

LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT



Land north of Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RA

PROPOSAL	Outline planning application for up to 30 dwellings with landscaping - all matters reserved
APPLICANT DOCUMENT	Landscape and visual assessment / landscape strategy
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DATE	September 2026



Document control

Document	Landscape Assessment
Site	Land north of Pirton, Hitchin SG5 3RA
Planning status	Outline application - all matters reserved
Development	Up to 30 dwellings with landscaping
Author	T. McArdle BSc. Hons MRICS
Issue	Planning - September 2026

Executive summary

This Landscape Assessment accompanies an outline planning application for up to 30 dwellings with landscaping on agricultural land on the northern edge of Pirton. All matters are reserved. The submitted plan is therefore illustrative, but it demonstrates a landscape-led framework in which the residential development cells are set within a substantial structure of grass and mixed scrub planting, with a play area and continued agricultural access to land beyond.

Landscape context

The site forms part of the large-scale arable landscape immediately north of Pirton. The village lies to the south, Holwell Road defines the eastern edge, open agricultural land extends north and west, and scattered edge development and paddocks occur to the west and south-west.

Principal sensitivity

The most sensitive landscape and visual issue is the transition from the village into open countryside, particularly the north-east approach on Holwell Road and the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Key View 4. The setting of the Chilterns National Landscape also requires a sensitive response even though the site itself is not within that designation.

Landscape response

The illustrative layout deliberately places the broadest mixed scrub and grass buffers to the northern and western outer edges, creating a planted transition to farmland. Detailed Reserved Matters should reinforce this structure with native hedgerows, scattered trees, street trees, meadow / species-rich grassland and a permeable, rural edge treatment.

Overall finding

Development would inevitably cause a permanent local change from open arable land to a residential edge and would reduce Green Belt openness within the developed part of the site. Subject to the landscape principles in this report being secured, the landscape and visual effects can be concentrated close to the site and materially moderated as planting establishes, without widespread change to the character of the Pirton Lowlands.

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1. Introduction and scope

PSK Rural Limited has prepared this Landscape Assessment to support the outline application for residential development and landscaping on land north of Pirton. The purpose is to describe the existing landscape, identify the principal landscape and visual sensitivities, assess the likely direction and scale of change represented by the illustrative masterplan, and establish landscape principles to guide Reserved Matters.

The assessment is based on the submitted Location Plan, Existing Topographic Plan and Indicative Site Layout Plan, the aerial and ground-level photographic survey supplied with the application material, and published national and local planning and landscape evidence. The reference Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Landscape Strategy supplied for other sites at Pirton have been used for local context, structure and terminology only; their site-specific conclusions have not been transferred to this application site.

The approach is proportionate to an outline application and follows the principles of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition (GLVIA3). It is a landscape and visual appraisal rather than an Environmental Impact Assessment LVIA. The qualitative effect ratings in this report are therefore tools for transparent professional judgement rather than EIA significance thresholds.

Outline-stage principle

Because all matters are reserved, the key task at this stage is to secure the spatial landscape framework: the location of development cells, the extent of outer green buffers, treatment of Holwell Road, protection of view corridors, and the long-term management of green infrastructure. Detailed species, building design, levels and boundary treatments can then be resolved at Reserved Matters.

Assessment method

- Landscape character is considered at three scales: the site itself; the local village-edge landscape; and the wider Pirton Lowlands character area.
- Visual receptors are grouped by where people experience the site: the Holwell Road approach, village-edge residents and road users, the open countryside around the site, wider approaches and key views identified in the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan.
- Effects are described at Year 1 and, where planting is material, at approximately Year 15. Ratings use Low / Medium / High sensitivity and change, expressed overall as Minor / Moderate / Major adverse or beneficial effects.
- Landscape mitigation is treated as part of the design. It can reduce visibility, soften the settlement edge, restore hedgerow and tree structure and provide green infrastructure benefits, but it cannot remove the permanent loss of open arable land or the spatial effect of buildings on Green Belt openness.

2. The site and the proposal



Figure 1 – Indicative site layout and landscape framework | PSK Rural Indicative Site Layout Plan LAP SITE 001 A

The application site lies immediately north of the built-up edge of Pirton. Holwell Road runs along the eastern side of the principal development parcel; village development lies to the south, with scattered houses, gardens, paddocks and agricultural edge uses to the west and south-west.

The site is arable farmland within a broad, simple field pattern, and the surrounding landscape opens into extensive agricultural fields to the north, west and east.

The topographic information and photographs indicate a gently undulating field whose main landscape structure is provided by hedgerows, trees and smaller-scale edge vegetation rather than strong relief.

The indicative plan identifies residential development cells for up to 30 dwellings served by an internal street,

together with a playground and extensive new landscape areas.

The outer north and west sides of the built cells are buffered by grass and mixed scrub planting, while grassed landscape margins continue along the southern and eastern edges.

The plan also retains a route to double gates for continued agricultural access to farmland beyond the development.

Aerial landscape context

The aerial photographs demonstrate the relationship between the site, Pirton and the wider lowland agricultural setting. The site reads as part of a much larger open field system, but the southern edge is already influenced by the village, Holwell Road, domestic boundaries and small paddocks. The established settlement is softened by trees and hedgerows; future development should adopt the same filtered, vegetated relationship rather than presenting an engineered or continuous built edge.

