



ARBORICULTURAL REPORT & TREE SURVEY

Land at Pirton

Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RA

Proposed Residential Development

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ORGANISATION	PSK Rural Limited
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Prepared in accordance with BS 5837:2012 - Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations

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Document Control

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Executive Summary

PRINCIPAL ARBORICULTURAL CONCLUSION

No trees are located within the red-line application site. Three trees are identified to the east of the application area. All three trees will be retained. T1 and T2 are unaffected by the works on the information provided. The only potential RPA interaction is a pedestrian pathway within the RPA of T3; this can be constructed using a no-dig, above-ground root protection method so that the tree is not subjected to material root damage, excavation or soil compaction.

This report has been prepared for the proposed residential development at Land at Pirton, Hitchin, SG5 3RA. It assesses the relationship between the proposed development and the three identified off-site trees, calculates their Root Protection Areas (RPAs) in accordance with BS 5837:2012 and provides the tree protection and construction measures necessary to safeguard those trees throughout the works.

The three identified trees are T1 Common Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), stem diameter 0.78 m; T2 Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), stem diameter 0.72 m; and T3 Common Walnut (*Juglans regia*), stem diameter 0.43 m. The calculated RPA radii are 9.36 m, 8.64 m and 5.16 m respectively.

Subject to implementation of the measures in this report, particularly the protected no-dig approach for the pedestrian pathway near T3, the proposal can be delivered without unacceptable arboricultural harm. The retention strategy is consistent with BS 5837:2012, the August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework, the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and Policy PNP4 of the made Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan.

1. Introduction and Instructions

PSK Rural Limited has been instructed to prepare an Arboricultural Report and Tree Survey in support of the planning application for the proposed residential development at Land at Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RA.

The assessment has regard to the PSK Rural Arboriculture Plan, drawing LAP ARB 001 Rev A (August 2026), and to the tree data provided for T1, T2 and T3. The drawing identifies the planning application boundary, the development layout and the three trees relevant to this assessment.

The principal purpose of the report is to establish whether the proposed development can be delivered while retaining and protecting the identified trees, and to define an appropriate construction method where the pedestrian pathway passes within the RPA of T3.

2. Site and Proposed Development

The site lies on the northern edge of Pirton, north of the existing built-up area. The land is shown on the submitted plan as agricultural land, with the proposed residential development concentrated within the red-line application boundary. The three trees considered in this report are located outside the application area to the east of the red line.

No tree stems are shown within the red-line application site. Accordingly, the proposal does not require the felling or direct loss of any of the identified trees. The only identified interface between proposed works and an RPA is the pedestrian pathway close to T3.

3. Survey Scope and Methodology

This is a focused arboricultural constraints and impact assessment prepared in accordance with the principles of BS 5837:2012. It is proportionate to the circumstances of the site: the relevant trees are outside the application boundary, no tree removal is proposed, and the principal technical issue is the safeguarding of root systems during construction.

Species identification and stem diameters are taken from the supplied project information. The diameter values are treated as single-stem diameters measured at breast height. RPAs are calculated using the BS 5837:2012 single-stem method: $RPA\ radius = stem\ diameter \times 12$, expressed in metres. Circular RPAs are adopted because there is no site-specific evidence requiring an offset or asymmetric RPA.

RPA CALCULATION

For a single-stem tree, the RPA radius is 12 times the stem diameter. Accordingly: T1 0.78 m x 12 = 9.36 m; T2 0.72 m x 12 = 8.64 m; T3 0.43 m x 12 = 5.16 m. The corresponding RPA areas are approximately 275.2 m², 234.5 m² and 83.6 m².

3.1 Survey limitations

The assessment is not a detailed tree-safety or decay-detection survey. Tree heights, crown spreads, life-stage, physiological condition and structural condition were not provided and have not been inferred. For the purposes of development assessment all three trees are treated as retained trees requiring protection. No BS 5837 retention category is assigned in the absence of sufficient condition data.

4. Tree Survey and Root Protection Areas

The identified trees and their calculated RPAs are summarised below. The RPA is a design and construction constraint intended to protect the soil volume most likely to contain roots necessary for tree health and stability. Roots can occur outside the RPA and the absence of an RPA overlap does not remove the need for good site practice.

