
Former Friends' School, Saffron Walden

Heritage Statement



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Former Friends' School, Saffron Walden



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Abbreviations and Conventions used in the text	
c.	circa
CA	Conservation Area
ha	hectares
HA	Heritage Asset
HE	Historic England
HER	Historic Environment Record
km	kilometres
LB	Listed Building
LPA	Local Planning Authority
m	metres
NGR	National Grid Reference
NHLE	National Heritage List for England
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework

Assumptions and Limitations

This report is compiled using primary and secondary information derived from a variety of sources, only some of which have been directly examined. The assumption is made that this data, as well as that derived from other secondary sources, is reasonably accurate.

Compliance

This document has been prepared following the requirements stated within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2021) National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG; (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment, and Standard and guidance for commissioning work on, or providing consultancy advice on, archaeology and the historic environment (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, 2014).

Executive summary

Project background

Savills Heritage and Townscape have been commissioned by the applicant to prepare a Heritage Statement to inform a full planning application for the proposed development at Former Friends' School, Saffron Walden. Following pre-application discussions with Place Services and the LPA, certain development proposals have been revised.

The proposals comprise the refurbishment and conversion of the existing main school on Mount Pleasant Road into 52 flats, converting and refurbishing the Croydon Building to provide four flats, with a new block of 6 flats to its south. Several existing outbuildings will be demolished and replaced with new one, two, three and four bed houses and apartments in a landscaped setting. All new build structures are proposed in the general locations of existing buildings, maintaining the general extent and balance of built form across the Site. The scheme also includes re-instating the grass tennis courts and MUGA, and keeping the significant and protected trees.

Built heritage considerations

The Former Friends' School was constructed to the designs of Edward Burgess in the late nineteenth century as a Quaker day and boarding school. Although not statutorily listed, the former school is included on the local heritage list meaning it meets the criteria to be of local architectural and historic interest. The former school is therefore understood as a non-designated heritage asset. An assessment of the buildings within the Site by Historic England in 2018 deemed that none of the buildings met the statutory criteria for listing in the national context; on the recommendation of Historic England, none of the buildings were listed. The Site is located in the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.

The proposals demonstrate an approach which responds to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset. The proposals aim to convert the internal areas of the existing school building, as well as provide a number of new housing units within the school grounds with structures that are sympathetic in scale, massing, detailing and use of materials and utilising existing building footprints. The proposals will retain the most important openings, doorways and detailing of the existing main building. The proposals also preserve where possible certain buildings within the grounds which are identified as of architectural or historic merit at a local level, such as the Croydon building, and enhance these through re-use and sensitive conversion.

It is considered that the proposals will ensure a viable future for the non-designated heritage asset and wider site while preserving and/or enhancing the elements of the school which contribute to its historic and architectural interest, as well as the contribution made to Zone 6 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area of which it forms part.

Overall, it is considered that the proposals show a conservation led approach and actively work to avoid or minimise any harm to designated heritage assets. The recognised benefits include the change of use to high-quality residential units. This would represent an opportunity to invest in the building and secure its future. This investment would secure the best form for appropriate investment in the building and the current masterplan has taken into account the key elements of the building that contribute to its significance, namely the exterior façade, the earliest phases of development on the site and its role within the wider conservation area.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Savills Heritage and Townscape has been commissioned by the applicant to prepare a Heritage Statement concerning a full planning application for the scheme at the property of Former Friends' School, Saffron Walden (hereafter 'the Site', NGR Ref: 494622, 168610; **Figure 1**).

1.1.2 An initial Heritage Statement (Savills, September 2021) prepared to supplement the pre-application process, has been revised in response to the revision of the proposed development, as a result of the pre-application feedback from the LPA, and Place Services its heritage advisor.

1.2 The Site and its wider context

1.2.1 The Site is located within the county of Essex in the town of Saffron Walden, occupying a fairly central position south of the Mount Pleasant Road. The wider setting is characterised primarily by residential buildings which surround the school building, most prominently so to the south. These have been constructed on a piecemeal basis over a number of years and display large variety, although Victorian and Edwardian housing typologies are common lining Mount Pleasant Road and Debden Road.

1.2.2 The Site comprises the Walden (formerly Friends') School, constructed by 1879. The building is constructed principally from red brick, with a prominent front tower, tall chimney stacks and elaborate window detailing. Walden School is considered by the local authority to be of architectural and historic interest, although not considered of group value. The school occupies a position set back from Mount Pleasant Road, from which it is accessed, contained within a set of large grounds and surrounded by later buildings associated with the school.

1.2.3 The Site is located within the southern section of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area and is identified in the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy as a defining feature within sub-area Zone 6, of six total zones. The Saffron Walden Conservation Area was initially designated in 1968, although its boundaries were later amended in 1991. The

conservation area is the only designated conservation area within Saffron Walden, with its boundaries terminating to the north at the War Memorial and to the south they line they line the Greenways Estate to the north.

1.2.4 The Site is situated in close proximity to two other designated heritage assets, both of which are located outside of the site boundary;

- Water Tower listed at Grade II (NHLE number: 1205709) situated to the west of the main school building and comprises a large water tower constructed to the designs of A.H. Forbes in 1913.
- Mount Pleasant Road are the Grade II listed 9 and 10 Mount Pleasant, comprising a pair of Late Victorian villas constructed in 1890 in a vernacular revival style with an elaborate polygonal turret (NHLE number: 1196227).

1.2.5 **Figure 1** is adapted from the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Strategy document and indicates the position of the Site within the conservation area.

1.3 Aims, objectives, and scope

1.3.1 Statutory provision for the safeguarding of heritage assets has been made at a national and local level. 'Heritage assets' may comprise below and above ground archaeological remains, buildings, structures, monuments, or heritage landscape within or immediately around the site, identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of their heritage interest.

1.3.2 Such assets are identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions and include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing), and non-designated assets. The presence of heritage assets can constitute a planning constraint and may affect the development options on the development site in the subsequent design, planning, and programming of the scheme.

1.3.3 The purpose of this Heritage Statement is to determine, as far as is reasonably possible from existing records, an understanding of the heritage significance of the building to:

- 1) Provide a heritage baseline assessment to understand the historic background and development of the Site and the surrounding area;
- 2) Formulate an assessment of the heritage significance of the sensitive built heritage assets considering their archaeological, historic, architectural and artistic interests, and;
- 3) Formulate an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage assets.

1.3.4 Professional expert opinion has been used to assess built heritage significance, based on historic, archaeological, architectural, or artistic interest, taking into account past alterations which may have compromised significance.

1.3.5 Savills Heritage and Townscape has been involved with the proposals as they have emerged to ensure a conservation led approach to the scheme in relation to the conservation area and setting of the listed buildings. This Heritage Statement now consolidates the built heritage considerations for the scheme and details the resulting impact in regard to relevant legislation and planning policy.

1.3.6 In line with legislation and national policy which directs development with the potential to impact heritage assets, the local policy for Uttlesford District Council will require that development within conservation areas preserves or, where possible, enhances the character or appearance of the area.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Heritage Statement

2.1.1 The Heritage Statement has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG 2021) and to standards specified by Historic England (2017, HE 2019).

2.1.2 A broad range of standard documentary and cartographic sources were examined in relation to the Site to determine the significance of the known designated heritage assets which comprise it. These data sources are referenced in the text and detailed in full in **Section 7**.

2.2 Site visit

2.2.1 To produce this Heritage Statement a site visit was carried out on the 7 May 2021, to review the architect drawings in relation to the identified heritage assets (the listed buildings) and offer recommendations to the design team. A further site visit was undertaken on 9th September 2021 with representatives from the LPA and Places Services (who advise the LPA on matters relating to Heritage in order to review the scheme (see **Appendix 2**). A further site visit was undertaken on 24 January 2022.

2.3 Legislative and heritage planning framework

2.3.1 **Appendix 3** of this report sets out the full legislative and planning framework in relation to the proposals.

2.4 Assessing heritage significance

2.4.1 The NPPF defines significance as “*The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence but also from its setting.*”

2.4.2 Historic England guidance introduced the concept of interests to assess the significance of heritage

assets (Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets, Historic England Advice Note 12, 2019), with reference to the following criteria:

- 1) **Archaeological interest.** Deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity that is worthy of expert investigation.
- 2) **Historic interest.** An interest in past lives and events. It tends to be illustrative or associative. Providing a material record of the nation's past, it can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and it can symbolise wider value such as faith or cultural identity.
- 3) **Architectural and artistic interest.** Interest from the design or general aesthetics of a place. Derived from conscious design or fortuitously through evolution. More specifically, it relates to the science of design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration. Artistic interest is an interest in other human skill, such as sculpture.

2.4.3 National planning policy guidance (NPPG, July 2029) in relation to the historic environment provides a similar interpretation of assessing significance.

2.4.4 These criteria reflect NPPF terminology and previous Historic England guidance (Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance (English Heritage, 2008)), which proposed values to assess heritage significance (Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic, Communal).

2.5 Assessing the contribution of setting

2.5.1 Concerning designated heritage assets, the assessment takes into account the contribution that setting makes to the overall significance of the asset.

2.5.2 Setting is defined in the NPPF as *"the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral"* (NPPF, Annex 2: Glossary).

2.5.3 Guidance produced by Historic England (The setting of heritage assets. Historic Environment Good Practice Advice (GPA) in Planning Note 3, 2017a) has been used to adopt a stepped approach for

settings assessment.

- 2.5.4 In accordance with Historic England guidance (GPA 3, 2017a), this assessment has taken into account the physical surroundings of identified sensitive heritage assets, including topography and intervening development and vegetation.
- 2.5.5 It also considers how the asset is currently experienced and understood through its setting, in particular views to and from the asset and the Site, along with views, and the extent to which setting may have already been compromised.
- 2.5.6 In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the level of detail in this report is proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

3.0 Historic development of the Site and surrounding area

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Understanding the history and context of the relevant heritage assets is important to establishing their setting and the contribution that their setting makes to their significance. Historic England guidance on the setting of heritage assets advises that while this matter is primarily a visual assessment, there are other factors, such as historical associations and relationships that define settings and contribute to significance.

3.2 Historic background

3.2.1 The following section provides a summary of the historical development of the site and its environs, compiled from sources listed in **Section 7**. This report will only reference those heritage assets that are directly relevant to the discussion and with reference to the Historic Environment Record (HER) where appropriate.

3.2.2 Following the Norman Conquest in the eleventh century many rural settlements, particularly those within southern England, became more consolidated. The settlement at Saffron Walden was first comprehensively recorded within the Domesday Survey commissioned by William I during the late eleventh century: it consisted of a total of one hundred and forty-seven households, valued at fifty pounds by 1086.

3.2.3 The settlement at Saffron Walden evolved into a characteristic post conquest settlement, namely a manorial holding under the ownership of Geoffrey de Mandeville. The town would continue to grow and by the mid-twelfth century had an established castle, owned by Geoffrey de Mandeville II. This castle was first recorded in 1140, concurrently when Geoffrey de Mandeville had the market in neighbouring Newport moved to Saffron Walden. The building itself was built to a typical Norman typology, although later augmented, it consisted of a Motte and Bailey formation with a large stone keep. The wider medieval context of the surrounding area was as follows: the castle was surrounded by two parallel roads, Church Street and Castle Street, which are situated east of the present high street. As Saffron Walden grew in size, the town developed to the south, aligning more

closely with the marketplace which had been relocated there during the twelfth century. The current streets still partially line up with the original Medieval market rows.

