
PLANNING STATEMENT

Conversion of buildings and demolition of buildings to allow redevelopment to provide 96 dwellings, swimming pool and changing facilities, associated recreation facilities, access and landscaping

At Former Friends' School, Saffron Walden

Planning Statement

Former Friends School, Saffron Walden



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1. Introduction

1.1. Savills (UK) Ltd has been instructed by our client, Chase (SW) Ltd. (Chase New Homes), to prepare and submit a full (detailed) planning application for a proposed residential conversion and redevelopment at the former Friends' School in Saffron Walden. The formal description of development is:

‘Conversion of buildings and demolition of buildings to allow redevelopment to provide 96 dwellings, swimming pool and changing facilities, associated recreation facilities, access and landscaping’

1.2. The Plan led approach at Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 necessitates that development proposals are determined in accordance with the Statutory Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As such, the purpose of this Statement is to assess and justify the proposed development within this planning policy context. In doing so, the sections of the report are as follows:

- **Section 2: Site and Surroundings**
Analysis of the application site and surrounding area;
- **Section 3: The Proposed Development**
A description of the proposed development and pre-application discussions;
- **Section 4: Policy Context**
Identification of the relevant local and national policies;
- **Section 5: Planning Appraisal**
An assessment of the proposals within the context of the development plan and other material considerations.
- **Section 6: Conclusions**
Concluding assessment of the proposals.

1.3. This Statement seeks to establish that residential development of this site is achievable, deliverable and suitable, and that high quality development will enhance the site and the surrounding area.

1.4. This Planning Statement is to be read in conjunction with the following assessments, plans and other supporting documents as follows:

Report / Plans	Company
Architectural Plans and Drawings	Chase New Homes
Design and Access Statement	Chase New Homes
Landscape Strategy	The Landscape Partnership
Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment	The Landscape Partnership

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Flood Risk Assessment & Surface Water Drainage Strategy	RSK Environment Ltd
Foul Water Statement	Chase New Homes
Transport Assessment (inclusive of Swept Path Analysis)	Iceni Projects Limited
Residential Travel Plan	Iceni Projects Limited
Air Quality Assessment	RSK Environment Ltd
Ecological Impact Assessment	CSA Environmental
Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment	Savills (UK) Ltd.
Tree Protection Plan	Keen Consultants
Tree Survey and Impact Assessment	Keen Consultants
Heritage Statement	Savills (UK) Ltd.
Toolkit Viability Assessment	Savills (UK) Ltd.
Statement of Community Involvement	Meeting Place Communications (MPC)

2. Site and Surroundings

Location

- 2.1. Saffron Walden is a market town located within the authority area of Uttlesford District Council. It is located approximately 12 miles south of Cambridge and Stansted Airport is located 10 miles south. There are a number of smaller villages and hamlets surrounding the town.
- 2.2. The town is located on the B184 which connects it with Thaxted to the south east, and the A11 to the north.
- 2.3. Saffron Walden is one of two major settlements in the District and as a market town has a town centre and outlying areas which provide a wide range of services to an extensive rural catchment area. The town has both primary and secondary education, an extensive retail facility base including three supermarkets (Waitrose, Tesco and Aldi), public houses, two doctors' surgeries, dentists, post office, pharmacies, places of worship, and a range of employment facilities in the town centre and in established commercial areas of the town.
- 2.4. Saffron Walden is served by Audley End railway station located approximately two miles from the centre of Saffron Walden. The town is strategically located on the West Anglian Main Line. Direct services operate out of Audley End Station to Cambridge (17 minutes), Bishops Stortford (13 minutes) and London Liverpool Street (56 minutes) as well as to other locations.

The Application Site

- 2.5. The site comprises the site of the school buildings of the former private Friends' School, most recently occupied by the Walden School, located off Mount Pleasant Road in the southern side of Saffron Walden. The school has been empty for approximately four years since the school went into administration. The main school building is locally listed.
- 2.6. The entirety of the site is located within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area in Zone 6, as recently expanded by Uttlesford District Council in 2018. Adjoining the site to the east are the former playing fields, gym and pool buildings of the former private Friends' School. Said lands were the subject of a previous planning application (UTT/19/1744/OP) that was refused by Uttlesford District Council in March 2021. To the south of the application site is a recent housing development known as 'The Avenue'. The eastern boundary is the aforementioned former school playing fields of which its eastern boundary is formed by mature trees beyond which are residential properties. The northern boundary also consists of mature trees fronting onto Mount Pleasant Road. Access to the site is currently taken from Mount Pleasant Road.

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- 2.7. The site itself extends to approximately 3.25 hectares and comprises the former buildings associated with the school. There is also a gym building and ancillary car park within the northwest of the site; tennis courts in the southern interior of the site; and a grassed/treed area fronting Mouth Pleasant traversed by a crescent vehicular lane connecting two site accesses from Mount Pleasant. The site is located within the Development Limits of Saffron Walden.

