

Mr and Mrs G Chapman

4th September 2024

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Application Reference: S62A/2024/0057

Site Address: Former Friends School Field, Mount Pleasant Lane, Saffron Walden, CB11 3EB

Applicant Name: Chase New Homes

We are writing this letter as a homeowner in close proximity to the south end of the site. Please find below our feedback and objections to the proposed development based on the impacts on my family and our surrounding community.

- 1. Loss of Sports and Playing Fields:** Our understanding is that loss of sports and playing fields is prohibited by NPPF (103) unless it can be clearly shown to be surplus to requirements. This is not the case as we understand that the Uttlesford Playing Pitch Assessment identifies a deficit in outdoor recreational spaces.
- 2. Proposed land use:** This latest proposal follows on from the previously refused application in 2019 (UTT/19/1744/OP), where a key element for refusal was against the negative impacts local residents would face from the use of the sports pitches proposed at the north of the site. The latest proposal relocates the sports pitches to the south of the site; we are concerned that these same negative impacts, which were sufficient for a refusal of planning consent last time are now transferred to the south end of the development site; on this basis the application must be turned down.
- 3. 3G Pitch upgrades:** Sport England was consulted on the original application and recommended that a 3G pitch would be required in order to provide all-year-round facilities, including floodlighting, which would be made available to groups during evenings and weekends. They were consulted again earlier this year with respect to the latest proposal and made no reference to this, although it did imply that they felt more area of the site should be allocated to pitches. If 3G pitches were to come forward, in the quantum that may offset any housing development on this site, impacts from light pollution and noise disturbance would have a severe impact on the surrounding residential properties. Although this is not reflected in the current application, it is a serious concern if it were to be stated as a condition during the planning response or came forward in subsequent applications because of impacts all year round and into the evenings.
- 4. Noise disturbance:** As a local resident directly affected by this proposal, we are concerned about the significant noise disturbance that these playing fields will generate, which is contrary to the principles of residential amenity preservation as stipulated in both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and our current

local plan. The NPPF emphasises the importance of safeguarding residential amenities and ensuring that new developments do not have an unacceptable impact on the living conditions of existing communities. The introduction of playing fields in close proximity to our residential area is likely to lead to persistent noise pollution, particularly during evenings and weekends when organised sports events typically occur. This is at odds with the local plan, which seeks to protect residents from excessive noise that could harm their quality of life. We do not feel enough work has been done to understand the impacts this will have on local residents.

5. **Lack of public consultation:** Although not a legal requirement, due to the designation of Uttlesford in respect of the consideration of major planning applications in the district, this has allowed the applicant to apply directly to the Secretary of State, and we believe this has minimised the opportunity to provide meaningful input on the proposal. The applicant held pre-app meetings with Uttlesford and Sport England against this proposal, purely to get ideas on how to tweak their proposal irrespective of the overall negative responses received.

6. **Increased Traffic on Greenways due to lack of parking:** Within the proposal 28 car, 2 disabled and 2 coach unallocated spaces next to the clubhouse. There are an additional 8 spaces unallocated as well across the development. Within this area, there are 20 proposed apartments across 3 blocks with 20 car and 6 disabled spaces allocated. Considering within Saffron Walden, 30.3% of homes have 2 or more cars (Office for National Statistics), there is a high probability that they will be using some of the unallocated spaces on a regular basis, including those around the clubhouse. This will limit the capacity on site, pushing regular users to seek alternate parking.

In their pre-app response, Sport England stated that 30+ parking spaces would be sufficient but also advised to consult Saffron Walden Community FC (SWCFC) as they see them being the primary user. The nearest SWCFC location is the Herberts Farm Playing Fields. There are 4 primary pitches at this location with circa 80 parking spaces provided and during peak times, parking overflows onto Debden Road and into the local residential areas. This ratio is 1:20 (Pitches:Parking) irrespective of the overflow.

The recently provided pitches off Little Walden Road also suffer from a lack of parking spaces with causes overflow parking onto nearby residential areas creating inconvenience and disturbance for residents.

Essex Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice 2009 advise 20 spaces per pitch for outdoor team sports pitches. Sports England guidelines, outside of the pre-app, suggest around 20 – 50 parking spaces per pitch, depending on the expected usage levels and the number of concurrent matches or training sessions. Spectator numbers should also be factored in at all levels but may vary depending on the specific nature of the event.

The NPPF emphasises the importance of providing adequate parking that reflects local conditions and the specific needs of a development. Developments should aim to avoid any adverse impact on the local road network and ensure that there is sufficient provision to avoid on-street parking that could inconvenience local residents.

The current proposal does not have adequate parking to serve the proposed pitches and with the potential of pedestrian only access from Greenways, there is a high probability that this will be used as overflow parking due to the limited restrictions in place stopping people from doing so. Even if not used for parking, there is anticipated traffic for drop-offs to avoid driving around to the only vehicular access on the North of the site, along Mount Pleasant Road. This road already struggles with traffic regardless of the addition of the 180+ new residents from Phases 1 and 2 of the applicant's development and users of the sports pitches, so at peak times, people will seek alternate ways, with Greenways anticipated to be the primary option. The approach to Greenways is via Winstanley Road which was designed in the 1970's. Winstanley Road is narrow, includes a severe bend and combined with extensive on-street parking creates a risk of accident, limited access for fire, ambulance and refuse vehicles. The proposal should be altered to allow for increased provision of parking to remove the risks outlined above.

- 7. Connection to Greenways:** From a design code perspective, it is understandable why connecting access to the site is proposed via Greenways although the potential implications this may cause to this quiet residential street is concerning. As stated above, the access and parking implications will cause harm and therefore if public provisions are to be located on site, this needs to be taken into account. Due to the land designation and history, it is unlikely that the site would be purely residential, although in doing so, it would reduce the impacts due to how the access would be used. If the proposal is to proceed, and further mitigation could not be provided, we would suggest access is removed from Greenways and alternate locations are considered to avoid impact on this and local streets.
- 8. Impact on local wildlife and protected species:** The proposed development would have a very negative impact, not just on local residents of Greenways but also on the local wildlife which currently inhabits the field, such as the Muntjac deer and, in particular, the bat colony which resides in the trees at the south end of the former playing field.
- 9. Flood Risk Assessment:** The Flood Risk Assessment concludes that there is no risk of flooding for the development on the proposed site but does not assess whether the development will have an impact off site elsewhere in the town. You will no doubt be aware that as recent as 2023 Thaxted Road suffered severe flooding as a result of surface water runoff from the new development. The River Slade has in recent years been repaired but at peak flows is at capacity. Given the risks the applicant must seek to evaluate the impact this proposal would have on the existing infrastructure within the town and provide such amelioration works as required to reduce/eliminate these risks. A revised Flood Risk Assessment is required which must consider the wider impact of the proposed development on the town itself.

Summary:

Greenways is a residential cul-de-sac with its own open protected space, which is used by the local community and wildlife on a daily basis. Children play and learn to cycle on the road, families congregate, and it is seen as a safe haven.

The concerns of traffic/parking implications alongside noise disturbance and potential light pollution resulting from this application are troubling and need to be fully considered when determining this application.

We believe further work is needed to understand and mitigate impacts on existing residential properties and wildlife habitats surrounding this site.

We believe further work is required to assess the impact this development would have on the existing surface water infrastructure close by.

We therefore, based on the above points, object to the current proposal.

Your sincerely,

Mr G Chapman

Mrs K Chapman