Ref.	Species	Position	DBH	RPA radius	RPA area	Development relationship
T1	Common Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	East of application site; outside red line	0.78 m	9.36 m	275.2 m ²	Retain. No proposed work within the calculated RPA.
T2	Field Maple <i>Acer campestre</i>	East of application site; outside red line	0.72 m	8.64 m	234.5 m ²	Retain. No proposed work within the calculated RPA.
T3	Common Walnut <i>Juglans regia</i>	East / adjacent to application site; outside red line	0.43 m	5.16 m	83.6 m ²	Retain. Pedestrian pathway only may enter RPA; no-dig construction required.

Table 1 - Focused tree survey and calculated Root Protection Areas

5. Arboricultural Impact Assessment

5.1 Tree retention

All three trees will be retained.

No tree removal is required and no pruning is proposed as part of the development. This avoids the principal direct arboricultural effect normally associated with development and preserves the existing landscape features identified around the site boundary.

5.2 T1 and T2

T1 and T2 are outside the application site. On the information supplied, no buildings, road construction, drainage works, service trenches, level changes or other operations are proposed within their calculated RPAs. Their root protection requirements can therefore be met by keeping construction activity outside the calculated RPA radii and by applying the general protection measures set out in Section 6.

5.3 T3 and the pedestrian pathway

The pedestrian pathway is the only element identified as potentially extending into the calculated 5.16 m RPA of T3. A conventional excavated path could damage shallow roots, remove rooting medium and compact the remaining soil. A no-dig construction is therefore required within the RPA.

The pathway will be formed at or above the existing ground level. Any necessary removal of surface vegetation or loose topsoil will be carried out by hand only and kept to the absolute minimum necessary. The underlying soil will not be excavated, regraded or mechanically compacted. A permeable root-protection geotextile / barrier membrane will be laid directly over the undisturbed surface and the pathway construction built above it using a load-spreading build-up appropriate to the path specification.

If roots are encountered during the limited surface preparation, roots 25 mm diameter or greater will not be severed. The path formation level, edge detail or local alignment will instead be adjusted to retain the root. Smaller roots will also be retained wherever reasonably practicable. No continuous concrete kerb or strip foundation will be installed within the RPA.

Provided that this method is followed, the pathway is not expected to cause material deterioration in T3 or compromise its reasonable future retention.

6. Tree Protection and Construction Methodology

6.1 Pre-commencement requirements

1. The positions of T1, T2 and T3 will be verified on site and the calculated RPA radii set out from the centre of each stem.
2. Tree protection fencing will be installed before construction traffic, storage, excavation or site establishment occurs near the retained trees. Fencing will remain in place until works in the relevant area are complete.
3. The construction team will receive a pre-start briefing identifying the RPAs as exclusion areas and explaining the special pathway method required within the RPA of T3.
4. The pedestrian pathway working strip within the RPA of T3 will be clearly marked. The remainder of the RPA will remain protected and inaccessible to general construction activity.

6.2 General RPA restrictions

- No excavation, trenching, soil stripping, level reduction or installation of underground services within an RPA unless specifically allowed by this report.
- No storage of materials, spoil, fuels, chemicals, plant or machinery within an RPA.
- No mixing or washing out of concrete, mortar or other potentially phytotoxic materials within or where run-off could enter an RPA.
- No fires, hot works or discharge of exhaust heat close to retained crowns or stems.
- No mechanical compaction of existing soil within an RPA. Where temporary access is unavoidably required, suitable ground protection capable of distributing loads will be installed before access occurs.
- No attachment of signs, cables, lighting or temporary structures to retained trees.

6.3 No-dig pathway method within the RPA of T3

5. Set out the pathway and confirm the extent of RPA overlap before breaking ground.
6. Cut existing vegetation flush to ground level. Where minor local surface preparation is unavoidable, remove only loose surface material / topsoil by hand and without cutting into the undisturbed subsoil.
7. If roots are exposed, retain them. No root of 25 mm diameter or greater will be cut. If a root conflicts with the intended level, the path will be raised or adjusted locally.
8. Lay a permeable root-protection geotextile / barrier membrane over the existing surface. The membrane will remain continuous beneath the full width of path within the RPA.
9. Install an above-ground load-spreading layer, such as a cellular confinement system or equivalent proprietary root-protection system, where required by the path build-up. Any fill will be clean, inert and free-draining.
10. Construct the wearing surface at or above existing ground level. Compaction will be confined to imported construction layers above the protection system; the underlying soil will not be mechanically compacted.
11. Use pegged or surface-fixed edging details that avoid continuous trench excavation or concrete foundations within the RPA.