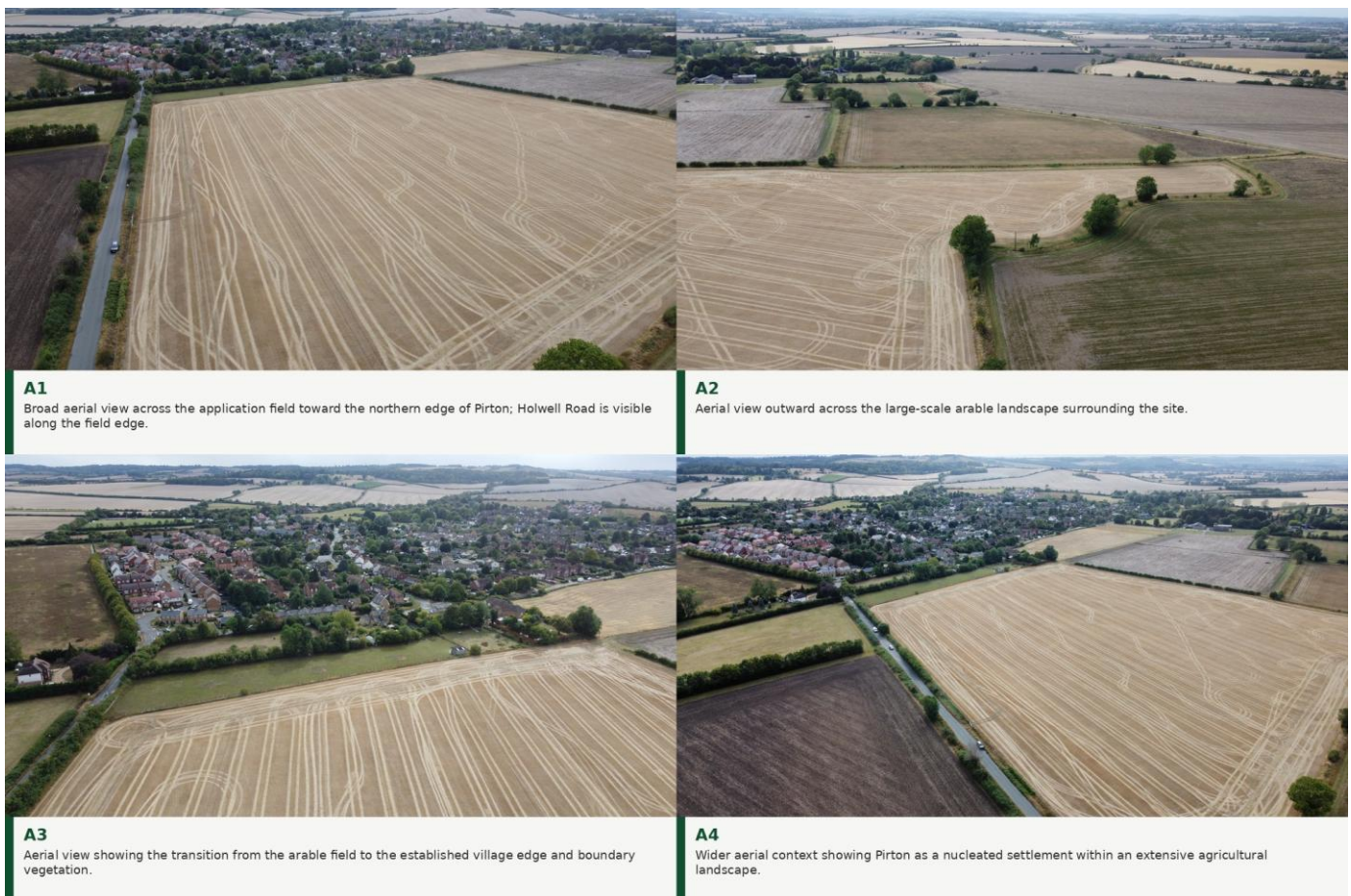


Figure 2 - Aerial context photographs A1-A4 | Applicant-supplied drone photography, September 2026

Landscape reading

At the wider scale Pirton remains a compact village within open farmland. The design objective is therefore not to make new development invisible, but to keep it visually associated with Pirton, prevent it appearing as an isolated incursion into the wider field system and establish a durable green edge.

3. Landscape and visual baseline

Ground-level photographs show a simple working agricultural landscape.

Open views across the field are long, with intermittent hedgerows, individual trees and small vegetation groups providing the main visual containment.

Closer to the village edge there is greater enclosure from domestic fencing, garden vegetation, paddocks and mature trees. This produces a clear transition from rural open field to a more varied settlement-edge landscape.



Figure 3 - Ground photographs G1-G4 | Applicant-supplied ground photography, September 2026

Landscape edge conditions



Figure 4 - Ground photographs G5-G8 | *Applicant-supplied ground photography, September 2026*

The field margins demonstrate the value of relatively modest landscape features in this open setting.

Where hedges, scrub and trees occur, they provide immediate filtering and help divide the larger arable landscape into legible compartments.

