

Martin Barker

10th June 2025

Application Reference: S62A/2025/0107

Site Address: Former Friends School Field, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 3EB

Formal Representation: Objection to Planning Application S62A/2025/0107

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing as a resident [REDACTED] which lies immediately to the south of the proposed development site at the Former Friends School Field. I wish to formally object to this application on the following grounds, with reference to the relevant planning policies, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the recent Planning Inspectorate decision on the previous application.

1. Traffic and Parking

The current application, as with the previous scheme, does not adequately address the issue of parking displacement into Greenways. While the site layout provides for on-site parking, there are no controls or guarantees that users of the proposed sports pitches and clubhouse will not use Greenways for overflow parking, particularly at evenings and weekends when pitch usage will be at its peak. Greenways is a quiet residential cul-de-sac, not designed for high turnover or non-resident parking, and has limited space for vehicle movement and parking as it stands.

It is worth noting that additional development on Greenways was refused due to health and safety concerns related specifically to the access roads, namely Winstanley Road. Also, Greenways, itself has narrow sections, where parked cars can obstruct access for the likes of emergency or waste removal vehicles.

Paragraphs 62–66 of the previous Inspector's report focused on general highway safety and site access from Mount Pleasant Road, but did not assess the very real risk of overspill parking into adjacent residential streets. This is a common and well-documented outcome in similar developments, and post-development parking controls are usually too late to prevent serious disruption to residents' amenity.

A significant and concerning change in the current proposal is the reduction in on-site parking for the sports facilities. The previous application included 28 standard car spaces, 2 disabled bays, and 2 coach spaces for the sports clubhouse area. In the revised proposal, this has been reduced to 22 standard car spaces, 3 disabled bays, and no coach parking.

This is despite Sport England's prior advice that 30+ spaces would be the minimum requirement for the level of sports provision proposed. This reduction directly contradicts the advice from Sport England and is inconsistent with both local and national guidance:

- Essex Parking Standards (2009): Recommend at least 20 spaces per pitch for outdoor team sports. The proposed provision falls below this threshold.
- Sport England Guidance: Advises 20–50 spaces per pitch, depending on expected usage, and stresses the importance of including capacity for spectators and coaches.
- Saffron Walden Community FC precedent: At Herbet Farm, with 4 primary pitches and around 80 parking spaces, peak usage regularly results in overspill onto adjacent roads—a clear indication that under-providing for on-site parking causes local congestion and inconvenience.

In their report on the previous application, the Planning Inspectorate suggested the parking provision “*seems high*”, which is difficult to reconcile with the real-world experience of similar facilities and the clear recommendations from Sport England. The reality is that reducing on-site parking will inevitably push regular users, visiting teams, and spectators to seek parking in nearby residential areas. Greenways, as the nearest and least restricted residential road to the new pedestrian access, is almost certain to bear the brunt of this overspill.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that developments should provide adequate parking to meet the needs of users and avoid adverse impact on local roads and the amenity of residents. The current proposal fails on this front, as the inadequate on-site parking will lead directly to on-street parking and traffic congestion in Greenways and the wider neighbourhood.

This is a problem that will be faced by other members of the community in surrounding streets, although with the direct connection into Greenways, and the pitches being located at the south of the site, it is particularly concerning for the residents here. I assume that the future residents that will move into the new homes being built on the North of the site will also experience this problem, due to the underlying problem.

Policy Context:

- **Uttlesford Local Plan GEN1, GEN2, GEN3** – require that new development does not compromise road safety, protects residential amenity, and provides for the safe and convenient movement of all users.
- **NPPF paragraphs 110–111** – developments should provide safe and suitable access for all users and prevent unacceptable impacts on highway safety.
- **Sport England "Planning for Sport Guidance" (Principles 9 & 12):**
Emphasises that new sports facilities must have **adequate parking provision** for users, spectators, coaches, and staff, and that any amenity impacts (e.g., parking overspill) must be **proactively addressed** through design and mitigation measures.
- **Sport England "Car Park and Landscape Design" guidance:**
Specifies that provision should include capacity for coaches/minibuses and sufficient vehicle parking tailored to pitch usage. The absence of coach spaces and reduced standard parking fails to meet these expectations.

