

Planning Statement

8 December 2025

**Address:**

Land to the East of
2 West Lane
Pirton
Hertfordshire
SG5 3RA

Applicant: Mr H Doyle

Proposal:

The creation of a new vehicular access point and permeable driveway to an existing residential caravan site together with an extended parking area (part retrospective).



Site Description

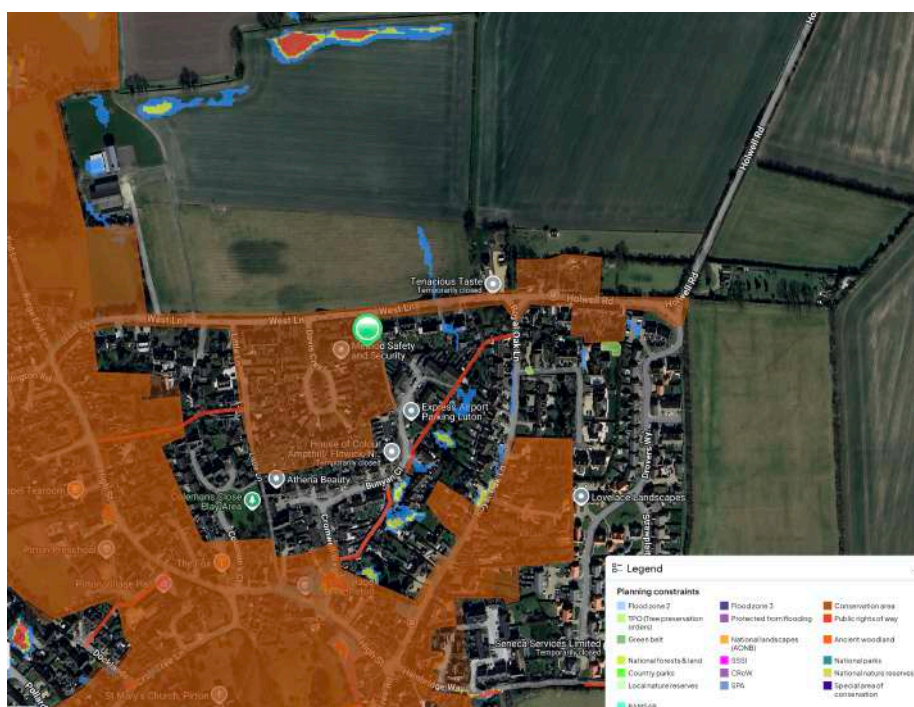
The application site is a lawfully consented residential caravan site by virtue of the confirmed Certificate of Lawful Existing Use Ref:95/01050/1EUD.

Whilst the caravan site is located on the fringes of the Village, with open countryside beyond, being situated just outside the defined settlement boundary, it is bounded on either side by existing detached residential dwellings.

The existing caravan site has an access afforded to it by the existing right of way



The application site is not located within the Conservation zone but it does sit adjacent to it and within the setting of the Conservation zone which was recently extended to include properties on the eastern side of the application site.



Planning History

25/01198/FP Extension of existing hardstanding (Development already carried out). Installation of permeable driveway (Development has commenced). Creation of vehicular access off West Lane. Refused 29 August 2025

78/01492/1: Outline application for erection of detached house and double garage and formation of new vehicular access. Refused 30/11/1978. Appeal dismissed 1979

92/00882/1: Detached dwelling with single garage. Refused. Appeal dismissed 27/05/1993

94/00775/1: Two bed detached dwelling with new vehicular access, Refused 6/10/1994

94/01353/1: Two bed detached dwelling with new vehicular access. Refused 19/07/1995

95/01050/1EUD: Certificate of Lawful Development for the retention and continued use of a mobile home on the site. Granted 21/11/1995

Plan Policies

North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031

Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution

Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt

Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport

Policy SP9: Design & Sustainability

Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity

Policy SP13: Historic environment

Policy CGB1: Rural areas beyond the Green Belt

Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters

Policy D1: Sustainable design

Policy D3: Protecting living conditions

Policy NE2: Landscape

Policy NE4: Biodiversity

Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets

National Planning Policy Framework Dec 2024

Pirton Neighbourhood Plan

Policy PNP2: Design and character

Policy PNP4: Hedgerows, Trees & Verges

Policy PNP5: Wildlife

Policy PNP7: Key views and vistas

Policy PNP8: Heritage Assets and Archaeological Heritage

Policy PNP 11: Safety of Pedestrians, Cyclists and Motorists

Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960

Manual for Streets 2007 - Design of Access and expected Standards

The Proposal

The application before the Council now is essentially a reworked and resubmission of the recently refused application Ref: 25/01198/FP, seeking to supply relevant and pertinent information that should be fully considered ahead of any appeal to the Planning Inspectorate to allow each party to fairly judge the full merits of the application.

Within the submission, I shall seek to address the comments of the Case Officer, made within their planning report and in particular their reasons for refusal.

Reasons for Refusal

- 1. The application site is located beyond the designated Pirton village boundary in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt in the adopted North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031 (NHLP). The development the subject of this application does not meet any of the acceptable forms of development and criteria set out in Policy CGB1 of the Local Plan. As such the development is considered to result in harm to the openness and visual character and amenity of the countryside contrary to Policy CGB1 of the NHLP*
- 2. The development the subject of this application, by reason of the amount of hard surfacing, boundary treatment and vehicular access proposed, would collectively result in an urbanising effect on the locality harmful to the character and appearance of the area contrary to the provisions of Policy SP9 and Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.*
- 3. The application site is located adjacent to the Pirton Conservation Area. The application is not accompanied by a heritage assessment of the impact of the development on the setting of the Pirton Conservation Area. The development introduces a markedly urbanising effect on the historic character and appearance of the area without adequate justification. As such the development is considered to be harmful to the historic character and setting of the Pirton Conservation Area contrary to the provisions of Policy HE1 of the North Herts Local Plan and Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.*
- 4. The development site is located on a classified road opposite a busy junction with Royal Oak Lane and Holwell Road. The Highway Authority consider that the development is likely to lead to conditions prejudicial to highway safety and amenity. As such the development is considered to be contrary to the provisions of Policy T1 of the North Herts Local Plan.*
- 5. The submitted ecology report concludes that the development results in a loss of habitat and hedgerow units with no proposals for mitigation and or replacement. As such the development fails to achieve a net gain for biodiversity contrary to the provisions of Policy NE4 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.*

BASELINE PLANNING

IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNISE THAT THE APPLICATION DOES NOT SEEK ANY CHANGE OF USE OF LAND, THAT THE SITE IS AN ESTABLISHED CARAVAN SITE, THE APPLICATION IS SIMPLY FOR A NEW AND IMPROVED ACCESS AND DRIVEWAY.