The landscape strategy should therefore strengthen existing boundary structure and introduce new native belts in a way that echoes the local field pattern rather than relying on ornamental screening.

Existing landform and landscape structure

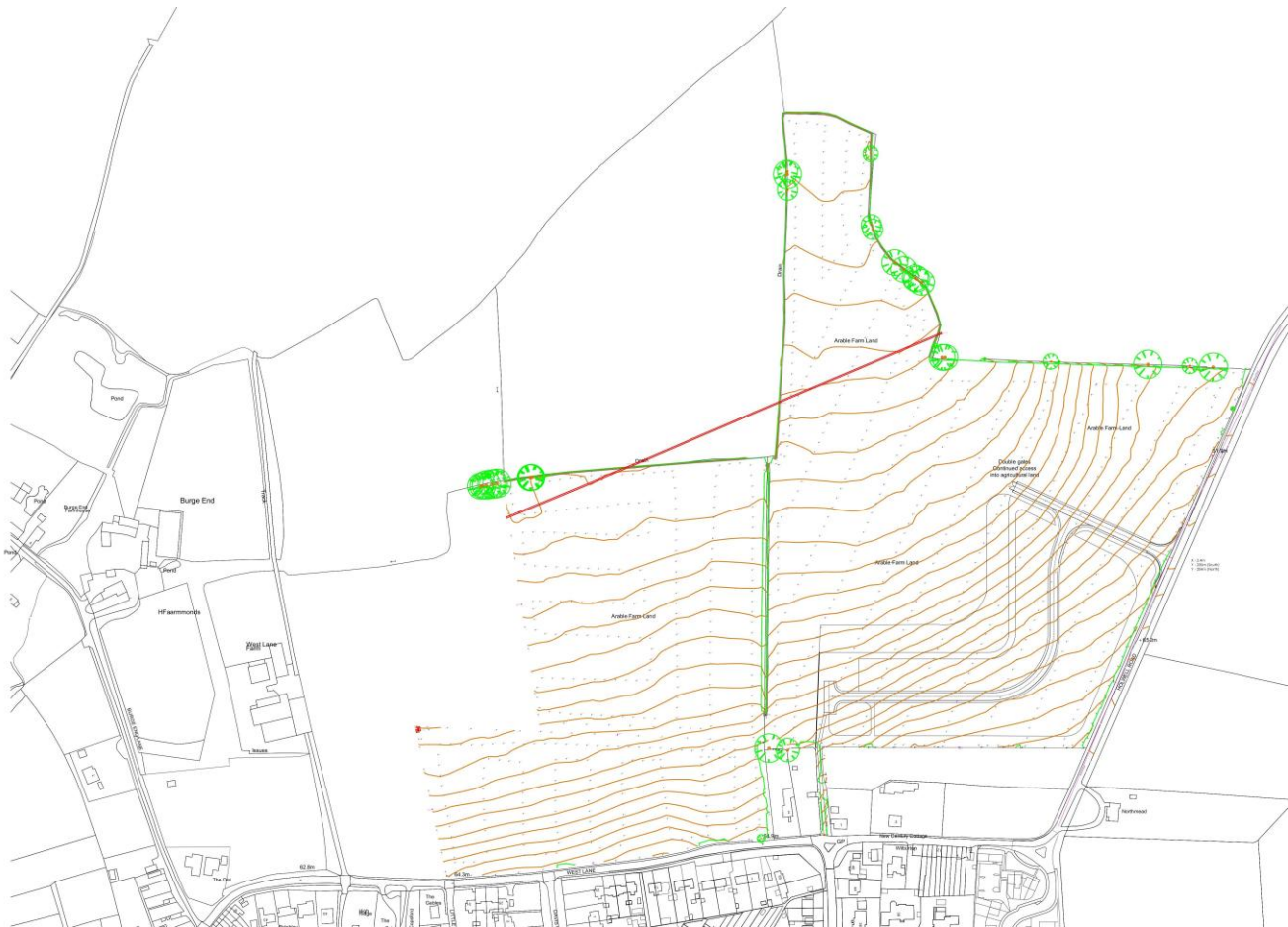


Figure 5 - Existing topography and field structure in the application area | PSK Rural Existing Topographic Plan LAP TOPO 001 A

The topographic plan shows contours crossing the application field and confirms a gently varying agricultural landform. No dramatic ridge or valley occurs within the development parcel. The field nevertheless has visual exposure because of its scale and limited internal vegetation, so changes in roofscape, lighting and roadside boundary treatment could be perceptible from the surrounding countryside even where local relief provides some filtering.

Landscape value and susceptibility

The application site is not identified as a National Landscape and, on the basis of the application brief, is not subject to a separate landscape designation. Its value is derived instead from its rural character, its contribution to the openness of the Green Belt, its position at the edge of Pirton and its relationship to locally valued views and the wider setting of the Chilterns National Landscape.

The site itself is a typical part of the Pirton Lowlands rather than a rare or highly distinctive landscape unit. Its susceptibility to residential development is nevertheless meaningful because the field is open and the development would form a new settlement edge. Overall landscape sensitivity is assessed as Medium at the site and local character scale, increasing to Medium-High where the development is experienced as part of a locally valued rural approach or key view.

