
**Supporting Planning and Affordable Housing
Statement**

**LAND NORTH OF THAXTED ROAD, SAFFRON
WALDEN**

OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION

FOR

**THE ERECTION OF UP TO 55 DWELLINGS,
ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND OPEN
SPACE, WITH ACCESS FROM KNIGHT PARK**

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On behalf of:

Kier Ventures Ltd



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1. INTRODUCTION

Context

- 1.1. This Statement has been prepared by Woolf Bond Planning LLP on behalf of Kier Ventures Ltd in support of an **outline planning application** proposing the development of land North of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden for the erection of up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping and open space, with access from Knight Park.
- 1.2. The purpose of this Planning Statement is to summarise the findings of the various supporting technical documents (section 2 refers) and to provide an overview of the proposed scheme, whilst setting out a justification for the development having regard to the relevant planning policy and material considerations.
- 1.3. The application is submitted under S62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which allows for applications to be made directly to the Secretary of State where a local authority has been designated. Uttlesford District Council was designated for major applications in February 2022.
- 1.4. Submission of the application has been informed by the pre-application process undertaken with the LPA (Ref: UTT/23/2567/PA).
- 1.5. The formal pre-application advice received from the Council¹ related to schematics and technical matters generally (including noise) as well as the merits of the application in the context of an out of date development plan and the proposals for the Site in the Regulation 18 consultation draft Local Plan. In addition, whilst the Council purports to be able to demonstrate a marginal five year supply of deliverable housing land, the tilted balance is still engaged by virtue of the Council's reliance upon sites outside its defined settlement boundaries to demonstrate this supply. This Planning Statement explores these issues, and undertakes a planning balance exercise sufficient to justify the grant of planning permission.

¹ LPA Ref: UTT/22/1539/PA

- 1.6. The technical information submitted with this application demonstrates the acceptability of the scheme having regard to the requirements of the Development Plan. Importantly, it confirms the acceptability of the illustrative design and quantum of development which is given further support due to the engagement of the tilted balance.

Planning Policy Context

- 1.7. The Uttlesford District Local Plan (“LP”) was adopted in 2005 and sets out the overarching spatial strategy in seeking to meet development needs in the period 2000 to 2011. As shown on the adopted Proposals Map, the site is currently identified as being adjoining but outside the defined settlement boundary for Saffron Walden.
- 1.8. However, and in so far as the Local plan pre-dates the NPPF, the policies for the supply of housing including in relation to their spatial application are out of date and the weight to be attached to the policies should reflect the provisions at paragraph 219 of the NPPF.
- 1.9. The policies which are the most important for determining the merits the proposed scheme for development of the Site for up to 55 dwellings are out of date given their inconsistency with the NPPF. In short, the settlement boundaries defined in the Local Plan do not provide for current development needs. Furthermore, there are ongoing delays with the emerging Local Plan process and an overarching context of the Council’s reliance upon sites outside defined settlement boundaries to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land.
- 1.10. In the circumstances, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied on account of the development plan being ‘out of date’ having regard to the lack of consistency between the policies contained therein and the approach to development set out in the NPPF (paragraphs 11, 74 and 219 refer).
- 1.11. In locational terms, Saffron Walden is acknowledged in the adopted Local Plan as one of the three main urban areas in the District and is therefore one of the

most sustainable locations for further growth.

- 1.12. In addition, the policy context is also informed by the Council's reliance upon sites outside defined settlement boundaries to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land.
- 1.13. This triggers the tilted balance at paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF.
- 1.14. In terms of the emerging Local Plan, the Council has undertaken an Issues and Options consultation in 2020/21.
- 1.15. The Council is currently consulting on a Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. This consultation period is set to run until the 18th December 2023. The draft plan contains the vision, objectives, spatial strategy, and planning policy framework for the period 2021 to 2041. It is anticipated that the new local plan will be adopted in Spring of 2026.
- 1.16. As such, and in accordance with Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, minimal weight can be attributed to the policies and allocations contained therein. This creates a policy vacuum, in which the extant Development Plan is considerably out of date, and no longer able to meet the housing needs of the District, and with no clear direction on an emerging spatial strategy to guide development over the next 15-20 years.
- 1.17. In locational terms, Saffron Walden is acknowledged as being one of the most sustainable locations for growth in the District.
- 1.18. The proposals for the development of land to the north of Thaxted Road afford an opportunity to secure sustainable development that can be delivered expeditiously on the grant of planning permission.

Pre-application Consultation

- 1.19. The illustrative proposals for the Site have been subject to pre-application discussions with the LPA (LPA Ref: UTT/23/2567/PA), correspondence and meeting the with the statutory consultees (including Essex County Highways), as well as an online public consultation exercise. Full details are set out in the

supporting Design and Access Statement and the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement.

- 1.20. The final scheme design as now proposed is the product of a collaborative approach to the masterplan process, informed by the advice received from the LPA and statutory consultees.

The Application

- 1.21. In so far as the planning application is in outline, only the principle of developing the site for up to 55 dwellings and the means of access are to be determined as part of the application. All other matters of detail, including appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for subsequent determination.
- 1.22. The application site is shown edged red on the accompanying Site Location Plan No. 3119-A-1000-PR-D and extends to approximately 4.3ha.
- 1.23. Details of how the Site could be developed for the proposed quantum of housing is shown on Site Sketch layout Plan No. 3119-C-1005-SK-J.
- 1.24. The access arrangements are shown on the access plans included in Appendix 3 to the Transport Statement ("TS") prepared by Milestone Transport Planning, which includes the Proposed Access Plan No. 23075/001 (Appendix 3 of the TS refers).
- 1.25. The Site is located to the north of Thaxted Road, with residential development to the north and commercial/industrial development to the west. The Site is also within walking distance from local the facilities at Knight Park. It is also within walking and cycling distance from the town centre. Existing bus services operate along Thaxted Road, with funding to be made available through the Scheme to provide enhanced bus service provision.
- 1.26. No part of the application Site forms part of a Conservation Area and nor is it identified for any landscape 'value'.
- 1.27. As detailed in the Flood Risk Assessment that accompanies the application, the site is classified as falling within Flood Zones 1, the area at least risk of

flooding. There are no further environmental constraints which would preclude the proposed development.

- 1.28. The Council is not able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land without breaching its defined settlement boundaries, such that the most important policies for determining this application are out of date and the tilted balance is engaged. Additionally, development of the Site will bring about economic and social benefits and the fact that there are no technical constraints to bringing the site forward for development, including in relation to the capacity of the local highway network, which position is agreed with County Highways means that there is no reason for the Council not to support this application.
- 1.29. As set out in the Transport Statement (“TS”) accompanying the application, the site is suitably located for future residents to make sustainable travel choices on foot, bicycle and public transport. The TS sets out the sustainable benefits of providing development at the site given its proximity to public transport including bus and rail services.
- 1.30. As to schematics, the scale parameters, paragraphs 3 and 4 in Article 4 of the Town and County Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 were deleted by Amendment Order No.3 dated 31 January 2013 such that outline planning applications, where layout is a reserved matter, are no longer required to state the approximate locations of buildings; and where scale is a reserved matter they are no longer required to state the upper and lower height, width and length parameters.
- 1.31. Information shown on the supporting plans and particulars includes sufficient detail to evaluate and assess the general planning and layout principles that are submitted in support of the proposal.
- 1.32. As set out in this Planning Statement, the benefits of the Scheme include the provision of both market and affordable housing, in a sustainable location, within walking distance from local services and facilities, to help meet an identified housing need within the District.
- 1.33. The Scheme also secures additional local expenditure through an increased local population, council tax revenues, and new homes bonus as well as

additional construction jobs.

- 1.34. Although the application is in outline, with only (i) the principle of developing the site for up to 55 dwellings; and (ii) the means of access to be determined at this stage, the illustrative site plan also provides for onsite landscaping and biodiversity enhancements, which mitigate the impact of the proposed development in landscape visual and heritage terms.
- 1.35. As set out in this Statement, the Scheme accords with relevant planning policy considerations, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 1.36. In short, the development plan is out of date in terms of the spatial application of its housing policies by virtue of it being predicated on an out-of-date assessment of development needs².
- 1.37. In the circumstances, the presumption in favour of sustainable development (the tilted balance) at paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is clearly engaged. This requires planning applications to be approved unless footnote 7 considerations provide a clear reason for refusing development (which they do not in this case); or any adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Again, they do not.
- 1.38. This is demonstrably a case where the weight to be attached to conflict with the development plan (on account of the location of the site beyond the defined settlement boundary for Saffron Walden) can be reduced given the need to breach the settlement boundaries identified in the development plan to meet development needs.
- 1.39. As acknowledged by the Council, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies as a result of the out-of-date nature of the development plan policies irrespective of the lack of a five-year supply.

² See Hopkins Homes paragraph 63

Benefits of the Proposed Scheme

1.40. In assessing the merits of the application, the benefits of the scheme include:

- Provision of much needed housing in a sustainable location, helping to meet identified housing needs.
- Delivery of a significant proportion of affordable housing (40%).
- A high-quality design-led development scheme.
- Provision of substantial areas of landscaped areas of open space, accessible by the wider community.
- A form of development, including by means of the proposed landscaping strategy that can be assimilated into the character of the surrounding area and provide an improved landscape buffer to the existing urban edge.
- Increased local expenditure to sustain and support local services and facilities.
- Job opportunities and increased economic activity.

Content

1.41. This Planning Statement is set out as follows:

- Section 1:** Introduction
- Section 2:** Summary of Supporting Material
- Section 3:** Description of the Site and Surrounding Area
- Section 4:** Description of the Proposed Scheme
- Section 5:** Planning Policy Framework
- Section 6:** Consideration of the Proposed Scheme
- Section 7:** Summary

2. SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING MATERIAL

General

2.1. A number of technical studies and reports have been undertaken and prepared in support of the application and comprise as follows:

- Design & Access Statement (Omega Architects)
- Design Code (Omega Architects)
- Energy and Sustainability Statement (Love Design Studio)
- Transport Statement (Milestone)
- Travel Plan (Milestone)
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (Rolton Group)
- Utilities Statement (Rolton Group)
- Ground Conditions (Rolton Group)
- Ecological Assessment (Tyler Grange)
- Essex Biodiversity Validation Checklist (Tyler Grange)
- Biodiversity Net Gain (Tyler Grange)
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (FPCR)
- Noise Impact Assessment (Cass Allen)
- Air Quality Assessment (Cass Allen)
- Odour Assessment (Cass Allen)
- Archaeology and Heritage Statement (BSA Heritage)
- Tree Survey and Report (AIA, AMS, TPP, TCP) (Tyler Grange)
- Agricultural Land Quality (RPS)
- Site Waste Management Plan (Tetra Tech)
- Minerals Assessment (Tetra Tech)
- Waste Assessment (Tetra Tech)
- Statement of Community Involvement (Forty Shillings)

2.2. The content of the technical reports submitted in support of the application is summarised below:

Design and Access Statement

2.3. The Design and Access Statement demonstrates how the technical team has analysed the characteristics of the application site and surrounding area and evolved the scheme following consideration of the technical assessment of the site and surrounding area.

2.4. The design team are seeking to create a new neighbourhood and community to the south-east of Saffron Walden of the highest standard, with the following key aspirations;

- Landscape-led design
- Supporting local infrastructure by developing in a sustainable location
- Integrate with the existing community
- High-quality design and placemaking

Design Code

2.5. The project architects have also developed a Design Code which provides information on the site constraints and opportunities, the design objectives and the engagement process undertaken which in turn has informed the preparation of a series of design principles and a masterplan which subsequent planning application(s) will be expected to accord with.

2.6. The Design Code has multiple aims, namely to:

- Inform the development management process;
- Enable the local community to fully engage with the planning and design of the site;
- Improve the efficiency of the planning and development process by providing greater certainty at the planning application stage; and
- Ensure that the new development framework delivers the sustainability and place-making aspirations of the design code thereby creating a high-quality environment.

Statement of Community Involvement

2.7. The Statement of Community Involvement (“SCI”) details the public consultation undertaken to inform the proposed application scheme.

2.8. A website was set up which contained draft details of the plans for the site. 30 people provided feedback, with the key points being related to;

- Increased traffic generation
- Impact on local infrastructure

- Support and opposition to the development in general
- Support for affordable housing provision

Energy and Sustainability Statement

- 2.9. The Energy Statement has been produced to demonstrate how the Application Scheme accords with the local policy requirements.
- 2.10. The energy strategy follows the energy hierarchy; avoiding unnecessary energy use, use energy more efficiently, use renewable energy, and offset emissions, as per the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Document (2007).
- 2.11. The proposed energy strategy capitalises on passive design measures to maximise the fabric energy efficiency and energy demand. The scheme will benefit from Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery to minimise heat losses. The scheme should then make use of Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) for space heating and domestic hot water. Heat-pump solutions for space heating and hot water will remove the need for on-site combustion. The scheme could look to utilise window reveals, balconies and external shutters where feasible, to reduce the requirement for active cooling.
- 2.12. The proposed energy strategy for the submitted scheme is currently demonstrating a combined on-site regulated **CO₂ reduction of 59%** (Part L 2021 Baseline).

