

Former Friends' School, Saffron Walden

Townscape and Visual Appraisal

for

Chase New Homes

Planning | 7th March 2022

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The Landscape Partnership Ltd is a practice of Chartered Landscape Architects, Chartered Ecologists and Chartered Environmentalists, registered with the Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment and the Arboricultural Association.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

1.1.1 The Landscape Partnership (TLP) has been commissioned by Chase New Homes to undertake a Townscape and Visual Appraisal (TVA) to assess the full application for the proposed residential development at the Former Friends' School in Saffron Walden, hereafter referred to as the 'Site'. The Site is located in the unitary authority of Uttlesford District Council (UDC).

1.2 Objectives of this report

1.2.1 The TVA sets out the anticipated townscape and visual effects of the proposed development, based on a 0.5km study area. In order to understand the likely changes, the TVA provides a baseline description of: the existing landscape and built features within the Site and the surrounding local context; relevant available evidence base documents; the key characteristics of the local townscape adjacent to the Site and how these relate to the Site, its value and the ability of the townscape to accommodate the type of change proposed; the presence of statutory or local townscape/visually related designations; locations where visual receptors are likely to be affected and the visual experience of the receptor; and identifying representative views from these locations and the contribution of townscape and built features have within these views.

1.2.2 The assessment of effects will set out the following:

- the loss to landscape and built features, and the perceived change to the extent and character of the townscape resulting from the proposed development;
- the effect of the proposed development on townscape/visually related designations; and
- the extent to which the proposed development would be visible, the resulting change in the nature of the view, and how this would affect visual receptors.

1.2.3 This report sets out the main constituent elements that form the proposed development and planning application, as shown on Dwg Nos: 21 0037-200H Proposed Site Plan; 21 0037-229D The Ash 3 bed terrace of 3; 21 0037-236 Proposed Assembly Hall conversion elevation; 21 0037-242C New flats south and north elevation; 21 0037-243C New flats east and west elevation; 21 0037-250 New swimming pool and changing rooms; 21 0037-270D The Oak 4 bedroom semi, floor plans and elevations; 21 0037-272 The Oak 4 bedroom semi and link detached, floor plans and elevations; 21 0037-280C The Lime four bedroom townhouse; 21 0037-290C Proposed flats adjacent to Croydon building floor plan and elevations; 21 0037-291 Proposed flats adjacent to Croydon building roof plan; 1642-KC-XX-YTREE-TPP01Rev1 Tree Protection Plan; and B21049-101E Landscape Proposals.

2 Methodology and assumptions

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 In order to understand how landscape features and townscape character would be affected, the assessment uses an objective approach based on the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact

Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3)¹ and Townscape Character Assessment². The detailed application of these guidelines, and the criteria and categories used are set out within Appendix 1: Methodology. The assessment approach identifies and explains the significance of any changes to the townscape should the proposed development proceed. This is achieved by first understanding the relative sensitivity of surrounding landscape features and the character of the townscape to the type of change proposed and then combining this with the magnitude or extent of change that would result from the proposed development. Changes can be experienced as an adverse, beneficial or neutral influence. Other considerations are also taken into account such as seasonal variation, direct or indirect effects, whether changes would be permanent or temporary, and whether they are reversible or not. GLVIA3 advises that the level of detail provided should be to a proportionate and reasonable level and sufficient to determine the likely significant effects. This should be: *'appropriate and proportional to the scale and type of development and the type and significance of the landscape and visual effects likely to occur'*.

2.2 Assumptions and limitations

2.2.1 The TVA assesses the likely effects of the proposed development, based on the primary aspects of the proposed development.

2.2.2 The following assumptions have been made in respect of the assessment of effects:

- the assessment Baseline Year is 2021;
- existing vegetation will continue to grow at rates typical of the location, species and maturity;
- all proposed mitigation planting would be implemented and that it would be undertaken at the same time as the other main works;
- proposed tree and shrub planting would grow at a rate of approximately 350mm/year, based on the average expected growth rates for the selected species growing on freely draining lime-rich loamy soils³ with planting beds formed by good quality imported topsoil and/or existing topsoil enhanced with compost. Predicted growth is also based on the assumption that no growth would take place in the first year, as the plants adjust to their new growing environments; and
- extent of use of public rights of way is based on: known information (e.g. if the right of way forms part of a promoted route at a local or national level), connectivity, signage, a well defined path, and the number of people using the right of way at the time of the survey.

3 Townscape context and Site features

3.1 Site

3.1.1 The Site is comprised of a number of school buildings, sports facilities, hard surfacing, Multi Surface Games Area (MUGA), tennis hard courts, garden and amenity grassland (refer to Viewpoints A-G in

¹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3rd Edition, April 2013

² Townscape Character Assessment, Technical Information Note 05/2017, Landscape Institute, 5 December 2017

³

Appendix 3 and Figure 02 for location of Viewpoints in Appendix 2). A large area of former playing fields, that belonged to the School, lies to the east of the Site. The main school building occupies a central area within the northern half of the Site. The main access is off Mount Pleasant Road, with the frontage to the main school building being formed by a horseshoe access road leading to the front entrance, with an area of lawn to the front. The boundary with Mount Pleasant Road is defined by a brick wall of variable condition, and a row of mature evergreen and deciduous trees and wide hedge growing on a low mound, set back from the wall, forming a significant feature along the road and frontage to the Site. The wide hedge and a row of lime trees extends along the frontage of the adjoining playing fields to the east of the Site.

3.1.2 Additional buildings to the main school buildings were constructed in the grounds in the 20th century to meet the needs of the School. This includes extensions to the main school building, to form eastern and western wings, with a swimming pool forming part of the eastern extension providing a single storey building with a pitched roof. Immediately adjacent is a large sports hall/gym to the north-east of the main school building. The adjoining car park has a separate access off Mount Pleasant Road. A belt of mature trees is present on a low mound to the west of the sports hall and acts to separate this part of the Site from the frontage to the main school building and create a greater association with the playing fields.

3.1.3 The southern and eastern boundaries of the adjoining school fields are demarcated by a dense mixed hedgerow and row of mature trees to the east, with a well established woodland to the south-east, and a weldmesh fence, belt of shrubs and double row of lime trees to the south.

3.2 Site context

3.2.1 The Site is located within the southern part of Saffron Walden (refer to Figure 01 in Appendix 2), a moderate sized town within the district of Uttlesford. The town is set in a localised bowl, with much of the settlement being set on the valley sides of the local valleys that incise the bowl. The topography creates an inward focus towards the centre of the town, with three of the main approach roads into the town being set within the valley bottoms that descend towards the centre. Saffron Walden has an important historic core to the north-west of the town, set within two Conservation Areas (refer to Figure 02 in Appendix 2), two Registered Parks and Gardens, and many listed buildings. Just beyond the town to the west lies the extensive historic parkland (Grade I Registered Park and Garden) and house of Audley End, which includes Scheduled Monuments and listed buildings, set within the broad River Cam valley.

3.2.2 At the turn of the 19th century, the Friend's School formed the most southerly part of the town, together with a row of terraced properties, known as Mount Pleasant, on Borough Lane. Prior to this the Saffron Walden Branch railway largely formed the southern edge of the town. Lying just to the north, it formed an important feature, around which further development occurred in the latter part of the 19th century and beginning of 20th century. This was based around the station, located approximately 250m north of the School. This led to the adjoining development of a goods shed, foundry, cement works, saw mill and malshouses. At the end of the 19th century, together with the building of the School, a number of modest to large villas and townhouses were built between the railway and the School. Residential development continued to expand along the line of the railway and Debden Road. More significant expansion occurred in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, in the form

of residential estates, schools, and industrial premises, that notably extended Saffron Walden to the east and south, well beyond the town centre. This now largely forms the extent of the settlement. Residential and retail development has recently occurred, and is currently taking place, to the east of the town.

- 3.2.3 The Site is located within this existing built form, falling between the residential development that took place at the end of the 19th century and through the latter half of 20th century. It is set on elevated ground, on one of the local ridges that separates the Cam valley and The Slade valley.

3.3 Site features

Landform

- 3.3.1 The Site gently falls from the south-east corner to the north-west corner, with a high point of approximately 90m AOD in the south-east corner, approximately 89m AOD in the north-east corner, approximately 87m AOD in the south-west corner, and a low point of approximately 85m AOD in the north-west corner. The Site visually appears largely flat with little discernible change in levels. The main evident change in levels occurs as a result of a localised variation to provide access to the rear of the main building.

Land use

- 3.3.2 The land has no current use but was formerly used for educational purposes.

