

**UTT/19/1823/FUL (Saffron Walden)  
(Major Application)**

**PROPOSAL:** Creation of an Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with associated features including: fencing and entrance gates, pitch barrier with entrance gates, fenced enclosure, hard-standing areas, vehicular maintenance and emergency access, 15m high floodlight system, maintenance equipment store, football car park, grassed mound and replacement planting.

**LOCATION:** Saffron Walden County High School, Saffron Walden

**APPLICANT:** Saffron Academy Trust, Saffron Walden County High School

**AGENT:** Labosport Ltd

**EXPIRY DATE:** 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019

**CASE OFFICER:** Chris Tyler

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**1. NOTATION**

1.1 Outside Development Limits

**2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE**

2.1 The application site is situated within the grounds of Saffron Walden County High School. Vehicular and pedestrian access is gained via a driveway entrance adjoining Audley End Road. The application site relates to an area south west of the High School Building.

**3. PROPOSAL**

3.1 This application is for the creation of an Artificial Grass Pitch and associated features including: fencing and entrance gates, pitch barrier with entrance gates, fenced enclosure, hard-standing areas, vehicular maintenance and emergency access, 15m high floodlight system, maintenance equipment store, football car park, grassed mound and replacement planting.

**4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 Town and Country Planning (Environmental Assessment):  
The proposal is not a Schedule 1 development, nor does it exceed the threshold criteria of Schedule 2, and therefore an Environmental Assessment is not required.

And

Human Rights Act considerations:

There may be implications under Article 1 and Article 8 of the First Protocol regarding the right of respect for a person's private and family life and home, and to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions; however, these issues have been taken into account in the determination of this application

## **5 APPLICANT'S CASE**

### **5.1 The applicant has provided a detailed design and access statement, this includes:**

This proposal has been strategically identified by the Football Association as a centre for grassroots development and once brought into use, it is vital for the proposal to work within the terms of its approval.

With the proposed times available for community access up to 10pm Monday to Friday and until 10pm on Saturdays and Sundays, the project will succeed in its ambition to develop more competent and capable footballers with improved technical skills from a younger age.

The requested operational times will provide opportunities for the AGP to be used for a maximum of 93.5 hours each week which is necessary to satisfy curriculum and community demands for the sports facility whilst balancing the necessary protection of neighbours amenity.

The AGP will replace part of the grass playing field at Saffron Walden County High School this proposed location will afford convenient access for school pupils and all community visitors to and from changing accommodation and administration facilities; as well as convenient maintenance and emergency access.

Residential neighbours will not be adversely affected by this proposal because the closest residential neighbours to the subject area are relatively distant and located 263m to Fulford House to the West (to the house façade), 170m to Icehouse Lodge to the North (to the house façade), 269m to the house facade to the East along Copperfields and 172m to the house facade to the South East along Beeches Close.

As such, direct views of the AGP from surrounding land and public areas will be mostly obscured by land topography, existing tree belts and green spaces to the North, West and South; and by school buildings, infrastructure and further tree belts to the East.

The proposed sporting applications directly relate to the existing uses of the playing field, which are acceptable in principle; but only if consequential impacts are within acceptable tolerances and thresholds.

From the very beginning of this project, we have proactively sought, commissioned and received professional advice and recommendations to ensure the sports facility design is compatible and complimentary to the sports complex setting; whilst being sensitive to visual and residential amenity and the surrounding environment as well as protecting local biodiversity.

A variety of professional studies and technical assessments have been published to support this proposal to inform the carefully considered sports facility design and this proposal has been prepared to ensure there is no unacceptable level of impact or harm to neighbours and the local environment by way of noise, light, flood risk or transport issues.

Floodlighting has been sensitivity designed with overspill entirely contained within the sports grounds and consequently; light trespass, light intrusion into windows and intensity (glare) comply with an Environmental Zone E2 (ILP) which is a rural surrounding with low district brightness, for example a village or relatively dark outer

suburban location; as recommended within The Institution of Lighting Professionals: Guidance Notes for The Reduction of Obtrusive Light GN01:2011.

Modern floodlights create very little light leakage outside of the sports facility, with backward light and overspill diminishing within a short distance around the AGP boundaries to restrict horizontal and vertical overspill.