Transport Statement

- 2.13. The implications of development related travel on the operational and safety characteristics of the surrounding highway and transport networks have been comprehensively considered within the Transport Assessment (“TS”).
- 2.14. A key part of the vision for the emerging development proposals is to deliver a new neighbourhood that embraces the principles of healthy living, sustainability with high quality and well-designed public realm.

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- 2.15. The Site is to be a place that connects with the rest of Saffron Walden with pleasant multi-user active travel routes as well as delivering convenient links to the countryside on its doorstep coupled with good public transport links. The layout of the new neighbourhood is designed such that it is more convenient and navigable for people to choose to walk and cycle rather than using the private car.
- 2.16. The TA has demonstrated that in terms of Planning Policy at both National and Local level and through a deliverable package of interventions including a robust Movement & Access Strategy, Framework Travel Plan as well as a comprehensive package of on and off-site sustainable transport and highway improvement measures, travel demand generated by the Site can be accommodated on the surrounding highways and transport networks up to and beyond the full completion of the proposed development.

Travel Plan

- 2.17. The Travel Plan (“TP”) sets out measures which will be adopted/incorporated into the development in order to support and enhance the sustainability of the site in terms of its accessibility by sustainable modes of travel.
- 2.18. The TP is to set out a long-term strategy for the management of trips generated by the Site, based on hierarchical principles where emphasis is placed upon the order of priority outlined below:
- Opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel;
 - Meeting the needs of vulnerable road users, i.e., pedestrians and cyclists;
 - Facilitating access by passenger transport;
 - Accommodating the requirements of two-wheeler users, i.e., mopeds and motorbikes;
 - Facilitating the safe and efficient movement of emergency vehicles, essential deliveries and refuse collections;
 - Accommodating the requirement that, for some, access by motor vehicle, will still be required and in such instances seeking to minimise, where possible, single occupancy car trips.

2.19. Effective measures will be identified through the preparation of the TP to achieve an overall goal of reducing the impact of traffic generated by the development and to improve accessibility. As a consequence, residents of the development will have:

- Better access to essential services and jobs;
- Improved travel options;
- Opportunities for a healthier lifestyle.

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy

2.20. Based on EA fluvial floodplain mapping, the application site is located within flood zone 1. However, the tributaries upstream of the main River are not mapped as part of the main River modelling and therefore do not contribute to the flood zones. The surface water flooding map identifies that there is a risk of surface water flooding along the routes of the tributaries, particularly to the northern and eastern boundaries of the site.

2.21. The Flood Risk Assessment (“FRA”) describes the site as being bounded by existing hedge lines and field boundaries to most sides. The ground conditions have been assessed from an initial desk study to contain various chalks, overlain by Head to the north-west and Lowestoft Formation toward the south-eastern end. Tributaries of the Slade system pass along the northernmost boundary of the site although there are no other water bodies within the catchment and no historic ground water flooding has been identified.

2.22. The overall site has no formal drainage system and therefore surface water run-off flows off of the site at the Greenfield run-off rate via overland flow routes to the existing field boundary and ditches located to the north and east of the site. A system of field ditches passes through the northern section of the site and ultimately connect into The Slade System main River which is located beyond the northwestern boundary and on the west side of Thaxted Road.

2.23. The proposed development is not located within a Critical Drainage Area. As such it is not proposed to model the tributary channels, however this could be

carried out as part of a reserved matters application if required.

- 2.24. The surface water run-off from the site will be directed towards and drained by areas of permeable paving, attenuation ponds and an infiltration basin. Where this is not possible, surface water runoff will be directed towards the ditch running across the northern boundary of the site. It is also proposed that during the detailed design, raingardens and tree pits are considered, to increase the benefits to the site.
- 2.25. In line with the updated 2020 Essex County Council SuDS Design Guide, rainwater re-use should be considered as part of any development. Discussions have considered using the attenuated surface water held in the ponds/basin for irrigation of the landscaped areas, which will likely require the use of pumping, this can be explored further in the detailed design stages. It is proposed that water butts be utilised for all residential units as part of the detailed design stage.
- 2.26. Foul drainage should be disposed of by connecting to the extended sewer in agreement with the relevant asset owner.
- 2.27. In summary, the FRA concludes, inter alia, that the development is, in flood risk and drainage terms, safe; the ground conditions show infiltration will work on site; SuDS will be used throughout the proposed development to slow, clean and attenuate surface water, and surface water flood risk will be managed on site and not increase risk to the development or third parties.

Utilities Statement

- 2.28. Foul water will be discharged into the existing foul sewer along Thaxted Road via the existing connection that runs along the main spine road of Knight Park. The existing disposal system infrastructure information, incorporating surface/storm water and foul sewage drainage, has been acquired and analysed to determine any potential impacts on the proposed development site. The information in the report is based on the record documents produced by Anglian Water, who maintain the surface water, foul and combined sewerage infrastructure in the area.

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- 2.29. The report contains the details of the companies whom control the various utilities in the area, and with whom the applicant should make contact in the future to connect those utilities in order to serve the proposed development.

Ground Conditions

- 2.30. A Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Desk Study has been undertaken for the Site, which provides a Conceptual Site Model that identifies potential pollutant linkages arising from the proposed development.
- 2.31. The Study also assesses probable ground conditions, likely foundation solutions and appropriate means of future ground investigations.

Ecological Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.32. The supporting Ecological Assessment (“EcA”) details the findings of the initial desk-based assessment of the entire site together with follow up Site Surveys relating to a range of species.
- 2.33. The EcA confirms that the Site is not covered by any designations that are the subject of statutory or non-statutory protection, nor are there any statutory or non-statutory designations within the appropriate zone of influence (Zol) of the site.
- 2.34. Whilst no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) fall within 2km of the site, the site is located within the impact risk zone (IRZ) of Debden Water SSSI, located c.3.5km southwest of the site. However, residential development is not described within the criteria of the IRZ requiring the local planning authority (LPA) to consult with Natural England.
- 2.35. The site is also within 2km of 5 non-statutory designated sites:
- 1) Roos Hill, Saffron Walden Special Roadside Verges Local Wildlife Site (LWS)
 - 2) Fulfen Slade Lane LWS
 - 3) Pounce Wood LWS

- 4) Crowney Wood LWS
- 5) Audley End Park Wall Special Roadside Verge LWS

2.36. The EcA describes the majority of the Site as presently comprising arable fields, with the margins of this habitat including hedgerows, grassland, ruderal, scrub, ditches, and scattered trees. The development will comprise the loss of habitat which is of negligible ecological importance, as well as c.70m of hedgerow of local ecological importance to facilitate access to the site. However, the majority of hedgerow on site will be retained, as well as the associated margins of grass. Habitat loss is generally minimal, however where it is unavoidable, the proposed scheme will compensate for this loss through the creation of areas of habitat such as grassland and ponds. It is considered that the proposed habitat will deliver an overall biodiversity enhancement to the site.

2.37. The proposals for the development demonstrate that it is possible to achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain for habitats and hedgerows, in accordance with the Biodiversity Metric 4.1 Auditing and accounting for Biodiversity Calculator Tool, 2023. The metric demonstrates that a **25.69% gain in habitat units** (4.27 units), and a 10.68% net gain in linear units (0.28 units) would be delivered by the scheme. The 25.69% BNG figure is achieved on-site and is materially in excess of the national 10% target.

2.38. Species recorded on site include foraging and commuting bats, two juvenile common lizards, an assemblage of nesting birds, with evidence of badger presence and limited suitable habitat available for great crested newt (GCN).

2.39. The following mitigation controls are proposed to manage the delivery of the development in line with the recommendations provided in this report:

- A pre-commencement badger check and monitoring period are to be undertaken to ensure the proposed works will not disturb a nearby badger sett.
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be produced to ensure certain habitat and species are protected during construction works.
- A suitably qualified ecologist will oversee any vegetation removal where this poses a risk to protected species.

- A lighting plan will be produced to ensure important retained habitat will not be subject to excessive artificial lighting during the operational phase of development.
- 2.40. With the implementation of the mitigation and enhancement measures, in combination with the proposed habitat creation, the proposed development would be in conformity with Policies GEN7, ENV7 and ENV8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan, as well as the Environment Act 2021.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

- 2.41. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (“LVIA”) confirms that the neither the Site nor the immediate landscape is covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality.
- 2.42. The site sits on east facing, gently undulating land associated with the Cam Valley. The vast majority of existing properties within Saffron Walden will be screened from the proposed development by the combined screening effects of existing built form, localised topography and vegetation cover situated adjacent to the site. There would be no significant views of the proposed development from other settlements within the surrounding landscape.
- 2.43. The visual receptors that will be the most noticeably affected will be those experiencing direct, close-range views of the proposed built development. These will primarily be from roads, residents of the adjacent Poppy View development and users of the public right of way bisecting the Site. Longer distance views from the wider public rights of way network would be restricted, with views of the proposed development largely be screened by a combination of existing vegetation, localised topography and urban fabric situated within the intervening landscape. Partial glimpsed long distance views of the proposed development would be seen within the close context various existing residential and commercial developments situated at the edge of Saffron Walden.
- 2.44. The proposed development will also include landscaped buffers along the boundaries, belts of new trees, green links and focal green spaces within the site along with new pedestrian routes and existing vegetation being retained

where possible.

- 2.45. The LVIA confirms that the Site and the immediate landscape is one that could accommodate change as presented by the proposed development and the consequential effects would not result in any unacceptable harm to landscape character or visual resources.
- 2.46. The site has been sensitively designed with consideration given to the baseline information including the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2036 and other guidance including Essex Design Guide. The sketch layout ensures that the development relates well to the adjacent settlement and minimises impacts upon the surrounding River Cam Valley. An appropriate relationship with the existing settlement edge and wider rural character is achieved by respecting the framework of established streets, public open space and field hedgerows and by setting development back from site boundaries to minimise the visual impact. Proposed streets, lanes footpaths and multi-user routes are designed to ensure connections to the existing settlement and wider countryside. Existing hedges and trees by the site perimeter and along field boundaries will be enhanced with additional tree planting, bolstering vegetation cover along the River Cam Valley which will soften and filter views.
- 2.47. A cohesive green infrastructure framework is proposed, providing an attractive setting to the proposed development. Vegetation cover would be increased along retained field hedgerow boundaries, ensuring that the proposed built development would be well integrated within the local landscape.

Noise Impact Assessment

- 2.48. The Noise Impact Assessment (“NIA”) reports that environmental noise surveys at the site have been undertaken in order to establish the typical and maximum noise levels incident upon the proposed development.
- 2.49. Surveys have been undertaken of existing commercial sources and background noise. An assessment of noise from the existing recycling centre and retail park indicates no adverse impacts according to the method described in BS 4142:2014.

- 2.50. The assessment has demonstrated that, taking into consideration the provision of reasonable practicable measures (i.e. the provision of good quality thermal double glazing and, for some facades, high-performance trickle ventilators and the inclusion of a significant buffer area) adverse effects of noise can be minimised for the development proposals. Consideration should also be given to using specified facades facing Knight Park preferentially for non-habitable rooms such as kitchens/bathrooms.
- 2.51. Acceptable external amenity noise levels are found for the entire site, with a 3m noise barrier along the western site boundary (to the rear of the existing retail/commercial uses and recycling centre) and standard 1.8m garden fencing for each plot.
- 2.52. Therefore, the assessment has demonstrated that incident ambient noise levels around the proposed residential development should not be viewed as a constraint for the planning application.

Odour Impact Assessment

- 2.53. An odour assessment, produced in accordance with IAQM Guidance on the Assessment of Odour for Planning (2018) and Environment Agency (EA) 'H4 Odour Management: How to comply with your environmental permit', supports this application.
- 2.54. A single day site visit with two separate surveys was undertaken during the morning and afternoon respectively, in order to capture baseline and potential diurnal variability of odour effects.
- 2.55. The odour survey undertaken on 26th October 2023 indicated that the odour character on, and in the vicinity of the site, is dominated by natural odours from vegetation and the earth.
- 2.56. The report concludes that no significant or distinct odours of any kind were detected and no odours attributable to the SWRC were detected away from the site boundary. Based on the extend of the odours detected and their intensity,

the source odour potential for the SWRC is considered to be 'small'.

- 2.57. As such, there are no significant odour impacts that would preclude development of the site.

