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Tel:

Mr T Rea
Planning Control
North Hertfordshire District Council
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG6 6DH

8th May, 2018

Dear Mr Rea,

Re: Outline Planning Application – 18/00912/FP

We refer to the above application and wish to object to this for the reasons stated in the attached document.

Yours sincerely,

Roy Blyth
Joanne Blyth
Rosie Blyth
Christopher Blyth

Conservation Area

Pirton has a Conservation Area covering much of the older part of the village, including the site of the castle, Great Green, Little Green and Burge End Lane. Most of the Conservation Area in Pirton is a mix of roads and housing, with limited views over open countryside. Burge End Lane however, has just five houses and offers excellent views from the road over open fields, leading to the network of footpaths.

The following definition of a Conservation Area is taken from the NHDC Local Plan:

> *"An area defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as 'an area of special architectural and historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".*

Similarly, the Plan clearly states that:

> *"Particular care will be required when considering the scale, layout, design and materials of development proposals within or adjacent to conservation areas. They must be designed to harmonise with their surroundings and in conservation areas preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the heritage asset.*
>
> *The Council will require applicants to assess the significance of the designated heritage asset, including its setting, and justify and detail the impact of the proposal upon the significance of the asset to ensure proposals preserve the significance of assets".*

Alongside these commitments from the Council, the NPPF also puts clear emphasis on the importance of Conservation Areas and reiterates that substantial harm to designated heritage assets should generally be avoided, unless specific exception criteria are met.

Clearly this application goes against the established principles of protecting and preserving this most valuable and historical village asset and gives no justification in the form of any exceptional criteria that would support a change in that view.

Building a large new modern house and garage, right alongside the Conservation Area, will do nothing to enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the area and approval would undoubtedly set a precedent for further development on similar open fields and large gardens within the rest of Burge End Lane.

Similarly, the applicant has chosen to completely ignore the unique collection of centuries-old listed buildings situated close by and has instead simply attempted to 'bury' part of the new build into the landscape. This in itself is completely at odds with the form and structure of the existing listed buildings and their environs.

Public amenity

Burge End Lane is one of the few public roads left within the Pirton Conservation Area that provides safe access to open countryside on foot, whilst at the same time affording peaceful views over the surrounding fields. It is also one of the few roads within the Conservation Area that is not lined with houses and parked vehicles.

It is a narrow, single track lane with no footpath and no passing places for vehicles along its full length and is used on a daily basis by pedestrian families, unsupervised children and walkers to access their homes, to play in the lane, or to reach the public footpath network at the end of Burge End Lane. It is also used by horse riders and occasionally Scout groups will use the lane to walk to the lower field for evening adventure activities.

This application to build a large five-bedroomed house at the far end of Burge End Lane will undoubtedly have a detrimental affect on it's use by the community due to the inevitable increase in traffic movements, which ultimately will discourage the public from walking along it.

The Manual for Streets: Section 6 – Street Users' Needs, gives clear guidance on how to meet these needs, as follows:

> *"The propensity to walk is influenced not only by distance, but also by the quality of the walking experience. This will depend on how stimulating and attractive the environment is, together with how safe and secure people feel within it. Design that accommodates the needs of children and disabled people is likely to suit most, if not all, user types".*

This development will clearly not meet those objectives for the public who already use this lane. It will significantly reduce the quality of the walking experience and introduce an unsafe environment with the inevitable increase in traffic volume.

Highway safety

A previous planning application to build one bungalow and detached garage (Ref. 01/01883/1) in Burge End Lane was refused on appeal by The Planning Inspectorate. One of the reasons for refusal was concerning highway safety and I have given below the relevant extract from the Inspector's report:

> *"... I saw how poor the visibility is at the junction of Shillington Road and Burge End Lane, especially to the west from which traffic approaches on the nearside of the road. I note that there is no record of accidents at the junction. This must, in part, be attributable to relatively low traffic volumes in Burge End Lane. Whatever the level of traffic using Shillington Road, it is the case that if more vehicles use Burge End Lane, then the potential for a conflict will increase. I consider that the appeal proposal would increase traffic movements in and out of Burge End Lane and that visibility at the junction is so restricted, that the danger to highway users would be increased".*

Since that time traffic volumes have increased generally and public transport for the village has also been reduced.

Burge End Lane is a cul-de-sac which opens at one end onto a narrow four-way junction with West Lane, the High Street and Shillington Road. There are five existing properties in the lane and the proposed development of another five-bedroom house would undoubtedly increase the volume of traffic using Burge End Lane.

There are already issues with access at the junction which will get significantly worse with the impact of additional traffic heading to and from the nearby new housing estate of 78 homes, currently under development to the east at Holwell Turn.

Heading south out of Burge End Lane is already a potentially dangerous manoeuvre as you have to negotiate a completely blind corner to the west, being mindful of oncoming traffic from three directions and the almost permanent rows of parked cars.

Burge End Lane is already used to access the existing properties by larger vehicles such as refuse collection, oil deliveries and ever more parcel delivery vans. Many of these vehicles are forced to negotiate the blind junction in an attempt to reverse down Burge End Lane as there are no turning places along its length. This reversing manoeuvre at the junction is already dangerous and also means that any pedestrians and cyclists in the lane behind the vehicle will likely not be visible.

Any increase in traffic at this junction as a result of this development will compromise highway safety to an unacceptable level and put pedestrians at greater risk when trying to cross the junction and access Burge End Lane, which has no footpath at all.

Sustainable Development

Burge End Lane currently has five properties and is situated entirely within a designated Conservation Area.

The NHDC Local Plan Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire clearly states that NHDC will *"protect key elements of North Hertfordshire's environment including important landscapes, heritage assets and green infrastructure (including the water environment).*

Permitting this development will clearly go against that commitment and undoubtedly set a precedent for a future pattern of developments in the other fields and gardens along the lane that is simply not sustainable and ultimately will lead to an unplanned expansion of the village, beyond the defined development boundary.

It is also a fact that the existing mains drainage leading to the pumping station at the lower end of Burge End Lane overflows because of the sheer volume of waste. This results in regular visits from a sewage truck to pump the excess waste, however it has been known on many occasions to overflow and flood the neighbouring properties with raw sewage.

I make reference to the NHDC Local Plan 2011-31 Section 11.70 which states:

> *"Drainage strategies should be used to demonstrate that a proposed development has considered the available surface and foul water drainage options during a scheme's preparation stage to ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place before development commences".*

Such a strategy has clearly not been considered as part of this application, which is simply not sustainable.

Village Boundary and Neighbourhood Plan

The site subject to this proposal sits clearly outside of the agreed village development boundary and is not included in the emerging site allocations development plan document, on which the public have been consulted. It therefore goes against the development plan for Pirton and against the views of the wider community.

Whilst the NHDC Local Plan 2011-2031 (incorporating the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan) is going through the final stages of approval, the Plan in draft must be considered a "material consideration" in any development proposals, so any applicant must consider it's contents.

The following statement is taken from the NHDC Local Plan 2011-31 Section 8.5:

> *"Prospective applicants should be mindful of emerging and adopted neighbourhood plans in the parish or settlement where the site is located".*

This application has chosen to completely ignore the Plans and failed to demonstrate any exceptional circumstances that would give a valid reason to consider development outside of the village development boundary and on the border of a Conservation Area.