



FORMER FRIENDS' SCHOOL FIELDS, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX

HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGY STATEMENT

Chase New Homes
Ltd.

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1.0 Non-Technical Summary

- 1.1. A desk based archaeology assessment has been completed for land east of the former Friends' School, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, Essex which was historically almost all the school's playing field. The work has been completed on behalf of Chase New Homes to support an application for residential and sports facility redevelopment of the site. The Essex Historic Environment Record and Record Office and online sources informed site visits in November 2023 and March 2024.
- 1.2. The site consists of an overgrown grassed area defined by boundary vegetation and housing beyond to the east and south and Mount Pleasant Road in the north. To the west, the buildings and remaining grounds of the former Friends' School are in the process of residential redevelopment.
- 1.3. The area is known to have seen prehistoric and later activity, with indications of Neolithic or later activity to the north and an Iron Age settlement to the west. However, more recent investigations suggest significant remains do not extend into the site itself. Any remains would also have been affected by later cultivation.
- 1.4. Given some archaeological potential, the site is likely to require further evaluation ahead of development nonetheless. It is recommended that initial geophysical survey could be complemented by trial trenching secured through a planning condition. Any sub-surface remains are likely to rate as of local significance only and could be dealt with through further investigation ahead of or during development.
- 1.5. The site does not contain any structures and is likely to have been agricultural ahead of its use as playing fields from the late 19th or early 20th century. This past use is not now clear. Nonetheless, it is included within Zone 6 of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area as important open space. It is assessed that the site has no intrinsic heritage interest and, given screening vegetation on its boundary, does not enhance the residential parts of the conservation area to the north.

- 1.6. The site's openness does provide limited enhancement to the former school to the west, albeit this area is in the process of changing due to its redevelopment. Very limited, less than substantial harm to the appearance and character of the conservation area is consequently assessed.
- 1.7. Although development of the site may cause very limited harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area, a small number of listed buildings which lie nearby would not be affected by the proposals. The same is true of almost all nearby locally listed buildings, including most facing towards the site north of Mount Pleasant Road. Very limited harm to the locally listed former school to the west, a non-designated heritage asset, would result from the proposed change.

2.0 Introduction, Purpose and Context

Introduction

2.1 ACD Environmental was commissioned by Chase New Homes Limited to complete an archaeological and heritage assessment of land at the former Friends' School, Mount Pleasant, Saffron Walden, Essex, hereinafter referred to as the 'site'. This report is an updated version of a report completed in 2024.

2.2 The site comprises a grassed and wooded area which was previously almost entirely the former school's playing field (Appendix 2). The area totals approximately six hectares. The site is surrounded by developed parts of Saffron Walden, including the former school's buildings to the west.

Context

2.3 Revised proposals for new residential, recreational and related development have been considered as part of this statement.

Purpose

2.4 The purpose of this statement is to ascertain the general archaeological and heritage value of the site by:

- Identifying known heritage assets and archaeological remains within or in such proximity to the site that they might be affected;
- Assessing the potential for hitherto undiscovered sub-surface archaeological deposits and their potential significance; and
- Assessing any likely archaeological and heritage impacts of the revised scheme.

3.0 Methodology

Background Data Search

3.1. Information on heritage assets and previously recorded sites, findspots and past archaeological investigation was obtained from the Essex Historic Environment Record (HER). The data search has been undertaken for a five hundred metre radius centred on the site.

3.2. The following sources were also consulted and, where relevant, the information provided has been incorporated with acknowledgement within this report:

- Uttlesford District Council (UDC) website;
- Historic England National Heritage List for England (NHLE) online;
- Essex Record Office (ERO) in Chelmsford; and
- Other online sources including historical aerial images of the site.

3.3. The ERO holds secondary sources including historic maps which provide information about past land use and can indicate sub-surface remains. The NHLE records designated heritage across the country including scheduled monuments and registered landscapes. UDC's website has information on local planning policies, Saffron Walden Conservation Area and local heritage designations.

Site Visit

3.4. The site was visited in November 2023 and again in March 2024 (Appendix 2). All the site was walked and the local topography and site features were considered. The wider environs were also checked to understand the relationship between the site and nearby heritage assets and the conservation area.

Evaluation and Impact Assessment

- 3.5. Having defined the known heritage and assessed the potential archaeological constraints to development of the site (a factor of their likelihood and subsequent processes), the impacts of the proposed scheme (Appendix 5) have been predicted, taking into account different stages and activities within the development process. Further evaluation or mitigation is recommended as appropriate.

4.0 Baseline Information

- 4.1. This review of baseline information has been informed by data held by Essex Historic Environment Record (HER) relating to previously identified sites, findspots and investigations. Designated and otherwise significant heritage assets have also been considered. Appendix 1 provides a gazetteer of referenced sites and Appendix 2 reproduces their locations as well as a pertinent historic map extract.
- 4.2. Sections below also review relevant information held by Essex Record Office and online sources, including historic maps, and also the site visits. References and sources are detailed in Appendix 4 and illustrative plates provided at Appendix 3.