The floodlights design can be trusted and embraces all practical measures published within relevant ecology guidance, to prevent harm and to maintain dark corridors around the playing field boundaries for any commuting or foraging bats or potential bat roosts.

Also, to ensure the floodlights do not ever become a public nuisance; they will be subjected to periodic testing and inspections throughout their working life to maintain but not exceed design levels.

A surface water drainage strategy has been proposed to ensure the proposal would resist a critical storm event, thereby preventing the risk of any offsite flooding in these conditions.

Saffron Walden County High School is committed to manage and maintain the sports facility as promised and will to implement a community use management plan to ensure the AGP is correctly operated and to minimise potential noise impacts to all neighbours.

There will be increased traffic movements because of the AGP, but enough car parking provision onsite will be available and Saffron Walden County High School will implement a travel plan / parking management plan to direct all visitors travelling by car to use onsite parking areas.

These measures will ensure that parking demands are satisfied onsite and do not result in overspill onto adjacent highways when the AGP is used by local organisations and community sports clubs.

This project will deliver genuine benefits in terms of sports engagement and as such, the proposed sports facility will serve to further enhance the excellent education and sporting offer that Saffron Walden County High School provides to its pupils and the local community.

## **6 RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

6.1 There are no previous planning applications linked to this proposal.

## **7 POLICIES**

### **7.1 National Policies**

National Planning Policy Framework (2018)

### **7.2 Uttlesford Local Plan (2005)**

Policy S7- The Countryside

Policy LC4 - Provision of outdoor sport and recreational facilities beyond development limits

Policy GEN2 – Design

Policy GEN4- Good Neighbourliness

Policy GEN7 - Nature Conservation  
Policy GEN1- Access  
Policy GEN8 - Vehicle Parking Standards

## **7. Supplementary Documents**

Essex County Council Parking Standards (2006)

## **8 PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS**

No objections

## **9 CONSULTATIONS**

### **9.1 The Highways Authority**

No Objections

### **9.2 Ecology**

No objection subject to securing biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures  
Summary

We have reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019) and Species Survey Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019) relating to the likely impacts of development on designated sites, protected species and Priority species and habitats.

We are satisfied that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination.

This provides certainty for the LPA of the likely impacts on protected and Priority species/habitats and, with appropriate mitigation measures secured, the development can be made acceptable.

However, we note that the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019) recommends an Ecological Impact Assessment is undertaken to show the effect of the proposed lighting on bats, barn owls and moths. We have reviewed the LED Floodlighting Plans and are concerned that the vegetation along the north of the site is unnecessarily illuminated by the proposed lighting.

We recommend that an Updated Lighting Design Plan is submitted to the LPA under a condition of any consent to show no light above one lux is impacting the boundary vegetation. This then removes the report recommendation for further ecological survey prior to determination to provide certainty of impacts particularly to bats. One lux has been identified as the maximum light level that bats are active in by the Institute of Lighting Professionals and Bat Conservation Trust Guidance Note (August 2018). This can be achieved through the use of lighting hoods and appropriate angling of the lights, ensuring the development will have no negative impact on bats. Additionally, the lights should only be used when the pitch is in use. Minimising the amount of time the lights are switched on also minimises the effect of lighting on nocturnal pollinators such as moths, some of which are Priority species. The mitigation measures identified in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019) and Species Survey Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019) should be secured and implemented in full. This is necessary to conserve and

enhance protected and Priority Species.

We support the proposed reasonable biodiversity enhancements, which have been recommended to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity, as outlined under Paragraph 170d of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019. The reasonable biodiversity enhancement measures should be outlined within a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and should be secured as a condition of any consent. This will enable LPA to demonstrate its compliance with its statutory duties including its biodiversity duty under s40 NERC Act 2006.

Impacts will be minimised such that the proposal is acceptable subject to the conditions below based on BS42020:2013.

Submission for approval and implementation of the details below should be a condition of any planning consent.

Recommended conditions:

#### ACTION REQUIRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL RECOMMENDATIONS

“All mitigation and enhancement measures and/or works shall be carried out in accordance with the details contained in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019) as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination. This may include the appointment of an appropriately competent person e.g. an ecological clerk of works (ECoW,) to provide on-site ecological expertise during construction. The appointed person shall undertake all activities, and works shall be carried out, in accordance with the approved details.”

