

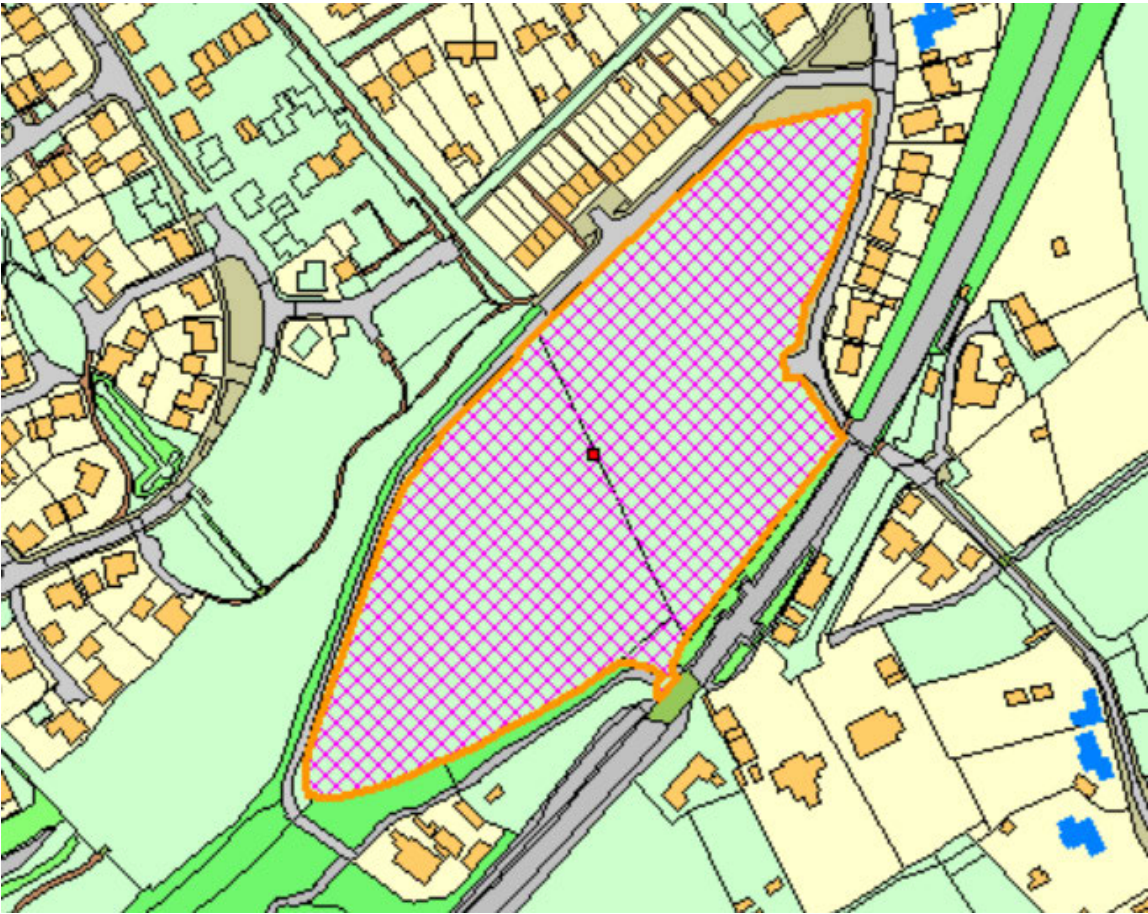
ITEM NUMBER:

PLANNING COMMITTEE **07 February 2024**
DATE:

REFERENCE NUMBER: **S62A/2023/0031 and UTT/23/3112/PINS**

LOCATION: **Land North Of Knight Park**
 Thaxted Road
 Saffron Walden
 Essex

SITE LOCATION PLAN:



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Organisation: Uttlesford District Council Date: 26th January 2024

PROPOSAL: Consultation on S62A/2023/0031 - Outline application with all matters reserved except for access for the erection of up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping and open space, with access from Knight Park

APPLICANT: Kier Ventures Ltd

AGENT: Woolf Bond Planning LLP

DATE CONSULTATION RESPONSE DUE: Extension of time given to 09th February 2024.