- 3.2.4 In the early to mid-13th Century a larger town enclosure was laid out and the original outer bailey ditch was infilled. The new town ditches were known as the Battle or Repell ditches and enclosed an area of 20ha (HER 443). A segment of the ditches located 750m northwest of the Site is a Scheduled Monument (Historic England ref: 1002179). Excavations at Abbey Lane in 1972-3 revealed a Medieval boundary marker, ditches, field boundary, fences, palisade, pits and trackways all related to Medieval properties and the town's defensive enclosure (HER 436).
- 3.2.5 Saffron Walden grew substantially during the medieval to post-medieval periods, principally to the south and east, as the town experienced a large amount of economic prosperity as a market centre between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. The present high street hosts large concentrations of timber framed buildings constructed during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries indicative of this urban prosperity.
- 3.2.6 The Chapman and Andre map of Essex shows that by the late 18th century Saffron Walden had grown significantly, propelled by its economic prosperity during the early modern period. The map shows the town as a densely packed one, aligned with the marketplace and church and intersected with a number of roads and lanes which are still retained today, one notable example being the Newport Road (**Figure 2**). The site itself at this time is not outlined on the map in great detail but can be seen as a section of enclosed agricultural space located some way south of the town, with a windmill situated in close proximity to the east.
- 3.2.7 The Tithe Map of 1843 gives one of the first accurate cartographical indications of the development of the site (**Figure 3**). By the mid-twentieth century the site was located some distance south of the main body of Saffron Walden. The location was defined by a number of strip fields orientated north-south which lay to the east of the present-day Newport Road, with the current site occupying plots 981 to 984. The Mount Pleasant and Debden Roads also existed at this time, aligned closely with their present-day positions. The built environment surrounding the site was relatively minimal, with scatterings of housing and some agricultural buildings which lined the roads to the west and east.

- 3.2.8 The Ordnance Survey map of 1870 shows that the site location was as yet relatively undeveloped, remaining as a section of enclosed land defined by strip fields. Minor shifts in the land use are evidenced by the presence of a reservoir directly to the west. As seen on mapping dating to this period, the quarter of Saffron Walden in which the site is located, was subtitled as Mount Pleasant, with a number of small terraces known as the Mount Pleasant cottages situated across the Newport Road to the east. Furthermore, north of these were a number of mid-Victorian villas aligned with the Newport Road. Saffron Walden itself had continued to grow during the nineteenth century, its growth bolstered by the addition of the railway, which can also be seen on contemporary Ordnance Survey mapping (**Figure 4**).
- 3.2.9 The Friends' School was opened in 1879 and can be seen on Ordnance Survey mapping dated to 1890 (**Figure 7**). The building was constructed to the designs of Edward Burgess and was tailored to accommodate 150 pupils, separated by gender within different wings of the building. Although later extended, upon construction the school building contained: a central lecture room, dormitories, playrooms, bathrooms and a dining hall. Late nineteenth century photography shows the historic 'core' of the building to be largely similar as that seen today, with a façade and design indicative of various architectural periods, borrowing elements from Gothic, Elizabethan and Jacobethan architectural styles.
- 3.2.10 Burgess was also responsible for the designs of a number of additions to the building following its construction, and architectural plans, as well as late nineteenth century Ordnance Survey mapping, shows that, with the exception of a proposed bath house, the majority of these changes were enacted. Late nineteenth century additions included: music rooms, closet and storage space as well as miscellaneous extensions to the Girls wing of the building. All of these additions branched off the east and west elevations of the main building.
- 3.2.11 A vast number of changes were progressively enacted throughout the 20th century, with the building having a greatly enhanced 'footprint' as visible on Ordnance Survey mapping dating to 1890. By 1921 the school hosted additional accommodation for both students and teachers, gymnasium, baths, lecture rooms, a laboratory and a sanatorium (**Figure 8**). A number of additional teaching rooms had been added by 1936, as well as several spaces within the school, notably the conversion

of the dining hall into an assembly hall, had been carried out. The Essex Room (a new classroom block) and a new sanatorium had been added to the school by 1964; as well a number of further classrooms being added to the south by the end 1977 (**Figure 10**). The formative years of the twenty first century saw the school downsizing significantly, with large numbers of wings and rooms demolished. Those sections taken down are as follows: The single storey timber classrooms by the avenue of lime trees, the Laurels, Octopus Gallery, Gibson House, the Early Years building, the Scout Hut, the groundsman's timber house. These buildings were later replaced with a number of residential ones, located in the present day along the southwestern perimeter of the site location.

4.0 Significance of identified heritage assets

4.1 Scoping

4.1.1 Following **Step 1** of the methodology recommended by the Historic England guidance (GPA 3), some designated heritage assets within the wider environs of the site have been scoped out of this assessment as they would not be affected by the proposed development, in terms of material changes or changes to their setting and significance. This has been based on the distance of the asset from the site; the asset's location, scale and orientation, and the nature, extent and scale of intervening built form, vegetation and topography between asset and the site.

4.1.2 The initial assessment utilised modern and historic mapping, aerial photography, Google Earth, the National Heritage List for England, and the Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) to identify which designated above ground heritage assets identified within the study area which may include the proposed development area as part of their setting.

4.1.3 Following the site walkover, several designated heritage assets have been scoped out of this report due to the existing vegetation and built form which surrounds the site, including residential areas. The Site is screened from these designated assets, which are located within its wider surrounds. Also, no important functional connections have been identified between the site and such assets. As such, it is considered that the land which constitutes the site does not form part of the setting of these assets and therefore does not contribute to their heritage significance.

4.1.4 As a result of this sifting process, there are two statutory listed buildings and one conservation area (designated heritage assets) whose significance could potentially be impacted by the development.

4.2 Saffron Walden Conservation Area

4.2.1 The Saffron Walden Conservation Area was initially designated in 1968 and then later extended in 1991 and in 2019. Being the only conservation area in Saffron Walden, the area of land covered by its boundaries is extensive in size. The conservation area boundaries terminate at the northern perimeter of the town, encompassing at their northernmost point the war memorial. The boundaries

then envelope the historic core of the town as they head south, branching to the east to include the large cemetery along Radwinter Road. At their southernmost point they terminate below the grounds of Walden (Former Friends' School).

4.2.2 The historic interest of Saffron Walden is principally attributed to its role as an important Medieval market town, specifically in relation to its prosperity between the years 1400-1700 when the town became an important focal point for local trade, beginning as early as the fourteenth century when the first dye works were established and the market stalls became permanent buildings. This kind of urban transformation was typically indicative of larger Medieval port towns such as Southampton. The historic built environment of the town evidences its prosperity during these centuries and is considered to be of important historic value, particularly along the high street where the largest concentrations of late medieval and early modern buildings can be found. It is from its prosperity as a trading centre to which the town derives its name 'Saffron [Walden]' in reference to the production of Saffron Crocus as part of the dye manufacturing process. To a lesser extent the town is considered to be of historic interest for its post-eighteenth century civic development which saw large numbers of grander buildings constructed.

4.2.3 Owing to the size and complexity of the conservation area, it is subdivided into a series of character areas or 'zones' that generally share common characteristics to assist in defining those features that contribute to the area's special interest. The factors that contribute to the overall architectural interest of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area are highly mixed, and the town hosts buildings with origins dating to the eleventh century considered of "high quality" as outlined within the conservation area appraisal. Within the historic Medieval core of the town, there are a large number of timber frame buildings, a number of which are statutorily listed at Grade I and Grade II*, example being Nos. 25 and 27 Church Street as well as 17, 19 and 21 King Street. Similarly the northernmost section of the conservation area is considered to be of architectural and historic significance for retaining the street patterns and buildings that have defined it since the medieval period, the principal examples being the Church, Castle and Castle Street.

4.2.4 The west of the conservation area, identified as Zone 3, derives its special interest from the buildings associated with the sixteenth century development of the town, with the Grade II listed Myddylton

House and Grade II listed Nos. 31 and 33 Bridge Street evidencing this well with their timber frame, tile peg roofs and partially surviving 'Wealden' typology design. To the east the conservation area is defined by 'the common' and a section of land south of east street, collectively constituting 'Zone 4'. This area is considered of historic interest for two reasons. The former is attributed to its long-term association with the turf maze, a seventeenth century, possibly earlier, maze complex. While the rest of the conservation area hosts a set of Grade II listed nineteenth century institutional and residential buildings. Zone 5 is also indicative of nineteenth century development, although of a more institutional nature, the most notable examples being the Grade II listed Old Saffron Walden Hospital and Old Chapel.

4.2.5 Identification of an overall predominant building material and scale within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area is difficult as the respective zones are all indicative of the town's chronological development since the medieval period. However, red brick is one of the defining building materials of post eighteenth century residential and institutional buildings, whereas timber frame structures are indicative of the medieval town.

4.2.6 The site is situated within Zone 6 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area, and this zone represents one of the last phases of the chronological development of Saffron Walden. Seen in late nineteenth century Ordnance Survey mapping, this section of the town remained open pasture until approximately 1880. Its boundaries encompass a select number of houses fronting Mount Pleasant Road to the north, a couple of which (Nos. 9-10) are statutorily listed at Grade II. Then aligning with Debden Road to the south, the boundaries then encompass the grounds of the Former Friends' School. The special interest of the conservation area zone is foremost attributed to the school which forms a focal point within it. However, other factors considered to mark the zone out to be of historic interest include its association with the industrial development of the town, with the land contained within the conservation area boundaries once hosting a nineteenth century cement works, sawmill, corn mill as well as an iron and brass foundry.

4.3 The Water Tower (Grade II Listed)

4.3.1 Situated outside the Site boundary, the Water Tower constitutes an imposing and decorated red brick structure, constructed to the designs of A.H. Forbes in 1913. The Water Tower was assigned

Grade II listing status in 1994 and is one of the two statutory listings within Zone 6 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area. Listing description below:

“Water tower. 1913. Architect AH Forbes, Borough Surveyor. Red brick. Approx 8m square, 28m high. Stepped plinth with round arched doorway and foundation plaque on W side. Upper tank stage has clasping pilasters and supporting cornice with 3 blind depressed arched recesses with splayed sills on each face. Motif continued down to plinth through 3 stages, the recesses becoming progressively longer but shallower. The tower was constructed by J Custerson, local builder and a photograph of it under construction exists.”

4.3.2 The architectural interest of the building is principally attributed to its elaborate design, with clasping pilasters, multi-layered recessed arches and splayed sills adorning the main elevations. Although not considered to be of group value with the school building, the tower does form part of important group view with the school as outlined within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal.

4.3.3 The historic interest of the Water Tower is owed to its unique context as a standalone feature within Zone 6 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area, illustrative of the early twentieth century development of the town, as well deriving a level of local historic interest having been constructed to the designs of local architect A. H. Forbes. In addition, the well-preserved nature of the building fabric lends the Water Tower a level of historic interest.