12. Complete the work in one controlled operation and remove surplus material promptly. The adjoining RPA will remain fenced and protected throughout.

6.4 Arboricultural supervision and hold points

A competent arboricultural person will attend or be available at the following hold points: initial setting out of the T3 RPA and pathway; the first stage of surface preparation within the RPA; and any point at which unexpected roots or ground conditions are encountered. Any departure from the approved method will be agreed before work proceeds.

7. Planning Policy Context

The relevant planning policy framework gives substantial weight to the retention of established landscape features, integration of trees within development and avoidance of unnecessary arboricultural harm. The proposal has been assessed against the following provisions.

Policy / guidance	Relevant requirement	Response of this proposal
BS 5837:2012	Integrate tree constraints at design stage; identify RPAs; protect retained trees during demolition/construction; use specialist methods where works enter RPAs.	RPAs are calculated for T1-T3. All trees are retained. T3 path work uses a no-dig, above-ground method and the remainder of each RPA is protected.
NPPF August 2026 - Policy N2	Development should conserve and enhance natural features of visual and nature conservation value, including established trees, where possible.	The existing trees are retained and construction is arranged to avoid material root damage.
NPPF August 2026 - Policy N3	Recognises the biodiversity, climate and place-making benefits of trees; requires suitable arboricultural advice and long-term provision for existing/new trees.	This report provides site-specific arboricultural advice and a protection method enabling the retained trees to remain part of the site context.
North Hertfordshire Local Plan - Policy D1	Sustainable design should take reasonable opportunities to retain existing vegetation and provide appropriate planting.	No identified tree is removed; the proposal retains existing vegetation around the application edge.
North Hertfordshire Local Plan - Policy NE2	Development should avoid unacceptable landscape harm, ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features and consider long-term management.	The retained off-site trees are protected by calculated RPAs and construction controls, with no-dig treatment for the only identified RPA interface.

Policy / guidance	Relevant requirement	Response of this proposal
North Hertfordshire Local Plan - SP12 / NE4	Protect and enhance green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity interests.	Tree retention maintains existing green infrastructure and avoids unnecessary loss of established woody vegetation.

Table 2 - Policy and guidance compliance

7.1 Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031 was made in April 2018 and forms part of the development plan. Policy PNP4 (Hedgerows, Trees and Verges) is directly relevant. It seeks assessment of trees and hedges in new development, encourages retention and maintenance of existing trees and hedgerows, promotes protection of trees at village edges and requires landscaping to be integrated into new development.

This report provides the tree assessment required by PNP4. No identified tree is proposed for removal, and the protection method for T3 specifically safeguards the tree where the pedestrian route approaches its rooting area. The approach therefore accords with the retention and protection objectives of PNP4.

8. Conclusions

The supplied Arboriculture Plan confirms that no tree stems are located within the red-line application site. Three trees are identified to the east of the application area: T1 Common Ash, T2 Field Maple and T3 Common Walnut. Their calculated RPA radii are 9.36 m, 8.64 m and 5.16 m respectively.

T1 and T2 are unaffected by proposed works on the information provided. T3 will also be retained. The only identified work within its RPA is the pedestrian pathway, which will be formed using a no-dig, above-ground method over a permeable root-protection membrane / load-spreading system, with minimal hand-only surface preparation and no excavation, trenching or compaction of the existing rooting soil.

The proposed development can therefore proceed without unacceptable arboricultural harm, subject to the implementation of the tree protection and construction controls set out in this report. The approach is consistent with BS 5837:2012 and with the relevant national, North Hertfordshire and Pirton neighbourhood planning policies relating to tree retention, landscape and biodiversity.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

