



*The Excitement is Building*

SAFFRON WALDEN

# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

VERSION 1



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# 1.0

## INTRODUCTION

Chase New Homes is the owner of the site, which measures 3.3 hectares within the town of Saffron Walden, only a five minute walk from the High Street.

It is very clear that the closure of this site has been to the detriment of the area and Chase are committed to bringing it back into use as soon as possible.

Saffron Walden along with Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet are cited in the existing Local Plan as the most sustainable settlements in the District where development should be directed to.

The site is one of the most sustainable in Saffron Walden, within walking distance to local amenities and schools and is in the Saffron Walden Conservation Area, an expansive designation within the town with many different sub-character areas.

The site contains the main former school building which is locally listed. Historic England responded to requests for statutory listing with an extensive report where it was deemed not to warrant a formal listing. The main school building is however an imposing and attractive feature within the locality that clearly contributes to its character.

Immediately to the south of the site is The Avenue, formerly part of the site. It is referenced in the National Design Guide as a good practice example, with its range of housetypes and tenures being visually integrated and facing onto a tree-lined avenue.

Against the high bar of successful historic and modern architecture Chase New Homes has evolved its concepts and designs to create a scheme that will add to the sense of place in this part of Saffron Walden, utilising traditional forms with modern embellishments that provide a clear distinction from the historic buildings while also tying them appropriately into the conservation area.

Meetings with the Council and public community engagement have occurred to allow for Chase to evolve the proposals for the site and provide 96 much needed new homes for local people.



# 2.0

## ASSESSMENT

In line with National Planning Policy Guidance, this Design and Access Statement shall:

- (a) *explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development; and*
- (b) *demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account.*

Paragraph: 031 Reference ID: 14-031-20140306  
Revision date: 06 03 2014

A development's context refers to the particular characteristics of the application site and its wider setting. These will be specific to the circumstances of an individual application and the Design and Access Statement should be tailored accordingly.

The Design and Access Statement is important in its role as a document that enables local planning authorities and other parties to understand the analysis that has informed the design of a development proposal and also see the evolution of the scheme as it has progressed through internal and external review.





# 3.0

## EXISTING SITE



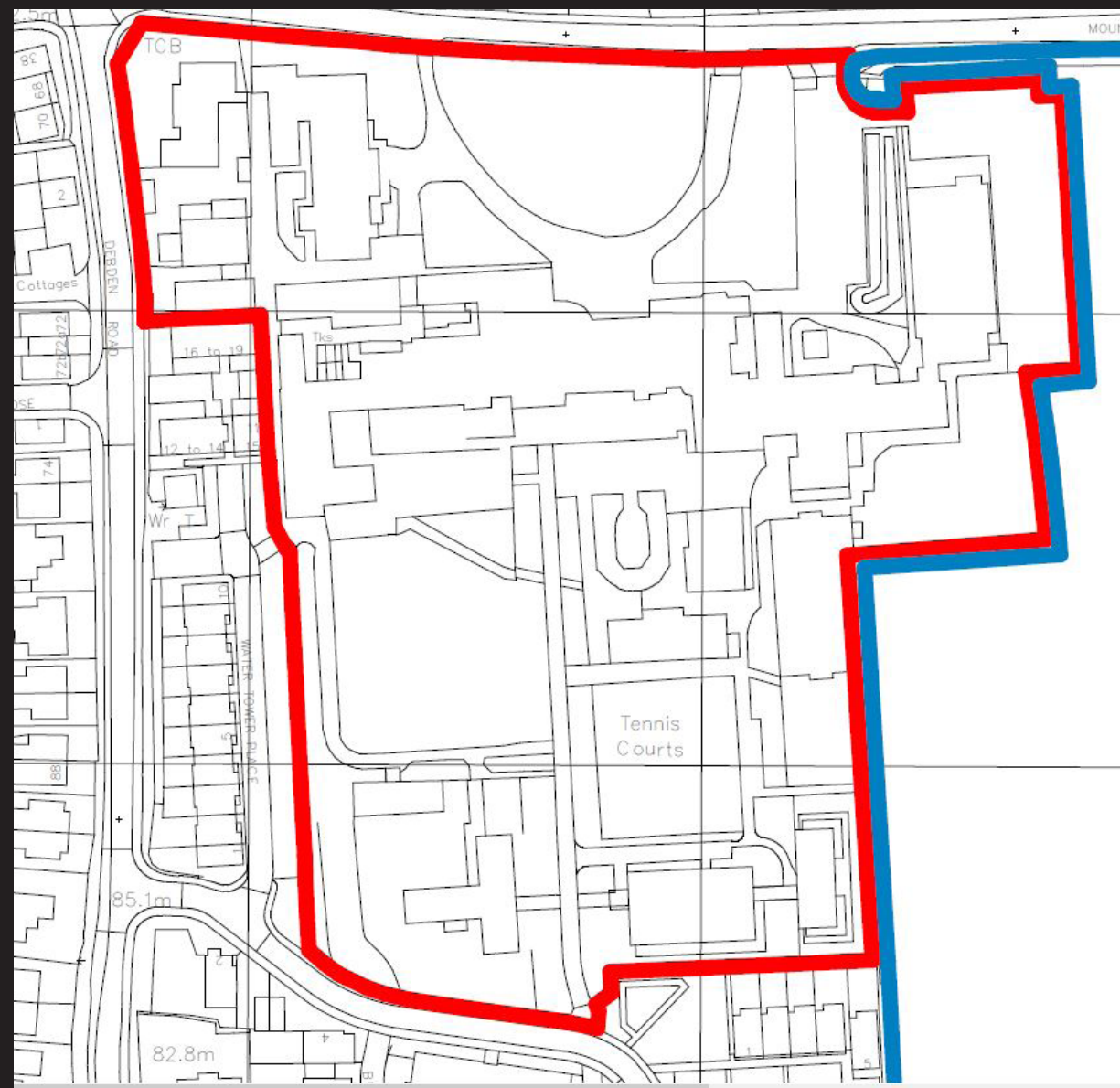
The application site is flanked by Mount Pleasant Road to the north, Debden Road to the west and The Avenue to the south.

The site is in an elevated position to Mount Pleasant Road, which the main building fronts onto, and as per the conservation area designation it provides an imposing building within the locality.

The main building has many Tudor embellishments such as large chimney stacks, embattled entrance tower with large corner buttresses and a gothic-arched entrance made from chamfered brick.



Existing building footprint plan



There are three existing access routes onto Mount Pleasant Road, including a crescent with in/out entrances and a larger entrance to the gym building and parking area.

There is a long boundary wall along Mount Pleasant Road with mature hedging and trees immediately behind it, the majority subject to tree preservation order, which provide a sylvan setting and a relatively robust level of screening from the road.

The site has a limited Debden Road frontage, but is in an elevated position to it with a handful of buildings visible on this frontage, including the flint-faced Croydon Building.

The remainder of the western boundary is mostly obscured from Debden Road by the relatively recent 'The Avenue' re-development, on land which was formerly part of the site and is designated Protected Open Space. The western boundary now fronts onto Water Tower Place and is separated from it with railings.

There is vehicular access onto the site from Water Tower Place.

The southern boundary of the site fronts onto The Avenue and has another vehicular access by the avenue of trees.







### Gym Building

While the majority of the newer buildings lie at the rear of the site, a 1980s gym building lies to the front and is available in public views.

It is a large utilitarian building that is viewed within the context of the main school building and clearly a significant presence.





### 3.0 EXISTING SITE



The main building has been extended on its eastern side with an indoor swimming pool (early 1900s) and on its southern elevation with a 1980s classroom block, and other buildings have been added on the site over time, with the most recent being the new school building to the south of the site in 2012 and annexation of part of the site which is now forms The Avenue/ Water Tower Place.

Also to the front of the site is the interwar assembly building, which is more successful in its siting and massing in views onto the main building, although it has been extended on its northern elevation with flat-roofed single-storey buildings which formerly housed the music department.

**Assembly Hall front entrance**



**Music Hall adjoining Assembly Hall**



**Assembly Hall façade**



**Music block from Mount Pleasant Road**





### 3.0 EXISTING SITE



The buildings at the rear of the site are situated either side of the avenue of lime trees, which form a strong feature of this part of the site, and carries on into The Avenue development.

Also at the rear of the site are former grassed tennis courts, a hard-surfaced tennis court, a MUGA and a playground.

The avenue of lime trees



The avenue of lime trees





### 3.0 EXISTING SITE



#### The Avenue

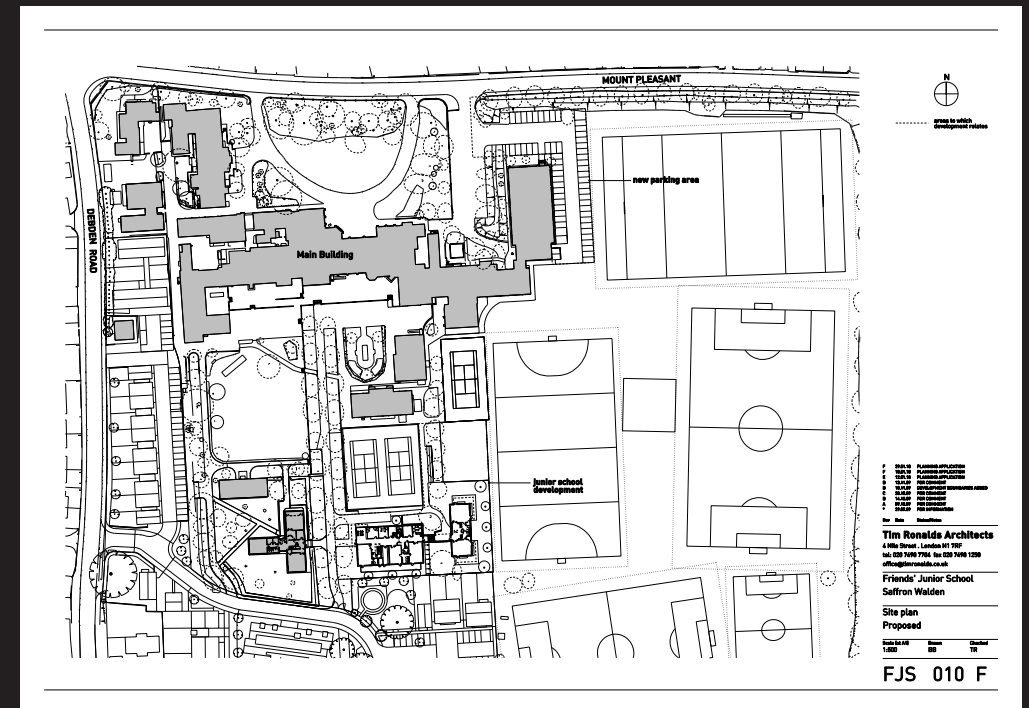
The Avenue has been cited as a good example of good practice in the National Design Guide with its mix of housetypes and tenures which are visually integrated.