Vegetation

- 3.3.3 The main vegetation within the Site is the presence of a large number of trees, many of which provide a notable visual contribution to the character of the Site and immediate context. The Tree Survey prepared by Keen Consultants in December 2021 provides a detailed assessment of the existing trees within the Site. This indicates that there are 77 trees or tree groups within the Site, the majority of which are Category C trees (low value) but also a large number of Category B (moderate value) trees. There are three key areas of trees, which provide the main contribution: row and cluster of trees along the northern Site frontage with Mount Pleasant Road and to the front of the main school building; a mature lime tree avenue extending from the rear of the main school building to the southern Site boundary; and a row of trees along the western Site boundary.
- 3.3.4 There are also notable hedges along the northern Site boundary with Mount Pleasant Road and more insignificant hedges around the western and southern edges of an area of grass to the south of the main school building and west of the lime avenue, and a small garden to the east of the lime avenue. The northern hedges are wide and mature providing an important local feature along Mount Pleasant Road. These comprise evergreen species, with some deciduous species, including: hawthorn, privet, holly, yew, viburnum, ivy, laurel, snowberry and Norway maple saplings. The evergreen content provides a good level of enclosure in winter. A 1.5m high privet and hawthorn hedge enclose the western and southern boundary of open space to the west of the lime avenue and a 2m hawthorn hedge encloses the small garden with a pool to the east of the lime avenue. A small length of 2m high beech hedge lies between the corners of Crossfield and Leicester buildings to the south-west of the Site. Other incidental shrub planting is present, mainly around the Preparatory School building to the south-east. The remaining areas of soft landscape treatment are formed of amenity grassland used for formal and informal recreation.

Buildings

3.3.5 The following buildings form the main buildings that characterise the Site (refer to Figure 03 in Appendix 2 for locations and Viewpoints A-G in Appendix 3), providing varied form, appearance, built character and value:

- **Main School Building:** is an imposing Victorian building, built at the end of the 19th century, with a strong architectural presence and character. Substantial three storey brick building with varied roofscapes, clay roof tiles, projecting front gables, tower with castellation, large roof stacks, and casement windows with glazing bars and window detailing create visual interest. It has been extended on the western and eastern wings, in more recent times, with a built form and character that is more functional in appearance and does not reflect the original character of the main building. This includes a one storey indoor swimming pool within the eastern wing of conventional construction and appearance.
- **Assembly Hall:** two storey red brick building, with large pitched roof, and regularly spaced casement windows with glazing bars, projects to the north from the eastern end of the main school building and has architectural merit that reflects some of the built character of the main building. The building has been extended to the north as a single storey modern brick built and flat roofed extension. The extension is ordinary and functional in appearance, lacking the architectural interest of the main Assembly Hall.
- **Croydon House:** two storey building of flint stone, red brick and white render finish, with shallow pitched slate roof and notable chimney. Pale brick and stone are used for headers, quoins, and window and door surrounds, with flint stone infill on the main frontage of the building. Sash windows and glazing bars. Varied form and articulation, providing a distinctive building on the corner of Mount Pleasant Road and Debden Road, providing visual interest and built character within the street scene.
- **The Pottery:** dilapidated collection of small buildings of breeze block and timber construction, in poor condition.
- **Sports Hall / Gym:** a large single storey building to the north-east of the Site. Formed of a large rectangular mass, brick building with flat roof, little visual relief and articulation, and lack of glazing, creating a hard functional building with no architectural interest.
- **Science Blocks:** single storey standalone buildings positioned around a small garden. The building to the east is older and reflects more of the character of the main school building in terms of features and the use of the same red brick and clay tile pitched roof. Projecting gable and casement windows with glazing bars add visual interest. Relatively poor flat roof extension. The building to the south is of more modern construction, being a single storey low pitched roof building of red brick and render, with flat roofed entrance canopy and simple window casements. The building is functional and plain appearance and ubiquitous architectural appearance, typical of the latter half of the 20th century, providing no inherent architectural value.
- **Preparatory School:** two storey modern building and conjoined single storey modern building, of multi-red brick and pitched roof with concreted tiles, and aluminium casement windows.

Pleasant, but generally plain buildings with limited detailing. The buildings have limited architectural interest.

- **Crossfield and Leicester:** two standalone residential blocks for students, including the 2 storey T-shaped building and rectangular Crossfield building. Both are of the same construction and appearance, being of red brick with concrete roof tiles, with pitched roofs and casement windows. Plain buildings, lacking fenestration and detailing, and typical of the latter half of the 20th century. The buildings have little architectural interest.

Public access

3.3.6 Public access is not available within the Site.

3.4 Summary of landscape features and their sensitivity

3.4.1 Details of Site townscape features and their value and sensitivity to change from residential development in a brownfield site are set out in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Site landscape features

| Site feature | Description | Townscape sensitivity: value | Townscape sensitivity: susceptibility to change | Overall townscape sensitivity |
|---------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Landform | See above. | Medium | Low | Low |
| Land use | See above. | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Vegetation | See above. | Medium (Low to High) | High | High |
| Buildings | See above. | Medium (Low to High) | High | High |
| Public Access | See above. | Medium | Medium | Medium |

4 Landscape and townscape character

4.1 Published townscape and landscape character assessments

4.1.1 Townscape character assessments are based on the character of settlements, usually towns and cities and, in contrast to landscape character assessment, are focused more on settlement pattern and characteristics of the surrounding landscape. However, there is a fair amount of overlap with landscape character assessments. Settlements and buildings form part of most landscapes, and landscape features such as landform and vegetation form an integral part of both landscapes and townscapes. GLVIA defines townscape as ‘the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationship between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces’ (Paragraph 2.7). The approach to understanding the character of landscapes and townscapes follow a similar approach. However, whilst there is a well established method to assessing landscape character, with publications available that have assessed landscapes at different scales from national to district scale, the same

is not true of townscape character assessments. The preparation of townscape character assessments for larger settlements within England has occurred in an ad-hoc manner. Where they have not been undertaken, standalone assessments need to be carried out, as is the case for Saffron Walden.

- 4.1.2 Townscape character assessments enable townscapes to be described and understood by mapping natural, physical and cultural features in order to define different townscapes and what is of value. Townscape character areas can be defined where they share similar characteristics, such as topography and landform, settlement pattern, historic land use, density and massing, architectural styles, materials and finishes, connectivity, open space, tree cover and the general visual experience of the area, based on specific geographic areas. This can be informed by published assessments / appraisals of the historic environment.
- 4.1.3 As settlements form part of a wider landscape setting, it can be helpful to understand the broader landscape character setting, as changes to settlements can influence the surrounding landscape character. However, this usually applies to large scale changes to settlements or changes on the edge of settlements, which is not the case for the Site. A description of the broader landscape character is provided, identifying any aspects or relevance in the context of the Site.
- 4.1.4 It is important to note that landscape/townscape character assessments can be undertaken at a range of scales. It should also be noted that boundaries are only indicative of the change between areas, especially close to boundaries between character types or character areas. In addition, areas close to boundaries are often better thought of as an area of transition, and where the landscape may display some of the characteristics and sensitivities of both character areas. This is less applicable in relation to townscape character areas, where boundaries are typically more defined and distinct, based on street pattern and built form.
- 4.1.5 Effects on townscape and landscape character can be both direct, i.e. effects on the character area that the Site is located within, and indirect, i.e. changes to characteristics or perceptions of character that occur beyond the boundary of a character area. In addition, effects on townscape/landscape character may be positive or negative, i.e. strengthening/enhancing the characteristic patterns and features, or eroding and losing features that contribute to townscape/landscape character, or a neutral effect.
- 4.2 National level**
- 4.2.1 In the mid-1990s, English Nature and the Countryside Commission jointly produced The Character Map of England, a single map that identified and described 159 Joint Character Areas (JCA) covering the whole of England. Each distinct area was defined following consideration of its landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, and cultural and economic activity. The boundaries of the areas followed natural rather than administrative boundaries. The various volumes of the Map were published between 1998 and 2000.
- 4.2.2 More recently, Natural England has undertaken a review of the JCAs in order to fulfil, in part, responsibilities set out in the Natural Environment White Paper 2011, Biodiversity 2020, and the European Landscape Convention 2007, creating National Character Area (NCA) profiles that are based on the original JCA profiles.

4.2.3 The Site falls within the southern part of National Character Area (NCA) 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland. NCA 86 extends from Stevenage in the west to Ipswich in the east, and from Chelmsford in the south and Bury St Edmunds in the north-east. Saffron Walden lies near the north-western edge of this Character Area. The landscape is formed of an undulating plateau dissected by river valleys with a predominantly arable land use and wooded character. Dispersed pattern of small settlements, scattered farmsteads and isolated hamlets, contrasts with the large 20th century towns present within the south and east.

4.3 District Level

4.3.1 At a district level the Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (BBCMULCA), published in September 2006, provides a more local scaled and detailed description of the landscape character within the district. Saffron Walden is surrounded by Landscape Character Area (LCA) A1: Cam River Valley (refer to Figure 01 in Appendix 2). LCA A1 is defined by a rolling open landscape with wide views from higher ground, with well vegetated riverbanks, large scale downland with rectilinear field patterns, low hedges and small copses. The core character of the LCA is formed by the broad river valley of the River Cam with the large scale eastern arable valley slopes dominated by the historic settlement of Saffron Walden, with its distinctive church spire. Major road and rail transport routes cross through Cam Valley and LCA. Views from higher ground are characterised by towns and villages that are often framed by distant blocks of woodland and copses. The Site is indicated as being located within a central position of the southern part of the urban area of Saffron Walden. No description of character within urban is provided within the BBCMULCA.

