

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4ER
Telephone (01799) 510510
Textphone Users 18001
Email uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk Website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Built Heritage and Conservation Advice Note

The following notes are associated with built heritage and conservation aspects only. These comments should be read in conjunction with all other Advice Notes associated with the application. This Advice Note does not include comments on archaeology.

Reference numbers	UTT/25/1343/PINS (UDC) S62A/2025/0107 (PINS)
Site location	Former Friends School Field, Saffron Walden

1.0 Proposal

The Applicant has submitted this application directly to the Planning Inspectorate.

Erection of 75no. dwellings with associated infrastructure and landscaping. Provision of playing fields and associated clubhouse.

2.0 Comments

The Site is within a Conservation Area and is designated as protected open space.

This application follows the refused application UTT/24/1898/PINS (PINS Reference: S62A/2024/0057). I provided comments on the refused application and reiterate my previous note that if development on the Site is to be progressed, the proposed scheme should be of exceptional quality to justify the loss of open space in a Conservation Area.

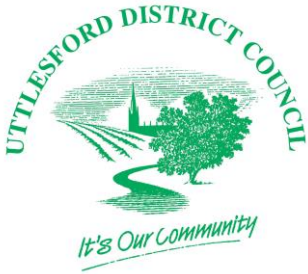
The Heritage and Archaeology Statement (HAS) submitted as part of this application provides a good assessment of the Site and its built history. However, I am not in agreement that the site does not possess good grounds to be considered as part of the conservation area. The field is noted within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposal as an 'Important Open Space' with the following characteristics:

*1.304 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.*

*1.305 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.*

Furthermore, the HAS notes that the Site is overgrown, but the Site has been under private ownership (by the Applicant), so this point seems irrelevant.

The Design and Access and Justification Statement (DAS) refers to the Saffron Walden Conservation Area but does not provide further assessment of how the proposed development preserves or enhances the Conservation Area. Additionally, it does not utilise or refer to the findings within the HAS. The HAS could have been used as a tool to aid design development.



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Architectural details

Balconies; are not a typical feature within the Conservation Area. That said, I am supportive of balconies to flats or dwellings that are without access to outdoor space. In line with H2 of the Uttlesford Design Code, balconies should be limited to dwellings without direct access to a garden space. However, the current design of balconies to some house types (i.e. Fog) appears bulky and inelegant. The design should be adjusted to appear more lightweight i.e. structure to be concealed. This component should appear more subtle, complementing the overall architectural style of the building instead of being the dominant feature of the elevation. The renderings on pages 60 and 62 of the DAS illustrate the bulky appearance of the proposed balconies.

Elevations; have minor misalignments of windows in most house types. A standardised approach to elevational details would create more visual consistency.

Form, Layout and Scale

The reduction in dwelling numbers from 90 to 75, is a positive change to help maintain more openness at the north end of the site. However, the ratio of hard landscaping for car parking still appears high given the status of the site at designated open space. Furthermore, the site is in a sustainable transport location.

The choice to retain a large section of the site as open playing fields is a positive aspect.

The scale of proposed buildings is appropriate to the context and reflects the modern developments in proximity of the site.

The intention to create a varied street scene would be effective. The renderings distributed throughout the DAS are useful to illustrate space and scale. However, they are all inward looking and without reference to the wider context. Simple sketches of the development in context would have been beneficial to demonstrate a more well-rounded representation of the proposal.

Landscape

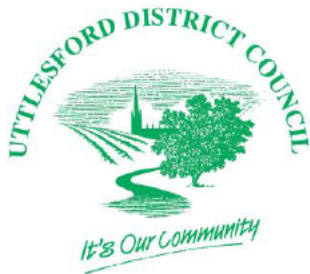
The Landscape Statement suggests the inclusion of a Micro Orchard with heritage varieties of fruiting and flowering planting of local origin. This is an appealing element of the proposal, however there is limited information that confirms the details and logistics. Additionally, the Micro Orchard is omitted from the Landscape Management Plan and appendices suggesting the concept has not been fully resolved or costed.

If the application is approved, a Condition should be applied that safeguards bespoke details such as the Micro Orchard, which are unique to the development.

Clubhouse

The design of the clubhouse has not been revised so most of my previous comments still stand.

The green roof shown on drawing 'Materials Strategy ROOFS' (23110 (D) 122) covers the full extent of the roof, but the 'Materials Schedule' (reference 23110 (D) 126) suggests a second



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roofing material of *sheet roofing to the clubhouse*. The elevations are not labelled but the drawing convention does not suggest a green roof.

The green roof remains absent from the Landscape Management Plan (and appendices) suggesting the concept has not been fully resolved or costed. Safe access for maintenance/working at height needs to be considered and should be included in the design at planning stage.

Similarly, the proposed solar panels will require access for cleaning to ensure they continue to work efficiently. The small section of solar panels to the southwest of the roof has a ramp below at ground level, so it would be prudent to consider how roof mounted aspects will be regularly accessed and maintained, i.e. is a person expected to stand at ground level with an extendable pole?

The Clubhouse could be an opportunity to design an exceptional feature building however the current proposal does not convey design excellence. The domestic fence-like enclosure to the condensers on the front elevation seems unconsidered. This could have been integrated into the overall design more sympathetically.

Conclusion

In my opinion the proposals do not result in harm to the significance of the listed buildings in proximity of the site.

Paragraph 219 of the NPPF (2024) states that new development within a Conservation Area should enhance or better reveal its significance. In my opinion the principle of development is acceptable, but the current proposal does not illustrate a scheme of exceptional design quality to justify its position within a Conservation Area, and the loss of designated Open Space.

Submitted by	Serena Cardozo
Role	Principal Conservation Officer
Department	Development Management
Date	20 June 2025