Individual Refusal Reasons Addressed

1. The application site is located beyond the designated Pirton village boundary in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt in the adopted North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031 (NHLP). The development the subject of this application does not meet any of the acceptable forms of development and criteria set out in Policy CGB1 of the Local Plan. As such the development is considered to result in harm to the openness and visual character and amenity of the countryside contrary to Policy CGB1 of the NHLP

Policy Quoted

CGB1 - Stated doesn't meet any of the Criteria within policy

6 Countryside and Green Belt

Policy CGB1: Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt.

In the Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt, as shown on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted provided that the development:

- a) Is infilling development which does not extend the built core of a Category B village;
- b) Meets a proven local need for community facilities, services or affordable housing in an appropriate location;
- c) Is strictly necessary for the needs of agriculture or forestry;
- d) Relates to an existing rural building;
- e) Is a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification; or
- f) Would provide land or facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries that respect the generally open nature of the rural area.

- 6.1 The Rural Area beyond the Green Belt covers the countryside to the east and north of the District that lies outside of the towns and larger villages identified in Policy SP2. These areas do not meet the necessary criteria to be designated as Green Belt, but it is still necessary to impose restraints on development to prevent inappropriate schemes⁹⁰.
- 6.2 Policy CGB1 sets out the broad typologies of development considered acceptable within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. Where schemes fall within one or more of the categories above, they will be judged against other relevant policies of the Plan.
- 6.3 Policy SP5 explains that proposals within the Green Belt will be judged against the policies of the NPPF to determine whether they are acceptable in principle.

It is clear that the Policy CGB1 is aimed at NEW housing type developments within Countryside and Green Belt, and not specifically a new vehicle access and driveway at an existing residential caravan site.

The most relevant Plan Policy in the absence of a specific Residential Caravan Site (non Gypsy and Traveller use) appears to be Policy SP6 Transport.

Policy SP6: Sustainable transport

We will deliver accessibility improvements and promote the use of sustainable transport modes insofar as reasonable and practicable. We will:

- a) Comply with the NHDC Transport Strategy and the provisions of the Local Transport Plan and other supporting documents as relevant;
- b) Encourage development in locations which enable sustainable journeys to be made to key services and facilities;
- c) Work with Hertfordshire County Council, neighbouring authorities, Highways England and service providers to ensure that a range of sustainable transport options are available to all potential occupants or users. This may involve new or improved pedestrian, cycle and passenger transport (including rail and/or bus) links and routes;
- d) Seek the earliest reasonable opportunity to implement sustainable travel infrastructure on Strategic Housing Sites and other development sites in order to influence the behaviour of occupiers or users, along with supporting Travel Plans in order that sustainable travel patterns become embedded at an early stage;
- e) Assess development proposals against the parking standards set out in this Plan and having regard to relevant supplementary advice;
- f) Require applicants to provide assessments, plans and supporting documents to demonstrate the safety and sustainability of their proposals; and
- g) Protect existing rights of way, cycling and equestrian routes and, should diversion be unavoidable, require replacement routes to the satisfaction of the Council.

Existing Access

There are two existing access points at the property.

1. Pedestrian access via a long standing dropped curb which had pavers leading into the site



2. Existing Vehicle Access



This area of land is outside of the applicant's ownership and is unregistered, longstanding shared user more than 40 years by several persons, one being a local farmer, also the neighbour to the right and the application site owners. The desire is to bring the access arrangements within the curtilage of the owned land to ensure proper maintenance of the access going forward.



Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Policy PNP11 - Whilst the policy is seen to align with proposed new developments, it is still perhaps worthy to look at specific elements which relate to the development proposed by this application so far as it can, when there are no residential caravan site plan policies.

Justification and Evidence for PNP 11, PNP 12 and PNP 13.

- The traffic, connectivity and parking policies are to be used to manage the impact of further traffic arising from any new local development and to improve the well-being of local residents. The Policies will improve highway safety and minimize conflicts between road traffic, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. The safety and enhancement of the extensive network of village footpaths has been included, as it is a necessary and important part of village life and safety (see map on page 50).

PNP 11 - Safety of Pedestrians, Cyclists, Equestrians and Motorists

Policy PNP 11 - Safety of Pedestrians, Cyclists, Equestrians and Motorists:

Development proposals will be required to:

- 11.1. Provide safe vehicular and pedestrian access to the development.
- 11.2. Demonstrate that there are adequate safe pedestrian links (including for those with visual and mobility impairments) to the principal village facilities including the village centre, and recreation ground.
- 11.3. Identify appropriate measures such as highway improvements to address any transport infrastructure inadequacies, and include measures to mitigate increased pollution arising from increased traffic and the impact on the environment. Where other development proposals are under consideration, any particular development proposal must take account of the cumulative impact of increased traffic arising from the new development, combined with other schemes that have received or are seeking planning permission.
- 11.4. Ensure that any traffic-calming measures or vehicular access from the highway that may be proposed are both sympathetic to the character of the village, and safe for all users, and existing Pirton residents.

11.1 Provide safe vehicular and pedestrian access to the development

This will be shown at Reason for Refusal 4.

The Applicants instructed a specialist third party highway engineer firm to assess the proposal and report on its design and safety aspects to Street Manuals Standards.

The proposed block plan shows that there is more than sufficient parking and in sight movability to meet the minimum parking standards.

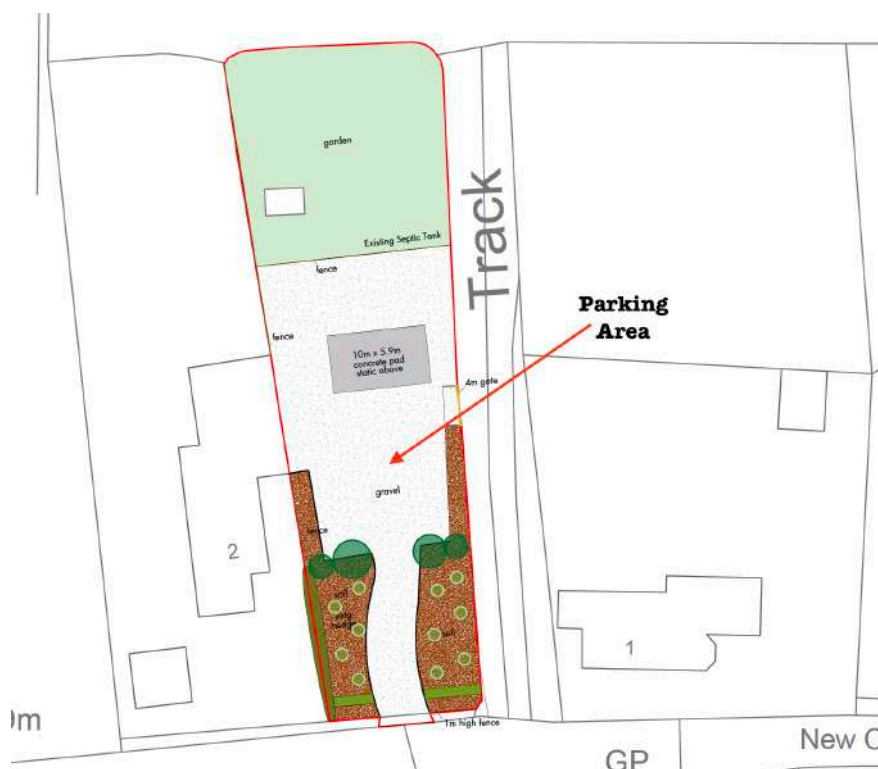
Reason for Refusal 2 - interalia linked to Reason for Refusal 1

