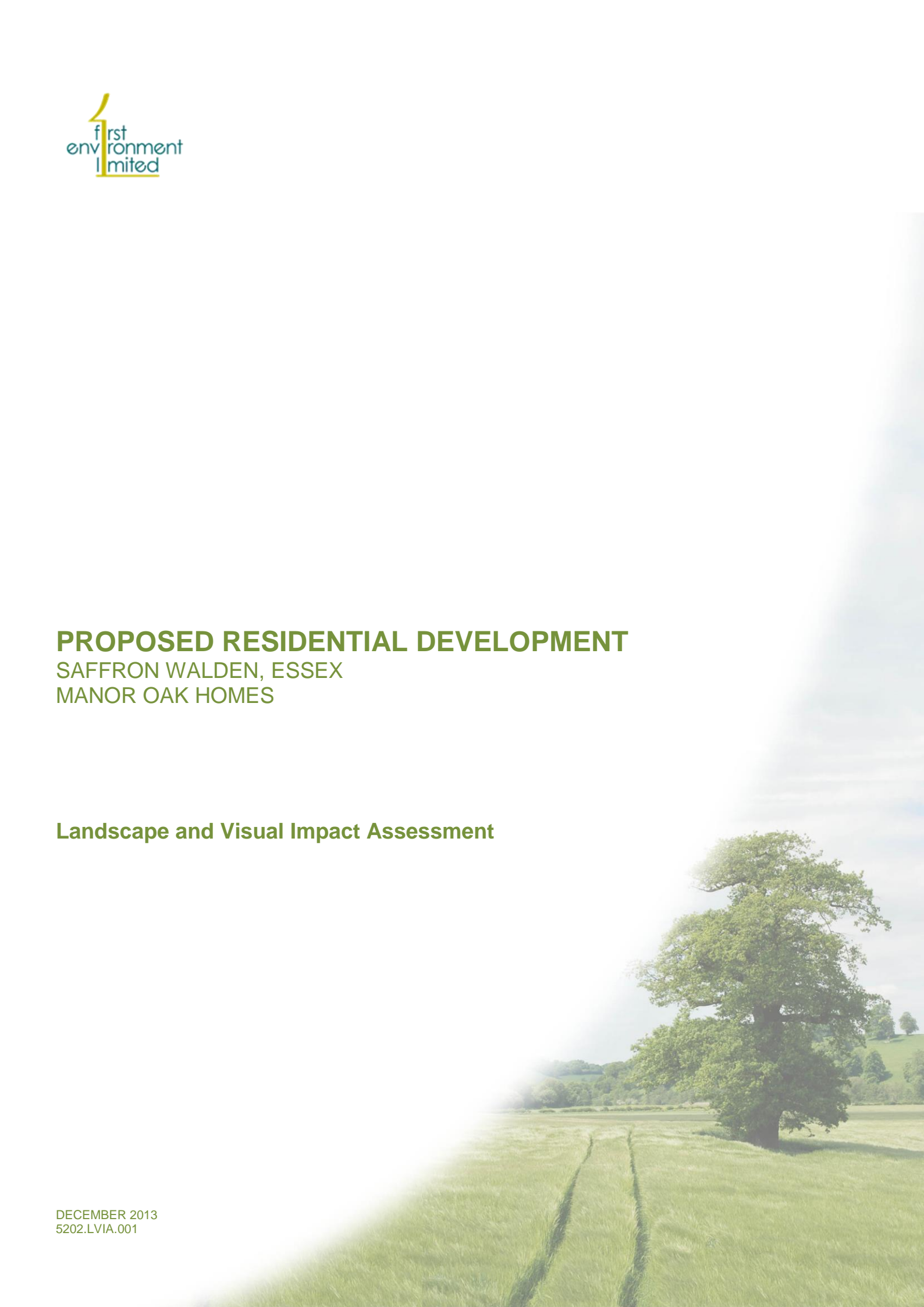




PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX
MANOR OAK HOMES

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment



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1. INTRODUCTION

General

- 1.1. First Environment Consultants Ltd has been appointed by Manor Oak Homes to assess the landscape and visual issues relating to the proposed residential led mixed use development on land adjacent to Radwinter Road, east of Saffron Walden urban area.
- 1.2. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will analyse the landscape character and visual effects to the local area, introduce the principle of development and assess the ability of the landscape setting and visual environment to accommodate change. A number of plans and photographs have been prepared to illustrate the character and visual context of the site and its setting. These are included as Appendices 1 and 2 within this report. The plans form part of the document and should be read in conjunction with it. The location of the application site is shown in Appendix 1 (5202/SS.01 Site and Setting).