Reason: To conserve and enhance Protected and Priority species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the UK Habitats Regulations, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species).

#### PRIOR TO SLAB LEVEL: BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

“A Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for Protected and Priority species shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The content of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy shall include the following:

Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures;

detailed designs to achieve stated objectives;

locations of proposed enhancement measures by appropriate maps and plans;

persons responsible for implementing the enhancement measures;

details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).

The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.”

Reason: To enhance Protected and Priority Species/habitats and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species).

#### PRIOR TO SLAB LEVEL: WILDLIFE SENSITIVE LIGHTING DESIGN SCHEME

“A lighting design scheme for biodiversity shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall identify those features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance along important routes used for foraging; and show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans, Isolux

drawings and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent bats using their territory.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the scheme and maintained thereafter in accordance with the scheme. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.”

Reason: To allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the UK Habitats Regulations 2017, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species)

### **9.3 Sports England**

It is considered that the potential sports development benefits that the proposed AGP would offer would clearly outweigh the detriment caused by the impact on the playing field. I therefore consider that the proposed development would meet exception 5 of our playing fields policy. This being the case, Sport England does not wish to raise an objection to this application subject to the following conditions being attached to the decision notice should the local planning authority be minded to approve the application.

### **9.4 UDC Landscape Officer**

The site has been inspected, the site is visually well contained and the proposed development, including its floodlighting provision, ball stop fencing, and the proposed changes in ground level to accommodate the pitch, car park and access, would not significantly impact on the broader landscape. There are a number of trees proposed to be removed (13no. individual, and 3no. groups of trees). Of these trees 1no. beech tree situated on the eastern boundary of the site is identified as being of high quality. Whilst this tree is a high quality specimen it does not have any significant public amenity value.

It is recommended that any approval is subject to the submission and approval of a fully detailed scheme of landscaping to include tree and hedgerow planting.

## **10 REPRESENTATIONS**

10.1 13 letters of support received, no objections received.

## **11 APPRAISAL**

The issues to consider in the determination of the application are:

- A The principle of the development of this site, design (ULP Policies S7, GEN2, LC4, ENV3 and the NPPF)
- B Impact on residential amenity, disturbance (ULP Policies GEN2, GEN4, ENV11 )
- C Access and Vehicle Parking Standards (ULP Policies GEN1 and GEN8, UDC Parking Standards)
- D Nature Conservation (ULP Policy GEN7)
- E Any other material considerations

### **A The principle of the development of this site, design (ULP Policies S7, GEN2, LC4, ENV3 and the NPPF)**

11.1 The site is outside of the development limits (ULP Policy S7). ULP Policy S7 states

that the countryside will be protected for its own sake and that planning permission will only be given for development that needs to take place there or is appropriate to the rural area, with development only being permitted if its appearance protects or enhances the particular character of the part of the countryside within which it is set or there are special reasons why the development in the form proposed needs to be there.

11.2 The site forms part of Saffron Walden County High School and will replace an existing playing field with the artificial football pitch. Although the proposal will result in the introduction of perimeter fencing, parking area and floodlights. It is not considered the proposal will result in an encroachment to the surrounding open countryside. The design of the proposed works would be compatible with the character of the existing school site and surrounding area. As such it is considered the development accords with ULP Policies S7 and GEN2.

11.3 As recommended within NPPF paragraph 97, confirmation that part of existing grassed playing field will be replaced by an Artificial Grass Pitch (APG) providing better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location. Due consideration has been made in regards to the loss of the playing field taking into consideration the detail set out in the submitted design and access statement, including:

The Saffron Walden County High School project will contribute to the Football Association National Game Strategy by:

- Increasing participation (especially for girls)
- Developing our football workforce
- Making high quality football facilities accessible to grass roots clubs

This project is supported by a well thought out and strategic football development plan that will provide a wide range of coaching and participation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities in Saffron Walden. With Saffron Walden Town Football Club as the key community football delivery partner, this project will enable the applicant to deliver a football development plan

11.4 NPPF paragraph 96 recommends that: Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate. Taking into account the requirement of the development and the positive provision of pitch area it is considered the development will accord with paragraph 96 of the NPPF.

11.5 Policy ENV3 considers the loss of traditional open spaces, other visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual tree specimens, development proposals will not be permitted unless the need for the development outweighs their amenity value.