2. The development the subject of this application, by reason of the amount of hard surfacing, boundary treatment and vehicular access proposed, would collectively result in an urbanising effect on the locality harmful to the character and appearance of the area contrary to the provisions of Policy SP9 and Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

Parking

Policy PNP 13 - Car Parking:

- 13.1. New developments should be self - sufficient in providing parking on plot to meet its needs in accordance with NHDC Residential Parking Standards, save for larger houses (3 bedrooms or more) when a minimum of 3 car parking spaces will be required. All proposals for parking must demonstrate that the needs of those with mobility impairment have been taken into account.
- 13.2. Where it is difficult to meet the above requirements on plot, for example for terraced housing, additional parking bays or service roads in front of the property will be considered acceptable to help achieve compliance with the parking standards.



It should be remembered that the site is a caravan site and as such, the ability to enter, unhitch and man over caravans is a material consideration, it is NOT a requirement to turn a caravan whilst hooked to a car, as motor movers remove the man handling that would usually prohibit any other kind of on site manoeuvring.

Urbanising Effect - Linked to Reason for Refusal 3

It is somewhat perverse when one considers the neighbouring property No2 and the level of hardstanding and front of house parking it enjoys, not to mention the overall built footprint of the 7 bedroom house within the context of the overall plot size.



As can be seen from the image above, the extent of hard surfacing seen at No2 is the entire width and depth of the front of the plot, whilst the image to the right, shows the extent to which the built form occupies the site as outlined in red.

Approx 367 Sq Mtr

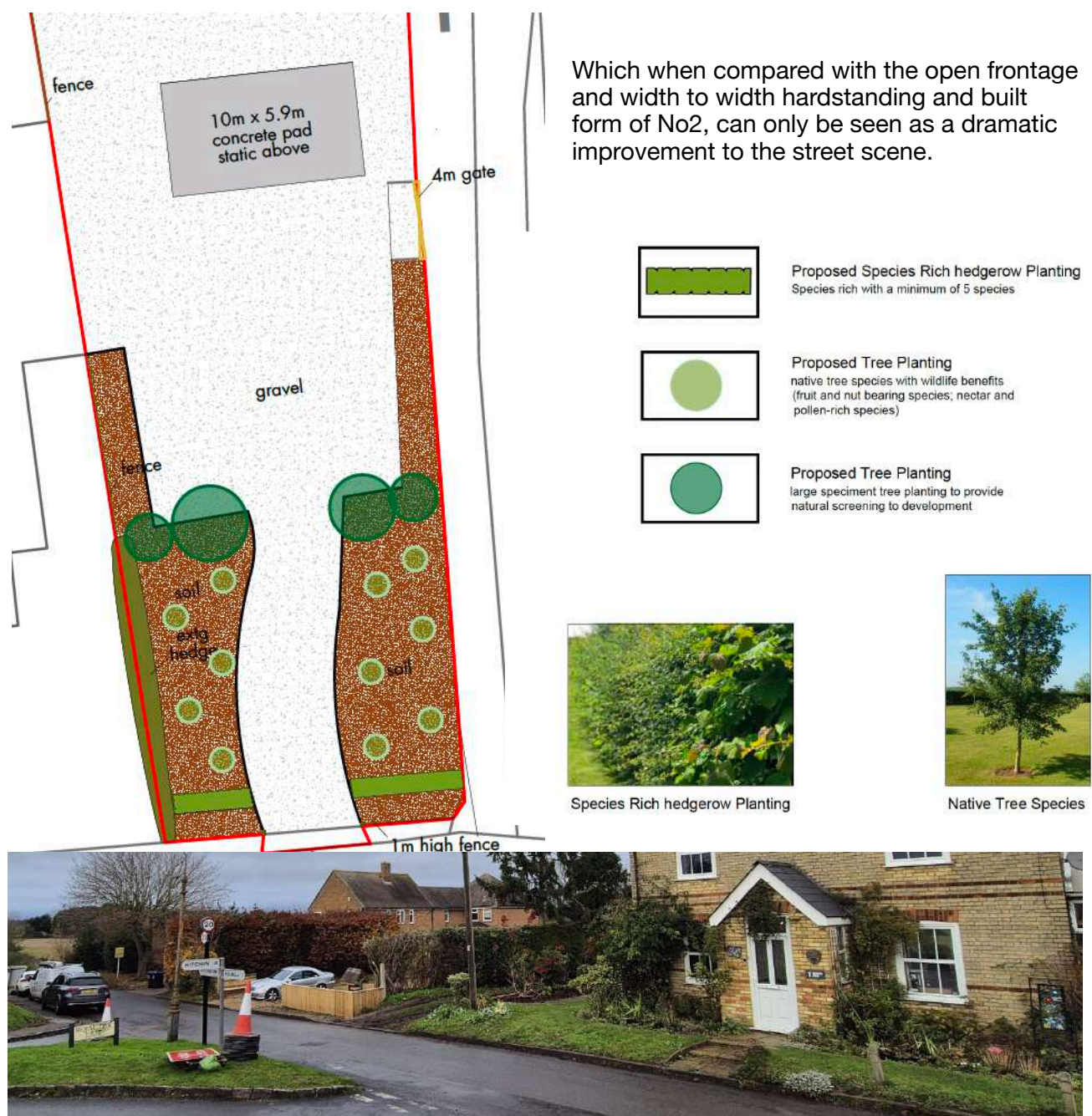


Proposed Landscaping

It is accepted that the site is located on a prominent and visual interjection and as such, the site has the potential to impact the character and appearance of the area.

