

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Land at Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RA

Outline Planning Application - 30 Residential Dwellings - All Matters Reserved

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Document Control

Document title	Statement of Community Involvement
Site	Land at Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RA
Proposal	Outline application for 30 residential dwellings - all matters reserved
Author	T. McArdle BSc. Hons MRICS
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Primary drawing reviewed	Indicative Site Layout Plan - Proposed Residential Development, Drg. No. LAP SITE 001 A, August 2026
Engagement status	No pre-application community consultation or direct consultee engagement undertaken before submission

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1. Executive Summary

This Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared by PSK Rural Limited to accompany an outline planning application for 30 residential dwellings on land at Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 3RA. All matters are reserved. The submitted plans therefore illustrate one potential form of development but do not seek approval for the detailed layout, scale, appearance, access or landscaping at this stage.

No pre-application community consultation, public exhibition, neighbour engagement or direct consultation with statutory or non-statutory consultees has been undertaken by the applicant before submission. This Statement records that position transparently. It does not seek to imply that engagement has already taken place.

The August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework places a clear expectation on major development to be informed by early engagement with neighbours, the local community, the local planning authority and other relevant bodies. North Herts Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement also recommends pre-application engagement for major schemes, while expressly recognising that the Council cannot insist on pre-application discussions and that not every application is discussed before submission.

Against that background, the applicant is using the formal planning application as the first structured and publicly accessible stage of community involvement. The Council's consultation process will place the application documents in the public domain and invite comments from neighbours, Pirton Parish Council, relevant consultees and the wider community in accordance with statutory requirements and the Council's adopted procedures.

The applicant will review all material planning representations received during the outline application. Where comments concern matters capable of being addressed during determination, proportionate clarification or amendment will be considered. Where comments concern detailed design matters these will be recorded and treated as a design input to the Reserved Matters stage and, where relevant, to submissions made to discharge planning conditions.

Key position

The formal application-stage consultation is not presented as a substitute for the early engagement encouraged by national policy. It is, however, a meaningful and transparent opportunity for the

community to influence the application from this point forward, particularly because all detailed matters remain reserved and the illustrative design can evolve in response to relevant feedback.

2. Introduction and Purpose

This Statement accompanies the proposed outline residential development at Land at Pirton and explains the applicant's approach to community involvement. Its principal purpose is to set out:

- the current factual position that no applicant-led consultation has taken place before submission;
- the national and local planning policy context for community involvement;
- how the statutory planning application process will provide the first formal opportunity for local residents, the Parish Council and relevant consultees to comment on the proposal;
- how comments received will be reviewed and, where relevant, influence the application during determination; and
- how matters raised at outline stage will be carried forward into Reserved Matters and condition-discharge submissions where those matters remain capable of being influenced at those later stages.

This Statement is deliberately distinct from the Planning Statement. It does not seek to determine the overall planning balance or repeat technical evidence submitted with the application. Its focus is the process by which views can be expressed, recorded and used constructively as the scheme progresses.

3. Site and Development Proposal

The application site is identified on the submitted drawing as Land at Pirton, Hitchin SG5 3RA.

The indicative site layout shows the site on the northern edge of Pirton, with Holwell Road to the east and the existing village to the south.

The application seeks outline permission for 30 residential dwellings with all matters reserved.

The indicative layout illustrates residential areas within a landscape-led framework that includes new grass planting, mixed scrub planting, a playground and continued access into adjoining agricultural land. The associated watercolour plan provides a non-technical illustration of how a detailed scheme could be arranged within that framework.

Because all matters are reserved, the illustrative material is intended to demonstrate feasibility and design potential rather than prescribe the final detailed form of development. Subject to the parameters and conditions of any outline permission, the detailed arrangement can respond to planning officer, consultee and community feedback before Reserved Matters are finalised.



Figure 1: Indicative watercolour layout illustrating one potential detailed arrangement (not to scale).