This development was permitted in March 2011 on land that formed part of the school site, designated as Protected Open Space and included 76 new-build homes along with a new junior school and new dwellings located either side of a Grade II listed water tower.

Plans elevation



Proposed site layout





### 3.0 EXISTING SITE



#### The Avenue

The scheme is clearly modern but with traditional form, including a barn-like approach to the buildings. It is well-assisted by the existing landscaping present on the site, including the avenue of lime trees which creates a mature landscape for the buildings to sit within.







# 4.0

## SURROUNDING AREA



Historic core

The historic centre of Saffron Walden consists of a medieval street pattern and a strong collection of Tudor and other timber framed buildings, many of which have first floor overhangs and pargetting .





## 4.0 SURROUNDING AREA



### Mount Pleasant Road

While the site lies very close to the historic core, housing to the east of the site is standard mid-20th Century architecture while housing in Mount Pleasant Road and Debden Road is a mix of Victorian and Edwardian housing set out in a linear fashion, with 9 & 10 Mount Pleasant Road being Grade II listed late Victorian villas.

The mix of housing from Tudor to 21st century provides a vibrant mix of high quality architecture from which to draw influence and inspiration, and to add to the distinctive sense of place that both the site and Saffron Walden holds.





# 5.0

## PLANNING CONTEXT

While the planning statement accompanying this application will consider and respond to specific local and national policies, the designations of the site and the wider area warrant mention here with regard to their influence upon the scheme.

The site is located within Saffron Walden, within the urban area and in close proximity to the high street.

The Council's existing Local Plan directs all major development to the major service centres of Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Stansted Mountfitchet.

Saffron Walden is therefore one of the most sustainable sites within the district, and this site is one of the most sustainable sites within Saffron Walden.

The site is within the Saffron Walden conservation area, an extensive designation, of which the site lies within Zone 6 - The Former Friend's School, Mount Pleasant Road and West Road. The importance of the buildings on the site and their relationship with the town are therefore clearly important.

In addition to the need to preserve and enhance the character of the conservation area, Local Plan Policy ENV1 requires the essential features of a conservation area, including plan form, relationship between buildings, the arrangement of open areas and their enclosure, grain or significant natural or heritage features to be considered.

Part of the site is also listed as Protected Open Space, although this is now quite out-dated given the level of development that has been permitted on this designation under previous applications, including The Avenue and primary school building.

Many of the trees on the site are also subject to tree preservation order and the main building on the site is locally listed.

While requests were made for the building to be formally listed Historic England confirmed with extensive reporting that the buildings were not worthy of listing, stating that while a notable building of considerable local interest it is, on the whole, architecturally modest and has undergone numerous, incremental alterations and additions which have diminished the original architectural composition. As such neither the main former school building nor any buildings in the wider school complex met the criteria for statutory listing.

The main school building is imposing and a significant feature in the local area, in combination with the nearby Grade II listed water tower, while the avenue of lime trees immediately to the south of the school building provide a landscape feature which carries on to the south, tying the main building to The Avenue.



NATIONAL POLICY

The insertion of the word 'beautiful' into Paragraph 8 b) of the National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that new homes need to be properly designed to support the social objectives of the planning system.

The National Design Guide is a robust tool that helps inform and understand how to make new homes as attractive as possible.

*The long-standing, fundamental principles for good design are that it is: fit for purpose; durable; and brings delight.*

*The underlying purpose for design quality and the quality of new development at all scales is to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities. This includes people who use a place for various purposes such as:*

- *to live, work, shop, for leisure and recreation, and to move around between these activities; and*
- *those who visit or pass through.*

*It may draw its inspiration from the site, its surroundings or a wider context. It may also introduce new approaches to contrast with, or complement, its context.*

*A place is more complex and multi-faceted than a building*

*A well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including:*

- *the layout (or masterplan);*
- *the form and scale of buildings;*
- *their appearance;*
- *landscape;*
- *materials; and*
- *their detailing.*

It is important that the context of the location shapes ideas for new development, as the understanding of the context, history and the cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region influences the location. If a development takes account of the specifics of the locality then this helps the community in being more likely to accept the new development, enhancing the sense of place and contributing to the cohesion of the area.







# 6.0

## PROPOSAL

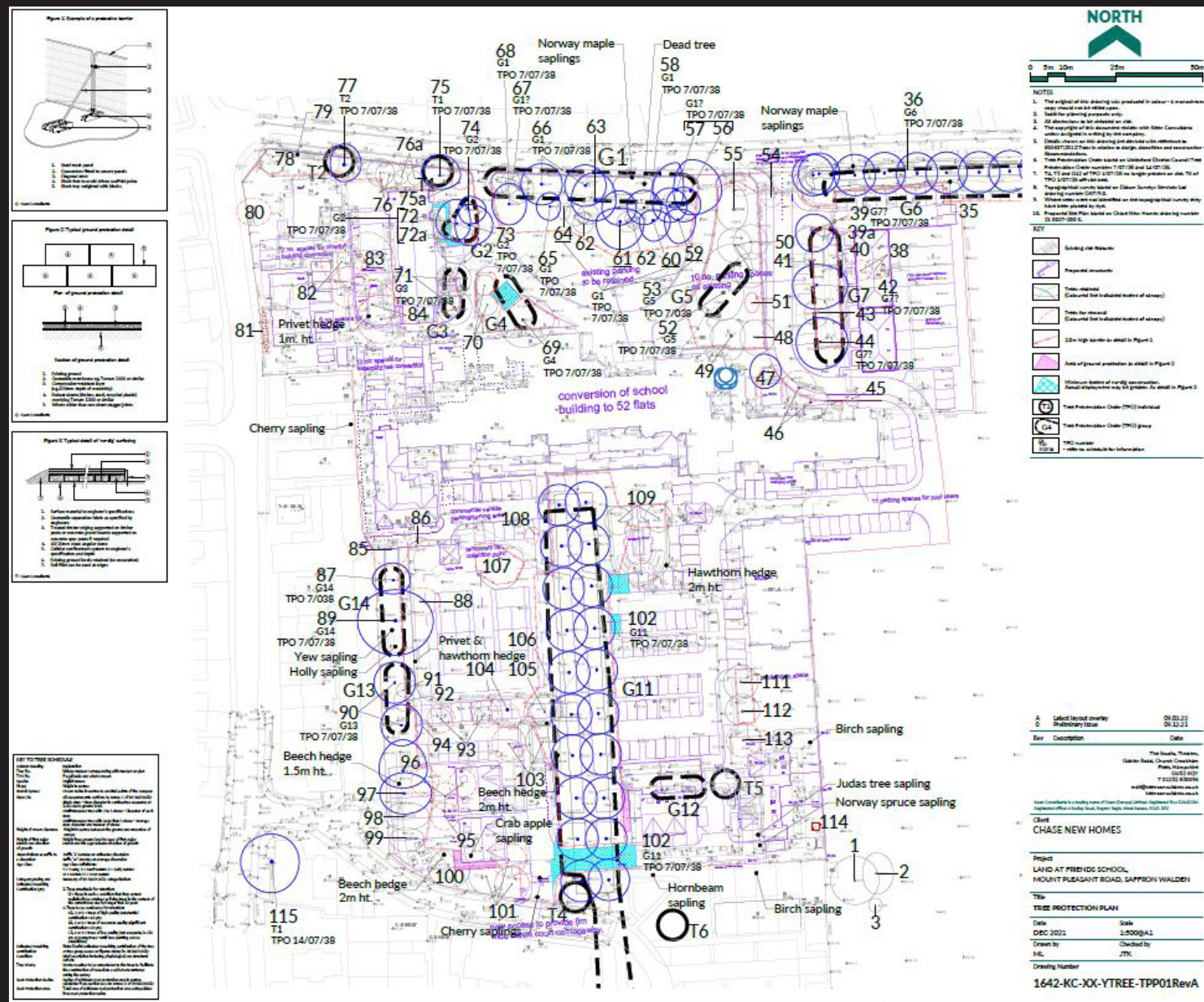
### Layout

The site is located within the urban area in one of the most sustainable locations in the District. There is no presumption against development in such a location.