CASE OFFICER: Matt Kolaszewski

NOTATION: Outside Development Limits / Within Countryside Protection Zone

REASON THIS CONSULTATION IS ON THE AGENDA: This is a report in relation to a major planning application submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for determination. Uttlesford District Council (UDC) has been designated by Government for poor performance in relation to the quality of decision-making on major applications.

This means that the Uttlesford District Council Planning Authority has the status of a consultee and is not the decision maker. There is limited time to comment. In total 21 days

1. RECOMMENDATION

That the Strategic Director of Planning be authorised to advise the Planning Inspectorate that Uttlesford District Council make the following observations on this application:

Details are to be outlined by the Planning Committee.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

2.1 The proposed application site is located to the to the northeast of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden. The site is approximately 2 hectares in size and its topography consists of a modest slope falling from the southeastern corner to the northwestern corner. The site is formed by a single distinct field currently in arable production and free of any established built form. Mature vegetation is the form of established hedgerows and medium

size trees are located along the boundaries of the site. Immediately adjacent to the southern boundary is Knights Park Retail Park which includes a several commercial units, a supermarket, a café, hotel, and a recycling centre. To the north, operation works are currently ongoing for a residential development for the construction of 150 dwellings being undertaken by Bellway. Modest size arable fields used for agriculture are located to the east.

- 2.2 In terms of local designations, the site is defined as being outside of the settlement boundary of the Town of Saffron Walden and thereby located in the countryside. The Environmental Agency Flood Risk Maps identifies the site lying within 'Flood 1'. The site does not fall within or abuts a conservation area, and there are no other heritage assets near the site. There are no local landscape designations within or abutting the site..

3. **PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 This is an Outline application for up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping, informal open space and open space, with access from Thaxted Road via Knight Park. All other matters are reserved for future consideration. Buildings heights will be in conformity with existing dwellings in the vicinity of the proposal, and proposed at a maximum of 2.5 storeys. The scheme will include a mix of housing tenures, together with up to 40% affordable housing provision.

4. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 The development does not constitute 'EIA development' for the purposes of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

5. **RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

5.1 **Application Site:**

- 5.2 A search of Council's records indicates that there is no relevant recorded planning history for the application site.

6. **PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE AND/OR COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Full details of the applicant's engagement and consultation exercises conducted is discussed in the supporting Statement.

7. **STATUTORY CONSULTEES**

- 7.1 All statutory consultees are required to write directly to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) (and not the Local Planning Authority) with the final date for comments being 23 January 2024.

7.2 Accordingly, it should be noted that a number of considerations/advice normally obtained from statutory consultees to assist the Local Planning Authority in the consideration of a major planning application have not been provided and are thereby not included within this report.

8. **PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS**

8.1 These should be submitted by the Parish Council directly to PINS within the consultation period are thereby not informed within this report.

9. **CONSULTEE RESPONSES**

9.1 All consultees' comments should be submitted directly to PINS (and not the Local Planning Authority) within the 21-day consultation period, which closes 23 January 2024. Accordingly, it should be noted that considerations/advice normally obtained from consultees to assist in the determination of a major planning application have not been provided and are thereby not included within this report. Notwithstanding this, the following comments have been received:

9.2 **Place Services Archaeology**
No objections subject to conditions.

9.3 **UDC Housing Officer**
No objections, details to be secured at reserved matters.

9.4 **Essex Police**
No objections subject to details.

10. **REPRESENTATIONS**

10.1 The application was publicised by sending letters to adjoining and adjacent occupiers and by displaying a site notice. Anyone wishing to make a representation (whether supporting or objecting) are required to submit their comments directly to PINS within the 21-day consultation period which closes 23rd January 2024. All representations should be submitted directly to PINS within the consultation period.

10.2 UDC has no role in co-ordinating or receiving any representations made about this application. It will be for PINS to decide whether to accept any representations that are made later than the extended consultation period

11. **MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

11.1 In accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this decision has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals in the National Planning Policy Framework, The Development Plan and all other material considerations identified in the "Considerations and Assessments" section of the report. The

determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

11.2 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act requires the local planning authority in dealing with a planning application, to have regard to

(a) The provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application,;

(a) a post-examination draft neighbourhood development plan, so far as material to the application,

(b) any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and

(c) any other material considerations.