Context

- 4.3. The wider landholding is centred at NGR TL 5412 3754 and extends across a total area of approximately six hectares. The site consists principally of a former playing field which was under long grass when the site was visited. An area in the south east of the site is wooded.
- 4.4. Beyond the site, which lies south of Saffron Walden's town centre, lies Mount Pleasant Road to the north, with late 19th century properties and their grounds beyond. Twentieth and twenty first century residences lie to the east, south and south west of the site. West of the north of the site lie the buildings and grounds of the former Friends' School which is in the process of being redeveloped as residential.
- 4.5. The site geology is Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation chalk, with superficial deposits not recorded (BGS viewer). The site has level topography, lying at circa 90 metres AOD.

Historic Environment Record Search Results

Designated Heritage Assets

4.6. Almost all of the site area lies within 'Zone 6: The Former Friends' School, Mount Pleasant and West Road' of the Saffron Walden Conservation Area (Appendix 2, UDC 2018). However, until 2018, only the northernmost quarter of the site was included within the designation, which encloses an area of 19th century housing and the former Friends' School between Debden Road in the west and South Road in the east (Appendix 2, Phase I).

4.7. The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan confirms that the designated area retains much of its 19th century character and is dominated by the Friends' School (UDC 2018, Plats 1 & 2). In relation to the playing fields and under 'Important Open Spaces', the Appraisal states that:

'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. 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.'

4.8. The Appraisal also notes that the trees related to the school make the most significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and that views of the school and water tower to its west are 'important views'. The 2018 Appraisal recommends the inclusion of all of the playing fields within the conservation area (Appendix 2, Phase II) and the Council website indicates that this was ratified.

- 4.9. The conservation area Appraisal confirms that there are only two statutorily listed buildings within Zone 6 of the conservation area. These are a pair of semi-detached late 19th century villas more than a hundred metres north west of the site and Mount Pleasant Road, Nos. 9 – 10 (Appendix 2, Plate 3, HER 27143). These Grade II listed buildings are described as in 'Vernacular style' and were built by William Bell & Sons, a prominent local builder at the time.
- 4.10. More than 150 metres west of the site, on Debden Road, lies a 1913 brick water tower which is also Grade II listed (Plate 4, HER 15596). This was part of the town waterworks and was more recently been converted to an arts space. Just beyond the conservation area on Debden Road, No. 64 is the next closest listed building to the site and is a Gothic Revival style late Victorian Grade II listed house (Plate 5, HER 26973).
- 4.11. Although a great many other listed buildings lie further from the site and closer to the historic centre of Saffron Walden, these are not detailed further as they are all surrounded by later built development and change within the site would in no way affect them.
- 4.12. The same is true of other designated heritage assets within the study area. The closest of these are scheduled earthworks: 'Repell Ditches' and the Registered Audley End park and garden which both lie more than half a kilometre north west of the site at their closest. The closest designated asset to the south of the site is a Grade II listed post-medieval listed barn at 'Herberts', circa 700 metres to the south east (Appendix 2, now named 'The Granary').
- 4.13. The conservation area Appraisal and Council website confirm that the main brick block of the former Friends' School is locally listed (Appendix 2, Plate 1). This imposing structure immediately west of the site is in the process of being converted to apartments, with new houses being built within the footprints of other former school buildings around it.

4.14. North of Mount Pleasant Road, the houses which are not listed are also locally listed and include numbers 1-8 and 11 to 17 from west to east (Appendix 2, Plate 6). These are described in the Appraisal as late 19th or early 20th century elegant residences in a range of styles, but of high quality and little altered since their construction.

Other Records

4.15. As with designated heritage assets, only those which are likely to inform an understanding of the site's archaeological potential or which lie close by are included. A number of records relating to the sites of post-medieval structures and features are therefore not detailed further. 'Event' records which duplicate 'Monument' entries on the HER are also not repeated.

4.16. One HER record lies within the site. This is to a 2008 geophysical survey completed across a small part of the playing fields and in the south of the site which recorded 'features' (HER 48802). The HER officer has kindly supplied a copy of this report, which appears to be a research investigation, rather than related to development (Sanderson 2008). The report mentions that the work was undertaken in response to theories about the area, but not what those theories were.

4.17. The short report confirms that an area of circa 0.5 hectares was surveyed using magnetometry, with a smaller part of the same area also subject to resistivity survey. Although some anomalies were located, the report concludes that these were likely due to a modern pipe and hardened ground and post-holes where goals had been located.

4.18. HER 509 is vaguely located, but records the finds of numerous Mesolithic worked flints including at least one Tranchet axe and other tools indicative of activity in this period.

