



## Design & Access Statement

Springwell Nursery Development.

Proposed residential development comprising 7no Passivhaus dwellings.

Job ref: 18955 – July 2022



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## Application Consultant Reports

Planning Statement	Peter George Town Planning
Topographical Survey	Sunshine Surveys
Flood Risk Assessment	SWECO
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	Skilled Ecology
Contamination Investigation	Ground Engineering Ltd



# 1. The Site

## 1.1. Site Summary

The site of Springwell Nursery consists of a large garden nursery on a site of 0.8 hectares set back from the B184 Walden Road, behind Josephs Farm, the Grade II Listed farmhouse. The site presently consists of a large gravel covered car park accessed off a similarly covered track to Walden Road. The nursery facility itself is a single storey building of an eclectic material palette though has a substantial presence on the site.

To the East of this area lie a series of polytunnels and greenhouses with open paddocks north and south generally.

Between the site and Walden Road lies Josephs Farm, the listed farmhouse with a stable and barn to the rear. The stable has recently been subject of a change of use to residential accommodation application. To the north of the car park area is an agricultural barn which has been granted a prior approval application for a change of use to a single residential dwelling. Details of these applications are included in section 3. At the rear of the site to the east lie a recently completed new dwelling with cart lodge, and a separate agricultural barn with a recently approved new stable block behind presently under construction.

Due to its past use this site is considered a brownfield site and suitable for re-use.

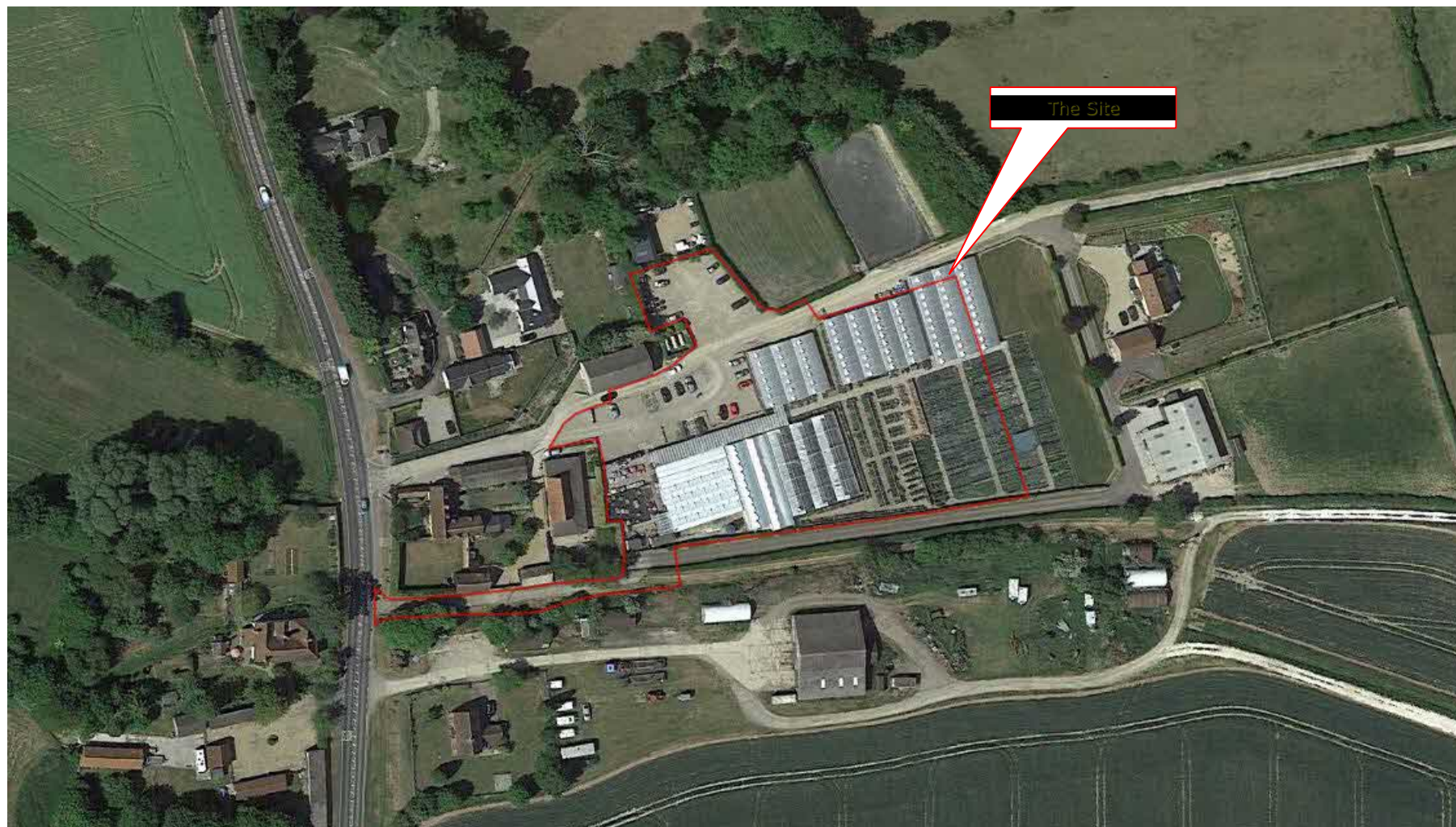


Figure 1 - Aerial View (Google Earth)



## 1.2. Existing Site

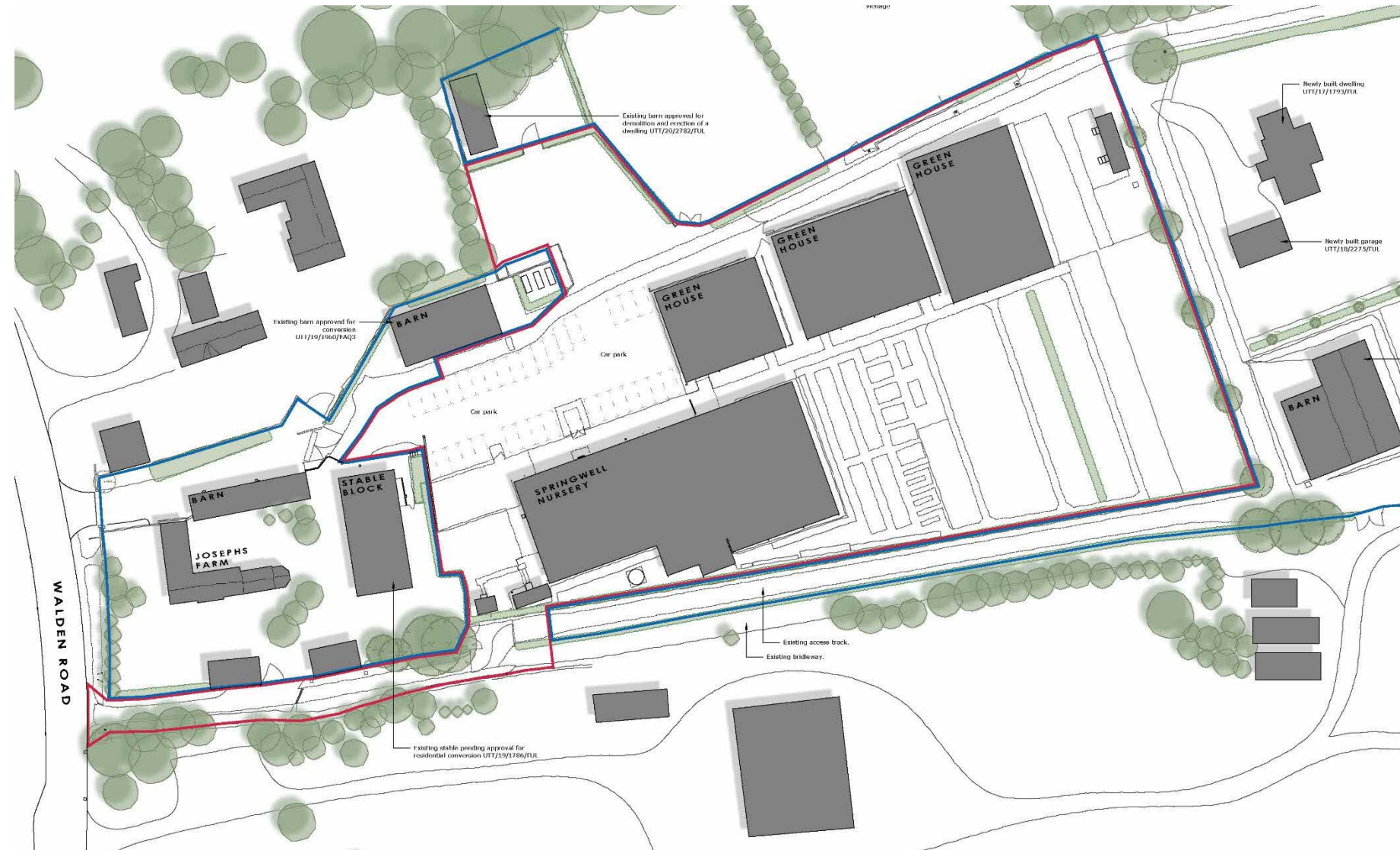


Figure II - Existing Site Plan



Figure III - Existing entrance to Springwell Nursery and Garden Centre.