The development previously had unmaintained and poor condition hedge/bushes located at the highways edge of the site. Whilst planning was not required to remove these hedges, and the removal was essential in order to provide Manual for Streets visibility splays and sight lines, it is recognised that in order to reduce the visual impact of the development within the street scene, additional hedgerow and landscape planting will be required.

Condition - This planting should be secured by a suitable enhanced landscaping condition, but as an indicative, I show on the proposed block plan and replanted native hedgerow set back sufficiently to facilitate the site lines, and internal trees and orchard planting to diffuse the inward views of the site. The 1mtr fence will be removed on grant of planning permission.



The views that presently exist and to which no planning control can remove, without a condition attached to a planning permission requiring a planting scheme, will be mitigated and largely disappear with clever planting and screening.



This base level CGI image gives an impression of how the site can be assimilated into the landscape and surroundings, reducing the visual appearance of built form, namely driveway parking, significantly reducing the visual impact upon the Character and Appearance of the area.



It is clearly seen that unlike No2, the application sites features, such as the caravan, hardstanding and driveway can be visually reduced by placement landscaping, with only fleeting glances at the entrance gap, although this image doesn't show the full extent of possible landscaping and the mitigation it can deliver..

Case Officer Comments

4.3.3 Impact on character and appearance

- 4.3.4 The developments the subject of this application involve the provision of hardstanding across an extensive area of the site, removal of soft landscaping including hedgerow, provision of timber boundary fencing and a vehicular access onto West Lane. Cumulatively this development erodes the landscaped character of the site and introduces a markedly urbanising impact. The development has had the effect of opening up public views into the site from the adjacent carriageway and public footpath. As a consequence the development is considered to not respond positively to the site's local context at this rural location beyond the village boundary. The development has a harmful visual impact on the landscape character of the site and the natural beauty of the countryside contrary to Local Plan Policies SP9 and D1.

Reason for Refusal 3

3. The application site is located adjacent to the Pirton Conservation Area. The application is not accompanied by a heritage assessment of the impact of the development on the setting of the Pirton Conservation Area. The development introduces a markedly urbanising effect on the historic character and appearance of the area without adequate justification. As such the development is considered to be harmful to the historic character and setting of the Pirton Conservation Area contrary to the provisions of Policy HE1 of the North Herts Local Plan and Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

The effect to Character and Appearance and urbanisation have been covered already within the statement.

PNP 2 and PNP 3 - Design and Character.

Objectives

1. To encourage sensitive and innovative development in accordance with the existing rural character of Pirton village and Parish including its greenery, wildlife habitats, its built and archaeological heritage and connectivity to the countryside.
2. To prevent sprawl and urbanisation and maintain Pirton as distinctive and separate place from the surrounding villages or the town of Hitchin.

Policy PNP 2 - Design and Character

Residential development proposals will be supported if they are in accordance with the guidance contained in the Pirton Character Assessment, and the following principles:

- 2.1 Recognise, respect and reinforce the distinct local, rural character of both Pirton Village and Parish (as set out in the Character Assessment at Evidence Base 1) in relation to height, scale, spacing, layout, orientation, design, design detail, and building materials, with particular consideration given to these elements reflected in dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development. This should be particularly reflected in areas of high heritage value. Proposals for development that fail to respect this Policy will be refused unless there are special circumstances of an architectural nature that demonstrate innovation in design without impacting adversely on the character and appearance of the area.
- 2.2 Are in accordance with the Build for Life Principles (Evidence Base 15).
- 2.3 The density of any scheme should be consistent and compatible with the existing and prevailing density and reflect the locally distinctive character of the locality in which the new development is proposed so that the village feel is retained.
- 2.4 Where there is a multi- dwelling development:
 - a) The proportions of openness between the houses and roads in the immediate surroundings is continued, and
 - b) A network of spaces of all sizes to preserve the rural balance and amenity spaces within Pirton Village is must be maintained.
 - c) Parked cars do not dominate the streetscape.
- 2.5 Should take into account the Chilterns Development Board Position Statement "Development Affecting the setting of the Chilterns AONB June 2011" or as updated.
- 2.6 Include gardens for all new dwellings.
- 2.7 Include secure cycle storage and storage for children's buggies and mobility scooters, and, where appropriate, a suitable store for refuse bins.
- 2.8 Preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of a conservation area or area adjoining a conservation area and to respond to existing scale, height and character of the conservation area, including boundary treatments around and within new development which should reflect the distinct local character in relation to materials and design.
- 2.9 Maintain a mix of open spaces, trees and varied housing layout along the edges of the village in order to sustain the current characteristic blending of the village into the countryside with a soft edge.
- 2.10 Follow good practice in lighting design for reduction of obtrusive or light pollution such as The Institution of Lighting Engineers: Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light. Developers should reference the design practice used.
- 2.11 Ensure by design that a development is fully integrated into the village and is not isolated and thereby form "satellite communities" separate from the main village.

4.3.5 Impact on heritage assets

- 4.3.6 The application site is located adjacent to the Pirton Conservation Area on two sides – the eastern and southern boundaries. The application is not accompanied by a heritage assessment of the impact of the development on the setting of the Pirton Conservation Area. The development introduces a markedly urbanising effect on the historic character and appearance of the area without adequate justification. As such the development is considered to be harmful to the historic character and setting of the Pirton Conservation Area contrary to the provisions of Policy HE1 of the North Herts Local Plan and Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

Heritage Assessment

Character Appraisal and Management Plan
© Place Services 2022 6

1. Introduction

1.1 Summary

Pirton Conservation Area encompasses the core of the Pirton village, a historic rural settlement with an extensive history. Located in North Hertfordshire, three miles northwest of Hitchin, Pirton is on the northern edge of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is surrounded by an agricultural landscape. The village has a compact, triangular layout, orientated around St Mary's Parish Church and the remains of Pirton's long demolished motte and bailey castle and original medieval settlement. Although long since lost, the site of the castle and original village remain an important area of green space designated as a scheduled monument at the heart of the Conservation Area.

The village retains many important archaeological, architectural, and historic features which contribute to its character, leading to most of Pirton being included within the Conservation Area boundary. This includes three scheduled monuments, numerous listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets, both built and archaeological. Surviving buildings of merit and archaeological features vary widely in age, yet all contribute positively to the Conservation Area's significance as an area of special interest, providing a link to the history and heritage of Pirton and wider area.