3. The Proposal

Description of Development

- 3.1. The application subject of this Statement is submitted in full form. Details provided demonstrate how the scheme seeks to convert the main school building into 52 no. apartment dwellings; convert the 'Assembly Hall' and Croydon Building into 4 no. houses & 2 no. flats and 4 no. apartment dwellings, respectively; and erect a further 34 no. dwellings consisting of apartments, terraced dwellings and semi-detached dwellings.
- 3.2. Description of the proposed buildings to be demolished, converted and erected is as follows:
- Conversion of main school building to 52 no. apartments;
 - Conversion of 'Croydon' building at northwest corner to 4 no. apartments;
 - Conversion of 'Assembly Hall' immediately east of Croydon building to 4 no. houses and 2 no. flats;
 - Demolition of school building in between 'Croydon' and 'Assembly Hall';
 - Demolition of school building south of 'Croydon' and erect block of 6 no. flats (Maple Building) in its place
 - 'push' internal car park further south;
 - Erect 12 no. new three storey flats (Pine Building) attaching to the western limits of the retained main school building;
 - Demolition of gym located in northeast corner and erect 7 no. (Ash) terraced houses;
 - Demolition of two buildings at southeast corner of site and erect 5 no. (Oak) dwellings; and
 - Demolition of two school buildings at southwest of site demolished and erect 4 no. (Lime) dwellings in their place (two semi-detached).
- 3.3. The new build elements will be provided on similar footprints to existing buildings that are proposed to be demolished. The footprints of proposed buildings to be demolished are shown on the site layout plan. None of these are considered to be of any heritage significance, having been modern extensions to the original building.
- Access to the site would remain as existing on Mount Pleasant Road and the southern access off The Avenue would be adapted to the appropriate standards. Additional access to the proposed 12 no. unit 'Pine' apartment building (central west of site) will be gained from the existing gated access connecting to the abutting 'Water Tower Place', which then connects to Debden Road via The Avenue.
- 3.4. The proposed development will also re-instate the grass tennis court and a Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) internal to the site. The existing pool within the main school building will remain and new changing room extension is proposed.

Landscape

- 3.5. The landscape proposals are shown in detail on drawing number 101E prepared by the Landscape Partnership. There will be a net increase in tree planting as explained in the accompanying Townscape and Landscape Visual Appraisal document and all of the trees subject to the Tree Preservation Order will be retained. Significant new planting is proposed in the southern half of the site to soften up the boundaries of the built development and parking areas.

Access

- 3.6. Vehicular access to the site is gained from Mount Pleasant via three existing access, the most easterly of which is to be upgraded and would service the 'Ash' Terrace dwellings car park, the main apartment car park and pool.
- 3.7. The central Mount Pleasant access is separated by open green space and connected by a crescent lane servicing the 'Croydon', 'Assembly Hall' and new Maple apartment building.
- 3.8. Access to the proposed 12 no. unit 'Pine' apartment building (central west of site) will be gained from the existing gated access connecting to the abutting 'Water Tower Place', which then connects to Debden Road via The Avenue.
- 3.9. A new mews court access from The Avenue will service the 'Lime' and 'Oak' dwellings to the south of the site.
- 3.10. Further details are provided in the Design and Access Statement and Transport Assessment submitted in support of this application.

Pre-application Discussions and Community Engagement

Discussions with Planning and Conservation Officers

- 3.11. The pre-application was submitted on 23 August 2021 followed by a site visit on September 9, 2021. Verbal feedback from the site visit resulted in a redesign circulated to UDC on 27th September. Said revisions culminated in formal pre-application comments being issued on 22nd October.
- 3.12. Highlighted issues included the sensitivity of redevelopment in the context of the locally listed buildings, the conservation area status and tree preservation orders on the site.
- 3.13. Officers noted that any scheme would need to carefully consider the impact on the landscape and the historic environment. Officers considered that the conservation area status does not preclude development. It was also accepted that the site was no longer in use.
- 3.14. Additional comments related to the retention of the Assembly Hall, retention of the interior pond feature, the on-site parking configuration and building design.
- 3.15. Key amendments in response to the pre-application to the masterplan included the retention and extension of the 'Assembly Hall', erection of terraced dwellings where the existing gym will be demolished and the southerly shifting of the main parking area to the rear of the school building to allow for the retention of pond and to create more landscaping around the school.

Community Engagement

- 3.16. As part of community engagement, the applicant carried out a letter drop and map in June 2021 and this is set out in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement. The Applicant also hosted a website and a notice board was erected at the school advertising the proposals. An electronic questionnaire was also available and the responses are included in the SCI. This received 82 responses and these responses are included in the SCI.
- 3.17. The SCI also states that the applicant followed up the consultation with a newsletter which explains the design changes that resulted as a consequence of the consultation.

Design Objectives

- 3.18. Further details concerning the design are provided in the Design and Access Statement. The design seeks to provide a high quality scheme that enhances the existing site and surroundings, and the conservation area. The proposal has been informed by the findings of the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) and the Heritage Assessment (submitted in support of the application), the outcome of pre-application meetings and a desire to produce a high quality environment for new and existing residents. The design aims to:
- Ensure that the proposals respond positively to the site and surrounding area;
 - Provide high quality landscaping which can be enjoyed by existing and future residents;

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- Provide safe pedestrian and vehicular access from Mount Pleasant Road;
- Provide a more 'porous' footprint, i.e., decreasing existing building footprint (of approximately 2,800 sqm) in exchange for additional open space via soft landscaping; and
- Provide community benefits which will not only benefit future occupants but also existing residents.

4. Policy Context

- 4.1. The plan led approach at Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 necessitates that development proposals are determined in accordance with the statutory Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. An important material consideration in the determination of planning applications is that of Government planning policy and guidance, which takes the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) respectively.

The development plan

- 4.2. The site lies within the local authority area of Uttlesford District Council and thus the adopted Local Plan (2005) provides the starting point for the consideration of this application. The Essex Minerals Local Plan 2014 and the Essex Waste Local Plan 2017 also form part of the development plan but contain no policies relevant to the proposals.

Other material considerations

- 4.3. The current local plan dates from 2005. A replacement plan was submitted for examination but subsequently withdrawn in May 2020 in the light of the examining Inspectors' comments on the soundness of the plan. At the same time the Uttlesford District Council resolved to commence a new local plan.
- 4.4. The NPPF sets out that decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies, and their degree of consistency with policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF Para 48). As the New Local Plan is in its infancy, it does not hold any weight.
- 4.5. Saffron Walden Town Council is currently preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The parish of Saffron Walden was designated as the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan Area by Uttlesford District Council on 13 December 2012. A pre-submission version of the Plan was published in and the consultation period ran from Wednesday 22 January until Tuesday 10th March, 2020. Following examination by an independent Examiner, her report has been published which raises significant issues relating to some of the policies in the Plan. A focussed consultation on significant modifications took place between 1 March and 21 March 2022. When the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' (adopted) it will become part of the development plan but at this stage only limited weight can be attached to this Neighbourhood Plan.