Site Background

- 1.3. The site consists of three arable fields currently in private ownership. These form the northern part of a site allocated by Uttlesford District Council as a mixed use development on land between Radwinter Road and Thexted Road and land to the south of the Lord Buttler Leisure Centre and west of Thexted Road. There is no public access through the site. An existing private access connects the farm and its outbuildings to Radwinter Road.
- 1.4. There is no history of planning applications on the site. However, there is an on-going application for a residential scheme on another part of the allocated site to the south-west.
- 1.5. A previous Landscape and Visual Assessment was undertaken to determine the capacity of the entire allocated site to accommodate a mixed use development. Though land covered by this proposal was included in that assessment there is no document specifically related to the site itself. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been conducted specifically to address the proposed development and its impacts on the landscape.
- 1.6. In addition, an Agricultural Land Classification has been conducted for the site in line with local authority policy relating to sites of this size and type.

2. LANDSCAPE POLICY

This section discusses relevant landscape planning policies affecting the site. These policies cover designations from national through to local level.

National

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) March 2013 – Guidance

2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the guidelines for future planning applications and replaces the Planning Policy Statement (PPSs). Instilled within the core of the framework is the presumption in favour of Sustainable Development with regards to growth and development (paragraph 14 and 17). See Appendix 4 for more detail.

2.2. The NPPF identifies “*three dimensions to sustainable development*”:

- *“An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*
- *A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being;*
- *An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.”*

District

Local Plan

Uttlesford District Local Plan (2005)

2.3. Status: New policies originally presented in the Uttlesford Draft Local Plan Position Statement March 2013, include

Saffron Walden Policy 1 which is relevant to the site. There is no policy referring specifically to landscape. However, this plan has yet to be adopted.

2.4. Until the new Local Plan is adopted the saved policies of the Uttlesford District Local Plan, adopted in 2005, are the only existing source of guidance in relation to landscape matters. Relevant policies include:

Policy GEN2 – Design

Policy GEN7 – Nature Conservation

Policy ENV3 - Open Spaces and Trees

Policy ENV5 - Protection of Agricultural Land

Policy ENV6 – Change Of Use of Agricultural Land to Domestic Garden

Policy ENV8 – Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation

Policy H3 – New Houses within Development Limits

Saffron Walden inset Plan

- **ENV- Protected Open Space of Environmental Value**
- **PF – Protected Open Space for Playing Fields**

(For details please refer to Appendix 4)

Uttlesford District Council Local Development Framework

Supplementary Planning Document - Accessible Homes and Play space (2005)

2.5. This Supplementary Planning Document is one in a series of guidance notes prepared in support of the Uttlesford Local Plan adopted in January 2005. The guidance has been prepared following consultation and a sustainability appraisal has been carried out to make sure that all relevant social and environmental issues have been taken into account (for details please refer to Appendix 4).

Urban Place Supplement to the Essex Design Guide (March 2007)

2.6. The Urban Place Supplement (UPS March 2007) does not replace the Essex Design Guide (EDG). The Essex Design Guide will remain the principal planning guidance for the design of new places in Essex, where it has been adopted by local planning authorities. In practice, this Supplement will be applicable to the majority of residential and mixed-use developments within urban areas as it provides additional guidance on most potential development scenarios ranging from the largest urban extensions to the development of small infill plots. It aims to bring about a design and development process that is more collaborative, responds better to meeting local opportunities and needs, and delivers high quality environments that produce fewer carbon emissions.

Local

Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.7. Parish and town councils are encouraged to produce Community Led Plans. The plans are produced with a high degree of community involvement and extensive survey work to establish local needs and aspirations. The Neighbourhood Plan is an assessment of land use, infrastructure and aspirations for development and conservation. It results in a vision and planning objectives for the area, together with 'Policies' to guide future development as part of a statutory planning document.
- 2.8. Status: Uttlesford District Council have designated the Civil Parish Saffron Walden as a Neighbourhood Plan Area. It is our understanding that although Neighbourhood Plan is currently emerging it is very much in early stage and is likely to be given only extremely limited weight in planning terms.

3. Baseline Landscape Context

Landscape Character Assessment

National

National Character Area (Natural England)

3.1. Natural England's National Character Area Assessment places the site within Character Area 86, South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands. NCA 86 extends from Stevenage to the west to Ipswich to the east and from Chelmsford to the south to Burry St. Edmunds to the north. Saffron Walden lies close to the northern edge of this Character Area with the land parcel situated in a part of landscape that reflects a number of the characteristics typical of Area 86. (For details please refer to Appendix 5).

County

County Landscape Character

3.2. The Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003) places Saffron Walden on the edge of two Character Areas and identifies the western part of the study area as C1: Cam Valley and the eastern part as B1: Central Essex Farmlands.

3.3. Key characteristics of C1:Cam Valley Character Area include:

- *“Broad valley. Strongly rolling valley sides in the north, gentler slopes to the south;*
- *Predominantly large scale, open arable farmland on the valley slopes;*
- *Nucleated settlement pattern;*
- *Extensive historic parkland between”;*

(For details please refer to Appendix 5).

3.4. Key characteristics of B1: Central Essex Farmlands Character Area include:

- *“Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches;*
- *Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape;*
- *Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and ponds;*
- *A concentration of isolated moated farmsteads;*

- *Network of narrow, winding lanes;*
- *Mostly tranquil character away from major roads and Stansted Airport”;*

(For details please refer to Appendix 5).