Site Baseline

The site is located outside of the Conservation Zone but sits adjacent to it within its setting

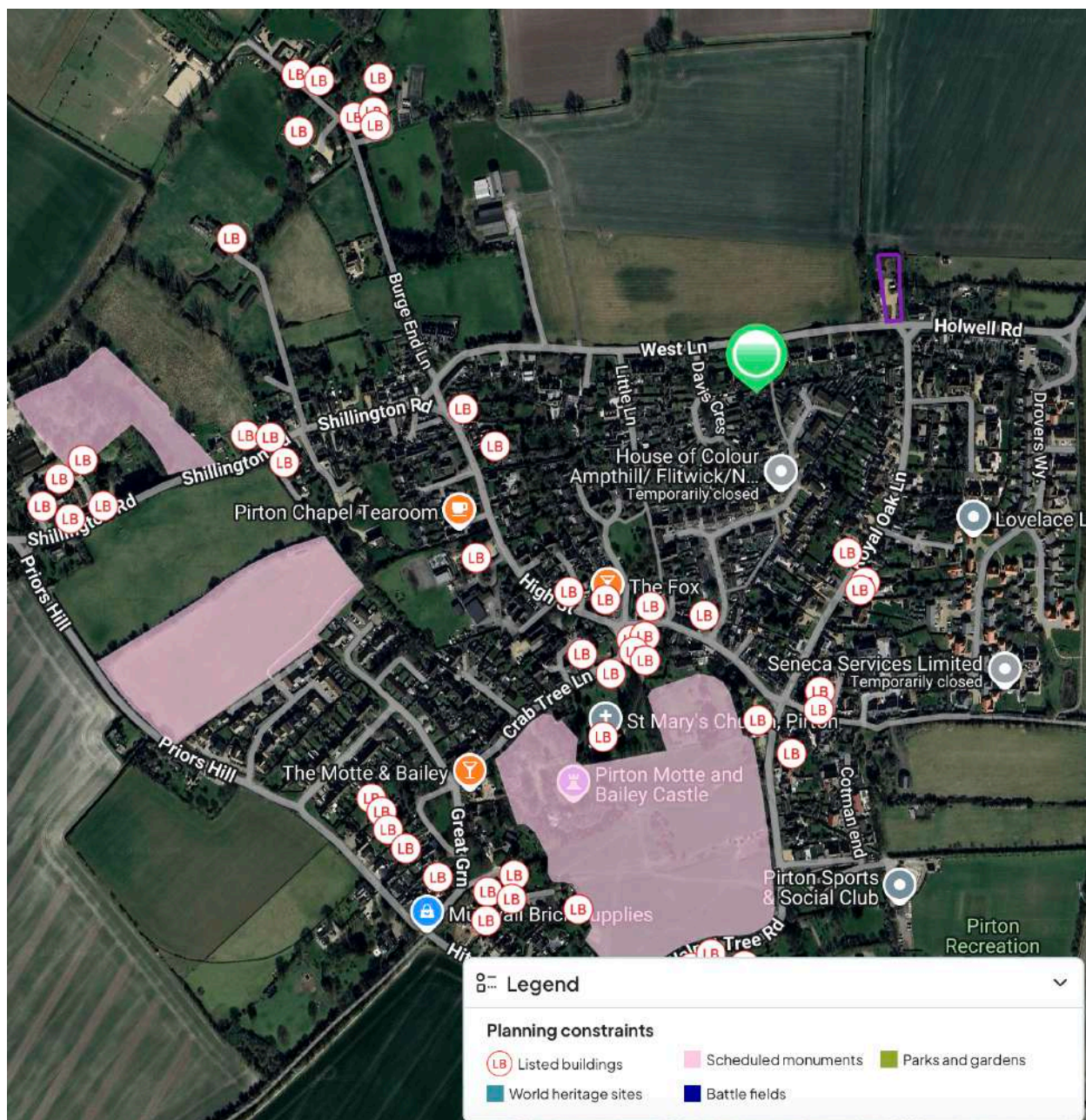
The site is an existing lawful caravan site

Heritage Assists including Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments

As the image below taken from professional data software shows, the site is not located in or close to a zone of sensitivity of any Listed Building, Scheduled Monument, World Heritage Site, Parks and Gardens or Battle Fields.

The site is outlined in purple with all other designated assets showing with their respective symbol.

As can be clearly seen the nearest sites are a significant distance from the application site and do not benefit from any interconnected visual relationship.



The nearest listed building is approximately 240 meters south, down Royal Oak Lane, as a result, of the physical and visual separation, it is not considered that the proposal adversely affects any of the Historic buildings or their settings.

2.2 Designation of the Conservation Area

Pirton Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and amended in 1979. A Character Statement for the Pirton Conservation Area was created in 2020, which outlines the significance of the heritage asset. This document provides further analysis of the Conservation Area and is the first document to provide an appraisal and management plan for the Conservation Area.

2.3 Revisions to the Boundary

As part of this review, revisions to the Conservation Area boundary are proposed, to reflect changing methodologies of good practice and provide a clearer strategy which acknowledges the practicalities of Pirton's unique built environment. This review is in line with the NPPF guidance on Conservation Areas (paragraph 191).

A map which marks the existing and proposed boundary is included on page 21 as Figure 20. Written descriptions and accompanying photographs are included in the following two sections.

Necessary Reductions

Small sections of modern housing have been removed from the Conservation Area on Priors Hill [Figure 14], Hambridge Way and Walnut Tree Road. This is because the properties in these areas lack historic or architectural interest to justify their inclusion within the boundary.

Additions

Following the designation of the Conservation Area, two further assets within Pirton have been added to the National Heritage List for England. To



Figure 14: Properties on Priors Hill, suggested for removal from the Conservation Area



Figure 15: Holwell Road, proposed to be added to the Conservation Area

Noteworthy

Necessary Reductions - Clearly the assessment pertaining to the modern buildings and their removal from the conservation zone is a clear indication that the baseline of the property, in that instance, a modern building, is material to their worthiness of being included or not within the conservation zone. The existing site is that is a lawful residential caravan site and I am certain that even in the absence of a proper and accurate assessment of this site within the assessment documents, we can see it has not been included for obvious reasons.

Our application site holds none of the characteristics that one would expect to see as key features within the Pirton Conservation Zone, and so we then must turn to see the effects our proposal (new access and drive) has within the setting of the conservation zone.