There are however several significant designations which must be taken into account:

- Conservation area designation
- Locally listed building
- Protected Open Space
- Extensive tree preservation orders

TPO plan







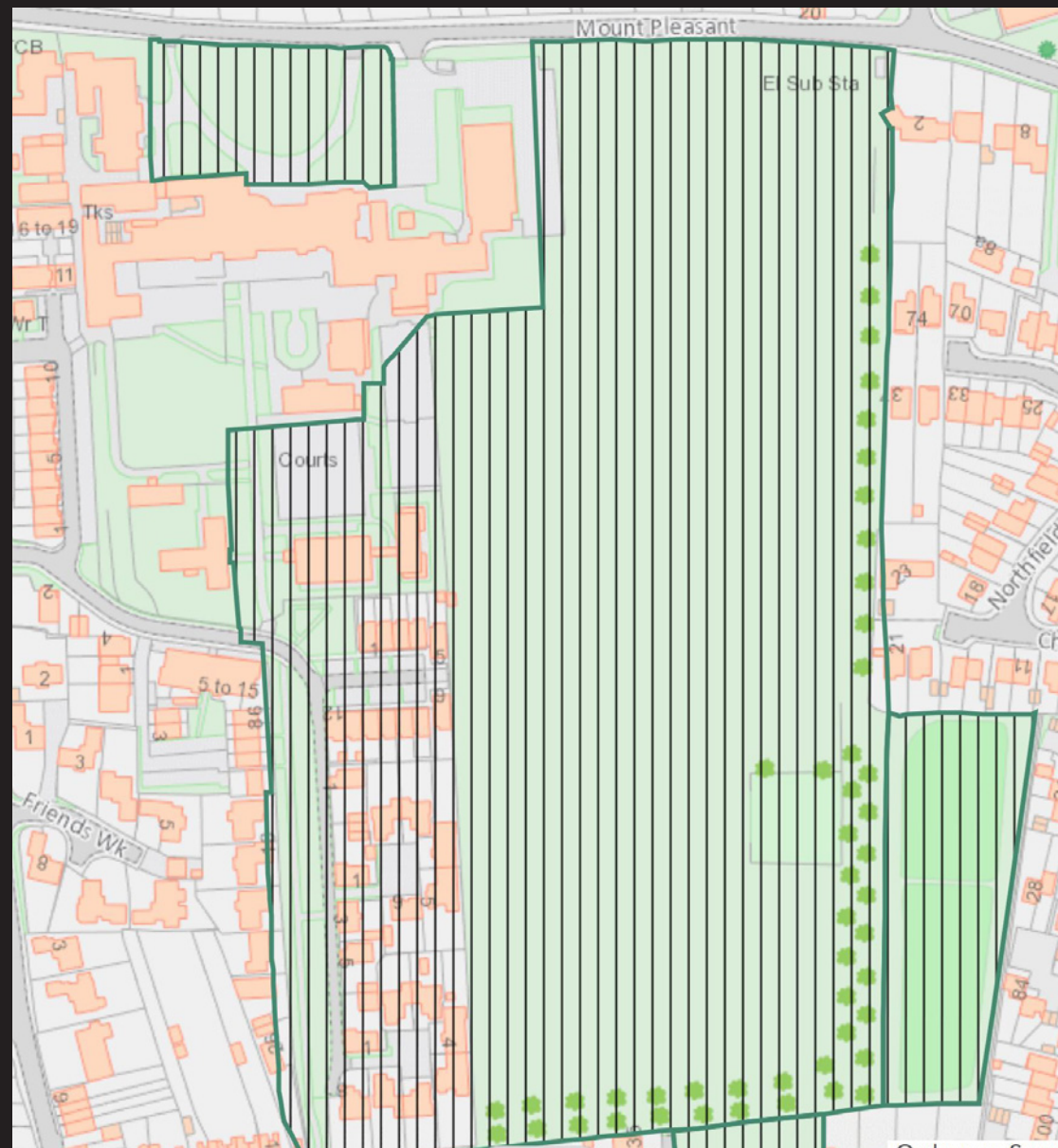
The Protected Open Space designation has obviously been set aside to allow extensive development over time, with the western part of the designation built over with The Avenue and primary school building.

Even so, a very sensitive approach needs to be taken and the designations provide a clear steer as to where development can take place.

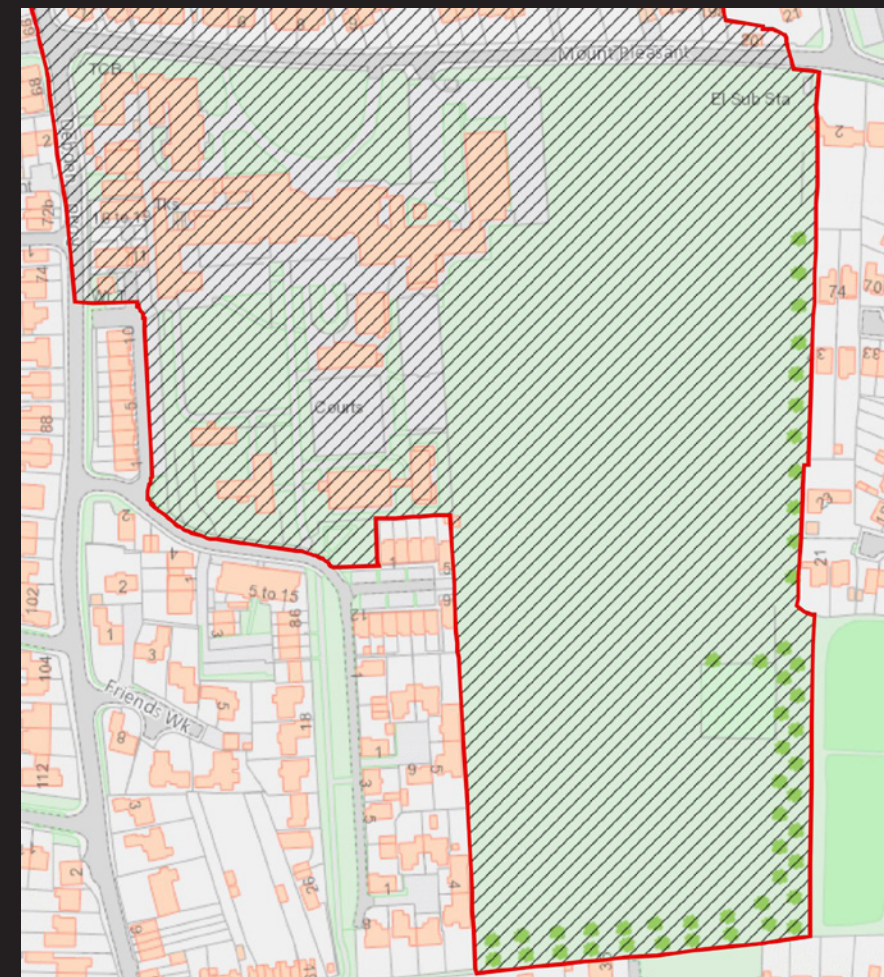
It is considered that re-use of buildings and, where demolished, the general building footprints/locations are re-used so as to mitigate the perceived level of change on the site.

The Council accepts this as a sensible approach to re-development of the site (please see Statement of Agreement) and this has also been considered a logical approach by neighbours who responded to the consultation exercise (please see Statement of Community Involvement).

Protected Open Space



Conservation area designation





The proposals therefore have three distinct parts:

RE-USE/RENOVATION

- re-use of existing main school building to provide 52 residential apartments with communal library/drawing room.
- Re-use of existing swimming pool with new changing room facilities.
- Re-use of of the assembly hall building to provide four new houses.
- Re-use of Croydon Building to provide four new apartments.

NEW BUILD

- Removal of music block attached to assembly building to provide two apartments with direct access.
- Removal of pottery building and replacement with a two-storey building accommodating six apartments – the Maple Building.
- Removal of 1980s classroom block on southern part of main school building and replacement with three-storey apartment block containing 12 apartments – the Pine Building.
- Removal of Buildings 4 & 5 to provide access and parking
- Removal of Buildings 1 & 3 to provide four new homes with parking – the Lime house style.
- Removal of Buildings 2 & 6 to provide five new homes – the Oak house style.
- Removal of the gym building and replacement with seven new homes - the Ash house style.

RECREATION

- Re-provision of grass tennis courts on western side of avenue of lime trees.
- Re-provisions of multi-use games area (MUGA) on eastern side of lime trees.
- Provision of public open space in place of hard-surfaced playground.





Alterations to northern part of site



The views onto the site from Mount Pleasant Road are possibly the most important as they provide clear views and appreciation of the main school building, while other views from the surrounding area are far more limited, as shown within the Zone of Influence work carried out by The Landscape Partnership.

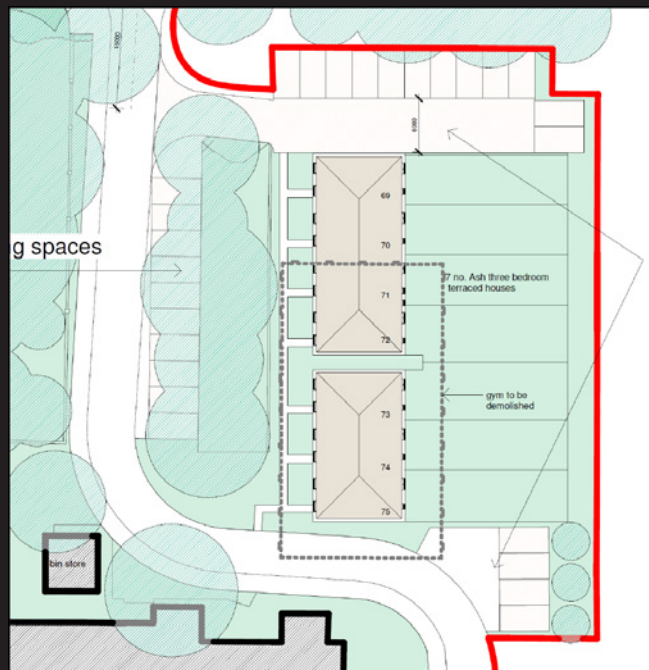
Existing parking spaces and hardstand are therefore re-used where possible, as are building footprints where buildings are removed.