Adopted Local Plan (2005)

- 4.6. The end date for the adopted Local Plan was 2011 and thus a number of policies are considered out of date. Furthermore, in the absence of a five year housing land supply, policies relating to supply of housing should also be afforded only limited weight. This matter is discussed further in Chapter 5 of this Statement.

- 4.7. Policy S1 (Development limits for the Main Urban Areas) identifies Saffron Walden as a 'main urban area'. Development within the existing built up areas, if compatible with the character of the settlement are permitted.
- 4.8. Three policy designations exist on parts of the site including: Conservation Area (ENV1); 'Protected Open Space Environmental Value (ENV3); and Protected Open Space for Playing Fields (LC1). All relevant policies are listed below.
- 4.9. Policy LC1 (Loss of Sports Fields and Recreational Facilities) states:
- “Development will not be permitted if it would involve the loss of sports fields or other open space for recreation, including allotments. Exceptions may be permitted if either of the following applies:
- a) Replacement facilities will be provided that better meet local recreational needs;
 - b) The need for the facility no longer exists.”
- 4.10. Policy GEN1 (Access) addresses the issues of access for development and makes it clear that satisfactory road access and road safety are important matters to address together with encouragement given to modes of transport other than the private car.
- 4.11. Policy GEN2 (Design) requires developments to meet the criteria set out within the policy as well as adopted Supplementary Design Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 4.12. Policy GEN3 (Flood Protection) requires development outside of flood risk areas not to increase the risk of flooding through surface water run-off. A Flood Risk Assessment will be required to demonstrate this. The policy states that Sustainable Drainage Systems should also be considered as an appropriate flood mitigation measure.
- 4.13. Policy GEN6 (Infrastructure Provision to Support Development) requires developments to make provision at the appropriate time for community facilities, school capacity, public services, transport provision, drainage and other infrastructure that are made necessary by the proposed development. In localities where the cumulative impact of developments necessitates such provision, developers may be required to contribute to the costs of such provision by the relevant statutory authority.
- 4.14. Policy GEN7 (Nature Conservation) states that development that would have a harmful effect on wildlife or geological features will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs the importance of the feature. Furthermore, where the site includes a protected species or habitats suitable for protected species, a nature conservation survey will be required. Measures to mitigate and/or compensate for the potential impacts of the development, secured by planning obligation or condition, will be required. Furthermore, the enhancement of biodiversity through the creation of appropriate new habitats will be sought.

- 4.15. Policy GEN8 (Vehicle Parking Standards) requires development to provide parking numbers, design and layouts which are appropriate to the location, as set out in the Supplementary Planning Guidance "Vehicle Parking Standards". Appendix 1 of the Local Plan sets out Parking Standards for the District. These were amended in September 2009 by the 'Parking Standards Design and Good Practice' Document.
- 4.16. Policy ENV1 (Design of Development within Conservation Areas) allows for development where it preserves or enhances the conservation area.
- 4.17. Policy ENV2 (Development affecting Listed Buildings) states that development which adversely affects the setting of a listed building will not be permitted.
- 4.18. Policy ENV3 (Open Spaces and Trees) is relevant to this proposal in that it seeks to retain traditional open spaces, or other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens, unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value.
- 4.19. Policy ENV4 (Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance) states that where archaeological remains are affected by proposed development there will be a presumption in favour of their preservation in situ. It further states that the preservation in situ of local important archaeological remains will be sought unless the need for the development outweighs the importance of the archaeology.
- 4.20. Policy ENV 8 (Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation) states that development which may adversely affect landscape elements, including hedgerows and linear tree belts, will only be permitted if certain criteria apply. These include if the need for development outweighs the need to retain these elements and mitigation measures are provided that would compensate for the harm and reinstate the nature conservation value of the locality.
- 4.21. Policy ENV12 (Protection of Water Resources) requires development that would be liable to cause contamination of groundwater particularly in the protection zones shown on the proposals map, or contamination of surface water, will not be permitted unless effective safeguards are provided. Protection of water resources is discussed in the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy.
- 4.22. Policy H1 (Housing Development) proposes the development of 5,052 dwellings for the period 2000 to 2011.
- 4.23. Policy ENV13 (Exposure to Poor Air Quality) addresses the need to control exposure to poor air quality. This policy states that development which would involve users being exposed on an extended long-term basis to poor air quality outdoors near ground level will not be permitted.
- 4.24. Policy H9 (Affordable Housing) states that the Council will seek to negotiate on a site by site basis an element of affordable housing of 40% of the total provision of housing on an appropriate allocated and windfall sites, having regard to the up to date Housing Needs Survey, market and site considerations.

- 4.25. Policy H10 (Housing Mix) states that all developments on sites of 0.1 hectares and above or of 3 or more dwellings will be required to include a significant proportion of market housing comprising small properties.
- 4.26. Policy LC2 (Access to Leisure and Cultural Facilities) requires development proposals to provide inclusive access to all sections of the community, regardless of disability, age or gender.

Emerging Local Plan

- 4.27. The current local plan dates from 2005. A replacement plan was submitted for examination but subsequently withdrawn in May 2020 in the light of the examining Inspectors' comments on the soundness of the plan. At the same time the Uttlesford District Council resolved to commence a new local plan.
- 4.28. The NPPF sets out that decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies, and their degree of consistency with policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF Para 48). As the New Local Plan is in its infancy, it does not hold any weight.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 4.29. The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 4.30. A revision of the National Planning Policy Framework was released on 20 July 2021. This revised Framework replaces the previous National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012, revised in July 2018 and updated in February 2019.
- 4.31. The revised NPPF makes it clear at paragraph 218 that, for the purposes of applications for planning permission (and consequent appeals), it replaces the 2012, 2018 and 2019 versions.
- 4.32. Within Annex 1, the Government sets out its policies on how the NPPF should be implemented. At paragraph 47, it confirms that the NPPF does not alter the statutory basis for decision-making (i.e. s70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act and s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act) but goes on to state in paragraph 218 that the policies within the NPPF are material planning considerations which local authorities should take into account. Moreover, it details the Government's policy on the weight to be afforded to local plan policies in the light of the provisions of the NPPF. At paragraph 219 it states that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF, and the closer the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given.

