- S6/2003/0022/FP | Construction of earth mounding (upto 2.5m in height) and installation of close boarded fencing (2m in height) in north western and south eastern sections of the site. Decision: Approved 16/06/2003
- S6/2003/0287/FP | Installation of two antennas on existing mast at height of 16.5 metres with associated telecommunications equipment to be housed within existing building. Decision: Approved (07/04/2003)
- S6/2002/0191/FP | Installation of two 0.6m dishes on existing tower and new equipment cabin to house digital radio equipment. Decision: Approved (25/03/2002)
- S6/2001/1333/FP | Erection of 18.3 metre dish antenna. Decision: Withdrawn (17/02/2003)
- S6/2001/1119/FP | Installation of four dipole antennas on existing telecommunications mast. Decision: Approved (16/09/2002)
- S6/2001/0308/DT | Prior approval to siting of replacement equipment cabin adjacent to 45 metre tower. Decision: Approved (02/04/2001)
- S6/1998/1053/FP | Installation of electricity sub-station adjacent to eastern boundary. Decision: Approved (04/01/1999)

2.18 The planning history reflects the functional telecommunication usage of the wider Brookmans Park Teleport site.

2.19 In terms of the part of the site where the platform is to be installed the online planning history also indicates satellite antennae have previously been permitted on the site – see Figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.3 Extract from Welwyn and Hatfield Planning explorer map



Source: Welwyn Hatfield Council website

2.20 The applications recorded on the explorer map as comprising or extending into the area of proposed development, include:

- S6/2002/0227/FP - Installation of 9.3m Satellite Antenna – Approved September 2002.
- S6/1991/0830/FP - Erection of two 11m diameter satellite receiving dish aerials and equipment housings – Approved December 1991.
- S6/1992/0767/FP - Erection of two 11m diameter satellite receiving dish aerials with equipment housing (revision to planning permission S6/0830/91), erection of 2.4m dish, provision of generator and power supply unit – Approved January 1993

2.21 Historic aerial views of this part of the site reaffirm the planning history and confirm that various satellite have been on the site from at least 2000 – 2018, see Figures 2.3.

Figure 2.4 Google Earth aerial shot 2000 (approximate area of platform installation outlined in blue)



Source: Google Earth

Pre-application engagement

2.22

An on site pre-application meeting was held with Officers from Welwyn Hatfield Council on 8 January 2023 (application ref: 2022/230/PA). Written feedback was issued on 3 February 2023 following the meeting and the key points are set out in the table below.

Table 2.1 Response to comments raised in pre-application advice

Comment	Response
Whilst the District Plan allocates this site in Policy RA8 as permitting telecommunications and other related development in accordance with the adopted masterplan and Policy R21, this policy is considered to be out-of-date.	The planning assessment in Section 5.0 considers the principle of development in view of the policy position.
The proposed development of new R&D platform for use for satellite testing would result in conflict with the development plan and the NPPF in relation to the Green Belt. Due to this planning permission is unlikely to be granted for the proposed construction of a R&D platform, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.	The positioning of the proposed development in a contained site with existing landscape screening minimising the impact to the openness of Green Belt when viewed from surrounding vantage points. A very special circumstances case is submitted in support of the proposed development.
The use of the site, its historic use and its potential limitations need to be considered and any benefit needs to be weighed up against the potential for other sites not within the Green Belt to be utilised instead. The benefits to the local economy, for example the number of jobs created and the technological	A very special circumstances case is submitted in support of the proposed development – this includes a summary of the benefits the proposed development will bring. It also details the site selection process, including potential other sites within the Borough outside of Green Belt that have been considered and dismissed as not

Comment	Response
benefits the proposals could bring, need to be quantified to make a case for very special circumstances.	suitable.
The re-use of buildings is identified at Paragraph 150 of the NPPF as one of the developments which are not inappropriate provided that the buildings are of substantial construction.	The proposed development includes the reuse of building 3. This helps minimise new build development in Green Belt.
There are no objections toward the reoccupation of the existing main office building and workshops on the site provided the proposed activities would fall within an appropriate use class. In this regard planning permission 6/2017/0206/FULL is relevant. This permission, dated 19/04/2017, granted “change of use of 895 square metres of ancillary office accommodation to Class B1 (Office) use”. The approved floorplans can be viewed on the Council’s website.	This is reflected in proposed development and what planning permission is sought for. The use of the main office building helps minimise new build development in Green Belt.
In term of the lawful use of the remainder of the site, a Certificate of Lawfulness ref: S6/2011/2770/LUP, dated 8 February 2012, certified that the lawful use of the site was electronic communications, which is a <i>sui generis</i> use.	This is reflected in proposed development and what planning permission is sought for.
It is acknowledged that the proposals intend to bring technology and highly skilled employment to the Borough of Welwyn Hatfield. The re-occupation of the existing office building at the Brookmans Park Teleport will also provide office-based jobs though it is unclear from the submission how many there will be. An application for planning permission should be supported by an economic statement.	An Economic Statement is submitted in support of this planning application.
The building is currently not listed, Policy SADM 15 of the emerging plan is therefore not a material consideration at the time of writing. Nevertheless, Historic England will be consulted on any future planning application. It is therefore suggested that you consider submitting a Heritage Statement which fully assesses the significance of the non-designated heritage assets, the contribution made by their setting and the impact of the proposal.	A Heritage Statement is submitted in support of this planning application.
Landscaping is important in order to protect and enhance the existing character of the area and to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of the development. The NPPF sets	Landscaping proposals are included with the proposed development. A Landscape Visual Assessment is also submitted in support of the planning application – and considers the wider