4.4 Historic Settlement Assessment and Historic Characterisation

4.4.1 Uttlesford District Council undertook the Historic Settlement Character Assessment in 2007, as part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. The report was prepared to understand the historic sensitivity of Saffron Walden and its capacity to accommodate future development. This included considering the various approaches to the town by road, as well as selected sites within the built up area. The latter was referred to as Sector 10 and included Sector 10g Friends School Playing Field. The quality of this space is defined as being a large flat open sports field visually enclosed by boundary treatment, where it *'fronts Mount Pleasant Road adds to the quality of the conservation areas in this location'* (page 19). It is described as largely lying beyond the historic core. Development in this location was assessed as having *'limited detrimental effect on the historic core which for the most part lies beyond the playing fields. Development of the frontage at Mount Pleasant Road and loss of the trees in this location would however have a detrimental effect on the historic core nearby'* (page 19).

4.4.2 Essex County Council prepared the Uttlesford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project in 2009 within which the document sets out the historic environment of the district, historic landscape character and identifies specific Historic Environment Character Areas (HECAs), which are sub-divided into Historic Environment Character Zones (HECZs). The HECA that covers the town is HECA3 Southern Saffron Walden, with HECZ1.4, HECZ6.1, HECZ6.4 and HECZ9.2 on the fringes of the town. HECA3 includes the historic core which includes a number of quality medieval and early post-medieval timber framed buildings. The Site and adjoining former school playing fields and The

Avenue lie within the southern part of HECZ3.4: Land to the South of the Historic Core (refer to Figure 01 in Appendix 2). This incorporates the following key elements:

- 19th century and later residential and commercial development with important historical industrial complexes, with evidence of multi-period prehistoric occupation;
- substantial 19th century villas/houses overlooking Mount Pleasant Road and West Road;
- early interwar, post-war and modern housing and infill;
- later 20th century residential development on the former 19th century industrial area around the former station and railway line;
- public buildings include the Friends School, Bell Language College, Hospital (now converted to the Uttlesford District Council Offices), and the Saffron Walden Union Workhouse (now converted to residential apartments and the Saffron Walden Community Hospital);
- town cemetery on the eastern edge of the zone; and
- the main sensitivity to change is identified as '*below-ground deposits are sensitive as well as surviving industrial buildings*'.

4.4.3 This is contained to the south by HECZ3.7: Southern Saffron Walden, with the following key features:

- dominated by 20th century residential development, which up until the second half of the 20th century had been predominantly arable farmland;
- evidence of prehistoric, Saxon and medieval activity; and
- very limited sensitivity to change due to extensive modern housing.

4.5 Local Level

4.5.1 The local scale is defined by variations in townscape character within southern part of Saffron Walden. The following provides a brief overview of the difference in character within the immediate vicinity of the Site, where the proposed changes would have an effect. TLP have identified four different Townscape Character Areas, as set out below (refer to Figure 06 in Appendix 2).

TCA1: Victorian Mixed

4.5.2 The key characteristics are as follows:

- Victorian houses with some later 20th century infill houses;
- mainly large two or two and half storey detached dwellings, with some properties set in large grounds in good condition;
- individual character, with a number of distinctive villas of notable architectural interest;
- some later less sympathetic 20th century infill houses,
- variable set back with irregular building line;
- traditional rectilinear grid road pattern provides good permeability;

- front gardens are mainly demarcated by low brick and rendered walls and/or railings and hedges;
- modest well vegetated front gardens, particularly along Mount Pleasant Road, creates a green character with enclosure in parts, but also smaller less vegetated front gardens in other parts;
- standard carriageway widths and footways, with on and off street parking;
- varied form and massing and architectural interest create variety and diversity, whilst still retaining continuity. Features include: projecting front gables; bay and dormer windows; architraves; gable pediments and front gables with timber and daub; and central doorways with varied pitched roof canopy. This creates notable built features to building frontages, providing rhythm and visual interest. Some houses have distinctive arched header to inset porches, whilst others have stone door and window headers;
- built materials are predominantly red brick, with stone, render and slate tile hanging. Roof tiles are clay and slate; and
- congested and busy roads, create movement and a lack of tranquillity.

TCA2: Victorian Academic

4.5.3 The key characteristics are as follows:

- substantial academic buildings with smaller ancillary buildings;
- Victorian and modern buildings;
- large, individual, 3 storey buildings set in extensive grounds, with predominantly open areas of grassland and fairly large areas of hard standing, creates a character of prominent buildings and low density. Generally in good condition but with some signs of degradation;
- varied roofscapes, projecting front gables, entrance canopies, built features such as a tower, substantial roof stacks and window detailing create visual interest;
- some benign, plain 20th century buildings, such as St Thomas More primary school and some buildings/extensions in the grounds of the Former Friends' School lack the architectural and visual interest of the other Victorian and more recent buildings;
- variable set back with irregular building line;
- on-site parking within car parks;
- well defined treed boundaries create enclosure;
- red brick wall and railing boundaries, with vegetation;
- contained land with little or no connectivity; and
- red brick, render, small to large casement windows with glazing bars, and clay roof tiles.

TCA3: Twentieth Century Residential

4.5.4 The key characteristics are as follows:

- 1960 and 1970s large scale residential estates, with architectural style reflecting the period, with a ubiquitous character creating a rather benign, bland and plain appearance that is not reflective of streetscape character in the neighbouring TCAs. Average condition;
- relatively high density;
- residential cul-de-sacs with limited connectivity;
- serpentine and arcing road pattern create varied juxtaposition of dwellings to provide interest;
- buildings are typically set back to a similar extent, and closely arranged, creating partial enclosure around an open frontage;
- two storey semi-detached and terrace properties, with a regular rectangular form that lacks articulation and variation in form;
- large box gable and hipped roofs, with consistent pitch to roofs;
- buildings lack strong fenestration or vernacular treatment, except canopy porches;
- small front gardens, large expanse of hard surface treatment for parking provision and amenity grassland, lack of boundary features to define gardens and limited planting in front gardens to break up the expanses and provide visual interest;
- standard residential carriageway widths and footways, with on and off street parking;
- relatively tranquil setting, particularly in cul-de-sacs; and
- predominantly red brick, with some render, pvc casement windows, and brown concrete roof tile.

TCA 4: Contemporary Residential

4.5.5 The key characteristics are as follows:

- predominantly 21st century residential development;
- high quality, relatively high density development in good condition. Built form creates a high degree of containment and enclosure;
- two or two and half storey modest terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings, with the exception of the small development on Friends Walk, which has large detached houses with more spacious gardens;
- contemporary architecture and detailing;
- distinctive treed streetscape along The Avenue, creating a tranquil and vegetated character;
- good connectivity and linkages;
- standard residential carriageway width, with off-street parking in the form of parking courts and driveway. Public footpath provides footway separated from the carriageway;
- tranquil setting, except along Debden Road;
- varied form, layout and roofscapes, with front and side gables;

- timber board cladding, red and pale brick, slate roof tiles;
- varied scale and juxtaposition of windows, projecting window surrounds and contemporary window detailing creates visual interest; and
- typically small front gardens, with buildings largely fronting onto the street with parking bays and hardcourts. Open front garden boundaries or defined by hedges / low planting.

4.6 Summary of sensitivity of townscape character to change

4.6.1 The local scale townscape character assessment has been used to provide the baseline data for assessing the effects of the proposed development.

4.6.2 Table 4.1 set out the sensitivity of the parts of the townscape/landscape character areas in relation to their value and sensitivity to change from residential development in a brownfield site.

Table 4.1: Townscape and landscape character – sensitivity

| Landscape character area | Description | Landscape sensitivity: value | Landscape sensitivity: susceptibility to change | Overall landscape sensitivity |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Local Townscape Character | | | | |
| TCA 1: Victorian Mixed | See above. | High | Medium | High |
| TCA 2: Victorian Academic | See above. | High | Medium | High |
| TCA 3: Twentieth Century Residential | See above. | Low | Low | Very Low |
| TCA 4: Contemporary Residential | See above. | Medium | Medium | Medium |

5 Townscape and visually related designations

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The townscape/landscape and visually related designations with the study area relate to landscape and heritage assets. There are number of designations within and surrounding Saffron Walden, including several Historic Parks and Gardens, and number of Conservation Areas and Ancient Woodlands (refer to Figure 02 in Appendix 2). The Site is located within Saffron Walden Conservation Area in which there are a large number of listed buildings. The TVA does not provide an assessment of the effect of the proposed development on the setting of the heritage asset and the contribution to the significance of the heritage asset, but rather provides an assessment of the effect on their character and appreciation in a visual context.

5.2 Listed Buildings

5.2.1 There are a number of Grade II listed buildings within the study area. Most lie within the north-western and norther fringes of the study area, along London Road and Audley Road, as well as on Borough Lane and Alpha Place on South Road. There are no listed buildings in the Site, but there three Grade II listed buildings close to the Site (refer to Figure 03 in Appendix 2), namely:

- 9 and 10 Mount Pleasant, immediately to the north of the Site, on the opposite side of the road;
- 64 Debden Road, approximately 60m to the north-west of the Site; and
- Water Tower, on Water Tower Place, immediately to the west of the Site.

5.2.2 Typical views from the location of these three listed buildings are represented by Viewpoints 2, 4 and 5 respectively (refer to Figure 03 in Appendix 2 and visualisations in Appendix 3). The effects are considered in relation to visual appreciation of the listed buildings from publicly accessible location, as part of the assessment of visual receptors in Section 11.