Achieving sustainable development

4.33. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 describes sustainable development as having three objectives – economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

4.34. Paragraph 11 states that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means: ... where ... 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.

**The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 181) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 68); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.*

Decision Making

- 4.34. Paragraph 38 sets out that ‘decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible’. It adds that ‘local authorities should ‘work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area’.

Housing Delivery and Supply

- 4.35. The 2021 NPPF continues to note (paragraph 60) the Government’s objective of ‘significantly boosting the supply of homes’.
- 4.36. The NPPF (Paragraph 69c) introduces specific support for the development of windfall sites, noting that ‘to support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes’.
- 4.37. The NPPF requires (paragraph 74), that LPAs should “... identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years’ worth of housing ...”

Building a strong, competitive economy

- 4.38. Paragraph 81 explains that the Government places significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity.

Open Space and Recreation

- 4.39. Paragraph 99 of the NPPF states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

Transport

- 4.40. Paragraph 110 of the NPPF states that ‘all developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment’.
- 4.41. Paragraph 111 adds that ‘development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe’.

Making Effective use of land

- 4.42. Paragraph 119 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.
- 4.43. Paragraph 120 adds that policies and decision should:
- c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;
 - d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively.

Design

- 4.44. Paragraph 126 asserts that 'the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve'. 'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'.
- 4.45. Paragraph 130 goes on to add that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- "will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
 - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
 - establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
 - optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*

create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

Healthy Communities

4.46. The NPPF sets out Government’s policies on promoting healthy communities within section 8. Amongst other things it states, in Paragraph 92, that planning decisions should aim to achieve places which:

a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other;

b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion; and

c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs.

Flood Risk

4.47. Paragraph 167, sets out that a site specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) should be submitted in respect of proposals on sites that extend to more than one hectare. The policy seeks to steer new development away from areas at risk of flooding and ensure that developments do not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Natural Environment

4.48. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out in Paragraphs 174 to 178 the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural environment. The NPPF places particular emphasis on the local authority to protect natural assets from development which would have an adverse impact.

Historic Environment

4.49. The historic environment is addressed within Chapter 16 of the NPPF. Paragraph 197 states:

‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.’

5. Planning Appraisal

- 5.1. The following key considerations are identified as being important to the determination of the application. An assessment of these principles against the relevant Development Plan policy and the NPPF is set out below.

Principle of Development and Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 5.2. The starting point for the determination of all planning applications is the adopted development plan, after which it needs to be determined whether there are material considerations that would indicate that a decision other than in accordance with the development plan should be made. The NPPF is a material consideration in determining applications.
- 5.3. As stated at paragraph 8 of the NPPF, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. This means contributing to the following objectives:
- Economic;
 - Social; and
 - Environmental.
- 5.4. The NPPF also states at paragraph 11 that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.5. The adopted Uttlesford Local Plan which expired in 2011 is chronologically out of date and pre-dates the NPPF. In addition, as explained below, we consider policies relating to the supply of housing to also be out-of-date due to the lack of five year housing land supply. The presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11 of the NPPF and sometimes referred to as the ‘tilted balance’) is therefore engaged and for decision-taking this means: ... 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.

**The policies referred to are those in the NPPF relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 181) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 68); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.*

Housing Need and Five Year Housing Land Supply

- 5.6. Policy H1 (Housing Development) of the adopted Local Plan states that the Council will deliver 5,052 dwellings between 2000 and 2011. This equates to approximately 500dpa. As the plan period has now passed, this policy is considered out of date and this figure no longer represents the appropriate housing requirement figure for Uttlesford.
- 5.7. The Housing Trajectory and Five-Year Land Supply 1 April 2021 published on the Uttlesford District Council website sets out the Council's latest position on housing land supply. This document states that the updated housing requirement is 701 dwellings per annum and this results in a five year housing land supply of 3.52 years.
- 5.8. It is clear from the above that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply and so there is a significant shortfall in the delivery of housing within Uttlesford. Furthermore, in the absence of an Emerging Plan, the Council has not identified sufficient sites to meet this need.
- 5.9. This site can be delivered well within the five year housing period as the site is all within the ownership of the applicant, a well-known housebuilder with a track record in delivery. With the full site being applied for in detail to allow for an early start on site, the applicant would start as soon as an implementable planning permission is received. The Government has made clear that small and medium housebuilders such as the applicant are essential to delivering housing quickly.

Location

- 5.10. Saffron Walden is identified as a 'Main Urban Area' in the adopted Local Plan, which reflects the role it plays in servicing the local community.
- 5.11. Saffron Walden is one of two major settlements in the District and as a market town has a town centre and outlying areas which provide a wide range of services to an extensive rural catchment area. The town has both primary and secondary education, an extensive retail facility base including three supermarkets (Waitrose, Tesco and Aldi), public houses, two doctors' surgeries, dentists, post office, pharmacies, places of worship, and a range of employment facilities in the town centre and in established commercial areas of the town.
- 5.12. The site is within the Development Limits and it is clear that the site is in a sustainable location for the proposed development with excellent access to local facilities. Policy S1 of the Local Plan 2005 provides support for development within the existing built up areas, if compatible with the character of the settlement. The site is within the existing built up area. The remainder of this section will consider whether the development is compatible with the character of the settlement.