11.3 Section 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority, or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State, in considering whether to grant planning permission (or permission in principle) for development which affects a listed building or its setting, to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses or, fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area

11.4 The Development Plan

11.5 Essex Minerals Local Plan (adopted July 2014)
Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (adopted July 2017)
Uttlesford District Local Plan (adopted 2005)
Felsted Neighbourhood Plan (made Feb 2020)
Great Dunmow Neighbourhood Plan (made December 2016)
Newport and Quendon and Rickling Neighbourhood Plan (made June 2021)
Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan (made February 2019)
Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan (made 19 July 2022)
Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan (made 11 October 2022)

Emerging Local Plan

The Council is currently out to consultation of the new Local Plan for Uttlesford (regulation 18) in which the consultation response for representations closes on the 15th 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. Once adopted the new local plan for the district will replace the existing Adopted Local Plan 2005.

12. POLICY

12.1 National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

12.2 Uttlesford District Plan 2005

- Policy S7 (Countryside)
- Policy GEN1 (Access)
- Policy GEN2 (Design)
- Policy GEN3 (Flood Risk)
- Policy GEN4 (Good Neighbourliness)
- Policy GEN5 (Light Pollution)
- Policy GEN6 (Infrastructure Provision)
- Policy GEN7 (Nature Conservation)
- Policy GEN8 (Parking)
- Policy ENV5 (Protection of Agricultural Land)
- Policy ENV7 (The Protection of the Natural Environment Designated Sites)
- Policy ENV8 (Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation)
- Policy ENV10 (Noise Sensitive Development and Disturbance from Aircraft)
- Policy ENV11 (Noise Generators)
- Policy ENV12 (Groundwater Protection)
- Policy ENV13 (Exposure to Poor Air Quality)
- Policy ENV14 (Contaminated Land)
- Policy H9 (Housing Mix)
- Policy H10 (Affordable Housing)
- Policy E2 (Safeguarding Employment Land)
- Policy SW5 (Thaxted Road Employment Site)
- Policy SW6 (Safeguarding of Existing Employment Areas)

12.3 Supplementary Planning Document or Guidance

- Accessible Homes and Play Space (November 2005)
- Urban Place Supplement to the Essex Design Guide (March 2007)
- Uttlesford Adopted Parking Standards
- Essex County Council Parking Standards (September 2006)
- Interim Climate Change Planning Policy (February 2021)
- Building for a Healthy Lifestyle (November 2021)
- First Homes Planning Advice Note (March 2022)

13. CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

13.1 The issues to consider in the determination of this application are:

- A) Background and Principle of Development
- B) Design
- C) Residential Amenity
- D) Heritage Impacts and Archaeology

- E) Affordable Housing Mix and Tenure
- F) Access
- G) Nature Conservation
- H) Air Quality, Contamination & Noise
- I) Flooding
- J) Planning Obligations
- K) Other matters
- L) Planning Balance and Conclusion

13.2 A) Background and Principle of Development

13.2.1 Referring to the existing adopted development plan, the northern part of the site is located within the 2005 Local Plan boundary for policy SW5 “Thaxted Road Employment Site” which is a 3.76 hectare site proposed for employment uses. It is noted that the northern part is no longer being considered for development in the latest illustrative masterplan for the site. The rest of the site is in open countryside.

13.2.2 The 2005 Local Plan safeguards existing employment land and allocates land for future employment development immediately to the south and west of the site under policies SW6 and SW5 respectively. Despite being in open countryside the proposed site access is through the existing and proposed employment sites. Since the 2005 plan was adopted a household waste recycling centre has opened immediately to the south of the site (consented in 2007 under reference UTT/0710/05/CC).