- 4.19. A potentially very significant record is located north of Mount Pleasant Road by the Council website and relates to the discovery of deep pits or ditches cut into chalk in the 19th century (HER 508). Antlers were found in the base of a feature as were buried human remains and given the local topography, it has been inferred that the finds and features may reflect the site of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure, one of the earliest known monumental structure types. Two watching briefs on small-scale development in the area of the inferred enclosure last decade did not record anything of note though.
- 4.20. HER 14913 records an area which was stripped for new development and then visited by an archaeologist. This area lies in the vicinity of the suspected Neolithic enclosure, but nothing of note was evident when visited.
- 4.21. South of the site, HER 507 is also ascribed a Neolithic date and relates to the recovery of a concentration of worked flints interpreted as a site, but when and how these finds were made is not detailed.
- 4.22. More recently, archaeological investigations ahead of residential development at least half a kilometre east of the site included fieldwalking, geophysical survey and trial trenching (HER 48520). These investigations identified two Bronze Age ring ditches which were archaeologically excavated ahead of construction and mark the site of two burial mounds. However, little else was found across more than eight hectares.
- 4.23. The author has overseen further fieldwork in the area south west of where the Bronze Age barrows were located (Smith 2023). However, both geophysical survey and subsequent trial trenching revealed little of interest. A small number of prehistoric and medieval features are currently being investigated further, but the results of this work will not alter an assessment of the site's archaeological potential.

- 4.24. Closer to the site, substantial finds of Iron Age pottery and millstone fragments in 1934, east of Debden Road and west of the site, have been interpreted as the site of settlement (HER 504). However, the area for this record is not shown as extending as far as the site on the Council website.
- 4.25. Iron Age finds have also been made immediately south of the site in 1993 when trial trenching was completed ahead of new development (HER 14594). Pits and worked flint and pottery fragments were recorded and an area opened up and investigated in more detail. It was concluded that the remains were early Iron Age. The HER record indicates the investigations took place at 'Friends' School', although the grid reference suggests this was presumably land sold off by the school for residential development.
- 4.26. Some Roman finds were made at the waterworks in the 1930s at the same time as Iron Age finds recorded under HER 504. Half a kilometre north west of the site, at the junction of Borough Lane with London Road, twelve burials aligned east to west have been found and interpreted as part of a cemetery (HER 515). It is not clear what date these were, although they may have been Roman or later. Small-scale trial trenching close to the cemetery site recorded nothing of interest in 1997 (HER 17771).
- 4.27. Human remains were also recorded during more recent development at the site of the Tudor Works west of the site (HER 48579). Again, these were not conclusively dated, but certainly pre-modern and possibly Iron Age, Roman or Anglo-Saxon in date given nearby sites.
- 4.28. Two phases of trial trenching were completed in the grounds of the Friends' School in 2006 and 2011, presumably ahead of redevelopment of part of the grounds immediately west of the site as new classrooms (HER 46249). Nothing of note was recorded though, with only modern service trenches and plough scarring evident despite the trenches falling immediately east of the suspected Iron Age site (HER 504).

- 4.29. The author has overseen more recent trial trenching within the school grounds and west of the site by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT), although the investigations have yet to be ascribed an HER number (Holloway 2023). Five short trenches were opened as part of the residential redevelopment of the school buildings and grounds, including one extending to within the site (Appendix 2). However, nothing of significance was revealed by any of these trenches and no further fieldwork was required as part of the relevant planning condition.
- 4.30. Other HER records located close to the site record the sites of post-medieval structures marked on historic maps, but which have since been lost to development. Both HER 499 north of the site and Mount Pleasant Road and HER 19776 east of the site record the site of windmills. More than 200 metres south of the site, HER 15646 records the site of a late 19th century infectious diseases hospital.

Historic Maps

- 4.31. The large-scale maps of Chapman and Andre of 1777 and Ordnance Survey of 1805 confirm that Debden Road and what became Mount Pleasant Road were in place, but Saffron Walden's settlement had not reached them at that point (Plate 7). A track appears to have continued south from the junction of Mount Pleasant Road and South Road, on the eastern edge of the site. The windmills and 'Pest House' isolation hospital recorded by the HER are shown in 1805, but the site area would have lain in one or more fields, with no structures within or adjacent.
- 4.32. The 1842 Saffron Walden Tithe map available at Essex Record Office shows more detail for the vicinity of the site (Plate 8). Much of the site would have lain in strip fields which were all known as 'Andrews Close', owned by Nathaniel Archer, farmed by Thomas Smith and arable.
- 4.33. The southern part of the site largely lay within 'Allotment in St. Johns Hold', again owned by Archer and farmed by How, but with land use not ascribed. Parts of the south west of the site may have lain in a parcel also called St. Johns Hold and 'Brickfield Piece', both arable and with Archer and How owner and occupier.

- 4.34. The first edition Ordnance Survey six inch map of 1877 shows several fields merged in the north of the site, but the site all still open and no buildings to the west. The windmills and pest house as well as a track on the site's eastern edge were still in place (Appendix 2).
- 4.35. By the second edition six inch OS map of 1897, surveyed in 1896, the main Friends' School building was in place and the north side of Mount Pleasant Road had been developed. However, the only indication that the site area itself was in use by the school is a square parcel created within the northern field adjacent to the school which may have provided open space. Other parcels in which the site lay were likely still agricultural.
- 4.36. The greater detail on twenty five inch OS map of 1897 actually shows a small structure in the west of the square parcel which may have been a sports pavilion. By 1921, not only is the swimming pool shown, but the entire width of the site in the north was likely in use as sports pitches (Appendix 2). The northern part of the site was defined in its south by an east to west boundary and the pavilion was still in place. Along the northern boundary with Mount Pleasant Road, hatching indicates this area had been landscaped, presumably to provide a more level surface. Beyond the site, the windmill to the south had been lost.
- 4.37. Only in the 1930s does the area take on a form similar to that evident today. By this time, the area of woodland in the south east is defined, but shown as open. Nonetheless, an east to west boundary still separated the southern quarter of the site from the larger area to the north.