5.13. There are no development plan policies that require the retention of the previous use of the buildings on the site. Part of the site is 'Protected Open Space for Playing Fields LC1'. Policy LC1 states that development will not be permitted if it would involve the loss of sports fields or other open space for recreation. The proposed development would not result in the loss of sports fields. The existing MUGA is being retained. The existing hard surfaced tennis court within this designation is being repurposed for car parking at the request of the Council's Heritage Officer in order to retain and enhance the existing pond feature as well as better frame the main school building. A grass tennis court is being reinstated west of the Avenue of lime trees (outside the designation), maintaining its recreational / open function whilst paying homage to its historic use. There are no development plan policies that require the retention of the existing gymnasium building on the site. Paragraph 99 of the NPPF does state that existing sports and recreational buildings should not be built on unless specific criteria are met. It is acknowledged that those specific criteria are not met in this instance, but as outlined below the Heritage Statement finds that this building is one of those incongruous modern buildings that detract from the setting of the principal building and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Heritage

5.14. A Heritage Statement has been submitted as part of the application.

5.15. The main building is a locally listed building and qualifies as a non-designated heritage asset. It was put forward for statutory listing as recently as 2018 but assessed by Historic England as not representing buildings of sufficient merit for inclusion on the national list. It is though a locally important building and the proposals include a viable new use of the building and the enhancement of original external features such as the existing entrance points and driveway, as well as the preservation of the Croydon building and Assembly Hall building and removal of the gym and other unsympathetic buildings. The buildings proposed for demolition are ancillary additions to the main school building, of no architectural quality, do not hold any heritage value nor do they positively contribute to the character or appearance of the area. The balance of the built form, resulting from proposals such as the replacement of the large gym building with smaller scale development, supports the enhancement of the architectural interest of the main school building through improving its setting.

5.16. The new proposals would result in the reconfiguration of the internal areas of the building. Many of the proposals for the interior of the main school building would retain the legibility of the form and features; in being reversible in nature and retaining the key interior features which contribute to the non-designated heritage asset such as dado rails and fireplaces, the significance of the building will be preserved. Furthermore, as the building is not a listed building, internal changes could be carried out without the need for any planning consent.

5.17. There are no listed buildings on the development site. The closest listed building is the Debden Road Water Tower (Grade II), which is partially screened by existing buildings off the development site to the north and south. The proposed development, including the closest proposed building to the water tower, are sympathetically designed and use materials consistent with the character of the surrounding area. The proposal is consistent with Policy ENV2.

- 5.18. The accompanying Heritage Statement concludes that the site makes a varied contribution towards the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The swimming pool building and open space at the northern portion of the Site both make a positive contribution, which are both being maintained and utilised within the scheme. The existing gym and connecting building to the pool were found to be detracting to the Locally Listed Former Friends School and character and appearance of the conservation area and are proposed for demolition. Enhancements to the landscaping are proposed within and across the Site. Overall, the Heritage Statement concludes that the proposed works would cause a change to the designated heritage asset of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area, but the proposed scheme exhibits a conservation led approach which works to avoid harm to the Conservation Area.
- 5.19. As such, the proposals seek to provide a development of considered design which references the palette of building materials, colours and built form found within the conservation area. The scheme accords with the policies relating to the historic environment including ENV1 and ENV2 of the adopted plan.

Design

- 5.20. This is considered in detail in the accompanying Design and Access Statement. The detailed element of the planning application has been considered in the context of the Conservation Area and the requirement to conserve and enhance the historic environment. The proposals reflect the Conservation Area Appraisal by keeping the majority of the northern part of the site open in character and removing the existing gym which does not conserve and enhance the Conservation Area. It is considered that the proposals comply with Policy GEN2 and D1 accordingly.
- 5.21. An assessment of the proposal's contribution towards sustainable development is discussed below.
- 5.22. In commenting on the various benefits of the proposal, it should be noted that many relate to more than one dimension of sustainable development.

Townscape and Visual Impact

- 5.23. The site lies within a predominately residential area and is surrounded by built development of varying townscape quality and sensitivity. The Site itself, owing to its former use as a school has a different character to the surrounding housing. The former Friends' School and Mount Pleasant Road lie entirely within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.
- 5.24. The Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted in support of this application assessed the main school buildings and the open space and vegetation at the frontage with Mount Pleasant Road as making an important contribution to the character and setting of the road and the Conservation Area. Similarly, the established vegetation at the Site boundaries is an important component of the wider townscape.

- 5.25. These parts of the school are assessed as being of high townscape quality, value and sensitivity. The remainder of the school site, including the buildings and land to the rear of the main school building and the wider playing fields have less inherent townscape quality (although the Lime avenue to the rear of the school is a highly valuable and sensitive feature) and make a lower contribution to the character of the wider area. Whilst these areas are located within the Conservation Area they are considered less sensitive to a well-conceived residential development which would be closely related to the neighbouring residential areas which border the Site.
- 5.26. The Townscape and Visual Appraisal submitted in support of this application concludes that the proposals would provide an appropriate development that would sympathetically relate to its townscape setting and Conservation Area, providing enhancements to the existing built character and external space, whilst retaining the key characteristic features of the Site, and having limited effects on visual receptors. Accordingly, the proposals will have limited impact on the character of the townscape and views from the residential areas to the west, south or east of the Site. Consequently the proposals comply with Policies GEN2, ENV1 and ENV2 of the adopted plan.

Housing Mix

- 5.27. The proposed development provides a diverse mix of dwelling types (flats, terrace, semi-detached) in a range of sizes (1-4 bedroom units), accommodating the lifestyle needs for all stages of life.