The neighbouring houses have been included within the Conservation Zone on the basis of their age, being Victorian Cottages typical of their type and area (fig 15)

The application site sits adjacent to Character Area 3

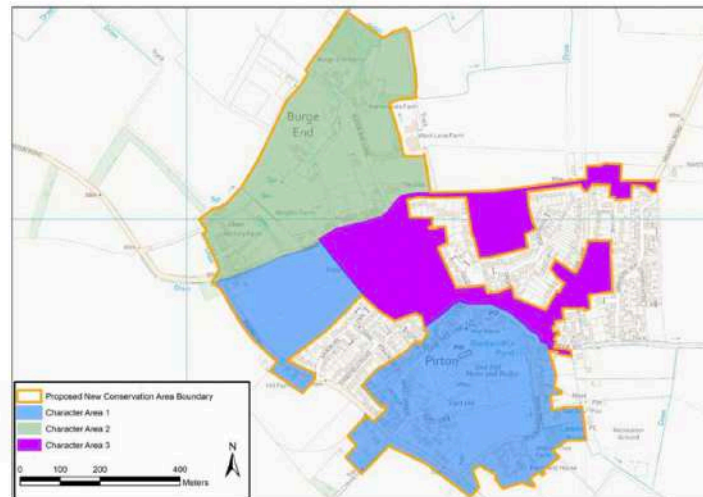


Figure 25: Map of Character Areas, Proposed Pirton Conservation Area

3.5 Character Area Three, The High Street and Royal Oak Lane

Description

Character Area Three represents a later phase in the village's development, east of the medieval village and castle. Buildings have a mixture of residential and amenity functions; within this Character Area there is the village hall, school, a public house and a shop.

Most buildings within the Character Area date from the nineteenth century or later, meaning they are predominantly brick constructions, rather than timber framed and rendered. Good examples of Arlesley brick buildings are present on the High Street and on Holwell Road, the light colour and appearance of which are a strong component of the Character Area. Where they do feature, older buildings within the Character Area typically date from the seventeenth century and would have once been outliers to the village core, such as Elm Tree Farm and 17 High Street. Buildings from the post-medieval period within the Character Area are almost all listed, due to their age and architectural interest.

Sections of modern infill have expanded the village, encroaching upon the Conservation Area's boundary and infilling sections of land between the High Street and Royal Oak Lane, including Davis Crescent, within the Conservation Area boundary. Built in 1920, the crescent has a strong designed layout which references the appearance of Great Green, in Character Area One.

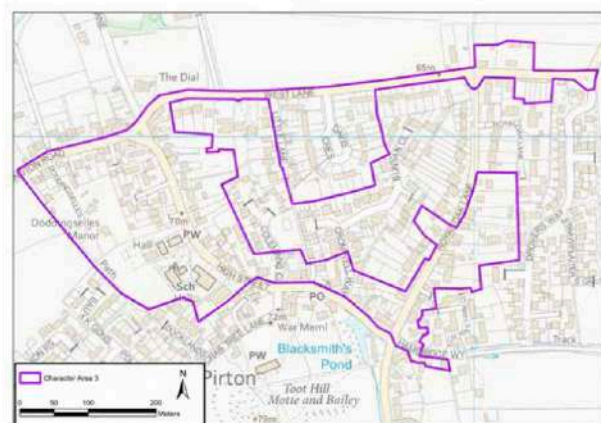


Figure 66: Map of Character Area Three

Layout and Land Usage

The Character Area is roughly triangular in shape, including two spine routes out of the village (the High Street and Royal Oak Lane) and a connecting road which runs east-west at the northern edge of the village, Holwell Road. At the junction of each road, sections of grass are present which have a widening effect, contrasting to the narrowness and undulation of the roads they adjoin.

Grass verges are a prominent part of the Character Area, which lacks formal pedestrian provision in places, often only featuring a pavement on one side of the road.

Land usage is split between residential, commercial and municipal use, including almost all of Pirton's amenities. The Village Hall, a chapel, the school, The Fox and village shop are all within the Character Area.

Landscaping and Open Spaces

Little Green [Figure 67], at the junction of Royal Oak Lane and the High Street, is the largest of publicly accessible open spaces within the Character Area. The school, Methodist Chapel and The Fox PH do, nevertheless, feature areas of associated land which have a community function. To the rear and front of the village hall the land is partially tarmacked for car parking.



Figure 67: Little Green



Figure 68: Grass Verges on Royal Oak Lane



Figure 69: Open Space at Cromwell Cottage



Figure 70: Green Space at the junction of the High Street and West Lane



Figure 71: The Fox Pub (left) and associated garden



Figure 72: The Village Hall, High Street

Pockets of grass verges are a prominent feature - this is something to be found now in our application proposal

Pockets of grass verges and small greens are a dominant feature of the Character Area, some featuring benches and offering areas of respite for residents and visitors to the village [Figure 56]. These small greens help to prevent the Character Area from appearing too urban, retaining a link to the surrounding rural landscape and emphasising the loose grain of development within the village.

Key Buildings

Designated

There are seven listed buildings within the Character Area, including the Methodist Chapel, The Fox PH and a selection of older residential dwellings. Many of the listed buildings are post-medieval in age and once would have been more scattered in appearance than they are today. For a details of all the listed buildings in the Pirton Conservation Area, see Appendix 6.3.

The Methodist Chapel [Figure 73]. Built in 1906, the building is constructed in red brick with steep slate roofs. The chapel features Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau elements, an elaborate frontage and stained-glass glazing.

The Fox PH [Figure 71]. Dating from the seventeenth century, re-fronted in the eighteenth century. The pub is timber framed and two storeys high. Originally a lobby entry house and two cells wide, the building was extended in the

eighteenth century with an additional two bays, lower in height.

17 High Street [Figure 74]. Built circa 1600, the house has a lobby entry plan form, thatched roof and roughcast rendered walls. From the street only the side of the building can be seen, the front of which is perpendicular to the High Street.

Cromwell Cottage [Figure 69]. Grade II listed, the building has a nineteenth-century brick frontage which disguises its sixteenth century origins. The rear range of the building is the oldest section, featuring exposed timber framing.

41-45 High Street. Seventeenth century in age, with later alterations, the small terrace was originally two dwellings rather than three. Timber framed, the building is set back from the road and features rough cast render and casement windows.

Elm Tree Farmhouse. Dating from the sixteenth century but primarily seventeenth century in age, Elm Tree Farmhouse was the farmhouse for the land between Hambridge Way and Holwell Road, now infilled with modern housing. Elm Tree Farm was closely linked to Little Green Farmhouse, which was located immediately to its north and demolished in the early twentieth century.

Orchard Cottage. Built circa 1600, Orchard Cottage is at the bottom of the High Street, on



Figure 73: The Methodist Chapel



Figure 74: 17 High Street, largely concealed from the road due to its elevated position



Figure 75: 21 Royal Oak Lane

Non-designated

Properties which feature typical local and traditional materials, such as Arlese brick, lime render, natural slate and handmade tiles contribute positively to the Character Area.

The following have been identified as positive contributors to the Conservation Area due to their display of such materials and relatively unaltered appearance.

1 and 3 Holwell Road [see Figure 76 which depicts number 3]. Both detached, these two buildings are typical in appearance for the nineteenth century, with a roof gabled at the sides and featuring a central doorway, with windows either side. Windows across the front of each house are wooden sashes. Built in gault brick, both houses are simply designed, with red brick used as ornamentation at the eaves, around windows and as strip bands across the buildings. Although they have been extended, each house retains large gardens to the side and rear.