4.4 Nos. 9 and 10 Mount Pleasant (Grade II Listed)

4.4.1 Nos. 9 and 10 Mount Pleasant constitute a pair of semi-detached late Victorian villas, constructed to the designs of local architect William Bell and Sons in 1890. The buildings were constructed in an asymmetrical style, with a gothic-medieval appearance, examples being the gable design, ground floor mullion windows, octagonal turret and projecting canted bay windows. Nos. 9 and 10 were assigned Grade II listing status in 1994. Listing description below:

“Pair of semi-detached villas. c1890. William Bell and Sons of Saffron Walden and Cambridge, builder. Red brick, front and sides partly stone faced in dressed random rubble with ashlar dressings, Westmorland slate hanging with some fishscale panels and courses, Welsh slate roof, terracotta cresting, copper spirelet. Axial stack with recessed panels to ends, right gable stack, left end stack with decorative terracotta shafts. Vernacular revival. 2 storeys, attic and basement. Asymmetrical composition; principal range with 2-bay cross-wing to left, turret to right, recessed wing to right with entrance and porch in angle, glazed timber porch to left side wall; ramp down to C20 garage to right. Front has scattered fenestration, iron casements in stone mullions with iron casements to principal ground floor windows, otherwise mainly small paned timber casements; cross-wing has oriel to ground floor, pair of oriels to first floor under jetty with plaster coving with swags over windows, decorative barge-boards, finials. Polygonal turret has band of windows at attic level, wind-vane. Single gabled dormer to main roof.”

4.4.2 The architectural interest of the buildings is attributed to the craftsmanship of their design, with a unique asymmetrical composition employing an axial stack, polygonal turret decorative terracotta shafts. Although they are of a somewhat unique design within the local context, Nos. 9 and 10 can also be considered nationally important examples of Late Victorian architecture which frequently employed elaborate gothic-medieval design styles.

4.4.3 Their historic interest of Nos. 9 and 10 related to their typology as late Victorian suburban houses and the subsequent evidential value they hold in relation to the development of the area during this time. Although not considered to be of group value with the school building, the terraces do form part of important group view with the school as outlined within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal.

4.5 Former Friends' School

4.5.1 The Former Friends' School is identified as a locally listed building and a contributor to the significance of Zone 6 of the Conservation Area. It is therefore considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.

4.5.2 Founded as a Quaker day and boarding school, previously relocated from Croydon, the Friends' School was established in Saffron Walden by 1879 as outlined the building can be seen on Ordnance Survey mapping dated to 1880. The school at Saffron Walden was constructed to the designs of Edward Burgess and was tailored to accommodate 150 pupils, separated by gender within different wings of the building. Although not statutorily listed, the site is included on the local

heritage list and meets the criteria to be of local architectural and historic interest. As such, the historic context in which it was built, as a Quaker School funded by the Friends' and a late nineteenth century addition to Saffron Walden, can be attributed to these reasons.

4.5.3 The architectural interest of the Former Friends' School is foremost attributable to the craftsmanship of the design, asymmetrical layout and elaborate features which furthermore mark it out as a unique building typology within the local context at Saffron Walden. The large central tower and doorway is decorated with design features characteristic of important sixteenth and early seventeenth century buildings, with a castellated and buttressed turret, lined beneath with multi-foil Tudor-style windows and hoodmoulds. The central tower above this also has a castellated parapet, decorated beneath with Romanesque windows. The principal elevations flanking these towers also have a similar appearance, with buttresses and multi-windows as well as seventeenth century style gables (**Figures 10, 11 and 12**).

4.5.4 In addition, the projecting gabled wing fronting the north elevation still retains the large mullion window that it was originally fitted with. Overall, despite a number of later additions and alterations, the principal architectural features that defined the Former Friends' School when it was constructed in the late nineteenth century are still retained and are indicative of late Victorian architectural styles that integrated elements from previous periods. This type of building was characteristic of those designed by Edward Burgess who was responsible for the design of a number of other school buildings during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, other notable examples of his work being Hazel Primary School and the Wyggeston Girls School, there was an original grander design by Burgess for the school however this was abandoned due to cost.

4.5.5 As mentioned, although the building was later extended and reconfigured, late nineteenth century photography shows the historic 'core' of the building to be largely similar as that seen today, with a façade and design indicative of various architectural periods, utilising elements from Gothic, Elizabethan and Jacobethan architectural styles. As such the school building can be considered of historic interest, with the main façade features relatively well preserved, with a limited legibility of the original internal layout, such as the dining hall, despite the many later changes. The historic interest of the Former Friends' School can furthermore be attributed to its long-term cultural

association with the nineteenth century civic-institutional development of Saffron Walden, and a feature that defines Zone 6 of the conservation area today.

Summary

4.5.6 It is evident that the form of the original school building by Burgess can still be appreciated and contributes to the local interest of the conservation area, however the numerous and considerable additions of the later 19th and 20th centuries have changed the setting and context of the original building considerably and are considered to have eroded the architectural interest of the building, and to not make a material contribution to the historic and architectural interest of the conservation area.

4.6 Previous listing assessment

4.6.1 The Former Friends School buildings were subject to an application requesting that Historic England assess the disused Walden School, formerly known as Friends' School, in Saffron Walden for statutory listing (Historic England case number 1452121). The Historic England assessment report determined the eligibility for listing of nine structures at the Walden School:

- Main Building at Walden School (formerly Friends' School)
- Assembly Hall and Music School at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School
- Croydon House
- Crosfield Building at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School
- Leicester Building at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School
- Croydon Gate at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School
- Chemistry and Physics Laboratories at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School
- Biology Laboratory at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School Listing
- Craft, design and technology building at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School

4.6.2 It was concluded by the report that none of the assessed buildings were eligible for statutory listing and inclusion of the National Heritage Listed for England. The relevant conclusions from the report are reproduced at Appendix 2. These conclusions inform an understanding of each of the buildings

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and any architectural and/or historic interest (significance) that the buildings possess or lack.

4.6.3 In summary the Former Friends School, Saffron Walden is a notable building of considerable local interest but 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 listing in a national context.

5.0 Assessment of impact

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The management and mitigation of change to the heritage resource resulting from development are based on the recognition within Government planning objectives that “...*heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource*...”. Impacts to the historic environment and its associated heritage assets arise where changes are made to their physical environment by means of the loss and/or degradation of their physical fabric or setting, which in turn leads to a reduction in the significance of the historic environment record and its associated heritage assets.

5.1.2 The following section outlines the proposals and whether these would impact the historic, architectural or evidential interest of the listed building (outlined in **Section 5**). Change, including development, can sustain, enhance or better reveal the significance of an asset as well as detract from it or leave it unaltered. The design of a development affecting the setting of a heritage asset may play an important part in determining its impact. The contribution of the setting to the historic significance of an asset can be sustained or enhanced if new buildings are carefully designed to respect their setting by their scale, proportion, height, massing, alignment, and use of materials.

5.1.3 The ethos of heritage policy and guidance in a planning context is not to preserve in aspic, but to manage change in the historic environment. Heritage policy in both its national and local contexts are detailed in **Appendix 3**.

5.2 Outline of the proposals relevant to the assessment

5.2.1 The current proposals are detailed in the drawings and associated documents submitted as part of the planning application. These drawings have been developed with input from the Savills Heritage and Townscape team in order to produce a full annotated description of the proposed changes relevant to the heritage assets. The proposals include:

- the conversion of the main school building to provide 52 new apartments comprising internal alterations;

- the conversion and refurbishment of the existing Croydon building, including partial demolition;
- the conversion and refurbishment of the Assembly Hall building
- the demolition or partial demolition of outbuildings considered to be of no architectural or historic merit and the provision of new homes within the grounds of the school in their place, involving:
 - the construction of a three-storey apartment complex of twelve flats (Pine building) adjacent to the south-west of the main school building based upon an existing building footprint;
 - the construction of six 1-bed block of flats (Maple building) south of the Croydon building in the approximate location of an existing building;
 - the construction of nine new mews houses (Oak and Lime houses) to the southern perimeter of the Site based upon existing buildings' locations;
 - the construction of seven new houses (Ash houses) to the east of Site based upon the location of the existing Gym building which is to be demolished;
- sections of the school grounds are to be re-landscaped;
- existing entrances and driveway to be retained and upgraded;
- the refurbishment of the existing swimming pool facilities; and
- provision of new changing rooms for the swimming pool

5.2.2 The proposals would provide 96 new homes. The below section should be read in conjunction with the application submission drawing pack (in particular the Existing / Proposed plans and elevations) for the full planning application.

5.3 Impacts

Former Friends School

5.3.1 It is important to note the Former Friends School building is not a statutory designated heritage asset and is only qualified as a non-designated heritage asset. It is also important to note that when assessing proposals for development to heritage assets, change to the fabric, form or appearance of a heritage asset does not automatically equate to harm to the significance of the heritage asset. The elements affected must be assessed in terms of their material contribution to the significance of the heritage asset, and then assessed in terms of impact.

- 5.3.2 The proposals will retain all important openings, doorways, exposed beams within the Former Friends School building, thereby further preserving the contribution it makes to the wider conservation area. Moreover, the principal elevations, which are considered to be of local historic and architectural interest, will be preserved and remain appraisable from the streetscape of the conservation area. Furthermore, in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, many of the changes implemented, including the large scale refurbishment and subsequent preservation of the existing building, demonstrate an enhancement and positive change to the conservation area, with the removal of a number of incongruous modern outbuildings (for example the gym building and the blocks by the western access on Mount Pleasant Road).
- 5.3.3 In regard to the NPPF, it is considered that the proposed scheme exhibits a conservation led approach and actively works to avoid harm to non-designated heritage asset and its setting through the enhancement of certain original external features such as the existing entrance points and driveway, as well as the preservation of the Croydon building and removal of gym and other unsympathetic buildings. A sensitively designed landscaping scheme would positively contribute to the appearance and character of the site and thereby enhance the setting of, and the ability to appreciate, the non-designated main building.
- 5.3.4 Furthermore, the proposed scheme will provide a sustainable future for the Former Friends School building, particularly since as the school was not able to retain its use as an educational-institutional building.
- 5.3.5 In relation to Policy GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan, the new built form references the traditional form within the Site but also avoids being a pastiche of the historic built form within the Site; the proposed development will adopt a sympathetic colour and material palette to successfully complement the existing building, most notably through the use of red brick and façade design. At the same time, some architectural detailing and character for the new buildings to the north-west of the Site make reference to the modern built form outside the Site, including those fronting Debden Road and along The Avenue.
- 5.3.6 In addition, the design of the apartment block proposed to replace the existing classroom wing,

while situated directly adjacent to the school itself, complements the design of the original main building, evidenced principally through the adoption of a highly similar material palette and being sensitive in scale whilst also echoing the existing and proposed built form to the west and north-west of the main school building (both within, and immediately beyond, the Site).

5.4 Consultation response

5.4.1 Following the September pre-app meeting officers from both Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council Place Services commented (ref: UTT/21/2631/PA) on the submitted documents (ref: PP-07980069) and the revised plans, including all indicative drawings. Comments are set out below (in italics), followed by an assessment of the impact of the subsequently revised proposals:

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).