3.1 What is fixed and what remains open for detailed consideration

Stage / matter	Position at outline stage	Community relevance
Principle and amount of development	The application asks the Council to determine the acceptability of residential development for 30 dwellings on the application site.	Comments on the principle, amount of development and material planning impacts need to be made during the outline application because these matters cannot simply be reopened at Reserved Matters.
Access	Reserved. The final detailed access arrangements are not fixed by the illustrative layout unless the Council expressly approves a separate parameter or condition.	Relevant highways, pedestrian, safety and local access comments can inform the later design, subject to the scope of any outline permission.
Layout, scale and appearance	Reserved. The disposition, size and architectural treatment of dwellings remain for later approval.	Comments on relationships to neighbours, village character, density, orientation and built form can be considered as the Reserved Matters scheme is developed.
Landscaping and open space	Reserved. The current grass, mixed scrub and playground arrangement is indicative.	Comments on planting, public open space, play, paths, edges and landscape treatment can influence detailed proposals.
Technical conditions	Any outline permission may require later submission of technical schemes.	Outline-stage comments will be retained and considered when preparing relevant drainage, ecology, construction, lighting, landscape management or similar details.

4. Planning Policy and Community Involvement Framework

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework - August 2026

National policy has recently strengthened the emphasis on early engagement for major development. Policy DM1 of the August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework states that proposals for major development should be informed by early engagement with neighbours and the local community, as well as with the local planning authority, statutory consultees, infrastructure providers, registered providers of social housing and other relevant bodies where appropriate. The engagement is expected to be proportionate to the nature of the proposal and those likely to be affected.

Policy DM1 also expects the supporting planning statement for major development to explain the

outcome of pre-application engagement and the extent to which the proposal has changed in response. In this case there is no pre-application engagement outcome to report. The application material therefore records that fact openly rather than seeking to retrospectively characterise other activity as consultation.

Policy DM3 requires planning authorities to work with applicants in a positive and proactive manner and to take account of relevant planning matters raised through engagement and representations. This reinforces the importance of the statutory consultation period as a live part of the decision-making process, even where no separate applicant-led engagement has taken place before submission.

4.2 North Herts Council Statement of Community Involvement - September 2023

North Herts Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement explains how the Council involves the community in planning and sets out its expectations for development management. Section 9.7 states that the Council cannot insist on pre-application discussions, although they are recommended, and that for major schemes developers are encouraged to engage with local interest groups and residents. Section 9.8 recognises that not all proposals are discussed with the Council before an application is made and sets out methods an applicant may choose to use at pre-application stage.

The Council's SCI is equally clear about application-stage consultation. Section 9.11 explains that, once a planning application is submitted, the Council will publicise it in accordance with legislative requirements. Depending on the applicable requirements, this can include publication on the Council's website, site notices, letters to adjoining properties, consultation with statutory consultees, local newspaper notices and notification of councillors and the relevant Parish or Town Council. Section 9.14 confirms that material representations are taken into account in determining applications and that material amendments can trigger further consultation.

The policy position can therefore be summarised as follows: early applicant-led engagement is clearly encouraged and, under the 2026 NPPF, is now an express national policy expectation for major development; nevertheless, the local SCI recognises that pre-application discussion is not a statutory prerequisite to the submission of a valid application. The formal application consultation remains a central and legitimate part of community involvement in development management.

4.3 Development Plan context

The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and the made Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan form part of the statutory development plan relevant to the application. Community representations made on the outline application will be assessed by the Council insofar as they raise material planning considerations relating to the development plan, national policy or other relevant matters. This Statement does not attempt to pre-judge those representations or the planning balance.

5. Engagement Position at Submission

As at 14 September 2026, the applicant has not undertaken direct community or stakeholder consultation in relation to this proposal. In particular, there has been no applicant-led public exhibition, public meeting, leaflet or letter consultation, dedicated consultation website, neighbour meeting, Parish Council presentation, formal pre-application consultation with North Herts Council or direct consultation with statutory consultees.

This Statement is therefore a record of the present position rather than a report of consultation results. There are no consultation responses to summarise, no consultation event attendance figures and no design changes that can properly be attributed to pre-application community feedback.

The absence of pre-submission engagement is material to the engagement narrative, but it does not mean that the community has no meaningful opportunity to participate. The application is being submitted in outline with all matters reserved, so the statutory consultation will take place while the detailed design remains capable of substantial evolution. The submission also provides a defined proposal and supporting evidence against which comments can be made, avoiding consultation on a concept so broad that its likely effects are difficult to understand.