13.2.3 The recently published Uttlesford Employment Needs Update (2023) identifies a need for “up to 5ha” of industrial land in Saffron Walden. As outlined in the Employment Site Selection Topic Paper (2023) the recently published draft Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2023) only identifies one site at Saffron Walden that is suitable, available and achievable for employment use – the site that is subject to this pre-app – albeit it is acknowledged that the site was promoted for both employment and residential in the Council’s Call for Sites. The Council published a draft Local Plan for Regulation 18 consultation on 3rd November 2023. The plan allocates this site for employment development (industrial use) under Core Policy 4 and Core Policy 6 for a total of 3ha at “Land north of Thaxted Road (Rear of Knights Park)”.

13.2.4 As the Site Selection Topic Paper explains; given the need for industrial floorspace at Saffron employment, the lack of alternative sites and furthermore the identified noise and amenity constraints created by the household waste recycling centre and commercial development immediately to the south the site, the site has been allocated for employment use in the emerging Local Plan. The area allocated is only 3ha (i.e. excluding the land to the north) due to advice received from the local highway authority about the impact of crossing the byway at Tiptofts Lane. Even with the proposed allocation in the Regulation 18 Local Plan there is still a technical shortfall against the “up to 5ha” need.

13.2.5 There is an objection in principle to residential development on this site due to the conflict with the employment policies in the 2005 Local Plan, the emerging Regulation 18 Local Plan and the proposed employment allocation on the site, and material considerations in the form of up-to-date evidence on employment need and suitable, available and achievable HELAA sites for employment land at Saffron Walden.

13.3 B) Design

13.3.1 Scale, Layout, Appearance and Landscaping are reserved matters which do not fall to be considered for this outline application following the decision by the applicant during the course of the current application to remove Layout from the application (leaving just Access).

13.4 C) Residential Amenity

The NPPF requires a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers of land and buildings. Policies GEN2 and GEN4 of the Local Plan states that development shall not cause undue or unacceptable impacts on the amenities of nearby residential properties.

13.4.1 The proposal would be up to two storeys in scale. There would be a substantial distance and soft-landscaped buffer between the site and the closest properties to the south-west and north of the site that would adequately off-set any potential adverse impacts in terms of daylight / sunlight or appearing overbearing or resulting in loss of outlook.

13.4.2 Given the generous spacings between the proposed units within the development and to that of the closest neighbouring residential developments, the proposal would have an acceptable impact upon the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers. As such, the proposal would comply with Policies GEN2 and GEN4 of the Local Plan.

13.5 Standard of Accommodation

13.5.1 In terms of the amenity of future occupiers, the proposed units would be dual aspect and would provide sufficient levels of outlook, daylight and natural ventilation for the future occupiers. All of the proposed houses and will have direct access to private amenity space in the form of gardens that comply with the relevant Essex Design Guide standards of 100sqm for 3 bed + houses, and 50sqm for 1 or 2 bed Houses. The proposed dwellings would also meet the minimum internal floor space requirements for each unit.

13.5.2 In terms of noise, it is noted that the Council's Environmental Health Team have not yet commented on the noise aspects of the application.

13.6 D) Heritage impacts and Archaeology

13.6.1 Heritage

13.6.2 There are no heritage assets on the or within close proximity to the site

13.6.3 Archaeology

13.6.4 In terms of archaeology, policy ENV4 of the adopted local plan, the preservation of locally important archaeological remains will be sought unless the need for development outweighs the importance of the archaeology. It further highlights that in situations where there are grounds for believing that a site would be affected, applicants would be required to provide an archaeological field assessment to be carried out before a planning application can be determined, thus allowing and enabling informed and reasonable planning decisions to be made.

13.6.5 The application was formally consulted to Place Services Historic Environment, who note that the planning application is supported by a heritage statement which contains a summary of the archaeological potential of the area. There has also been discussions between the applicants consultant and this office. The results, largely negative, of a geophysical assessment area also provided within the heritage statement. The Historic Environment Record shows that to the west of the site on the opposite valley side the remains of two Bronze Age burial mounds have been excavated in advance of housing (EHER 48520). Immediately to the south west of the site two lime kilns were recorded situated within an existing chalk quarry (EHER 15007) both of post medieval date. The location of the large field of this development on the opposite valley slope to that of the burial mounds has the potential to have surviving prehistoric deposits of a similar date. As such, it is recommended that an Archaeological Programme of Trial Trenching followed by Open Area Excavation with a written scheme of investigation would be required. This would be secured by way of conditions, as suggested by the Place Services Historic Environment Consultant.