Figure IV - View looking East across site.



Figure V - View of polytunnels currently on site.



### 1.3. Flood Risk Assessment

The majority of the site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at a low probability of flooding as demonstrated by the flood risk map below. Flood Zone 3 does partially cover the south-west corner of the site and no residential development is proposed within this area.

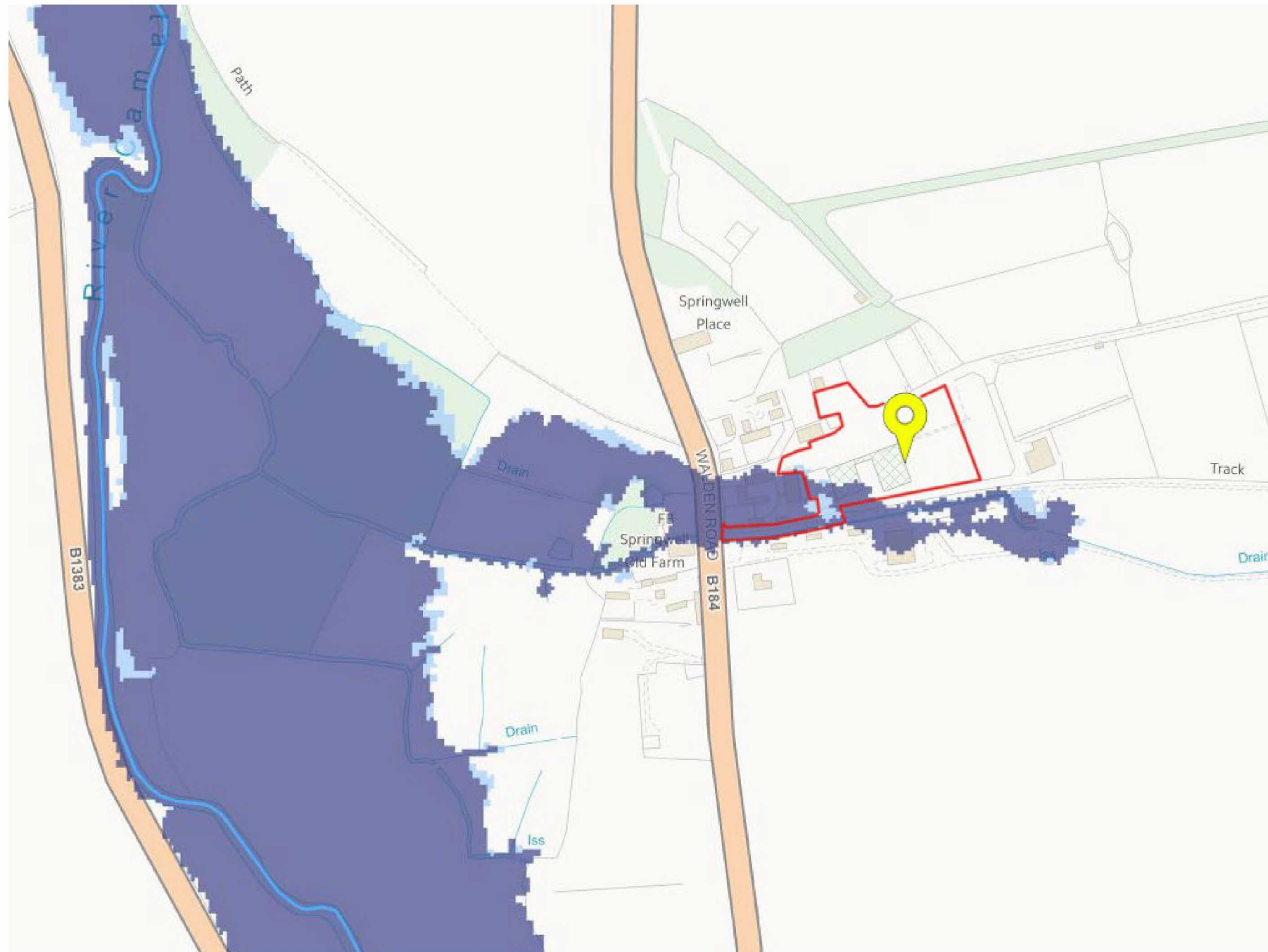


Figure VI - Flood Risk Map.



Figure VII – View of Josephs Farm building.



Figure VIII – View of barn with permission for conversion to dwelling.



Figure IX – View of stable block to West of site.



#### 1.4. Local Services

The closest settlement is Little Chesterford which is half a mile away and accessible by foot and bicycle. Most day-to-day facilities are in Great Chesterford or Saffron Walden, both a 5-minute drive.

#### 1.5. Accessibility

The nearest bus stop is in Little Chesterford where there are hourly services to Cambridge and Saffron Walden on the No. 7 bus. The nearest railway station is Great Chesterford, a 30-minute walk, where there are regular services to Cambridge, Bishops Stortford, and London. Within the former two towns all the expected services are located, with schools, supermarkets, doctors and similar.

The average journey time between Great Chesterford and London Liverpool Street is 1 hour 16 minutes with trains running approximately every 30 minutes during peak times. The average journey time between Great Chesterford and Cambridge is 20 minutes with trains running approximately every 30 minutes during peak times.

#### 1.6. Trees and Hedges

The site enjoys robust trees and hedges to the Southern boundary along the existing road and footpath. There is good screening to the North and East of the site, as well as established hedges and trees in around the barn to the West. The site is mainly clear of vegetation throughout the area to be developed and the proposal is designed to avoid conflict with the important tree and hedges on the site boundary as shown on the proposed site plan.

#### 1.7. Ecology

The current use of the site ensures the whole area is currently 'neutral' with no protected wildlife existing within structure son site – modern glass and polythene buildings, and shingle/ paved or concrete hard standings. The site is not known to support any protected species. This application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by Skilled Ecology Ltd.

#### 1.8. Contamination

The site has an innocuous use, was formerly garden/ paddock land, and there is no nearby industrial heritage. Given the applicants' long residency adjacent to the site, and knowledge gathered from building the nursery and commercial Garden Centre, the soil conditions are known to be sound. This application is accompanied by a Phase 1 Desk Study by Ground Engineering Ltd.



Figure X - View of proposed site entrance off Walden Road.



Figure XI - View looking toward Walden Road from proposed site entrance.



Figure XII - View of southern end of site.



## 2. Policy & Designation

The application site lies within an established residential area as the below image shows. This area, like Little Chesterford, does not have a development limit.

This small settlement is currently made up of around 8 dwellings, with further properties approved and/or being considered by the planning department.