11.6 A total of 13 individuals (1 Category A, 8 Category B and 4 Category C) and 3 full groups (1 Category B and 2 Category C) will require removal in order to implement the construction of the proposed development. It will also be necessary to remove a section of 1 Category C group of trees.

11.7 The removal of a Category A beech tree is unfortunate, though it is unfeasible to

retain this tree under the current design. However, this should be mitigated by the planting of replacement trees in a suitable location, this should be conditioned if planning permission is granted. The Council Landscape Officer has been consulted, no objection has been made. As such it is considered that although the development will result in the loss of some trees this will be outweighed by the positive of the development and accords with ULP Policy ENV3.

- 11.8 With regards to Local Plan Policy LC4, it states the following development will be permitted:  
Outdoor sports and recreational facilities, including associated buildings, such as changing rooms and club houses. The proposal will include the replacement of the current playing field with an artificial grass pitch associated works and parking area.
- 11.9 No adjustments are required to the school's remaining playing fields to ensure that adequate grass playing pitches are retained to support summer and winter curriculum and community sport requirements and this is because the proposed AGP will only replace one grass playing (football) pitch.
- 11.10 The artificial grass pitchy will replace part of the existing grass playing field at Saffron Walden County High School, this proposed location is conveniently accessed for school pupils and all community visitors and within close proximity to the changing accommodation and administration facilities; as well as convenient maintenance and emergency access.
- 11.11 Sport England have been consulted, and no objections have been raised. Due consideration has been made and an assessment against Sport England's playing fields policy. The benefits of the development outweigh the harm caused from the loss of the playing field.
- 11.12 In conclusion and taking into consideration the consultation response from Sport England, the proposed artificial football pitch will result in a;
- Better quality provision
  - In a suitable location
  - Supported by effective and appropriate management arrangements
  - Implemented with best practice construction techniques to minimise waste and pollution

As such it is considered the development accords with ULP Policy LC4.

**B Impact on residential amenity, disturbance (ULP Policies GEN2 & GEN4, ENV11 )**

- 11.13 Local Plan Policy GEN2 requires that development does not cause an unacceptable loss of privacy, loss of daylight, overbearing impact or overshadowing to neighbouring residential properties. Due to the location of the development within the school site and significant distance from residential dwellings it is not considered the proposal will result in any significant harmful impact regarding loss of privacy, loss of daylight, overbearing impact or overshadowing. As such it is considered the development accords with ULP Policy GEN2.
- 11.14 ULP Policy GEN4 and ENV11 consider the development and the impact to neighbouring properties due to noise and disturbance.
- 11.15 A Noise Assessment has been included within the Design and Access Statement and illustrates the extent of activity noise created by the AGP which are unlikely to

create an unacceptable level of impact to adjacent residential neighbours. It is not considered noise impacts will be created by the new AGP and the inclusion of neoprene washers (inserts) fitted to ball stop fence post / panel fixings to reduce panel rattle and vibration from ball impacting on perimeter ball stop fencing, will reduce noise emission created from use of the AGP.

11.16 The siting of the application site within the school site and a significant distance from neighbouring residential properties will ensure the development will not result in any material harm to residential amenity and impact from noise and disturbance.

11.17 The proposal includes floodlights to satisfy the necessary and planned weekly usage for community use. The proposed floodlights will be operated during evenings of permitted use. As such due to the location and the imposition of condition should planning permission be granted it is considered the light will not result in any harmful impact. The lighting system design will comply with complimentary recommendations published within BS EN 12193:2007 Light and lighting. Sports lighting. This will ensure the development will be;

- Optimising the perception of visual information used during sports events
- Maintaining the level of visual performance
- Providing acceptable visual comfort

11.18 Taking into account the exiting use of the site, the imposition of conditions it is considered the development is in accordance with ULP Policies GEN2, GEN4 and ENV11.

### **C Access and Vehicle Parking Standards (ULP Policies GEN1 and GEN8, Essex County Council Parking Standards 2006)**

11.19 The proposal provides adequate on-site parking and necessary traffic management to meet the needs of the development and would not result in any harm to the safety of the surrounding public highway network. Traffic movement to and from Saffron Walden County High School will be managed such that proposal will overlap with exiting site activities and will not create undue congestion within the surrounding vicinity of the application site and will not result in an increase in demand for off-street parking or have a detrimental impact on highway safety. The Highways Authority have been consulted, no objections of further comments have been made. As such it is considered the development accords with ULP Policies GEN1 and GEN8, Essex County Council Parking Standards 2006.