4. Planning and design policy context

The policy framework has changed since the May 2025 reference LVIA supplied with the application material. In particular, the National Planning Policy Framework was replaced in August 2026 and North Herts Council adopted a new Districtwide Design Code SPD in June 2026, revoking the former 2011 Design SPD. This assessment therefore applies the current documents.

Document	Policy / topic	Landscape relevance
National Planning Policy Framework - August 2026	DP3 - Key principles for well-designed places	Requires development to respond to context and integrate with surroundings. Relevant principles include nature and multi-functional green infrastructure, built form and views, public space, identity and a coherent planting palette.
National Planning Policy Framework - August 2026	N2 - Improving the natural environment	Requires consideration of landscape character and countryside qualities, conservation of natural features where possible, appropriate landscaping to integrate development, multi-functional green infrastructure and long-term management.
National Planning Policy Framework - August 2026	N3 - Trees in new development	Seeks tree-lined streets and appropriate trees elsewhere, with species/placement suitable for infrastructure and climate resilience and provision for long-term maintenance.
National Planning Policy Framework - August 2026	N4(4) - Protected Landscape settings	Development within the setting of a Protected Landscape should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts. The site is outside the Chilterns National Landscape but its wider setting remains relevant.
National Planning Policy Framework - August 2026	GB6-GB8 - Green Belt	Green Belt policy gives substantial weight to harm including openness. For major housing on Green Belt application sites, GB8 includes accessible green space that positively contributes to landscape setting and nature recovery. The separate Planning Statement should address the policy route and planning balance.

Document	Policy / topic	Landscape relevance
North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031	SP5, SP9, SP12	Protects Green Belt/countryside principles, requires good design and seeks protection/enhancement of green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity.
North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031	D1 - Sustainable Design	Requires a positive response to local context, appropriate new planting, retention of vegetation where relevant, high quality public realm and integration of SuDS and parking.
North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031	NE2 - Landscape	Requires respect for landscape character sensitivities, avoidance of unacceptable harm, retention of important landscape features and long-term management of landscaping.
Pirton Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2031	PNP2, PNP4, PNP5, PNP7	Seeks locally responsive design; retention/enhancement of hedgerows, trees and verges; wildlife enhancement; and protection of key views, sensitive village edges and rural approaches. PNP4 specifically promotes a green and soft village edge using predominantly native planting.
North Herts Design Code SPD - adopted June 2026	Districtwide design requirements	Sets current design expectations for residential-led development, including neighbourhood structure, open space, streets and buildings. It supports Local Plan SP9 and D1 and is a material consideration at outline and Reserved Matters stages.

Pirton Neighbourhood Plan - key landscape themes

The Neighbourhood Plan objectives seek sensitive development that respects Pirton's greenery, wildlife, built and archaeological heritage and links to the countryside; prevents sprawl and urbanisation; conserves the local landscape and biodiversity; protects distinctive views; and creates green/open space in new development.

Key View 4 - Holwell Road

The locally identified view on the approach to the north-east corner of Pirton from Holwell Road is directly relevant to the site. Development should preserve the legibility of the rural approach and the broader experience of the Pirton Lowlands merging towards the Chilterns, using set-back, varied rooflines, view gaps and a layered landscape edge rather than a continuous wall of built form.

5. Landscape character

Pirton Lowlands - Landscape Character Area 218

Published North Hertfordshire landscape evidence identifies the Pirton Lowlands as a large-scale, open and generally flat or gently undulating farming landscape dominated by arable production, with remnant hedgerows and woodland shelter around settlements. The landscape is sensitive to development that is out of scale with the nucleated settlement pattern, loss of shelterbelts and hedgerows, and urbanising features within open views.

The 2011 sensitivity and capacity work describes overall landscape sensitivity as moderate to low and visual sensitivity as moderate, with expansive views and a notable relationship with the neighbouring chalk scarp. It also records degradation from historic hedgerow loss and identifies the importance of small shelterbelts in enclosing settlements. The study gives low capacity to both small and large urban extensions because of the area's rural and undeveloped character.

Characteristic	Baseline at / around site	Design response
Large-scale open arable fields	Strongly represented by the application field and land to north/west/east.	Keep development spatially compact; maintain broad green margins and avoid outward creep of curtilages into the buffer.
Remnant hedgerows and trees	Field-edge vegetation provides much of the existing containment.	Retain/enhance boundary structure and create new native hedge/tree belts that reflect agricultural field boundaries.
Woodland/shelter around settlements	Pirton appears partially embedded in mature vegetation in aerial views.	Use native trees, scrub, street trees and small copses to filter rather than abruptly screen the new edge.
Nucleated settlement pattern	Pirton remains visually compact, although modern housing extends to the north-east and south of the site.	Relate the development clearly to Pirton; avoid a detached enclave or isolated ribbon along Holwell Road.
Expansive views / chalk scarp relationship	Open countryside permits broad views and the Neighbourhood Plan values approaches to the village.	Protect key outward and inward view corridors; manage heights, roofscape, lighting and roadside planting to preserve long views.

