CHASE
NEW HOMES
The Excitement is Building

Former Fields Friends School

Saffron Walden

Landscape Statement

April 2025

DCa landscape

Contents

1. Introduction

This Landscape Statement has been prepared by David Coles architects limited in support of the planning application for the proposed residential development, sports pitches and clubhouse on land at the former Friends School on Mount Pleasant Road in Saffron Walden.

Matters concerning planning policy have been considered separately within the accompanying planning statement prepared by Barker Parry

This statement supports the Design and Access statement also prepared by David Coles Architects which describes the design process including site analysis, planning background and design approach.
To be read with drawings;

L23110.02.D Soft landscape
L23110.03.D Hard landscape
L23110.04.C Landscape Maintenance Strategy

2. Masterplan

This statement supports the Design and Access statement also prepared by David Coles Architects which describes the design process including site analysis, planning background and design approach.
This document discusses the landscape approach as follows;

Landscape appraisal

The existing site currently comprises former school fields, surrounded by existing trees to the northern, eastern, and southern boundaries, and an area of woodland to the southeast. A small group of trees adjoins the western boundary towards the middle of the site.

The trees around the site periphery provide a high level of screening and separation to the surrounding context, with very limited views of the adjacent development. This contrasts with the openness of the western boundary where the more recent development of The Avenue is highly visible and includes built form right up to the boundary.
The landform is elevated above Mount Pleasant Road and rises to a crest towards the middle of the site, before falling away to the southwestern corner.

Landscape strategy

The strategy adopted has sought to retain many of the existing trees around the site perimeter and within the woodland, and to incorporate these into the overall scheme. The retained landscape sits wholly within the public realm elements of the scheme so that they positively contribute towards the character of the development.

3. Existing tree strategy

Northern boundary (G6)
Group of Lime growing amidst dense understory of mixed species hedgerow. Contributing to screening of site from northern residential properties and road. Ivy present on many specimens preventing thorough inspection. Some deadwood present throughout.
Manage hedgerow – possibly lay along roadside to establish hedgeline, ensure longevity and wildlife corridor and prevent future interference with Limes. Retain some larger specimens inside hedgeline for screening.

Eastern boundary (G8)
Mixed species group of viburnham, cotinus, blackthorn and hazel growing as understory to linear group. Large specimens providing off-site screening.
Manage understorey, manage and maintain existing specimens and infill gaps

Woodland area (T7 Mixed species woodland)
Mixed species woodland comprising of sycamore, field maple, hawthorn, dogwood, buddleia and hazel with occasional birch along the eastern edge. An emerging shrub layer of hawthorn, hazel, field maple, bramble, privet and buddleia. Some open space.
A detailed management and maintenance plan to be prepared and implemented/
Introduce pockets of sub layer planting
Improved grassland – retain some open spaces - potential to reintroduce forest school

Southern boundary (G10)
Avenue of lime growing as an avenue with understory of sycamore, holly and hawthorn. Visually significant to south of site. Many trees heavily clad in ivy preventing thorough inspection. Some deadwood growing throughout.
Linear group of Lime. Visually significant, contribution to landscape.
Continuation of avenue to south running along eastern boundary, growing to west of mixed species woodland. Ivy present on some specimens preventing through inspection. Some deadwood throughout.
Clear mown path through linear belts to southern boundary and continuing north along western edge of the woodland and manage understorey in order to reinstate as Avenues.

4. Grand Avenue

The creation of a new tree lined avenue running east-west within the development establishes a strong connection to the existing treed avenue within the former school site.

The new avenue forms a key link to the existing perimeter landscape and its alignment retains a focus towards the former main school building.

The rhythmic planting of grouped blossom and fruit bearing trees is emphasised on a lower level with linear blocks of medium hedge planting and native groundcover underplanting creating an attractive walkway.