### **D Nature Conservation (ULP Policy GEN7)**

11.20 The applicants submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019) and Species Survey Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019). Essex County Council Ecology officer's has been consulted, no objections have been made or requirement of further mitigation details. As such it is considered the proposal is not considered not to have a harmful impact to protected species and biodiversity and accords with ULP Policy GEN7.

### **E Any other material considerations**

11.21 The following policies are included in Regulation 19 Local Plan submission and therefore have been considered in the assessment of the application; these policies hold some limited weight.

SP10- Protection of the countryside  
LC4-Protection and Provision of Open Space, Sport Facilities and Playing Pitches  
D1- High quality design  
TA1- Accessible Development  
TA4- Vehicle parking standards  
EN8- Protecting the natural environment  
EN20-Light Pollution

## **12 CONCLUSION**

12. In conclusion, the proposal is considered an appropriate form development that would represent an acceptable scheme in terms character of the site and its surroundings. The proposal would comply with national and relevant local plan policy and is acceptable.

## **RECOMMENDATION – APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS**

### **Conditions**

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 The Use of the artificial grass pitch shall not commence until: (a) certification that the Artificial Grass Pitch hereby permitted has met the FIFA Quality accreditation or equivalent International Artificial Turf Standard (IATS); and (b) confirmation that the facility has been registered on the Football Association's Register of Football Turf Pitches; have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure the development is fit for purpose and sustainable, provides sporting benefits and to accord with ULP Policy LC4.

- 3 Prior to the use of the artificial grass pitch hereby permitted a community use agreement prepared in consultation with Sport England shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and a copy of the completed approved agreement has been provided to the Local Planning Authority. The agreement shall apply to the artificial grass pitch, multi-use games area and supporting ancillary changing and parking facilities and include details of pricing policy, hours of use, access by non-educational establishment users, management responsibilities and a mechanism for review, and anything else which the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Sport England considers necessary in order to secure the effective community use of the facilities. The development shall not be used at any time other than in strict compliance with the approved agreement."

REASON: To secure well managed safe community access to the sports facility/facilities, to ensure sufficient benefit to the development of sport and to accord with ULP Policy LC4.

- 4 All mitigation and enhancement measures and/or works shall be carried out in

accordance with the details contained in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (Concord Ecology, July 2019) as already submitted with the planning application and agreed in principle with the local planning authority prior to determination.

This may include the appointment of an appropriately competent person e.g. an ecological clerk of works (ECoW,) to provide on-site ecological expertise during construction. The appointed person shall undertake all activities, and works shall be carried out, in accordance with the approved details.”

Reason: To conserve and enhance Protected and Priority species and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the UK Habitats Regulations, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended and s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species) and in accordance with ULP Policy GEN7.

- 5 Prior to the development above slab level a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy for Protected and Priority species shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The content of the Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy shall include the following:

1. Purpose and conservation objectives for the proposed enhancement measures;
2. detailed designs to achieve stated objectives;
3. locations of proposed enhancement measures by appropriate maps and plans;
4. persons responsible for implementing the enhancement measures;
5. details of initial aftercare and long-term maintenance (where relevant).

The works shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained in that manner thereafter.”

REASON: To enhance Protected and Priority Species/habitats and allow the LPA to discharge its duties under the s40 of the NERC Act 2006 (Priority habitats & species) and in accordance with ULP Policy GEN7.

- 6 The development hereby approved and its associated sports lighting shall not be used outside the hours of:
- a) [8 a.m.] and [10:15 p.m.] Monday to Friday;
  - b) [9 a.m.] and [10:15 p.m.] on Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday

REASON: To balance illuminating the development for maximum use and benefit to sport with the interest of amenity and sustainability and to accord with ULP Policies GEN4 and ENV11.

- 7 Prior to commencement of the development, details of all hard and soft landscaping (including planting, hard surfaces and boundary treatment) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. This should include boundary treatment between the site and neighbouring property.