Boundary Treatments

Boundary treatments are minimal, limited to hedgerow, picket fencing and tree cover throughout the Character Area. The set back of buildings, including the presence of grass verges on both High Street and Royal Oak Lane creates a sense of separation meaning high or solid boundary walls are not necessary for privacy.

Iron railings are uncommon, and where present, incidental to the street scene. This is due to their visual permeability and the lack of grand formal gates or entranceways forming part of the boundary they mark.

Hedgerows have been removed in places to facilitate off road parking. Although beneficial to the appearance of the Conservation Area by removing cars from the road, the loss of hedging diminishes the green appearance of the street scene.

Neutral Elements

Within the Character Area there are numerous twentieth-century infill buildings on the High Street and Royal Oak Lane which do not detract from, but do not add to, the overall appearance and special interest of the Conservation Area. This is due to the sympathetic massing and materials used on these buildings, which allow

them to remain innocuous within the street scene.

The general appearance of the twentieth century buildings allows them to be easily read as modern additions, with these later additions to the village typically featuring larger windows and reddish-brown bricks, rather than the orange-y red or gault brick of nineteenth century dwellings.

Public Realm

Public realm is limited within the Character Area to streetlamps, traffic signs and general paraphernalia, such as utilities cabinets and litter bins.

Outside Cromwell Cottage [Figure 69], there is a Victorian post box and bench which, together with the bench next to the pond, provide an attractive focal point to the village.

Streetlamps, where present, are a variety of styles. As part of the Parish's Neighbourhood Plan, streetlamps were appraised, with swan necked lamps considered most favourable by residents.



Figure 86: Hedgerow on Royal Oak Lane



Figure 87: Neutral modern buildings on the High Street



Figure 88: Infill dwellings on Royal Oak Lane

Boundary treatments are minimal limited to hedgerows, this is a key feature of the application proposal

Key Views - Relevance View 8

Pirton Conservation Area
Character Appraisal and Management Plan



Views

The location of areas where key views within the Character Area can be gained are identified on the adjacent map. These include the view toward St Mary's church at the bottom of the High Street and along the High Street toward the village shop.



Figure 89: View 6, at the junction of the High Street and Shillington Road



Figure 90: View 3, looking south east along the High Street



Figure 91: View 2, looking south along Royal Oak Lane



Figure 92: View 7, Holwell Road

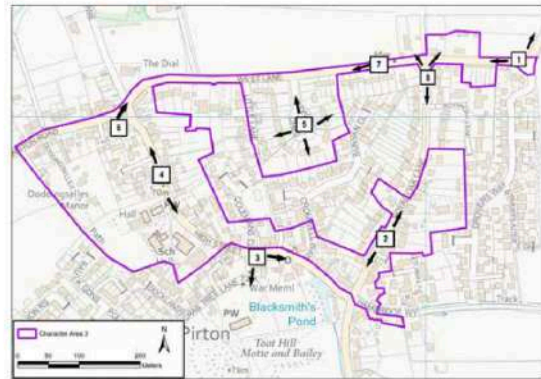


Figure 93: Locations within the Character Area where important views can be gained

Views toward the open countryside to the north reinforce Pirton's rural village character and provide a tangible connection to the Conservation Area's setting. Similarly, long views across the High Street and back towards Toot Hill are verdant in character, with the presence of hedgerows, trees and planting in gardens prominent within the streetscape.

The positioning of houses at junctions and in planned cul-de-sacs such as Davis Crescent, also add visual interest, intercepting and framing views towards the landscape beyond.

© Place Services 2023

52

This view enables glimpses of the open countryside to the north, especially through the existing driveway gap which provides access to the farmed fields beyond.

It is noteworthy to mention that those views will not be interrupted or blocked, and the inward views of the site will be significantly enhanced through the imposition of a suitable planning condition to secure enhanced planting and landscaping.



Parking

In the event that the application site is unable to obtain a satisfactory entrance and parking arrangement to satisfy the owners needs, then on street parking will continue to be the option available to the occupiers of the caravan site.

This parking takes place at the junction of West Lane and Howell Road as seen below.



Pirton Conservation Area
Character Appraisal and Management Plan



4. Opportunities for Enhancement

The following key issues have been identified and are summarised below in brief. The list is in no way exhaustive and neither are the issues identified unique to Pirton Conservation Area, with many being shared with other conservation areas.

4.1 Access and Integration

Pirton can be accessed through multiple routes, on foot or by vehicle. In many places entry to the Conservation Area is not discernible and better acknowledgment of the Conservation Area, either through signage, changes in streetscape features or markers would be beneficial. Interpretation boards and the creation of integrated approach, utilising uniform signage and specific lighting and paving throughout the Conservation Area, or Character Areas, would allow for improved public awareness.

4.2 Car Parking

Car parking can have an adverse effect on the character of a conservation area, impacting the street scene and how the area is experienced. Pirton contains some areas where parking is particularly an issue and presents an opportunity for enhancement, to rid congestion and improve the appearance of the area. Particularly on the southern section of the High Street and Great Green, there is a shortage of off-road parking and parking is predominantly on-street, and thus does little for the appearance of the Conservation Area.

4.3 Inappropriate Modern Development

Throughout the Conservation Area are examples of inappropriate and unsympathetic additions which can make a cumulative negative impact on

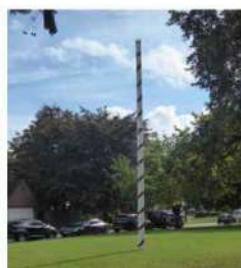


Figure 99: Car parking on Great Green

the area. The addition of uncharacteristic modern porches to residential units, the replacement of windows and doors, as well as the installation of unsympathetic additions to buildings such as air conditioning units, rooflights, extraction flues, and TV aerials and satellite dishes, harm the historic character and qualities of the area. In some cases, unsympathetic fixings can also affect the historic façade of buildings.



Figure 100: Visible satellite dishes and disproportionate modern windows distract from the appearance of buildings which otherwise contribute positively to the Conservation Area

Maintenance, and the lack of it, can detract from the quality of the Conservation Area. In general, Pirton is well maintained however the risk of decay is most common on private dwellings, and there is scope for better engagement with landowners to improve the appearance of properties. Regular maintenance, including painting, cleaning and the clearance of vegetation should be promoted as a key component of preserving the quality of the Conservation Area.

4.2 Sets out that on street parking is an area of concern and whereby a measurable enhancement can be delivered by securing off street parking.