District

District Landscape Character Assessment

3.5. The Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Area (2006) Section 7 locates the site within A1: Cam River Valley Character Area, abutting Character Area B7: Debden Farmland Plateau to the east and urban area of Saffron Walden to the west. The north the site is adjacent to B1: Ashdon Farmland Plateau Character Area.

3.6. Key characteristics of A1: Cam River Valley Character Area include:

- *“Rolling, open landscape of chalky boulder clay with wide views from higher ground;*
- *Well vegetated riverbanks with shrubs, trees and water meadows along the winding narrow river corridor;*
- *Large-scale downland reflecting late enclosure, with rectilinear field pattern;*
- *Low hedges and few trees mainly in small copses;*
- *Ancient town of Saffron Walden;*
- *Dispersed settlements on valley sides connected by busy B roads.”*

(For details please refer to Appendix 5).

3.7. Key characteristics of B7: Debden Farmland Plateau Character Area include:

- *“Dense woodland patches or copses, many of them ancient, provide structure in the landscape;*
- *Gently rolling plateau incised by River Cam in the South, Debden Water West of Debden, and a small section of the River Pant in the northeast corner near Bears Hall;*
- *Tall trees or overgrown hedgerows line some roads or lanes; broken hedgerows evident or absence of hedgerows due to agricultural intensification;*
- *Expansive views on open roads at higher elevations;*
- *Settlements visible in most directions;*
- *Rich cultural heritage with many vernacular buildings”.*

(For details please refer to Appendix 5).

3.8. Key characteristics of B1: Ashdon Farmland Plateau Character Area include:

- “Gently undulating glacial boulder clay (till) with broad ridges on the high ground;
- Scattered farmsteads, hamlets and a few large villages;
- Irregular field pattern follows topography;
- Road and lanes rarely straight;
- Ancient landscape with subtle qualities;
- Wide views from open roads on high plateau contrasts with enclosed nature of wooded areas in valley bottoms”.

(For details please refer to Appendix 5).

Conservation Area

3.9. The site is not included within the Saffron Walden Conservation Area. Furthermore, the site location is such that development will not have an impact on the Conservation Area.

Site and Setting

General

3.10. To the west of the site is Saffron Walden town, one of the largest in the District. The town is one of the finest preserved examples of a medieval market town with number of listed buildings in town centre. The town centre has a historic layout. The town has a wealth of architectural detailing including a medieval roof line, the form and special dimensions of street widths and the overall relationship of buildings to urban spaces, public open spaces and use of boundary walls. Beyond the built-up area of the town the surrounding land is characterised by strongly rolling hills divided by broad valleys. The hills are covered with arable fields marked by sinuous mature hedgerows and ditches with small wood patches and copses, and by historic parks to the west of the town.

3.11. The location of the site is illustrated on the 5202/SS.01 Site and Setting Plan in Appendix 1. The site is located to the South of Radwinter Road which follows the bottom of a valley and is enclosed by tree and hedgerow cover which provides a rural approach to the town. However, the edge of the town is defined by large scale commercial built form which has a strongly detrimental effect on the town gateway and makes it one of the “*least attractive edges to Saffron Walden*” (Historic Settlement Character Assessment, August 2007 – see Appendix 6 for more details).

3.12. The main part of the site is composed of three arable fields separated by hedges that provide strong landscape features of varied quality in the

wider landscape. In the north-east corner of the site is a visually well contained area of rough grassland with adjacent established vegetation to north and west, scrub to the east and open to the south.

- 3.13. The site boundaries reflect the existing settlement pattern. However, by its very nature as open arable fields the site contrasts strongly with adjacent industrial built form to the west.
- 3.14. The site is not viewed as a significant component of the overall landscape in terms of defining key characteristics or securing long term landscape benefits. Development of the site is unlikely to detract significantly from the landscape merit arising from either Saffron Walden or the surrounding villages.
- 3.15. Recent industrial and residential development is present both immediately adjacent to the site and at medium distances. Land directly to the west contains several industrial units within Shire Hill and to the north east is 'Commercial Centre' located on the far side of Ashdon Road. An existing Tesco Store is located directly adjacent to a section of the northern boundary. (For location detail please refer to the plan 5202/SS.01 Site and Setting within Appendix 1)
- 3.16. The plain contrast between adjacent on and offsite land use, combined with the partially enclosed nature of the site, provides an opportunity to round off the edge of settlement in a more sympathetic manner.

Topography

- 3.17. The key landscape characteristic of the site is its topography and exposed nature. The site is located on the south slope of a valley containing Radwinter Road. The land rises up to the plateau of Shire Hill Farm. There are open views from the site towards the north overlooking residential properties along Ashdon Road, Commercial Centre, Oil Storage Depot and the local ridge line with Harcamlow Way public footpath. The west end of the site slopes down to the urban area of Saffron Walden itself (for topography detail please refer the plan 5202/Topo.Apx Topographic Map within Appendix 1).