Transparency commitment

The applicant will not describe application-stage consultation as pre-application consultation. All representations will be treated as having been received through the formal planning process, and the applicant's response to them will be recorded accordingly.

6. Community Involvement Through the Planning Application

Submission of the outline application begins the formal development-management consultation process. The Council will determine the precise publicity and consultation steps required, but its

adopted SCI identifies a combination of online publication, site notices, neighbour notification, statutory and non-statutory consultee invitations, local newspaper publicity where required, and circulation to councillors and the Parish Council.

For this proposal, that process will enable the local community to review the illustrative layout and the technical documents together, understand the scope of what is being sought at outline stage and make representations to the Council. Those representations will form part of the public planning record and will be considered by the decision-maker insofar as they relate to material planning considerations.

6.1 Matters on which community views can be particularly useful

The applicant will review all representations, but the following topics are likely to be capable of benefiting particularly from local knowledge and experience:

- the relationship between the development and the existing village edge, including local character and views;
- walking, cycling, highway and access matters, including local movement patterns and points of conflict;
- the location, character and usability of open space, play space, planting and pedestrian routes;
- the scale, type and mix of proposed housing to satisfy local needs'
- any need for community facilities or improvement to community facilities
- local drainage, surface-water, ecology, landscape, tree, heritage or archaeological matters where residents have relevant knowledge;
- construction access, routing, hours and site-management matters that may need to be addressed through conditions; and
- the detailed design characteristics that residents and the Parish Council consider important to the successful integration of the scheme with Pirton.

The list is illustrative rather than restrictive. Representations may address any material planning issue. The applicant will distinguish between matters that need to be resolved before outline permission can properly be granted and matters which can lawfully and appropriately be left for later detailed approval.

6.2 Applicant response during determination

During the consultation and determination period, the applicant and planning agent will monitor the Council's public register and review representations as they become available. Where an issue is capable of being clarified by reference to submitted evidence, a written clarification may be provided. Where a proportionate amendment would materially improve the scheme without changing its fundamental nature, the applicant will consider whether an amendment is appropriate in discussion with the Council.

Where a representation concerns a genuinely reserved matter, the applicant will record it for the detailed design stage rather than prematurely fixing a solution within the outline application. This is particularly relevant to the precise disposition of dwellings, architectural form, landscaping, detailed access geometry, boundary treatment, open-space design and other matters intentionally left open by an all-matters-reserved submission.

7. How Feedback Will Inform Reserved Matters and Conditions

If outline planning permission is granted, the Reserved Matters stage will provide the mechanism for translating the approved principle and any fixed parameters into a detailed development. The applicant will use the record of outline-stage consultation as one of the inputs to that design process.

The applicant will prepare a consultation feedback schedule after the principal outline consultation period. That schedule will identify the main planning issues raised, distinguish between matters resolved at outline stage and matters remaining relevant to detailed design, and record the action proposed. It will be retained as a project document and made available to the design team preparing Reserved Matters.

7.1 Reserved Matters

The applicant intends that the Design and Access Statement or equivalent supporting document submitted with Reserved Matters will include a concise section explaining how relevant outline-stage community and consultee feedback has influenced the detailed scheme. This may include changes to the layout, dwelling orientation, pedestrian links, landscape structure, play provision, access arrangements, boundary treatments or architectural approach, subject always to the scope of the outline permission and technical requirements.

It is important to distinguish this design influence from re-opening matters already determined by the outline permission. The principle and amount of development, and any parameters fixed by the outline

decision, will not be re-decided at Reserved Matters. Community participation at outline stage is therefore important for issues that go to those matters.

7.2 Discharge of planning conditions

Some detailed matters may be secured by planning condition rather than Reserved Matters. Where an outline-stage representation raises a relevant issue that falls within a later condition - for example construction management, drainage details, ecological protection, landscaping implementation, lighting or management of open space - the applicant will ensure that the relevant design or technical consultant is made aware of that issue when preparing the condition-discharge submission.