Comment	Response
<p>out at paragraph 130 that planning decisions should be sympathetic to local character, including the landscape setting. Detailed landscaping proposals can be adequately secured through condition. Nevertheless, it is suggested that a future application for planning permission would benefit from an Illustrative Landscaping Scheme to demonstrate the type of landscaping which could be achieved.</p>	<p>landscape setting.</p>
<p>No significant ecological constraints have been identified at this pre-application stage, however, due consideration should be given to maximising opportunities for habitat creation and improving biodiversity. This might include tree planting, improving for habitat corridors, installing bird and bat boxes, etc.</p>	<p>A landscaping scheme is included with the application and sets out opportunities for improved landscaping/ biodiversity on the site.</p>
<p>Any external lighting must meet the requirements within the Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive lighting, and should be designed to minimise light spill, in particular directing light away from any boundary vegetation / trees to enable dark corridors to be used by wildlife as well as directing lighting away from potential roost / nesting sites.</p>	<p>Details of lighting proposed are included within the drawings and DAS submitted as part of the proposed development.</p>

3.0 **Proposals**

3.1 This Section provides a summary of the proposed development. Further details of the proposals are provided in the application drawings and accompanying DAS.

3.2 The description of development is as follows:

Proposed Development at Brookman's Park Teleport Site comprising installation of a platform and service room for use for research and development and allow testing of new satellite technology.

Together with trenched cable linkage between data room and platform and other associated works.

3.3 Inmarsat is proposing to lease space at the Brookman's Park Radio Transmitter / Teleport Station. The proposals relate to development works needed to enable its occupation and use of the site. The works subject to the planning application comprise the construction of a Research and Development Platform to allow the testing of new satellite technology, along with other associated works.

3.4 The refurbishment of internal premises in both the main building and self-contained Building 3 will allow effective re-occupation of presently vacant floorspace. These works do not form part of the planning application.

3.5 The construction of the R&D unit will involve the creation of a gantry-style platform over 2 principal levels to test new technology / antennae. These principal levels comprise:

- 1 A lower-level of a 2.5m platform; and
- 2 An upper-level platform of 5.5m

3.6 The Platform is 'split' to allow sufficient distance on the upper platform for radio wave frequencies from the higher-powered antennae. Spaces for storing office / equipment will be provided beneath the platform.

3.7 The intention is that the antennae can be tested in situ for differing periods (ranging from days to months) and therefore the platform is likely to have a varying number of antennae over the course of time. The tallest of these units will be no greater than 3.5m. Therefore, the overall height of the (upper) platform plus satellite / antennae unit is likely to be no greater than 8.5m.

3.8 Other tenants, including Globecast, will remain on site for the foreseeable future.

4.0 **Planning Policy Context**

4.1 This section identifies key relevant planning policy and guidance at a national and local level relevant to this proposal. The proposed development is then assessed against these policies in Section 5.0.

The Statutory Development Plan

4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, states that:

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.

4.3 The statutory development plan for the site comprises:

- 1 Saved policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (adopted 2005);
- 2 The Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan (adopted 2012-2014); and
- 3 The Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan (adopted 2007).

4.4 Welwyn Hatfield has started to prepare a new Local Plan which will replace the District Plan 2005. The draft Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in 2017. It was then subject to amendments to address concerns from the Inspector. Most recently, a consultation on Main Modifications ran between 4 January and 15 February 2023.

District Plan (2005)

4.5 Key designations / allocations relating to the site set out in the District Plan are as follows:

- 1 Within Green Belt;
- 2 The site forms part of Brookmans Park Transmitting Station (Policy RA8); and
- 3 The site sits just outside North Mymms Common and Newgate Street Farmed Plateau Landscape Area, to the north, east and south of the site.