Site-specific character

At site scale the principal change would be from a simple, open arable field to a more complex residential and green-infrastructure landscape. The direct loss of agricultural openness is adverse and permanent within the development footprint. The principal opportunity is to use the remainder of the site to restore a stronger hedgerow/tree structure,

create habitat and open space, and establish a more coherent long-term northern edge to Pirton than would result from unstructured incremental development.

6. Visual context and key views

The photographic evidence confirms that visibility is not uniform. Open views occur from the field and nearby agricultural land, while hedgerows, domestic vegetation and the village edge provide local filtering. The likely highest-sensitivity public views are from Holwell Road on the approach to Pirton and from countryside routes where viewers are specifically experiencing the rural landscape. Views from existing dwellings are also locally sensitive, although there is no planning right to retain an unchanged private view.

Receptor / view	Sensitivity	Likely change	Key design response
Holwell Road approach / PNP Key View 4	High	New residential edge in a rural approach; greatest potential for change to foreground / middle-ground experience.	Set back outer built form where possible; keep green gaps; use layered but permeable planting; avoid bulky uniform roofscape and intrusive lighting.
Existing village edge to south	Medium-High	New development becomes part of the northern settlement context behind existing houses, gardens and edge vegetation.	Strengthen southern green edge; face public spaces / streets positively; use tree planting to break roofscape.
Scattered edge properties and paddocks to west / south-west	Medium-High	Local change from open agricultural backdrop to a landscaped residential edge.	Use the broad western mixed-scrub/grass buffer, retain boundary vegetation and avoid rear close-board fencing as the dominant public edge.
Open agricultural land north and west	Medium-High	Development visible at close to middle distance in an otherwise open arable setting.	Maintain broad outer buffer as permanent GI, establish native trees/hedges, control heights and keep development grouped with Pirton.
Wider Pirton and more distant approaches	Medium	Development may be perceived as a limited addition to the village edge where intervening vegetation and built form permit views.	Use restrained materials/roof colours, maintain village-scale form and develop a treed settlement edge.
Chilterns National Landscape setting	High value, low exposure	Potential distant/setting effect rather than direct effect on designated land.	Keep scheme visually subordinate to wider rural landform and avoid skyline intrusion, glare and prominent engineered features.

Winter visibility

The assessment should be read on a worst-case seasonal basis. Deciduous planting will provide less screening in winter, so the spatial layout, building heights, roofscape, boundary design and lighting must do the main work; planting should moderate and integrate the scheme rather than be relied upon to conceal poor design.

7. Assessment of landscape and visual effects

The table below provides a proportionate outline-stage appraisal. It assumes that the broad landscape framework shown on the indicative plan is retained, that outer planting is established early, and that Reserved Matters follow the parameters in Sections 9 and 10. If development encroaches into the landscape buffers or uses materially greater scale than anticipated for a village-edge scheme, the residual effects would be greater.

Receptor	Sensitivity	Year 1	Approx. Year 15	Appraisal
Site landscape fabric	Medium	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse	Permanent loss of arable field within the development footprint. New GI, trees, scrub and grassland provide beneficial new structure but do not replace the lost openness.
Local Pirton Lowlands character	Medium	Moderate adverse	Minor-Moderate adverse	A local urbanising change at the village edge. Effect reduces as the new edge becomes vegetated and read with Pirton rather than as a separate incursion.
Holwell Road / PNP Key View 4	High	Moderate adverse	Minor-Moderate adverse	Principal visual sensitivity. Residual effect depends on set-back, retained view gaps, roofscape, eastern boundary treatment and tree establishment.
Village-edge and nearby residential context	Medium-High	Moderate adverse	Minor adverse	Close views change, but existing domestic vegetation and proposed planting can integrate the new edge and reduce prominence over time.
Open countryside north and west	Medium-High	Moderate adverse locally	Minor-Moderate adverse	Close-range visibility cannot be removed, but effects should fall with distance and as native structure planting establishes.
Wider approaches / other PNP key views	Medium-High where locally valued	Minor adverse	Negligible-Minor adverse	Limited change where site is perceived with existing Pirton and intervening vegetation; avoid skyline and lighting effects.
Setting of Chilterns National Landscape	High value	Negligible-Minor adverse	Negligible-Minor adverse	Site is outside designation. A restrained village-edge scheme with effective GI is unlikely to become a dominant feature of the protected landscape setting.

Cumulative and settlement-edge considerations

Pirton has experienced modern residential growth, and the aerial survey shows areas of comparatively recent housing forming part of the existing village edge. The assessment therefore considers the proposal not against an untouched settlement context, but against an edge that already combines historic village fabric, modern housing, gardens, paddocks and agricultural land. The key cumulative objective is to avoid a progressive hardening of the

northern edge. The broad outer landscape buffer should be retained in perpetuity as shared green infrastructure rather than fragmented into private rear gardens.

8. Green Belt landscape considerations

The application site lies within the Green Belt. Green Belt is a planning policy designation rather than a landscape quality designation, but openness has both spatial and visual dimensions. Residential buildings, roads, parked cars, domestic activity and lighting would introduce development onto currently open land and would therefore reduce openness within the developed part of the site. Landscape planting can moderate the visual perception of change but cannot remove the spatial loss of openness.