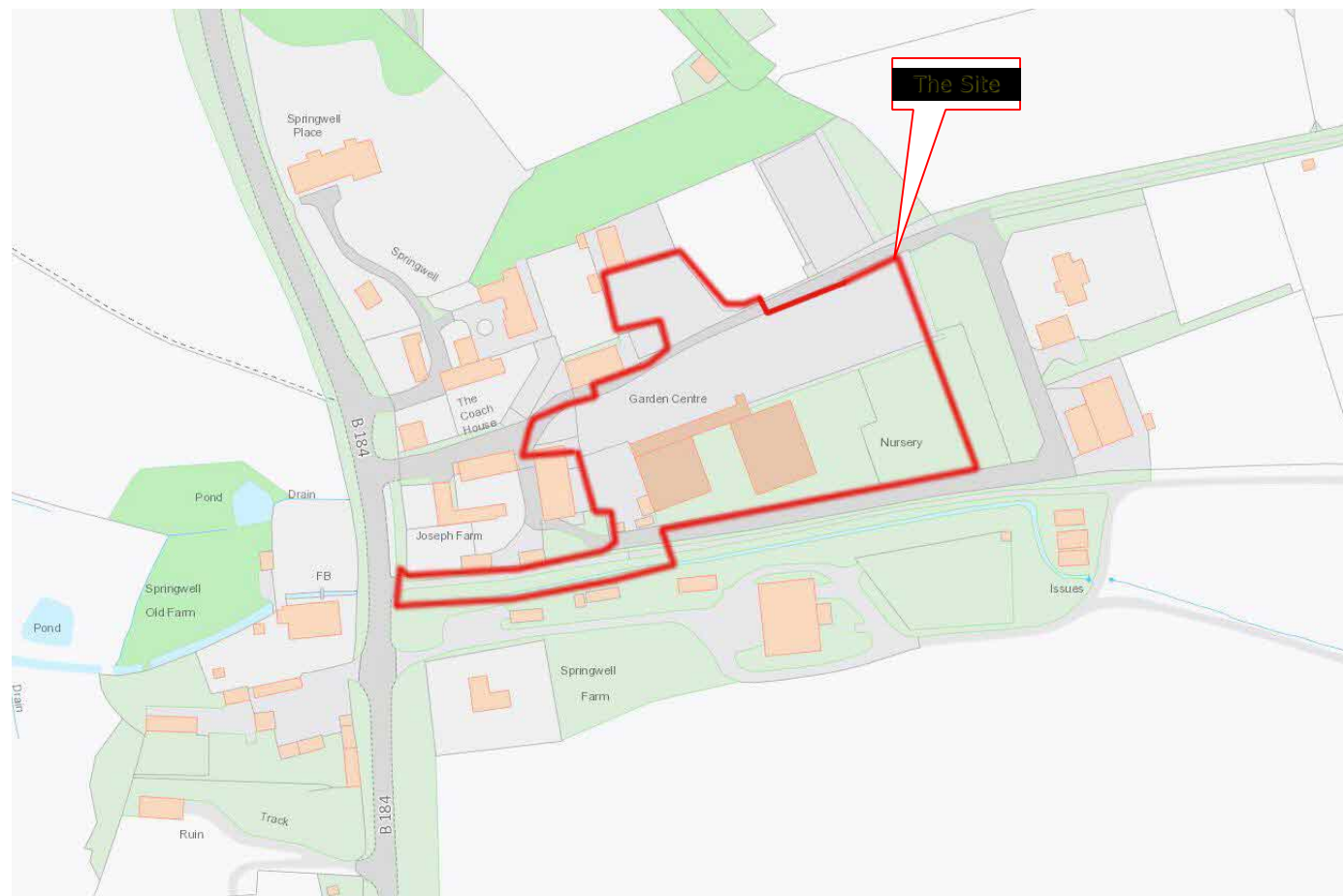


Figure XIII – Uttlesford DC Constraints Map

## 3. Planning History

### 3.1. Site Planning History

The below table details some of the planning applications on and adjacent to the application site within the last 5 years.

Date	Reference	Description
June 2022	<a href="#">UTT/22/0139/FUL</a> [Approved]	Conversion of existing barn to 1no dwelling.
December 2021	<a href="#">UTT/21/2688/FUL</a> [Refused]	Proposed residential development comprising 7no dwellings and associated works.
October 2020	<a href="#">UTT/20/2782/FUL</a> [Approved]	Proposed demolition of agricultural building and erection of 1 no. Dwelling.
August 2020	<a href="#">UTT/20/1943/LB</a> [Withdrawn]	Conversion of former barn to 1 no. dwelling.
July 2020	<a href="#">UTT/20/1827/PAQ3</a> [Approved]	Prior Notification of change of use of agricultural building to 1 no. dwelling.
August 2019	<a href="#">UTT/19/1960/PAQ3</a> [Approved]	Prior notification of change of agricultural building to 1 no. dwelling.
July 2019	<a href="#">UTT/19/1786/FUL</a> [Pending]	Conversion of former barn to 1 no. dwelling off existing access.
June 2019	<a href="#">UTT/19/1383/PAP3</a> [Refused]	Prior notification of change of agricultural building to 1 no. dwelling.
November 2018	<a href="#">18/3260/PAP3Q</a> [Pending]	Prior notification of change of agricultural building to 1no dwelling.
November 2018	<a href="#">18/3063/FUL</a> [Pending]	Conversion of former barn to 1no dwelling off existing access.
August 2018	<a href="#">18/2275/FUL</a> [Approved]	Construction of a new domestic garage (revision to previously approved application UTT/18/0890/FUL)
May 2018	<a href="#">18/1320/FUL</a> [Refused]	Conversion of barn to form a private dwelling off existing access.
April 2018	<a href="#">18/0890/FUL</a> [Approved]	Construction of a new garage.
August 2017	<a href="#">17/2042/PAP3Q</a> [Refused]	Prior notification of change of use of agricultural building to 1no dwelling.
July 2017	<a href="#">17/2043/PAP3Q</a> [Approved]	Prior notification of change of use of agricultural barn to 1no dwelling.
June 2017	<a href="#">17/1793/FUL</a> [Approved]	Erection of a farm workers dwelling.

Table I - Site planning history.

This site has previously been subject to an outline and full application for residential development in 2013 (REF: 13/3095/OP) and 2021 (REF: 21/2688/FUL). Refer to section 4 for more details.

### 3.2. Outline Planning Application 2013

This 2013 outline application was for the “removal of existing structures and erection of 6no. dwellings with all matters reserved except access and scale” (REF: 13/3095/OP). It proposed accessing the site via the existing road to the South of Joseph Farm.

This application went to Uttlesford District Council’s planning committee with a recommendation for refusal which was subsequently carried by members in March 2014.

To summarise the reasoning for this includes:

1. The development would produce an adverse and unacceptable visual and physical impact upon the open character of the countryside.
2. The proposed development is not sustainable by virtue of its relatively inaccessible location to good public transport, retail, education, and other local services.
3. Inaccessibility for pedestrians.
4. Absences of adequate potable water supply.

The case was appealed by the applicant, then dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate in January 2015. The main issues were identified as:

1. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
2. Whether the site is in a sustainable location, with regard to community facilities and transport opportunities.

Following this decision this application seeks to address these points and proposes a new design for the site.

### 3.3. Response to 2013 Planning Decision

The below points set out the design aims of the new application to address the dismissal issues:

1. Repositioning of the dwellings across the site to reduce the visual impact and embrace the surrounding landscape.
2. Dwellings to be of ‘barn’ and ‘farmhouse’ character to reflect the scale, massing, and materiality of the existing rural store and neighbouring buildings.
3. Reduction in the amount of hard standing and introduction of communal green space in the centre of the site.
4. Demonstration and substantial improvement of sustainability case for development including dwellings to be built to Passivhaus standards.
5. Demonstration of water potability supply.

The plans enclosed show the development of this new site layout.



Figure XIV – 2013 Outline Planning Application Proposed Site Plan.



### 3.4. Full Planning Application 2021

The full application submitted in late 2021 proposed the erection of 7no detached dwellings, with associated works including demolition of the existing nursery site and a new access onto Walden Road.

The application was refused by the officer under delegated powers with the following reasons:

1. The proposal would introduce 7no dwellings in the countryside where development is resisted unless it is sustainable and is located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Local services within the village are limited and thereby future occupiers would need to access facilities and amenities beyond reasonable walking/cycling distance of the site in other settlements to meet their needs. The development in this location would undoubtedly place reliance upon travel by car and would not encourage sustainable transport options to be made. The proposed development would not be a suitable location for housing having regard to the accessibility of services and facilities. Therefore, it would not accord with policy GEN1 of the Adopted Local Plan which amongst other things, requires development to encourage movement by means other than the private car and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The proposal would introduce a sizeable new development to an area of open countryside and would result in an unnatural extension of built form in the locality. The location of the site and the topography of the land are such that any development on the site would have a harmful impact upon the rural character and appearance of the area. The proposals would significantly harm the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside resulting in landscape and visual effects from a number of publicly accessible viewpoints and failing to perform the environmental role of sustainability, contrary to policy S7 of the Adopted Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
3. The application lies to the east of the three Grade II listed buildings known as Joseph's Farmhouse, Springwell Cottage and Springwell Farmhouse. The Local Planning Authority has a duty under Section 66(1) of the Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting and significance of any features of special architectural or historical interest. The existing pattern of development and 'grain' of surrounding development is that of a small line of dwellings of a linear pattern and loose grain along the B184. The proposed cul-de-sac would be inconsistent with the existing pattern of development and the creation of a cul-de-sac is particularly incongruous to local character and distinctiveness. Thus, in principle the proposals would result in adverse impacts to the setting, experience, and appreciation of the designated heritage assets. The setting of the heritage assets will inevitably be affected by the development and thereby result in 'less than substantial' through change in their setting. Having regard to the guidance in paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Local Planning Authority has considered the public benefits associated with the development but concludes that these would not outweigh the harm caused to the significance and setting of the designated heritage asset. The proposals are thereby contrary to policy ENV2 of the Adopted Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
4. The proposal would intensify the use of an access onto the B184 Walden Road which is deficient in terms of visibility and width and does not accord with current highway standards. The proposals would thereby lead to an increase in traffic movements to a substandard junction and thereby would be detrimental to highway safety and its efficiency. In addition, Insufficient information is provided within the application to demonstrate to the satisfaction of this Authority that the impact on the footpath caused by this proposal will not have unacceptable consequences on the safety of the public rights of way user, with specific regard to Interaction with the public footpath, including the width of the access track / public footpath and the ability for opposing vehicles to pass, and vehicles to pass users of the footpath, and appropriate intervisibility. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy GEN1 of the Adopted Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
5. Insufficient information has been submitted in support of the application to demonstrate that there would not be an unacceptable impact to protected and priority species and their habitats. Without this information, the LPA are unable to properly assessed the proposals and impacts on legally protected and priority species. The proposals would thereby be contrary to policy GEN7 of the adopted Local Plan and the NPPF.
6. The application is seeking permission for 7 dwellings, and it is the responsibility of the applicant to accurately demonstrate that 7 dwellings can be suitably accommodated on the site. The Council are not satisfied that the site can accommodate 7 dwellings successfully given that a portion of the development is located within Flood Zone 3a which is unacceptable, and that this development cannot be accommodated within the portion of the site that lies within Flood Zone 1. The proposals conflicts with the NPPF and policy GEN3 of the adopted local plan.
7. Due to a lack of information submitted in support of the proposals to demonstrate its acceptance in respect to drainage and flooding, both the flooding authority and the Council are unable to accurately assess the potential impact that the proposals may have to flooding upon the site itself or elsewhere. The proposals are thereby contrary to policy GEN3 of the adopted Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.



### 3.5. Response to 2021 Planning Decision

The below points set out the design aims of the new application to address the previously refused reasons:

#### Reason 1 – Unsustainable location & accessibility to services.

The dwellings proposed will be designed and built to accord with Passivhaus standards, a whole-building approach focused on reducing energy usage and improving a buildings sustainability credentials.

The requirement for private vehicle use is wholly offset with the Passivhaus standard, coupled with significant PV with battery installation, and electric vehicle car chargers provided at a minimum rate of 2no per plot.

#### Reason 2 – Harmful development in the countryside.

Policy S7 has been continuously proven incompatible with the NPPF given it predates the national policy and Uttlesford are still without an up-to-date Local Plan.

The site proposes the re-use of a brownfield site following the demolition of the unsightly nursery business and associated structures. The design proposes an in-keeping rural high-quality design which contributes to the lacking 5-year land supply.

The public views into the site are well screened by mature hedging, so to claim that it would have a harmful impact from publicly accessible views is unjustified.

The proposed development would be a substantial visual improvement both in character and quality of the area over the existing nursery business, including a 60% reduction in the built-form footprint.

#### Reason 3 – Impact upon Listed Buildings.

No heritage reasons nor concerns over any impacts upon Listed Buildings was raised by the inspector in the previous application.

The comments from Place Services are largely unjustified, in stating that the existing pattern of development is a linear arrangement is not true, as clearly evidenced on the existing site plan which shows a sporadic arrangement of existing dwellings and barns (most with permissions held for conversion to residential).

As with the previous reason, we feel that the new development would be a significant improvement over the existing nursery business, and actually improve the setting of the Listed Buildings around the site.

#### Reason 4 – Highways access.

The response from Highways in the 2013 application for the same access confirmed that the highways authority had no objection to the application as proposed. A copy of this response is enclosed in Appendix A, so the last-minute objection raised on the previous application was not expected.

Nevertheless, the two highways' reasons in their response dated 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021 have been addressed by the provision of drawing PL04 which demonstrates how the access conforms to highways standards by providing inter-vehicular visibility splays of 2.4x160m in both directions and confirms that a 6m wide shared surface structure is provided along the driveway/footpath shared element.

The intensification of the new access to the residential site is significantly offset through the loss of the nursery business which averages 150 cars per day in the peak seasons, 50 cars per day in the off season, up to 21 deliveries per week including articulated lorries, plus 5/6 staff cars per day.

#### Reason 5 – Ecology.

A response to the ecologists' comments was submitted during the course of the previous application on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021, though this was not reconulted on with the County Ecologists. This response is submitted as part of this revised application which addresses the outstanding holding objection from Place Services Ecology.

#### Reason 6 – Flood risk.

As noted in the Environment Agency response dated 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021, the modelling provided within the FRA "is adequate to prove that the site will not flood during a 1 in 100-year event plus climate change". It is acknowledged that the flood mapping data held by the EA is incorrect and will be changed should this application be successful to remove the proposed plots from FZ3.

This reason for refusal is therefore not valid as the development is facilitated in land outside of the flood zones.

#### Reason 7 – Flood risk.

Regarding the LLFA response dated 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021, it is not possible to undertake infiltration testing on the site whilst the present commercial business is in operation, and we would ask that infiltration testing be conditioned on any approval. The fallback position should infiltration not work (though given the chalky strata it is highly likely to be successful and was a working solution for the managers house at the north of the site), is that surface water run-off can be discharged into the nearby ditch which directly feeds the River Cam, and subject to attenuation and a hydro brake system.



## 4. Design Development

### 4.1. Existing Site & Movement

The plan opposite highlights the important features of the site.

The site is currently accessed by the road just North of Joseph Farm. This leads into the centre of the site where there is a car park and the nursery's polytunnels and greenhouses, shown by a dashed line. The road continues the East providing access to the Farmer's Dwelling to the rear of the site. This access through the site must remain.

The proposal will utilise the existing road to the South allowing the current road to become a private driveway. To make best use of the site, logic dictates the existing access remains to the North providing access to the large barn and buildings to the East, therefore splitting the site into a small North parcel and larger South parcel. The highlighted 'node' location can provide a central access point for the proposed dwellings.

A key part of the site's character are the established hedges and trees that form a large part of the site's borders. It is therefore important these remain wherever possible and enhanced if there is opportunity.

The view Northeast from the site is open overlooks paddocks and fields. This should remain and be incorporated into the proposal.