4.6 Key saved policies in the District Plan relevant to the development proposals are as follows:

- Policy SD1 Sustainable Development
- Policy GBSP1 Definition of the Green Belt
- Policy GBSP3 Area of Special Restraint and Structural Landscape Area
- Policy R1 Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land
- Policy RA10 - Landscape Regions and Character Areas
- Policy R11 Biodiversity and Development
- Policy R13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Policy R14 Local Nature Reserves

- Policy R17 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- Policy R19 Noise and Vibration Pollution
- Policy R20 Light Pollution
- Policy R21 Telecommunications Development
- Policy M1 Integrating Transport and Land Use
- Policy M2 Transport Assessments
- Policy M3 Green Travel Plans
- Policy M5 Pedestrian Facilities
- Policy M6 Cycle Routes and Facilities
- Policy M14 Parking Standards for New Development
- Policy D1 Quality of Design
- Policy D2 Character and Context
- Policy EMP8 - Employment Sites Outside of Employment Areas
- Policy RA8 Brookmans Park Transmitting Station
- Policy RA10 Landscape Regions and Character Areas
- Policy RA17 - Re-use of Rural Buildings

Emerging Local Plan

- 4.7 Weight given to the policies in the Emerging Local Plan should reflect its advance stage; and the ongoing work with the Planning Inspectorate to confirm its soundness.
- 4.8 Relevant policies in the Emerging Local Plan relevant to the proposed development include:
- Policy SP 1 Delivering Sustainable Development
 - Policy SP3 Settlement Strategy and Green Belt Boundaries
 - Policy SADM 10 Employment Development
 - Policy SADM 15 Heritage
 - Policy SADM34 Development in the Green Belt

Other Material Considerations

- 4.9 The Revised National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (2021) is also a material consideration in the determination of planning application.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 4.10 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Paragraph 11 states that Development Plans and decisions on planning applications should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) 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:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

4.11 Key policies relevant to these proposals in the NPPF are set out in:

- Section 4 – Decision making;
- Section 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy;
- Section 10 – Supporting high quality communications;
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land;
- Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places;
- Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land;
- Section 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

5.0 **Policy Assessment**

5.1 This section sets out an assessment of the relevant planning issues associated with the proposed development.

5.2 The following areas are considered specifically relevant in this instance:

- A. Principle of Proposed Uses
- B. Principle of Development and the Green Belt
- C. Design, Layout, Height and Massing
- D. Landscape and Visual Impact
- E. Heritage
- F. Transport, Access, Parking
- G. Landscaping
- H. Ecology
- I. Trees

A. Principle of Proposed Uses

Research and Development Satellite Testing

5.3 The proposed development is for a new research and development satellite testing facility at part of Brookmans Park Teleport.

5.4 The teleport site has been used historically for broadcasting and telecommunication uses since the 1940s; and associated satellites have been positioned on the site for over 20 years. The proposed use is therefore in keeping with character of the site as a functioning teleport i.e. with a range of hardstanding, satellites and supporting infrastructure and ancillary office space.

5.5 The site is identified as an appropriate location for new telecommunication development in the District Plan. Policies RA8 which relates to Brookmans Park Transmitting Station states that Telecommunications and other related development at the Brookmans Park Transmitting Station will only be permitted where it is in accordance with the adopted masterplan and Policy R21 (relating to telecommunications development).

5.6 Policy RA8 recognises the importance of concentrating telecommunication development on sites where technical infrastructure is already in situ – therefore the policy notes very special circumstances may exist to justify further telecommunication development at the site. The Council prepared a Masterplan in 1995 with the BBC to guide development on the site, including requiring landscaping to screen the site – we understand from pre-application discussions with the Council that this masterplan is no longer available. The owners of the site Arqiva also do not have a copy. The Council considers Policy RA8 to be out of date noting it is not carried forward in the Emerging Local Plan, as such the Council's

view is that the development within the site area should be considered under Green Belt policy.

- 5.7 It is relevant to note that the site has for more than 20 years been identified in the District Plan as a site within Green Belt where new telecommunication development could be justifiable by virtue of its significant telecommunication function.
- 5.8 Policy R21 of the District Plan which relates to Telecommunication Development is relevant to consideration of proposals. It requires for all telecommunication development, including satellite equipment to not cause harm due to visual intrusion and if in Green Belt applicants must be able to demonstrate why sites outside these areas cannot be used. This policy is to be replaced with Emerging Policy SP 9 (Place Making and High-Quality Design).
- 5.9 Policy EMP8 relating to existing employment sites outside the designated employment areas is also relevant to the principle of the proposed development. It states new employment development will only be permitted where it would be of a similar scale to the existing activities on the site; would not have any adverse effects on residential amenity; and would have adequate parking, servicing and access arrangements and would not have an adverse impact on the highway network. These points are addressed in subsequent sections.