Not every discharge-of-condition application is subject to a separate statutory public consultation. The commitment in this Statement is therefore not dependent on there being a new consultation at each later stage: it is a commitment to carry forward the issues already raised and to address them where they remain relevant and within the scope of the condition concerned.

7.3 Further targeted engagement

Where the outline consultation identifies a detailed issue that would benefit from further discussion before Reserved Matters are submitted, the applicant will consider proportionate targeted engagement with Pirton Parish Council, affected neighbours or other relevant stakeholders. The form of any such engagement will reflect the issue concerned and may include a meeting, written exchange or focused presentation of revised design material.

8. Applicant Commitments and Feedback Protocol

To ensure that the application-stage consultation has a practical influence on later design work, the applicant will follow the protocol below.

Stage	Commitment
1. Monitor	Review representations published by North Herts Council during the outline consultation period and any subsequent re-consultation.
2. Record	Maintain an issue schedule summarising the principal material planning matters raised by the community, Parish Council and consultees.

Stage	Commitment
3. Categorise	Identify whether each issue relates to the outline principle, a matter capable of being addressed during determination, a Reserved Matter, or a condition-discharge topic.
4. Respond	Where appropriate, provide clarification, additional information or proportionate amendments during the determination process in discussion with the Council.
5. Carry forward	Provide the final feedback schedule to the team preparing Reserved Matters and relevant condition-discharge submissions.
6. Demonstrate	Explain within the Reserved Matters supporting material how relevant consultation feedback has influenced the detailed design, or why a suggested change has not been adopted where that explanation is material.
7. Re-engage where useful	Consider targeted engagement before Reserved Matters where a locally sensitive detailed issue would benefit from further discussion.

8.1 Feedback schedule structure

The project feedback schedule will use a simple structure so that the design team can trace each issue from representation to response. It will record the source or consultation category, the planning issue raised, the stage at which it is capable of being addressed, the applicant's response and any resulting design or technical action. Personal data will not be reproduced unnecessarily within the project schedule.

9. Conclusion

No pre-application community or consultee engagement has been undertaken in connection with the proposed 30-dwelling outline application at Land at Pirton. This Statement records that position clearly and does not suggest that the statutory application process retrospectively amounts to pre-application engagement.

The applicant nevertheless recognises the importance of community involvement and the strengthened expectation in Policy DM1 of the August 2026 NPPF that major development is informed by early engagement. North Herts Council's adopted SCI also encourages engagement on major schemes while recognising that pre-application discussions cannot be required in every case.

The outline application therefore marks the first formal and structured opportunity for the community, Pirton Parish Council and consultees to review the proposal and provide comments. Because all matters are reserved, the detailed design remains deliberately flexible. Material comments received during determination can therefore be considered both in the live outline application where appropriate and, where they concern matters left open, in the preparation of Reserved Matters and relevant condition-discharge submissions.

The commitments in this Statement provide a clear audit trail for that process. They will ensure that community feedback is not treated merely as a procedural step, but is captured, assessed and passed forward to the detailed design team so that relevant local concerns and opportunities can influence the final form of development within the scope of any outline planning permission.

References

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework, August 2026.
Policies DM1 and DM3.

North Herts Council. Statement of Community Involvement, adopted September 2023, particularly Section 9:

Community Involvement in Development Management.

North Herts Council. North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted 8 November 2022.