Archaeology and Heritage Statement

- 2.58. A desk-based assessment has been carried out, along with a walkover of the Site, in order to understand the baseline conditions.
- 2.59. The Site was visited in March 2022. The walkover confirmed that the site consists of two largely rectangular arable fields adjacent to the existing developed edge of Saffron Walden. Nothing of note was apparent within any of the fields.
- 2.60. External boundaries of the site include hedgerows and trees, but with some gaps in the south. Although that marking the boundary between the northern parcel and new development has largely been lost.
- 2.61. The Heritage Assessment confirms that no designated heritage assets lie within or close to the site and there are no scheduled monuments or registered landscapes within a kilometre radius study area. Indeed, there are only a small number of heritage assets which have the potential to be impacted by the proposal through change to their setting.
- 2.62. The closest designated asset to the site is a Grade II listed barn at Herberts, circa 600 metres south of the site to which modern development has already severed any connection with. The report concludes that no heritage asset would be harmed by the proposed development.
- 2.63. The site visit also confirmed that the spire of the parish church, St Mary's, is just visible from northern parts of the site but the report concludes that this does not amount to heritage harm..
- 2.64. The proposals would include strengthening of the vegetation on the edges of the site. The site also lies at a distance from Herberts, separated and obscured by modern development. Given this, **no harm** to the significance of Herberts'

Grade II listed barn or an appreciation of that significance is assessed to result from the proposals, and no other designated heritage assets are considered to be affected by the proposed development of the site.

- 2.65. The HER details a limited number of records for those parts of the kilometre radius study area beyond the earlier parts of Saffron Walden well to the north. The most useful of these suggest that the area has been settled from prehistory.
- 2.66. The Council's archaeological advisor agreed that further field work could be undertaken as a condition of planning permission.

Arboricultural Impact Assessment

- 2.67. The Tree Survey was carried out on 22nd August 2023. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment ("AIA") identifies a total of 4 individual trees, 10 groups and 4 hedgerows within the survey area.
- 2.68. The retention of the majority of the boundary trees and the replacement of those removed allows for the proposed development to be set within a well-treed environment. The collective visual amenity the trees provide to area will be preserved and therefore the proposals are consistent with local planning policy in relation to trees.
- 2.69. The protection of the retained trees during the construction stage will require a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS), to be secured by condition and required at the reserved matters stage.
- 2.70. The AIA identifies a limited number of trees for removal, due to their quality and/or condition. New trees are proposed to replace those removed, alongside additional structural and landscape planting. A comprehensive landscaping scheme will be put forward for consideration at the reserved matters stage.

Agricultural Land Quality

- 2.71. The Agricultural Land Classification ("ALC") system provides a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical

characteristics impose long term limitations on agricultural use. The ALC system divides agricultural land into five grades (Grade 1 'Excellent' to Grade 5 'Very Poor'), with Grade 3 subdivided into Subgrade 3a 'Good' and Subgrade 3b 'Moderate'.

- 2.72. Agricultural land classified as Grade 1, 2 and Subgrade 3a falls in the 'best and most versatile' category in Paragraph 179 and 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.73. The Application Site comprises a mixture of Subgrade 3a and 3b land, limited by soil droughtiness. The quality of land on the Site some of the lowest quality of land within the vicinity of Saffron Walden and the wider area. The land within this site is therefore not considered to be of exceptional quality within this area, and overriding weight in the planning balance should not be attached to the loss of this quality of agricultural land within that context.

Minerals Assessment

- 2.74. The Application Site falls within a Minerals Safeguarding Area for chalk as defined on Essex County Council mapping.
- 2.75. The supporting desk-based study considers the policy requirements covering the site as well as undertaking an assessment of the need and practicability of mineral extraction from the application Site.
- 2.76. The report concludes that, due to the presence of the Newport Chalk Pit, there is no demand for extraction of chalk from the site. Furthermore, it outlines the constraints existing development neighbouring the site would prohibit mineral extraction from the site.
- 2.77. Overall, the report concludes that the siting of the application site within a Mineral Safeguarding Area should not be seen as a constraint that will prohibit development of the site.

Air Quality Assessment

- 2.78. The Air Quality Assessment ("AQA") considers the potential of the Proposed

Development to cause impacts at sensitive locations. These may include fugitive dust emissions associated with construction works and road traffic exhaust emissions from vehicles travelling to and from the Proposed Development during the operational phase. Further to this, the proposals may introduce future occupants to any existing air quality issues at the Site. An Air Quality Assessment (AQA) was therefore undertaken to determine baseline conditions, consider location suitability for the proposed end-use and consider potential effects because of the proposals.

- 2.79. During the construction phase of the development there is the potential for air quality impacts because of fugitive dust emissions from the Site. These were assessed in accordance with the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) methodology. Assuming good practice dust control measures are implemented, the residual significance of potential air quality impacts from dust generated by demolition, earthworks, construction and trackout was predicted to be not significant.
- 2.80. During the operational phase of the development there is the potential for air quality impacts because of traffic exhaust emissions associated with vehicles travelling to and from the Proposed Development. Dispersion modelling, following Defra TG22 and EPUK & IAQM LUPDC guidance, was undertaken to predict pollutant concentrations at relevant sensitive receptors. Due to the size and nature of the proposals, emissions impacts during the operation phase were predicted to be not significant.

Waste Infrastructure Assessment

- 2.81. WLP Policy 2 requires a Waste Infrastructure Assessment to be carried out for all proposed developments within 250m from the boundary of safeguarded waste infrastructure. Saffron Walden Waste Recycling Centre is located to the west/ southwest of the site.
- 2.82. The supporting Waste infrastructure Assessment considers potential efficiency, noise and traffic implications of the proposed development upon the SWRC. The report concludes that the proposed development will not cause a notable impact on the safeguarded SWRC.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

Context

- 3.1. The Application Site is shown edged red on the accompanying Site Location Plan No. 3119-A-1000-PR-D and extends to approximately 4.3ha.
- 3.2. The Site's context is formed by built development on two sides, with wider countryside to the south and east.
- 3.3. Existing residential development is located to the north with commercial/industrial development of Knight Park to the west of the Site, whilst the eastern and southern boundaries border open fields.
- 3.4. Further build development extends to the west of Thaxted Road, comprising recent residential development and the lord butler Fitness & leisure Centre.
- 3.5. The Site is located within easy walking distance of the town centre and easy access can be gained to the local shopping facilities, health facilities, schools, nurseries and job opportunities. Accordingly, the site affords a highly sustainable location in seeking to meet identified housing needs

The Site

- 3.6. The site is currently in agricultural use and is occupied by arable fields. Vegetation cover within the site itself is restricted to hedgerows and trees, situated along site perimeters and internal field boundaries.
- 3.7. The accompanying Design and Access Statement ("DAS") includes an assessment of the Site's characteristics, noting as follows:
 - The site is defined to the west by the Knight Park commercial area, within which the Saffron Walden Recycling Centre and a service yard for commercial units adjoin the site boundary.
 - The north-west of the site is characterised by a small parcel of land which benefits from planning permission for residential development whilst the northern boundary is defined by the Bellway Poppy View development.

- To the east and south-east are open fields for agricultural use.
- 3.8. A Tree Survey has been conducted with results accompanying this planning application. This shows that the majority of tree and hedgerow planting on the site is set around its edges, with a small amount forming a field boundaries extending along the public right of way which bisects the site. It is the intention that all existing trees and hedgerows are retained except where they are in poor health and landscape management may facilitate replacement or improvement to the areas.
- 3.9. In terms of topography, the low point of the site is located to the north western corner adjacent to the Poppy View development, standing at 77 metres AOD. The field rises from this point approximately 6 metres up to the bridleway dividing the site. The other half of the site to the east of the bridleway continues to rise in height, reaching 94 metres AOD at the south-eastern corner of the site, the highest point where gradients become slightly steeper. This makes for approximately 17 metres elevation change across the whole site.
- 3.10. No part of the site forms part of a Conservation Area and nor is it identified for any landscape 'value'.
- 3.11. The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Map ('MAGIC') and the Proposals Map (adopted 2005) indicates that the site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality.
- 3.12. As detailed in the FRA accompanying the application, the area where the development is proposed is classified as falling within Flood Zone 1. There are no further environmental constraints precluding the proposed development.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

General

- 4.1. The outline application scheme has been developed and informed following a thorough review of the opportunities and constraints afforded by the site.
- 4.2. Only the principle of developing the site for up to 55 dwellings, together with the means of access are to be determined as part of this outline application.
- 4.3. Appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for subsequent determination.
- 4.4. The application proposes:

“Outline application for up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping, informal open space and open space, with access from Thaxted Road via Knight Park.”
- 4.5. The proposals are set out on the following plans:

The Scheme

- i. Site Location Plan No. 3119-A-1000-PR-D
- ii. Proposed Access Drawing No. 23075/001 (Appendix 3 to the TA)

Supporting Plans

- iii. Site Sketch Layout Plan No. 3119-C-1005-SK-J
 - iv. Framework Plan No. 3119-A-1004-PR-D
 - v. Land Use Plan No. 3119-A-1201-PR-E
 - vi. Access Plan No. 3119-A-1202-PR-D
 - vii. Building Heights Plan No. 3119-A-1203-PR-D
 - viii. Density Plan No. 3119-A-1204-PR-D
 - ix. Green Infrastructure Plan No. 3119-A-1205-PR-C
- 4.6. Plans (i) and (ii) comprise the application plans for the purpose of determining the application.
 - 4.7. Plans (iii) to (ix) are submitted for illustrative purposes only.

Masterplan Approach

- 4.8. Preparation of the Illustrative Masterplan has been informed by the technical studies summarised in Section 2, and the assessment of relevant planning policy considerations summarised in section 5.
- 4.9. Key to the evolution of the layout of the proposed development is the identification of existing trees and hedgerows for retention.
- 4.10. Analysis of the site's topography and drainage requirements has informed the siting of a large proposed balancing pond towards the northwestern corner of the site,
- 4.11. The Masterplan vision is to create a high-quality development that has a strong sense of character and identity whilst linking seamlessly and positively with existing development in this part of Saffron Walden.
- 4.12. The Masterplan approach, including in relation to design, is underpinned by a thorough contextual appraisal of the site and its surroundings. Full details are set out in the accompanying Design & Access Statement.
- 4.13. The vision is to be achieved through the following design principles included in the masterplan design:
- The creation of a sustainable living environment with a mix of residential accommodation.
 - A place with a varied character that responds to the local vernacular and built context to provide a sense of place.
 - A sustainable development which responds to best practice, with house type designs to be approved at the reserved matters stage that will seek to minimise energy use, sustainably manage water, responsibly source materials and manage waste and ecology.
 - Enhancing the landscape edge to the boundaries of the site,.

- A development which preserves and enhances biodiversity by retaining natural features on the site and reinforcing them by creating opportunities for new habitat areas, including tree planting.
- To encourage and enhance the opportunities for sustainable movement, through the provision of pedestrian and cycle linkages to neighbouring facilities and public transport routes within Saffron Walden.
- Creation of areas of accessible public open space, together with to creation of walking routes and footpaths for future residents and the wider community.

4.14. The principal elements of the scheme are summarised as follows:

- The scheme provides for up to 55 dwellings, to include an appropriate mix of house types, within a landscaped setting.
- The scheme will include a mix of housing tenures, together with up to 40% affordable housing provision.
- Buildings heights will be in conformity with existing dwellings in the vicinity of the proposal, and proposed at a maximum of 2.5 storeys..
- Multi-functional landscaped green spaces;
- The creation of 3 distinct character areas to provide a transition between the varying characters of the site's surrounding characteristics.
- Green corridor providing a direct pedestrian/cycle link between Knight Park, Tiptoffs Lane and the existing public right of way; car-free and safe routes well overlooked by new buildings; alignment allows for retention of existing landscape features such as hedgerows and trees along field boundaries.
- New development outwardly facing to form positive frontage with countryside and allow for new public routes to be overlooked;
- Landscape buffer around the developed part of the site including pedestrian/cycle route, with connections northwards off-site to the existing public right of way and other existing streets to the north;
- Road alignment proposed to 'meander' within western part of site to address rising ground levels to higher areas to the west; some buildings on this road proposed as split-level to help address the level differences across the site;

4.15. The component parts of the scheme are summarised as below.

Access and Layout

- 4.16. Vehicular access to the proposed dwellings will be provided by a single means of access from Thaxted Road via Knight Park. Details of the proposed access are provided in the Access Plan at Appendix 3 to the TA (Plan No. 23075/001).
- 4.17. As shown on Plan and described in the TA, the proposed arrangements for vehicular access to the Site that is proposed to take the form of an extension to the existing spine road serving Knight Park into the western boundary of the site.
- 4.18. The proposed vehicular access involves the extension of the existing spine road by approximately 15m. The existing service yard access will be retained in full whilst the existing turning head opposite is to be removed. Narrowing will be introduced at the site entrance as a traffic calming measure whilst the existing footpath will be extended to tie into the proposed development.
- 4.19. The DAS sets out consideration of the illustrative layout, which is a matter for consideration at the reserved matters stage. However, the internal street network will be designed to incorporate natural speed attenuation that will also include changes to surface treatment at features such as gateways, junctions, crossings and interfaces with key public open spaces to create focal points and promote legibility.
- 4.20. A key objective of the development on the Site will be to deliver liveable streets that are not overly dominated by parked cars. Where on-street parking is provided, changes in surface material will be considered to provide definition and continuous lengths or no more than 5 spaces will be provided before being broken up by landscape / street furniture features. Again, these matters are for consideration at the reserved matters stage.