Installation of platform for use for satellite testing

- 5.10 In relation to Green Belt the installation of the platform for satellite testing should be considered 'appropriate development' in Green Belt when considered against policy in the NPPF; and Policy SADM 34 (Development within the Green Belt) of the Emerging Local Plan.
- 5.11 Paragraph 149 of the NPPF states local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*
- 5.12 The part of the application site to be used for the installation of the platform is currently an area of hardstanding in disrepair. Historic aerial records viewed on Google Earth show satellite antennae on the site since at least 2000-2018. The site is therefore previously development land within Green Belt. The proposals would comprise a limited infilling/redevelopment of the previously developed land.
- 5.13 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') has been carried out and concludes in terms of impact on openness that the platform would not result in a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. It notes that the site is within a previously developed area of land in close proximity to existing buildings and surrounded by existing development and landscape elements which would result in Nil to Neutral visual effects from the surrounding

area. Also that it would not affect the openness of the wider Green Belt area within the adjacent North Mymms Common and Newgate Street Farmed Plateau as a result of intervening tree screening. The LVIA work is also discussed in more detail in the next section in relation to the assessment of harm to Green Belt.

- 5.14 As such, the installation of platform and use for satellite testing is capable of being considered as not inappropriate in Green Belt.

B. Principle of Development and the Green Belt

- 5.15 This section of the Planning Statement considers the principle of the proposed development. It considers an assessment of the harm to Green Belt and the demonstration of VSC as part of the test established by the NPPF paragraphs 147-148.

- 5.16 The site is located within the Green Belt, where, as set out in the NPPF paragraph 147, inappropriate development should not be approved except in VSC. Policy SADM 34 (Development within the Green Belt) of the Emerging Local Plan reflects national policy.

- 5.17 As set out above in Section A, the proposed development is considered to accord with Green Belt policy. Notwithstanding this if the Council does not accept this position, then these are Very Special Circumstances (VSC) that should be considered to justify the development.

Green Belt Background

- 5.18 The site is located within the Green Belt as designated within the adopted District Plan and Emerging Local Plan. Paragraph 147 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in VSC. Paragraph 148 clarifies that VSC will not exist unless any harm resulting from the proposal – in terms of Green Belt and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Green Belt – Assessment of Harm

- 5.19 Paragraph 148 required local planning authorities to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt. In accordance with this paragraph, consideration has been given to the harm to the Green Belt taking into account the fundamental aim of Paragraph 137 which is “to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.” Paragraph 138 states that Green Belt serves the following five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

5.20 In terms of purposes of Green Belt the site is previously developed land and contained within the existing Brookman’s Teleport site. It therefore does not conflict with purposes of Green Belt set out in Paragraph 138 of the NPPF.

5.21 Paragraph 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722 (revision 22 07 2019) of the NPPG sets out guidance on the factors which can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt and states:

“Assessing the impact of a proposal on the [openness of the Green Belt](#), where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- *openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;*
- *the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
- *the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.”*

5.22 This planning application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Lichfields. This assessment undertakes an independent assessment of the site’s contribution within the Green Belt and the impact of the proposed development. The assessments conclusion are summarised here:

Landscape effects

- 1 The site currently comprises an area of hardstanding used for parking surrounded by a concrete post and wire mesh fencing on three sides. It has been previously used to site satellite dishes and is within the Brookmans Park Transmitting Station. It does not contain any features of landscape interest or value. Having been previously developed and forming part of the transmitting station, the site is considered to have Very Low sensitivity.
- 2 LCA51 (North Mymms Common and Newgate Street Farmed Plateau) surrounds but does not include the transmitting station or the edge of Brookmans Park. None of its characteristic features would be affected by the proposed development and surrounding tree belts and woodland blocks result in limited potential intervisibility. It has a Low sensitivity.
- 3 The site is situated within Sub-Area LCA 51a which was also found to have low-sensitivity to development within the existing transmitting station due to its existing developed character.
- 4 There would be a Neutral effect on the landscape character of the site itself, with the proposal introducing elements that would be characteristic of existing adjacent development within the transmitting station. The vegetation and fencing at the edges of the site would be retained.

- 5 There would be a Negligible effect on LCA51 (North Mymms Common and Newgate Street Farmed Plateau) as a result of the extensive screening from existing structures and tree belts/woodland blocks within the transmitting station.
- 6 There would also be a Negligible effect on Sub-Area 51a. Visibility from other parts of the character area would be limited and there would be no effect on any positive or characteristic features. The appearance of the structures and equipment arrays would be generally characteristic of existing development within the transmitting station and would not appear out of place.

Visual effects

- 7 A ZTV along with fieldwork reviewed the potential for views of the proposed development from the surrounding area, including from Great North Road to the west of the site as well as a public footpath to the north of the transmitting station. In total, 4 representative views have been considered in the visual assessment.
- 8 The assessment found that views of the proposed development would be limited and highly localised due to screening provided by built elements within the transmitting station as well as trees and woodland within the surrounding area.
- 9 Receptors along Great North Road would not experience any visual effects as a result of screening from an adjacent tree belt and low-lying buildings within the field between the road and the Site.
- 10 Receptors along the public footpath to the north would not experience any harmful changes to visual amenity with Nil or Neutral visual effects. There would be very limited glimpsed views of the top of the platform structure and associated equipment on its upper level through trees/fencing when viewed from a short the section of the footpath to the north of the site in winter. This would be compatible with the existing scene where equipment and buildings are already visible.