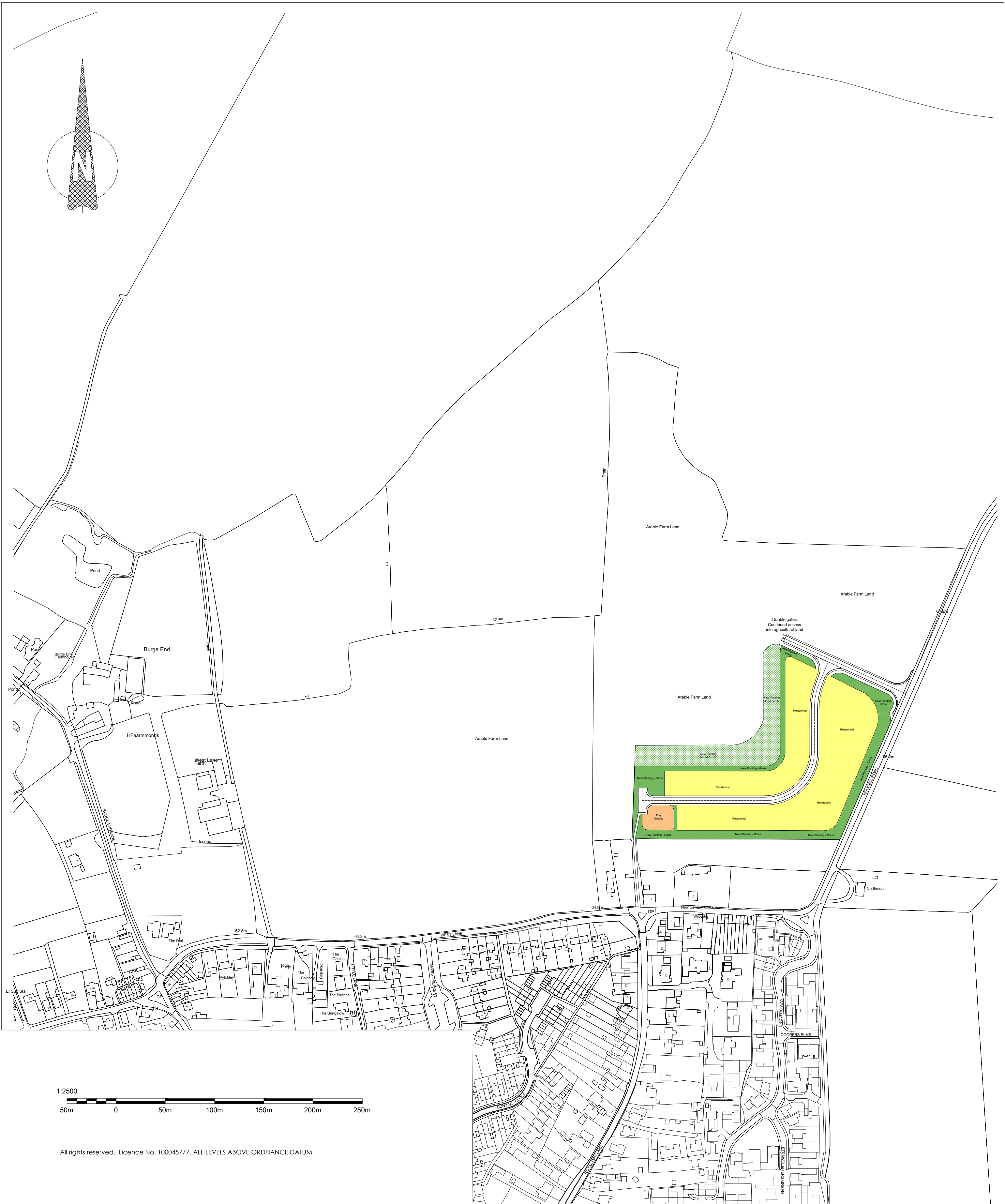
Pirton Parish Council / North Herts Council. Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031, made 27 April 2018.

PSK Rural Limited. Indicative Site Layout Plan - Proposed Residential Development, Land at Pirton, Hitchin SG5 3RA, Drg. No. LAP SITE 001 A, August 2026.

PSK Rural Limited. Indicative Watercolour Layout Image, Land at Pirton, September 2026.

Online policy sources reviewed 14 September 2026: [North Herts Council Statement of Community Involvement](#) and [National Planning Policy Framework](#).

Appendix A - Indicative Site Layout 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 Pilton Hitchin SG5 3RA
Title	Indicative Site Layout Plan - Proposed Residential Development
Fig No.	LAP SITE 001
Rev	A
Drawn	TMC
Checked	JPH
Date	08/20/26
Scale	1:2500 (A2)
Status	Planning

Appendix B - Indicative Watercolour Layout



Revisions

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Project

Land at Pirton,
Hitchin,
SG5 3RA

Title

Indicative Site Layout Plan - Proposed Residential Development

Dwg. No.

LAP SITE 001

Rev

A

Drawn

TMC

Checked

JPH

Date

08/2026

Scale

1:2500 (A2)

Status

Planner