5.4.2 The revised scheme has been drawn up in response to the above comments and the Historic England guidance. The existing school buildings of historic and architectural interest are to be retained and converted to residential and any new built form is considered to be of a scale which does not put pressure on the main building; the proposed built form will echo the existing scale of built form, and, to the east, reduce it.

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. Residential conversion would cause harm to the plan form and understanding of the building by dividing it in separate units. If the principle of conversion is established, more detailed information will be required in order to understand the impact of the proposed changes on the building. A phasing plan, identifying original walls and later insertions, would be helpful. A demolition plan would assist in understanding the extent of proposed alterations to the interior of the building. When more information is provided, a site visit can be undertaken to consider the specific interventions proposed.

- 5.4.3 Viability assessments relating to the future use of the main school building have been undertaken and the results are provided in the accompanying documents submitted with the application. In seeking to retain the use of the building in educational use only, may result in the non-designated heritage asset remaining vacant rather than seeking an alternative viable use incorporating a design and vision which recognises the significance of the building. Drawings submitted with the application show the extent of proposed alterations to the interior of the main school 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 significance of the non-designated heritage asset such as dado rails and fireplaces, the significance of the building will be preserved. The location and type of proposals (demolition, layout etc) are indicated in the submitted plans for the main school building, which are deemed proportionate to the significance of this un-listed building.
- 5.4.4 As a non-designated heritage asset, paragraph 203 of the NPPF is relevant in assessing any proposed development application. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF requires that a balanced judgement is used regarding the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. Proposals which include change to a heritage asset should not be determined as automatically equating to harm to their significance. The contribution of the elements being altered to the significance of the heritage asset needs to be understood. The primary element of significance of the main school building is its exterior appearance and its association with its architect, Burgess. As noted by Historic England, the imposing centre piece of the tower and dining hall are not sustained across the building, with the numerous additions and later alterations compromising the integrity of the original school building. The original form of the school has been subsumed and there is no particular quality to the interior fittings of school planning. The interior layout of the former school building is therefore of very limited significance and does not reflect that as originally proposed in the late 19th century.
- 5.4.5 The submitted plans illustrate the limited extent of internal changes. These changes have been fully considered against the existing internal layout which itself has experienced internal alteration and partition over its lifetime. It should be noted that in order to re-use this building in a viable way to meet modern requirements, a degree of alteration to the internal form would be required; should

any harm be considered to result by way of the minor changes to the internal layout and plan form, this is outweighed by the contribution that the proposed alterations have the building as a whole by providing a long term viable use for the building and ensuring its survival. Furthermore, the internal alterations to the main building would result in change to a non-designated heritage asset. Since the building is not a designated heritage asset it is therefore not covered by statutory protection. The interiors of the buildings make no contribution to the Saffron Walden Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset) and as such would not impact the character or appearance of the conservation area.

New three-storey building

This block is proposed as a replacement for a modern two-storey building abutting the main school to the west. The existing block is of low architectural quality and there is no objection to its removal. It's positioning abutting the main school building means that it has an impact on the appreciation of the architectural quality of the main building, therefore replicating built form on this sensitive location would not be ideal.

The proposed replacement block of flats would be three storeys, increasing its impact on the main building. As discussed on site, the design has been modified to reflect a more contemporary style rather than replicating details from the main building. The massing is largely unchanged, and the fenestration altered to reflect contemporary detailing. It is considered that the proposed fenestration appears rather piecemeal and there is opportunity for further refinement of the designs for this block. The overall design would need to be improved in order to overcome the harm to setting caused by a building in this sensitive location.

5.4.6 The revised design for the replacement block has responded to the comments above, and the redesign allows for the history of the main building to be read as reflected in the difference between the contemporary style and the Victorian style of the main school building. The existing building is of low architectural quality and is a negative element within the Site adjacent to the main building. It is this low architectural quality which adversely impacts the significance of the non-designated heritage asset, not the simple existence of the built form. The design of the proposed building responds to the quality and interest of the existing exterior of the main building. The proposed replacement building would preserve the significance of the main building and the conservation area.

Assembly Hall

The proposal to retain the 1930s Assembly Hall and convert it into four residential units is welcomed. The front (east) elevation is the more significant and would be retained largely as existing. The rear elevation is of lesser interest and changes to this elevation to support improved accommodation are reasonable. 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 and would provide little benefit while increasing the cost of conversion.

- 5.4.7 The proposed design of the 1930s Assembly Hall, as noted in the pre-app response, respects the primacy of the east (main) elevation, which possesses greater interest than the west elevation. The proposed extension at first floor level to the west elevation is required to enable the viable use of the internal space; the design of this element allows the architectural interest of the building to remain legible, the proposed addition utilising suitable materials and scale to ensure it does not jar with the existing building. The previously proposed gables have been removed and the proposed roof form now follows the horizontal emphasis of the existing building.

Croydon building

There is no in principle objection to the conversion of this building to flats, but at the site visit it was discussed that the proposed internal arrangements could be improved to retain more of the plan form of the non-designated heritage asset and to demonstrate that a sympathetic change of use can be achieved.

- 5.4.8 It is important to bear in mind that the Croydon building (Croydon House) is not itself identified on the local heritage list. It is not a listed building. It is not identified in the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal as making an important architectural or historic contribution to the Conservation Area, nor of being a building which has experienced little alteration. The pre-app response outlined above indicates the LPA consider it to be a non-designated heritage asset. When assessed in 2018 by Historic England, it was determined that *'large-scale extensions and alterations have significantly compromised its architectural integrity as a suburban house'* and that *'the building's original plan form is no longer readable, while its current layout does not exhibit any important development in schools' planning.'* As such, the extent to which the interior layout of the building contributes to any architectural or historic interest possessed by the building is questionable.
- 5.4.9 It should be noted that in order to re-use this building in a viable way to meet modern requirements, a degree of alteration to the internal form and fabric would be required.

- 5.4.10 The proposed works to the Croydon building include partial demolition (that is, demolition of the modern additions which are legibly negative elements added to the earlier building), and conversion which would require internal alteration. This level of proposed internal alteration is limited, primarily involving the removal of internal subdivision which created bathrooms, with the majority of the earlier division and form being retained. The minor loss of fabric to create interior doorways has been reduced as far as possible whilst ensuring a viable and useable space; retaining nibs to the doorways which illustrate the location of the existing layout allows the ability to understand the internal form and reversibility of that form.
- 5.4.11 Paragraph 203 of the NPPF requires that a balanced judgement is used regarding the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of a non-designated heritage asset; should any harm be considered to result by way of the minor loss of internal fabric, this is outweighed by the minor contribution this fabric provides to the low significance of this non-designated heritage asset.
- 5.4.12 The revised plans show the extent of proposed alterations to the interior of the Croydon building. The Croydon building's contribution to the conservation area as a non-designated heritage asset will be preserved.

Flats by Croydon building

The design of these flats appears to be referencing the recently constructed new houses facing onto Debden Road with their rhythm of pitched gable ends facing the street. There would be a preference for the proposed Juliet balconies to face inwards into the site rather than outwards towards the road as these are not traditional forms within the Conservation Area and would fail to preserve its character.

For the new flats, glass balustrades and grey presumably aluminium cladding are questionable materials. Brick and presumably reconstituted stone used in a contemporary way are supported, but glass and grey cladding detract from this quality 'traditional' material palette. Contemporary metal railings could be a more appropriate solution for what is a 'traditional' material palette used in a contemporary way.

Windows in gable end of east and west elevations look small and out of proportion with the large gable end, larger windows could alleviate this.

- 5.4.13 The redesign of these proposed flats has responded to the comments above and it is considered that the design is sensitive and contextual to the conservation area, while allowing the evaluation of the site to be read. The proposed buildings echo those existing to the south of the site; the

balconies are less prominent than those to the modern development immediately south which are a feature in this part of the conservation area.

Ash houses

Several options have been presented for the 'Ash' type of house on the site of former gym. There is a preference for design 'D', which is considered the most successful in its handling of the fenestration and facades. Crown roofs are a novel roof form in the Conservation Area and are not considered to preserve its character. The crown roofs on these houses would be quite visible because of their positioning end-on to Mount Pleasant Road. It is suggested that the applicant explore reducing the depth of the footprint of these houses to allow a traditional pitched roof form, while creating a bedroom within the attic space to compensate for the smaller footprint.

5.4.14 It is judged the proposed design has responded to the above comments and the redesigned houses are sensitive and contextual to the conservation area. The size and scale of this terrace is significantly more sympathetic than the existing gym building which has a bulky and dominating scale. The Ash houses will have pitched roofs and their height will be no greater than the built form to the south (part of the main former school building) in order to avoid dominating this end of the non-designated heritage asset. In replacing the existing gym building with smaller, more sensitively scaled, built form, would improve the setting of the main school building and this improved balance of built form would help focus views on the primary and most architecturally interesting elevation of the main school building.

Oak and Lime houses

These houses would replace the modern nursery school block at the southern end of the site. While the existing buildings are not of great architectural quality, their recent date of construction means that demolition would be wasteful of resources and it is unfortunate that the existing buildings are not able to be reused as part of the new scheme. The proposed new houses utilise a contemporary design language, referencing the commended new-build estate to the south, which will help to integrate the new development on the Friends' site with the wider townscape.

The clad projecting bays shown on the Oak house type are not considered acceptable for the following reasons:

- *Over-dominance of grey cladding (presumably aluminium) the precedent image shown has a predominance of brick with grey elements, rather than the other way around.*
- *Roof detail not clear for bays and would likely be deeper/more complicated in reality, not enough depth shown to be feasible, and increased depth would worsen over-dominance of grey cladding.*

The Lime is considered more successful with its less complicated detailing and predominance of brick. Overall, the contemporary approach is supported and considered appropriate - it does not 'water down' the impact of the heritage assets by copying them, and it also sits well with the contemporary and celebrated Avenue next door.

- 5.4.15 It is judged the proposals have responded to the above comments and the redesigned houses are sensitive and contextual to the conservation area. The Oak houses will not be clad and will have exposed brick elevations. The proposed location of the Oak and Lime houses follow that of existing built form at those locations and would avoid any sense of domination or encroachment of the historic buildings within the Site. Their scale and appearance would also preserve the balance of built form and landscaping within the Site and the understanding of this as a contributor to the appearance of the conservation area.

Parking

The proposal to shift the car parking spaces to the south of the site, away from the main school building, while retaining the area of landscape around the pond is welcomed as this provides a more sympathetic setting for the building. Concerns remain about some of the piecemeal proposed parking on the site, including around the main semi-circular entrance drive, where parked cars would detract from the designed setting of the building and views from the Conservation Area.

It was discussed on site whether additional parking could be provided on the existing area of hardstanding to the east of the gym building, although in the revised proposals, this area is shown as rear gardens for the Ash buildings. By providing more parking in this area, the density of parking to the rear of the school could be reduced, providing a more generous garden setting for the main school building.

There is also a concern regarding the location of some of parking in respect to their position in relation to intended buildings in that these appear to be remote or isolated. Parking should be located close to their intended buildings to improve accessibility, and clarity.