Access and Highways

- 5.28. Primary vehicular and pedestrian access is being provided via Mount Pleasant Road at the north-eastern end of the site. This existing access has suitable visibility splays and can provide a safe access to the development.
- 5.29. Secondary access is provided by a new 6m wide mews court carriageway, connecting to Debden Road via The Avenue south end of the site.
- 5.30. Additional secondary access, serving the Pine Building, utilises the existing gated access located at the west end of the site, connecting to Debden Road via Water Tower Place.
- 5.31. An existing crescent access off Mount Pleasant Road, to the north of the development, will remain unchanged and will serve as an access point for visitor parking at the front of the site as well as parking associated with the Croydon, Maple and Assembly Hall buildings located at the northwest of the site.
- 5.32. The Transport Assessment prepared and submitted in support of this application concludes that the existing highways network can accommodate up to 344 units, which is 256 more units than what is proposed (96 units). Furthermore. The development is compatible with and supports national and local transport policies and would not give rise to any adverse transport impact which cannot be mitigated. It is therefore considered that there is no highway related reason why the development proposal should not be granted planning consent, especially given the significant local betterment.

5.33. In light of the above, the proposals are considered to accord with adopted Policy GEN1 (Access).

Parking

5.34. The proposed development provides parking in accordance with the standards prescribed by the Essex Design Guide Parking Standards (2009) and the Uttlesford Local Residential parking Standard (2013), as demonstrated in the Transport Statement that has been prepared and submitted in support of this application (Policy GEN8).

Air Quality

5.35. The Air Quality Assessment submitted in support of this application concludes that the development is expected to have a negligible effect on local air quality at existing sensitive receptor locations (regarding annual mean NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations). Moreover, no exceedances of the mean NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, daily mean PM₁₀ or hourly mean NO₂ AQSs were predicted at the modelled existing receptor locations with the development in place and therefore, overall effects of the development on local air quality are considered insignificant. Based on the results in Section 5.2, annual mean or short-term NO₂ and PM₁₀ AQS exceedances are not anticipated at the proposed development site and therefore, it is considered that ambient air quality would not significantly affect future site users.

5.36. Based on the results of the assessment, it is judged that with appropriate construction phase mitigation the proposed development complies with relevant national and local planning policies and will not result in a significant adverse impact on air quality. The proposal is in accordance with Policy ENV13.

Flooding and Drainage

5.37. As demonstrated in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment, the site is located in Flood Zone 1 and the site is not considered to be at risk of flooding from fluvial or tidal sources.

5.38. Surface water from the proposed development will be attenuated and discharged directly to the ground via infiltration features. In order to prevent flooding, both on and off the site, a variety of SuDS will be utilised to control surface water flows, including geo-cellular soakaways and infiltration basins. These features will be designed to store the volume of water associated with a 1 in 100 year rainfall event, plus an allowance for climate change.

5.39. Foul water will be connected into the public foul network as per the existing scenario. Records provided by Anglian Water confirm public foul water sewers to be present in Mount Pleasant Road, Debden Road and within the southern boundary of the application site.

- 5.40. The proposed development is thus considered to accord with adopted Policies GEN3 and GEN6 accordingly.

Ecology

- 5.41. As concluded in the submitted ecological report, no designated sites or areas of ancient woodland have been identified within the Site or within the immediate surroundings which would be affected by the proposed scheme.
- 5.42. The Site is dominated by buildings and areas of hardstanding with negligible ecological interest, along with some areas of amenity grassland. Areas of greater ecological interest include the established mature trees, which proposals retain alongside development.
- 5.43. Roosting bats have been confirmed within two buildings on-site, with a mitigation approach set-out in respect of works to demolish or convert these buildings. In addition, opportunities for ecological enhancement will be adopted within the scheme including integrated bird and bat boxes.
- 5.44. Subject to implementation of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, the development proposals are not anticipated to result in any adverse effects in respect of important ecological features. The scheme is considered to accord with relevant nature conservation and local planning policy.
- 5.45. The proposals are thus considered to accord with Policy GEN7.

Trees

Many of the trees on the Site are subject to Tree Preservation Order (TPO) as shown in the accompanying tree report. These trees will all be retained. The proposals will also introduce new landscaping and planting which will result in an improvement in overall tree cover on the site in accordance with policy ENV3 of the adopted plan.

Archaeology

- 5.46. In accordance with Policy ENV4 (Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance), proposals which affect nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, will not be permitted.
- 5.47. The Desk Based Archaeology Assessment states that there are no relevant designated heritage assets such as World Heritage site, Scheduled Monuments or Historic Battlefield sites in the application site or its immediate vicinity
- 5.48. The studies have concluded that there is moderate potential for archaeological remains from the Pre-historic and Roman periods and a low potential for remains from the Saxon to Post Medieval periods. The report concludes that any necessary archaeological mitigation measures can be secured by an appropriately worded condition.

Vacant Building Credit and Viability

5.49. Vacant Building Credit was introduced to incentivise bringing forward brownfield sites for development. Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 23b-026-20190315 of the National Planning Policy Guidance states that:

'National policy provides an incentive for brownfield development on sites containing vacant buildings. Where a vacant building is brought back into any lawful use, or is demolished to be replaced by a new building, the developer should be offered a financial credit equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of relevant vacant buildings when the local planning authority calculates any affordable housing contribution which will be sought. Affordable housing contributions may be required for any increase in floorspace.'

5.50. The principal building is vacant (save for the caretaker's flat), and all the other buildings on the site are vacant. In this case the existing floorspace on the application site is 10,596 sqm and the proposed total floorspace is 10,590 sqm. As there is an ultimate net loss in the amount of floorspace, no affordable housing is required as part of this development. Furthermore, the submitted viability assessment demonstrates that the inclusion of affordable housing would make the development unviable.

Planning Obligations and Draft Heads of Terms

5.51. Any obligations must be:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- directly related to the development; and
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

5.52. If justified in relation to these tests, the planning obligations as set out in Appendix 1 would be sought and agreed between the applicant and District Council:

Asset of Community Value (ACV)

- 5.53. The site is designated as an ACV. Whilst this can be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, it should be noted that the site was entered on the list of ACVs on 16 February 2018 which was after the site had ceased operating as a school. It is considered that this designation should not carry significant weight in the determination of this application.