13.7 **E) Affordable Housing Mix and Tenure**

13.7.1 In accordance with Policy H9 of the Local Plan, the Council has adopted a housing strategy which sets out Council's approach to housing provisions. The Council commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which identified the need for affordable housing market type and tenure across the district. Section 5 of the Framework requires that developments deliver a wide choice of high-quality homes, including affordable homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.

13.7.2 The delivery of affordable housing is one of the Councils' corporate priorities and will be negotiated on all sites for housing. The Councils policy requires 40% on all schemes over 0.5 ha or 15 or more properties. The affordable housing provision on this site will attract the 40% policy requirement as the site is for 40 properties. This amounts to 22 affordable housing properties.

13.7.3 In terms of mix, Policy H10 requires that developments of 3 or more dwellings should provide a significant proportion of small 2- and 3-bedroom market dwellings. However, since the policy was adopted, the Council in joint partnership with Braintree District Council have issued the 'Housing for New Communities in Uttlesford and Braintree (ARK Consultancy, June 2020)'. The study recommends appropriate housing options and delivery approaches for the district. It identifies that the market housing need for 1 bed units is 11%, 2-bedunits 50%, 3-bed units 35.6% and 4 or more bed units being 3.4%.

13.7.4 It is also the Councils' policy to require 5% of the whole scheme to be delivered as fully wheelchair accessible (building regulations, Part M, Category 3 homes). The Council's Housing Strategy 2021-26 also aims for 5% of all units to be bungalows delivered as 1- and 2-bedroom units. This would amount to 2 bungalows across the whole site delivered.

All the above details will be secured as part of a reserved matters application should outline planning permission be granted again.

13.8 F) Access

13.8.1 Paragraph 110 (b) of the NPPF states that development should ensure that 'safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users', whilst Paragraph 112 (c) states that development should 'create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards.'

13.8.2 Policy GEN1 of the Local Plan requires developments to be designed so that they do not have unacceptable impacts upon the existing road network, that they must compromise road safety and take account of cyclists, pedestrians, public transport users, horse riders and people whose mobility is impaired and also encourage movement by means other than a vehicle.

13.8.3 Vehicular access to the proposed dwellings will be provided by a single means of access from Thaxted Road via Knight Park. 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. 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.

13.8.4 The acceptance of the proposed vehicle access point and highway impacts, including the Construction Management Plan will ultimately be assessed by the Highway Authority in respect to matters of highway

safety, traffic congestion, intensification, and accessibility. The Highway Authority will directly provide written advice of their findings and conclusions directly to PINS.

13.9 G) Nature Conservation

13.9.1 Policy GEN2 of the Local Plan applies a general requirement that development safeguards important environmental features in its setting whilst Policy GEN7 seeks to protect wildlife, particularly protected species and requires the potential impacts of the development to be mitigated.

13.9.2 The acceptance of the proposed development in the context of nature conservation and biodiversity will ultimately be assessed by ECC Place Services Ecology. Place Services Ecology will directly provide written advice of their findings and conclusions directly to PINS.

13.10 H) Air Quality, Contamination & Noise

13.10.1 Noise

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Agent of change principle is relevant to this development. Section 187 of the NPPF states as follows; 187. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing businesses and community facilities (such as places of worship, pubs, music venues and sports clubs). Existing businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established. Where the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse effect on new development (including changes of use) in its vicinity, the applicant (or 'agent of change') should be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed.

To ensure that all the existing businesses at the retail park (e.g. Pets at Home, Vets 4 Pets, B and M store and Garden Centre, Pure Gym, Beefeater, Costa Coffee, the Saffron Walden Household Recycling Centre, a depot, Premier Inn, Howdens and Aldi supermarket etc) would not have unreasonable restrictions placed upon them as a direct result of the proposed development it is necessary to undertake a robust noise assessment under BS4142 that includes all relevant noise sources and includes all the information to be reported as set out in BS4142 section 12 including a description of the main sources and the specific sound, hours of operation, mode of operation and so on.