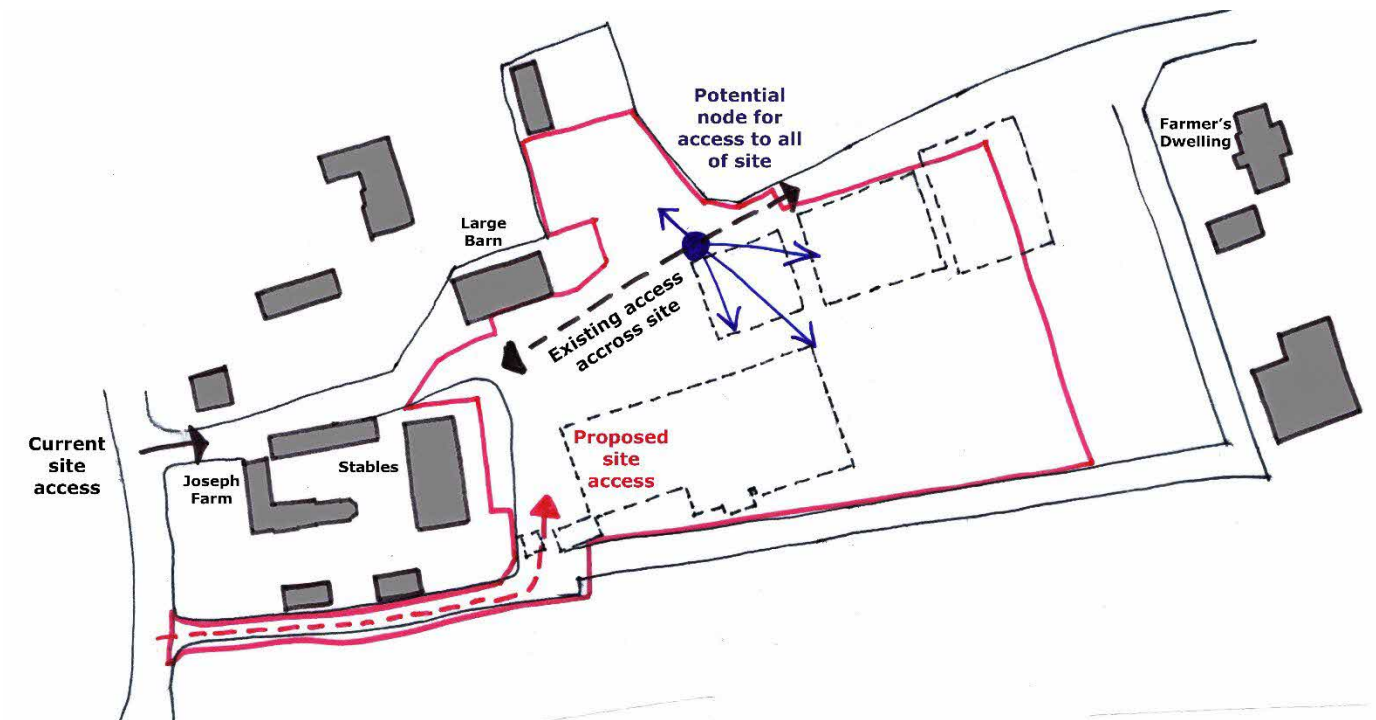


Figure XV – Existing site and movement.

### 4.2. Constraints & Design Features

The plan opposite highlights the potential design constraints.

A continuation of existing building lines, from Joseph Farm, the stables, and the large barn, help define zones where dwelling placement feels in keeping with the established grain. Adding a linear pattern of development to the East of the site encloses the proposal and reflects the layout of the buildings behind.

Locating gardens to the boundary of the site helps soften the edges of the development and corresponds with the established hedges and trees border. This allows the dwellings to overlook a central green space, adding to the development's character and identity.

Positioning the through road and central access node to the North of the site, reduces the need for excessive individual hard standing via a shared driveway, and starts to shape areas for landscaping opportunity.

Some of the existing building outlines (shaded in) begin to define the potential forms and scale of the proposed dwellings.

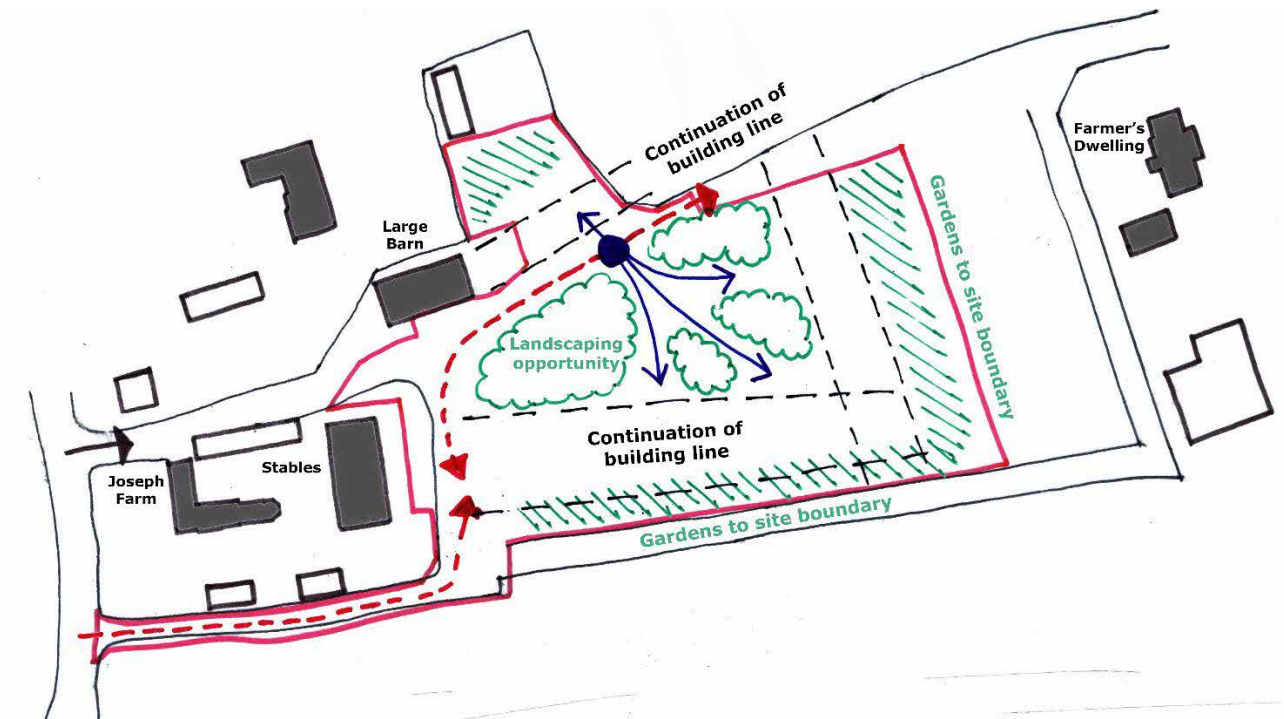


Figure XVI – Constraints and design features.



## 5. Proposal

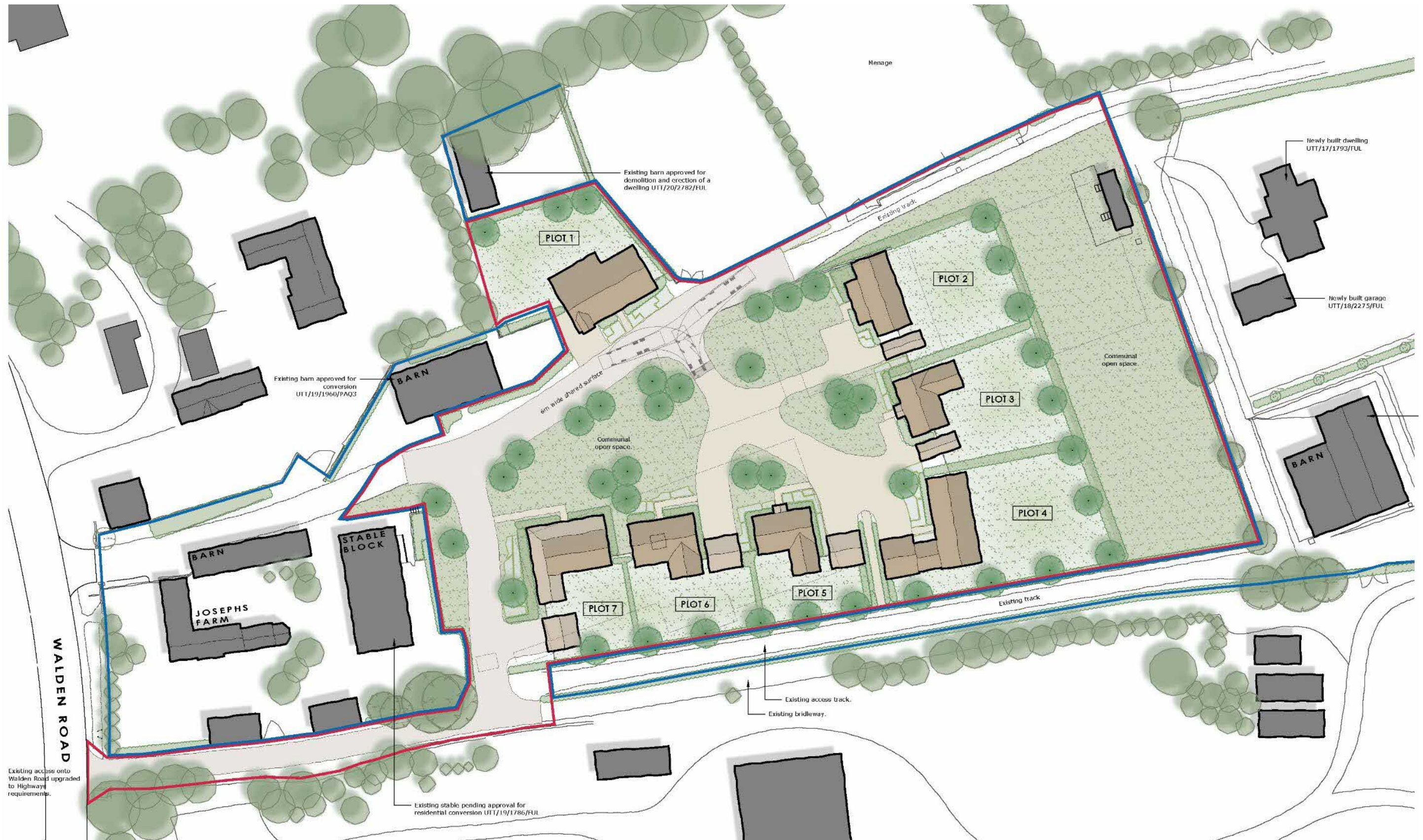


Figure XVII - Proposed Site Plan



## 5.1. Proposal Summary

This full planning application seeks residential development of the site to erect 7no. high-quality, Passivhaus family homes, each with associated parking provision and amenity space, with an upgraded road from the existing access to the south onto Walden Road.