Other Sources

- 4.38. Detailed research and building recording was completed last year by ACD Environmental ahead of the conversion of the retained and older school buildings (ACD 2023). It is not clear exactly when the area to the east was brought into use as playing fields, although the school was opened in the late 1870s and then slowly developed over time, with the swimming pool building next to the site dating to the early 20th century. Both the main building and swimming pool extension were designed by Edward Burgess. As well as the school, Pevsner mentions the listed villas north of Mount Pleasant Road (Bettley & Pevsner 2007).
- 4.39. As indicated by historic mapping, the site area lay well away from the historic core of Saffron Walden which developed from the medieval period (UDC 2018). Mount Pleasant Road was known as Mill Road until the late 19th century and the southern mill is believed to have been demolished around the turn of the century (White 1991).
- 4.40. A number of good quality black and white oblique images of the site were available through the Britain from Above website, all dating to 1929. These confirm the majority of the site was in use for sports. Two cricket pitches are in use in the north west of the site and extending west beyond it. To the east, two goals are all that define a football pitch in what looks to be slightly longer grass. A pavilion on the south western edge of the southerly cricket pitch would have lain beyond the site.
- 4.41. South of these, a group of eight bell tents may be related to 'cadet force' activity. Although the area south of this and including the southern part of the site appears to be separate, there was clearly a wide walk laid out which ran through the southern part of the site and joined up with the tree lined walk running south from the main building. The windmill survived to the north.

Site Survey Results

- 4.42. The site was visited in November 2023 and March 2024 to check for any features of interest within the site and its land use and topography. The surrounding area was also visited to understand the relationship between the site and nearby designated and non-designated heritage assets and understand the character and appearance of Zone 6 of the conservation area of which the site is part. The visits confirmed that no other heritage assets other than those detailed above would be affected by change within the site.
- 4.43. The visit confirmed that the site itself consists of a largely level long grassed area in the main (Plates 9 & 10). In the south east of the site are an area of woodland and also a raised platform which is marked on some more recent maps and is likely the site of a post-war tennis court or other games area. This area is also grassed, whilst close to it there are piles of dumped material.
- 4.44. Nothing of heritage interest was evident within the site. Indeed, the only indication that it was once the school's sport field are modern rugby goal posts in the north of the site. Strong treed and vegetated boundaries provide good screening on the western, southern and north ern site boundaries (Plate 11).
- 4.45. To the west, the main school building dominates its surroundings (Plates 1 and 12). This fine late Victorian three storey structure is orientated east to west and a tree lined avenue to the south and open area to the north reflect its key axis away from the site. Much of the school grounds remain in place at present, although later buildings are in the process of demolition ahead of development of their footprints with sensitive new housing. South of the school area and beyond the conservation, an early 20th century housing estate lies west of the site and replaced other school buildings and spaces apparent on arial images and historic maps.

4.46. Although there is clear inter-visibility between the main school building and site ahead of permitted new structures being built, there is little if any inter-visibility with areas of the conservation area north of Mount Pleasant Road. Indeed, the locally listed and positive buildings north of the site lie at a lower level than the road and site and both vegetation within their grounds and on the northern edge of the site limit views into the site and the setting of these houses which enhances their significance.

4.47. Nos. 9 to 10 Mount Pleasant Road lie west of the site and face south in the same manner as the adjacent houses such that there is little if any visibility between these listed structures and the site (Plate 3). The same is true of the other nearest listed structures. The water tower is surrounded by modern houses, whilst No. 64 Debden Road is downslope of the site and largely screened by its own wall and vegetation (Plates 4 & 5). Development of the site would in no way challenge the dominance of the water tower on Debden Road. A wider perambulation confirmed the domestic scale and character of other parts of Zone 6 of the conservation area.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

- 5.1. This section summarises the relevant national and local planning policies, as well as other reference documents, relevant to the assessment of effects on heritage assets. The duty to preserve or enhance the setting of listed buildings and character and appearance within conservation areas contained within sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is a statutory consideration for the local planning authority.
- 5.2. A 2014 Court of Appeal ruling in *Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northants District Council*, English Heritage and the National Trust made clear that to discharge this responsibility, decision makers must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings when carrying out the balancing exercise of judging harm against other planning considerations, as required under the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG 2024).
- 5.3. The more recent Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has some heritage elements, but none which are pertinent to this Statement (HMSO 2023).

National Policy

- 5.4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been revised six times in recent years since it was first published in 2012 (DCLG 2012, MHCLG 2024). The pertinent policy wording for Historic Environment remains very similar, albeit that the order of certain paragraphs and numbering has changed. Heritage assets are still defined in the NPPF glossary as any designated or undesignated element of the historic environment which is identified as being of such significance that it is a material consideration in the planning process.