The large parking courts should also be broken up with soft landscaping. Presently, the large expanse of hardstanding areas is not ideal and should be revised to break down the perceived harshness of these areas.

- 5.4.16 It is judged that the proposed design has been responded to the above comments and the redesigned houses are sensitive and contextual to the conservation area.
- 5.4.17 Sympathetic landscaping across the parking area south of the main building would reduce any sense of a dominant block, and soften the area, by breaking up the parking courts. It will also add interest and reduce any sense of over-bearing of hard standing against the built form and

landscaping in the wider site. Indeed, the proposals include for a reduction of c.10% in hardstanding across the Site. Existing parking bays to the north of the main school building will be retained for use. Where possible, existing parking areas are used (such as at the Ash houses) or vehicle parking is to be sensitively located to be screened by built form or landscaping, to reduce any adverse visual impact on the main school building and conservation area, from Mount Pleasant Road. It is acknowledged that there will be a limited number of parking bays to the front of the main school building; these have been reduced as far as possible, utilising existing spaces, to mitigate any potential adverse impact on the setting of the non-designated heritage asset, whilst providing accessible parking spaces.

Saffron Walden Conservation Area

- 5.4.18 The proposed works represent a level of change to the designated heritage asset (Saffron Walden Conservation Area) and the non-designated heritage asset (Former Friends' School). However, in relation to the 'historic core' of the school, the proposed changes are largely focused on the reconfiguration of the interior space which will retain historic elements of the internal building as well as opening up vaulted ceilings that have previously been concealed by modern ceiling tiles and seeking to expose previously hidden beams.
- 5.4.19 The principal exterior street facing elevations will not be affected and external features considered of local historic and architectural interest that subsequently contribute to the special interest of the conservation area will be sustained. Moreover, the proposals roughly follow the existing footprints and scales of the later un-sympathetic buildings, and their removal will improve the primary view of the school building from Mount Pleasant Road. The impact of the proposed landscaping across the Site, and the retention of the existing landscaping, such as the avenue of lime trees on a north-south axis in grounds to the south of the main school building, would ensure the primacy of the north elevation of the main school building is maintained and its appearance enhanced (albeit the ability to understand some of the landscaping and its character is limited from outside the Site).
- 5.4.20 While it is likely that a number of the proposed buildings within the grounds of the school will result in a visual change to Zone 6 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area, the majority of the conservation area will not be affected due to the scale of development and surrounding built form.

Furthermore, the proposals will allow the Former Friends' School building to remain understood within its setting and the key relationship to the conservation area will be sustained as the existing buildings will be replaced. The proposals would ensure that the main elevations and defining architectural features of the Former Friends' School will be retained, while the interior will be reconfigured to adapt the building for residential use. The removal of the later incongruous buildings (for example the existing building south of the Croydon building) is considered to rationalise the Site and would provide positive regeneration.

5.4.21 The proposals comprise the demolition of a number of the later buildings and extensions which date to the post-war period; these have been deemed to lack architectural quality for national listing. The proposals for the new replacement buildings are considered to be sympathetic to the architecture of the school: an example being the flat blocks proposed to replace the existing classrooms which complement the scale, massing and design aesthetic and material palette of the main building. A further example of this is the low pitch roofs on the mews Ash houses which seek to reduce prominence and form. Moreover, the overall redevelopment of the site will enhance the conservation area by way of aesthetic improvements and the removal of detracting modern additions such as the gym building and extensions close to Mount Pleasant Road. The replacement of the large, obtrusive gym building which dominates the eastern side of the Site, with smaller scale two storey residential mews houses will result in an enhanced balance of built form within the Site and within the wider conservation area. This balance would also enhance the setting of the main school building by way of improving the wider aesthetic of the building's primary elevation.

5.4.22 Any demolitions envisioned as part of the proposed development focus on buildings considered to hold no architectural and/or historic interest and which are unsympathetic in quality or appearance in comparison to the existing main building, such as the existing classroom wing and outbuildings to the north-western perimeter of the site. Furthermore, the original school building itself will be retained in its entirety and therefore the overall contribution made to the conservation area by the building will be sustained. In relation to policy ENV 1, the features of the school building which are considered to be positive contributing factors to the conservation area, will not be affected by the proposed works and it is considered that the proposed development will be both sympathetic in colour and material pallet to the existing school building and wider setting.

- 5.4.23 While the changes to the southern area of Zone 6 will result in a change to the conservation area, the design of the proposed additional housing that will replace the existing buildings within the grounds, as well as the ones that will be built new plots, will provide an aesthetic benefit, echoing the modern development beyond the Site whilst not dominating the traditional appearance of the school and other historic buildings within the Site. Through the proposed residential use of the Site, the opportunity for wider appreciation of the buildings and their contribution to the conservation area would be increased.
- 5.4.24 The retention of the mature trees to the south of the main building, notably the avenue of lime trees, would help preserve the character of the Site and the degree of verdant landscaping would, alongside the re-use of existing locations for new built form, reinforce the balance of the Site and ensure open, green spaces permeate through the Site. This would accord with Policy ENV1 of the Uttlesford Local Plan.
- 5.4.25 In summary, it is deemed that the proposals would not result in harm to the significance of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area. The character of the Site would be retained, with a degree of enhancement through the demolition of built form which does not positively contribute to the character of appearance of the conservation area in and around the Site. The proposed new buildings will be of a sensitive appearance and scale so that the balance of the built form/landscaping character of the Site is retained. The retention and enhancement of the landscaping within the Site would contribute to this.

The Water Tower

- 5.4.26 There will be no physical impact on the Grade II listed Water Tower. The proposed works to the Former Friends' School will have a visual impact upon the setting of the Grade II listed Water Tower within the designated conservation area, chiefly in regard to the construction of new housing units within the Site. However, in light of its unique architectural and historic context, the significance of the tower is chiefly related to its importance as a standalone feature, rather than deriving from its setting, which has undergone continual change during the 20th century.
- 5.4.27 As such it is considered that the proposed new builds would not hinder or restrict the historic and

architectural legibility of the Water Tower. Additionally, there would be no material interference with the tower itself and the proposals are of a scale and extent which would not adversely impact the understanding of the tower. The special interest of the building will be sustained and its role as a landmark with this parcel of the conservation area will be preserved.

5.5 Nos. 9 and 10 Mount Pleasant

5.5.1 While the nature of the proposed works would have an effect upon the wider conservation area, in regard to visual impact, Nos. 9 and 10 Mount Pleasant Road will suffer no adverse effect in relation to the retention of their historic and architectural interest. Despite being situated in close proximity to the main school entrance, their inter-visibility with the building remains relatively low, furthermore Nos. 9 and 10 occupy a very different architectural context. Additionally, there will be no material impact upon the buildings which will hinder their architectural and historic importance, which is chiefly related to their design and layout.

5.5.2 When coupled with the above, despite a change in the overall setting, the ability to understand and appreciate these assets within their architectural and historic context will not be affected by the nature of the proposed works.

5.6 Summary of impacts on listed buildings

5.6.1 In terms of the listed buildings which are considered sensitive to the proposed development, and in relation to policy ENV2, the current proposals, namely, to adapt the existing school grounds for residential use, represent a future consistent and viable use for the non-designated heritage asset, particularly so as the building can no longer revert to its former use. Although the proposals would comprise a certain amount of change to the setting of the listed Water Tower, the principal features of local importance would be retained (including views of the heritage assets which enable their appreciation) while a consistent future use for the school would be ensured.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Savills Heritage and Townscape has been commissioned by the applicant to prepare a Heritage Statement to inform a full planning application for the proposed development at the Former Friends' School, located within the Zone 6 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.
- 6.1.2 The proposals comprise the conversion of the locally listed building into residential units. Provision is also made for new residential units within the wider grounds of the site. This assessment meets the requirements of the NPPF and provides sufficient and proportionate information concerning heritage considerations relating to the proposed development, as currently known.
- 6.1.3 This Heritage Statement has been revised in response to the revised design and proposals following the pre-application process and consultee feedback.

6.2 Built heritage considerations

- 6.2.1 The Former Friends' School itself was constructed to the designs of Edward Burgess in the late nineteenth century as a Quaker day and boarding school. Although not statutorily listed, the site is included on the local heritage list and meets the criteria to be of local architectural and historic interest. As such, the historic context in which it was built, as a Quaker School funded by the Friends' and a late nineteenth century addition to Saffron Walden, can be attributed to these reasons.
- 6.2.2 The building was later extended and reconfigured, with late nineteenth century photography showing the historic 'core' of the building to be largely similar as that seen today, with a façade and design indicative of various architectural periods, utilising elements from Gothic, Elizabethan and Jacobethan architectural styles. Subsequently the school building can be considered of historic evidential value, with the main façade features relatively well preserved, as well as some of the internal layout, despite the many later changes.
- 6.2.3 The architectural interest of the Former Friends' School is foremost attributable to the craftsmanship of the design, asymmetrical layout and elaborate features which furthermore mark it out as a unique building typology within the local context at Saffron Walden. The large central tower and doorway

is decorated with design features characteristic of important sixteenth and early seventeenth century buildings, with a castellated and buttressed turret, lined beneath with multi-foil Tudor windows and hoodmoulds. The central tower above this also has a castellated parapet, decorated beneath with Romanesque windows. The principal elevations flanking these towers also have a similar appearance, with buttresses and multi-windows as well as seventeenth century style gables.

- 6.2.4 It is important to note the Former Friends School building is not a statutory designated heritage asset and is only qualified as a non-designated heritage asset. The school buildings were put forward for statutory listing in 2018 and assessed by Historic England as not representing buildings of sufficient merit for inclusion on the national list. The report noted that the school was; *“on the whole, architecturally modest and has undergone numerous, incremental alterations and additions which have diminished the original architectural composition.”* Therefore, the statutory designated heritage assets for consideration are the Conservation Area itself and the two Grade II listed buildings which are located outside of the Site boundary.
- 6.2.5 The new proposals would result in the reconfiguration of the internal areas of the school but will retain the main features, openings and detailing which contribute to the significance of the conservation area. It is considered that the proposals are in keeping with local planning policy and that the proposed internal alterations would pose no adverse change to the heritage significance of the building which is principally derived from the contribution it makes to the setting of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.
- 6.2.6 As the building is a non-designated heritage asset, its principal legislative interest lies on its consideration within the Local Plan and the NPPF (and its location within the conservation area). The alterations and extensions, both to the school and wider grounds, conform to national and local policy in relation to sustainability and conservation, specifically that the principal features of the elevations will be retained, and the new residential use will make a contribution to local vitality and ongoing viable use of the building.
- 6.2.7 The proposals demonstrate an approach which responds to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset and the designated asset of the wider conservation area. The proposals aim to reconfigure the internal areas of the existing school building, as well as provide a number of new housing units within the school grounds with structures that are located on the footprints of existing

structures, sympathetic in detailing and use of materials, while simultaneously preserving where possible certain outbuildings within the grounds in a poor state of repair such as the Croydon building.

6.2.8 Overall, it is considered that the proposed works would cause a change to the designated heritage asset of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area. However this change would not automatically equate to 'harm' (in regards to the NPPF) and it is considered that the proposed scheme exhibits a conservation led approach which works to avoid harm to the designated heritage asset (the conservation area), and include the enhancement of certain 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 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.