Dwelling Mix

- 4.21. As set out above, the scheme provides for a total of up to 55 dwellings, including the provision of 40% affordable dwellings (up to 22 affordable dwellings).

- 4.22. The tenure mix is to be agreed through the determination of the application in consultation with the Council's Housing Officer.
- 4.23. The overall housing mix, including in relation to the market housing, is a matter to be determined at the subsequent reserved matters application stage. It will however provide for a mix of housing types to cater for all members of the community.

Design

- 4.24. The house type designs, to be considered at the reserved matters stage do not need to replicate any existing patterns of development or utilise particular materials but should achieve a cohesive appearance sympathetic to the properties within this part of Saffron Walden.
- 4.25. As shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, the overall layout and form of the development has been designed to be sympathetic to the urban edge location of the site. This includes the creation of a new landscape buffer around the boundaries of the site.

Character Areas

- 4.26. The Design Code document submitted alongside the Outline Planning Application identifies a series of character areas across the proposed development area. These areas have different parameters and design coding principles with the intention of creating a cohesive development, with a strong design principle for the buildings to reflect the setting of the site and its surroundings whilst referencing local character.
- 4.27. The Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how the implementation of the character area guidance along with other design coding principles can be achieved.
- 4.28. The three defined character areas are:
1. Knight Park Frontage
 2. Internal Streets
 3. Rural Edge

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- 4.29. The character areas will embrace the design principles at section 12 of the NPPF, to include the creation of tree-lined streets.

Density

- 4.30. The Illustrative Site Plan provides for up to 55 dwellings which equates to a gross density of 12.8dph and a net density of circa 35dph.
- 4.31. This density will ensure the new dwellings integrate with, and complement the local area in terms of scale, massing and layout, whilst sympathetically responding to the site's edge of settlement location.

Dwelling Heights

- 4.32. The proposed dwellings are generally at 2 storeys. However, the Illustrative Masterplan does provide an opportunity for two and a half storey houses in the eastern part of the site (See Building Heights Plan No. 3119-A-1203-PR-D)

Landscaping Strategy

- 4.33. Although landscaping is a reserved matter, the accompanying Illustrative Site Plan provides for a landscaped buffer to the developed southern parcel of the site. This is in conjunction with the countryside setting that expands to the east and south.

Scheme Benefits

- 4.34. The key benefits of the proposed scheme can be summarised below:
- Provision of up to 55 new dwellings in a sustainable location.
 - Contribution towards the provision of much needed market and affordable housing.
 - Appropriate landscaping strategy throughout the site which will contribute to a sense of place.
 - Provision of new public footpaths.
 - A 25% biodiversity net gain.
 - The provision of recreational play space to the benefit of the wider community.

5. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

General

- 5.1. This section summarises the planning policy position against which the acceptability of the scheme is determined.
- 5.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out a requirement that planning applications are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. This represents the s.38(6) 'balance'.
- 5.3. In this instance the material considerations include:
 - the policy vacuum left following the delay in the preparation of the emerging Local Plan;
 - the significant need for housing (market and affordable);
- 5.4. The Council accepts it is reliant upon sites outside defined settlement boundaries to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply.
- 5.5. Section 39 of the Act identifies the requirement for decision makers to exercise their functions with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. These requirements must be considered in light of the NPPF, including the 3 roles of sustainability set out at paragraph 8 (economic, social and environmental). However, and as set out at paragraph 9 of the NPPF, the three roles are not a checklist and their values are considered below in light of that context.

The Development Plan

- 5.6. The Development Plan comprises the following:
 - Uttlesford Local Plan Saved Policies (2005) (Saved 2007)
 - Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan (made October 2022)

- 5.7. The development limits contained within the 2005 Local Plan show that the site is located outside of the settlement policy area.

Uttlesford Local Plan

- 5.8. The Uttlesford Local Plan was adopted in January 2005 and as such the housing and requirement was based on the former Essex County Structure Plan which was replaced by the since rescinded Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England³. The Local Plan set a housing requirement for the period 2000 to 2011 consistent with the then requirements of the former Essex County Structure Plan.
- 5.9. The housing requirement therefore significantly pre-dates the standard method by some time and as such the most important policies, namely those related to the supply of housing, are out of date.
- 5.10. Policy H1 (Housing Development) makes provision for some 5,052 dwellings within the District from 2000 to 2011 to address the residual need arising from the former Structure Plan which had required 5,600 dwellings from 1996 to 2011 after deducting completions of 980 homes. Whilst the requirement in policy H1 sought to ensure that the minimum outstanding need identified in the Structure Plan would be met, the end date of the Local Plan is now more than 11 years ago. It is therefore clearly out of date and cannot represent an appropriate assessment of housing need in the district.
- 5.11. Consistent with their assessment of housing land supply at October 2023 (the most recently published). The Council acknowledges that the housing requirement is derived from the calculation of Local Housing Need⁴.

³ East of England RSS was revoked on 3rd January 2013 -

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/3046/contents/made>

⁴ The assessment of housing need within the Council's [5-Year Land Supply Statement and Housing Trajectory Status](#) indicates that the district's Local Housing Need at October 2023 is 684dpa (paragraph 10).

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- 5.12. However, as the resulting affordability adjustment would result in an increase in the district's housing requirements above the 40% cap within the standard method, the Local Housing Need is 684dpa. This is a significant increase in the 459dpa figure which was the district's requirement within policy H1 of the Local Plan saved policies.
- 5.13. It is evident therefore that saved policies of the Local Plan (including Policies H1 and S7 are out of date and that significant additional housing is required on greenfield sites. This has been further accepted in the decisions by the Council and through appeals on subsequent applications.
- 5.14. Policy H9 (Affordable Housing) ensures, inter alia, that new developments provide for a mix of dwelling size and tenure that meet the identified needs of a community and that on relevant sites affordable housing should be provide at a level of at least 40%.
- 5.15. Whilst the application is submitted in outline form with only the principle and means of access to be considered the scheme would provide for a mix of dwellings sizes to cater for both younger individuals, couples and families. In addition, the proposal would provide for up to 22 affordable houses.
- 5.16. The provision of affordable housing attracts very substantial weight even where the Council can demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply.
- 5.17. The following Local Plan policies apply to the consideration of the Application:
- S1 – Development Limits
 - S7 – Countryside
 - GEN1 – Access
 - GEN2 – Design
 - GEN3 – Flood Protection
 - GEN5 - Light Pollution
 - GEN6 – Infrastructure Provision to Support Development
 - GEN7 – Nature Conservation
 - ENV5 – Protection of Agricultural Land
 - ENV7 – Protection of the Natural Environment
 - ENV8 – Landscape and Nature Conservation
 - H1 – Housing Development
 - H9 – Affordable Housing
 - H10 – Housing Mix

- 5.18. As this Planning Statement identifies, the Application Scheme conflicts with spatial Policy S1 (Development Limits), S7 (Countryside) and Policy ENV5 relating to the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land. However, and for the reasons explained in section 6 below, the weight attached to these conflicts is reduced to the extent they only attract limited weight.
- 5.19. The Application Scheme accords with the Local plan in all other respects.
- 5.20. When the spatial policies relating to housing (S1, S7 and H1) are assessed against the aims of paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF they are to be considered out of date as they are not based on up to date housing requirements in accordance with the standard methodology and further as the Council cannot demonstrate an up to date supply of deliverable housing sites without breaching its defined settlement boundaries. This is discussed later in this statement.
- 5.21. In *Suffolk Coastal DC v Hopkins Developments Ltd* [2017] UKSC 37 Lord Carnwath's judgement confirms at paragraph 63 that the weight to be attached to restrictive policies, such as countryside and landscape policies, can be reduced where they are derived from settlement boundaries that in turn reflect out of date housing requirements. In the Suffolk Coastal case the Inspector's findings were consequential upon their being no five-year housing land supply and on the basis that the Council could not deliver the housing to meet current needs. There are obvious parallels with Uttlesford District.
- 5.22. In the case of Uttlesford District, that planning permission has been granted for housing on land beyond settlement areas that are in breach of countryside and landscape policies in order to meet market and affordable housing needs and maintain a rolling five-year land supply⁵.
- 5.23. Evident from the above is the countryside and landscape policies are not meeting current housing needs based on the definition of built-up areas as defined in the development plan. Therefore, consistent with the approach now

⁵ Including the recent appeal for up to 1200 dwellings at Land East of Highwood Quarry, Little Easton (PINS Ref: APP/C1570/W/21/3289755).

followed by the Council, reduced weight applies to any conflict with saved policies H1 and S7 of the Uttlesford Local Plan; reflecting the position at paragraph 63 of the Suffolk Coastal judgment (Hopkins Homes).

5.24. As an overarching assessment, it is worth pausing to note the following considerations:

1. The spatial policies for the supply of housing do not meet current housing needs; and planning permissions have been granted for the development of sites for housing beyond the settlement boundaries as defined in the Local Plan.
2. Accordingly, the settlement boundaries defined under H1 and S1 are not sufficient to meet current housing need and the weight to be given to the conflict with this policy is reduced.
3. Although the application site is within the countryside, it is not a valued landscape nor are there any other constraints on site that would preclude such a development as proposed.
4. The scheme provides a safe means of access.
5. The site is in a sustainable location.
6. The loss of BMV agricultural land should be afforded no more than limited weight.
7. The requisite mitigation measures are secured by condition and/or through the planning obligation such that the impacts of the scheme can be adequately mitigated.

Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan

5.25. The Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan (“NP”) was made in October 2022 and forms part of the development plan for the purpose of applying s38(6).

5.26. In accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 (as amended), the NP is required to satisfy “basic conditions” before it can come into force. This includes a need to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area. In so far as the spatial policies contained in the Local Plan are out of date, due to their inconsistency with the NPPF, and on the basis that the NP does not allocate sites for housing, the

presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11(d) is engaged and the tests at paragraph 14 of the NPPF are not triggered.

5.27. The following NP policies apply to the consideration of the Application:

- SW1 – Dwelling Mix
- SW2 – Affordable Housing
- SW3 – Design
- SW4 – Parking
- SW11 – Ecology
- SW12 – Promoting Walking and Cycling
- SW14 – Improving Provision of Public Transport
- SW17 – Open Space for Information Recreation

5.28. In so far as the Application is in outline, all these development management-style policy requirements can be satisfied at the reserved matters stage. However, the Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how the requirements can be achieved.

Uttlesford Reg 18 Draft Local Plan

5.29. Uttlesford District Council is currently consulting on a Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. This consultation period is set to run until the 18th December 2023. The draft plan contains the vision, objectives, spatial strategy, and planning policy framework for the period 2021 to 2041. It is anticipated that the new local plan will be adopted in Spring of 2026.

5.30. The application site is proposed to be allocated for industrial and employment development (E(g)(iii)) under draft Core Policy 4 and Core Policy 6. However, the land in question is not controlled by the Council nor by a party that is willing to release the site for such developmental purposes. As such, the approach to the allocation of land for E(g)(iii) uses at Saffron Walden, including the application site, fails the tests of soundness at paragraph 35 of the NPPF.

Development Plan Summary

5.31. The conclusions drawn from committee reports, planning permission, appeal decisions and from a review of the current development plan policies are set out below:

- Countryside policy (S7) of the Local Plan is too restrictive when considered against the requirements of the NPPF and as such should be afforded significantly less weight;
 - The Core Strategy Policies related to housing provision do not provide for an NPPF consistent objectively assessed housing need and as such the settlement limits set in the Saved Local Plan Policies are out of date.
 - The corresponding weight to be attached to such policies is therefore reduced.
 - The Council is reliant upon permission outside settlement boundaries to demonstrate an up to date 5-year housing land supply.
- 5.32. The Council has accepted that limited weight applies to the conflict proposals with Development Plan policies S1, S7 and H1. Furthermore, it has been established above that the basket of most important policies is to be considered out of date as they are inconsistent with the NPPF.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.33. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was most recently updated in September 2023. It is a material consideration of particular standing in the determination of planning applications.
- 5.34. The content of the NPPF as it relates to the proposed development of the application site is addressed in the order set below:
- The presumption in favour of sustainable development
 - Decision making
 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
 - Promoting sustainable transport
 - Achieving well-designed places
 - Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- 5.35. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, comprising (i) economic, (ii) social; and (iii) environmental.

Economic Role

- 5.36. The economic role requires the planning system to, inter alia, ensure that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth. This is achieved with the application scheme on the basis that it is located within a sustainable location, within walking and cycle distance to local services and facilities. The scheme also provides for housing development of the type and mix required to meet identified needs.
- 5.37. The scheme further addresses the economic role in terms of increased LPA Revenues, Construction impacts (increased GVA, jobs etc.) and increased expenditure in local area.