- 5.5. In determining applications which cause harm to heritage assets directly, or indirectly, through affecting a complementary setting, the NPPF now recommends that 'great weight' should be given to their conservation when reaching a planning decision (Paragraph 212).
- 5.6. The more important the asset, the greater the weight that should be ascribed. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, it is noted that any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. It notes that 'substantial harm' to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance (Grade I and II*) should be 'wholly exceptional' and that it should be 'exceptional' for Grade II listed buildings and Conservation Areas (Paragraph 213).
- 5.7. Paragraph 215 clarifies that, where a development proposal will lead to 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing an optimal viable use.
- 5.8. Paragraph 216 notes that effects on the significance of non-designated heritage assets, which confusingly includes 'locally listed buildings' and archaeological remains, require a balanced judgement weighing the scale of impact on the significance of the heritage asset against the benefits of the proposed development. Where heritage assets are to be lost, Paragraph 218 confirms that an appropriate record of the elements to be lost should be provided and both disseminated and archived by the developer.
- 5.9. Paragraphs 219 and 220 relate to designated areas and note at 220 that: '*...not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 214 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 215, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole.*'

Local Policy

- 5.10. The current Local Development Plan for Saffron Walden consists of saved policies of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005) and the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan (SWTC 2021), which has as its Objective 4 the preservation or enhancement of heritage assets and conservation areas amongst other elements.
- 5.11. Policy ENV1 relates to Design of Development within Conservation Areas and states that: *'Development will be permitted where it preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the essential features of a conservation area, including plan form, relationship between buildings, the arrangement of open areas and their enclosure, grain or significant natural or heritage features.'*
- 5.12. Policy ENV2 of the 2005 Local Plan relates to listed buildings and notes that development which affects a listed building should be in keeping with its *'...scale, character and surroundings'*.
- 5.13. Policy ENV4 – Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Importance, notes a *'presumption in favour of preservation in situ'* for nationally important remains, echoing PPG16: Archaeology and Planning, which preceded the NPPF. If less important remains would be affected, the policy notes that development might be permitted, if its benefits outweigh the harm to archaeology. The policy also confirms that fieldwork might be required pre-determination to confirm the archaeological interest of a site and that further investigation to mitigate harm might be required where development is permitted.

Guidance

- 5.14. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has produced updated Planning Practice Guidance which supports the NPPF (DLUHC 2023). This includes a section titled *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment*. Historic England has produced more detailed guidance on decision making: *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (Historic England 2015). Where relevant, this guidance has informed this assessment.

- 5.15. Historic England also released an updated version of its *The Setting of Heritage Assets* at the end of 2017 (Historic England 2017). The Guidance highlights the fundamental basis of current policy; that although setting can cover a large area, not all of it is positive or anything other than neutral in relation to the significance of the heritage assets concerned. The Guidance also confirms that setting is not a heritage asset or designation in itself. It sets out in detail the aspects of setting which may have a bearing on a heritage asset's significance.
- 5.16. The Guidance examines assessment of the effects of a development proposal on significant elements of setting and stresses that, although visual impacts are at the heart of such effects, other factors including noise, vibration and lighting can also harm setting. An understanding of the heritage assets and the significance of their setting at an early stage can influence proposals in order to minimise adverse effects. A proposal may be re-located, better screened or designed to complement an asset's character where harm could be caused.
- 5.17. Historic England's Guidance also details enhancement of setting which can stem from development. This is noted to include the removal of a detrimental structure, or revealing a lost historic feature, enhancement or creation of public views and improving public access to and interpretation of an asset and its setting. The Guidance sets out a five-step approach to considering setting in relation to development proposals. The assets which might be affected have to be identified and then the degree to which their setting enhances their significance or an appreciation of that significance is to be assessed. Steps 3 and 4 require that the harm or benefits of the proposals are considered in relation to setting and that measures to avoid or minimise the harm are sought. A final, post-construction step is the documenting of the decisions made and post-development monitoring to confirm how accurate the assessment had been.

5.18. Given past Appeal decisions in relation to the effect of development on highly visible assets such as churches, the new Guidance includes specific reference to these and states:

'Being tall structures, church towers and spires are often widely visible across land- and townscapes but, where development does not impact on the significance of heritage assets visible in a wider setting or where not allowing significance to be appreciated, they are unlikely to be affected by small-scale development, unless that development competes with them, as tower blocks and wind turbines may. Even then, such an impact is more likely to be on the landscape values of the tower or spire rather than the heritage values, unless the development impacts on its significance, for instance by impacting on a designed or associative view.'