Following the 2013 Outline Planning and 2021 Full Planning application refusals, a new scheme has been developed to bring a new proposal forward responding to the refusal reasons as detailed previously.

The dwellings will each be built to high environmental standards, aiming to meet the highly-rated Passivhaus standard which addresses all areas of a buildings energy performance levels. This will involve creating an 'A rated' energy performing property, with fully considered heat loss credentials, efficient heating systems, and renewable technologies such as PV panels with battery back-up, heat recovery, rain & grey water harvesting, and the provision of electric vehicle charging.

The proposed development will require the demolition of the existing nursery and removal of a commercial land use (Class E), to form an entirely residential (Class C3) setting for the Springwell settlement.

The proposed layout has been designed around the site constraints with the positioning of the dwellings informed by the existing grain of neighbouring buildings. The development is conceived around retaining the perimeter greenery and minimising hard standing, creating a sense of place surrounding a communal green space enhancing the sites rural characteristic.

## 5.2. Proposed Housing Mix

This application proposes 7no. new-build residential properties with a mix of 3 and 4-bedrooms - 2x3-bed and 5x4-bed. There will be 5no. 'barn style' and 2no. 'farmhouse' which reflects a typical balance of farmyard rural settings.

## 5.3. Scale & Massing

Following the demolition of the existing nursery and its structures, in plan view the proposal delivers a massive 60% reduction in the aerial-built form on the site, coming down from 2,572m<sup>2</sup> to 1,073m<sup>2</sup>.

The scale of the proposed dwellings is of 1.5 storey and 2 storey constructions, and their massing has been informed by the surrounding agricultural and residential buildings. For the 1.5 storey 'barn style' dwellings, eaves heights are at mid, first floor window height, and for the 2 storey 'farmhouse' dwellings the eaves are at first floor window head height.

## 5.4. Topography & Landscape

The existing site falls steadily from the East to West, with the Northern parcel sitting slightly higher than the Southern parcel. When viewed in section, the proposed buildings are bedded into the landscape and are respectful of the Listed farmhouse, stables, and Farmer's Dwelling to the edge of the development, with the larger dwellings positioned in the centre.

The proposed scheme will not affect any important existing landscape features and yet further private amenity screening will be provided. There is a proposed green area in the middle of the scheme.



Figure XVIII - Proposed Site Section



## 6. Design

### 6.1. Existing Character

The site and its immediate area are not within a conservation area or other similar designated zone. There is a mix of styles and development patterns when all the surroundings are considered, with a general appearance typical of rural store and horticulture buildings, along with some residential plots.

At the entrance to Springwell Nursery and Garden Centre is the listed Josephs Farm, comprising of a yellow rendered façade with clay plain tiled roofs. The building is a classic farmhouse design, set in an 'L' shape with a more modern conservatory addition to the rear. Between the proposed site and Joseph Farm is the curtilage-listed stable block, a two-storey pitched roof barn with single storey stables wrapped around. The lower part is constructed of brick, with feather-edge weather boarding gables, and a mixture of pantiles and slate tiles for the roof. Also located on the site are a collection of agricultural barns (with extant permissions for their conversion to residential dwellings), built in a typical rectangular form with brick plinths, boarded elevations, and sheet or tiled roofs.

The Farmers Dwelling to the East of the site was built in the last few years in a farmhouse style. The building has two storey and single storey elements and is constructed of traditional building materials such as handmade brick, render, and some timber cladding to walls and a natural slate and plain clay tiled roof.

Beyond the boundary of the site, within a short distance, there is a Listed thatched cottage (Springwell Cottage), another Listed farmhouse (Springwell Farmhouse), and examples of brick built contemporary farmhouse style housing. The principal design theme among these surroundings is a general theme of agricultural barns and farmhouse style. These will be adopted into these proposals.

### 6.2. Site Layout

The existing surrounding character of development is made up of primarily detached properties, with adjoining annexes, separate cart lodges or annex buildings, and agricultural barns. These developments range from being linear in layout along the road, in small clusters of buildings, or located in the centre of a plot.

Whilst the proposed layout is unlikely to be able to compare directly to one of these approaches, these key features, along with the existing grain of neighbouring buildings outlined previously, have been carried over into the new layout and influence the new proposal.

### 6.3. High-Quality Design

Planning applications always seek to deliver "high-quality homes", but there is never any definition as to what this is expected to include, and large developers often end up building soulless cheap residential sites.

Our view with this application is to ensure that the proposal is truly high-quality, with no house types and no "standard" cheap designs. Rather, delivering bespoke individual homes, independently designed and crafted, giving the future end users a unique property, which is one of a kind. Properties will be finished with premium quality materials, no machine-made cheap stock bricks or cheap concrete imitation tiles, but rather handmade or natural products which deliver a quality finished palette.

High levels of landscaping will complete the look, providing natural barriers between properties rather than the usual close boarded fencing. Overall, a unique scheme like this creates a true sense of place for the future owners.



Figure XIX – Joseph Farm.



Figure XX – Stable block.



Figure XXI – Planning drawings for Farmers Dwelling.



## 6.4. Design Philosophy

As the application site sits between the mix of styles, the best characteristics and qualities of a 'barn' and 'farmhouse' style have been carried over and will form a unique sense of place, ensuring high quality design and greatly improving the character of the area.

The 'barn' style takes direct influence from existing structures on and around the site, as well as developments further afield where agricultural barns have been converted for residential use. The main feature is a 2-storey central barn form, from which 1 and 2-storey elements extend. The eaves are set at mid, first floor window height, to maintain a considerate ridge height, and the roof is pitched at 45 degrees like the 'farmhouse' style. This is with the exception of Plot 1 which corresponds to the 30-degree roof pitch of the adjacent existing curtilage-listed barn to the West.

There are a range of features incorporated to the 'barn' style dwellings which reflect the industrial and agricultural history of the site. These include: 1.5 storey 3-bay windows, double height galleries, lucarnes, large barn doors, exposed rafter tails, cat sliding roofs, lanterns, and roof lights,

The 'farmhouse' style is largely informed by the Farmers Dwelling to the East and other homes of this style. They are 2-storeys and in an 'L shape', with the eaves at first floor window head height, and a roof pitch of 45 degrees. The main features are a lobby with timber pitched roof, external brick chimney, and exposed rafter tails.

As previously stated, the proposal will incorporate 5no. 'barn' and 2no. 'farmhouse' style dwellings.

## 6.5. Materials

The material palette of the development is informed by the surrounding buildings. Materials include handmade plain clay tiles, natural slate tiles, handmade facing brickwork, dark stained feather-edge boarding, sand cement render, traditional painted joinery to windows and doors, vertical timber doors, and dark grey metal rainwater goods. The main difference between the two styles is that the 'barn' style will feature dark feather-edge boarding, and the 'farmhouse' style will be clad in sand cement render and brickwork.



Figure XXIV – Example of barn converted for residential use.



Figure XXV – Example of new-build 'barn' style residents.



Figure XXII – Example of 'barn' style.



Figure XXIII - Example of 'farmhouse' style



Figure XXVI - Example of new-build 'barn' style residents.



## 7. Planning Policy

### 7.1. Local and National Planning Policy

Please refer to the attached Planning Statement by Peter George Town Planning.

At the extraordinary council meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2020, local councillors resolved the withdraw the emerging Draft Local Plan following the Inspector raising fundamental concern to the soundness of the plan. As such there is no emerging Local Plan to consider or emerging policies at this stage.