Compliance with policy

- 5.23 The proposal complies with local and national planning policy in respect landscape and views as summarised here.
- 5.24 In relation to District Plan policy R1 and R21 though located within the Green Belt, the site is a previously developed area of hardstanding within the transmitting station site and has also previously housed a number of satellite antennae.
- 5.25 In terms of District Policies D2, R10, R21 and RA8; Emerging policy SP9 and SADM16; NPPF para. 174; NDG, the site is of Very Low value, being comprised of unmaintained hardstanding and surrounded by existing telecommunications development and other infrastructure. It is not within a valued landscape nor does it contain any elements that contribute positively to landscape character.
- 5.26 The proposed development will relate to the existing uses within the transmitting station and comprise a lightweight two-storey platform structure housing a number of smaller satellite antennae and equipment which will change over time. It would be in keeping with its location within the transmitting station and would not affect any of the characteristic landscape features of the surrounding area. It would have a Negligible effect on the

surrounding Landscape Character Area defined in the Welwyn Hatfield Landscape Character Assessment (LCA51) as a result of the extent of screening from both surrounding built and natural elements. It would also have a Negligible effect on LCA51a as defined in the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment. The character of the surrounding landscape would be maintained.

5.27 With regards to District Plan policy R21 this requires that consideration is given to the proposals harm to the streetscene or visual intrusion and affect on the character of a conservation area or setting of a listed building. The maximum height of the proposed platform is 8.5m, which is below the height of other buildings and structures within the transmitting station. The platform would appear as a lightweight element that would not be visually intrusive or visible from nearby roads. There would only be glimpsed, filtered views from highly localised areas. The proposed development is not within a conservation area nor would it affect the setting of any listed buildings or conservation areas.

5.28 In terms of NPPF Paragraph 150 and Emerging Local Plan Policy SP25 the development can be considered infill development compatible with Green Belt. It would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with its purposes having regard to the scale of development, level of impact on physical and visual openness. The transmitting station already contains a number of buildings, satellite antennae and transmitting masts of various sizes. The site is a previously developed area of land close to existing buildings and telecommunications infrastructure. The structure would be relatively small in scale would be almost entirely screened in views from the surrounding area by existing development and landscape elements. There would only be one highly localised winter view from a short stretch of the public right of way to the north where part of the structure and equipment would be glimpsed in the context of existing buildings and structures. This would result in a Neutral visual effect due to the proposal appearing characteristic in the context of the existing transmitting station. The platform structure and equipment would have a degree of visual permeability further limiting the visual effects.

5.29 With regards to Policy R20, in respect of lighting installations being appropriate to the area and minimising light and glare – the proposed lighting would only be used occasionally in hours of darkness, would be designed to be the minimum required for operational purposes and to minimise light spill consistent with good design principles. Given the limited occasional use of artificial lighting and the extent of screening in the surrounding area no unacceptable effects on landscape character or visual amenity are expected.

Conclusion

5.30 Overall, it is considered that the scheme complies with the planning policy context and is acceptable in landscape and visual terms. It would result in a Neutral visual effect due to the proposal appearing characteristic in the context of the existing transmitting station. The platform structure and equipment would have a degree of visual permeability further limiting the visual effects – thus limiting potential harm to Green Belt.

Very Special Circumstances

5.31 The NPPF and NPPG do not set out a definition of VSC and there is no statutory explanation of what these constitute. Paragraph 148 of the NPPF explains that VSC will not exist unless harm and inappropriateness is outweighed by “*other considerations.*”

- 5.32 A Very Special Circumstance Statement accompanies the planning application this sets out what in this instance constitutes the considerations which – when set against harm (to Green Belt and any other harms) – represent VSC. In summary the elements which make up VSC are as follows:
- 1 The site will play a key role in researching and developing satellites and advancing this technology.

Satellite and telecommunications infrastructure is vital to the UK. It underpins the operation of key services and contributes billions every year to the UK economy.