- **Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Guidance:**
Sets out that planning applications impacting playing fields must be consulted on, with particular attention to ensuring user access and amenity are properly serviced—including parking, access routes, and community use arrangements.
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2. Pedestrian Access and Residential Amenity/Security

The application highlights the creation of a “*new public link from Greenways to Mount Pleasant Road*” as a public benefit holding “*moderate weight*” (Inspector's report, paragraph 82). While permeability and access are positive in principle, the reality is that this footpath will channel a significant number of non-residents through Greenways, changing its character and increasing the risk of anti-social behaviour, litter, noise, and loss of security. The amenity of residents, particularly the elderly and families with children, will be harmed.

Policy Context:

- **Uttlesford Local Plan GEN2, GEN3** – new development must protect the amenity and security of existing residents.
 - **Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan SW3, SW17** – require that new developments are designed to protect local amenity and ensure public spaces are safe and secure.
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3. Inadequate Assessment and Lack of Mitigation

The current proposal relies on assumptions about the capacity of on-site parking and the adequacy of the travel plan. In practice, there is no binding mechanism or commitment to prevent Greenways being used as free, unrestricted parking for sports pitch users. The Inspector's previous report notes (paragraph 65) notes concerns about the distribution of visitor parking but we would challenge the statement that “*this can be rectified through the imposition of an appropriately worded condition*”. It is clear that, without proactive management and enforcement, localised parking stress and amenity harm will result.

I therefore urge the Inspectorate not to rely on generalised highway assessments, but to require a full and site-specific parking management plan, including the use of physical measures or on-street controls to prevent displacement parking into Greenways and to protect the amenity and safety of its residents.

4. Recommendation: Review and Reconfiguration of Site Layout

The current proposal locates the sports facilities and pitches towards the southern part of the site, immediately adjacent to Greenways. This layout significantly increases the risk that sports users will seek access and parking in Greenways, thereby impacting the amenity, safety, and convenience of existing residents. The design also means that users must traverse almost the entire development from the main vehicular entrance at Mount Pleasant Road to reach the sports area, resulting in unnecessary vehicular movement through residential areas.

A more logical and policy-compliant approach would be to reposition the sports facilities and associated parking to the northern end of the site, which has a direct and more suitable connection to the main road. Historically, there were pitches located at the north of the site, with more direct access, and this arrangement made use of the established main road infrastructure. Locating the pitches and clubhouse at the north would:

- Reduce vehicle and pedestrian traffic through the residential core of the new development
- Minimise the risk of overspill parking and nuisance in Greenways and other southern residential streets
- Allow for better management of parking, access, and amenity for both new and existing residents
- Create a more coherent and accessible sports facility that is less likely to harm neighbour amenity

It is worth noting that a previous application for this site (UTT/19/1744/OP, refused in 2019) proposed sports pitches at the north of the site. One of the key reasons for refusal in that case was the predicted negative impact on both existing and new residents from the use of sports pitches in that location. The current application, in attempting to address those historic objections, has over-corrected by shifting the problem onto existing residents of Greenways, rather than finding a balanced solution.

I recommend that the Planning Inspectorate require the applicant to review the site layout in collaboration with Sport England, the local authority, and residents, with a view to:

- Relocating the sports facilities and parking to the northern end of the site
- Minimising conflict between residential amenity and sports facility use
- Making use of existing road infrastructure for sports traffic, and
- Limiting the likelihood of parking overspill and amenity impacts on Greenways

This review should be a condition of any approval or, preferably, grounds for refusal until a more suitable layout is presented that avoids foreseeable negative impacts on both new and existing residents.

Conclusion

In summary, I object to this application on the grounds of the unacceptable impact on the amenity, safety, and character of Greenways, arising from likely overspill parking and increased non-resident access via the proposed footpath. These impacts have not been properly assessed or mitigated and are contrary to the Uttlesford Local Plan, Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

I urge the Planning Inspectorate to refuse this application, or at the very least consider the reconfiguration proposal alongside imposing stringent conditions to protect the interests of existing residents, both of Greenways and other surrounding streets.

Yours faithfully,

Martin Barker