

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

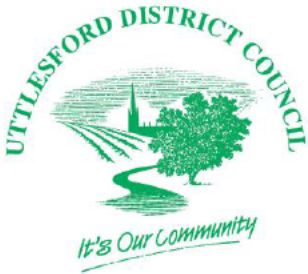
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Heritage and Conservation Advice Note

The following notes are associated with Built Heritage and Conservation aspects only. These comments should be read in conjunction with all other Advice Notes associated with the application.

Reference numbers	UTT/24/1898/PINS (UDC) S62A/2024/0057 (PINS)
Site location	Former Friends School Field, Saffron Walden

1.0 Details
<p>The Applicant has submitted this application directly to the Planning Inspectorate.</p> <p>Proposal Erection of 91no. dwellings with associated infrastructure and landscaping including the provision of a playing field and associated clubhouse.</p> <p>Context The Site is within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area.</p> <p>Other: Refer to the specialist archaeological advice for historical environment notes.</p>
2.0 Heritage Policies and Materials
<p>Non-exhaustive list of legislation, policies, and materials</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 The application has been reviewed to assess the level of harm (if any) caused to the significance of the heritage assets. Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places. Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.</p> <p>The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 The application has been reviewed to assess whether it would preserve/would not preserve the architectural and/or historic interest and its compliance with Sections 16 and 66 of the Act.</p> <p>Uttlesford Local Plan – Adopted January 2005 Policy ENV1- Design of Development within Conservation Areas</p>
3.0 Heritage Assets
<p>Non-exhaustive list of assets in proximity of site.</p> <p>Saffron Walden Conservation Area</p>



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4.0 Comments on Proposal

The Site is within a Conservation Area, an area that has been designated for its special and unique character, appearance and historic interest. Furthermore, the Site is designated as protected open space, therefore if development on the Site is to be progressed, the proposed scheme should be of exceptional quality to justify the loss of open space.

The field is noted within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposal as an 'Important Open Space' with the following characteristics:

*1.304 The semi circular green sward to the front of the Friends School and the associated **playing fields to east of the school buildings** are important in this area characterised elsewhere by tight urban form.*

*1.305 The grounds to the rear of the school, encompassing the avenue of lime trees and **adjacent playing field** are also considered to represent an important area of open space which juxtaposes the tight built form of the modern development and is relevant to the school site.*

The Heritage and Archaeology Statement (HAS) submitted as part of this application provides a good assessment of the Site and its history.

The Design and Access and Justification Statement (DAS) refers to the Saffron Walden Conservation Area but does not provide further assessment of how the proposed development preserves or enhances the Conservation Area. Additionally, it does not utilise or refer to the findings within the HAS which is unfortunate. The HAS could have been used as a tool to aid design development.

My observations on the application documents are as follows and should be read in conjunction with other specialist officer feedback.

Materiality and architectural details

The design references to 'The Avenue' is commendable, however the proposed scheme appears to simply replicate elements of 'The Avenue'. The Site has its own identity and historical connections with the former school. The aim of harmonising the new development with 'The Avenue' is positive, however the proposal could benefit from having its own character to avoid a development that is a pastiche of 'The Avenue' typologies.

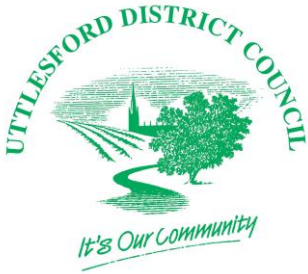
The application does not provide evidence to show that the buildings will be finished to a high-quality standard, which was a key aspect of the award-winning scheme. The Materials Strategy (drawing 23110 D 021) and Materials Schedule (drawing 23110 D 025) refers to a series of materials but uses generic descriptions without reference to a specific product, or type which is not acceptable for a development within a conservation area.

Extracts from DAS shown in italics: (non-exhaustive list)

'M1 - Brickwork, to relate positively to The Avenue development'

A specific product including manufacturing method, sources etc should be provided.

Confirm how brickwork will '*positively relate*' to The Avenue.



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'M3 - Weatherboarding, relating to The Avenue development'

Specify timber species, material origin etc.

Why has this development adopted this aesthetic?

'M10 - Grey colour coated windows'

Specify actual materials for external elements that are appropriate for the heritage context. Vague notes for key architectural aspects are not acceptable within a conservation area.

'M4 - Cladding to feature elements'

Provide specific materials and products. Vague notes for key architectural aspects are not acceptable within a conservation area.