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1. This assessment has been prepared by ACD Environmental Limited on behalf of Chase New Homes to support a revised detailed planning application for residential and related development on land lying east of the former Friends' School, Saffron Walden, Essex. It accords with current legislation and national and local policy and guidance which requires consideration of the archaeological and heritage implications of development in advance of a planning decision.
- 6.2. The assessment has been informed by consultation with the Essex Historic Environment Record and Record Office. Historic England's National Heritage List for England and other online sources have complemented these county sources. Site visits in November 2023 and March 2024 completed the work informing this report.
- 6.3. The site itself does not contain any extant features of interest or known archaeology. Long-standing vegetated boundaries to the north and east will be retained. It is almost entirely located within Zone 6 of Saffron Walden Conservation Area and a number of Grade II listed and locally listed structures lie close by, including the main building of the former Friends' School which lies immediately to the west.
- 6.4. In terms of archaeological potential a number of likely sites have been recorded nearby, including a possible Neolithic causewayed enclosure to the north, a possible Iron Age to Roman settlement to the west and also burials and Neolithic to Iron Age activity south of the site.
- 6.5. However, key sites were identified in the 19th century and 1930s, so their exact nature is uncertain. Geophysical survey within the site did not identify anything of likely potential, albeit a small area was surveyed. Trial trenching to the west and extending to just within the site also found no features, nor finds which would indicate a continuation of the Iron Age activity to the west.

- 6.6. Although the site area is likely to have always been open, it was certainly cultivated in the mid-19th century and original surfaces may have been truncated thereafter to provide a level area for pitches and both would have damaged any earlier sub-surface remains.
- 6.7. Nonetheless, given nearby indications of prehistoric or later activity, it is likely that the advisor to Uttlesford District Council will seek some archaeological investigation ahead of development and possibly pre-determination. It may be appropriate to complete professional geophysical survey across all of the site ahead of targeted trial trenching to test its results.
- 6.8. Given the available information, it is concluded that there is low potential for significant archaeological remains of any period to survive. Any surviving sub-surface remains are likely to reflect common types of deposits and it would almost certainly be appropriate to deal with these through further investigation ahead of or during construction, with fieldwork secured through a planning condition.
- 6.9. Although the majority of the site is designated as part of Saffron Walden's conservation area, there do not appear to be good heritage grounds for this. The conservation area Appraisal notes that the openness of the area is important, although it is clear from the site walkover that the area now appears as an overgrown grassed field and there are no clear indications of its historical use other than modern rugby posts. A platform which may have held tennis courts is no longer clearly discernible.
- 6.10. Historic maps and aerial images confirm that the site area is only part of what would have been used by the school for sports and other outdoor activity and that the area which is likely to have been used changed over time, echoing the expansion of the school. The southernmost areas do not appear to have come into school use until after the Second World War. Two likely sports pavilions lay to the west and have since been demolished ahead of redevelopment. Residential redevelopment has also removed parts of the original area used.

- 6.11. The character and appearance of the site is unlike the rest of the associated part of the conservation area, the character of which is defined by fine late 19th century and later houses and their grounds, as well as the former Friends' School. This latter is in the process of change as the earlier buildings are converted to residential use whilst new houses are built in the footprint of later structures which have been demolished.
- 6.12. The enhancement of significance that the site area actually provides to the wider conservation area is minimal, whilst it has no intrinsic interest as it now appears, or special character. It is only in its openness adjacent to the main school building that the proposed change might be assessed as harmful. Given this, the proposed change would only cause 'less than substantial' harm at the very lowest end of a notional spectrum.
- 6.13. None of the Grade II listed buildings nearby or any other designated heritage asset would be affected by residential development of the site as there is no clear inter-visibility or relationship with the site. The locally listed school buildings do lie immediately to the west and the loss of openness could be seen as a very limited adverse effect on these non-designated heritage assets. However, as well as facing away from the site, permitted development west of the site will include new houses surrounding the larger school structures and, given this evolving context, the harm would be extremely limited.
- 6.14. A strong northern belt of vegetation to the site largely screens it from locally listed houses on the north side of Mount Pleasant Road which are also set at a lower level than the site. However, these late Victorian and early 20th century structures do face towards the site. Again, any harm to their significance through change to setting is close to negligible. The very limited harm caused would need to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals which includes new housing and also sports facilities, which echo the historical use of the site (Appendix 5).