Social Role

- 5.38. The social role requires the planning system to provide the supply of housing required, creating a high quality, well-designed built environment, accessible to local services and reflecting the community's needs. All of these requirements can be achieved with the application scheme.

Environmental Role

- 5.39. The environmental role requires the planning system to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment. This can be achieved with the proposal in a location that will not result in any significant adverse effects upon the character of the surrounding area, including in landscape terms and lead to enhancements to both the natural and historic environment.

Decision Taking

- 5.40. In setting out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, paragraph 11 of the NPPF adds, in relation to decision-making at 11(c), that this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan. It adds at paragraph 11(d), and of particular relevance to Uttlesford, that where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless (i) policies in the NPPF provide a clear reason for refusing the

development; or (ii) any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

- 5.41. It has been discussed earlier in this Statement, why it is considered that the policies for the supply of housing (both in terms of the housing requirement and the associated settlement boundaries) are materially out of date.
- 5.42. Section 4 of the NPPF sets out the approach to decision-taking. Paragraph 38 makes it clear that decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.43. The site is located in a sustainable location and will improve the economic and social conditions of the area. It will also help to provide an enhanced landscaped edge to the settlement as well as new biodiversity habitats.

Delivering a sufficient supply of Homes

- 5.44. Paragraph 60 sets out the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.
- 5.45. Paragraph 61 sets out the approach to determining the minimum number of homes needed, which should be informed by a local housing need assessment conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless an alternative approach is justified. It is also added that any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.
- 5.46. Paragraph 68 sets out the need to provide a five-year supply of deliverable sites for housing. It also requires sites for years 6-10 and beyond.
- 5.47. Paragraph 74 requires local planning authorities to identify a supply of sufficient deliverable sites to provide a minimum five years' worth of housing. In Uttlesford's case this is to be assessed against the local housing need (derived from the standard method) as the strategic policies set out in the Local Plan are more than five years old; and have not been reviewed (footnote 39 of the NPPF refers).

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- 5.48. This application for up to 55 dwellings would make a material contribution towards the substantial shortfall in supply.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 5.49. Section 9 sets out the approach to providing for sustainable growth.
- 5.50. Paragraph 105 states as follows.

‘The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making’.

- 5.51. Paragraph 110 requires applications for development to take opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes, achieve safe and suitable access and to mitigate the impacts of trip generation on the highway network.
- 5.52. Paragraph 111 makes it clear that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 5.53. In highway and accessibility terms, the Site is located adjoining a principal settlement in the District, within walking distance to local services and facilities, and within reach of larger settlements via readily accessible public transport. The supporting TA also demonstrates the acceptability of the Scheme in sustainability and highway terms, concluding in relation to the acceptability of the trip rates from the proposal upon the highway network. Accordingly, the Scheme is consistent with section 9 of the NPPF.

Achieving Well-Designed Places

- 5.54. Section 12 of the NPPF sets out the aspirations for well-designed places, requiring beautiful and sustainable buildings.

- 5.55. The desire for well-designed places requires careful consideration of what makes ‘the place’ and how schemes can be designed to embrace the building beautiful agenda.
- 5.56. One element of well-designed places includes the requirement for landscape-led masterplans and provision of tree-lined streets.
- 5.57. As set out at paragraph 134 of the NPPF, development reflecting local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides attracts significant weight.
- 5.58. The accompanying DAS explains the appropriateness of the overall design response in the content of the design approach advocated in the NPPF and the Council’s design guides and policies.

Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

- 5.37. Section 14 sets out the approach to supporting the move towards a low carbon future as well as the approach to the management of development and flood risk.
- 5.38. These requirements are addressed in the accompanying Energy and Sustainability Statement and the Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy.

Natural Environment

- 5.59. Section 15 sets out the approach to conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 5.60. In the context of the approach set out at paragraph 174 of the NPPF, the Site is not located within any formal designations for the most valued landscapes. The accompanying LVIA confirms that the proposal would be similar in character to the existing residential development to the north, and the retention of the existing field boundary planting and local topography will further mitigate the appearance of the scheme.

- 5.61. The LVIA concludes that the receiving landscape is one that can accommodate change (given the context provide by existing built form), with the consequential effects of the proposed development not resulting in any unacceptable harm to landscape character or visual resources.

Historic Environment

- 5.62. Section 16 of the NPPF sets out the approach to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- 5.63. As set out in the accompanying Archaeology and Heritage Statement, the Scheme will not result in any harm to the setting of any listed buildings. As such, heritage is not a footnote 7 consideration that could otherwise disengage the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Five Year Housing Land Supply

- 5.64. The Council's October 2023 5-Year Land Supply Statement and Housing Trajectory Status indicates that as of 1st April 2023, the Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land.
- 5.65. The Council purports to be able to demonstrate a marginal 5.14-year supply. However, this is heavily reliant upon permissions granted on sites outside defined settlement boundaries.
- 5.66. Whilst the Council purports to have the requisite housing land supply, this is predicated upon permissions granted outside settlement boundaries. As per the Hopkins Homes decision, this results in the presumption in favour of sustainable development applying pursuant to paragraph 11 of the NPPF.
- 5.67. Such an approach has been upheld by the Planning Inspectorate and was considered in an appeal decision on land south of Gilda Terrace and North of Finch Way, Braintree ⁶dated 27th July 2021 Paragraph 54 of the appeal decision states:

⁶ PINS ref APP/Z1510/W/20/3265895

“The Council acknowledges that the revised HLS position has relied upon the contributions made by a number of sites outside of development boundaries, and that the restrictive nature of policies RLP 2 and CS 5 is not fully in accordance with the Framework. These development boundaries were evidently predicated upon much earlier levels of housing need, dating back to the 2001 Essex and Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Plan, and conceived many years prior to the publication of the original 2012 Framework. The conflict with policies RLP 2 and CS 5, over the site falling outside the settlement boundary, is therefore given limited weight, with a finding of a corresponding degree of limited harm”

- 5.68. An appeal decision on land North of Netherhouse Copse, Fleet (Hart District)
⁷dated 6th October 2017 . Paragraph 63 of the appeal decision states:

“Nevertheless, as the Supreme Court held in the case of Suffolk Coastal, the weight to be given to restrictive policies can be reduced where they are derived from settlement boundaries that in turn reflect out-of-date housing requirements. In that case the Inspector’s finding was consequential upon there being no five year housing land supply and on the basis that the Council could not deliver the housing to meet current needs. In the current appeal the Council argued that it can provide five years supply of housing land. However, this is a reflection of the Council granting a number of permissions for housing development outside of settlement boundaries identified in the LP in breach of Policies RUR2 and RUR3 in order to meet market and affordable housing needs and maintain a rolling five year land supply. Consequently it is not meeting current housing needs on the basis of the settlement boundaries in the development plan. I therefore find that Policy RUR1 is out-of-date and carries only moderate weight.” (Our emphasis underlined)

- 5.69. This acknowledgement that sites outside of settlements had artificially boosted the supply was also recognised in two appeal decisions in Wokingham Borough. This was that for land east of Finchampstead Road, Wokingham ⁸and for land north of Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead⁹

⁷ PINS ref APP/N170/W/17/3167135

⁸ Appeal dismissed on 25th August 2020 – PINS ref APP/X0360/W/19/3235572

⁹ Appeal dismissed on 9th April 2020- PINS ref APP/X0360/W/19/3238048

5.70. In paragraph 29 of the east of Finchampstead Road appeal, the Inspector concluded:

“I have found later in my decision that the Council can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. However, despite the views of the Council, it does rely on supply that falls outside of the currently set settlement boundaries. It is therefore clear to me that delivering a sufficient supply of housing cannot be done, whilst also meeting the requirements set out in Policies CP9, CP11 of the CS and CC02 of the MDD LP. They are therefore out-of-date.”

5.71. This view is repeated in paragraph 26 of the north of Nine Mile Ride appeal where the Inspector states:

“The scale and location of housing and the associated development limits were established to accommodate this lower housing requirement. However, as the Hurst Inspector observed, policy CP17 does not cap housing numbers and includes flexibility to bring land forward in identifying future land supply. Housing land supply is considered later in the decision, but the evidence is clear that this depends on some sites that are outside the development limits. The delivery of a sufficient supply of homes is a fundamental objective of the Framework but cannot be achieved through adherence to policies CP9, CP11 and CC02, which are all dependent on the development limits. These policies are therefore out-of-date. In this respect I disagree with the Hurst Inspector, but I note that there was no dispute about housing land supply in that case and therefore the evidence on which his conclusions were based was materially different.”

5.72. The role of development contrary to the Plan in boosting supply is also highlighted in the appeal decision for land off Satchel Lane, Hamble-le-Rice¹⁰. In paragraph 18, the Inspector concluded:

“As stated above the fact that the authority can clearly demonstrate a five year housing land supply is not relevant to the weight which should be accorded to development plan policies. However when considering the currency of a policy, it is relevant to have regard to the record of how it has been applied. In this case the Council has achieved the current supply position in part by greenfield planning permissions outside settlement boundaries – in some cases

¹⁰ Appeal allowed 20th December 2018 – PINS ref APP/W1715/W/18/3194846

on sites which were within Strategic Gaps (an additional policy objection which does not apply in this case). I do not criticise the authority for any of these decisions but it is reasonable to infer that, in those cases, the Council either considered that the settlement boundary carried reduced weight or that the policy harm was outweighed by other considerations.”

- 5.73. These appeal decisions demonstrate that when an Authority is reliant upon the inclusion of sites contrary the development plan, the policies for the supply of housing are out of date.
- 5.74. Whilst Uttlesford District is able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land, the components of supply upon which they rely include permissions granted on sites beyond defined settlement boundaries.
- 5.75. This reduces the weight to be attached to the conflict with the development plan, in a situation where the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged on account of the most important policies for the supply of housing being out of date.
- 5.76. This approach is reinforced by the judgement in *Eastleigh Borough Council v Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government* [2019] EWHC 1862 (Admin) which followed the *Satchell Lane* appeal decision. In paragraph 54 of the judgement, it concludes:

“As to the rationality of the Inspector’s reasons, in my judgment, Mr Glenister has a complete answer. He submits that the Inspector’s “consideration of the past application of the policy ... revealed that the current compliance with the 5YHLS was achieved “in part by greenfield planning permissions outside settlement boundaries – in some cases on sites which were within Strategic Gaps”. This indicates that the development plan policies were not consistent with the NPPF, which goes to their “currency”. Consideration of this was clearly rational”. I agree.”

- 5.77. As explained below, the proposal accords with the thrust of the development plan for growth in and around Saffron Walden and therefore this provides further justification for approval of the scheme at the earliest opportunity.

Affordable Housing

- 5.78. The application proposes the on-site provision of up to 22 affordable dwellings¹¹, thus achieving a policy-compliant 40% affordable housing provision.
- 5.79. Paragraphs 20 and 62 of the NPPF sets a strong emphasis on the delivery of sustainable development including affordable homes, whilst paragraph 60 clearly sets out the Government's aim to "boost significantly the supply of homes".
- 5.80. The need for affordable housing and their importance in achieving sustainable development is emphasised in many government publications, including House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts – Planning and the Broken Housing Market (19th June 2019).
- 5.81. The West Essex and East Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) – Affordable Housing Update (July 2017) (figure 21) indicates an annual need for 127 affordable homes from 2016-33.
- 5.82. This annual need for affordable housing within the SHMA can be compared with the Council's record of affordable housing delivery together with changes in housing waiting list since 2016. These are shown in the tables below.

¹¹ Assuming 55 dwellings are built

Comparison of affordable housing delivery in Uttlesford District against the SHMA appraisal of affordable need (2016-22)¹²

Year	Affordable dwellings completed	SHMA affordable homes required (min)	Difference from SHMA affordable homes figure	Cumulative Provision
2015/16	193	127	66	66
2016/17	272	127	145	211
2017/18	104	127	-23	188
2018/19	376	127	249	437
2019/20	348	127	221	658
2020/21	9	127	-118	540
2021/22	106	127	-21	519
Total	1,408	889	519	

5.83. The above table indicates that from 2016 through to 2022, the Council has delivered 1,408 affordable homes which equates to 201 annually. Cumulatively, the authority has delivered 519 more affordable homes than was required in the SHMA for the district.

5.84. The extent that the District's housing waiting list has changed in the intervening period is shown in the table below¹³.