Statement of Agreement

- 5.54. A Statement of Agreement – attached as Appendix 2 – has been agreed between the applicant and the Council's Principal Planning Officer. The applicant's comments are in black text. The Council Officer's comments are in red text. The agreement of a range of matters, including the agreement that the principle of re-development of the site for residential in this location is acceptable, is welcomed. The applicant continues to contend that the existing main building's internal configuration could be altered without the need for planning permission (point 8) and the concept of a masterplan incorporating the adjoining playing fields cannot be progressed at this time due to the Council's refusal on the principle of development on the protected playing fields (point 24).

Summary

Economic Benefits

- 5.55. With regard to the economic dimension of sustainable development, Paragraph 8 of the NPPF defines this as:

"...to help build a strong, responsive, competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure..."

- 5.56. This proposal will result in a range of positive economic benefits, including an enlarged labour force, increased local expenditure and demand for local services, improved vitality and viability of local services and facilities, increased Council Tax receipts and a New Homes Bonus. This is a grant that can be spent on either revenue or capital, strategic projects or placed in local authority reserves.

- 5.57. To ensure the vitality of town centres, paragraph 86 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should "recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites". The Council's categorisation of Saffron Walden as a 'Main Urban Area' in the adopted Local Plan identifies it as a highly sustainable location for residential development with an excellent range of services and facilities as well as good accessibility to a range of modes of public transport.

Social Benefits

- 5.58. With regard to the social dimension of sustainable development, Paragraph 8 of the NPPF defines this as:
- “...to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being...”*
- 5.59. This proposal will deliver social benefits in the form of market dwellings, ranging in type, size and price point in a sustainable location, with the increased population reinforcing the vitality of the local community.
- 5.60. In the absence of a five year housing land supply and where this shortfall is substantial, significant weight should be afforded to making efficient use of land and the repurposing of an existing building.
- 5.61. This site is within walking distance of the town centre and consequently will reduce reliance on the private car as there is easy access to local facilities.
- 5.62. The demolition of the gymnasium does weigh against the proposal, but the benefits of the scheme and specifically the resulting enhancement to the setting of the local listed building and the character and appearance of the area of its removal are considered to outweigh the loss.
- 5.63. Through planning conditions and the S106 Agreement, the necessary provisions to mitigate its impact on other community facilities and services, including primary and secondary education and health services, will be made to minimise impacts arising from the proposals and that the needs of new residents are met through the necessary and related improvement to local services and facilities.

Environmental Benefits

- 5.64. With regard to the environmental dimension of sustainable development, the NPPF at paragraph 8 defines this as:
- 5.65. *“...to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”*
- 5.66. As highlighted throughout this planning statement, this application will result in a range of positive environmental benefits, including new tree and hedgerow planting, open space and additional landscaping.
- 5.67. The proposed layout and design approach aims to function well and add to the overall environmental quality of the area in the long term, and fully respects and enhances the local character and identity of Saffron Walden.

5.68. The site is located within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area and the proposed development seeks to preserve and enhance this area. This is achieved by retaining an area of open space in the northern part of the site as explained in the accompanying Heritage Statement, removing buildings that detract from the setting of the locally listed building and the Conservation Area and concentrating development on the southern part of the site which is less sensitive to development. It also provides a long-term viable use for the locally listed building.

5.69. The site will also benefit from ecological improvement with two large areas of open space and landscaping across the site. Consequently there will be a net benefit in ecological terms as a result of the development.

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF

5.70. The submission demonstrates that the development accords with the development plan and there are no material considerations that indicate that a decision other than in accordance with the development plan should be reached. There is certainly no clear reason for refusing the development proposed based on heritage grounds (or any of the other policies listed in footnote 7 of the NPPF). Having regards to paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the application should therefore be approved

5.71. If the Secretary of State took a different view and concluded that the proposed development would cause some harm to a heritage asset(s), this harm would still need to be weighed against the public benefits which are summarised above and again below. The conclusion reached would be that the application of policies in the NPPF would not provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed based on heritage grounds (or any of the other policies listed in footnote 7 of the NPPF). In this scenario, and again having regards to paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the application should be approved

5.72. In the event that the Secretary of State concluded that there was no clear reason for refusing the development proposed based on heritage grounds (or any of the other policies listed in footnote 7 of the NPPF), but he did have concerns in relation to another planning consideration, the 'tilted balance' would be engaged and this harm would need to be weighed against the benefits of the scheme. The application should be approved unless those adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, which is not considered to be the case. In this scenario, and again having regards to paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the application should be approved

5.73. The benefits of the development include:

- 96 dwellings in a sustainable location in a District which can't demonstrate a five year housing land supply;
- A viable long-term use for a locally listed building
- A MUGA accessible to residents and the wider community;

Planning Statement

Former Friends School, Saffron Walden



- A swimming pool accessible to residents and the wider community;
- A hall that would be available for bookings by residents and the wider community; and
- Public access to proposed landscaped areas including the existing avenue of lime trees approaching the main school building from the south as well as the retained pond feature.

6. Conclusions and Planning Balance

- 6.1. Planning permission is sought for 96 dwellings and renovated swimming pool and changing rooms, together with recreation facilities, access and landscaping on land at the former Friends School in Saffron Walden.
- 6.2. Uttlesford District Council cannot currently demonstrate a five year supply and is not delivering enough housing to meet the District's needs. Furthermore, the adopted Local Plan was to the period 2011 and for these reasons, the adopted Local Plan cannot be considered up to date. In such instances, planning applications should be considered against paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF.
- 6.3. This Statement has comprehensively assessed the proposals against national and local planning policy. It shows that the site is located in a sustainable location and its development will contribute to the three dimensions of sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. There are no technical reasons that prevent the delivery of the site and its development will make a positive contribution towards meeting housing need in Saffron Walden.
- 6.4. In summary, the key benefits of the proposal and attributes of the site include:
- A viable use for, and sensitive conversion of, this locally listed building;
 - Provision of 96 dwellings in a District where the deficit of housing is significant;
 - A range of housing types and sizes to accommodate households through various stages of life;
 - The site is deliverable in the next 1-5 years – there are no technical reasons why the site cannot come forward;
 - It is located within a sustainable settlement close to services and facilities;
 - The development is compatible with the character of the settlement;
 - The economic benefits associated with new housing;
 - Retention of MUGA, meeting room and pool facility and opening them to the public;
 - and
 - Provision of recreational space, additional landscaping and enhanced biodiversity.

