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25<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Your ref: S62A/22/0000002  
(UTT/22/1040/PINS)

By email ([section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk))

Dear Sir/Madam

**Planning Application S62A/22/0000002 (UTT/22/1040/PINS)  
Former Walden/Friends' School, Saffron Walden, Essex**

I am writing with comments for your consultation on the above planning application and trust that serious consideration will be given to these during its determination.

**Conversion**

The applicant does not justify the conversion of the site from educational to residential use. While Chase New Homes could afford to take the gamble to outbid educational providers to acquire the site in the anticipation that permission for residential use might be forthcoming, the fact remains that there was, and is, potential for the site to continue in educational use. The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 paragraph 197a clearly states that the optimum viable use for the conservation of assets of historic interest may not always be the one that is economically the most attractive. The conversion of the school buildings to residential use would not only harm the significance of locally listed buildings but detract from the setting of neighbouring historic buildings within the conservation area.

Additionally, the determination of this application in a piecemeal fashion without knowledge of the plans for the rest of the wider site (notably the playing fields) could scupper a future use that is more compatible with the nature of the site as a whole, including educational provision.

**Proposed demolition and alterations**

The existing two-storey 1960s west wing (Essex Wing) to the main building was designed by Kenneth Bayes of the Design Research Unit and creates an interesting, low-key contrast to the adjoining Victorian exuberance. The demolition of this wing and its replacement with a larger three-storey structure would be especially harmful to the locally listed main building. The existing Essex wing should be retained.

Although somewhat sketchy, the applicant's proposals for the main building would result in excessive subdivision that would harm its historic interest.

**Conclusion**

The former Walden/Friends' School site is not surplus to local educational requirements. The current application would lead to its fragmentation, reduce possibilities for a more compatible future use and harm significance of heritage assets both on the site and neighbouring it, all within the conservation area.

This application should be firmly rejected.

Yours faithfully

Douglas D Kent BSc(Hons), BSc, MSc, MRICS

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