The Adopted Local Plan 2005 is considered considerably out-of-date now and predates the National Planning Policy Framework. Whilst Uttlesford District Council still rely on this adopted plan, it has been proven out-of-date on several occasions at Planning Appeals. However, the following policies are considered relevant to this applications determination:

- S7 – The Countryside
- H3 – New Houses within Development Limits
- H10 – Housing Mix
- GEN1 – Access
- GEN2 – Design
- GEN3 – Flood Protection
- GEN4 – Good Neighbours
- GEN7 – Nature Conservation
- GEN8 – Vehicle Parking Standards
- ENV14 – Contaminated Land

Policy S7 will no doubt be the largest concern to Uttlesford officers, which aims to protect the countryside for its own sake and supports development that needs to take place there or which is appropriate to the rural area. The policy supports development which protects or enhances the character of the countryside within which it is set.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is only partially consistent with S7, and this policy has been proven on several occasions that it is out of date and can only receive limited weight in determining an application. Cases of these appeals are set out within the Planning Statement enclosed with our application.

### 7.2. Housing Land Supply

The Uttlesford DC Housing Delivery Test and 5-Year Land Supply Statement issued in January 2021 states that at present the current land supply for the council is currently 3.11 years, and therefore 1,402 short of the 5-year supply. As such, the council are in need to suitable residential sites, of which this site must be considered one being largely brownfield previously developed land.

### 7.3. Uttlesford Special Measures & Emerging Local Plan

In February 2021 Uttlesford District Council were placed into 'Special Measures' due to the poor performance in dealing with planning applications, and number of appeals it has lost – having the worst rate in the country for major appeals being overturned by inspectors.

The council are still without an up to date local plan and have recently admitted they will not have a new plan in place before the governments deadline of the end of 2023.

### 7.4. Landscaping

A full landscaping scheme would be produced to accompany a full application on the site which would detail ecological enhancements to the area. Trees and hedges would be retained where possible though this would be fully detailed upon a full application.

The external layout would be biased around landscaping, to maintain the rural character and countryside setting. This would also enhance the biodiversity of the site and create a welcoming sense of place to the residents.

The submission of a landscaping scheme can be secured by way of a planning condition on any approval for the site.

### 7.5. Noise

During consultation of application 18/3260/PAP3Q, environmental health consulted on the scheme and commented that the conversion to a residential property was unsuitable due to the noise impacts from the commercial premises, which would have an adverse impact on future occupiers.

This proposal aims to remove these concerns for not only the previously considered application, but for all the properties in the Springwell settlement by removing the commercial business.

## 8. Sustainability

### 8.1. Present Use

The current nursery site is heated by a substantial gas heater, which is expensive to run and environmentally harmful given the structure is uninsulated.

By promoting eco dwellings on the site, there would be a significant long-term environmental benefit to the proposal and a significant carbon offset with the nursery removed.

### 8.2. Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development (NPPF)

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF establishes that there are three dimensions to sustainable development are: economic, social and environmental. These three credentials are met with this proposal through the following:

#### Economic

This residential application will provide employment to local trades and merchants through the construction phase of these properties.

#### Social

The additional housing provision in this area will contribute much needed housing to the area, which is actively being sought by the local authority as detailed in section 7.2 of this document.

Residential development here will also add to the already present small community of Springwell and help develop and create a need for additional facilities and services to be provided in this location.

#### Environmental

The creation of eco dwellings on this site will create environmentally friendly living for the future residents, with renewable technologies and encouragement to use electric vehicle charging points.

### 8.3. Passivhaus & Environmentally Friendly Dwellings

Part L of the building regulations sets out the minimum criteria for building homes in this country, and despite the global drive to make homes more energy efficient, this is yet to happen.

With the sites location being away from main services there is no doubt a reliance on private vehicle use, but this is not a sole reason enough to justify a proposal as “unsustainable” given the wide spectrum which a properties sustainability credentials cover.

A dwellings sustainability covers everything from how it is built, including materials sourced, how it heated, how it preserves energy, and how it operates in the long term.

It is generally accepted and allowed in this country that new homes are built to minimum standards, with no renewable energy sources, and little to no regard to how it operates in the long term. Planning applications rarely consider whether homes meet the minimum standards or aim to exceed them.

This application simply aims to better the UK standards for homes energy usage, in both the short term and the long term. This will be achieved by achieving Passivhaus certification which is a widely recognised standard for building performance and demonstrates the highest of qualities in construction. This is securable by the planning authority through a planning condition.

The properties therefore propose the following measures:

Sustainable design by construction, utilising off-site timber frame methods factory built and erected on site using FSC certified materials.

Lowering the level of water usage per person per day, from the Building Regulations minimum of 125 L/p/d to 110 L/p/d.

Solar panels, using natural resources to power each property tied into the feed-in tariff to enable all power generated to go un-wasted and benefit the local community as well as the proposed housing. This will include battery back-up.

Ground or Air source heat pumps, omitting the need for the burning of gas for heating.

Whole house mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, omitting the need for cold draughty trickle ventilation, recycling heat as the air changes in the house. This system can also be fitted with a filter to vastly improve the air quality for residents in the house.

Greywater & rainwater recycling, recycling water in and around the house for a variety of uses including flushing toilets, washing clothes, and watering the garden.

Smart lighting & heating, ensuring energy is only used when it is required with systems not switching on if nobody is home.

Electric vehicle charging points, 2no to each property as a minimum.

The site will easily be able to demonstrate a minimum of 10% energy demand being delivered by renewable or low carbon sources, and/or that energy demand will be reduced by at least 10% through fabric measures.

These measures will significantly enhance the aim for these new homes to be truly high quality.



## 8.4. Accessibility

The site is frequently passed by buses, serving a number of routes primarily between Saffron Walden and Cambridge. At present the nearest bus stops to the site are located at Little Chesterford on Walden Road (0.4-miles north), and at Littlebury on Walden Road (1-mile south). Due to the frequent passing of buses on the route a bus stop could be created and secured as part of this development which will not only increase the accessibility of services by public transport to the proposed houses, but also benefit all the existing properties within the Springwell settlement.

Reliance on cars may be required for inhabitants on the site, as with most smaller settlements in the county. As part of the environmental credentials within these properties each will be fitted with solar panels and electric vehicle charging points to encourage the use of sustainable transport nodes. The provision of charging points will link well with Uttlesford’s provision of such charging in the nearby town of Saffron Walden.

As settlements grow so do the level of services available, and the planning system should not shy away from opportunities to improve the levels of sustainability for the existing housing stock in this country.

## 8.5. Ecological & Biodiversity

Whilst a full ecological and biodiversity assessment and impact study will be provided upon any full application, it would be the intention of the proposals to only promote ecological values. Limited vegetation removal is targeted with a range of planting being provided through a detailed landscaping scheme on full submission.

Walden Road is lined with special verges to both sides and full ecological consideration will be paid to these with a detailed appraisal undertaken at a later stage. The re-use of an existing access is proposed to serve the dwellings and therefore there is no interruption to this verge.

## 8.6. Part M4(2) Compliance

Part M4(2) sets out the optional requirements relating to accessibility and adaptability to dwellings. This requires properties to generally have:

- Level access approaches.
- Improved internal movement requirements.
- Ground floor WC enhancements including showers.
- Provision for future lifts / hoists.

In accordance with the above, all the proposed properties will meet this requirement.

## 8.7. Home Offices

Considering the recent Covid-19 pandemic there is a growing emphasis on working from home, and a need for sufficient space in new homes to do so. As such, properties proposed are provided with ample home office space, in most instances sufficient for more than one person. This naturally promotes sustainability through the reduced need for cars and offers flexible working arrangements for future occupiers.

## 8.8. Energy Performance

Modern buildings must adhere to strict guidelines as set out within the Building Regulations with regard to energy performance, and ultimately sustainability.

Elemental U-Values (which are a form of measuring heat loss) will be designed to be an improvement on the minimum standards which are set out within the Building Regulations. The below table sets out these areas and highlights their improvement.

Building Element	Building Regulations Minimum U-Value	Proposed Elemental U-Value	% Improvement
Ground Floor	0.25 W/m <sup>2</sup> K	0.14 W/m <sup>2</sup> K	44%
External Walls	0.30 W/m <sup>2</sup> K	0.21 W/m <sup>2</sup> K	30%
Roof	0.20 W/m <sup>2</sup> K	0.14 W/m <sup>2</sup> K	30%
Windows & Doors	2.00 W/m <sup>2</sup> K	1.4 W/m <sup>2</sup> K	20%
Air Permeability	10.0 m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>2</sup> h @ 50 pascals	4.0 m <sup>3</sup> /m <sup>2</sup> h @ 50 pascals	60%

Table II - U-Value Comparison

Highly efficient air source heat pumps will be supplied to the properties with heating by radiators and underfloor heating. Draft proofing and cold bridging will be designed out through the implementation of accredited details.