**The Ash housing layout**



**THE ASH HOUSES**

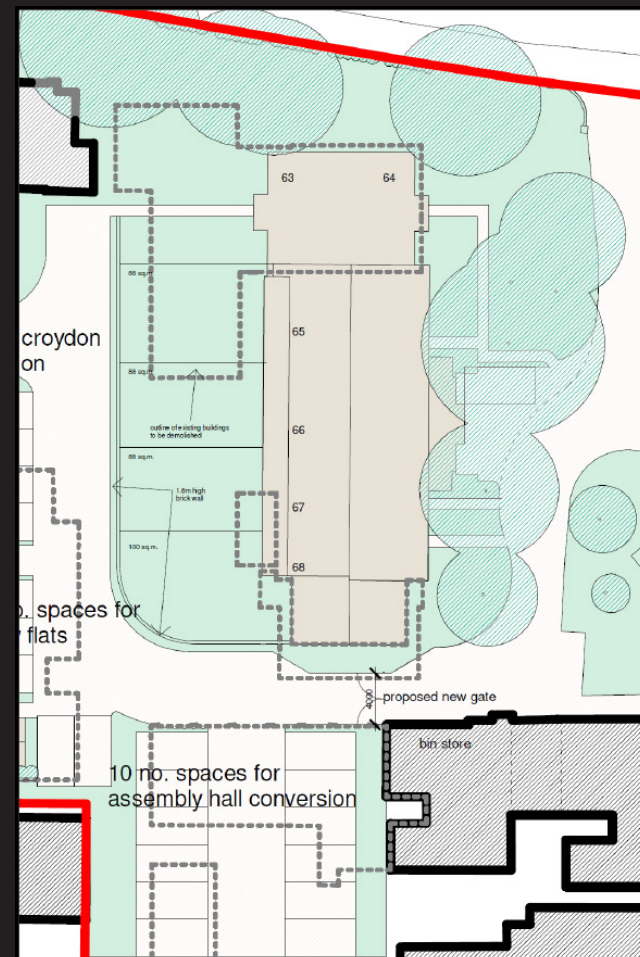
While the footprints of the new housing with The Ash housetype in place of the gym building extend closer to the road than the existing gym building, this is clearly offset by the far lesser scale of these modest two-storey houses with shallow-pitched roofs. The banked landscaping on the boundary with Mount Pleasant Road is also a significant screen with TPO trees.

Even without such screening, the domestic nature of the houses compared with the significant scale and dominating nature of the gym building still represents a major visual improvement to the locality, the locally listed building and the conservation area, with the houses not competing with the main building.

The houses also provide an appropriate setting for the central green crescent, which is protected open space and almost mirror the assembly building opposite, providing a sensible and logical arrangement of buildings. At the pre-application meeting the Council's historic advisors, Place Services, viewed this as a positive proposal within the context of the designated and non-designated heritage assets.

Parking for these houses utilises existing parking on their northern side with new parking to the southern side, while the row of trees to the front of the houses are retained to continue their contribution to the soft landscaping on this part of the site.

**Assembly Hall layout**



**ASSEMBLY BUILDING**

The Assembly Building is to be retained. It was previously proposed to demolish this building (see 'Evolution of Scheme' section), but with its retention it continues the setting of the main school building.

The main parking for these houses will be concealed from public views by being located to the south of the building, utilising more recent building footprints that will be demolished to allow for them.

**SINGLE-STOREY HOMES REPLACING MUSIC BLOCK**

The music block is replaced with two new single storey homes within a much smaller footprint. These new homes will each have their own direct access and parking provided at the rear and concealed from public view.

Views onto this part of the site from Mount Pleasant Road will be improved due to the smaller footprint of the new homes against and increased levels of soft landscaping.



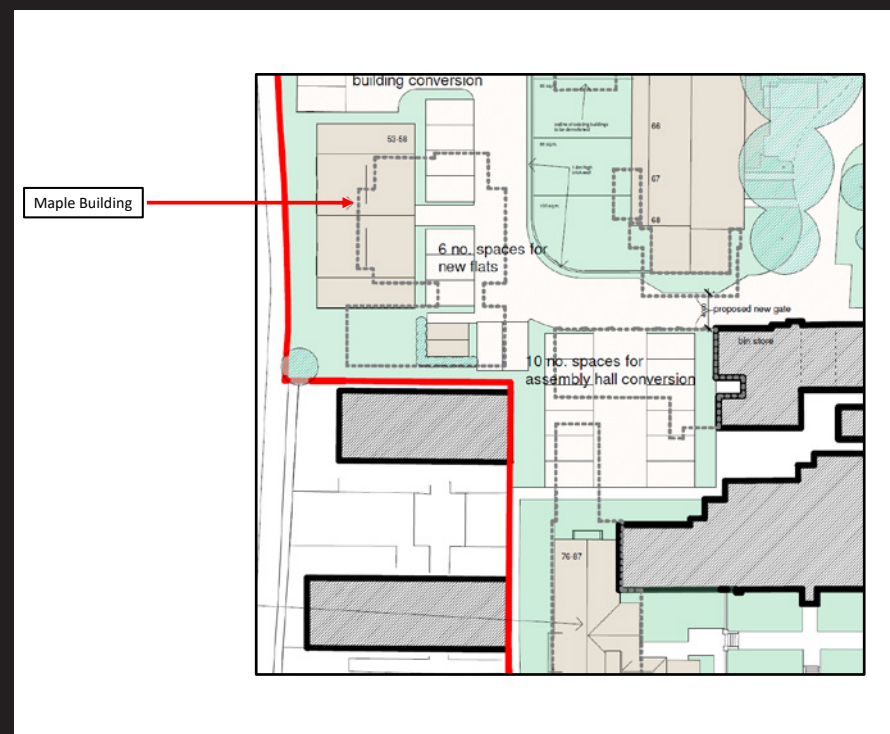


MAPLE BUILDING

This new apartment block will take the place of the pottery and woodwork building, albeit slightly closer to the Debden Road frontage. By moving building footprint closer to the road there will be more breathing space within the new enclave of housing, while the building line created by more recent development immediately to the south will be maintained.

Parking will also be concealed from public views within the site.

**Maple Building layout**

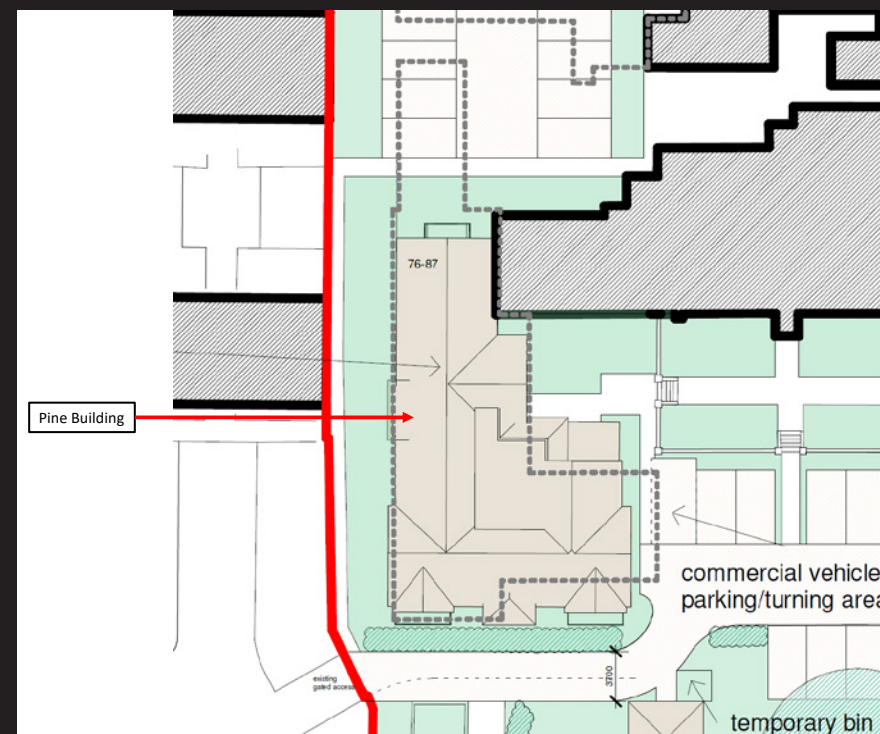


PINE BUILDING

The Pine Building almost replicates the footprint of the classroom block it replaces. It will be located behind the water tower and maisonettes that front onto Debden Road, and will maintain a similar presence to the classroom block.

Parking will be located by the Pine Building using an existing access from Water Tower Close.

**Pine Building layout**

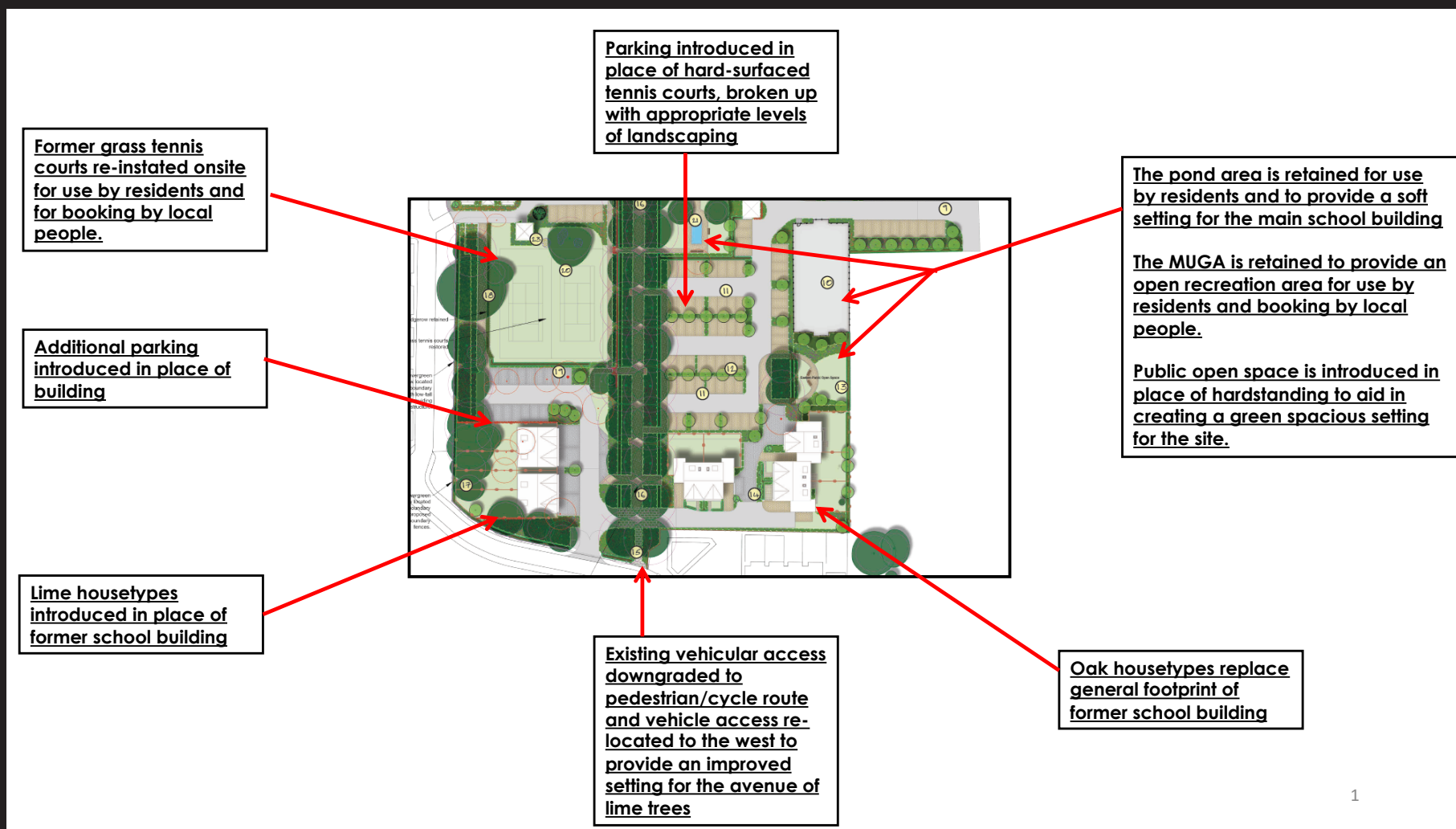


SWIMMING POOL CHANGING ROOMS

The replacement building to accommodate the changing rooms will be of a similar scale but with smaller footprint than the existing building, with parking available around it for visitors to use the pool.