Details on changes in Uttlesford District's housing need

Category	1/4/16	1/4/17	1/4/18	1/4/19	1/4/20	1/4/21
No. on register	888	808	1,112	1,090	1,108	928
No. in reasonable preference category	352	284	379	361	538	761
Homeless	27	83	97	94	134	210

5.85. Whilst the Council has achieved its sufficient delivery of affordable homes to address the identified need in the SHMA, the above table indicates that the authority still has a very significant unresolved need as demonstrated through its housing waiting list. This is especially noticeable with respect to the growth in the numbers in both a reasonable preference category together with homeless, notwithstanding that the Council had over-delivered by 519

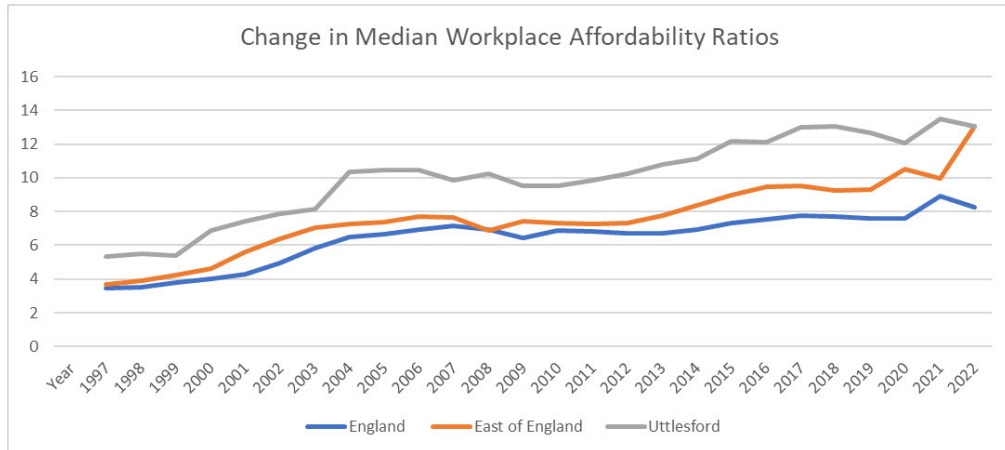
¹² Data sourced from Table 1011C at [Live tables on affordable housing supply - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply)

¹³ Data derived from [Local authority housing data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/local-authority-housing-data)

dwellings between 2016 and 2022 with regard to the assessed need for affordable housing.

- 5.86. On the basis of the available evidence, it is clear that there remains a very significant need for additional affordable homes to address the burgeoning demand as illustrated in the growth of the housing waiting list, especially those in a reasonable preference category or homeless.
- 5.87. As the tables above indicates, whilst between April 2016 and March 2022, there has been a cumulative over-delivery of 519 affordable dwellings (when assessed against identified needs), there remains acute issues in how the district functions in an economic, social and environmentally sustainable way as emphasised by the growth in the housing register.
- 5.88. The future delivery of affordable housing in Uttlesford District is highly uncertain, especially with respect to the very significant deficit within the five-year supply. Consequently, there is the question of how and when the existing needs as indicated by the housing register will be met.
- 5.89. With its continued delays in delivery, this has the potential to make the situation even more severe for the significant number of households currently on the Council's Housing Register.
- 5.90. As of April 2022 there were 928 households on the Council housing register. Accordingly, it is evident that there is a significant need for additional affordable homes.
- 5.91. Paragraph 60 of the NPPF requires that needs of groups with specific housing requirements to be addressed. Paragraph 62 confirms that one of the specific groups relates to those requiring affordable housing.
- 5.92. Although the Council publishes details of its planning commitments for housing, there is no information on the extent that those sites forming parts of its supply will deliver affordable housing to either address the current deficit of 1,088 dwellings or ensure that this does not increase in the future.

5.93. Alongside the burgeoning housing waiting list, as referenced, the workplace affordability ratio has also increased for the district. The changes since 1999 are illustrated in the chart below.



5.94. The above chart indicates how the affordability of homes in Uttlesford District has consistently been higher than that of England and the region. The chart also indicates the extent that affordability in Uttlesford has worsened, which is also reflective of the failure to plan for sufficient housing, notwithstanding its achievement of the affordable housing needs.

5.95. The failure to meet the identified needs of affordable housing is a dire situation indicating that the Authority is not fulfilling the objectives in paragraph 60 of the NPPF.

5.96. A step change in the delivery of affordable housing is therefore required if the Council is to get anywhere near the identified need in the SHMA and begin to address the dysfunctions of the local housing market. Such a step change would be consistent with the thrust of paragraph 60 of the NPPF, to boost significantly the supply of housing.

- 5.97. The acute affordable housing need reinforces the merits of this Scheme with the on-site provision of 22 affordable dwellings¹⁴.
- 5.98. The Applicant considers substantial weight is attributable to the benefits associated with the provision of affordable housing.

¹⁴ Assuming 55 dwellings are built

6. CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME

General

- 6.1. This section of the Planning Statement deals with the detailed aspects of the application proposal.
- 6.2. In so far as the scheme is submitted in outline form, the following section of this Statement demonstrates, when considered against the main issues, that the scheme is entirely acceptable in planning terms. The main issues, noted below are summarised in corresponding order:
1. Principle
 2. Highways & Transport
 3. Drainage
 4. Housing Mix and Tenure
 5. Character and Landscape
 6. Heritage
 7. Ecology
 8. Agricultural Land Quality
 9. Air Quality
 10. Noise
 11. Energy and Sustainability
 12. Planning Obligations
- 6.3. These matters are addressed in turn below.

(1) Principle

- 6.4. As set out at paragraph 5.2 above, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 6.5. The current development plan comprises the saved policies from the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 and the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan (2022).
- 6.6. The reliance upon permissions outside defined settlement boundaries to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply means the most important policies for determining the planning application are out of date triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11 of the NPPF.
- 6.7. Although the Application Scheme is contrary to Saved Policies S1, S7 and H1 of the adopted Uttlesford Local Plan, by virtue of its location outside the development boundary as set out on the Proposals Map, the policies, which restrict development in the countryside, were based on an assessment of housing need that is inconsistent with that need that is now required to be met.
- 6.8. The effect of these policies, which seek to restrain new development to land within the settlement boundaries, serves to restrict the supply of housing and prevents local housing needs being met.
- 6.9. The identified housing need, and the Councils reliance upon permissions outside defined settlement boundaries to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land outweighs the policy conflict with policies S1, S7 and H1.
- 6.10. The restrictive application of these policies was addressed in the recent PINS assessment of the application at land to the West of Thaxted Road (PINS Ref: S62A/2022/0014). With regard to Policy S1, the inspector, at paragraph 18 of the decision states:

“SWTC consider the proposal would be contrary to Local Plan policy S1. However, although in the open countryside, the application site adjoins the edge of Saffron Walden which is identified in policy S1 as a main urban area where development would be permitted for sites on the edge of the built-up area if compatible with its countryside setting.”

- 6.11. As for Policy S7, this was considered by the inspector in paragraph 17 of the decision:

“Policy S7 of the Local Plan advocates that in the countryside planning permission will only be given for development that needs to take place there or is appropriate to a rural area and that there will be strict control on new building. However, UDC acknowledges that the Local Plan is not up to date and significantly predates the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).”

- 6.12. In addition, the Application Scheme accords with the economic, social and environmental roles of sustainable development.
- 6.13. In addition and having regard to paragraph 111 of the NPPF it is not considered that the development would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety nor that the likely residual cumulative impact of development would be ‘severe’, and therefore the scheme is acceptable in highway terms.
- 6.14. The LPA’s pre-application advice concludes in relation to the principle of development of the Site as follows:
- An in-principle objection due to the site being allocated for employment use in the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan
 - The proposed access arrangement is acceptable in-principle.
- 6.15. The recent appeal decision at Radwinter Road (APP/C1570/W/22/3296426) also clarifies a number of policy related matters, which informs the assessment of the in-principle acceptability of developing the Application Site for housing. As in that case, the Site is located adjacent to but beyond the settlement boundary for Saffron Walden. Paragraphs 71 to 75 of the appeal decision set out an assessment of that scheme against the policies of the Local Plan. The considerations are equally applicable to the assessment of the Application Scheme. They are reproduced below.

“The parties agree that there is no five-year land supply in Uttlesford. Accepting that the agreed housing land supply position is 3.52 years, this shortfall is to my mind very significant. Paragraph 11 (d) of the Framework and the associated footnote 8 is engaged and the lack of a 5 year supply of housing sites means that the policies most

important for determining this appeal are deemed to be out of date.

The proposal would result in some harm in terms of landscape and visual impact. The proposal would also result in the loss of agricultural land. As such, the proposal would conflict with policies S7 and ENV5 of the ULP.

In terms of policy ENV5, this policy is only partly consistent with the Framework and the requirement to undertake in effect a sequential approach is not consistent with the Framework. I am therefore attaching only limited weight to the policy conflict.

In relation to policy S7, I have set out above that the general objective of the policy accords with the Framework. However, I recognise that the detailed wording which requires the countryside to be protected for its own sake is inconsistent with the Framework. It is my view that only limited weight should be attached to this policy conflict.

As a result, it is my view that on the basis of the conflict with the policies outlined above, the proposed development would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole.”

- 6.16. Paragraphs 76 to 79 set out the planning balance. Again, the considerations equally apply to the assessment of the Application Scheme. They are reproduced below.

“It is common ground that the tilted balance identified within the Framework and as set out above has been engaged. In the case of this appeal, this means granting planning permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

The proposal would conflict with policies S7 and ENV5 of the ULP. In relation to policy S7, it is my view that limited weight should be attached to this policy conflict. I also attach limited weight to the policy conflict with policy ENV5.

The benefits arising from the proposed development would be substantial. I have concluded that the benefits of housing delivery, affordable housing and custom build housing should all individually carry substantial weight. I have also attributed moderate weight to the wider off site highways benefits that the scheme would deliver beyond mitigation measures. I have also attributed moderate weight to the sustainable transport measures which would also deliver

benefits to the wider population and not just future residents of the scheme. I have attributed moderate weight to the economic benefits in terms of employment generation, as well as moderate weight to the biodiversity net gain the proposal would secure. Finally, I have attributed moderate weight to the delivery of a significant amount of publicly accessible open space provision at the site.

I have identified no adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole. In the case of this appeal, I conclude that the material considerations of the appeal are such that they outweigh the conflict with the development plan.”

- 6.17. Although the Application is contrary to the development plan when taken as a whole, the presumption of sustainable development at paragraph 11d (ii) of the NPPF is engaged and there are no adverse impacts that could even be considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the many benefits arising from the proposal. As such, the principle of development is acceptable; and necessary if the identified housing need is to be met.

(2) Highways & Transport

General Principles

- 6.18. The assessment of the scheme’s highway impact has been an integral aspect of the scheme from the outset, with pre-application meetings and discussions convened with the County Highway Authority.
- 6.19. Section 4 of the TA explains the proposed movement and access strategy, referencing conformity with the Essex Design Guide (EDG) (2018), with the integration of the scheme to the surrounding neighbourhood to ensure social cohesion and active travel modes with the aim of realising a reduction in the need to travel. A hierarchical approach will be a guiding feature of the planning and design stages to ensure that priority is given to more sustainable forms of transport and opportunities to reduce travel demand over motor vehicle access.
- 6.20. The Development is supported by a comprehensive Movement & Access Strategy that seeks to deliver a good quality environment for all modes of travel to / from the Site that is attractive, well-connected and permeable to encourage walking and cycling to local destinations; and able to encourage activity thereby

improving personal security and safety.

Smart Travel Choices

- 6.21. A commitment is made by the applicant to develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive Framework Travel Plan (FTP) for the Site, working in partnership with the UDC / ECC to incorporate Smarter Choices measures and include the application of personalised travel planning techniques, marketing and other behavioural change initiatives with the aim of sustaining these changes over the long term.
- 6.22. The FTP measures are planned to work alongside the delivery of physical improvements to the pedestrian, cycle & public transport environment to achieve modal shift, reduce the impact of traffic generated by the development, to improve accessibility, promote healthier lifestyle choices as well as wider social / community benefits and to assist in minimising the environmental impacts of the development.
- 6.23. The TP will outline a commitment to the appointment and funding of a Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC) alongside the funding of measures / incentives identified in the TP. Such measures / incentives to be delivered by the Site include a community website, travel packs, car sharing promotional strategies and personalised travel planning.

Permeability

- 6.24. The Movement & Access Strategy will deliver a 'walkable neighbourhood' with interconnected street patterns incorporating formal shared footway / cycleway and / or footway provision and where the daily needs of people within the area, such as work, play, education, and shopping are within walking distance to minimise any reliance on the use of the car.
- 6.25. All formal footways and cycleways within the Site will be constructed to full highway standards with sealed asphalt surfaces and concrete edging. On some secondary and tertiary routes where there is no identified pedestrian desire line on one side of the street over a section, then footways may be omitted.

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- 6.26. Hedges and fences to adjoining properties will be set back at least 0.5m from footways or cycleways. Inter-visibility splays of 2m x 2m will be provided at crossovers, path junctions to maintain pedestrian safety.
- 6.27. Crime and the fear of crime can deter people from making trips by foot and cycle. In this regard, active travel corridors and user activity will be overlooked and generally concentrated on active frontages avoiding, where possible, routes to the rear of building plots and other blind spots.
- 6.28. The formal shared footway / cycleway and / or footway provision will be lit. All pathways will be accompanied by a legible signage strategy. Crossing points are intended to be uncontrolled and will tie in with desire lines of movement.
- 6.29. Priority will be given to users of the formal, surfaced path network where it intersects with the internal street network through measures such as carriageway narrowing and changes to surface material.