The UK has a powerful and innovative space sector, which has been identified by the UK Government as a strategic growth sector.
 - 2 The site will be operated by British-based Inmarsat, the company plays a vital global role in satellite communications and its services form the backbone of aviation and maritime safety, protecting millions of people every day.
 - 3 With its existing Teleport status and proximity to Inmarsat’s London HQ, Brookman’s Park is the location identified following an extensive 2 year site search, for Inmarsat’s new, globally important, Research & Development lab.
 - 4 Inmarsat’s premises would host around 20-30 space engineers and customers at peak times –the site currently employs around 100 staff and has an overall capacity of 200-400.
 - 5 Inmarsat’s use of the site and the proposed development will maintain Brookman’s Park established use as an active centre for Radio Satellite Telecommunications and bring up to 30 highly skilled technical roles to Welwyn & Hatfield.
 - 6 Lack of more appropriate alternative locations in Welwyn Hatfield which would cause less harm to Green Belt.
- 5.33 In accordance with paragraph 147 of the NPPF, the proposed development has been assessed in terms of its harm to the designated Green Belt. It is considered that this harm must – by policy definition - carry substantial weight, although this harm is limited to the impact on openness, here the visual effects of views into the site are assessed as Neutral due to the proposal appearing characteristic in the context of the existing transmitting station. They also do not conflict with Green Belt purposes.
- 5.34 Paragraph 148 clarifies that VSC will not exist unless harm to the Green Belt – and any other harm – resulting from the proposal is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The benefits of the proposed development can be said to carry weight which in combination off-set the identified harm to the Green Belt.
- 5.35 On this basis, the harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by tangible benefits which are specific to the proposed development and meet the test of ‘very special circumstances’ as defined by paragraph 148 of the Framework and Policy SADM 34 (Development within the Green Belt) of the Emerging Local Plan of the Local Plan. The remainder of this section – addressing other planning considerations - demonstrates that there are no other harms that would lead to the conclusion that these benefits and considerations are not very special circumstances justifying the grant of development.

C. Design, Layout, Height and Massing

- 5.36 District Plan Policy D1 relates to Quality of Design and Policy D2 Character and Context. Policy D1 requires new development to be of a high quality and Policy D2 requires proposals to respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed. Design policies in the Draft Local Plan are also relevant Policy SP9 (Place Making and High-Quality Design).
- 5.37 The platform element of proposed development has been designed to meet the requirements its function as a satellite testing facility. The positioning of the platform is in close proximity to the workshop and office building where researchers will be based.
- 5.38 The height of the platform is necessary to provide clearance from surrounding equipment, however it is sited in a contained existing development plot with surrounding landscaping. This minimises potential visibility of the proposed platform from outside the Brookmans Park Teleport site. The use of materials on the platform will be galvanised metal in ‘dark grey’ also helps the platform site comfortably alongside existing buildings, satellite antennae and structures that make up the Brookmans Park Teleport site.
- 5.39 Overall, the proposed platform would be in keeping with the surrounding telecommunication uses on the Brookmans Park Teleport site. The proposed platform accords with design policies in national and local policy.

D. Landscape and Visual

- 5.40 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been undertaken to assess the impact of the proposed development on surrounding landscape and to assess the impact of the proposed development on Green Belt.
- 5.41 A summary of the findings and a summary of the compliance with local and national policy is set out in Section B above.

E. Heritage

- 5.42 At present there are no existing heritage assets on or adjacent to the site that are relevant to the proposed development. If the proposed Historic England listing of the Brookmans Park Transmitting Station is carried forward policies in national and local policy relation to Listed Buildings and preserving heritage assets would apply.
- 5.43 Draft Local Plan Policy SADM 15 Heritage would be relevant if the listing did go ahead. Draft Policy SADM 15 states that proposals which affect designated heritage assets and the wider historic environment should consider the following:
- the potential to sustain and enhance the heritage asset and historic environment in a manner appropriate to its function and significance.
 - Successive small-scale changes that lead to a cumulative loss or harm to the significance of the asset or historic environment should be avoided.
 - Proposals should respect the character, appearance and setting of the asset and historic environment in terms of design, scale, materials and impact on key views.

- Architectural or historic features which are important to the character and appearance of the asset (including internal features) should be retained unaltered.
- The historic form and structural integrity of the asset are retained; and Appropriate recording of the fabric or features that are to be lost or compromised takes place and is deposited into the Historic Environment Record.

5.44 In line with the requirements of Draft Local Plan Policy SADM 15 a Heritage Statement has been prepared to consider the nature of the proposed development and its likely impact on the significance of all or part of the asset.