The parking is sited so it can be enclosed by landscaping to screen it in views from the wider area. It will not feature in views from any public viewpoint.





Southern part of the site

MUGA/POND AREA/PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The pond area is retained and enhanced with landscaping and seating for the benefit of residents and visitors and provides a soft setting for the main school building.

The Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) is to be retained for residents and the public for recreation purposes.

The hard-surfaced playground will be converted into soft landscaping with path and seating which will be an asset for future residents and the public and be an improvement upon the existing hardstanding.

OAK HOUSES

The Oak houses replace the former school building and represent a reduction in scale and massing from the existing building.

Some of the houses will look southward and provide an active frontage for pedestrians entering the site from the The Avenue and there will be sufficient scope for intervening planting between the avenue of lime trees and the flank of the nearest Oak house to provide a soft setting.







THE LIME HOUSES

These houses will replace large buildings that were on this part of the site, which lies outside of the Protected Open Space.

The Lime houses will look onto the avenue of lime trees, providing a pleasant outlook for the houses and also active frontage to this public area.

Parking will be well-screened by soft landscaping from wider public views.

EXISTING VEHICULAR ACCESS RE-LOCATION

The existing vehicular access onto The Avenue is in-between the avenue of lime trees, and does not necessarily celebrate this entrance into the site or provide the most appropriate context for this historic avenue.

Moving the vehicular access slightly to the west allows for the existing access to be exclusively for pedestrians and cyclists and for improved landscaping to provide a welcoming entrance for walks up the avenue.

By making this access more pedestrian-friendly it is hoped that local people will feel free to walk up and appreciate the amenity of the avenue and views onto the main school building.

FORMER GRASS TENNIS COURTS

While this area lies outside of Protected Open Space, we believe its historic use as tennis courts is something to be celebrated and retained, also providing an open context the rear of the school building and also for visitors walking up the avenue of lime trees.

The Council's historic advisors advanced the idea of using this area for parking, but it was discounted due to the benefits it has as green space and also for technical reasons (see 'Evolution of Scheme' section).

PARKING IN PLACE OF TENNIS COURTS

Parking for the apartments in the main school building were originally sited where the pond is so as to not affect the tennis courts and breach the Protected Open Space designation.

The Council's historic advisors then sought retention and enhancement of the pond to improve the setting for the main school building, and suggested that the tennis courts be used for parking as they were hard-surfaced already.

When the Protected Open Space designation and potential conflict was discussed, the Council's advisors stated that the designation has already been significantly affected and that for proper master-planning for the site this should be the approach. The Council agreed with placing the parking on the tennis courts and the Council's advisors stated that they would proactively support this approach if any policy conflict was raised by the Council.

NEW RESIDENTIAL CAMPUS

The re-use of existing buildings and existing buildings' footprint is an approach supported by both the Council, residents who responded to our consultations and the work carried out by The Landscape Partnership.

Not only has our approach been to re-use existing buildings, it has also been to improve upon the current arrangement, with less bulky buildings replacing existing and therefore to improve the appearance of the site overall.

So while the existing constraints of the site has significantly influenced where new development may go, our development proposals have been appraised to seek opportunities to improve upon the existing situation.





Existing and Proposed building footprints



Existing and proposed soft landscaping



Benefits of the scheme are as follows:

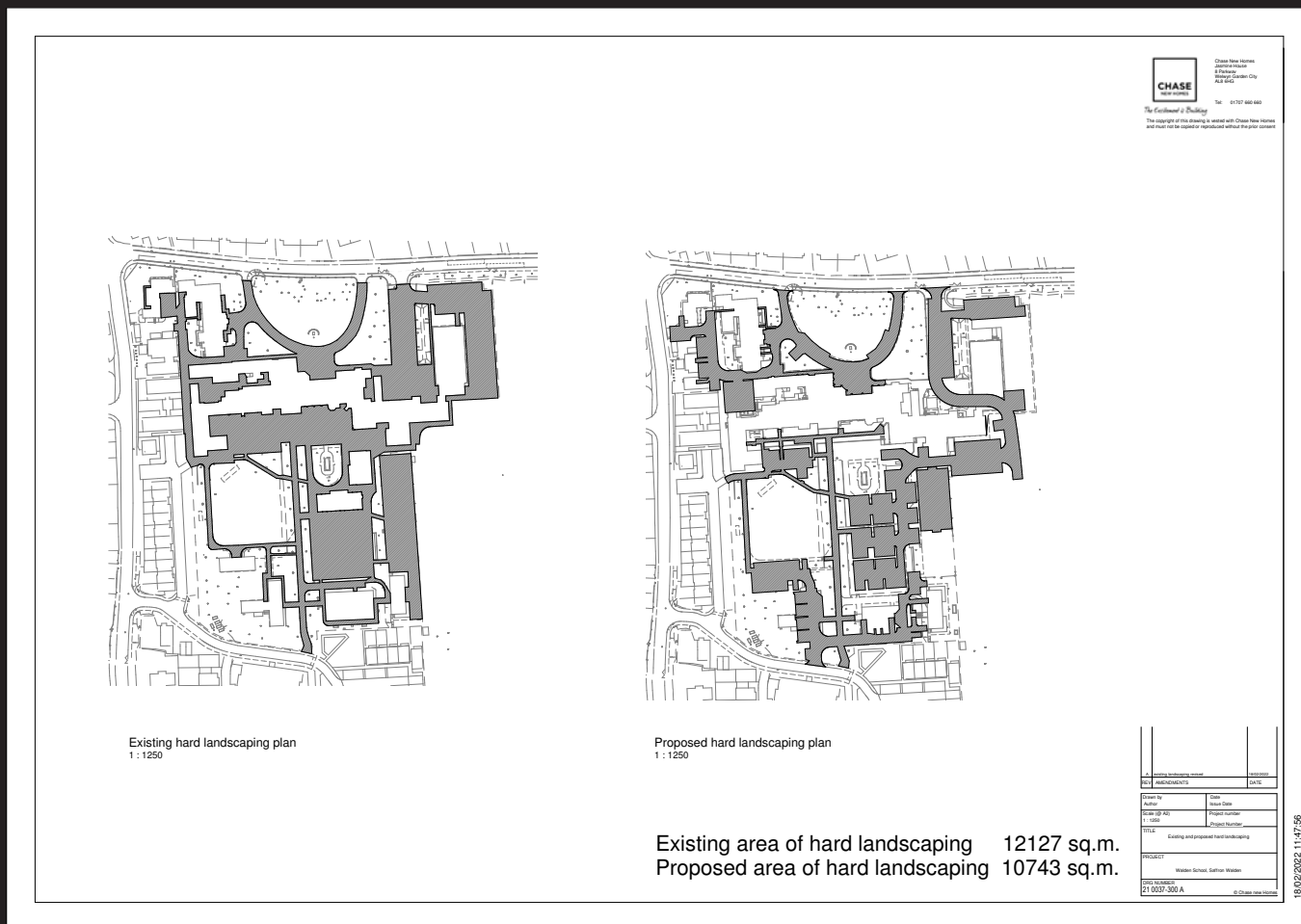
The building footprints have decreased by 1725 square metres

The level of soft landscaping has increased by 3000 square metres.

