

Your Ref: S62A/2024/0075
Our Ref: 57218
Date: 16th April 2025



Essex County Council

Director for Highways
and Transportation

To: Section 62A Applications Team
The Planning Inspectorate
3rd Floor
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6PN

County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 1QH

Updated Recommendation 16th April 2025

Application No.	S62A/2024/0075
Applicant	Melanie Summer (Saffron Walden LLP)
Site Location	Land North of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden
Proposal	Reserved matters (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale); pursuant to outline planning permission ref: S62A/2023/0031 for the erection of up to 55 dwellings, associated landscaping and open space, with access from Knight Park.

The applicant has submitted a rebuttal letter dated 28th March 2025 which has now been reviewed by the Highway Authority.

A loop option was provided at outline application to demonstrate that, with the removal of the turning head, the internal layout could still provide an option for the bus to turn and exit in a forward gear. The internal site layout has changed since the initial indicative submission. During pre-application engagement with the applicant, we expressed concerns that although a loop around the development is an option it is not the optimal one as it will likely disturb the everyday life of the residents.

ECC has proposed a number of different possible arrangements for the applicant's consideration, such as a separate turning head for the sole use of buses, or a roundabout arrangement, which would act both as a turning facility as well as acting as a traffic management feature. It must be noted that none of the arrangements proposed by ECC are contrary to condition 20 as they are viable, safe and appropriate bus facilities.

The existing turning head is located at the end of the road at Knights Park where no live traffic or pedestrians are expected, and therefore the bus would perform the turning manoeuvre without posing a hazard for other highway users and without requirement for a banksman to oversee safe turning.

The current proposal includes two options of turning heads with the potential to be used as a bus turning facility. Buses with passengers negotiating such manoeuvres would typically require a banksman to be present to guide them out and halt any traffic behind the vehicle. The current proposal would likely result in a hazardous situation where private vehicles and pedestrians would have to negotiate a bus trying to do a three point turn on a

residential network with live traffic, therefore, this is not an acceptable proposal to the Highway Authority as it is considered unsafe.

Furthermore, the design presented at the reserved matters stage now shows a shared surface as opposed to a carriageway with a separate footway facility presented at the outline stage. A shared surface in the Essex Design guide is at the lower end of the estate road hierarchy serving up to 25 properties in a cul-de-sac and this would present a low-speed environment that allows pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle users to mix, and it is not an environment to accommodate a regular bus service.

In the absence of an up-to-date Uttlesford local plan, the Highway Authority is required to plan and promote for alternative modes of transport. This is made difficult by speculative rather than planned development coming forward. As a result, we are dependent upon timescales of development and S106 obligation triggers which are out of our control. However, the Highway Authority has every intention of this service coming forward to provide connection between Saffron Walden and the retail facilities available at Knights Park.

It is our view that the current proposed arrangements and alternative arrangements (loop route on a shared surface) do not meet the safety criteria for a bus turning facility and therefore present an unacceptable impact on highway user safety which is contrary to NPPF.

From a highway and transportation perspective the impact of the proposal is NOT acceptable to the Highway Authority for the following reasons:

1. The Highway Authority protects the principle use of the highway as a right of free and safe passage of all highway users. The proposal fails to minimise the scope for conflicts between buses and other road users, contrary to the NPPF, and compromises road safety by introducing unsafe bus turning manoeuvres in a residential road network with live traffic and without any mitigation measures to ensure safe manoeuvring.
The proposal, if permitted, would give rise to an unacceptable impact on highway safety to the detriment of all highway users.

Therefore, this proposal is contrary to National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) and the Highway Authority's Development Management Policies, adopted as County Council Supplementary Guidance and Uttlesford Local Plan Policy GEN1

Informative:

The Highway Authority may consider the proposal further should the developer wish to submit an amended layout similar to that presented at outline stage with the segregated footway facilities or one of the other options suggested above.



.....
pp. Director for Highways and Transportation
Enquiries to [REDACTED]