From a landscape perspective, the most effective way to limit the perceived extent of encroachment is to keep the built footprint compact and physically associated with Pirton, maintain a permanent green transition to the wider agricultural field system, avoid ribboning along Holwell Road, and prevent later domesticisation of the outer buffer. These principles also help the scheme avoid reading as unrestricted outward sprawl.

NPPF GB8 - landscape opportunity

For major housing proposed on Green Belt application sites, current national policy requires accessible green space to make a positive contribution to the landscape setting and support nature recovery. The indicative mix of grass, mixed scrub and play/open space provides a clear spatial opportunity to meet the landscape element of this requirement, subject to public accessibility, quality, ecological design and long-term stewardship being secured.

The Green Belt policy route, including the application of GB6, GB7 and the overall planning balance, is a matter for the accompanying Planning Statement. This report should be read as evidence on landscape, visual and openness-related effects rather than as a conclusion on whether the proposal is appropriate development in Green Belt terms.

9. Landscape strategy and mitigation

The landscape strategy should be treated as primary infrastructure rather than residual planting around housing. The existing indicative layout contains the correct basic hierarchy: development is grouped within the inner part of the parcel, while the north and west boundaries are given over to a broad green transition. Reserved Matters should strengthen this hierarchy and add a more explicit landscape response to Holwell Road and Key View 4.

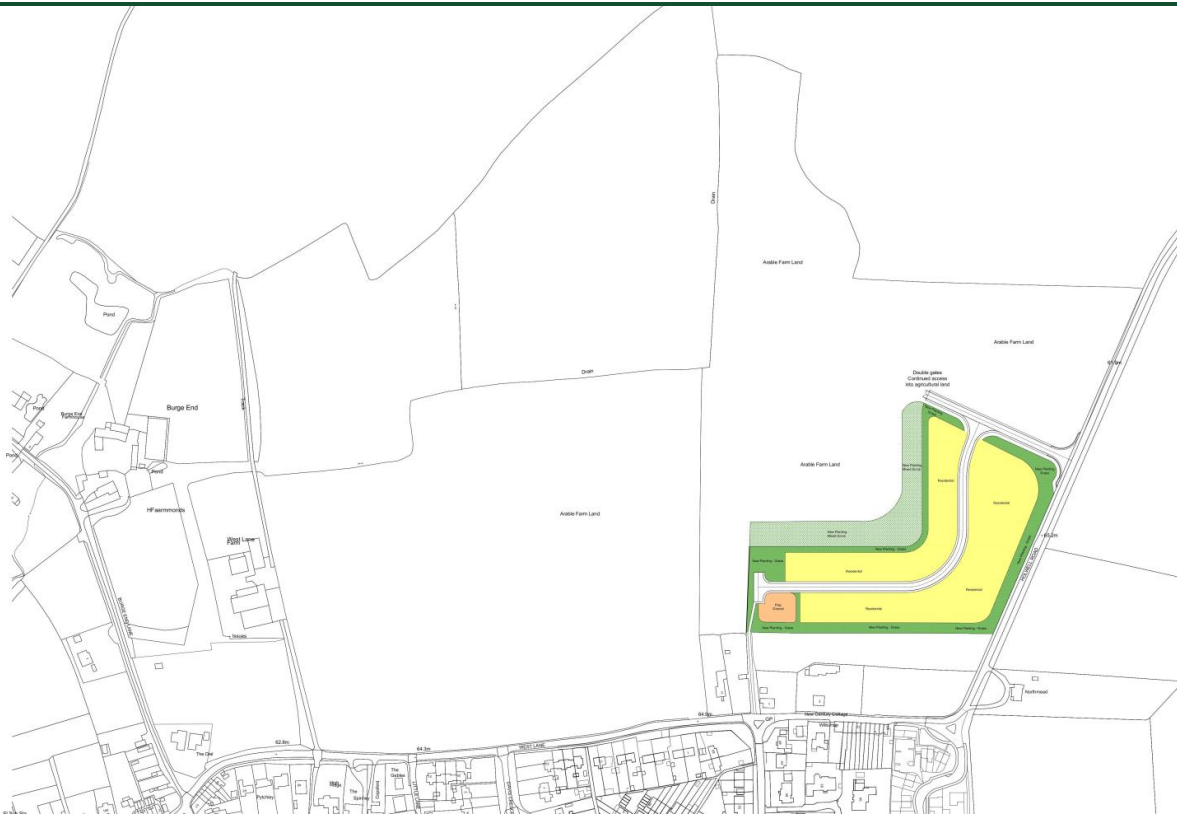


Figure 6 - Landscape-led framework to be retained through Reserved Matters | PSK Rural Indicative Site Layout Plan LAP SITE 001 A

No.	Principle	Requirement
1	Permanent outer green buffer	Retain the broad northern and western grass/mixed-scrub buffer as communal or managed green infrastructure. Do not subdivide it into private gardens or allow built form, sheds, close-board fences or parking to creep outward.
2	Native settlement-edge structure	Use native hedgerow, scrub and tree planting characteristic of the local landscape. Reinforce field-boundary patterns rather than creating a suburban ornamental screen.
3	Holwell Road / Key View 4	Create a layered and visually permeable eastern edge: hedgerow, occasional trees, grass/meadow and selected gaps. Planting should soften new houses without closing the locally valued approach view.
4	Street trees and internal green links	Use medium/large canopy trees at street bends, junctions, the play area and green spaces to break the roofscape and connect the inner street to the outer GI network.
5	Species-rich grassland and scrub mosaic	Manage substantial parts of the buffer as species-rich grass / meadow with mixed scrub groups, rides or mown paths where appropriate, integrating biodiversity and informal recreation.
6	Play and social space	Integrate the playground within the green structure using natural materials, shade trees and low-key boundary treatment, avoiding visually intrusive bright equipment or urban fencing at the countryside edge.