5.3 Conservation Area

5.3.1 The Saffron Walden Conservation Area was first designated in 1968 and then revised in 1991. The Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals, published in January 2018, sets out the history and features of historic interest in Saffron Walden that should be retained and enhance, as well as defining detracting features, and an appraisal of the current condition of historic assets and improvements that can be made. It can also be used as a basis for assessing development proposals and alterations that affect the Conservation Area. For the purposes of the appraisal of the Conservation Area, six zones were defined. The Site is located within Zone 6 (refer to Figure 03 in Appendix 2), a separate area to the south of the other five, formed around the Former Friends' School, Mount Pleasant Road and West Road. The Conservation Area Appraisal suggested a boundary change to extend the Conservation Area to include the grounds to the rear of the School, including the avenue of lime trees and a section of the playing fields, which were considered to be relevant to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This now forms part of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.

5.3.2 The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies that there are two listed buildings in Zone 6, namely that of 9 and 10 Mount Pleasant (pair of semi-detached villas, c.1890, constructed in red brick, dressed random rubble and ashlar dressing, slate hanging, with slate roof and copper spirelet to a polygonal turret) and the large prominent brick water tower (approximately 28m high) dating from 1913. There are also a high number of 19th and early 20th century non listed houses, described as '*other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution*' (page 72). These mainly lie to the north of the Site, including along Mount Pleasant Road, but also the original main School building and assembly hall within the Site. Boundary walls are also noted as distinctive features that add to the quality of the street scene, with those along Debden Road and West Road identified for protection. There are no features included within the Local Heritage List within or immediately adjacent to the Site.

5.3.3 The Conservation Area Appraisal advises that '*The Friends School on the south was opened in 1879. George Stacey Gibson provided the school site, described as being "beautifully situated ...on an open breezy hill above the town, near the railway station and within a very easy distance of the Meeting House"*' (paragraph 1.283). It also provides the following description of the School in paragraph 1.290:

The area is dominated by the Friends School, a large Victorian structure that opened in 1879. It is set in large grounds fronting Mount Pleasant Road and surrounded by later additions.

The tall earlier structure, constructed of red brick with tiled roof has a prominent tower to front, refined architectural detailing, tall chimney stacks and window detailing. Selected windows and chimney stacks may be candidates for additional protection by possible Article 4 Direction, subject to further consideration and notification. The asset is also worthy of consideration for inclusion a Local Heritage List. In addition, the early-mid 20th century School Assembly Hall and Geography room and Biology Laboratory, both in the modernist architectural style, are also considered to be good surviving and little altered examples, and are unusual in the town. These have also been highlighted on the relevant maps as they contribute positively to the historic development and expansion of the school and architectural variety of the complex, and wider conservation area.

- 5.3.4 Important open spaces are identified as being the semi-circular lawn to the front of Former Friends' School and the playing fields to the east. Paragraph 1.305 also notes that *'the grounds to the rear of the school, encompassing the avenue of lime trees and adjacent playing field are also considered to represent an important area of open space which juxtaposes the tight built form of the modern development and is relevant to the school site'*. Trees of particular note are identified as those within the curtilage of the Former Friends' School. Important views are identified as being those of the Former Friends' School, Water Tower and the high quality villas on Mount Pleasant Road and West Road. Two Important View locations are identified on Mount Pleasant, which are represented by Viewpoints 1 and 2 in this TVA.

5.4 Protected Open Space

- 5.4.1 There are several areas of Protected Open Spaces identified within Saffron Walden, as identified within the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 (Policy LC1 and ENV3). Two lie within the Site (refer to Figure 03 in Appendix 2), as referred to in the Conservation Area Appraisal i.e. the semi-circular lawn to the front of the main school building and the former playing fields. It should be noted that the Protected Open Space covering the former playing fields has notably changed and seems not to have been updated since its designation. The western part of the playing fields previously included a maintenance compound, hardstanding and storage area, tennis courts, nets for cricket practice and area of scrub and trees. Much of this was replaced following completion of The Avenues residential development and the construction of the Preparatory School building to the south-east of the Site in recent years. Two of the tennis courts remain within the Site but were also supplemented with the construction of the existing MUGA and hard court that relate more to the character of the part of the playing fields that has now been developed with buildings. These areas of development remain as part of the Protected Open Space but have largely lost a sense of being open space.

5.5 Registered Park and Garden

- 5.5.1 Audley End lies 420m to the north-west of the Site and is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden. Audley End includes a Conservation Area and publicly accessible land covered by the CROW Act. Shortgrove Park (Grade II) lies 1.5km from the Site to the south-west of Saffron Walden, Bridge End Gardens (Grade II*) lies 960m from the Site on the north-western edge of Saffron Walden, and The Maze (Grade II) lies within the northern part of the town, approximately 800m north of the Site. The extent of built form and vegetation between the Registered Park and Gardens and the Site is

sufficient to prevent any visual association or result in an effect on their character and views experienced by visual receptors, arising from the proposed development. Consequently, this is not considered further.

5.6 Ancient Woodlands

5.6.1 The Ancient Woodlands are all a long distance from the Site and would not be affected by the proposed development, so are not considered further.

5.7 Tree Preservation Order

5.7.1 Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 7/07/38 covers some of the trees within the Site. The TPO came into effect on 9 October 2007. Details of the TPO are included in Keen’s Tree Survey, May 2021, that accompanies the planning application. The TPO incorporates the following: T1 (yew); T2 (yew); T3 (yew); T4 (Yew); T5 (beech); G1 (lime and other species); G2 (mixed species); G3 (lime); G4 (maple); G5 (maple); G6 (lime); G7 (hornbeam); G8 (lime and a maple); G9 (beech and a maple); G10 (lime); G11 (lime); G12 (lime); G13 (lime); G14 (beech); and G15 (yews and a horse chestnut). T6 is marked on the accompanying plan with the TPO but is not listed in the schedule. T3, G8, G9, G10, G15, much of G6, and the southern part of G11 lie beyond the Site. T4, T5, T6 and G12 are no longer present on the Site or were inaccurately recorded. Effects on TPO trees are considered as part of Site Features in Section 8.

5.8 Summary of designations and their sensitivity

5.8.1 Details of the townscape/landscape and visually related designations and their value and sensitivity to change from residential development are set out in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Townscape/Landscape Designations

| Site feature | Description | Townscape sensitivity: value | Townscape sensitivity: susceptibility to change | Overall townscape sensitivity |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Saffron Walden Conservation Area | See above. | High | High | High |
| Protected Open Space | See above. | Medium | High | High |
| Tree Preservation Order | See above. | High | High | High |

6 Visual receptors and visual context

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 The extent of theoretical visibility of the proposed development is illustrated on Figures 04 and 05 in Appendix 2 as the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). This is a computer generated plan, based on digital surface model and terrain data to provide an indication of the potential extent of visibility of the proposed development, which typically identifies the worst case scenario. This has then been further assessed during the site assessment to confirm or modify the extent of visibility. This is further described in Section 11.

6.1.2 The Site is located within a heavily built up area of Saffron Walden, with built form of mainly two storey, but also two and half, and three storey surrounding the Site. The density of the built form and extent of mature trees provides a high degree of containment to the Site. The opportunities for views from publicly accessible locations is largely limited to adjoining roads. The primary effects would relate to road users and pedestrians using Mount Pleasant Road, Debden Road and The Avenue. Eight Representative Viewpoints (Viewpoints 1-8) have been provided to assess effects on visual receptors from publicly accessible locations, who would have the greatest potential to be affected. Viewpoints 1 and 2 represent the two Key Views identified in the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. Six Illustrative Viewpoints (Viewpoints A-G) have also been included to illustrate the main features and characteristics within the Site. The location of Viewpoints 1-8 and A-G is shown on Figure 03 in Appendix 2 and Type 1 Visualisations (Annotated Photographs) illustrating each Viewpoint are provided in Appendix 3.

6.2 Public Rights of Way

6.2.1 There are three Public Footpaths within the study area (refer to Figure 03 in Appendix 2). The only Public Right of Way where users are likely to be affected, is those using Public Footpath PROW 44_17 that follows The Avenue.

6.3 Roads

6.3.1 There are a number of residential streets within the vicinity of the Site. The density, form and massing of buildings creates a strong enclosure to these roads, essentially containing views to the street scene. Occasional gaps between buildings and intersections of roads, allows views beyond the street scene, but these are limited. The consistency of built height and form and presence of trees, results in little awareness of neighbouring buildings, within neighbouring streets and consequently there is little influence of built form beyond the built frontages of the surrounding streets. This creates an intimate character and street focused experience. Views of the Site are thus largely limited to users of roads adjoining the Site, namely Mount Pleasant Road, The Avenue, Debden Road and the Old Mill Road. The views along Mount Pleasant Road fall within the Conservation Area and are more noteworthy in terms of visual experience, due to the presence of distinctive buildings along the road frontage and the wide hedge and trees that form the boundary with the Former Friends' School.

6.4 Residential Properties

6.4.1 The TVA serves to focus upon publicly accessible views and, as such, it does not include a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment which would typically form a separate piece of work as it relates to potential effects upon private views. However, a broad description is considered helpful in order to provide contextual information and to provide an indication of the likely extent of private residential views of the Site.