6.2.9 Furthermore, the present scheme will provide a sustainable future for the Former Friends School building, particularly so as, despite previous efforts being made, the school was no longer able to retain its use as an educational-institutional building. This would represent an opportunity to invest in the building. The recognised benefits include the provision of new housing in a sustainable location, enhancements to the landscaping within and across the Site, the provision of increased access to the grounds and facilities within the Site, enabling the Site and the non-designated heritage asset to be appreciated more readily, and the removal of built form which provides a negative contribution to the Site, the setting of the non-designated heritage asset, and the wider Saffron Walden Conservation Area.

7.0 References

7.1 Documentary sources

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Uttlesford District Council., Uttlesford Local Heritage List (approved April 2021)

7.2 Cartographic sources

Ordnance Survey mapping (1870-1970)

7.3 Online sources

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8.0 Appendix 1: Figures

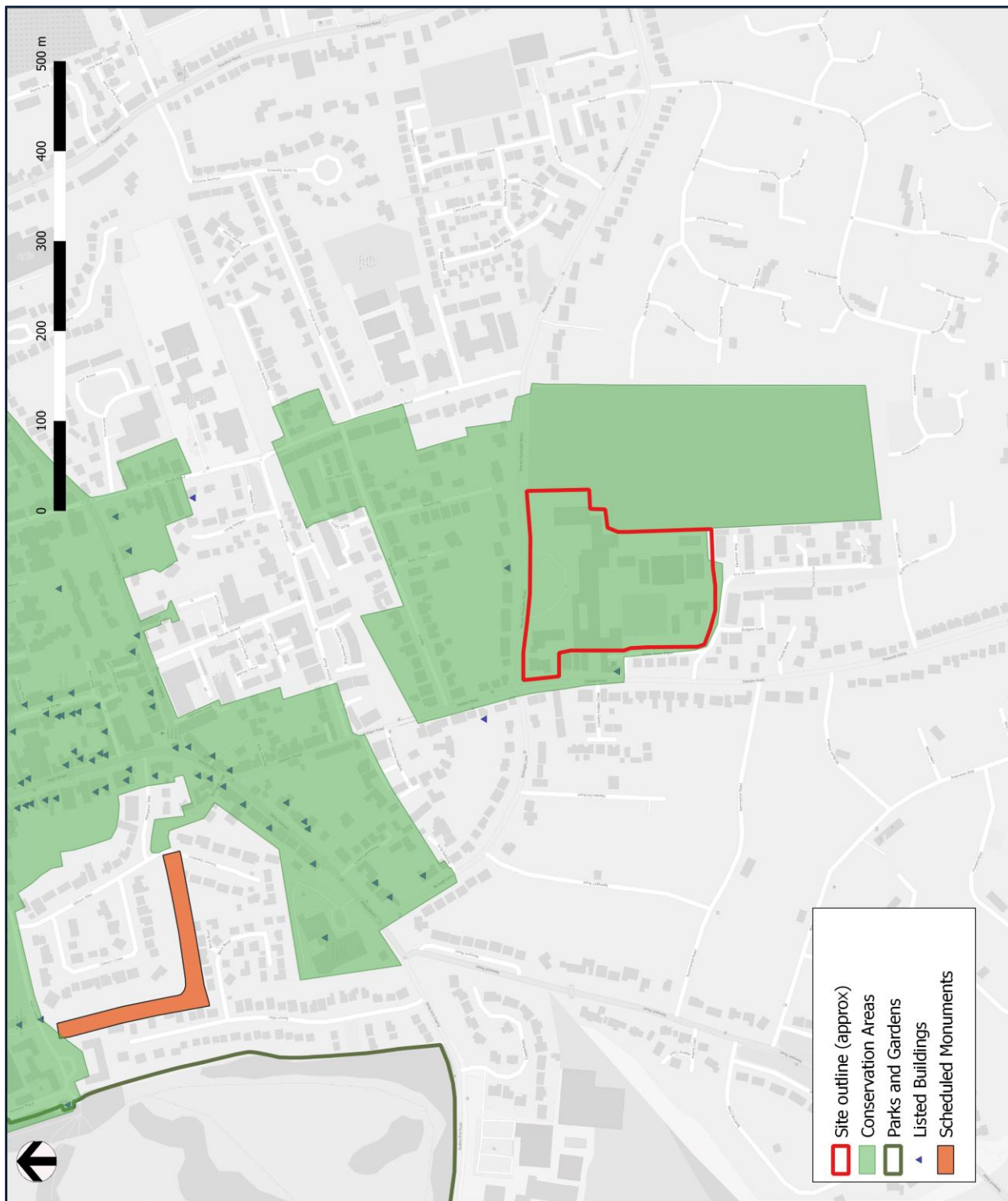


Figure 1: Site location and designated heritage assets



Figure 2: Chapman and Andre map of Essex (1777)



Figure 3: Site location on Tithe Map (1843)

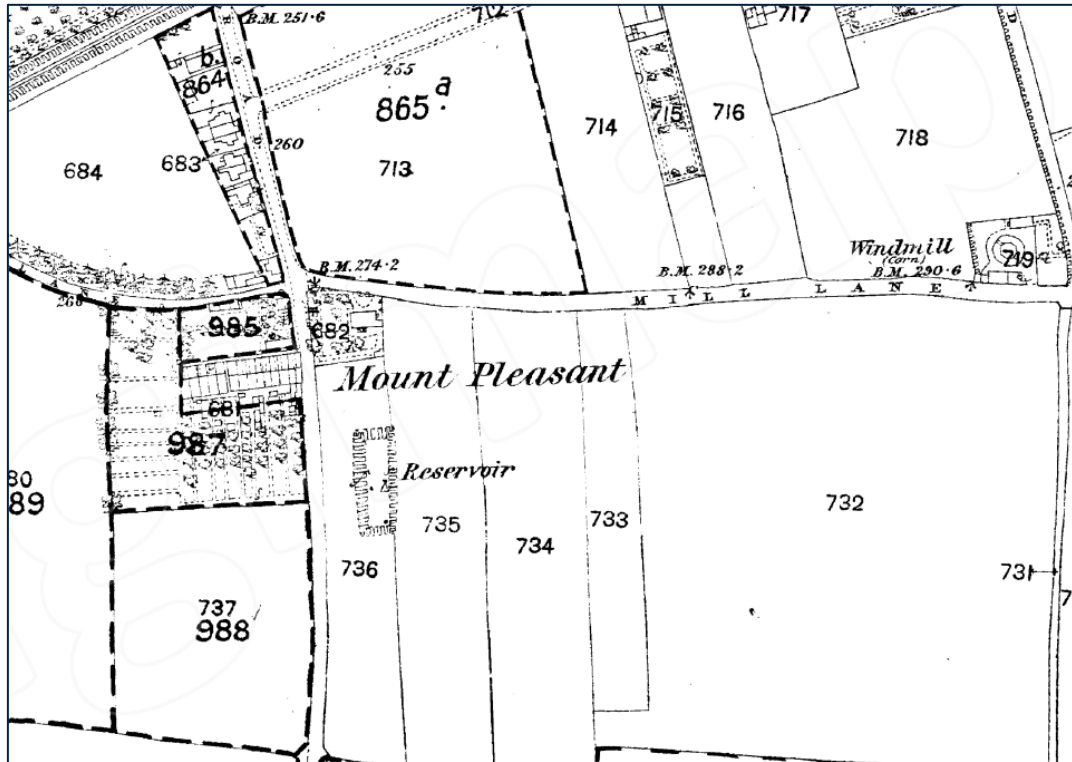


Figure 4: Site location on Ordnance Survey mapping (1870)