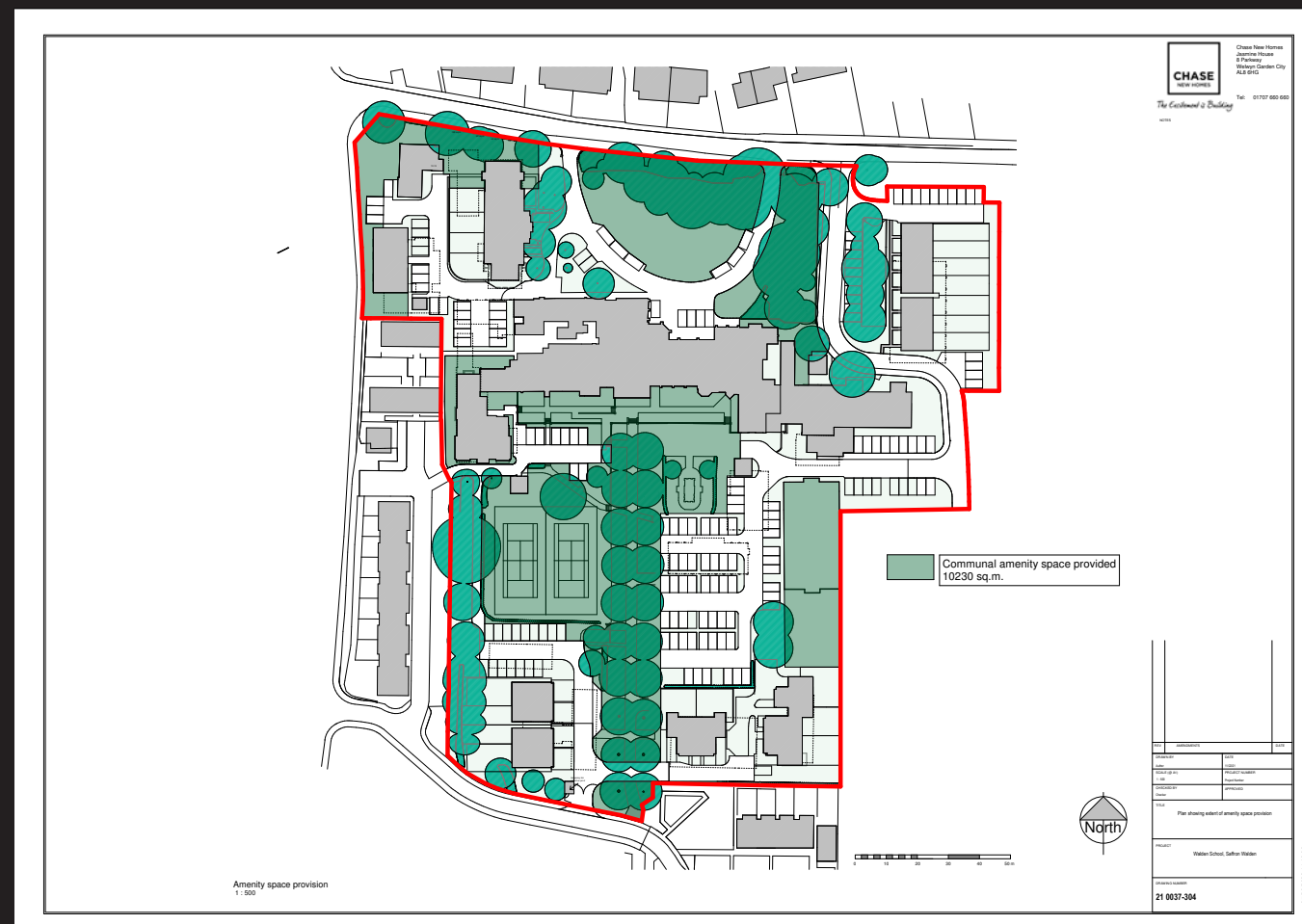




Existing and proposed hard landscaping



Plan showing extent of amenity space provision



There is also an abundance of amenity space proposed, both private and public. The public amenity space is high for a site in the urban area that's so close to the centre of town, but in this instance is considered appropriate for the sensitivities and designations on the site and the increase in open space must be seen as a benefit/enhancement to the setting of the conservation area and locally listed building.





## 6.0 PROPOSAL

### Existing building example floor plan



### Existing beam example



### Existing kitchen



### CONVERSION LAYOUTS

The need to bring the main building back into use is both urgent and necessary, in order to make much needed repairs and to ensure its long term future.

The interventions to the building to allow for conversion has been kept to a minimum, utilising existing doors and openings in the majority of cases and not altering the external appearance of the building.

The building's layout is interesting and diverse with a surprising number of rooms and areas worthy of opening up and celebrating, such as vaulted ceilings and skylights obscured by ceiling panels, or double height windows cut in half by partitions.







Existing internal features such as fireplaces and exposed beams will be retained and refurbished to create features for new residents and visitors can appreciate.

**Example of an existing room with fireplace**



**Example of an existing fireplace**



**Dance hall**







The other buildings being converted are also little altered on their external facades and internal interventions kept to the minimum needed to create practical homes.

The former dining room is a particularly striking room with vaulted ceiling and timber panelling, and we have taken the view that this should be a communal space which can be enjoyed as residents to relax or work from home, and for potential future use by local groups who wish to meet, introducing public access which was not previously available.

The internal layouts and the overall site layout are considered to respond sensitively to their designations, their strengths and the opportunities that have been presented on and within this site, as well as having due regard to the sensitivities outside of the site, to create a layout that has been preserves and enhances the conservation area and non-designated heritage asset. The Landscape Partnership reports effectively demonstrate that the proposed site layout is appropriate with regard to views onto the site from the surrounding area.

**Dining hall**



**Dining hall**



**Dining hall**







Oak housetype



Ash housetype



Lime housetype



Ash housetype



NEW-BUILD DESIGN

The initial proposals for the site followed a traditional approach (see 'Evolution of Scheme' for more information), but subsequent to discussions with the Council this has since been altered to a more modern theme that ties in with The Avenue and Water Tower Close, which has been welcomed by the Council's historic advisors.

The new houses retain a traditional form so as to tie them into the conservation area and the locally listed building.

They provide a contrast that clearly places the buildings as being 21st century homes.

The Ash houses are cottage-like in size and appearance, which fits well at the front of the site against the context of the main building, with simple detailing so as to be discreet within the street scene and not detract from the the building.







Assembly Hall entrance



Assembly Hall rear elevation



The assembly hall will have extensions added to the rear of the building on the least sensitive elevation to allow enough head room at first floor for these new homes.

The rear extension has been through several iterations in discussion with Council officers to come to this solution (for more information please see 'Evolution of scheme' section).

The front elevation of the assembly hall will remain the same, as requested by the Council's historic advisors, and so continue the status quo against the setting of the main building.







Assembly Hall section view



Apartments adjoining Assembly Hall section view



The changes to the assembly hall building elevations are therefore very minor and also tie into the 1930s horizontal and vertical lines of the existing building, which has clear art deco influence.

The two apartments adjoining the assembly building have maintained a flat-roof design as per the music block they replace, to maintain the status quo for neighbours looking onto the site, which also aids in creating a modern looking pair of homes with horizontal emphasis that sits well against the assembly hall.



## 6.0 PROPOSAL



The Maple Building has been clearly influenced by homes in Water Tower Close that front onto Debden Road. This is a conscious choice given the strong rhythm created by these existing buildings.

There is however an acknowledgement of the pottery building that is being replaced, with a gable feature copied over from the pottery building to this new apartment building.

The Maple Building will have Juliet balconies on the Debden Road frontage. This is considered acceptable and in line with the current character of the road, given the projecting balconies on the homes immediately to the south.

The Pine Building has also evolved during discussions with the Council, and is now a simple modern building with traditional form that respects the building it replaces and is both subservient and respectful of the main school building.

The materials of all the above buildings has been kept simple with traditional materials, in line with the requests of the Council.

**Maple building**



**Maple building**



**Pottery building**

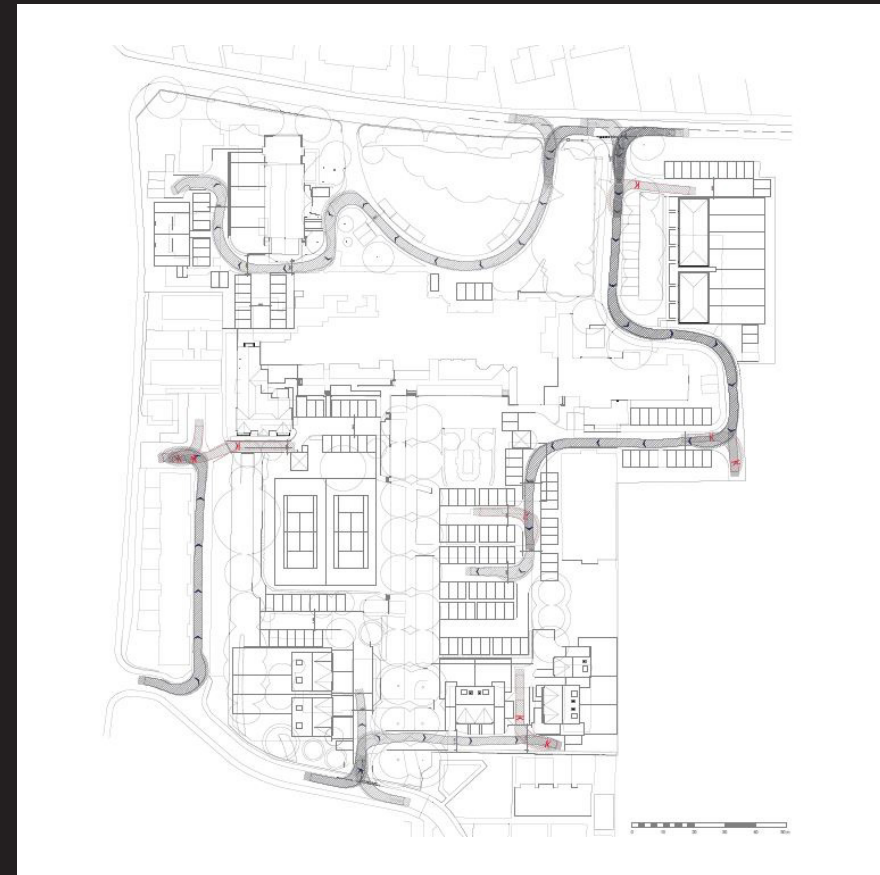




# 7.0

## ACCESS

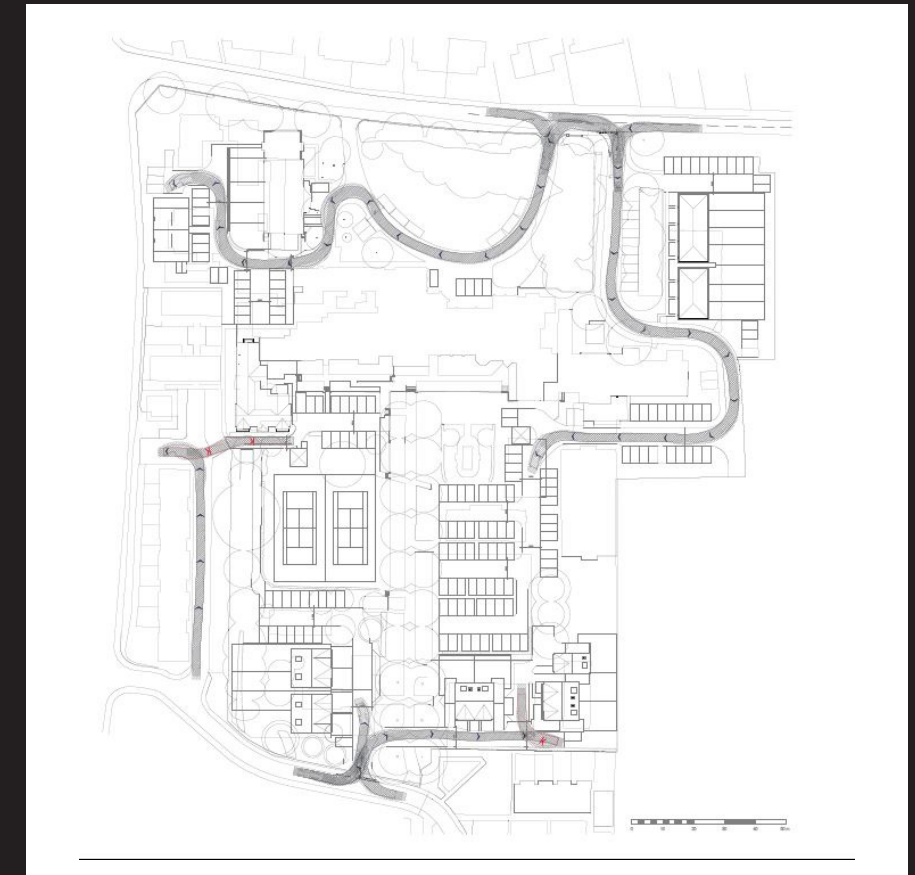
Fire tender tracking plans



The proposals use the existing accesses on Mount Pleasant Road and also re-introduce pedestrian access to the front of the Croydon building to improve permeability through the site.