This is inspired by the tree - hedge - underplanting found at The Avenue to the west of the site

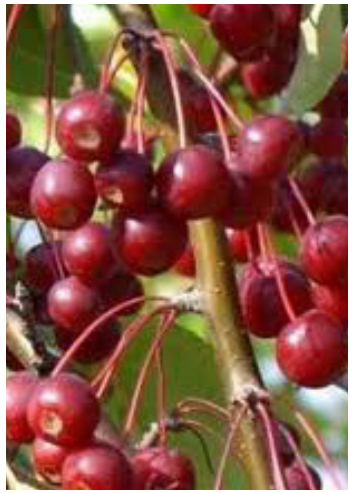
5. Grand Avenue link

The north-south link connects the Grand Avenue with the proposed sports pitches and the open space setting to the retained woodland and existing tree lined site boundary.

The proposed link reinforces the pedestrian connectivity within the site through the green network and landscape as well as creating an extensive landscaped setting for the new dwellings.

The rhythm of the tree planting is softer and less rigid than the Grand Avenue but continues with blossom theme with smaller growing varieties.

Low curving hedge sections reflect this softer but directional theme leading to the crescent and transition to the open sports pitch area.



6. The Crescent

To the southern end of the site, a range of new houses form a crescent that reflects the circular nature of the cricket pitch.

Tree planting here is uniform again following this crescent shape with larger lime trees to extend the adjacent existing retained lime avenue to the east and defining the boundary between the homes and the sports area.

This boundary is further defined with a ready grown minimum 1m height Hornbeam hedge which will form year round protection to the dwellings behind.

7. Community space

An informal LAP will be created in the leisure space adjacent to the offsite MUGA.
Columnar form trees will define the space creating higher level softness and shade but will not impact the MUGA.
Gentle mounds and natural elements will encourage play activity in the wider area.
As the space narrows a micro orchard will be established as small stock fruit trees meander through a wildflower meadow.
This will comprise a number of heritage varieties of fruiting and flowering species of local origin including apple Malus sp., pear Pyrus sp., and plum Prunus sp.
The trees and meadow will offer foraging opportunities to birds and invertebrates as well as community engagement.
Establishment and ongoing maintenance of the micro-orchard will aim to encourage healthy, vigorous and naturally shaped growth. Management will follow best arboricultural practice

8. Proposed tree planting

The planting of native fruiting trees and shrubs around the site will contribute to increasing native floral biodiversity at the site, offering foraging opportunities to birds and invertebrates as well as the bird nesting opportunities.

Closer within the residential areas where there is less space for the larger habits of native trees, columnar cultivars have been selected. These will enable trees to be included within the built form matrix and integrate pollen, nectar and fruits for birds and invertebrates whilst creating a leafy, floral built environment.

The existing woodland to the SE of the site will be improved with native understorey tree planting.

9. Planting to residential areas

Frontages to properties are seeded with a species rich variety of native wildflowers and grasses (see plant schedule) that will all tolerate close mowing to a height of about 5cm for the majority of the year. This will contribute towards increasing native floral biodiversity within the site where mowing is ceased to allow flowering.

For private dwellings this will be to the owner's discretion, however management will be retained for many frontage areas adjacent to access roads, the sports hall and apartments for example (see management plan) and a maximum cut of 3 times a year will be implemented to ensure flower and seed production.

Ornamental planting areas around houses will be mostly low growing with some specimen shrubs and will have a focus on pollen and nectar bearing species, referring to the RHS Plants for Pollinators database.

Low growing hedges define individual frontage areas where this would benefit the space.

10. Sports field and facilities

The provision of sports facilities affords a large area of open public space. The sports pitches and run off will be grass that is regularly mown

The pitches are bounded to the north by the crescent form of the buildings, reflecting the geometry of the cricket pitch. This form is reflected and accentuated by a formal single species (Hornbeam) hedge with vertical accents of trees which frame the views from the housing across the open space.

The pitches are bounded to the south and east by the improved avenue and walkway.

A species rich native hedge is proposed to the western boundary. This will enhance and extend the green corridor provided by the tree-line along the southern and eastern site boundaries and represent a new ecologically-valuable feature along the western site boundary. The proposed management will encourage dense, well structured, and diverse hedgerow with a desirable three-dimensional structure for providing forage and refuge to local wildlife and nesting habitat for birds once mature.

A species rich grasses margin buffering this corridor from the mown sports pitches and run-off will be managed for biodiversity.
The sports hall incorporates a green roof, making efficient use of this area of manmade structure.

Native shrubs around the sports hall and parking

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