6.4.2 Views from residential properties are largely limited to those directly facing on to the Site, namely from first floor windows to the front of residential properties along the northern edge of Mount Pleasant Road, properties overlooking the Site along Water Place Tower and a small section of The Avenue where residential properties face onto the Site. Views from the residential properties along Mount Pleasant Road are largely obscured by the hedges and trees along the northern edge of the Site, although filtered views are possible during winter. More open views are possible from the

houses fronting on to Water Place Tower and parts of The Avenue but are partially obscured by the trees along the western and southern boundaries in summer and filtered in winter. Views from most of the houses along Debden Road are obscured by the existing residential buildings along Water Tower Place, The Avenue and Mount Pleasant Road. Views from the houses within the housing estates to the south and east of the former school playing fields are contained by the mature hedgerows, trees and woodland along the boundary of the playing fields.

6.5 Representative viewpoints

6.5.1 The selected Viewpoints provide a range of geographical locations, providing representative visual experiences for visual receptors, as well as using locations where there is the potential for the visual receptors to be affected.

Table 6.1: Summary of visual receptors - sensitivity

| Viewpoint, location and receptor type | Description | Visual sensitivity: value | Visual sensitivity: susceptibility to change | Overall visual sensitivity |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Viewpoint 1: Mount Pleasant Road Road User | • See above. | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Viewpoint 2: Mount Pleasant Road Road User | • See above. | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Viewpoint 3: Mount Pleasant Road Road User | • See above. | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Viewpoint 4: Debden Road Road User | • See above. | Low | Medium | Low |
| Viewpoint 5: Water Tower Place Road User | • See above | Low | Medium | Low |
| Viewpoint 6: The Avenue Road User | • See above | Low | Medium | Low |
| Viewpoint 7: Public Footpath 44/17 Walker | • See above | Medium | High | High |
| Viewpoint 8: Debden Road Road User | • See above | Low | Medium | Low |

7 Proposed development

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 The proposed development seeks to repurpose the Former Friends School site from its previously educational function to residential development. Following the former school's closure, the various school buildings have remained unused for a period of time and the grounds remained closed to public access. The proposed residential development will replace the poorer quality existing buildings and extensions within the Site, whilst retaining those buildings of identified architectural

merit, most noticeably the Main School building and Croydon House both of which contribute to the existing character of the local townscape, the conservation area and, in particular, the character of Mount Pleasant Road.

7.1.2 The proposed development aims to ensure the long-term viability of the distinctive buildings that relate to Mount Pleasant Road through their sensitive conversion to residential use. In addition, the new buildings are to be introduced within the former heart of the school and will be located and arranged in such a manner as to consolidate the valued landscape attributes, in particular the distinctive lime avenue to the south of the Main School building, and the arrangement and distribution of open space that provides the immediate setting to the retained buildings.

7.1.3 The proposed new residential buildings will help to strengthen and define the spatial structure and spatial organisation of the former school site and will be designed to relate to and complement the character of the existing buildings, the Lime Avenue and the existing spatial structure. The proposed development comprises the following key elements (refer to Appendix 2 for Dwg No. B21049.101E Landscape Proposals):

- demolition of various, generally undistinctive existing buildings including: The Pottery; the Assembly Hall extension; the Sports Hall; the Science Blocks; the Preparatory School building; and the Crossfield and Leicester former accommodation blocks;
- retention and sensitive conversion to residential use of the Main School building, Croydon House and the Assembly Hall;
- new flats to the northwest corner of the Site within the vicinity of Croydon House and the former Assembly Hall;
- a new residential apartment block attached to the southwest of the Main School building, broadly consistent with the footprint of an existing extension which is to be demolished;
- replacement of the Sports Hall with The Ash, two short rows of seven new terraced houses with shallow pitched roofs;
- nine semi-detached/terraced dwellings either side of the southern end of the north-south aligned Lime Avenue, known as The Oak and The Lime, which are to be partially located on the footprint of former buildings which are to be demolished;
- retention and enhancement of the north-south aligned Lime Avenue;
- retention of all key areas of mature trees and associated shrub/hedgerow planting;
- retention of the existing multi-use games area (MUGA);
- provision of a consolidated landscape structure to give design cohesiveness to the entirety of the development;
- retention of the area of open space/former grass tennis courts to the west of the Lime Avenue;
- the creation of small garden/seating areas for the residents (and off-site local residents) to enjoy. These include areas to the south of the Main School building, around the retained existing pond and to the south of the retained MUGA;

- retention and enhancement of the important area of open space immediately to the north of the Main School building which provides its immediate context and setting from Mount Pleasant Road to the north;
- retention of the former garden area associated with the Science Block and its development and enhancement as a retained feature within the site;
- creation of new access points into the site off Water Tower Place (adjoining the Site to the west) and The Avenue (adjoining the Site to the south); and
- the incorporation of areas of new hard standing to provide parking for the various dwellings within the Site, broken up by planting.

8 Effects on Site features

8.1 Effects on Site features

8.1.1 The following details the likely effects arising from the proposed development on Site features, as described at Chapter 3 and within Table 3.1, together with the significance of such change. The effects on Site features are considered in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8.1 Summary of effects on Site features

| Site feature | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Landform Sensitivity: Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be some minor modifications to the landform to accommodate the proposed buildings, car parks and garden areas. However, this would result in little discernible change within the Site and would not be apparent beyond the Site. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Neutral | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Minor Nature of change: Neutral |
| Land-use Sensitivity: Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be a change from no current defined land use with unoccupied buildings to residential use. The proposed development would provide a beneficial use for the Site and retained buildings that is consistent with the character of its surroundings and prevent continuing future issues of trespassing and vandalism. Some of the areas of sport provision and gardens would be retained. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial |

| Site feature | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vegetation Sensitivity: High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A total of 27 trees and a row of 7 sycamore would be removed by the proposed development. All the trees to be removed are assessed within the Tree Survey as being Category C (low value) trees, with the exception of one Category B (moderate value) tree. Most of the trees to be removed are diminutive and provide limited contribution to the Site and public amenity value. However, a Category B tree, a Category C ash tree, a Category C beech tree and two Category C foxglove trees are larger and provide a more noticeable presence and contribution to the Site. These trees are internal within the Site, with little or no awareness of their presence beyond the Site, so have limited current public amenity value. 75 new trees would be planted within different parts of the Site, providing a significant increase in the number of trees within the Site. Most of the existing hedges would be retained and managed. The hedge between the corner of Crossfield and Leicester buildings would be removed. A small amount of ornamental planting would be removed adjacent to buildings to be removed. The proposed hedge and shrub planting would exceed the quantity being removed and provide a more meaningful contribution to the Site. Some areas of amenity grass would be removed but this would be largely replaced with amenity grassland in alternative locations e.g. rear gardens of Ash plots and the new pocket park. Initially it is assessed that the effect would be adverse, but once the planting has become established after 15 years, on balance, the effect is assessed as beneficial. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Major/Moderate Nature of change: Adverse | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Major/Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial |
| Buildings Sensitivity: High | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The buildings, identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal, which make an important architectural and historic contribution would be retained. In addition, the architecturally noteworthy building of Croydon House would also be retained. This would secure the long term future and management of these locally important buildings and avoid future vandalism and neglect. The other ordinary/poor buildings will be removed. These have little or no architectural interest, are not locally distinctive, and do not contribute positively to the Conservation Area. Some are in poor condition or, in the case of the former Sports Hall, have an intrusive effect. The proposed buildings would provide greater visual and architectural interest, providing a built character that reflects the buildings of local historic character. The proposed extension to the existing main school building would reflect its built character and use of materials. The proposed buildings would be | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: High Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: High Significance of effect: Major Nature of change: Beneficial | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: High Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: High Significance of effect: Major Nature of change: Beneficial |

| Site feature | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>equivalent in size and volume to the existing buildings. The only exception being the extension to the main school building, which would be three storey instead of the two storey building it replaces, but would be consistent with the predominant height of the retained main school building to the rear. The proposed buildings would occupy similar positions to the existing buildings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is assessed that the proposed buildings would provide a notable improvement to the built character of the Site, whilst retaining a long term future for the existing buildings of interest, and on balance would provide a beneficial change. | | |
| Public Access Sensitivity: Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development would provide the opportunity for public access, which is currently not available, providing a benefit. | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium</p> <p>Geographical influence: Medium</p> <p>Duration/Reversibility: High</p> <p>Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Moderate</p> <p>Nature of change: Beneficial</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium</p> <p>Geographical influence: Medium</p> <p>Duration/Reversibility: High</p> <p>Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Moderate</p> <p>Nature of change: Beneficial</p> |

9 Effects on townscape character

9.1 Overview

9.1.1 The following table describe the likely effects of the proposed development on townscape character areas identified at Section 4, together with the significance of such change.

9.1.2 The townscape character areas defined within this report are used as the baseline for assessing effects as they provided the most detailed information for the Site and its surrounding area.