An existing access on Water Tower Close is utilised and the vehicular access onto The Avenue is being downgraded to pedestrian/cycle only, to allow for enhanced landscaping and surfacing to encourage its use by residents and the public.

Refuse tracking plans



A new vehicular access will be formed slightly to the west of it for residents of this part of the site.

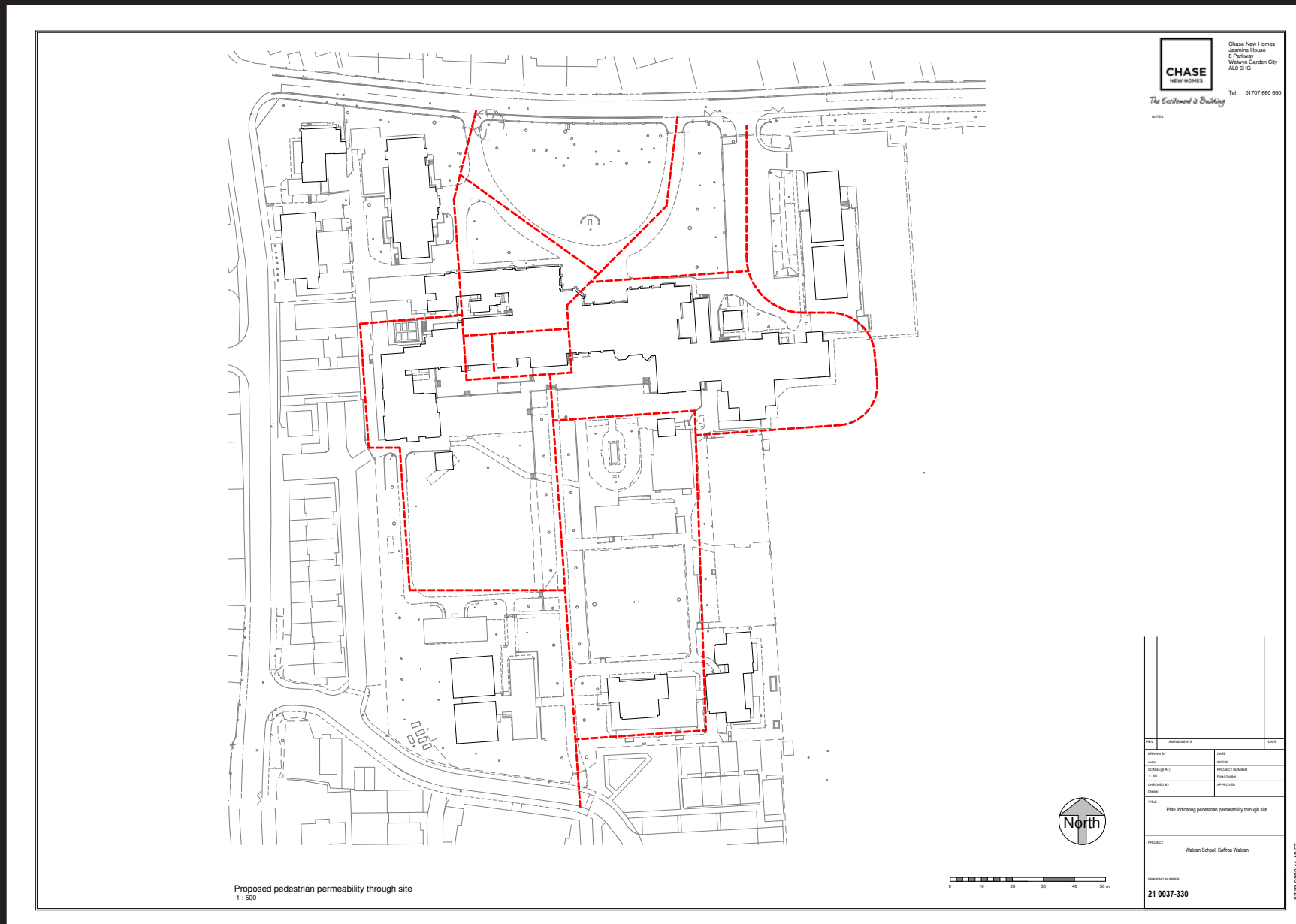
All the above accesses have been tested to ensure they meet relevant standards and that the homes can be adequately serviced.







Pedestrian permeability through site



The site itself constitutes previously developed land with a former commercial use and the accompanying transport statement demonstrates that the comings and goings from the site with the change of use will be either de minimis or an improvement upon the extant use of the site.

The site is also only a five minute walk to the centre of Saffron Walden with all its amenities. The transport statement refers to other facilities within the locality, but the site is undoubtedly one of the most sustainable sites in the area.

With such a large residential campus it is important to consider the access within it for residents to reach various facilities and utilise the various access points on the site. The plan opposite shows the abundance of pedestrian routes through the site and convenience of travel through it.

With regard to the above it is considered that the site not only has adequate vehicular access, but it also has an abundance of pedestrian routes through the site that will allow residents to pass freely throughout, while the access to the avenue of lime trees presents a welcoming option for local people to walk into and appreciate the setting.



# 8.0 LANDSCAPING

Landscaping plan



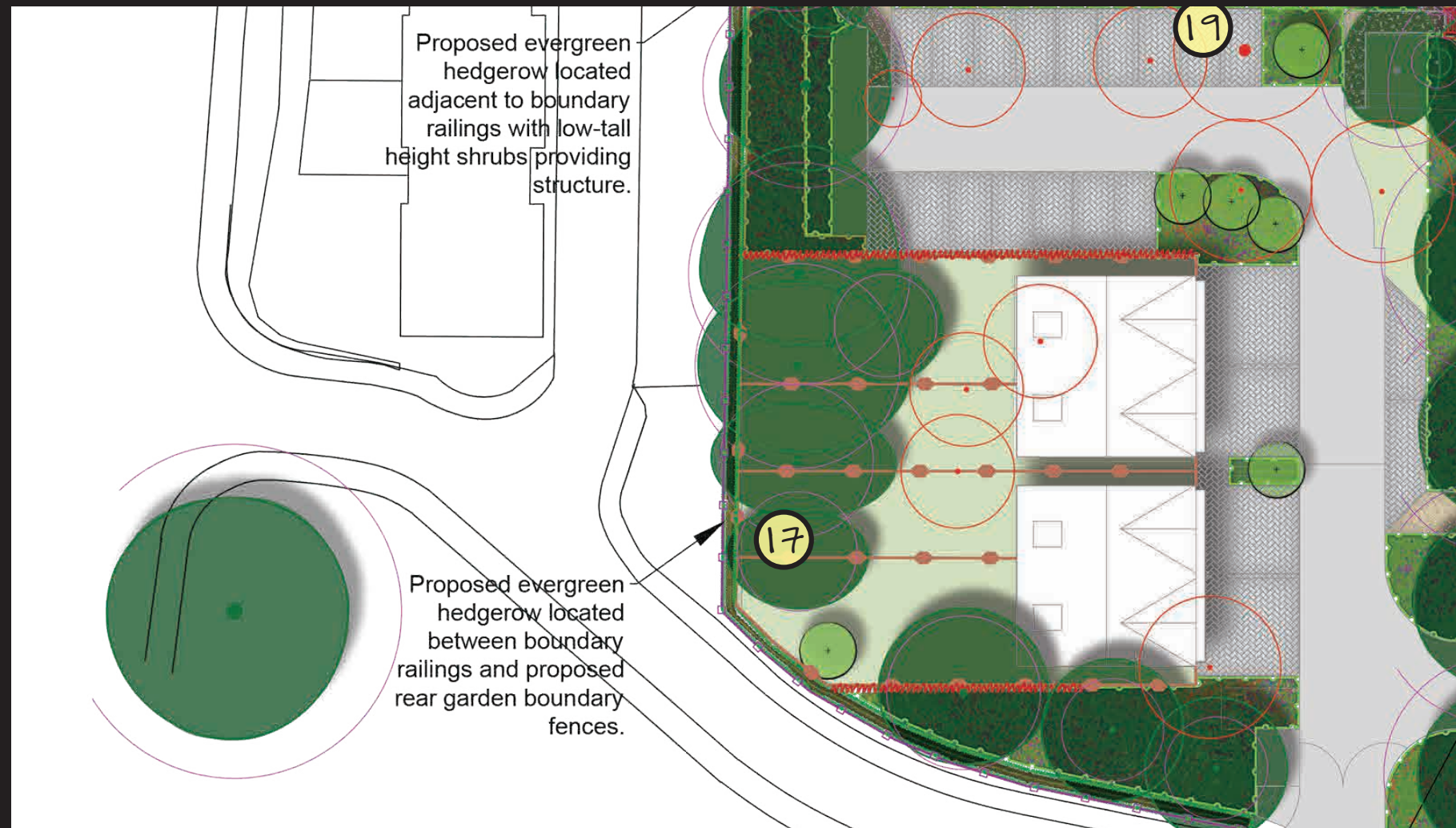
The Landscape Partnership has produced a comprehensive landscaping plan that enhances existing areas of soft landscaping without compromising the impressive soft setting around buildings, and also provides well-thought out new areas of soft landscaping that punctuate the site with pleasant green areas of new planting.

