Helen Cantoni
[redacted]

10th 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

I am writing this letter as a homeowner in close proximity to the site with the address stated above. Please find below my feedback and objections to the proposed development based on the impacts on my family and our surrounding community.

1. **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 and proposed residents would face from the use of the sports pitches proposed at the north of the site. The latest development flips the proposal and places them at the south of the site, along with increasing the quantum against the comments from Uttlesford in respect to the land designation (Open Protected Space). This land, when previously in use, was school playing fields. Therefore, the potential impact on local residents was minimal due to the occasional usage. Wherever these new public playing fields are placed on this site, which is surrounded by residential properties, impacts from noise, light, traffic and potentially from antisocial behaviour will be felt.

2. **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.

3. **Noise disturbance:** As a local resident directly affected by this proposal, I am deeply concerned about the significant noise disturbance that these playing fields will introduce, 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. I do not feel enough work has been done to understand the impacts this will have on local residents.

4. **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.

5. **Increased Traffic 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 Herbet Farm Playing Fields. There are 4 primary pitches at this location with circa 80 parking spaces provided and during peak times, parking overspills onto Debden Road and into the local residential areas. This ratio is 1:20 (Pitches:Parking) irrespective of the overflow.

   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.

6. **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.

7. **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.

8. **Management of Boundaries:** There are many concerns and questions relating to the boundaries of the field. Historically we have had a huge problem with the trees on the boundary of the field. They have not been maintained during the entirety of Chase's ownership of the land even though on multiple occasions it was made aware to them that trees were causing damage to property along with removing **all** available natural light from our home and causing an enormous amount of debris on our home and garden including blocking gutters and causing water damage along with damage to wooden window frames from tree sap. How are Chase to tend to the existing trees? How will it be managed and funded? How will the residents on the other side of Chase property be able to request that work be done? In the tree plans published one of the largest trees causing a lot of problems for us is not even given a plan, it is listed, but without further mention. It is a huge Chestnut that causes massive shadow, debris and potential damage to our building. It has increased our insurance as it is now directly over our house.

9. **Water Shortage / Flooding:** Will there be impact on current water shortage due to extra use, along with potential flooding due to removal of green space? This has been seen from other developments in town.

10. **General Disruption:** What is the likely time scale of building. How will the residents be looked after with regard to building noise, disruption, dirt, damage to structures from vibrations, safety to boundaries. None of this information appears to be readily available.

11. **General Communication:** If there is work needed - how do we make that happen? Who is the contactable committee? Will there have to be legal wrangling? We have seen over the previous number of years a serious lack of commitment to the needs of the surrounding residents. None of this information appears to be readily available.

Summary of Impacts to residents:

This part of Saffron Walden is a residential area 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 roads, families congregate, and it is seen as a safe haven.

The concerns of traffic implications alongside noise disturbance and potential light pollution resulting from this application are troubling and need to be taken into account when

determining this application. As it stands, I object to the current proposal, and for future applications, I believe further work is needed to understand and mitigate impacts on existing residential properties surrounding this site.

Thank you for taking into consideration the points raised in this letter, and I trust that a thorough assessment will be conducted before a decision is made regarding the application.

Your sincerely,

Helen Cantoni