Granite Edge Stones

Hard Landscaping

While road surfacing is generally of a good quality, there are some areas that would benefit from consistent maintenance, removing pot holes and areas of erosion. Pavements are of varying quality throughout the Conservation Area, featuring a range of coping stones and edge treatments. Granite edge stones, where present are a positive reinforcement of the village's character, utilising a traditional material, however in some places these have been lost. Reinstatement of granite and the prevention of further removal or replacement with cement stones, is recommended. Therefore, great consideration should be taken by the Local Planning Authority for all new applications.

The applicant is perfectly satisfied to accept a planning condition to secure the final details of any and all hard landscaping which is capable of including granite edge stone to the proposed driveway entrance, which would enhance the setting of the conservation zone and deliver further enhancements in combination with securing off street parking.

The base line of the site is that of a lawful residential caravan site and the impact to the area must be judged to reflect this position as a starting point.

Conservation Zone Setting

Impacts -

The removal of existing hedgerow and erection of a 1 meter timber fence pre development were permitted development activities not subject to requiring planning permission and are not capable of being enforced upon.

The effect is that the site frontage is now extremely open and is therefore visually intrusive to Character and Appearance of the area, and has a minor adverse impact to the visual appearance.

The laying of a significant area of hardstanding with permeable loose stone and shingle negatively contributes to the visual impact in its current form.

The on street parking by the present owners is an identified area for improvement within the conservation zone and their setting.

Mitigation -

Removal of 1 meter close board fencing

Plant native hedgerow set back a sufficient distance to establish both clear visibility sight lines but also a key feature of the conservation zone, being a grass verges alongside the roads edge

Use of typical features such as granite edging stones to delineate the driveways edge

Extensive native tree planting to include fruiting trees to interrupt the inward views of the site and enhance the visual relationship between the residential caravan site and the nearby conservation zone

Parking to be moved from on street to off street delivering a recognised enhancement

12 Historic Environment

Policy HE1: Designated heritage assets

Planning applications relating to Designated heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement that:

- i. Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting;
- ii. Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and
- iii. Informs any necessary measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms.

Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable):

- a) Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;
- b) Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character or distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and
- c) Will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset's optimum viable use.

Where substantial harm to, or loss of significance, of a designated heritage asset is proposed the Council shall refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.

Summary

The proposal has identified that no heritage assets are affected by the proposal and impacts are restrained to the setting of the conservation zone.

The key features of strength of the conservation have been identified and judged against the proposed scheme.

The negative impacts clearly identified with significant and suitable mitigation identified to deliver planning gain and clearly demonstrate that the proposal will not have any adverse impact to the setting of the conservation zone.

The proposal is policy compliant subject to the imposition of suitable planning conditions to secure the measures suggested.

Reason for Refusal 4

4. The development site is located on a classified road opposite a busy junction with Royal Oak Lane and Holwell Road. The Highway Authority consider that the development is likely to lead to conditions prejudicial to highway safety and amenity. As such the development is considered to be contrary to the provisions of Policy T1 of the North Herts Local Plan.

The applicants instructed JR Transport a specialist firm of highways engineers to examine the proposal and previous reasons for refusal.

Their report and findings are submitted in full in support of the application and clearly show that

1. Adequate and sufficient visibility splays and sight lines can be achieved and secured at the site.
2. That vehicle tracking demonstrates that the site access and internal space works and meets the relevant standards
- 3.
4. Planning gains by providing

The access is evidenced as being safe for all road users

John Russell Transport Report

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 4.1. This Access Appraisal is prepared in relation to planning application 25/01198/FP for works at Land to the East of 2 West Lane, Pirton, including the extension of hardstanding, installation of a permeable driveway, and creation of a new vehicular access.
- 4.2. The application was refused, inter alia, on highway-safety grounds, with the Highway Authority citing insufficient information – specifically the absence of swept-path analysis for vehicles towing caravans.
- 4.3. This appraisal demonstrates that the existing access via a narrow grass track is substandard, requiring vehicles to overrun verges and offering poor visibility. In contrast, the proposed new 5.2 m-wide access from West Lane allows cars and light vehicles to enter and exit without crossing the centre line. Swept-path analysis demonstrates that a vehicle towing a touring caravan can enter, turn on-site, and exit in forward gear. Visibility is also significantly improved by setting back the boundary hedge.
- 4.4. The proposed access would therefore not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety. In contrast, the new arrangement represents a significant highway safety improvement over the existing access. in accordance with Government policy set out at paragraph 116 of the NPPF, there are no highway safety reasons why planning permission should be withheld or refused.

Reason for Refusal 5

Bio Diversity Net Gain (BNG)

5. The submitted ecology report concludes that the development results in a loss of habitat and hedgerow units with no proposals for mitigation and or replacement. As such the development fails to achieve a net gain for biodiversity contrary to the provisions of Policy NE4 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031

The laying of the driveway is the retrospective element of the application proposal, as such, there is no requirement by the applicant to submit a BNG metric or assessment at the application stage, as one of the exemptions is that of a retrospective application.

In this instance the Applicants apply the Exemption for BNG reporting on the basis that it's a retrospective application.

That being said, the applicants recognises that he will be required to deliver a Bio Diversity Net Gain, and will accept a planning condition of the same.

The revised plans show significant enhanced planting of trees and fruit trees which will certainly secure an increase in BD over the existing position, additional measures such as under storey planting or species enrichment to all grass areas will further deliver BNG.

The council are invited to condition the necessary evidence of a 10% BNG to be discharged.



Conclusion

It is important to acknowledge and understand that this site is a lawful residential caravan site as the starting point with the removal of hedgerows and the section of a 1 meter close board fence being unenforceable.

The Council appears to have applied policy standards more akin to new housing development and fail to acknowledge its lawful planing position and the lack of a Local Plan policy specifically for existing residential caravan sites.

The approach open to the Council should they seek to refuse this application, is to enforce upon the laying of hardstanding (shingle drive), but one should ask themselves what this will achieve?

In the event that the Council successfully enforced against the laying of the hardstanding (shingle drive), this will not get;

- a) the 1 meter permitted development fence removed
- b) will not secure enhanced landscaping and planting of roadside hedging
- c) will not secure conservation zone identified enhanced features like granite cobble stones
- d) will not secure conservation zone identified features such as grass verges
- e) will not secure conservation improvements by removing on street parking
- f) will not prevent access to the site as both pedestrian and vehicle access exist at the site

What will remain in the event that the Council refuse the application and do not secure the identified improvements, is an open fronted caravan site that will negatively impact the visual relationship of the conservation zone and view point 8 together with the immediate character and appearance of the area.

In granting planning permission for the proposed development subject to conditions, there is immeasurable planning gain and significant identifiable gain to the setting of the conservation zone.