No.	Principle	Requirement
7	SuDS as landscape	Any required surface-water features should be designed as shallow, naturalistic green infrastructure with species-rich margins rather than fenced engineering compounds.
8	Dark rural edge	Keep lighting to the minimum necessary, use full cut-off fittings and avoid upward light, high columns or continuous illumination along the countryside edge.
9	Agricultural interface	Maintain the indicated agricultural access and design gates/track connections as rural features. Protect adjoining farming operations from conflicts created by domestic boundaries.
10	Management and stewardship	Secure a long-term landscape and ecological management plan covering establishment, replacement planting, grassland/scrub management, tree care, hedge cutting and public open-space maintenance.

Landscape palette

Species selection should be finalised through the ecology, arboricultural and detailed landscape design process, taking account of soils, utilities, climate resilience and biosecurity. The following palette is appropriate as a starting point because it reflects species already characteristic of lowland Hertfordshire field boundaries and the reference Pirton landscape material.

Layer	Indicative species / treatment	Landscape function
Structure trees	English oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>), small-leaved lime (<i>Tilia cordata</i>), field maple (<i>Acer campestre</i>), hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>), silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>), rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>).	Build long-term canopy structure, break roofscape, provide settlement shelter and ecological value.
Native hedgerow	Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>), field maple, hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>), dogwood (<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>), spindle (<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>), crab apple (<i>Malus sylvestris</i>), alder buckthorn (<i>Frangula alnus</i>) where suitable.	Reinforce field pattern, define edges, provide nesting/foraging habitat and filtered screening.
Mixed scrub	Hawthorn, dogwood, hazel, guelder rose, spindle, wayfaring tree and locally appropriate native shrubs.	Create a gradual countryside transition, habitat complexity and visual filtering without a formal suburban character.
Grass / meadow	Species-rich neutral grassland mixes selected for local soil conditions, with mown paths / amenity zones only where needed.	Increase seasonal diversity, support pollinators, reduce maintenance intensity and create a rural green-space character.
Public realm / play	Natural timber, muted surfacing, clipped/native hedges and shade trees; permeable materials wherever practicable.	Keep the scheme visually coherent with a village-edge setting and avoid over-engineering.
	Planting character The outer edge should look like countryside planting that has become part of the Pirton field pattern,	

Layer	Indicative species / treatment	Landscape function
	not like a landscaped estate boundary. Native structure, varied spacing and long-term management are more important than immediate dense screening.	

10. Reserved Matters design parameters

The following parameters should be carried forward into the Reserved Matters application and, where appropriate, secured by condition so that the landscape conclusions of this assessment remain valid.

Parameter	Outline-stage requirement
Development envelope	Keep all principal built form within the indicative residential cells. The broad northern and western buffer should not be reduced materially.
Scale and roofscape	Use a village-edge scale with varied eaves and ridge lines. The most exposed outer plots should be lower and visually recessive; avoid continuous, repetitive rooflines parallel to Holwell Road.
Frontage orientation	Where practical, buildings should positively address streets and green space. Avoid long runs of rear fencing facing public routes, Holwell Road or the outer landscape buffer.
Holwell Road edge	Retain a green verge / hedge / tree structure and selected view gaps. Avoid a hard suburban frontage or continuous close-board boundary against the road.
Materials	Use a restrained locally responsive palette, with subdued roof colours and limited reflective materials on exposed elevations. Detailed choices should follow the North Herts Design Code and Pirton character evidence.
Tree strategy	Provide street and open-space trees with adequate soil volumes and species selected for mature scale, climate resilience and local character. Protect existing trees/hedges during construction.
Lighting	Prepare a lighting strategy that preserves a dark countryside edge and controls spill into hedgerows, scrub and the wider rural landscape.
Levels / earthworks	Follow existing landform as far as practicable. Avoid prominent retaining walls, excessive cut/fill or artificial bunds that would urbanise the field edge.
Open space access	Ensure the principal green space is genuinely usable and legible, with safe connections to the village and a coherent walking circuit where practical.
Management	Submit a detailed Landscape and Ecological Management Plan with establishment maintenance and long-term objectives for trees, hedges, scrub, meadow, play and any SuDS features.

11. Implementation and long-term management

A strong landscape concept only succeeds if it is implemented early and managed consistently. Structural planting on the outer northern and western edges should be delivered at the earliest practicable stage, preferably in the first planting season associated with enabling or infrastructure works, so that the landscape framework begins to establish before or alongside occupation.