Vehicular Access Strategy

- 6.30. Plan 23075/001 included as Appendix 3 to the TA shows the proposed arrangements for vehicular access to the Site that is proposed to take the form of an extension to the existing spine road serving Knight Park.
- 6.31. To accommodate the proposed vehicular access, it is proposed to extend the existing spine road some 10-15m to the Site boundary whereupon it is proposed to provide a gateway feature as a transition from the retail park to the residential development by way of a carriageway narrowing designed in accordance with guidance in the Essex Design Guide (2018).

Development Trip Generation

- 6.32. As set out in section 5 of the TA, the Scheme is anticipated to generate 32 vehicle movements in the AM peak hour and 31 vehicle movements in the PM peak hour. In total, the Scheme could be expected to generate 427 daily vehicle movements.

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- 6.33. As set out in section 6 and 7 of the TA, the impact of traffic movements associate with the proposed development of the Site is considered to be acceptable on the local highway network, provided the package of mitigation measures at section 8 is implemented.
- 6.34. Overall, the capacity assessments have been undertaken which demonstrates that the local highway network can accommodate the level of traffic generated by the scheme without the need for substantial off-site highway works.
- 6.35. Providing new homes on the application site, within walking and distance from the facilities available within Saffron Walden, gives a real opportunity for the majority of trips to be made on foot and by bicycle thereby contributing towards sustainable modes of transport and corresponding reduction in traffic emissions.
- 6.36. Access can be gained to local shopping facilities, health facilities, eating and drinking establishments, schools and nurseries.
- 6.37. A package of transport measures is proposed to mitigate the impact of the development, which matters are summarised as follows:
- New bus stops on the B184 Thaxted Road, to include passenger facilities, step-free access, seating and real-time passenger information)
 - Car-club scheme
 - Framework Travel Plan
- 6.38. With the proposed mitigation measures in place, the scheme will not have a severe impact on highway safety and the flow of traffic along Thaxted Road Hill or within the town centre thereby complying with Policies GEN1, GEN2 and GEN6 of the Local Plan, NP Policies SW4, SW12 and SW14 as well as Section 9 of the NPPF.

(3) Drainage

- 6.39. As set out in the FRA, the flood risk mitigation strategy for the development consists of the following elements:

- The proposed ground floor levels are set at a minimum of 300mm above the 1 in 100 annual probability plus allowance for climate change level; and
 - Continuous safe access from the site is provided at the 1 in 100 annual probability plus climate change flood level.
- 6.40. The Surface Water Drainage Strategy has been developed using best practice Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) techniques.
- 6.41. As set out in the FRA, the results of the soakaway testing undertaken on the Site confirms that, in the northern part of the site, infiltration will be appropriate for the surface water drainage strategy.
- 6.42. As such, it is proposed that surface water from the northern residential plots, driveways and the access road will be conveyed to the attenuation basins, prior to outfalling into the infiltration basin located in the northern area of the site.
- 6.43. In the northern portion of the site the residential plots will have individual soakaways, where ground conditions allow. Shared surfaces will drain into areas of permeable paving which will be able to drain via infiltration. Utilising permeable paving, surface water will be cleaned prior to discharge to the ground and will also allow for some attenuation within the subbase. It is also proposed that during the detailed design, raingardens and tree pits are considered, to increase the benefits to the site.
- 6.44. In the southern and western parts of the site, the strategy is to implement permeable paving (Type B), a traditional drainage and piped sewer network (via basins where possible) into an attenuation basin prior to discharge via a gravity sewer.
- 6.45. The drainage strategy will manage surface water runoff utilising sustainable drainage methods including source control (pervious pavements, water butts and bioretention), conveyance (filter strips and swales), and site control (detention basin).
- 6.46. The surface water from the southern and western parts of the site, including highways will drain into the attenuation basin located in the northern field. At times of heavy rainfall events, surface water will back up within the drainage

system and be attenuated in areas of permeable paving and other smaller attenuation ponds. The storage requirements for the worst-case duration storm event (1 in 100) identifies a solution for attenuation ponds with a combined storage volume of approximately 871m³, maximum depth of 1.5m and 1 in 3 side slopes with a minimum freeboard of 300mm.

- 6.47. The final detailed design requirement for the scheme will need to provide storage through a mixture of attenuation ponds, permeable paving, and other measures to ensure the drainage can be adopted for future maintenance purposes. Storage will need to accommodate the worst case 1 in 100-year rainfall event including 40% climate change and a 10% allowance for urban creep. As per the ECC guidance, the roof areas have all had a 10% increase to account for this and drainage network modelling has included an additional flow of 10%.
- 6.48. Foul water, or effluent, flows from the site will be managed in a new sewer network, which will connect into the existing public foul sewer network.
- 6.49. The foul and surface water drainage strategy is included at Appendix B to the FRA.
- 6.50. Overall, the FRA demonstrates that the proposed development is safe and in accordance with the requirements of national and local planning policy.

(4) Housing Mix and Tenure

- 6.51. Whilst submitted in outline form with only the principle of the development and means of access to be considered it is important nevertheless to consider the underlying need to provide for a range of house size, mix and tenure.
- 6.52. This responds to the requirements at policies H9, H10, SW1 and SW10.
- 6.53. The proposal will also provide for a policy compliant quantum of affordable housing which is currently set at 40%. This would generate up to 22 affordable homes, a significant benefit in its own right.

(5) Character and Landscape

- 6.54. As set out in the supporting Landscape and Visual Appraisal (“LVA”), the Application Site sits on gently undulating land associated with the Cam Valley. Within the Site, land rises from the northern corner, which sits at approximately 78m AOD, to the south at approximately 95m AOD. Other variations in topography within the site include ditches and embankments along field boundaries.
- 6.55. Topography within the wider landscape is varied, with gently undulating hills and narrow shallow valley slopes along the River Cam and associated tributaries. Localised landform includes a series of low hills and ridgelines which surround Saffron Walden.
- 6.56. The baseline landscape conditions can be summarised as follows:
- The site has a restricted visual envelope, being generally well contained due to the combined screening effects of topography along the Cam Valley, as well as existing urban fabric along the southeastern edge of Saffron Walden.
 - The site occupies gently undulating land situated along the Cam Valley and is visually contained to the north and west by existing settlement including various commercial and residential developments. An undulating landscape of low ridgelines and shallow valleys associated with tributaries of the River Cam restricts potential views of the site from the wider landscape.
 - The majority of views of the site are close range from users of the public right of way and Knights Park situated adjacent to the site. Existing properties with clear views of the site are limited to dwellings situated to the north on Tiptoffs Lane and from the Bellway Homes Poppy View development.
 - Longer distance views of the site from surrounding areas are more restricted. Partial views of the site occur from the public footpath to the southeast, as well as from higher ground on the Green Mile, to the west of Thaxted Road. However, such views of the site are seen within the close context of existing developments at edge of Saffron Walden including the Knights Retail Park and Bellway Homes Poppy View development.
- 6.57. Section 7 of the LVA concludes in relation to the acceptability of the Scheme as follows:

- The proposed high-quality residential development will provide an extension to the existing settlement to the north of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden. The proposals for the scheme are detailed in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning application. The proposed development, comprising of up to 55 residential dwellings, will also include landscaped buffers along the boundaries, belts of new trees, green links and focal green spaces within the site along with new pedestrian and bridleway multi-user routes and existing vegetation being retained where possible.
- It is considered that the site and the immediate landscape is one that could accommodate change as presented by the proposed development and the consequential effects would not result in any unacceptable harm to landscape character or visual resources.
- The site has been sensitively designed with consideration given to the baseline information including the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2036 and other guidance including Essex Design Guide. The proposed layout ensures that the development relates well to the adjacent settlement and minimises impacts upon the surrounding River Cam Valley.
- An appropriate relationship with the existing settlement edge and wider rural character is achieved by respecting the framework of established streets, public open space and field hedgerows and by setting development back from site boundaries to minimise the visual impact. Proposed streets, lanes footpaths and bridleway multi-user routes are designed to ensure connections to the existing settlement and wider countryside. Existing hedges and trees by the site perimeter and along field boundaries will be enhanced with additional tree planting, bolstering vegetation cover along the River Cam Valley which will soften and filter views.
- The vast majority of existing properties within Saffron Walden will be screened from the proposed development by the combined screening effects of existing built form, localised topography and vegetation cover situated adjacent to the site. There would be no significant views of the proposed development from other settlements within the surrounding landscape.
- The visual receptors that will be the most noticeably affected will be those experiencing direct, close-range views of the proposed built development. These will primarily be from users of the public right of way that crosses the site, residents of the Poppy View development and visitors to Knights Park.
- Longer distance views from the wider public rights of way network would be restricted, with views of the proposed development largely be screened by a combination of existing vegetation, localised topography and urban fabric situated within the intervening landscape. Partial glimpsed long-distance views of the proposed development would be seen within the

close context various existing residential and commercial developments situated at the edge of Saffron Walden.

- As proposed a well-designed residential development situated to the north of Thaxted Road can be accommodated within the local landscape with minimal adverse impact upon the wider landscape character and visual resources. Within the site proposed built development would create a high quality scheme that relates well to the adjacent settlement and does not harm Saffron Walden's character. A cohesive green infrastructure framework is proposed, providing an attractive setting to the proposed development. Vegetation cover would be increased along retained field hedgerow boundaries, ensuring that the proposed built development would be well integrated within the local landscape.

6.58. It is evident from the above that the landscape has been an integral element of the design process with the findings of the accompanying LVA demonstrating the acceptability of the Scheme in landscape terms.

(6) Heritage

6.59. There are no buildings or structures within or adjoining the Application Site that would be adversely affected by the proposed development. In addition, the Scheme is not located within or adjoining a Conservation Area. Accordingly, there are no heritage impacts that need to be weighed in the overall planning balance.

(7) Ecology

6.60. The baseline ecology conditions comprise mostly arable land of negligible ecological importance hedgerows, grassland, ruderal, scrub, ditches, and scattered trees. Species recorded on site include foraging and commuting bats, two juvenile common lizards, an assemblage of nesting birds, with evidence of badger presence and limited suitable habitat available for great crested newt.

6.61. The development proposes to retain the majority of the hedgerows/vegetated boundaries and all of the ditches, and replace the arable land, of negligible ecological important, with a mix of housing and associated sealed surfaces. In addition, the development will include new areas of wildflower grassland, shrub planting, and SuDS ponds.

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- 6.62. Impacts to habitat and protected species primarily comprise the minor loss of hedgerow, which is suitable habitat for reptile, GCN, and bats, and the loss of the arable land, which comprises suitable breeding habitat for breeding birds.
- 6.63. The loss of what is mostly habitat of negligible ecological importance and the introduction of new areas of more valuable habitat is considered to provide an overall long-term benefit to biodiversity and protected species on the site.
- 6.64. The proposals demonstrate that a BNG in excess of 10% is achievable on-site. This assessment is based on the loss of predominantly arable land and a minor removal of hedgerow, replaced by the proposed planting areas of grassland, mixed scrub, and SuDS features.
- 6.65. Overall, the development is in conformity with policies GEN7, ENV7, and ENV8 of the Uttlesford District Council Local Plan, as well as the requirements of the NPPF.

(8) Agricultural Land Quality

- 6.66. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF ensures, inter alia, that planning policies and decisions recognise the benefits that the best and most versatile agricultural land can bring.
- 6.67. The accompanying Agricultural Land Classification Report concludes that the Application Site is comprised of a mixture of Subgrade 3a and 3b land. The loss of such land would conflict with Local Plan Policy ENV5. However, and for the reasons set out at paragraphs 61, 62, 72 and 73 of the Radwinter Road appeal decision (see above), this conflict only attracts limited weight (including on the basis that EBNV5 is only partly consistent with the NPPF).

(9) Air Quality

- 6.68. The Site is located approximately 0.67km from the nearest Air Quality Management Area ("AQMA") (Figure 1 of the supporting Air Quality Assessment ("AQA") refers). As such, there is the potential for vehicles travelling to and from the Proposed Development to increase pollution in this sensitive area. The exposure of future residents to poor air quality is also an

important consideration. These issues have been considered in the assessment.

6.69. The AQA concludes in relation to the acceptability of the Scheme in relation to air quality matters as follows:

- During the construction phase of the development there is the potential for air quality impacts because of fugitive dust emissions from the Site. These were assessed in accordance with the IAQM methodology. Assuming good practice dust control measures are implemented, the residual significance of potential air quality impacts from dust generated by demolition, earthworks, construction and trackout was predicted to be **not significant**.
- During the operational phase of the development there is the potential for air quality impacts because of traffic exhaust emissions associated with vehicles travelling to and from the Site. These were assessed against the screening criteria provided within Defra TG22 and EPUK & IAQM LUPDC guidance. The model results indicate that the change in pollutant concentrations at sensitive receptors are expected to be below AQOs. furthermore, road vehicle exhaust emissions impacts were predicted to be **not significant**.