13.10.2 UDC Environmental Health have not commented on noise matters. Their comments will go directly to PINS. Environmental Health subject to appropriate noise conditions to reflect the findings of the report (ULP Policy ENV10).

13.10.3 Air Quality

13.10.4 The site is not within an Air Quality Management Area, although the issue of air quality is required to be considered in the wider local context given levels of poor air quality which are currently being experienced along the lower reaches of Grove Hill and parts of Stansted where the granting of permission for further housing developments within Elsenham are likely to compound these reduced air quality levels for these areas in terms of cumulative effects

13.10.5 UDC Environmental Health are yet to comment but recommended conditions on the previously approved application, an outcome that is likely to be similar on this application. These comments will go directly to PINS.

13.10.6 Contamination

13.10.7 Policy ENV14 of the Local Plan states that any proposal on contaminated land needs to take proper account of the contamination. Mitigation measures, appropriate to the nature and scale of the proposed development will need to be agreed.

13.10.8 The site is a greenfield site which is currently vacant and unused. However, the presence of the railway line running along the southern boundary of the site and the former sawmill beyond this, which has recently been developed for residential use, are both considered to be historic uses and potential sources of contamination whereby elevated levels of ground gas was found at the sawmill during the contamination remediation scheme carried out for the approved new housing on that site.

13.10.9 The Environmental Health Officer will directly provide written advice of their findings and conclusions directly to PINS. Notwithstanding, based on their response to the previously allowed outline scheme, matters regarding contamination could be adequately dealt with by way of condition, ensuring that further assessment of the nature and extent of contamination should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

13.11 **I) Flooding**

13.11.1 The NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas of high-risk flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

13.11.2 New major development for housing need to include a flood risk assessment as part of their planning application, to ensure that the required form of agreed flood protection takes place. Additionally, all major developments are required to include sustainable drainage to ensure that the risk of flooding is not increased to those outside of the

development and that the new development is future proofed to allow for increased instances of flooding expected to result from climate change.

13.11.3 The site falls within Flood Zone 1, which represents the lowest risk of flooding.

13.11.4 The LLFA are yet to comment but recommended conditions on the previously approved application, an outcome that is likely to be similar on this application. These comments will go directly to PINS.

13.12 J) Planning Obligations

13.12.1 Paragraph 57 of the NPPF sets out that planning obligations should only be sought where they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. This is in accordance with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations. The following identifies those matters that the Council would seek to secure through a planning obligation, if it were proposing to grant it permission.

13.12.2 Relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees will directly provide PIN's their formal consultation response in respect to the proposals which may or may not result in the need for obligations to be secured by a Section 106 Legal Agreement. Such matters that may arise include:

- 13.12.3**
- i. Affordable housing provision (40%)
 - ii. Payment of education financial contributions; Early Years, Primary and Secondary Schools
 - iii. Financial contribution for Libraries
 - iv. School Transport
 - v. Provision and long-term on-going maintenance of public open space and play area.
 - vi. Highways obligations and associated financial contributions towards sustainable transport measures

13.13 K) Other Matters

13.13.1 From 1 October 2013 the Growth and Infrastructure Act inserted two new provisions into the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) ('the Act'). Section 62A allows major applications for planning permission, consents and orders to be made directly to the Planning Inspectorate (acting on behalf of the Secretary of State) where a local planning authority has been designated for this purpose.

13.13.2 The Planning Inspectorate will appoint an Inspector to determine the application. The Inspector will be provided with the application documents, representations and any other relevant documents including the development plan policies. Consultation with statutory consultees and the designated LPA will be carried out by the Planning Inspectorate.

13.13.3 The LPA also must carry out its normal notification duties, which may include erecting a site notice and/or writing to the owners/occupiers of adjoining land.

13.13.4 The LPA is also a statutory consultee and must provide a substantive response to the consultation within 21 days, in this case by 16th March 2023. This should ideally include a recommendation, with reasons, for whether planning permission should be granted or refused, and a list of conditions if planning permission is granted. However, as indicated above, the Local Planning Authority are not in possession of all the required information that would be available to it to make an informed assessment of this development proposal.