The loss of the gymnasium facility is outweighed by the benefits of the scheme, including the resulting enhancement to the setting of the local listed building and the character and appearance of the area of its removal.

- 6.5. We trust that Officers and the Members of the Council will acknowledge the opportunities this development presents and grant planning permission for the proposal.



Appendix 1: Draft Heads of Terms



**FORMER FRIENDS SCHOOL
MOUNT PLEASANT ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN**

**PROPOSED HEADS OF TERMS FOR S.106 AGREEMENT WITH
UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

SCHEME DETAILS

Full planning application for the conversion of buildings and demolition of buildings to allow redevelopment to provide 96 dwellings, swimming pool and changing facilities, associated recreation facilities, access and landscaping

1. Parties

- Uttlesford District Council (Council)
- Essex County Council (County Council) [if necessary]
- Chase (SW) Limited (Owner)
- Chase Capital Land Acquisitions Limited & Assetbridge Finance Limited (Mortgagees)

2. Travel Plan

- If not conditioned

3. Landscape and Ecology Management Plan

- If not conditioned

4. Community use for swimming pool

5. Provision of MUGA

6. Provision of Community Meeting Room

7. Affordable Housing

- Subject to vacant building credit

8. Financial Contributions

- Subject to viability

In addition, provisions will be included to ensure compliance with regulation 122 of the CIL regulations.

Heads of terms are subject to negotiation.

Instructed Solicitor:

Nicola Gooch
Irwin Mitchell LLP
Belmont House
Station Way
Crawley RH10 1JA
[REDACTED]



Appendix 2: Statement of Agreement

Former Friends School, Saffron Walden

Conversion of existing buildings and replacement of others to provide residential development

1. The site is very sustainably located, only five minutes' walk from the High Street. (Agreed.
2. The site constitutes previously developed land within the urban area. Agreed.
3. The current Local Plan directs the majority of development to Great Dunmow and Saffron Walden, as the most sustainable settlements in the District. Agreed.
4. The Council does not have a five year housing land supply. Agreed.
5. Paragraph 11(d) is engaged and for decision taking the policies most important for determining the application are out-of-date. Agreed.
6. Even if the Council did have a five year housing land supply, the principle of re-development for residential in this location is acceptable. Agreed.
7. The vacant buildings on the site qualify for Vacant Building Credit and if there is a net decrease in floor space as a result of the proposed development, then there would be no affordable housing requirement on the site. This would need to be fully demonstrated and justified within the supporting documentation submitted as part of the application for the Council to be able to assess in full.
8. The existing main building's internal configuration could be altered without the need for planning permission. Potentially not, but this would need to be fully assessed, however, permission may also be required to change the use of the building.
9. The removal of the gym building and replacement with houses of far lesser scale will be a material benefit to the appearance of the conservation area and the Locally Listed building. Any proposals of a lesser scale would be a benefit, however, other matters such as the new buildings appearance and sitting would also need to be addressed. The application would be consulted to Place Services conservation officer to assess the acceptance in this regard.
10. It's agreed that the buildings need significant investment to ensure their long term future. This would need to be demonstrated within the application submission.
11. The modern design approach was requested by the Council's heritage consultee. Noted, but this would be assessed in full during the assessment of the application by the conservation officer at Place Services as they did not take part in the latest pre-application meeting.
12. In pre-application discussions the Council's heritage consultee recommended moving parking southwards onto the hard-surfaced tennis courts into land technically designated as Protected Open Space. This was to better frame the main building. As Above.

13. The Council's Heritage consultee stated he would proactively support this approach during the application. **As per point 11.**
14. The Council agreed with this approach in that it would better frame the main building. **Noted**
15. The Council has no objection in principle to providing parking on this Protected Open Space. **Noted. Although this would need to be checked with both the urban designed and local highway authority during the assessment of the scheme.**
16. The Council has previously permitted development Protected Open Space on the site, as part of the current Local Plan, which is now known as The Avenue. **Agreed.**
17. The principle of re-using the approximate locations of existing buildings on the Protected Open Space component of the site for new development is acceptable, subject to final design considerations. **Generally agreed, but the final assessment would still need to be made taking into all design and place making considerations including the advice from the LPA's urban designer.**
18. The principle of re-using building footprints on the conservation area component of the site is acceptable in principle. **Agreed.**
19. The retention of the assembly hall building is agreed. **Agreed.**
20. The proposal will result in less building footprints than currently exists. **This would need to be demonstrated within the documentation supporting the proposals.**
21. In highways terms there was no objection to the provision of 100 homes on the adjoining playing fields (ref: 19/1744/OP). **Agreed, but every application should be assessed in its own merits and the highway authority will have to make a further assessment of the new scheme.**
22. The application proposes to utilise the same access as the above referenced application which should be acceptable in principle. **As above.**
23. The principle of 96 new homes in this location should be acceptable in highway terms with regard to the general road and pedestrian network, given the previous no objection to 100 homes immediately next door. **As above.**
24. The concept of a masterplan incorporating the adjoining playing fields cannot be progressed at this time due to the Council's refusal on the principle of development on the protected playing fields. **Generally agreed, but this will need further investigations.**
25. The provision of market homes; securing the future of a locally listed building; MUGA and new swimming pool and changing rooms facility with public access; and securing public access to Lime Avenue would all constitute material planning benefits. **Agreed.**

26. The Council's new Local Plan preparation is at a very early stage, and no draft allocations have yet been published. **Agreed**
27. The draft Neighbourhood Plan carries no weight at this time. **Agreed**