All planting, seeding or turfing and soil preparation comprised in the above details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings, the completion of the development, or in agreed phases whichever is the sooner, and any plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation. All landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the

guidance contained in British Standards, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

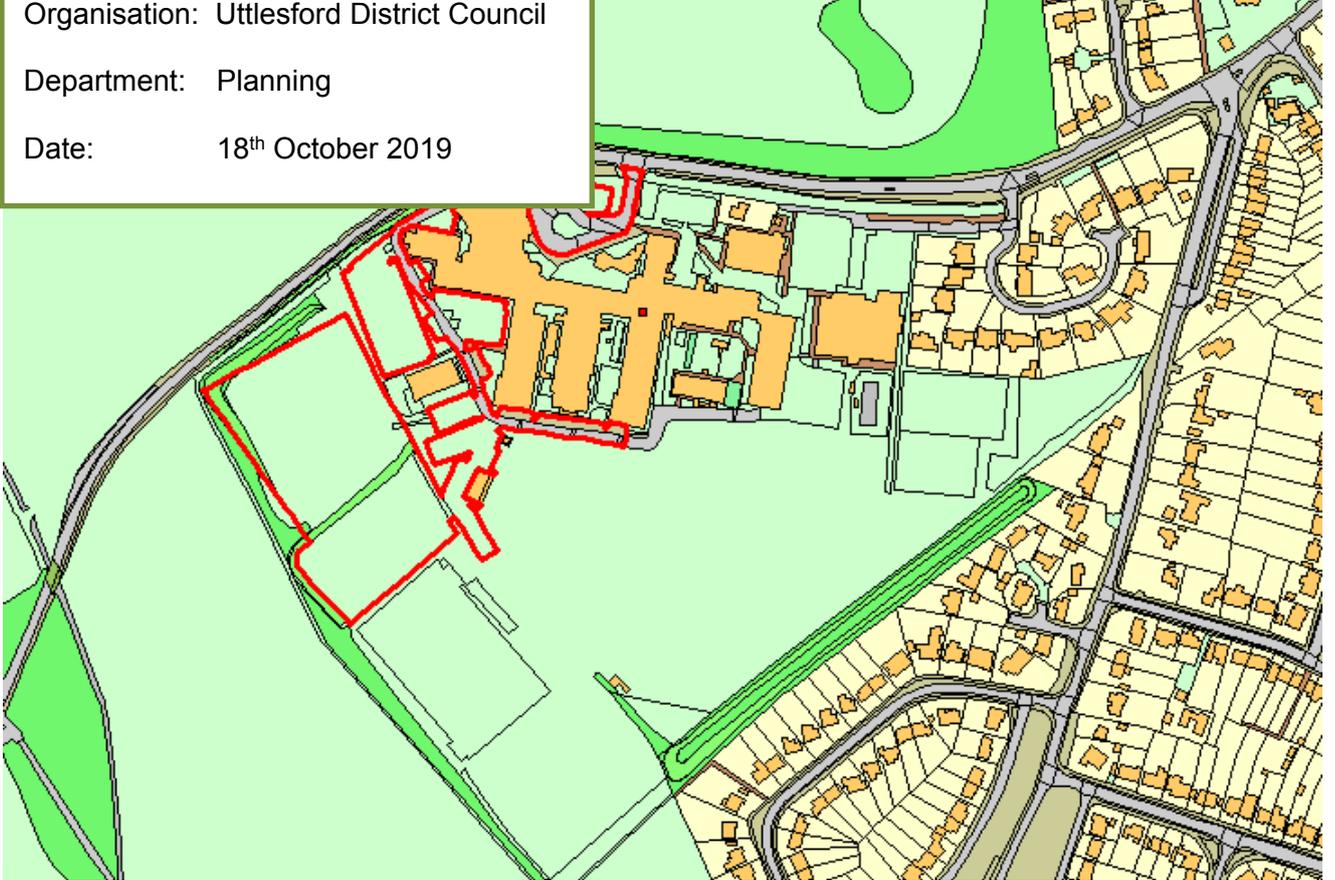
REASON: To ensure compatibility with the character of the area and to mitigate the loss of trees on the site, in accordance with ULP Policies 37 and GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005)

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Organisation: Uttlesford District Council

Department: Planning

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> October 2019



Organisation: Uttlesford District  
Council

Department: Planning

Date: 02 June 2017