Vegetation

- 3.18. The majority of the northern boundary is defined by robust, mature vegetation and provides a good visual screen for the site in localised views. A section of the northern boundary between the existing Tesco Store and Wild Hedges is separated from the road by a low quality, gappy hedge which allows filtered views into the site.
- 3.19. The western boundary is defined by the edge of the Shire Hill Industrial Estate, residential properties and Public Open Space in between.

Vegetation along this boundary is composed of trees and hedges that provide screening of the site. Beside the Industrial Estate hedges become gappy and of low quality allowing more filtered views into the site.

3.20. The southern boundary is offset from the existing field boundary which is defined by robust tree and hedgerow planting between Shire Hill Farm and fields to the east. Vegetation along this boundary provides a good screen in views of the site from the south.

3.21. The eastern boundary is defined by tree and hedgerows separating and screening site from open countryside with irregularly shaped fields. The northern end of this boundary runs along Turnip Hall Farm and consists of dilapidated buildings currently in commercial usage. This collection of buildings detracts visually from this part of the site.

Public Right of Way

3.22. There are several public rights of way approaching the site from the east and existing pedestrian links from the site to the town centre. A number of public footpaths run to the south of the site connecting Saffron Walden to the wider country side. To the west of the site there are existing public footpaths and pedestrian links to the town centre. These provide an opportunity to create pedestrian linkages throughout the site which connect to the wider pedestrian network.

Footpaths to the east of the site:

- Footpath 315_22 - From FP21 and Radwinter Road leading generally eastwards, northwards and eastwards to the junction of Redgates Lane and Radwinter Road.
- Footpath 315_21 - From FP22 and Radwinter Road leading generally eastwards, beside the road, to rejoin it.

Footpaths to the south of the site:

- Byway 315_18 - From Saffron Walden BYW 18 continuing eastwards to Cole End Lane.
- Byway 44_18 - From the road by the Industrial Park leading north-eastwards and eastwards to continue as Swards End BYW 18.
- Footpath 44_36 - From its junction with BYW18 in a south-easterly direction to the Borough boundary with Wimbish where it continues as footpath 8.
- Footpath 57_7 - From the road north of Thunderley Hall in an easterly and northerly direction to the road south of Bears Hall.
- Footpath 57_8 - From its junction with footpath 7 in a north-westerly direction to the parish boundary with Saffron Walden Borough where it continues as footpath 36.

Footpaths to the west of the site:

- Footpath 44_37 - From Thaxted Road in an easterly direction to its junction with BR19.
- Bridleway 44_19 - From Thaxted Road north of Stanleys Farm in a south-easterly direction past footpath 37 to its junction with BYW18.

(For reference see plan no. 5202/SS.01 Site and Setting)

4. SCHEME DESCRIPTION

General

- 4.1. The two options for the proposed development and the associated landscape treatment are illustrated on plan nos. **5202/LM** and **5202/LM RES** Landscape Masterplans at Appendix 1. Option no. 1 consists of approximately 230 residential dwellings, retirement village along Radwinter Road frontage and school located to the south west corner of the site. Option 2 is identical except the school and associated grounds are replaced with residential dwellings. The development would be connected to the local transport infrastructure by an access road onto B1053 Radwinter Road. This will serve as the main access point for vehicular and pedestrian movement. Secondary access road would be located to the west onto Shire Hill.
- 4.2. The proposed development would be divided by sinuous main access road branching into a network of narrow lanes of irregular pattern. The new built form along the northern boundary would continue the commercial character of the Radwinter Road frontage with the urban character of Saffron Walden in a residential area behind. Further south the development would become more scattered with the density of dwellings falling as the topography rises.

Public Open Spaces and public right of way

- 4.3. Proposed Public Open Spaces would be strategically located to allow for more rural feel to the development and soften the structure of the layout. The green spaces linked via pedestrian paths with adjacent tree and shrub planting would create a green infrastructure network. This network provides opportunity to connect the site to existing Protected Open Spaces within the Saffron Walden urban area (for details refer to Saffron Walden Inset Plan within Appendix 4), town centre and existing public rights of way to the south and north east.
- 4.4. Public open spaces adjacent to the junction of main access road and secondary access road of Shire Hill to the north west part of the site provide soft focal points, adding visual attraction to the development structure. Public open spaces create green and soft focal points throughout the site.
- 4.5. Proposed water features within green spaces will enhance the landscape and provide an opportunity for increased biodiversity. Proposed vegetation associated with ponds will include native species to attract wildlife and further enhance these spaces. The design of the ponds and public open spaces will include features and plantings to

increase visual attraction throughout the year and highlight its park like character.

Vegetation

- 4.6. Retention and enhancement of existing hedges both internally and along the boundaries preserves the feel of the existing irregular field boundaries. Proposed enhancements to existing vegetation along site boundaries would assist visual containment in views from the south, east and west and soften the appearance of the new development when viewed from the northern and north-eastern ridgelines. Proposed tree planting along streets would highlight the structure of the road network and help to mitigate the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development.
- 4.7. Proposed tree, hedge and shrub planting in public open spaces would feature native species. The planting proposals associated with dwelling frontages and the street network would include a mix of native and ornamental planting to provide visual interest and support biodiversity on the site.

5. DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS AND POTENTIAL EFFECTS

Illustrative Masterplan

General

- 5.1. The proposed schemes are highly influenced by the landscape character of the area and the requirements for the mitigation and enhancement of that character. The proposed schemes have been designed to function either as standalone proposals on their own merit or, in combination with other development in the southern part of the allocated site.
- 5.2. The layout has been divided into roughly equal northern and southern parts. The northern part is more visually contained and closer to existing urban and commercial area of Saffron Walden, with the design of this space keeping closely to that character. This approach allows for higher density and more diverse forms with formal frontages to the main connection road. The road structure in this area would be wide and allow for heavy traffic flow. Proposed vegetation associated with the urban/commercial part of the site would include a mixture of native and ornamental planting to ensure biodiversity, but also highlight a more formal character to the space.

Topography

- 5.3. The southern part of the site is clearly visible from the ridgelines to the north and north-east and therefore character of the development would be more rural. Lower density built form with public open spaces and a narrower road network would create a farmstead like feel to the space. Proposed planting of native species would soften the built form and ensure biodiversity within the development.

Vehicular and Pedestrian Route Network

- 5.4. The main access road runs through the site linking Radwinter Road to Shire Hill and land to the south-west of the site. The road is designed for heavy traffic loads and creates a transitional space between existing and proposed development. Vegetation along the boundaries helps screen the vehicular link and, together with the proposed tree planting along the road, creates a green avenue winding through the site. The proposed vegetation would help to soften the road network for immediate users and for receptors looking from the north and north-east into the site.

- 5.5. The layout of the main access road allows for the possibility of further development to the south of the site, while reducing the likelihood of expansion to the east. This approach assists in keeping the green buffer between Saffron Walden and neighbouring villages. The line of the road also provides an opportunity to create a linear park to integrate the urban and rural character components of the site.
- 5.6. There is a proposed pedestrian link to the adjacent Tesco store to ensure good connectivity for residents to the local services. The link runs north-south along the store's eastern boundary, meeting the main trunk road and continues as a narrow vehicular road running south across the site along linear green space. Proposed tree and hedge planting along that link provides an avenue structure and mimics the character of the main road on a smaller scale. This avenue is part of the green infrastructure design and, together with the retained hedges within the site, creates a green subdivision to the built up area.

Vegetation

- 5.7. Proposed planting associated with southern part of the site would include trees, shrubs, hedges and associated grasses and perennials. In order to attract wildlife and ensure biodiversity the planting list would be dominated by native species (refer to the Essex Wildlife Trust). Public open space in the north-east corner of the site would be designed as a special ecological area to provide an opportunity for education and interaction with wildlife. In addition in close approximate to play area and school shrub planting would include species that bring colour, fragrance and texture to the space encouraging sensory benefits for children.
- 5.8. The tree planting on the main access road is specifically designed to control an element of the traffic movement through the site. From the junction of Radwinter Road and main access road the trees create single sided avenue to screen the 'retirement village' from the road. When the road approaches the residential development the landscape treatment is reduced to low shrub planting, wildflower meadows and perennial planting associated with public open space and pond. This treatment allows for open views across this part of the site. A double sided avenue of trees will be introduced to the remainder of the access road creating an intentional landscape statement.
- 5.9. Tree planting adjacent to main access road and main pedestrian link would include ornamental species to provide colour and visual interest throughout the year. Avenue of trees would create a landscape feature within the site.

Site Capacity to Accommodate Development

- 5.10. The site provides a good opportunity for pedestrian connectivity between the Saffron Walden pedestrian network and wider public rights of way to the east and south of the site. Pedestrian networks created throughout the site will link the proposed public open spaces to those existing within the Saffron Walden urban area, including Protected Open Spaces.
- 5.11. Design of vehicular and pedestrian networks provides public access throughout the site ensuring appropriate traffic flow and improving the existing road structure and reducing traffic at the junction of Radwinter Road and Thaxted Road.
- 5.12. The development will change the current character of the site. However, it is in keeping with significant and recent industrial and residential development to the north along Ashdon Road, the Tesco Store adjacent to the northern site boundary and the industrial area of Shire Hill.
- 5.13. Appropriate design will help blend this recent development into the surrounding countryside. The southern part of the site would be influenced by the adjacent farm land and associated built form. A network of narrow lanes and tranquil character away from major roads. This objective is strongly recognised by the arrangement of scattered low density dwelling patterns on the masterplan.
- 5.14. The proposed development will change how the site is visually perceived. Instead of arable fields it will be a developed area. However existing topography contains views of the site from the south, east and west. This will be further enhanced by the proposed green infrastructure with retention and enhancement of existing hedges along the boundaries. The site would be clearly visible from the hills to the north but it would be read as part of Saffron Walden and would create a softer edge to the town. Proposed tree and hedge planting would soften the built form and the farmstead like development on the southern part of the site. Proposed planting together with lowering density as the land rises, would create a more appropriate edge to the settlement, bleeding out to the linear park.
- 5.15. The site has capacity for accommodating development and is already allocated by Uttlesford District Council for development.

6. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

Landscape

Landscape Character

- 6.1. To assess the nature of the impact as a result of the proposals, it is appropriate to consider the impact of the proposed residential development upon the existing landscape character and visual environment within which the site is set.
- 6.2. Receptors to the north of the site have views of undeveloped farmland with hedges and trees within and around the site. These will be impacted upon by open and filtered views of new residential dwellings and their associate landscape.
- 6.3. Receptors to the south of the site will be subject to minimal impacts due to established vegetation along irregularly shaped field boundaries.
- 6.4. Receptors to the east of the site have views of rolling farmland, the urban area of Saffron Walden and rolling hills in the background. These will be impacted upon by heavily filtered or glimpsed views of the new development due to a combination of topography and established vegetation along agricultural boundaries.
- 6.5. Receptors to the west of the site have views of the vegetated southern boundary of the site and will be impacted upon by filtered and glimpsed views of the proposed development.

Landscape Feature

- 6.6. Existing hedges with tree planting associated with the site boundaries and hedges along fields boundaries within the site would be retained and enhanced.
- 6.7. Proposed public open spaces with attenuation ponds would create additional landscape features. Proposed planting would include native species to enhance biodiversity.
- 6.8. Winding secondary and tertiary vehicular routes together with proposed footpaths and pedestrian access appropriately landscape with native species tree, hedge and shrub planting would create green infrastructure network. The network would link green open spaces and open countryside to the east and existing green open spaces within Saffron Walden to the west.

- 6.9. Ornamental tree planting along main vehicular and pedestrian access will highlight route infrastructure and create soft landmarks within the site.

Review against Landscape Character Assessments

- 6.10. Design of the layout uses the topography of the site as an advantage to create divided to two characters development. To the north site is kept within urban/industrial character of Radwinter Road frontage. To the south the development has farmstead character. The development has scattered settlement pattern with greens and ponds and network of narrow winding lanes coming off main access road.
- 6.11. Proposed enhancements to existing hedgerows associated with site boundaries and field boundaries within the site to mirror irregular pattern of mainly medium size arable fields in broad valley slopes. Proposed tree planting would create avenues along the roads and small copses within public open spaces and along the development edge.

Conclusion

- 6.12. The public open spaces will provide a green feel to the development. The site connects directly to Radwinter Road and Shire Hill industrial estate creating a bypass road for vehicular movement. A footpaths network runs though the site linking proposed public open spaces to the wider open countryside and public footpaths approaching from the east. The network also allow for pedestrian access to the existing built up area of Saffron Walden to the west.

Visual

Photograph Record and Effect Assessment

- **Long Distance Views**

6.13. The photographs chosen for assessment are those taken from public vantage points compliant with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (third edition published 2013) and from the site itself. The points have been selected as they are the most suitable locations to show the effect of development on views available to people and their visual amenity. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility is shown on the 5202/ZTV Plan Zone of Theoretical Visibility within Appendix 1

6.14. The effects of change relate to the content and character of views as a result of existing landscape elements being removed or new ones introduced. The number of photographs taken and the locations of photo points are consistent with a reasonable approach which is proportional to the scale and nature of the proposed development. The photographic records are enclosed within Appendix 2.

6.15. **Photograph 1** is taken from the Harcamlow Way along local ridgeline looking south towards the site. The new development would change the character of the site and view. The new dwellings would be seen as extension of urban area of Saffron Walden. Proposed landscape would soften built form of new development.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: High
- Magnitude of change: Medium Adverse
- Overall significance: Medium Adverse in year 1 and in year 15

6.16. **Photograph 2** is taken from the Harcamlow Way just behind local ridgeline looking south towards the site. Proposed development would change the nature of the view and character of the space. New dwellings would be clearly visible from this point of view. Proposed linear parks and associated landscape as well as proposed vegetation associated with dwellings would soften new built form.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: High
- Magnitude of change: High Adverse
- Overall significance: High Adverse in year 1 and Medium Adverse in year 15

6.17. **Photograph 3** is taken from the highest point / north-west corner of the Common Pol Sta looking south-east towards the site. The proposed development would be well screened from this point of view by the existing built form of Saffron Walden and associated, established vegetation. During winter, any glimpsed views of the roofs of the new dwellings will be visible in the context of existing dwellings to the west and north along Thaxted Road and Radwinter Road respectively.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Medium
- Magnitude of change: No Change
- Overall significance: No Change in year 1 and in year 15

6.18. **Photograph 4** is taken from cross roads of Ashdon Road and Shepherds Way looking south-east towards the site. There would be filtered views into the site but new dwellings will be seen in context of existing residential built form and associated vegetation.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: Low Adverse
- Overall significance: Negligible in year 1 and in year 15

6.19. **Photograph 5** is taken from the Ashdon Road Commercial Centre access point looking south towards the site. Proposed development would change character and the skyline of the view.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Medium
- Magnitude of change: Low Adverse
- Overall significance: Low Adverse in year 1 and in year 15