5.45 The Heritage Statement, prepared by Pegasus, notes that:

- 1 the proposed platform installation will result in the introduction of modern transmission equipment, and ancillary development, into a discrete part of the wider, modern extent of the Brookman's Park complex. The character of the proposals would be entirely in-keeping with the existing and previous uses of the area of the proposed changed, and the complex as a whole.
- 2 Due to siting of the platform away from the main building (more than 90m) and intervening areas of development the proposed development comprising a mix of hardstanding, modern 'compounds' and modern workshop buildings. The proposals would be read as clearly separate from the building and as part of the ongoing transmission use of the wider complex.
- 3 Based upon onsite assessment, it is not considered that the proposals would be visible from the main building. Should views occur, they would be oblique glimpsed views, with much of the equipment screened by intervening built form and vegetation. The ability to view the proposals in this manner would not alter overall understanding, experience or appreciation of the main building.
- 4 Co-visibility of the proposals and the main building from isolated areas to the east may occur; however, views would not be interrupted (with screening provided by existing built form and vegetation), and wider aspects of the modern development of the complex would be visible. Accordingly, should co-visibility occur, it is again not considered to alter the overall understanding, experience or appreciation of the main building.
- 5 There would be no intervisibility or co-visibility between the proposals and pair of towers to the north of the complex.
- 6 Intervisibility and co-visibility may occur with regard to the eastern most tower of the southern pair. Should this change occur, the proposals would again be viewed as a discrete change associated with the modern transmission use of the complex. The resulting change would not alter the overall understanding, experience or application of the towers, either in terms of their interrelationship with each other, or the main building.

5.46 Overall, it is concluded the proposed development would not result in a change that would impact upon the heritage significance of the main building or transmission towers at Brookman's Park, via a change in setting.

- 5.47 The proposals are thus in accordance with Policy SADM 15 of the emerging Local Plan, and in particular bullet point 3 which states that "Proposals should respect the character, appearance and setting of the asset and historic environment in terms of design, scale, materials and impact on key views."
- 5.48 Should either the main building or transmission towers at Brookman's Park be subject to 'Listing', any changes within their 'setting' would require consideration under Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The designation of the structures would not, however, alter the methodology for the consideration of how their 'setting' may contribute to their overall heritage significance, nor how any changes within their 'setting' would alter such significance. Accordingly, the Heritage Statement confirms that the assessment and conclusions set out would remain valid, and no harm would continue to arise to the heritage significance of the structures, via a change in setting. There would thus be no conflict with Section 66(1) of the Act, and the proposals would continue to be in accordance with Policy SADM 15 of the emerging Local Plan.

F. Transport, Access, Parking

- 5.49 The NPPF requires transport issues to be considered from the earliest stage of development proposals so that the potential impacts of the development on transport networks can be addressed (a), opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised (b), opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport are identified and pursued (c) and the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account (d) (paragraph 104).
- 5.50 When determining planning applications, development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds where it would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe (NPPF paragraph 110). All developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan, and the application should be supported by a transport statement or transport assessment so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed (paragraph 113).
- 5.51 Local Policy on transport and parking is set out in the District Plan (including Policies M1, M2 and M14) Draft Local Plan SP4.
- 5.52 Brookman's Park Teleport is an existing functioning telecommunication site. The proposed development would typically increase the number of employees on site by approximately 20-30 employees. The additional trips would be negligible.
- 5.53 Access to the site will use the existing access from the A1000. Inmarsat has been allocated 22 parking spaces in the existing car park.
- 5.54 The proposals are small scale and will use existing access and parking arrangements. On that basis they are considered to accord with local and national policy relating to transport, access and parking.

G. Landscaping

- 5.55 District Plan Policy D8 relating to Landscaping states that all development, other than changes of use of buildings, should include landscaping as an integral part of the overall design. This should reflect the strong tradition of urban landscape design in the district.
- 5.56 Policy D8 also encourages landscaping schemes to use materials which respect the character of the area, the planting of trees, hedgerows and shrubs and details of future maintenance. The retention and enhancement of existing key landscape features such as trees and shrubs, ponds and watercourses will be expected where feasible; where this is not possible, replacement planting should be carried out.
- 5.57 Policy D8 also states that the design of landscaped areas should be such that maintenance is straightforward. On larger schemes, certain landscaped areas will be required to be designed in a manner capable of adoption. In the Emerging Local Plan landscaping policies are to be addressed within Policies SP9 and SP10.
- 5.58 As set out in the Landscape proposals, the planting strategy has been developed to strengthen the existing character of the site, whilst integrating with the local environment. The majority of the external landscape will be open but sensitively landscaped in order to create a natural character and set the scheme contextually within the wider landscape setting. The landscape proposals seek to enhance the existing biodiversity by introducing natural planting, linking with the wider setting.
- 5.59 Where possible native species will be implemented and it is proposed to implement a native hedge species to border the southern boundary, this hedge will be maintained at approximately 1.5- 2.0m wide to help nesting birds, this linear planting belt will also help define the development and platform, whilst relating to the wider informal boundaries, creating important wildlife corridors, improving habitat values and visual connectivity (Ref to:2697-LLA-ZZ-00-DR-L-0201-P01 Landscape Enhancement Strategy Plan).
- 5.60 It is also proposed to implement an area of improved grassland to the south of the site within the wider proposals which will help settle the scheme within the wider parkland, species rich grassland will encourage natural habitats and reduce intensive maintenance regimes.
- 5.61 Along the existing vegetative boundary to the South East of the site a series of bat and bird boxes are proposed with log piles to the floor, these will increase habitat value and help bat and bird foraging whilst increasing insect habitat value.
- 5.62 In terms of landscape management, the Landscape proposals also set out details of the management regime which will ensure that the spaces and other integral parts of the landscape are well managed in perpetuity, for the benefit of wildlife value they do not become degraded through neglect, inappropriate management or misuse.
- 5.63 The proposals are in line with policies relating to landscaping and will offer opportunities for improved landscaping.