6.70. As the AQA concludes, based on the assessment results, air quality is not considered a constraint to planning consent for the Proposed Development.

(10) Noise

6.71. The Noise Impact Assessment (“NIA”) reports that environmental noise surveys at the site have been undertaken to establish the typical and maximum noise levels incident upon the proposed development. An assessment of noise from the existing recycling centre and Knight Park indicates no adverse impacts according to the method described in BS 4142:2014.

6.72. Acceptable external amenity noise levels are found for the entire site, with only a 3m noise barrier along the shared boundary with Knight Park and standard 1.8m garden fencing required.

6.73. The NA concludes that the Scheme is acceptable in terms of the overall noise environment.

(11) Energy and Sustainability

- 6.74. The Energy Statement outlines how the predicted energy demand and resultant carbon emissions of the development will be managed and reduced.
- 6.75. The energy strategy follows the energy hierarchy; avoiding unnecessary energy use, use energy more efficiently, use renewable energy, and offset emissions, as per the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Document (2007).
- 6.76. The proposed energy strategy capitalises on passive design measures to maximise the fabric energy efficiency and energy demand. The scheme will benefit from Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery to minimise heat losses. The scheme should then make use of Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) for space heating and domestic hot water. Heat-pump solutions for space heating and hot water will remove the need for on-site combustion. The scheme could look to utilise window reveals, balconies and external shutters where feasible, to reduce the requirement for active cooling.
- 6.77. The proposed energy strategy for the submitted scheme is currently demonstrating a combined on-site regulated **CO₂ reduction of 59%** (Part L 2021 Baseline).
- 6.78. The Application Site is also in a sustainable location and will provide for a significant number of social public and environmental benefits. This includes providing development within walking distance from the town centre, accessible by bus whilst also creating recreational opportunities as well as enhancements to the sites biodiversity through habitat creation.

(12) Planning Obligations

- 6.79. Matters of detail, including in relation to the likely financial contributions are to be agreed as part of the reserved matters application including, subject to meeting the necessary tests at paragraph 57 of the NPPF, it is considered that the following may be provided for/sought through preparation of a s106 agreement as follows:

On-site provision

- (i) On-site provision of affordable housing (40%)
- (ii) On-site public open space, including ongoing maintenance
- (iii) Travel Plan
- (iv) Car club

Off-site provision

- (v) Off-site provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities
- (vi) Healthcare care
- (vii) Education (early years and primary)
- (viii) Library provision
- (ix) Off-site highway enhancements as necessary.

6.80. Additional details are set out in the supporting Draft Heads of terms Document, with the content to discuss be discussed with the Council during the determination of the Planning Application.

6.81. If a satisfactory legal agreement is completed securing the necessary contributions for on and off site provision of facilities and infrastructure, this would address the requirements of Local Plan Policy GEN6.

The Planning Balance: Assessing Sustainability

6.82. This section assesses the significant merits of the scheme in relation to the three sustainability tests set out at paragraph 8 of the NPPF and clearly shows that whilst there are considered to be some slight adverse impacts, these considerations are plainly incapable of outweighing, let alone significantly and demonstrably outweighing, the many benefits of the scheme.

6.83. Paragraph 9 of the NPPF states (amongst other things) the assessment of the sustainability roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

6.84. A planning balance exercise has been carried out in accordance with the guidance at paragraph 9 of the NPPF and sets out a combined analysis in relation to the sustainability roles (economic, social and environmental).

Economic

6.85. The Scheme satisfies the economic role of sustainability including through the provision of housing to support growth and the associated provision of infrastructure, to be secured through the preparation of a S106 agreement, where justifies, and by on-site provision of affordable housing of up to 22 dwellings.

6.86. The Scheme generates a series of local and District-wide economic benefits including through (i) construction of the scheme and the range of employment generated as a result; and (ii) the on-going expenditure from the households purchasing and occupying the new homes.

6.87. The principal economic benefits arising from the scheme are summarised below:

- Increased house building in an area where there is an acute need for new housing that in turn drives economic growth further and faster than any industry. In this regard the proposals will contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is being made available in the right place and at the right time to support growth.
- The provision of up to 55 new homes in the district where there is an established need housing.
- The application scheme will deliver much needed affordable homes that will meet identified needs that are otherwise not being met.
- Meeting general housing needs is a significant benefit, consistent with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing.
- In order for the economy to function, sufficient housing is required in the right locations and at the right time. This site represents a location where there would be no significant impact upon the landscape, historic environment nor on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

- Based upon a multiplier of 2.3 jobs per new home¹⁵, up to 55 dwelling Application Scheme is estimated to create approximately 126 new jobs.
- Increased expenditure in the local area will support local FTE jobs.
- Helping to deliver a significant boost to the local economy through ‘first occupation’ expenditure of £300,410¹⁶. This is expenditure on new furniture and other household goods that residents spend as ‘one-offs’ when moving into a new home.
- Generating a further significant economic boost of £525,800.00 from residents moving into the District’s existing housing stock which were vacated so that the owners could move into the new homes. This is a result of the spending on renovations, household goods, removals, surveys, estate and legal fees that are associated with the purchase of existing rather than new homes within the District’s housing stock¹⁷.
- In terms of household expenditure, data from ONS Family Expenditure Survey 2021-22¹⁸ shows that the ‘average UK household spend’ is £532.70 per week (Table A33) (or £27,700.40 per year), whereas in the East of England it is 3.6% higher than the UK average (Table A33). This means average weekly spend per household is £552 (or £28,704 per annum). For the application proposal at providing up to 55 dwellings, the total gross expenditure is estimated to be £1.578m per year to the economy. A proportion of this household expenditure is anticipated to be spent in local shops and services and will help sustain the existing services in Uttlesford District including those in Saffron Walden. The expenditure will include that a proportion of that spent on areas including food & non-alcoholic drinks (£66.40 per week); alcoholic drinks (£13.40 per week); recreation and culture (£60.40 per week), household goods and services (£37.30) and miscellaneous goods and service i.e. hairdressing & beauty treatments (£41.80 per week).¹⁹ Given the current economic challenges facing the UK these are significant economic benefits.

¹⁵ See page 13 of the Homes Builders Federation “Economic Footprint of UK Housebuilding “ (July 2018)

¹⁶ Research carried out by OnePoll on behalf of Barratt Homes (August 2014;

) which shows an average of £5,462 per dwelling.

¹⁷ Research by HBF and Knight Frank on “Economic Benefits of housing market activity” which shows a contribution per house sale/purchase transaction of £9,560 -

. The 2011 Census indicates that 31% of owner occupied or shared ownership households in Uttlesford District that had moved within previous year, had lived within the authority.

¹⁸ [Family spending workbook 3: expenditure by region - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/family-spending-workbook-3-expenditure-by-region).

¹⁹ Figures based upon East of England Regional data in Table A33

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- 6.88. By providing land of the right type, in the right place, and at the right time to support economic growth, the development of up to 55 no. dwellings on the site satisfies the objectives at paragraph 8 of the NPPF and assists in the aims of the NPPF in helping to build a strong and competitive economy.
- 6.89. This is further emphasised in the Government's November 2011 Paper 'Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England' where paragraph 11 states *"getting house building moving again is crucial for economic growth – housing has a direct impact on economic output, averaging 3 per cent of GDP in the last decade. For every new home built up to two new jobs are created for a year.*
- 6.90. The economic benefits are to be accorded substantial weight in the planning balance.

Social

- 6.91. The Application Scheme satisfies the social role, in helping to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, including through providing the supply of housing required to meet identified needs in open market and affordable sectors. This is a significant benefit. In addition:
1. Future residents will be in an easy walking and cycling distance to a wide range of other uses including the shops and services in Saffron Walden town centre.
 2. The Application Scheme will, to be agreed at the reserved matters stage, provide a range of housing types and size.
 3. The scheme secures high quality residential environment together with extensive areas of open space, a children's play park and walking routes.
 4. The scheme would deliver a policy compliant 40% affordable housing contribution (up to 22 dwellings).
- 6.92. The details of the layout and house type design are to be agreed through the determination of a subsequent reserved matters application, with the detailed scheme to reflect the particular need for housing at that time.
- 6.93. Any increased pressure upon local services will be mitigated through the planning obligation(s).

6.94. Overall, the social benefits of the scheme can be afforded significant weight in the overall planning balance.

Environmental

6.95. In terms of the environmental role, the Application Site is not located on land designated for its landscape value. The accompanying reports demonstrate that the scheme will not have any material impact on existing ecology and will in fact significantly enhance the biodiversity characteristics of the site, resulting in a biodiversity net gain.

6.96. The retention of existing boundary trees and hedges around the site and the sensitive set back of the development will ensure the proposed built form is subsumed positively into the landscape character of the area.

6.97. The proposals would deliver sustainable homes allowing the fulfilment of this important objective whilst at the same time moving to a low carbon economy and securing an environmentally sustainable form of new residential development.

6.98. On the basis of the above, there are environmental benefits which would arise from the proposals, to which moderate weight should be attached to in the overall planning balance.

Planning Balance: Harms and Benefits

6.99. The planning balance in so far as it relates to harms and benefits is summarised below.

Harm/Adverse Impact	Weight
Outside settlement boundary	Limited weight because (i) the spatial application of the Development Plan is out of date, (ii) there is an acute and unmet need for affordable housing;
Loss of greenfield site in the countryside	Limited weight for the reasons summarised above.
Loss of Subgrade 3a & 3b BMV agricultural land	Limited weight as the Council accepts such land is required if housing needs are to be met.

Benefit	Weight
Contribution to the supply of market housing	Substantial Weight
Contribution to the supply of affordable homes	Substantial weight to the provision of up to 22 affordable dwellings (40%) in the context of a significant and chronic affordable shortfall.
Creation of jobs during the construction phase and increased spend during the operational phase	Substantial weight
Environmental benefits arising from the biodiversity enhancements	Moderate weight

6.100. As the Table demonstrates, the adverse impacts that have been identified would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits that have been identified.

6.101. The collective benefits of the development are extensive. As demonstrated, any possible adverse impacts of granting planning permission would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Accordingly, the Scheme benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development and which is a further material consideration in support of the grant of planning permission.

6.102. It follows that the application of paragraph 11(d)(ii) NPPF provides a powerful material consideration to justify the grant of planning permission.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1. The application proposes a residential development scheme, in outline form, on land west of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden, for up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping and informal open space, with access from Thaxted Road.
- 7.2. The spatial policies for the supply of housing do not meet current housing needs; and the Council has been granting planning permissions for the development of sites for housing beyond the settlement boundaries as defined in the Local Plan.
- 7.3. Accordingly, the settlement boundaries defined under Policies H1, S2 and S7 are not sufficient to meet current housing need and the weight to be given to the conflict with this policy is reduced.
- 7.4. Although the application site is within the countryside, it is not a valued landscape nor are there any other constraints on site that would preclude such a development as proposed.
- 7.5. There are a number of material considerations which weigh significantly in favour of the application being permitted, including the Council's relevant policies not seeking to deliver an NPPF consistent objectively assessed need.
- 7.6. It has been demonstrated in this Statement that whilst the application site is outside the settlement policy boundary for Saffron Walden as defined in the Local Plan, it is inevitable that the Council will have to use greenfield sites to provide for increased housing provision. Consequently, it is considered that those policies are to be afforded limited weight and, pursuant to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the application scheme represents a sustainable form of development in its own right.
- 7.7. The Application will secure an extensive areas of publicly accessible open space, as well as a Green Orbital Route.
- 7.8. In the planning balance it is considered that the material considerations in favour of the scheme (provision of market and affordable housing, economic

benefits, biodiversity benefits, landscape enhancement, heritage enhancement) outweigh the conflict with an out of date settlement boundary, and loss of Subgrade 3a and 3b agricultural land.

- 7.9. The Application Site provides a sustainable location for housing, within walking distance to local services and facilities in Saffron Walden town centre.
- 7.10. It represents a sustainable location for housing development to meet identified needs and development of the site in the manner proposed would result in a well-designed scheme that would contribute positively to residents' social well-being.
- 7.11. The scheme, at the reserved matters stage, will provide for a mix housing types and tenures, including 40% affordable housing, helping to meet the identified need for new homes in Uttlesford District.
- 7.12. The scheme satisfies the economic, social and environmental roles of the NPPF and has been advanced following pre-application consultation with the Council and Essex Highways and has been amended to respond to the advice received.
- 7.13. There are no adverse impacts that could even be considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the many benefits arising from the proposal.
- 7.14. For the reasons set out above, the Application represents a sustainable form of development and should be supported, and planning permission granted.