9.2 Summary of effects on townscape character

9.2.1 Table 9.1 below summarises the effects that the proposed development would have on townscape character.

Table 9.1: Summary of effects on townscape character areas

| Townscape character area | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local Townscape Character | | | |
| <p>TCA 1: Victorian Mixed Sensitivity: High</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development would retain the distinctiveness and character of TCA 1. The proposed development would be recognised as forming part of a different area of townscape character. There would be little effect on the streetscape character of Mount Pleasant Road that forms the southern boundary of the TCA. The retention of the mature wide hedgerow and tree belt would retain a strong green character on the edge of the TCA. The adjoining features of strong built character would be retained. The main apparent change occurring within the adjoining TCA would be the replacement of the existing sports hall with The Ash shallow pitched roof terraced properties and the replacement of the dilapidated The Pottery buildings with the proposed flats to the south of Croydon House. These would enhance the neighbouring built character through the reduction of massing / improved built character and appearance, providing a direct benefit. The loss of existing trees within TCA 2 would largely not be discernible within TCA 1. | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Low</p> <p>Geographical influence: Low</p> <p>Duration/Reversibility: High</p> <p>Overall magnitude of effect: Low</p> <p>Significance of effect: Moderate</p> <p>Nature of change: Beneficial</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Low</p> <p>Geographical influence: Low</p> <p>Duration/Reversibility: High</p> <p>Overall magnitude of effect: Low</p> <p>Significance of effect: Moderate</p> <p>Nature of change: Beneficial</p> |
| <p>TCA 2: Victorian Academic Sensitivity: High</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed development applies a contemporary interpretation of the built character within the TCA, reflecting built features and use of materials. The proposed west wing extension to the retained main school building would reflect the scale and massing of the main building and character of the TCA. The average or poor quality buildings within the Former Friends' School grounds would be removed and replaced with a building of similar scale and mass but providing an enhanced built character, appearance, detailing and use of materials that would provide a stronger built character with a more sympathetic influence on the TCA. The character of individual standalone buildings with irregular form and building line of the TCA would be retained. Whilst a comparable extent of hard surfacing would be present within the proposed development to the existing situation, the proposals would introduce a greater presence | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium</p> <p>Geographical influence: Medium</p> <p>Duration/Reversibility: High</p> <p>Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Major-Moderate</p> <p>Nature of change: Beneficial</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium</p> <p>Geographical influence: Medium</p> <p>Duration/Reversibility: High</p> <p>Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Major-Moderate</p> <p>Nature of change: Beneficial</p> |

| Townscape character area | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>of parked vehicles, albeit away from the key frontages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main area of open space and groups of trees would be retained, together with new planting, would maintain the existing balance of built form to open space and treed boundary enclosure and character of the TCA. Boundary features, such as walls and railings would also be retained. The proposals would provide enhanced connectivity and public access and increase the presence of new tree and hedge/shrub planting, as well as ensure ongoing management of the existing retained trees and vegetation. On balance, the proposed development would provide an enhancement to the TCA. | | |
| <p>TCA 3: Twentieth Century Residential Sensitivity: Very Low</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCA 3 is physically and visually separated from the Site and contained by other intervening built development and vegetation. This would prevent any awareness of changes occurring in the adjoining TCA. | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: No Change Geographical influence: No Change Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: No Change Significance of effect: No Change Nature of change: N/A</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: No Change Geographical influence: No Change Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: No Change Significance of effect: No Change Nature of change: N/A</p> |
| <p>TCA 4: Contemporary Residential Sensitivity: Medium</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of the existing average and poor quality buildings and replacement with buildings of enhanced built character, features and detailing would be more reflective of the TCA, providing an enhancement. The replacement of the existing educational buildings with residential dwellings, which include terraced and semi-detached two storey residential properties, would more sympathetically relate to the residential character of TCA 4. Whilst there would be some variation in form, detailing and use of materials, there would be a number of similarities in built character, providing a complementary appearance that responds to the built character of TCA 4. Most of the boundary features, vegetation and trees, in particular the lime avenue would be retained, helping the proposed development to integrate with the adjoining character of TCA 4. The improved access and | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial</p> |

| Townscape character area | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| | connectivity offered by the proposed development would provide enhanced links with TCA 4, particularly in relation to the continued physical access along the lime avenue, a key feature of TCA 4. | | |

9.2.2 The influence of the proposed development on the broader townscape character in the southern part of Saffron Walden is limited due to the extent of existing containment provided by built form, the retention of existing key buildings, the presence and retention of most of the mature hedgerows and trees along the boundaries of the Former Friends' School grounds, and the replacement of the existing buildings with buildings positioned in similar locations and of comparable mass. This is furthered influenced by the retention of a comparable extent of hard and soft treatments, retention of the main areas of open space and most of the main significant trees within the Site, as well as providing additional new tree planting, thereby helping to retain a treed character to this part of the town. Car parking would provide a change in character, but this would be localised, well contained and restricted in influence, due to their location away from the main frontages and through the retention of existing mature vegetation and provision of new planting that would break up the massing of vehicles. The proposals would lead to a notable change in character, within a localised context, predominantly within the Site and adjoining land of the former playing fields to the east and TCA 4 to the south and west. The proposals would provide a beneficial change, introducing an enhanced built character to the existing buildings to be removed, that would be more sympathetic to their context. Most of the proposed buildings are on the periphery of the Site and would therefore provide a more consistent residential character with the adjoining streetscapes and TCAs, both engaging with and providing a more integrated townscape character, than the former more contained private educational character, thereby creating a transitional character.

10 Effects on Designations

10.1 Conservation Area

10.1.1 Most of the main parts and aspects of the Conservation Area, including Area 6, would remain unchanged. The buildings that provide an important architectural or historic contribution would be retained. The key feature of the lime avenue, the trees and hedgerow along Mount Pleasant Road, and other significant trees of public amenity value would be retained. The open space, including the existing playing fields and the semi-circular lawn to the front of the main school building would be retained. The proposed development would replace the existing buildings, which have a neutral or intrusive effect on the character of the Conservation Area or in poor condition, with buildings that would have a stronger architectural influence. The proposed buildings would provide greater visual variety and interest in a way that is sympathetic to the existing built form and character or Area 6 but also integrates with the adjoining more contemporary residential development, providing a neutral effect on the historic character of the Conservation Area.

10.1.2 The necessitated proposed parking has been integrated to the rear of the Site, in locations that are not discernible from key frontages and the public realm. The massing of parking has been broken up, wherever possible, through the provision of planting and by providing parking in different locations within the Site.

10.1.3 The extent of proposed built massing would be comparable to the existing built mass to be removed. Similarly, there would be a comparable extent of hard and soft landscape treatment between the proposed development and the existing situation. There would be an initial unavoidable loss of existing trees and hedges of variable size and maturity to facilitate the proposed development. These are generally fairly insignificant, although there would be the loss of some more prominent Category C trees. The proposed development has sought to minimise the loss of trees wherever possible. The trees removed would be replaced with a greater number of new trees and hedge/shrub planting, which once established would provide an overall beneficial influence.

10.2 Protected Open Space

10.2.1 The only part of the Protected Open Space that would be affected, is an area of existing hard tennis courts and hardcourts, which relate more to the character of the former playing fields that have been subsequently developed with buildings and no longer forms open space. The existing MUGA would be retained but the hardcourt immediately to the south would be converted to provide a small area of public open space, providing a benefit. The existing hard tennis courts would be replaced with an area of parking, and whilst also a hard surface treatment, would be a detrimental change as a result of the introduction of vehicles. These changes to the Protected Open Space are relatively minor and localised and would not notably change the nature of the open space.

10.2.2 The Protected Open Space to the north would be largely retained with its current form and character. A couple of trees to the south-east would be removed. There would also be new tree and bulb planting created to provide some enhancement to the space. There would be some minor extension of the asphalt surfacing that forms the arcing access driveway to the former school building entrance. Nevertheless, the primary form and character of the road and adjoining lawn would be retained.

10.2.3 The proposals would incorporate a mixture of adverse and beneficial changes, resulting in an overall neutral effect to the Protected Open Space.

10.3 Tree Preservation Order

10.3.1 There would be no loss of TPO trees.

Table 10.1: Summary of effects on designations

| Designation | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Saffron Walden Conservation Area Sensitivity: High | • See above. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Major-Moderate Nature of change: Neutral | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Major-Moderate Nature of change: Neutral |
| Protected Open Space Sensitivity: High | • See above. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Neutral | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Low Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Neutral |
| Tree Preservation Order Sensitivity: High | • See above. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: No Change Geographical influence: No Change Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: No Change Significance of effect: No Change Nature of change: N/A | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: No Change Geographical influence: No Change Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: No Change Significance of effect: No Change Nature of change: N/A |

11 Effects on visual receptors

11.1 Effects experienced from representative viewpoints

11.1.1 The ZTV is illustrated on Figures 04 and 05 in Appendix 2. Figure 04 shows the theoretical visibility of the proposed buildings without taking account of the screening effect of the existing trees and Figure 05 shows theoretically visibility including the screening influence of trees. The ZTVs are based on grouping the retained and proposed buildings into three groups to provide a more detailed analysis of the visual influence of the proposed built form. The retained existing buildings are included in Group A, with the main school building being the tallest building. The exception is the retained part of the Assembly Hall, which is included within Group B, together with the replacement extension to the north. Whilst the proposals will result in internal modifications, there will be no external changes, so will be no different to the existing situation. In addition to the Assembly Hall, Group B covers the proposed buildings that form new extensions to the retained main school building, replacing the existing extensions, and the new buildings that will replace existing buildings

within the northern half of the Site. Group B buildings have a maximum height of 13m. Group C cover the proposed buildings that would replace the existing buildings within the southern part of the Site. Both ZTVs illustrate that the visual influence of the retained and proposed buildings would be largely limited to the extent of the grounds of the Former Friends' School i.e. the Site and adjoining former playing fields. Group C buildings would theoretically mainly affect views along The Avenue. All building Groups would theoretically affect views from The Avenue when trees are not taken into account. Group B buildings theoretically mainly affect views from the Water Tower Place and parts of Debden Road. Group A and B theoretically affect a short section of Debden Road and a part of Borough Road and, when trees are not taken into account, the section of Mount Pleasant Road directly fronting on to the north of the Site. The ZTVs also show that is only residents with residential properties that front on to the Site that would theoretically have views affected by the proposed development.