6.20. **Photograph 6** is taken from public footpath running west-east across valley of The Slade, where the path starts by Ashdon Road. Views towards the site from here are restricted by topography and vegetation. The southern part of the proposed development would change the skyline. There would be filtered views into the site but these are likely to be glanced/temporary views.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Medium
- Magnitude of change: Low Adverse
- Overall significance: Low Adverse in year 1 and in year 15

6.21. **Photograph 7** is taken from public footpath running east-west along a local ridgeline to the east of the site. From the topographically highest point on the footpath, there is an open view to the west towards the site. New development would sit surrounded by wooded space and proposed dwellings, though clearly visible, would be softened by proposed landscaping.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: High
- Magnitude of change: Medium Adverse
- Overall significance: Medium Adverse in year 1 and Low Adverse in year 15

6.22. **Photograph 8** is taken from public footpath running east-west along local ridgeline to the east of the site, from a topographically lower point. There is an open view to the west towards the site. There would be a significant change to the landscape and character of the view. The site is clearly visible and the impact would be adverse.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: High
- Magnitude of change: Medium Adverse
- Overall significance: Medium Adverse in year 1 and Low Adverse in year 15

6.23. **Photograph 9** is taken from Radwinter Road by the access to Turnip Hall Farm looking south towards the site. The majority of the new development will be screened by established vegetation along eastern site boundary. Filtered views of the dwelling roofs and development associated landscape would be available.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: Low Adverse
- Overall significance: Low Adverse in year 1 and in year 15

6.24. **Photograph 10** is taken from cross roads of Radwinter Road and Cole End Lane looking south towards the site. The site is screened by existing vegetation adjacent to the Radwinter Road corridor and existing dwellings.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: No Change
- Overall significance: No Change in year 1 and in year 15

6.25. **Photograph 11** is taken from topographically highest point on Cole End Lane looking south towards the site. The new development would be well screened due to topography and established vegetation associated with field boundaries. Any available views of the new dwelling roofs would be visible in the context of the existing Saffron Walden built form and impact would be negligible.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: High
- Magnitude of change: No Change
- Overall significance: No Change in year 1 and in year 15

6.26. **Photograph 12 and 13** are taken from the topographically highest points on the public footpath to the south of the site, on the hill between Cole End Lane and Thaxted Road, looking north towards the site. The new development would be very well contained from the views from the south by topography and established vegetation along field boundaries. Impact on the landscape and views from the south would negligible if not non-existent.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: High
- Magnitude of change: No Change
- Overall significance: No Change in year 1 and in year 15

6.27. **Photograph 14** is taken from public footpath running east-west on the south side of the Shire Hill looking north towards the site. The new development would be very well contained from this point of view by the land form and mature vegetation on the plateau of Shire Hill. There would be no landscape or visual impact.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Medium
- Magnitude of change: No Change
- Overall significance: No Change in year 1 and in year 15

6.28. **Photograph 15** is taken from Industrial Area along Thaxted Road south-west to the site looking north towards the site. The proposed dwellings would be well contained by the landform and mature vegetation in views from the south. There would be possible glimpsed views of the roofs of the new dwellings during winter.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: No Change
- Overall significance: No Change in year 1 and in year 15

6.29. **Photograph 16** is taken from public footpath running south-north in the topographical valley to the west of Shire Hill looking north-east towards the site. The new development would be screened by landform and existing vegetation adjacent to the footpath. There would be no landscape or visual impact from this viewpoint.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: No Change
- Overall significance: No Change in year 1 and in year 15

Summary

6.30. Out of 16 viewpoints only 4 are considered to result in a high adverse (photograph no. 2) to medium adverse impact (photograph nos. 1, 7 and 8). These impacts can be readily mitigated by the proposed tree and

hedge planting lowering the overall significance in year 15 to medium adverse and low adverse respectively. The remaining photographs illustrate no change or negligible impacts from the proposed development.

- **Localised Views**

6.31. The Local Views Photographic Record is enclosed with this report (please refer to Appendix 2). The record illustrates close range visual effects of the new development on the views from the Radwinter Road, neighbouring Shire Hill Industrial Estate and existing Public Open Space to the south of the site.

6.32. This Photograph Record also includes views from the site itself (photographs 10-15, refer to Localised Views Photographic Record within Appendix 2) to illustrate the character of the space and visual connectivity between the site and the hills to the north and north-east, and because views of the site are apparent and are not on public rights of way from this locations, an assessment is not required.