All lighting throughout all properties will be low voltage energy efficient type fittings.



## 8.9. Lifetime Homes

Lifetime Homes policies mean that as families age the dwelling is already adapted, or can be through slight modification, to greatly aid accessibility. The proposed dwellings have been designed to meet all 16 criteria of the key criteria as follows:

Criteria:	Achieved:
On plot parking	Parking spaces are 2.4m wide with capability to widen to 3.3m.
Approach to dwelling from parking	Level or gently sloping transfer surface between parking and dwelling entrance.
Approach to all entrances	All entrances to have level or gently graded approach.
Entrance standards	Entry lights will be provided to doors with level thresholds only. Doors will be of a sufficient width to allow access.
Stairs	Staircases will be ambulant disabled style with low risers and deep treads.
Internal doors and halls	All hallways will be a minimum of 1m wide and doors to main rooms will generally be minimum 750mm wide.
Circulation space	Achieved through careful space planning of furniture in key rooms.
Entrance level living space	Living room on ground level of all dwellings.
Potential for entrance level bed.	Space allocated within living rooms of all dwellings.
Entrance level WC and shower drainage	Entrance level WC of sufficient size provided with drainage installed for future shower addition.
WC and bathroom walls	Studwork bathroom walls will be lined with plywood to provide structural rigidity.
Stairs and potential lifts	Area highlighted within dwellings for future lift installation.
Potential for disability hoists	Floors will be installed structurally capable for future installation of hoists. Some bedrooms will have en-suite facilities.
Bathrooms	All bathrooms to have accessible bathrooms, all with shower facilities.
Glazing & window handles	Shallow window sills throughout with accessible controls.
Location of service controls	All switches and sockets will be positioned at a height band between 450mm and 1200mm over finished floor level.

Table III - Lifetime Homes Compliance



## 9. Access

### 9.1. Vehicular & Pedestrian Access

Springwell Nursery is presently served by a shared access drive to the north side of Josephs Farm, which also serves other existing residential properties on the site. To the south of the site is a concreted access track which serves some barns to the rear of Josephs Farm and leads to a public bridleway heading east.

This application proposes to re-use this southern access, widen, resurface, and improve the access into the site to serve these new residential properties. The existing crossover will be maintained which has good visibility in both directions.

### 9.2. Highways Offsetting

The present commercial use of the site attracts a high volume of customers all visiting the site via cars, plus any freight deliveries to the site. The proposed residential use of the site would require a reduction in the travel frequency and reduce the number of cars coming into the site.

In addition, the loss of the freight deliveries to the site will see a benefit in highways safety in the area.

### 9.3. Car Parking Provision

The level of parking provided for each dwelling has been considered with the Essex County Parking Standards which requires the following:

	Vehicles:	Cycles:
2+ bedrooms:	2 spaces per dwelling*	1 secure covered space per dwelling.
Visitor:	0.25 spaces per dwelling.	1 covered and secure space per dwelling.
*Excluding garage if less than 7m x 3m internal dimension.		

Table IV - Parking standards

Secured covered parking is provided to each plot by the inclusion of a single or double garage.

### 9.4. Cycle Storage

Cycle parking to residential plots will be provided by a garage, sufficient to allow for min.1no cycle per bedroom.

## 10. Services

### 10.1. General

All necessary main services are available and connected to the serve the development. Good levels of foul drainage are on site along with electricity and mains water. The site currently serves hundreds of customers daily in terms of demands for water, drainage, and power. This is not seen as a significant barrier to development.

### 10.2. Refuse Collection Strategy

Private bins will be provided to each property and stored generally within private gardens. Refuse lorries are able to access the site under the new vehicular access proposals and collect waste from outside the properties.

Separate waste, recycling and food bins will be provided in accordance with local authority standards.

### 10.3. Foul Drainage

Foul water drainage will be to the small-scale sewage treatment tanks in the site and these are known to work in the area, holding/ sealed cess pits (to be agreed under applied detailed planning conditions).

### 10.4. Surface Water Drainage

'Footprints' of new dwellings and impermeable 'hard area' will be significantly less than the existing buildings and hard areas. This will bring about material benefits in terms of surface water drainage. Surface water run-off will be collected and attenuated on-site prior to a restricted discharge from the site in accordance with the SuDs hierarchy and ECC requirements, subject to detailed design at a later stage. Given the close proximity of a watercourse it is likely that surface water run-off will be discharged into this.

### 10.5. High-Speed Communications

All new dwellings will be fitted with high-speed-ready in-building physical infrastructure, to a network termination point for high-speed electronic communication networks. In accordance with the new Approved Document R, broadband should be capable of delivering download speeds of at least 30 Mbps.



## 11. Precedent Cases

### 11.1. Sunnymead, Ashwell, Hertfordshire

A similar site was considered by North Hertfordshire District Council in 2014 on a former poultry farm at Sunnymead Farm on the outskirts of Ashwell in Hertfordshire. This application (reference 14/02932/1) sought permission for the erection of 6no executive homes following demolition of the former sheds, in a rural part of the countryside far beyond the village settlement limits, set among a small collection of residential properties.

This application passed the test of meeting the 3 dimensions of sustainability as defined by the NPPF and required a sustainability statement through condition requiring the implementation of renewable technology and electric-vehicle charging points, which was crucial in meeting the environmental aspect of sustainable planning.



Figure XXVII - Approved Site Plan at Sunnymead Farm (North Herts District Council)

This subject application now proposed on the former nursery site is similar in many regards to this site in Hertfordshire. Both sites are brownfield by their past uses and their replacement with residential accommodation provides substantial benefit.

Neither application was located in a main settlement, though this does not render the site unsustainable. Living in isolated villages is common in most areas of the country, and car dependency is expected. This can be vastly minimised however with access to bus routes as proposed, and encouragement for sustainable technologies to create an environmentally friendly development. This is fully intended on the application site and was accepted in the above case.

### 11.2. Will's Ayley Farm, Swards End, Essex

A recent application (UTT/20/1926/FUL) refused by Uttlesford District Council on the grounds of being detrimental to the rural character of the area and not amounting to a presumption in favour of sustainable development, contrary to the NPPF and policies H6, GEN2, and S7 of the adopted 2005 UDC Local Plan.

This decision was taken to appeal by the applicants under reference APP/C1570/W/20/326543 and allowed by the Planning Inspectorate in June 2021.

The site shares similarities with the application site, having existing structures located on it, and being in an isolated location away from nearby settlements.

The inspector found, as they have so frequently before, that Policy S7 is not fully consistent with the NPPF, where S7 strictly controls new building in the countryside, whereas the Framework supports the reuse of redundant or disused buildings that enhance its immediate setting.

The Inspector permitted the erection of dwellings on the site even with the sites location away from mains services which the local planning authority had previously branded as “unsustainable”.

## 12. Summary

This application proposes 7no. new high-quality, eco-friendly dwellings, following the demolition of the existing nursery with the re-use of an existing access track south of the site.

A low-level density is proposed to maintain and enhance the rural feeling and open-countryside feel, and to not substantially increase the amount of replaced building structure on site to protect the countryside.

The site lies in area with no development limit, but is bounded by residential development on all sides, therefore this proposal does not erode the openness of the countryside, but rather enhances this established community, and removes the noise generating commercial premises.

As set out in this document, the proposed dwellings will be of true high-quality standard being individually designed rather than using house-types, be built to high environmental standards with renewable energy sources and built to design out heat loss.

The sustainability of the dwellings is considered in both the short and long term, with the design including long term measures such as water conservation systems, smart heating and lighting technologies, and a future proofed heating system being of ground/air source type ahead of the upcoming ban on gas in the next few years.

Sustainability is key with this site, and acknowledging the site's location away from services, we strongly feel that on balance with the wider aspects of sustainability this application goes above and beyond to offset the reliance on private vehicle usage (whilst promoting the more sustainable use of electric vehicles).

This high-quality, sustainable proposal is offered on this site to provide a contribution to the local lacking housing stock in the Uttlesford District who have a history of not delivering on their housing targets, and not providing enough homes in the area.



Figure XXVIII - Plot 1 Proposed Front Elevation



Figure XXIX - Plot 6 Proposed Front Elevation



## Appendix A – Highways Response

UTT/13/3095/OP - 27/11/2013

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