11.1.2 Consequently, the Site is visually well contained, with visual receptors only being affected in close proximity to the Site. This was further supported by the site visit, which highlighted what the visual influence would be of the retained existing vegetation within the Site and the extent of visibility of the existing buildings. This showed, the existing surrounding built form, the maturity, width and extent of evergreen species in the vegetation along the northern Site boundary, and the retention of the main school building and Croydon House, would have an important influence in containing views from visual receptors using the roads to the north-west, north, and north-east of the Site. More open views are possible from Water Tower Place and The Avenue, but the buildings along these roads, and Friends Walk, combined with variations in level, largely prevented views beyond from views to the west, south-west and south. The only exception being the proposed flats to the south of Croydon House, which would be visible along parts of Debden Road. Views from the east and south-east are largely contained by the mature hedgerows, trees and woodland along the boundary of the former playing fields, except very filtered views through the vegetation in winter.

11.1.3 The effect on visual receptors is based on the assessment of Viewpoints 1-8, which represents the locations where visual receptors would most likely be affected from different geographical positions, as set out in Table 11.1. Refer to Figure 03 in Appendix 2 for Viewpoint locations and Type 1 Visualisations (Annotated Photographs) in Appendix 3.

Table 11.1: Summary of effects on visual receptors

| Viewpoint | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Viewpoint 1: Mount Pleasant Road Visual Receptor: Road User Sensitivity: Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing retained wall and evergreen vegetation would continue to largely obscure views into the Site in summer and winter. Filtered views of Croydon House in the foreground would continue, as is currently the case. The only discernible change would be the replacement of the existing Assembly Hall extension with the proposed extension. The proposed extension would reflect the existing extension by being a one storey flat roofed extension, built of red brick with modern casement windows. Whilst there are differences in architectural design / appearance, these would be barely discernible as a change, due to the very filtered nature of the view. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: N/A | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: N/A |

| Viewpoint | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Viewpoint 2: Pleasant Road Visual Receptor: Road User Sensitivity: Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In summer there would be very filtered views through to The Ash proposed shallow pitched roof residential terraced properties. Glimpses would be possible of the northern gable end of the row of four terraced properties through the existing vegetation along the northern boundary of the Site. This would replace the existing view of sports hall which would be demolished. In summer, there would be barely any discernible change to the road user. In winter, the view is more open, with the vegetation along the northern Site boundary providing less screening. The removal of the existing sports and hall and replacement with views of the gable end of The Ash shallow pitched roof terraced properties would be an apparent change. The view would be similar, being of a blank brick wall, but would appear as a reduced built mass and therefore an enhancement to the view. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Low Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: Neutral |
| Viewpoint 3: Pleasant Road Visual Receptor: Road User Sensitivity: Medium | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent of vegetation along the northern side of the Former Friends' School playing fields would prevent views of the proposed development in summer. The concentration and density of branch form of the trees and understorey scrub, and the presence of evergreen shrubs and ivy on the trees would significantly obscures views of the proposed buildings in winter. The very glimpsed views of the existing sports hall would be replaced by The Ash proposed shallow pitched roof terraced properties. However, these glimpsed views would be sufficiently indistinct that it is unlikely that the road user would be aware of any change and be no more than a negligible effect. | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: N/A | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: No Change Geographical influence: No Change Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: No Change Significance of effect: No Change Nature of change: N/A |
| Viewpoint 4: Debden Road Visual Receptor: Road User Sensitivity: Low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Pottery buildings and the small trees along the western boundary with Debden Road would be removed from a more distant part of the view, just beyond the junction with Mount Pleasant Road. The existing retaining wall and fence along the road would be retained. The proposed flats south of Croydon House would be seen as a new built feature above the wall and fence. This would be experienced as a blank red brick wall and slate pitched roof on the southern side elevation. This would appear in the same part of the view as the existing residential properties at the southern end of Water Tower Place. The proposals would appear as having a similar built mass and visual presence in the view, providing limited material difference to the view in terms of built form. The main apparent change would be the removal of the existing trees along the boundary with | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate/Minor Nature of change: Adverse | <u>Magnitude Assessment</u> Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium Significance of effect: Moderate/Minor Nature of change: Beneficial |

| Viewpoint | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Debden Road, enabling the built form to be more visible. The trees are small in stature and do not provide a major feature in the view, however, their removal in the view would initially be apparent. The proposed hedge and tree planting would redefine this visual presence within the street scene, once established by Year 15, providing a more appropriate form and longevity.</p> | | |
| <p>Viewpoint 5: Water Tower Place Visual Receptor: Road User Sensitivity: Low</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed replacement building for the existing classroom building on the eastern wing of the main school building, would occupy a very similar location within the view as the existing classroom building. The main apparent difference would be the increase in height from two storey to three storey. Whilst partially, seen against the backdrop of the 3 storey main school building, it would increase the presence of built form in the view, as seen against the skyline. The appearance of the proposed building would be similar to the existing building, but with greater articulation and definition in form through use of projections, gables, glazing and balconies. The proposals would also introduce the use of slate for the roof. There would be a minor benefit from the removal of the existing science blocks from a more distant part of the view. The existing presence of boundary features, hedges and trees would largely remain the same. The new road link from Water Tower Place would not materially change the view. The proposed parking would be largely obscured to the viewer. On balance, the increase in built mass of the proposed building within the view would result in adverse effect on the viewer, although apparent as being characteristic of the built setting. | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Moderate/Minor</p> <p>Nature of change: Adverse</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Moderate/Minor</p> <p>Nature of change: Adverse</p> |
| <p>Viewpoint 6: The Avenue Visual Receptor: Road User Sensitivity: Low</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The boundary railings and trees would be retained in the foreground but the section of the hedge nearest the viewer would be removed and replaced with a timber hit and miss fence to form the rear of the gardens of the proposed The Lime semi-detached town houses. The proposed dwellings would replace the existing buildings of Crossfield and Leicester. The proposals would reduce the presence of built mass within the view. The rear of the proposed town houses would have a similar built appearance to the existing buildings, being predominantly formed of red brick, plain elevation, casement windows and pitched roofs. Some additional detailing is proposed in the use of Staffordshire blue brick detailing and use of dormer windows, and the provision of Eternit Thrutone Fibre Slate roofs. In | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Moderate/Minor</p> <p>Nature of change: Neutral</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Moderate/Minor</p> <p>Nature of change: Neutral</p> |

| Viewpoint | Description of effects | Year 1 (Winter) | Year 15 (Summer) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>winter, The Limes would be visible as filtered views through the existing trees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reduced visible built mass would provide an enhancement to the view but would be offset by the loss of the existing hedge and introduction of the proposed fencing. In summer, views of the proposed town houses would be restricted to glimpsed views through the foliage. The proposed evergreen hedge would have also established to screen the proposed fence and replace the loss of the hedge. | | |
| <p>Viewpoint 7: Public Footpath 44/17 Visual Receptor: Walker Sensitivity: High</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focal lime avenue would be retained, with the other existing focal feature, that of Preparatory School building, would be removed and replaced with The Oak semi-detached properties. The proposed properties further to the east would largely be obscured by the existing houses closer to the viewer. The semi-detached properties closer to the viewer would occupy a reduced proportion of the view, providing a reduced visible built mass in the view, in comparison to the existing Preparatory School building. The Oak would provide a residential character more in keeping with the context of the view and active frontage with The Avenue. This would be assisted by the removal of the existing fence along the Site boundary, creating a more open appearance. The architectural form and appearance of The Oak frontage would also enhance the built character, replacing the existing plain built elevations with greater articulation, detailing and use of materials, providing a more engaging appearance that is characteristic of the existing residential development along The Avenue. Accordingly, there would be an evident enhancement to the visual experience for walkers, road users and residents. | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Major/Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Medium Geographical influence: Medium Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Medium</p> <p>Significance of effect: Major/Moderate Nature of change: Beneficial</p> |
| <p>Viewpoint 8: Debden Road Visual Receptor: Road User Sensitivity: Low</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing houses along Friends Walk and associated walls and hedges along the garden boundaries and variation in levels, would prevent views of the proposed development. The exception would be a very minor glimpse of the proposed flats to the south of Croydon House within a distant part of the view. This would result in a barely discernible change to the view. | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low</p> <p>Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: N/A</p> | <p><u>Magnitude Assessment</u></p> <p>Size/scale: Very Low Geographical influence: Low Duration/Reversibility: High Overall magnitude of effect: Very Low</p> <p>Significance of effect: Negligible Nature of change: N/A</p> |