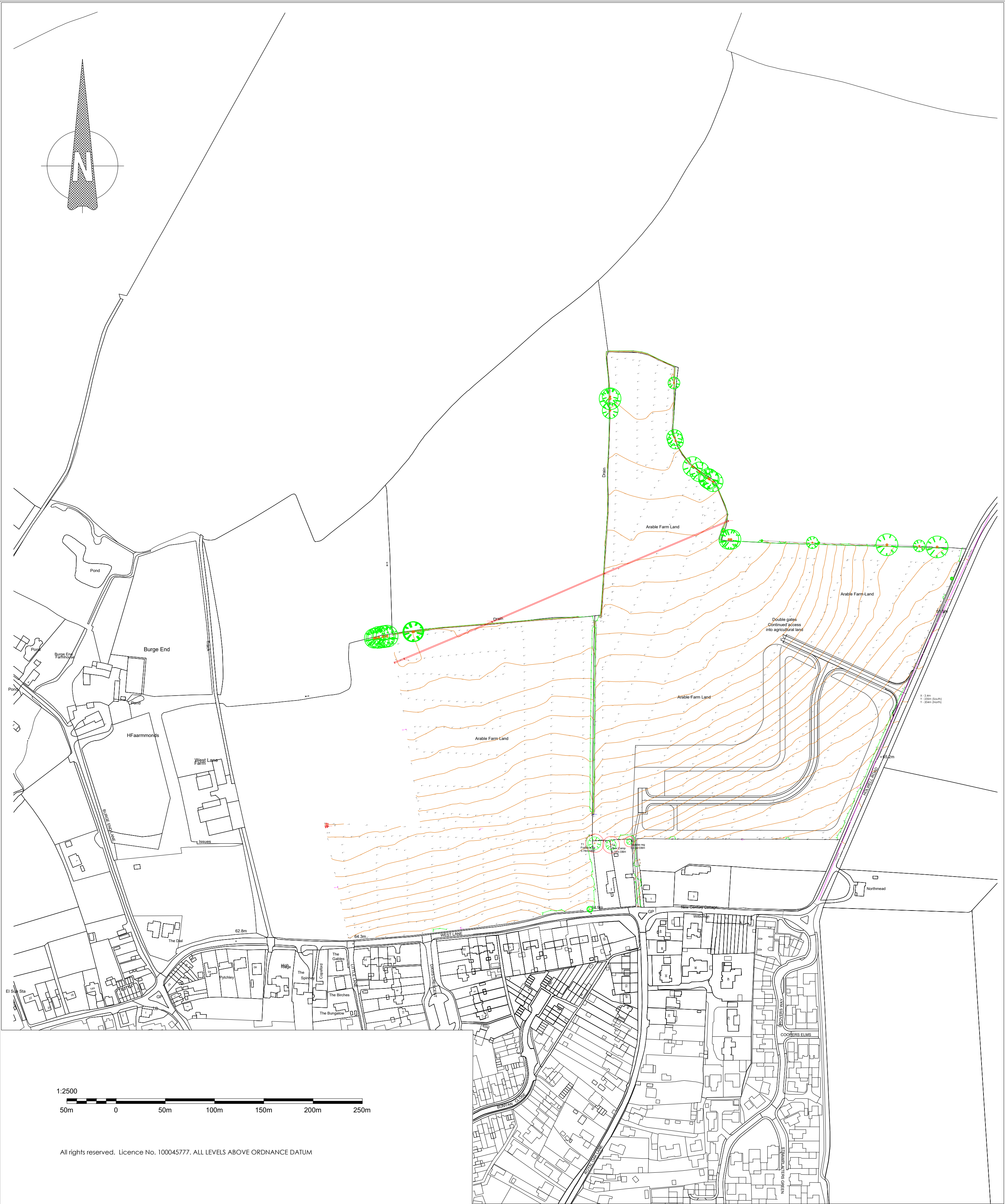
No arboricultural reason has been identified that would prevent the proposed development from proceeding,

provided the retained-tree protection measures and the T3 no-dig pathway method in this report are implemented in full.

9. References

- British Standards Institution (2012), BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (August 2026), National Planning Policy Framework.
- North Herts Council, North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted 8 November 2022.
- Pirton Parish Council, Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031, made 27 April 2018.
- PSK Rural Limited, Arboriculture Plan - Proposed Residential Development, Land at Pirton, drawing LAP ARB 001 Rev A, August 2026.

Appendix A - Arboriculture Plan



Revisions	Drawings Notes
	1. this is not a survey drawing - all dimensions to be checked on site.
	2. do not scale off this drawing
	3. the copyright of this drawing is the property of Pike Smith and Kemp Rural
	4. all discrepancies to be reported to the architect
	5. please ensure that this drawing is read together and cross referenced with all other relevant architectural drawings, schedules and specifications.
	6. please ensure that this drawing is read in conjunction with all other consultants/specialist contractors relevant drawings, schedules and specifications.



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Project	Land at Pirton Hitchin SG5 3RA
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Drawn	TMC
Checked	JPH
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