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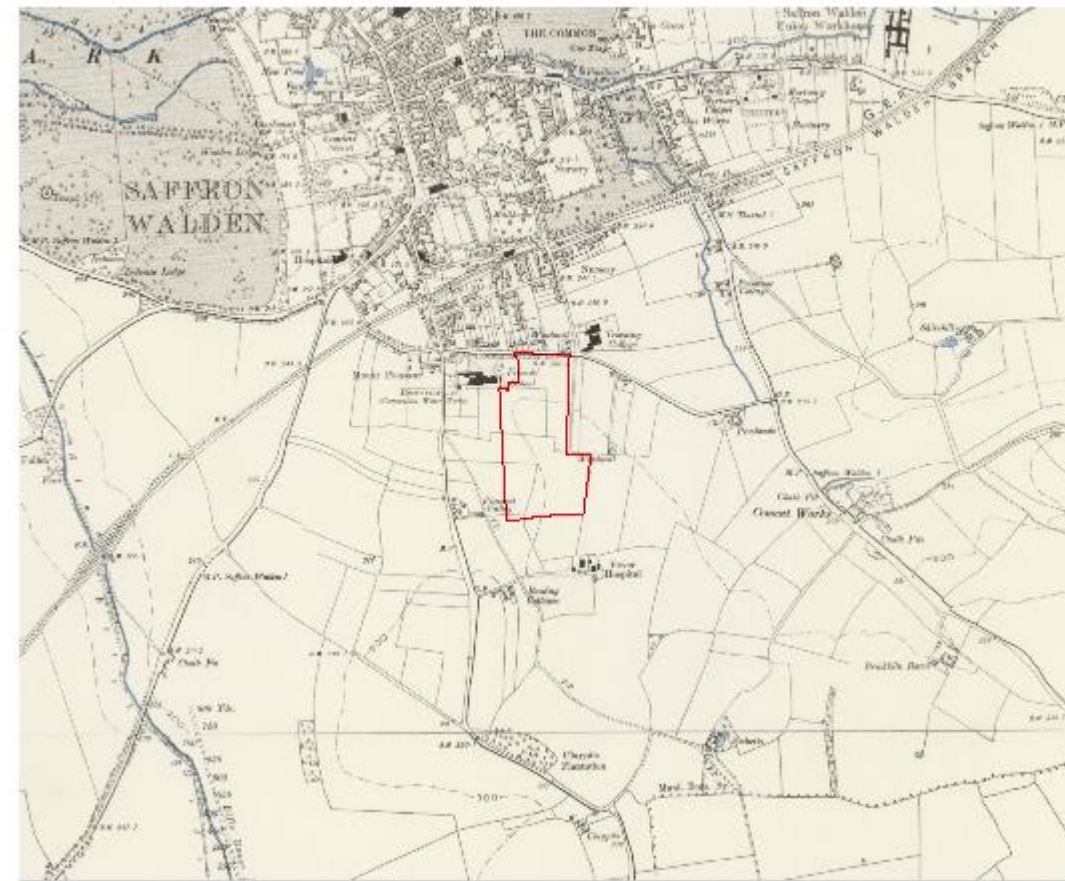
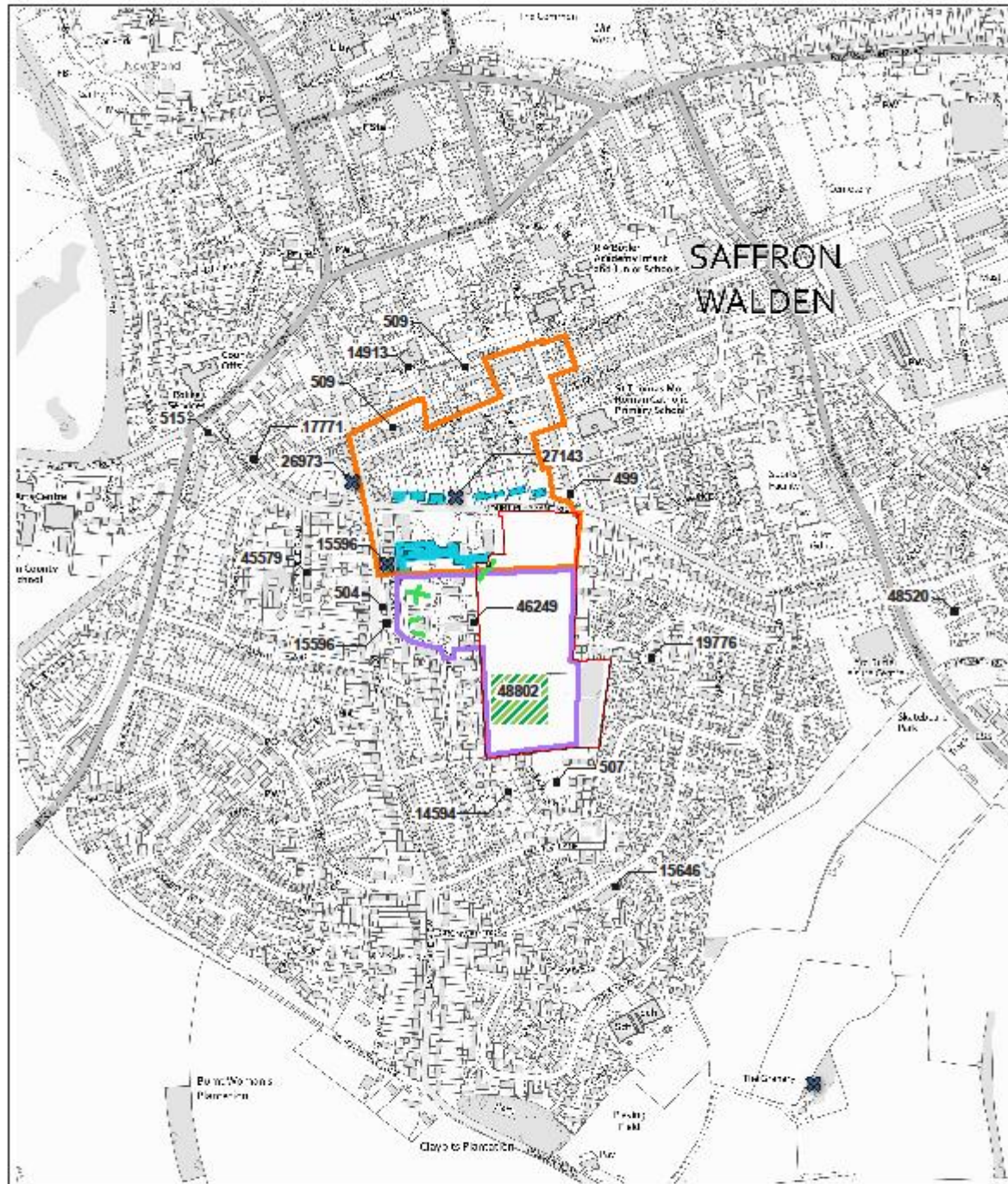
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Appendix 1: Essex Historic Environment Record Gazetteer