Stage	Action	Landscape objective
Pre-construction	Protect retained vegetation; confirm root protection, construction access, soil storage and no-dig / low-impact treatments where required.	Avoid preventable loss of the limited existing landscape structure.
Early works	Implement outer native structure planting and primary green-space earthworks/soils as early as seasonally practicable.	Front-load mitigation and begin settlement-edge establishment.
Years 1-5	Watering, weed control, formative pruning, hedge establishment, replacement of failures, meadow establishment and monitoring.	Achieve full establishment rather than nominal planting.
Years 5-15	Selective thinning, crown lifting where appropriate, hedge management, scrub rotation and meadow management.	Develop layered structure, habitat and filtered views while retaining key view corridors.
Long term	Maintain trees to maturity, rejuvenate hedges/scrub, replace losses and review public-space condition through a funded management body.	Ensure the green edge remains permanent and does not degrade into fragmented private boundaries.

Monitoring

The management plan should include measurable establishment targets, annual inspection during the initial maintenance period and formal reviews at Years 5 and 10. Replacement planting should maintain the approved species mix and intended canopy/hedgerow structure. Any management transfer should preserve public access and prevent the landscape buffer from being appropriated into private gardens.

12. Conclusion

The application site is an open arable parcel at the northern edge of Pirton, within the Green Belt and within the broad landscape context of the Pirton Lowlands. It is not within the Chilterns National Landscape, but the wider setting of that protected landscape and the locally important rural approaches to Pirton remain relevant. The existing landscape is simple and agricultural, with value derived from openness, the relationship between village and countryside, field-edge vegetation and long views rather than from rare site-specific features.

A residential scheme would inevitably introduce built form and domestic activity into this open field and would result in a permanent adverse change at site scale. The greatest visual sensitivity is the Holwell Road approach and Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Key View 4, together with close views from the adjoining countryside and scattered village-edge properties. The effect on wider landscape character is expected to reduce with distance because the development would be experienced with Pirton rather than as a free-standing settlement, provided that the scheme remains compact and does not extend beyond the illustrated landscape framework.

The indicative plan provides a credible basis for mitigation. In particular, the substantial northern and western mixed-scrub/grass buffer creates room for a genuine countryside transition, while the play area and green margins provide opportunities for accessible green space, nature recovery and tree planting. This framework is consistent with the direction of NPPF DP3, N2, N3 and GB8, Local Plan policies SP9, SP12, D1 and NE2, and the landscape objectives of Pirton policies PNP2, PNP4, PNP5 and PNP7.

Subject to the landscape framework being secured and strengthened at Reserved Matters - particularly through a carefully designed Holwell Road edge, protection of key views, a restrained village-scale roofscape, native structural planting, dark-sky lighting and long-term stewardship - the landscape and visual effects can be kept predominantly local to the site and immediate village edge and can reduce materially as planting matures. The scheme can therefore be designed as a defined, green and managed northern edge to Pirton rather than an exposed or visually detached incursion into the wider agricultural landscape.

Landscape conclusion

The central requirement is permanence of the green edge. If the broad northern/western buffer, Holwell Road landscape treatment and view-sensitive built envelope are maintained through Reserved Matters, the illustrative 30-dwelling scheme has a clear landscape strategy capable of integrating development with Pirton while limiting wider visual effects.

Appendix A - Photographic survey

The selected photographs used in the assessment are reproduced below for ease of reference. They form part of the applicant-supplied photographic material and illustrate the broad landscape characteristics described in the report. They are not verified photomontages or surveyed viewpoint photography.


A1

Broad aerial view across the application field toward the northern edge of Pirton; Holwell Road is visible along the field edge.


A2

Aerial view outward across the large-scale arable landscape surrounding the site.


A3

Aerial view showing the transition from the arable field to the established village edge and boundary vegetation.


A4

Wider aerial context showing Pirton as a nucleated settlement within an extensive agricultural landscape.

A1-A4 - Aerial landscape context | *Applicant-supplied photography*



G1-G4 - Ground-level landscape context | *Applicant-supplied photography*



G5
Field-edge view showing the role of hedgerow and tree belts in containing and filtering views.



G6
View toward established vegetation and fencing at the village-edge interface.



G7
View along the agricultural edge where arable land meets smaller-scale paddock and edge uses.



G8
Existing field access and hedged boundary character at the edge of the agricultural land.

G5-G8 - Ground-level landscape edge conditions | *Applicant-supplied photography*

Appendix B - Source documents

Application material

- PSK Rural - Location Plan - Proposed Residential Development, Drg LAP LOC 001 A, August 2026.
- PSK Rural - Indicative Site Layout Plan - Proposed Residential Development, Drg LAP SITE 001 A, August 2026.
- PSK Rural - Existing Topographic Plan - Proposed Residential Development, Drg LAP TOPO 001 A, August 2026.
- Applicant-supplied aerial and ground-level photographs, September 2026.

Planning policy and evidence

- [National Planning Policy Framework - August 2026](#)
- [North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031](#)
- [North Herts Design Code SPD - adopted June 2026](#)
- [Pirton Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2031 and Character Assessment](#)
- [North Hertfordshire Landscape Study / Pirton Lowlands Area 218](#)
- [Planning Practice Guidance - Natural environment](#)
- [Landscape Institute / IEMA - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition \(2013\)](#)