Figure 5: 1880s photograph showing the (then) recently built Friends School

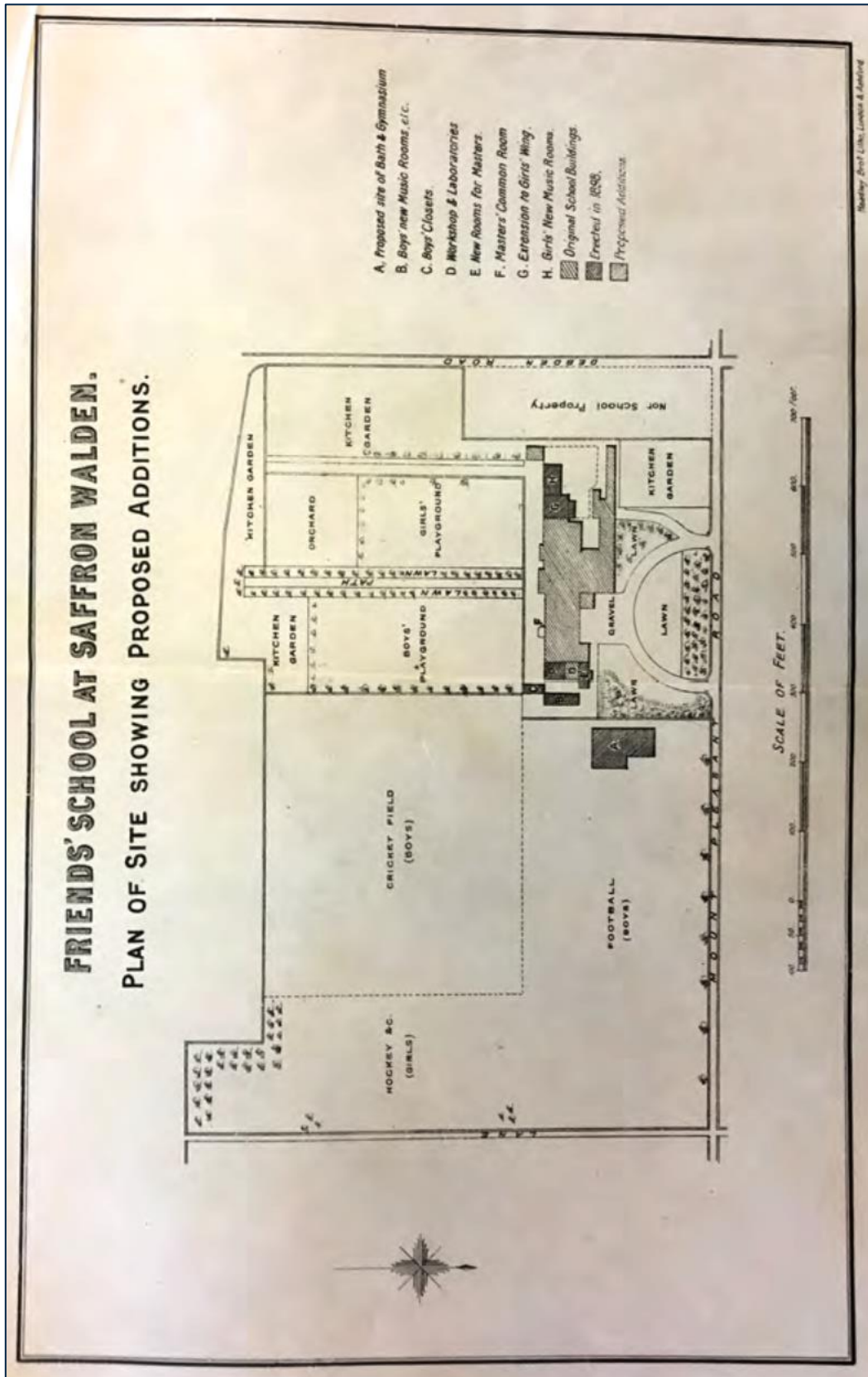


Figure 6: 1989 plan of site showing proposed additions

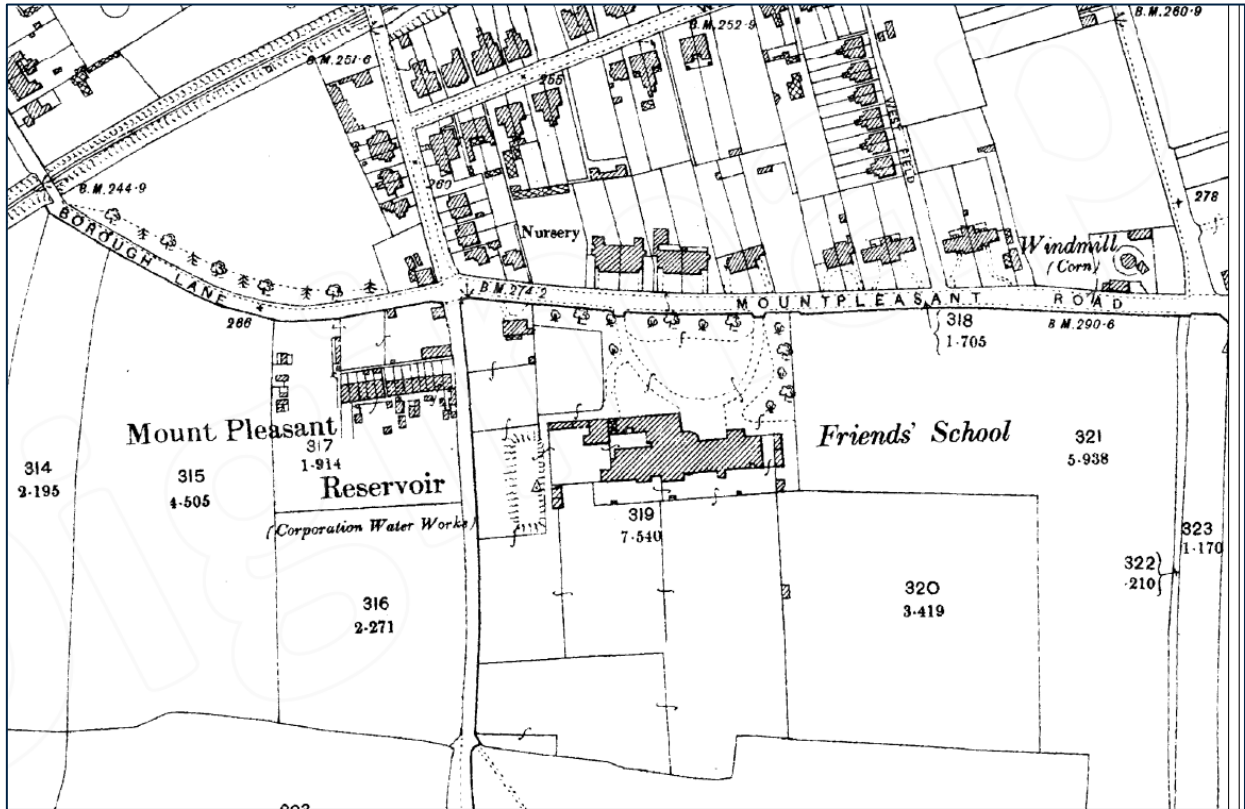


Figure 7: Site location on Ordnance Survey mapping (1890s)

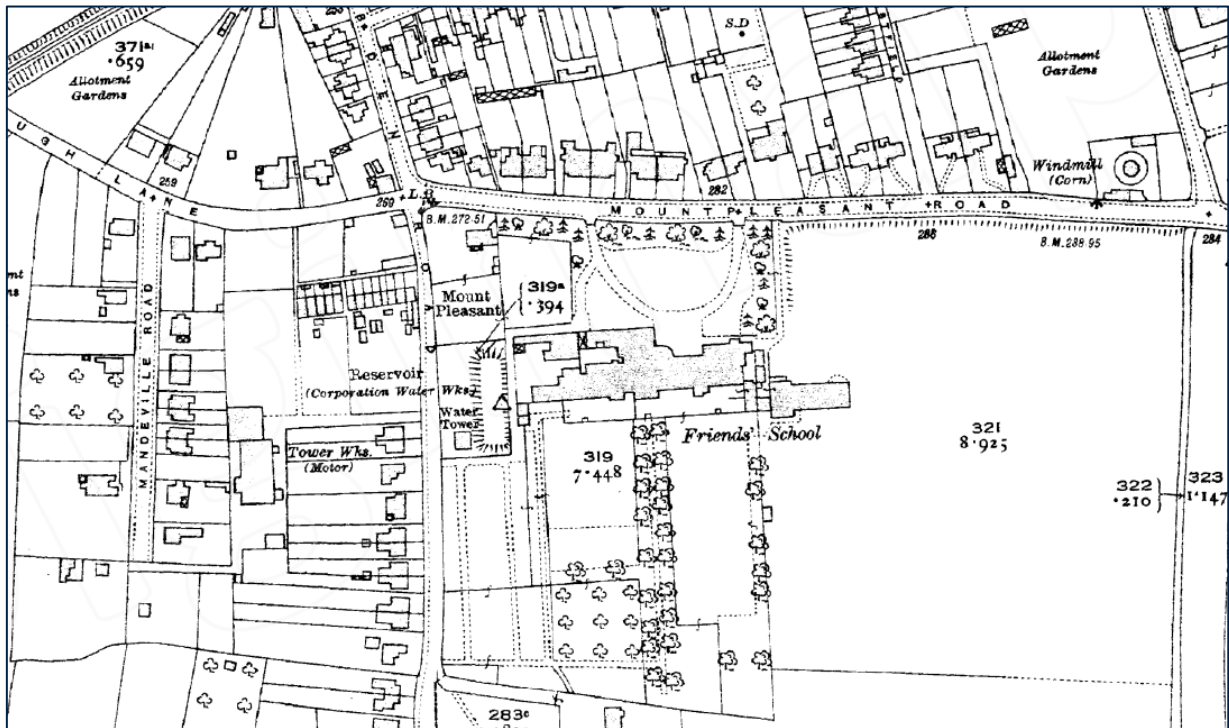


Figure 8: Site location on Ordnance Survey mapping (1920)



Figure 9: 1935 aerial photograph

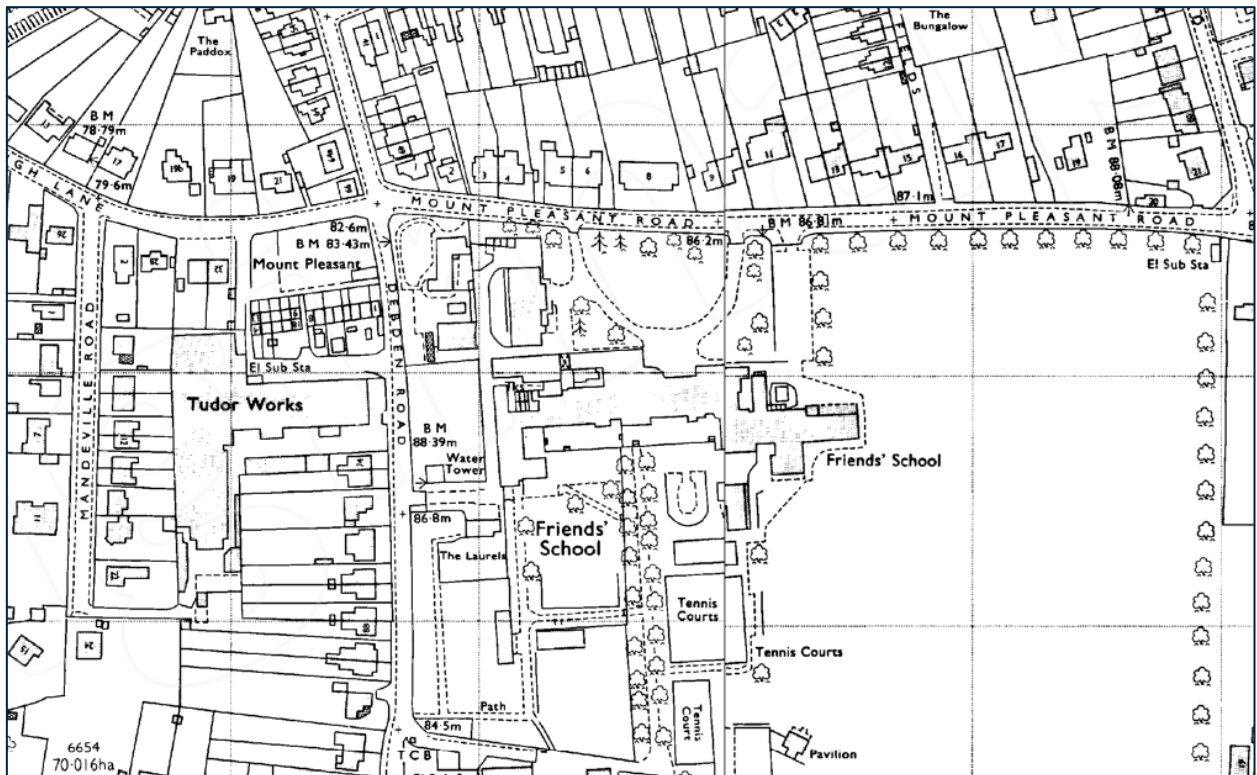


Figure 10: Site location on Ordnance Survey mapping (1970)