HER Ref.	NGR (TL prefix)	Period	Notes
499	5419 3778	Post-medieval	Site of Mount Pleasant windmill shown on 1777 map, but later as disused and site now redeveloped.
504	539 376	Iron Age to Roman	Iron Age pottery finds indicate site of settlement near waterworks. HER 505 records fragments of millstone in same deposits. HER 48771 records Roman finds in 1934 in vicinity of waterworks.
507	5420 3733	Neolithic	Finds of worked flint including scrapers interpreted as site. No further detail.
508	539 378	Neolithic	Records finds of deep ditches and antlers and skeletons during late 19 th century development which may reflect a prehistoric enclosure given the topography and finds. HERs 46250 and 47113 record watching briefs in the vicinity in 2003 & 2009 which recorded nothing of note.
509	540 380	Mesolithic	Worked flint including tranchet axes and cores recovered in 19 th century. HER 510 records a single later flake from same collection and HER 47264 records the find of a Mesolithic tranchet axe in the same area.
515	536 378	Uncertain	Twelve east to west burials found near junction of Borough Lane and may be Roman or later.
14594	541 373	Iron Age	Trial trenching revealed some roughly worked flint and pottery fragments in one of several pits in 1993 and further investigation suggested early IA.
14913	5390 3801	N/a	Scraped area observed for features, but nothing evident. However, this may reflect later truncation from development.
15596	5388 3766	20 th century	1913 brick water tower which was part of waterworks and now an arts centre is Grade II listed.
15646	5424 3723	19 th century	Site of late 19 th century infectious diseases hospital since redeveloped.
17771	5369 3765	N/a	Three trench evaluation in 1997 recorded nothing of note.
19776	5430 3753	Post-medieval	Site of windmill since redeveloped. Not clear if same as HER 499.
26973	5383 3780	19 th century	64 Debden Road is a Grade II listed late Victorian polychrome brickwork Gothic Revival house.









27143	5399 3778	19 th century	9 – 10 Mount Pleasant are late Victorian Vernacular style semi-detached villas by William Bell & Sons and Grade II listed.
46249	5406 3755	Post-medieval	Trial trenching ahead of new school buildings found only plough scars and modern features in 2006 & 2011 phases.
48520	5483 3739	Bronze Age	Evaluation including fieldwalking, geophysics and trial trenching led to excavation of two BA ring ditches representing the site of round barrows.
48579	5379 3766	Uncertain	Undated, but likely pre-modern skeletal material found which might be related to IA & Roman site to east or Anglo-Saxon cemetery a greater distance to west.
48802	5411 3742	Uncertain	Records geophysical survey completed across 'Friends' School playing fields' in 2008 with 'features' recorded.

Appendix 2: Site and Identified Archaeology



OS Six Inch 1888-1915

LEGEND

-  Site boundary
-  Listed building
-  Locally listed or positive structures
-  Saffron Walden Conservation Area, Zone 6: Phase I
-  Saffron Walden Conservation Area, Zone 6: Phase II
-  CAT trial trenches
-  HER 48802
-  Other HER record



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0 500m

Scheme: Land at Former Friends' School, Saffron Walden, Essex.

Plan 1: Site and Identified Heritage and Archaeology

ACD Ref: CNH24380-81

Scale: As shown

Drawn: MP

Checked: BS



Appendix 3: Plates



Plate 1: Former Friends' School main building, looking south east



Plate 2: View east along West Road



Plate 3: Nos. 9 – 10 Mount Pleasant Road, looking north west



Plate 4: Listed water tower, looking south east



Plate 5: No. 64 Debden Road, looking north west



Plate 6: Houses on Mount Pleasant Road, looking north east



Plate 7: Map of 1805, site at centre of image



Plate 8: Tithe map of circa 1840, site at centre of image



Plate 9: Site, looking north



Plate 10: Northern edge of site, looking north



Plate 11: View east along Mount Pleasant Road



Plate 12: Main school buildings from site, looking north west

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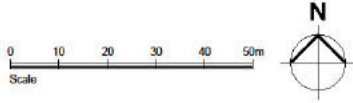
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Appendix 5: Proposed Site Plan



NOTES:
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SCALE:	DATE:	BY:	
1:500 (A3)	April 2025	JB	
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