H. Ecology

- 5.64 The NPPF includes clear objectives for conserving and enhancing the natural environment, including paragraph 174 which states “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to

and enhance the natural and local environment...” ; and paragraph 180 which requires LPAs to apply a number of principles when determining planning applications including encouraging developments to integrate opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature.

- 5.65 Policy R11 of the District Plan requires new development to demonstrate how it would contribute positively to the biodiversity of the site. Draft Policy SADM16 is also relevant in terms of Ecological Assets.
- 5.66 Policy R13 relates to proposals likely to affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Policy R4 to Local Nature Reserves. Due to distance and scale of the proposals they are not expected to affect Northaw Great Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest nor any Local Nature Reserves.
- 5.67 As outlined in terms of the Landscaping Proposals above, the scheme includes proposals which offer the potential to enhance the opportunities for biodiversity. The proposals are considered to accord with local and national policy in terms of biodiversity.

I. Trees

- 5.68 Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. District Plan Policy R17 seeks to protect and retain existing trees, hedgerows and woodland. These principles are carried forward in Draft Local Plan Policies SP 9, SP 10, SP 11 and SADM 16.
- 5.69 There are no trees on or immediately adjacent to the application site that would be affected by the proposed development.
- 5.70 As described in the LVIA the wider Brookmans Park Teleport site benefits from existing trees which screen the proposed development when viewed from surrounding areas.
- 5.71 The proposed development is considered to accord with planning policies relating to trees set out in both local and national policy.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Inmarsat to accompany a full planning application for the erection of a R&D platform associated with satellites at Brookmans Park Teleport, Great North Road Brookmans Park, AL9 6NE.
- 6.2 The site is within Green Belt and that has been fully considered within this report and accompanying assessments.
- 6.3 The proposed development relates to the installation of a platform to enable research and development work for Satellites to be carried out by Inmarsat at Brookmans Park Teleport – an established teleport site.
- 6.4 The proposed development is on previously developed land and is capable of being considered infill development which does not impact on openness. Should the Council not agree with this with have also assessed harm to Green Belt and set out VSC that are relevant to the consideration of the proposed development.
- 6.5 The harm to Green Belt is assessed by the LVA as Neutral in terms of visual effect due to the proposal appearing characteristic in the context of the existing transmitting station - thus limiting potential harm to Green Belt.
- 6.6 In terms of VSC these are set out in a separate assessment and summarised as follows:
- 1 The site will play a key role in researching and developing satellites and advancing this technology.

Satellite and telecommunications infrastructure is vital to the UK. It underpins the operation of key services and contributes billions every year to the UK economy.

The UK has a powerful and innovative space sector, which has been identified by the UK Government as a strategic growth sector.
 - 2 The site will be operated by British-based Inmarsat, the company plays a vital global role in satellite communications and its services form the backbone of aviation and maritime safety, protecting millions of people every day.
 - 3 With its existing Teleport status and proximity to Inmarsat's London HQ, Brookman's Park is the location identified following an extensive 2 year site search, for Inmarsat's new, globally important, Research & Development lab.
 - 4 Inmarsat's premises would host around 20-30 space engineers and customers at peak times –the site currently employs around 100 staff and has an overall capacity of 200-400.
 - 5 Inmarsat's use of the site and the proposed development will maintain Brookman's Park established use as an active centre for Radio Satellite Telecommunications and bring up to 30 highly skilled technical roles to Welwyn & Hatfield.
 - 6 Lack of more appropriate alternative locations in Welwyn Hatfield which would cause less harm to Green Belt.
- 6.7 In addition economic benefits associated with the development are also relevant:

- 1 Creating up to 20-30 new high skilled jobs on the site;
- 2 Providing capital investment to the Brookmans Park Teleport site;
- 3 Bringing high paid and high skilled technical innovative research and development jobs to Brookmans Park and Welwyn Hatfield;
- 4 Providing significant investment in Welwyn Hatfield from relocating satellite operations from London to Hertfordshire; and
- 5 Investing in research and development of satellites which is vital to the UK economy.

6.8 On balance the proposed development is in accordance with local and national policy and the applicant would seek to implement the proposed use as soon as possible upon the grant of planning permission.

6.9 If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact Alison Bembenek on alison.bembenek@lichfields.uk or Ian Anderson ian.anderson@lichfields.uk in the first instance.