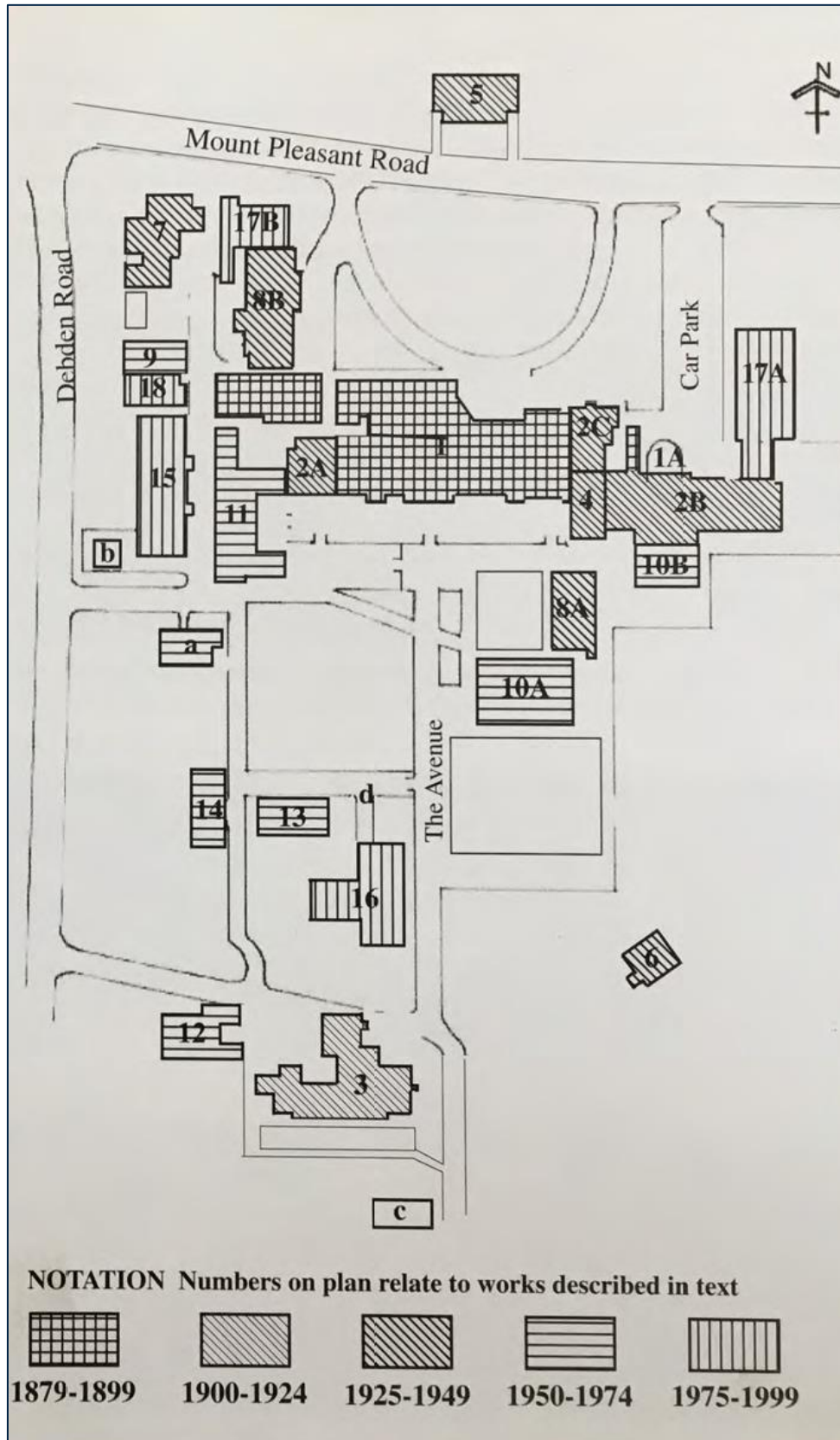


Figure 11: Friends' School, Saffron Walden development (from 'The School on the Hill')



Figure 12: Former Friends' School (2018-2019)



Figure 13: Photograph of central turret, north elevation



Figure 14: Photograph of east flanking wing, north elevation



Figure 15: Photograph of west flanking wing, north elevation



Figure 16: Photograph of gym building western elevation



Figure 17: Photograph of the Assembly Hall and Music School



Figure 18: Photograph of Croydon Building



Figure 19: Photograph looking north towards the Water Tower



Figure 20: Photograph showing the many later additions to the School

9.0 Appendix 2: Historic England assessment of architectural and/or historic interest

Main Building at Walden School (formerly Friends' School)

The main building at Walden School, built in 1879 to a design by Edward Burgess, with extension by Burgess in 1898, 1901, 1902 and 1903, and additions by Fred Rowntree and Ralph Thorpe in 1922, Paul Mauger in 1955, Kenneth Bayes in 1961 and BH Jolly and RE Millard in 1984, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

the school was not built as Burgess originally intended, with his sophisticated Gothic Revival design being diluted to one relying on the sparing use of Tudor and Gothic details for limited architectural affect;

although the entrance tower and dining hall form an imposing centrepiece, this is not sustained across the rest of the building, which is architecturally unassuming;

there is no particular quality of interior fittings or special significance of schools' planning;

later alterations and extensive additions, which are also of limited architectural quality, have compromised the integrity of the original school building;

the extensions, which were not laid out to any known masterplan, have more than doubled the footprint of the original school building, where its form has been subsumed into the long and sprawling range of which it now forms part.

while the school is undoubtedly of some significance as a forward-looking educational establishment, where the values of the Society of Friends resulted in the early provision of purpose-built educational facilities, this is not of a sufficient standing in a national context to support the case for listing given its overall lack of architectural interest.

Assembly Hall and Music School at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School

The assembly hall at Walden School, built in 1936 to a design by Johns and Slater of Ipswich, with the addition of a music school in 1984 by BH Jolly and RE Millard of Bishop's Stortford, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

although its Modernist idiom provides an elegant solution to the functional needs of a well-lit open space, being an unusual surviving example of the idiom in Saffron Walden, its form is derivative and displays little of the architectural flair, decoration and innovation associated with the best educational architecture of the inter-war period;

the music school displays little in the way of innovation regarding its design, construction and planning for its late date;

the loss of original glazing units to uPVC replacements has compromised the integrity of the original design.

while the two buildings have some interest as part of the historic development of Walden School, and its progressive ethos of providing specialist educational facilities, this does not compensate for their overall lack of architectural quality in a national context.

Croydon House

Croydon House, originally known as Flint House, built in 1840 as a private residence, converted to a junior school in 1930-1931, with later-C20/early-C21 alterations and additions, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

although the building has a pleasing symmetrical elevation, with the use of knapped flint adding to its aesthetic quality, large-scale extensions and alterations have significantly compromised its architectural integrity as a suburban house;

the C20 additions are not only out of scale and totally unsympathetic to the architectural style of the original building, but they are also very standard pieces of school design, largely distinguished by oversized windows rather than a high level of architectural quality;

the building's original plan form is no longer readable, while its current layout does not exhibit any important development in schools' planning.

while the building is of some interest as part of the historic development of Walden School, and its progressive ethos of providing specialist educational facilities, this does not compensate for its overall lack of architectural quality in a national context, and high level of alteration.

Crosfield Building at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School

The Crosfield Building, designed by Black, Bayes and Gibson in 1967, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

it is a very standard piece of design which lacks the overall architectural distinctiveness looked for in school buildings of this late date;

the loss of all the original window frames to uPVC replacements has undermined the integrity of the original design;

the internal spaces are plainly adorned with little elaboration.

while the building is of some interest as part of the historic development of Walden School, and its progressive ethos of providing specialist educational facilities, this does not compensate for its overall lack of architectural quality.

Leicester Building at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School

The Leicester Building, built in 1975 to a design by Philip M Cowell, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

it is a standard piece of design which lacks the overall architectural distinctiveness looked for in school buildings of this late date;

the loss of all the original window frames to uPVC replacements has undermined the integrity of the original design;

the internal spaces are plainly adorned with little elaboration.

while the building is of some interest as part of the historic development of Walden School, illustrating its progressive ethos for providing specialist educational facilities, this does not compensate for the building's overall lack of architectural quality in a national context.

Croydon Gate at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School

The Croydon Gate, a wrought-iron gate dating from 1708, possibly designed by Thomas Robinson, which was re-erected at Walden School in 1976, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

the suggested attribution to the blacksmith Thomas Robinson cannot be substantiated;

its design is one which is seen to represent a continuation of traditional blacksmith designs and techniques rather than being innovative;

the original design intent has been eroded by the loss of the gate piers.

as it no longer serves the building for which it was originally designed it has lost its historic context.

Chemistry and Physics Laboratories at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School

The chemistry and physics laboratory building at Walden School, built in 1955 to a design by Paul Mauger, with later alterations and additions, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

it is an unremarkable example of a post-war educational building which lacks innovation for a building of its date;

later alterations, including the application of cement render, the loss of all its original windows to uPVC replacements and the insertion of a porch, has further diminished its limited architectural integrity; the interior was refurbished in 2000 and retains no historic fixtures and fittings of note.

while the building is of some interest as part of the historic development of Walden School, illustrating its progressive ethos for providing specialist educational facilities, this does not compensate for its overall lack of architectural quality in a national context.

Biology Laboratory at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School Listing

The biology laboratory, built in 1936 to a design by Johns and Slater of Ipswich, with late-C20 alterations and additions, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

although its Thirties Modernist idiom provides an elegant solution to the functional needs of a well-lit open space, being an unusual surviving example of the idiom in Saffron Walden, its form is derivative and displays little of the architectural flair, decoration and innovation associated with the best educational architecture of the inter-war period;

by placing the main entrance in a corridor on the east side, the building lacks a strong focal point around which its aesthetic could have been shaped;

the two laboratories have been refurbished and retain no fixtures and fittings of note.

while of some interest as part of the historic development of Walden School, illustrating its progressive ethos for providing specialist educational facilities, this does not compensate for the building's overall lack of architectural quality.

Craft, design and technology building at the former Walden School, originally the Friends' School

The craft, design and technology building at Walden School, originally built as a classroom block in 1950 by Kenneth Bayes of the Design Research Unit, with later alterations and additions, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

it is an unremarkable example of a post-war educational building which lacks innovation for its late date;

alterations and additions have compromised the original design intent;

the interior retains no historic fixtures and fittings of note.

while the building is of some interest as part of the historic development of Walden School, illustrating its progressive ethos for providing specialist educational facilities, this does not compensate for its overall lack of architectural quality.

10.0 Appendix 3: Legislation and planning policy

Legislation

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides that with regard to applications for planning permission affecting Listed buildings and /or Conservation Area or their setting:

“s.66(1) In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a Listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

“s.72 In considering development which affects a Conservation Area or its setting, the LPA shall pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.”

National Planning Policy Framework

National planning policies on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2021). Section 16, 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment' specifically deals with historic environment policy and includes the following policy text:

Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (para 189).

In determining applications, LPAs should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance. Where a site includes, or has potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, LPA's should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation (para 194).

In para 197 it states that 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- 1) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- 2) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- 3) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, 'irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance' (para 199).

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification (para 200).

Local planning authorities should refuse consent where a development proposal will lead to substantial harm or total loss of significance, unless it can be demonstrated that this is necessary to deliver substantial public benefits that outweigh

such harm or loss, or a number of other tests can be satisfied (para 201).

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use (para 202).

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset (para 203).

Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred (para 204).

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably (para 206).

Local planning policy

The Uttlesford Local Plan was adopted by Uttlesford District Council in 2005. It includes the following policies which are relevant to the current application in terms of built heritage

Policy ENV1 - Design of Development within Conservation Areas

Development will be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character and appearance of 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. Outline applications will not be considered. Development involving the demolition of a structure which positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area will not be permitted

Policy ENV2 - Development affecting Listed Buildings

“Development affecting a listed building should be in keeping with its scale, character and surroundings. Demolition of a listed building, or development proposals that adversely affect the setting, and alterations that impair the special characteristics of a listed building will not be permitted

Policy GEN2 – Design

Development will not be permitted unless its design meets all the following criteria and has regard to adopted Supplementary Design Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents.

- a) It is compatible *with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings;*
- b) It safeguards important environmental features in its setting, enabling their retention and helping to reduce the visual impact of new buildings or structures where appropriate



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