6.33. **Photograph 1** was taken from the public open space adjacent to the western site boundary looking east. There will be filtered views of the new development from this viewpoint.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: Low Adverse
- Overall significance: Negligible in year 1 and in year 15

6.34. **Photograph 2 and 3** was taken from Shire Hill Industrial Estate looking east towards the site. The tops of the roofs of the new development and the associate vegetation will be visible from the estate in the context of existing industrial buildings.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: Low Adverse
- Overall significance: Negligible in year 1 and in year 15

6.35. **Photograph 5** was taken from Horn Book Residential Estate. There will be highly filtered views of the tops of the roofs and associated vegetation. The close board fence and existing vegetation behind create screening for the site.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: Low Adverse
- Overall significance: Negligible in year 1 and in year 15

6.36. **Photograph 4, 5, 6, and 9** were taken from along Radwinter Road and illustrate change of street scene from west to east. New development will be visible from viewpoint 6 as an extension of the industrial character of this part of the street. From viewpoints 4 and 9 the site will be contained either by vegetation associated with the road or by existing industrial development.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: Low Adverse
- Overall significance: Negligible to Moderate in year 1 and Negligible in year 15

6.37. **Photograph 7** was taken from parking associated with adjacent to the site Tesco Store looking south. The development will not be visible from this view point.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: No Change
- Overall significance: No Change in year 1 and in year 15

6.38. **Photograph 8** was taken from footpath running along the northern side of Radwinter Road looking south onto the access point for the site. The development will be visible from this view point, however most of receptors will be in the cars so the view will have a transient character.

- Visual sensitivity of the receptor: Low
- Magnitude of change: Medium Adverse
- Overall significance: Medium Adverse in year 1 and Low Adverse in year 15

Summary

6.39. Of the 10 localised photographs taken outside the site boundaries just 1 (photograph no. 8) represents a medium adverse impact upon a receptor. The impact can be partially mitigated and presents only a low adverse significance in year 15. The remaining 9 photographs represent no change or negligible impacts because the site is not visible.

Review against Landscape Policies

6.40. The proposed scheme seeks to meet the development needs within the local area. Location and design of the site would enhance the residential and industrial character of the eastern side of Saffron Walden and create more appropriate edge to the existing settlement area.

6.41. The layout ensures a high quality design and a high standard of amenity that would accompany proposed built form and route network.

Separation of the proposed development into two specific character areas creates an appropriate transition zone between the urban and rural space.

- 6.42. Proposed planting comprises mostly of native species and allow for reduction of visual impact of the new development upon receptors looking from northern and north-eastern ridgelines. New vegetation will continue to support visual containment of the site for the views from east, west and south. Proposed ornamental trees along main vehicular and pedestrian accesses would highlight infrastructure and create soft landmarks.
- 6.43. Retention and enhancement of the site boundary hedgerow and tree planting would minimise visual and environmental impact upon neighbouring properties. Site boundary landscape treatment would allow only for glimpsed views from localised viewpoints. Retention and enhancement of two hedgerows within the site would help visually to break up the overall built form.

Conclusions

- 6.44. Proposed development would be contained for receptors looking from south, east and west by existing landform and the vegetation associated with site boundary and site itself.
- 6.45. Proposed planting would additionally enhance visual contamination for view from south, east and west. Additionally it would soften built form for the views from the north and north east.
- 6.46. Proposed green open spaces would break up the built up area and soften the appearance of residential dwellings grain, giving a farmstead feel to the southern part of the site. Whilst the northern part of the site although kept in urban/industrial character, would be hidden in the valley and behind robust hedgerow and tree planting along northern side boundary.

7. FINAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1. The preceding analysis has identified the extent of landscape and visual impact arising from either of the development options for the proposal. The context of the area is influenced both in landscape and visual terms by residential, industrial and agricultural land use.
- 7.2. The proposed site is located within a landscape that is covered by Natural England statutory designation Character Area 86, South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands; by County Landscape Character Area B1, Central Essex Farmlands; and by District Landscape Character Area A1, Cam River Valley.
- 7.3. The visual assessment identified a restricted number of potentially sensitive receptors, most situated on the localised ridgelines to the north and north-east of the site. Typically areas of potential sensitivity were assessed as receptors along the public footpaths to the south, east and north; and publicly accessible roads and green spaces. The retention of the majority of the existing vegetation along the site boundary and the proposed landscape treatment will reduce the impact of the proposed development upon localised and long distance views.
- 7.4. The public open spaces would provide additional depth to boundary treatments and together with pedestrian access/paths would create green infrastructure within the site. The site connects directly to Radwinter Road and Shire Hill for vehicular connections. Biodiversity would be enhanced by the proposal of additional native plant species to complement the existing flora and attract more fauna to the area. Any effect in long range views would be mitigated by the planting of mature and semi-mature trees within the site and enhancement of existing hedgerows along the site boundary and within the site.
- 7.5. All of the analysed photographs were taken from local public footpaths and publically accessible green spaces. We consider that within the local or immediate area the landscape and visual effect would be negligible if either of the scheme options came forward for development.
- 7.6. In the case of long distance views, landscape and visual effects will be at worse medium adverse in year 15 from four receptor points of a total of sixteen. All of these are to the north and north-east of the site and any impacts will be substantially reduced by the proposed landscape treatment.

Appendix 1
Illustrative Material

Site & Setting

Opportunities & Constraints

Topographic Map

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Landscape Masterplan

Appendix 2 Photograph Record

Long Distance Views

Localised Views