13.13.5 The Planning Inspectorate will issue a formal decision notice incorporating a statement setting out the reasons for the decision. If the application is approved the decision will also list any conditions which are considered necessary. There is no right to appeal.

13.14 L) Planning Balance and Conclusion

13.14.1 Although the Uttlesford District Council can demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, the recent NPPF requires a 20% buffer is also secured which UDC cannot demonstrate. There is also currently no up-to-date Local Plan.

13.14.2 As a consequence, NPPF paragraph 11(d) is triggered as the policies most important for determining the proposal are out of date. NPPF paragraph 11(d)(i) is not relevant as there are no policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance which provide a clear reason for refusing the development. Instead, NPPF paragraph 11(d)(ii) states that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

13.14.3 Notwithstanding the above, it is a material consideration that the site has outline planning permission as allowed by the Inspector under appeal ref. APP/C1570/W/19/3242550. In allowing this appeal, the Inspector concluded the following:

13.14.4 The development would result in limited harm to the open characteristics of the CPZ and countryside. There would be no significant coalescence either between Elsenham and the airport or surrounding settlements. There would inevitably be landscape harm arising from a loss of openness across the appeal site. However, given the site's high level of visual containment and close relationship to the existing built form of Elsenham, these are not factors that weigh heavily against the scheme. Overall, there would be limited conflict with the countryside protection aims of LP Policies S7 and S8.

13.14.5 Nevertheless, the following balancing exercise has been undertaken for the current application.

13.14.6 Benefits of the development:

13.14.7 The development would result the delivery of 55 dwellings. The number of dwellings proposed would make a minor contribution to maintaining the supply of housing locally.

13.14.8 The proposal would provide additional affordable housing at 40%. This would equate to 22 affordable homes.

13.14.9 The provision of public open space and a play area would also represent a social benefit of the scheme, along with the inclusion of pedestrian links.

13.14.10 The environmental benefits include small biodiversity gains.

13.14.11 The appeal site is also located in an accessible and sustainable location in Saffron Walden which has an extensive range of shops and services.

13.14.12 The development would provide economic benefits in terms of the construction of the dwellings and supporting local services and amenities providing investment into the local economy. Further consideration would also been given in respect to net gains for biodiversity.

13.14.13 Adverse impacts:

13.14.14 There is an objection in principle to residential development on this site due to the conflict with the employment policies in the 2005 Local Plan, the emerging Regulation 18 Local Plan and the proposed employment allocation on the site, and material considerations in the form of up-to-date evidence on employment need and suitable, available and achievable HELAA sites for employment land at Saffron Walden.

13.14.15 Neutral:

13.14.16 Cumulative impact of the development proposals on local infrastructure can be mitigated by planning obligations and planning conditions.

13.14.17 Indicative plans indicate an intention to provide landscape features at the site to compensate for the loss of soft landscaping.

14. Conclusion

14.1 Due to the nature of this application process, it is not possible to provide a detailed assessment of all of the relevant material considerations to this proposal. Neighbour comments have also not been factored into this assessment.

- 14.2** However, there are concerns regarding the residential development on this site due to the conflict with the employment policies in the 2005 Local Plan, the emerging Regulation 18 Local Plan and the proposed employment allocation on the site, and material considerations in the form of up-to-date evidence on employment need and suitable, available and achievable HELAA sites for employment land at Saffron Walden.
- 14.3** All other factors relating to the proposed development will need to be carefully considered by relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees in respect to the acceptance of the scheme and whether the scheme is capable of being satisfactorily mitigated, such that they weigh neutrally within the planning balance. These factors include biodiversity, highways, drainage and flooding, local infrastructure provisions and ground conditions.
- 14.4** The unique application process that is presented by this submission, requires the Local Planning Authority to advise the Planning Inspectorate whether or not it objects to this proposal. Having regard to the limited opportunity to consider the proposals the Planning Committee is invited to provide its comments on this proposal.