12 Summary and conclusions

- 12.1.1 The proposed development is located within the Former Friends' School site, within the southern part of Saffron Walden, occupying the existing area of school buildings, hard courts, tennis courts, a lime avenue and boundary vegetation. To the east of the Site, lies the former school playing fields. The Site lies with Zone 6 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area. Whilst there are no listed buildings in the Site, the Conservation Area Appraisal identifies that the older, former elements of the Main School building and the Assembly Hall are buildings that make '*an important architectural and historic contribution*' to the Conservation Area. There are a number of listed buildings adjoining the Site and local context, most notably the Water Tower to the west of the Site, and a pair of Victorian semi-detached villas on Mount Pleasant Road to the north of the Site. There are also two Protected Open Spaces, as defined within the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005, covering the semi-circular lawn to the front of the Main School building and the former playing fields, part of which lies within the Site. However, changes have occurred to the Protected Open Space covering the former playing fields since its designation. This includes much of the western part being developed for housing that now forms part of The Avenue residential development, the construction of the Preparatory School building, and the introduction of the MUGA and hard court within the south-eastern part of the Site. Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 07/07/38 also covers parts of the former school site, which includes a number of trees within the Site. These make an important contribution to the character of the Site, most notably a lime avenue to the south of the Site, a row of trees that form part of a wide hedgerow that defines the northern frontage of the Former Friends' School with Mount Pleasant Road, groups of trees to the front of the Main School Building, and trees along the western Site boundary. There are also a number of other trees, hedges and shrubs, which provide less of a contribution.
- 12.1.2 The school buildings and grounds have remained unused for a period time, with uncertainty regarding the future use of the Site. The proposed development would ensure the retention and future management of the buildings of architectural merit and historic interest and the main trees that contribute to the Conservation Area and local townscape character. The retained buildings would be sensitively converted to residential use. A number of additional school buildings were introduced, including extensions to the original school buildings, during the 20th and 21st century. These buildings are largely functional and ordinary in appearance, lacking the distinctiveness and architectural interest of the original Victorian buildings. Some are also in poor condition. The proposed development would replace these buildings, in similar locations, with buildings of similar mass but of higher quality and greater architectural interest that more sympathetically relate to the Site and adjoining residential character. The semi-circular lawn to the north of the Main School building would be retained with some minor changes to the access driveway. The proposed development would introduce changes to the external space to the south of the Main School building to reflect the requirements of the residential development, with a similar proportion of hard and soft surface treatments, presence of gardens and tree cover being provided. This includes the request by UDC for the existing tennis courts to be replaced with car parking, to enable the retention of the small garden and pond.

- 12.1.3 The proposed development would result in a minor change to landform and would have a Moderate Beneficial significance of effect on land use, by securing a long term use for the Site that is sympathetic to its context. The proposals would result in the loss of 27 trees, and a row of insignificant sycamores, of which a beech, an ash, and two foxglove trees provide a noticeable presence and contribution within the Site. All the trees to be removed are assessed as Category C (low value) trees in the Tree Survey, with the exception of a single Category B (moderate value) tree. The proposed development has sought to minimise the loss of trees with only those necessary to facilitate the development being removed. The majority of trees and hedges, including the TPO trees and key boundary trees / vegetation would be retained. 75 new trees, hedge and shrub planting would be provided as part of the proposed development, which would more than offset the losses, once established. This would create a more extensive landscape treatment for the Site, as well as bringing the existing vegetation into regularly management. The loss of the trees would have an initial Major/Moderate Adverse significance of effect but with the establishment of the proposed planting this would more than offset the losses, providing a Major/Moderate Beneficial significance of effect by Year 15. The retention and management of the existing buildings of architectural and historic interest, and the replacement of the ordinary and undistinctive buildings and extensions, with buildings of greater architectural interest that more sympathetically integrates with their setting, would provide a Major Beneficial significance of effect.
- 12.1.4 The retention of the key buildings, trees and boundary vegetation and the enhancement of built character and increased planting within the Site, would also have a beneficial effect on townscape character. Due to the containment of the Site by the existing buildings adjoining the Site and the retention of the mature boundary vegetation on the edges of the Former Friends' School site, there would be limited influence on townscape and visual receptors beyond the Site. Four different Townscape Character Areas (TCAs) have been defined within this assessment, reflecting the historic settlement pattern and expansion of Saffron Walden at the end of 19th century and through the 20th century and the first part of the 21st century. This has influenced built form, massing, street layout, architectural style and features, density and boundary treatments. The Site is identified as lying within TCA 2: Victorian Academic, defined by large existing and former academic buildings, hard standing, open space and well defined treed boundaries. The key buildings and boundary vegetation that define the TCA would be retained, with the average or poor quality buildings being replaced with buildings that apply a more contemporary interpretation of the built character within the TCA, whilst also utilising materials characteristic of the TCA. This would result in a Major-Moderate Beneficial significance of effect. Due to the extent of built and vegetative containment there would be No Change to the large TCA 3 Twentieth Century Residential that lies to the south and east of TCA 2. There would be an indirect effect on the fringes of the adjoining TCA 1 Victorian Mixed and TCA 4 Contemporary Residential. The proposed development would retain the primary character of TCA 1, with much of the TCA being unaffected. This is in part due to the retention of the mature boundary vegetation to the north of the Site, which would retain a strong green character to the streetscape of Mount Pleasant Road. The main apparent change would be the replacement of the existing intrusive Sports Hall with the more sympathetic residential properties of The Ash and the replacement of the dilapidated buildings of The Pottery with the proposed flats to the south of the retained Croydon House. This would result in a Moderate Beneficial significance of effect on TCA 1. The replacement of the existing school buildings within the southern part of the

Site would provide a more sympathetic residential character with TCA 4 to the south and west, reflecting some of the contemporary residential architectural character and use of materials within TCA 4, whilst still retaining the distinctive character of TCA 2, providing more of a transitional built character. The main boundary vegetation would be preserved, maintaining the green interface, as well as retaining the lime avenue which forms a distinctive feature that connects TCA 2 and TCA 4, whilst also enabling physical connectivity. The proposals would result in a Moderate Beneficial significance of effect on TCA 4.

- 12.1.5 The retention of the buildings of architectural and historic interest, the main significant trees, features and boundary vegetation, the notable areas of open space, and the retention of the boundary walls and railings would conserve the main features of interest in the Conservation Area. The proposed buildings would replace buildings that have a neutral or intrusive effect on the Conservation Area and replace with buildings that would have a more sympathetic and greater architectural interest. Whilst there would be an enhanced effect on the built character, the effect on the historic interest of the Conservation Area is assessed as being predominantly a neutral change. The necessitated proposed parking has been integrated to the rear of the Site, in locations that are not discernible from key frontages and the public realm. The massing of parking has been broken up, wherever possible, through the provision of planting and by providing parking in different locations within the Site. The proposals would provide a comparable built massing and extent of hard and soft landscape treatment to the existing situation. Whilst some trees and hedges would be removed, these would be replaced with a greater quantity of new trees and hedge/shrub planting. On balance, the change is assessed as having a Major-Moderate Neutral significance of effect.
- 12.1.6 There would be limited effect on the two Protected Open Spaces, with minor changes to the open space to the north and a mixture of beneficial and adverse changes to the Protected Open Space to the south-east of the Site, within a part that has already been notably affected. The changes would result in a Moderate Neutral significance of effect. There would be no loss of TPO trees.
- 12.1.7 The visual containment of the Site by the adjoining built form and retention of existing boundary vegetation, restricts views into the Site from publicly accessible locations. Consequently, there would be limited effect on visual receptor from roads, footways and public footpaths in the adjoining parts of Saffron Walden. This is demonstrated by the ZTV, which indicates a restricted zone of theoretical visibility from streets in the local context of the Site. Views of the proposed development would be limited to the adjoining streets to the north, west and south. Views of the proposed development from the Mount Pleasant Road to the north would be largely prevented by the mature wide hedge and trees along the road, in particular along the northern edge of the Site, where much of the vegetation is evergreen. Change in views to users of Debden Road would be limited to the replacement of the dilapidated buildings of The Pottery with the proposed flats to the south of Croydon House, which would be seen in the context of the existing residential dwellings on Debden Road. Change would be more apparent to users of Water Tower Place and The Avenue and the associated Public Footpath 44/17, due to the change in built form and appearance. The proposals would be experienced as retaining a similar proportion of built massing and location, set within a retained tree landscape. The main apparent change would arise from a greater awareness of a more residential character and architectural style and detailing that would relate more to the

street scene of The Avenue and the Water Tower Place. Effected visual receptors would experience a mixture of adverse, neutral and beneficial change but none of which would be significant, except for walkers using Public Footpath 44/17 where there would be a Major/Moderate Beneficial significance of effect.

- 12.1.8** In conclusion, the proposals would provide an appropriate development that would sympathetically relate to its townscape setting and Conservation Area, providing enhancements to the existing built character and external space, whilst retaining the key characteristic features of the Site, and having limited effects on visual receptors.