Surfacing is also thoughtfully considered with new hard surfaces provided with appropriate materials.





Landscaping plan extract



Screening of the site on the boundaries is also considered in the landscaping plan to ensure no significant impacts upon nearby residents, such as the south-west corner of the site to the rear of the Lime houses, where the rear boundaries will be planted with evergreen hedgerows to prevent a hard fence screen being perceived from outside the site.

Overall the landscaping proposed will build upon the existing significant levels of trees and hedging and appropriately preserve and enhance the sylvan setting of the site.



# 9.0

## EVOLUTION OF SCHEME

### Initial scheme slide

3. Proposal

**'Teachers Mews' – mews style housing in traditional design with shallow pitch roofs to maintain similar scale to buildings removed while being better separated from northern boundary.**

**Create the story that these could have been housing for the school staff.**

**Apartment building has strong design features in line with late Victorian gothic-style architecture, tying into main building.**

**Limited views of this block will be available from the main part of the Conservation Area**

The Council supported the concept of conversion and utilisation of existing buildings during pre-application discussions, and in September 2021 officers visited the site with their heritage consultants - Place Services.





Initial scheme slide



While they were also supportive of re-use of buildings/footprints, they did not support the design approach of the scheme, which had a clearly traditional approach. The use of traditional Tudor timber detailing and Victorian style buildings as seen in the immediate locality and the centre of town were to be utilised in a faithful way to the original buildings.

While many new schemes seek to contrast their architecture within conservation areas, we believed our approach to be proportionate, in the knowledge that we would faithfully re-create the proposed features and give the impression of homes that had been there for some time. We are also mindful that many new homes finished with a modern appearance can appear dated within only a couple of years, and that many people moving to or within Saffron Walden wish for modern, well laid out and insulated homes but with the Saffron Walden vernacular that creates the much sought after sense of place.





## 9.0 EVOLUTION OF SCHEME



We also initially proposed removal of the assembly hall to provide a small mews of houses that would have reduced the amount of building footprint in this location and created a new and improved approach into the site.

It was clear at the site visit that the historic advisors liked the appearance of the assembly hall and suggested its retention would demonstrate a willingness on us as the developer to work with them in providing the best development for the site.

As such the retention of the assembly hall was proposed with a shallow two-storey rear extension to provide sufficient head room at first floor level to create four new houses. The first option proposed gables with extensive glass to create a feature on the rear of the building, which Place Services agreed had limited public views.

The Council's formal response supported the extensions but not the gable option:

*However, in our view, the proposed gables would be an unnecessary addition. They do not respond to the strong horizontal and vertical lines of the Art Deco building*

The Council subsequently examined the section drawing of the building and understood the need for the extension, and have since supported the principle of the flat-roofed extension, which supports the horizontal and vertical lines of the existing building.

Mews of houses



Assembly Hall gable option







**1st generation Oak housetype**

On other buildings the modern approach was adopted and applied to the form of houses that we had designed, removing traditional elements and increasing glazing, providing metal embellishments and some brick detailing that were utilised to add interest in a modern fashion, but the metal elements were not supported by the Council as they were not considered traditional or part of the conservation area.

In discussions with the Council we explained that certain materials in The Avenue were not representative of the locality and to create a modern scheme we should not be limited to local materials, but ultimately conceded and such elements were removed, with further simplification of elevations made and new brick detailing introduced.





**1st generation Ash housetype**



The first modern version of the Ash was also considered to be too drastic a change from the existing area.

Other window arrangements were considered not to present a sensible arrangement, which was agreed and improved upon.

While the layout of the scheme was generally supported, Place Services requested that the main parking area to the rear of the school building be moved further south onto the hard-surfaced tennis courts, which were proposed to be retained. It was explained that the tennis courts constituted Protected Open Space and this would result in a policy breach. The consultant, Tim Murphy, stated that this would be necessary to ensure that the setting of the main building is enhanced as much as possible, and that he would proactively support this approach.

**1st generation Maple Building**

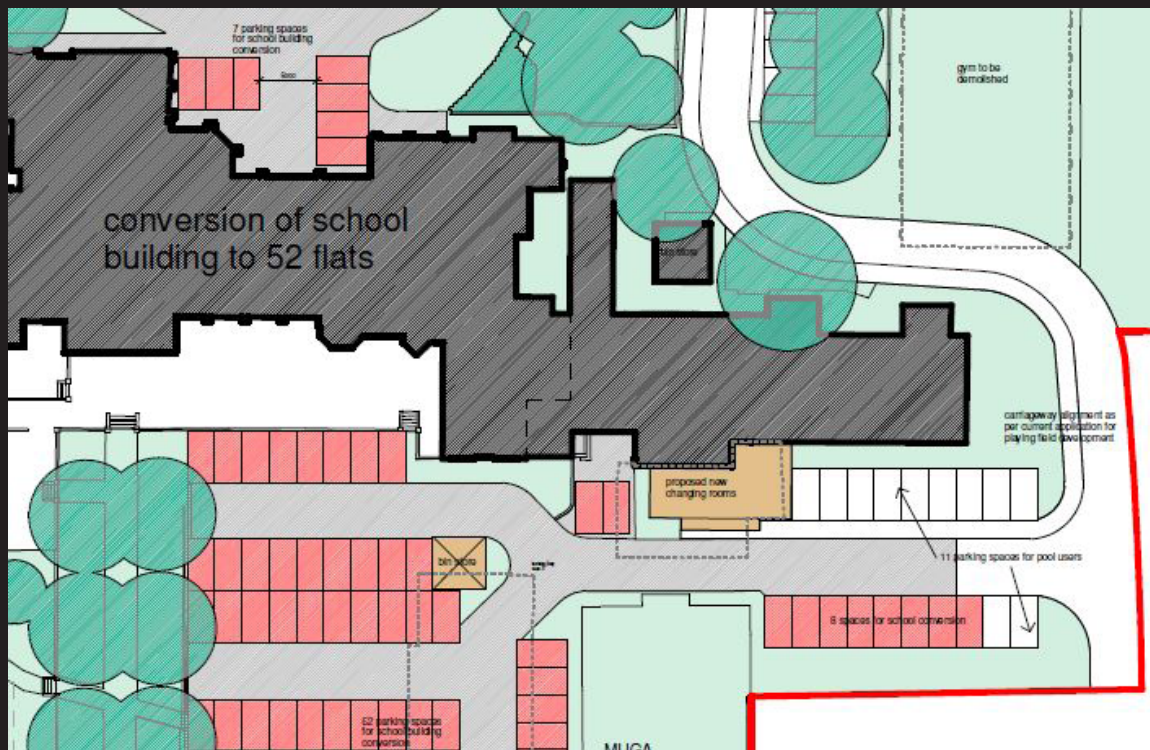




9.0 EVOLUTION OF SCHEME



1st scheme parking to rear main building



Friends School letter

**UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
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Mr Mark Hodgson  
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 Utex House  
 132-134 Hills Road  
 Cambridge  
 CB2 8PA  
 MHodgson@savills.com

Your ref: PP-07980069  
 Our ref: UTT/21/2631/PA  
 Please ask for on 01799 510 462  
 email: ltrevillian@uttlesford.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: Former Friends School, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden.**

I refer to your preliminary enquiry submitted to Uttlesford District Council on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

For your information, officers from both Uttlesford and Essex County Council Place Services have now had the chance to examine your submitted documents and the revised plans, including all indicative drawings which inform the submitted proposal.

We would like to make the following comments in respect to the proposals in their current form.

**Masterplan**

The conversion of the school buildings to residential provides the opportunity to re-think the site as a whole. The existing school buildings have been developed in a piecemeal fashion responding to the school requirements of the moment, without a clear overarching strategy. Several of the existing buildings do not relate sympathetically to the main school building in their size or location. At present, the proposed site plan largely replicates the areas of existing built form on the site, replacing them with new residential dwellings. It is considered that there is an opportunity to reassess the site as a whole and consider how best a new residential development could be integrated with the existing school buildings of interest which are to be retained (the main school building, the 1930s Assembly Hall and the Croydon building).

We would recommend that the adjacent school field forms part of the masterplan and the application considers the overall site as a whole. Spreading a little to the adjacent field may help ease the pressure on the school site in terms of new built form... however regard would need to be had to UTT/19/1744/OP.

**Main school building**

The local authority would need to be satisfied that the school building is surplus to requirements as a school, as this would be the optimum viable use for the building.

The parking was therefore moved southward and the pond area retained in the current scheme.

Positive changes occurred subsequent to the meeting which created the modern approach which was then further refined after receipt of the formal pre-application response.

A further pre-application meeting was held virtually with the Council on the 24 February 2022, where the officer confirmed that much had been achieved in response to the pre-application letter, which resulted in an improved scheme.

Due to time constraints of the officer we have not received a formal pre-application response letter, but the officer has responded to our Statement of Agreement which we composed to facilitate an application submission.

It is our view that the proposal as it now stands makes the optimum use of the site and has responded to queries raised by Council officers and their consultants, and it shows how positive dialogue can shape and enhance a scheme.





# 10.0

## CONCLUSION

The scheme has evolved over many months, being refined with layouts and designs altered to take into account local designations, character and the constraints of the site, which have also been utilised as opportunities to provide a pleasant residential environment that is also accessible to the public to enjoy.

A positive pre-application engagement has been employed with the Council over an extended period to ensure they are satisfied with the proposal before it is formally submitted, with computer generated imagery utilised to demonstrate and give further insight into our vision for the site.

The need for housing, the need to re-invigorate the main building and the site as well as its high sustainability credentials provide a sound case for residential re-development to allow regeneration of this site to happen.