M11 - Black rainwater goods

Specify actual materials for external elements, that are appropriate for the heritage context. Vague notes are not acceptable within a conservation area.

If the application is approved, a Condition could be applied stipulating that a fully detailed Materials Schedule and Specification is subject to LPA approval.

Form, Layout and Scale

The choice to retain a large section of the site as open playing fields is a positive aspect.

The scale of proposed buildings is appropriate to the context and reflects the modern developments in proximity of the site.

The intention to create a varied street scene with different levels of enclosure could be effective, however no information to support this concept has been provided. The application would benefit from illustrated street scenes to show how the layout and typologies are perceived at street level.

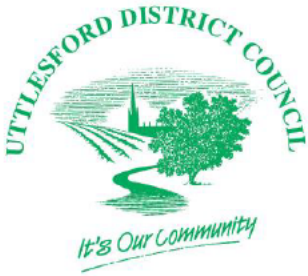
If the application is approved, a Condition could be applied stipulating the requirement for a series of artists impressions or rendered visualisations, that aligns with all features shown in 'Section 5.0 Design Approach' of the DAS.

Rendered walkthroughs would more effectively illustrate the quality of space which at present, is limited to text and 2D street elevations which do not communicate the characteristics of the proposed spaces. In addition, rendered images would help illustrate how the development knits into its context, including its relationship with 'The Avenue', which is the basis for many of the design choices.

The Townscape and Visual Assessment would benefit from a series of proposed views that show the development in context.

Landscape

The Landscape Strategy and Statement suggests the inclusion of a Micro Orchard with heritage varieties of fruiting and flowering planting of local origin. This is an appealing element of the proposal, however there is limited information that confirms the details and logistics. Additionally,



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the Micro Orchard is omitted from the Landscape Management Plan (appendices) suggesting the concept has not been fully resolved or costed.

If the application is approved, a Condition could be applied that safeguards bespoke details such as the Micro Orchard, which are unique to the development.

When considering the Site's status as designated open space, the area of car parking for dwellings seems thoughtless. A minimum of two car parking spaces per dwelling, and three spaces for 4 and 5-bedroom dwellings seems excessive for a Site that is well connected to transport infrastructure.

In my opinion, this aspect should be reviewed given the status of the Site as open space, and its location within a Conservation Area.

Clubhouse

The elevations (drawing 23110 D 265) are not labelled so the surface treatments are unknown. For example, the location and extent of the 'green roof' and 'sheet roofing to the clubhouse' referenced in the Materials Schedule (drawing 23110 D 025) is unclear.

The green roof is not detailed in the Landscape Management Plan (appendices) suggesting the concept has not been fully resolved or costed. Safe access for maintenance/ working at height needs to be considered and should be included in the design at planning stage.

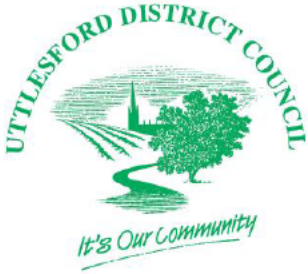
Similarly, the proposed solar panels will require access for maintenance and cleaning to ensure they continue to work efficiently. The small section of solar panels to the southwest of the roof has a ramp below at ground level, so it would be prudent to consider how roof mounted aspects will be regularly accessed and maintained, i.e. is a person expected to stand at ground level with an extendable pole?

The Clubhouse could be an opportunity to design an exceptional feature building however the current proposal does not convey design excellence. Further information such as rendered visualisations to show the building in context would be beneficial to see how the green roof etc. appears when seen from around the Site.

Conclusion

I do not consider the proposals to result in harm to the significance of the listed buildings in proximity of the site. However, paragraph 212 of the NPPF (2023) states that new development within a Conservation Area should enhance or better reveal its significance.

In my opinion the current scheme lacks detail and exceptional design quality to justify its position within a Conservation Area, and the loss of designated Open Space.



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If the application is to be approved by the Inspectorate, I suggest Conditions associated with the following are attached to improve the design quality of the scheme:

- A full materials palette, including a detailed schedule for each building typology
- Walkthrough visualisations and/or street scenes with proposed materials accurately applied, to illustrate the quality of each character area.
- Detailed Landscape Management Plan
- Improved parking strategy to reduce the excessive hardstanding area within a conservation area and designated open space.

Submitted by	Serena Cardozo
Role	Principal Conservation Officer
Department	Development Management
Date	11 September 2024