

Formal Objection to Planning Application by Gladman Developments

Planning Application Reference: 25/01696/OP

Location: Land East of Drovers Way, Pirton, North Hertfordshire, SG5 3EQ

Applicant: Gladman Developments

Date: 3rd August 2025

1. Introduction

Herein sets out my detailed objection to the planning application submitted by Gladman Developments for up to 130 dwellings on land east of Drovers Way, Pirton. My objection is rooted in sound planning policy and highlights unresolved and serious concerns around access, environmental impact, village character, infrastructure, and policy non-conformity. This objection draws on adopted policies within the North Hertfordshire (NHDC) Local Plan (2011–2031), the December 2024 revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Pirton's Neighbourhood Development Plans (PNP) and material planning history associated with the site.

3. Policy-Based Objections

3.1 Development Outside Settlement Boundary – Urban Sprawl

The proposed site is approximately 6.7 hectares of agricultural land. It is located **outside** the Pirton settlement boundary, in an area designated as Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The site is not subject to Green Belt or Grey Belt policy, and it is **not** allocated for residential development within the adopted PNP. Previous applications for residential use on this site have been **refused** and dismissed at appeal.

Neighbourhood development plans, such as the one in Pirton (PNP), are designed to empower local communities to shape the future of their areas by defining a vision, setting policies for land use and development, and identifying areas for protection or improvement. This is recognised by NHDC SOC4 which states that rural communities should be able to plan to meet their own local needs, especially through neighbourhood planning.

Policy SP2 and SP8 in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, states that developments in Category A villages, such as Pirton, will be allowed **within** the defined settlement boundaries. This is corroborated by PNP 1 (Meeting Local and Wider Needs: A residential development proposal will be supported if: It is within the development boundary of the village). However, this planning application proposes development **outside** of the settlement area of Pirton.

3.2 Unsustainable Scale of Development

SP5 d) recognise the intrinsic value of the countryside and the NHDC aspiration to operate a general policy of restraint in Rural Areas. ECON6 aims to sustain the vitality of our villages and the rural economy in supporting rural diversification whilst ensuring development is of an appropriate scale and character. The proposed development violates both of these policies.

The proposal conflicts with PNP 1, which states that residential development proposal will be supported if it is **for no more than 30 houses** on any one development site. In addition, the scale breaches SP2 and SP1's emphasis on proportionate development. Between 2011 and 2021 the Pirton parish population grew three times as fast as the average for North Herts: Pirton grew by 14% (1,274 to 1,452) compared to only 4.8% (127,100 to 133,200) for North Herts. 130 additional dwellings would further overwhelm Pirton, overloading infrastructure, services, and harming village character.

Additionally, PNP 2 states that 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. However, the proposed development has a **significantly higher density** (>32 dwellings per hectare), compared to the average in Pirton (<17 dwellings per hectare, with the greatest density of 22 dwellings per hectare).

3.3 Inadequate Access

The sole vehicular access proposed via Drovers Way/Coopers Elms is inadequate. This cul-de-sac is not designed for high traffic volumes or construction traffic. Gladmans have predicted that the proposed 130 houses will generate a 160% increase in cars through Coopers Elms/Drovers Way (75 additional cars between 8-9am and 66 cars between 5-6pm).

In addition, manual for Streets 2 recommends two points of access for schemes exceeding 100 dwellings. The proposal **fails** to meet this threshold and creates safety and congestion risks, breaching Local Plan Policy T1. The proposed access point off Holwell Road is already an incredibly **dangerous** junction, with extremely limited visibility around a sharp corner with high bushes.

In addition, PNP 11 concerns the safety of pedestrians and cyclists to the principal village facilities. However, access involves either using the Hambridge way or via Holwell Road from the junction with Drovers Way. The Hambridge Way is an **unmade and unlit** bridleway whose surface is very rough and prone to flooding – not a suitable route for anyone with a visual impairment nor small children. Additionally, the route from the Hambridge Way to the recreation ground is across the edge of a clay field which becomes even worse and virtually impassable in wet weather. Alternatively, the route to village amenities via Holwell Road has no footpath and hence pedestrians

need to walk in the road past parked cars of the terrace of properties, compounded by the wheely bins which have to be placed in the road. This is a busy road, particularly during rush hour and whilst school aged children are walking to the pre-school, primary school (including parents with pushchairs) or bus stops (to access secondary schools).

There are additional concerns about the impact of traffic on local roads, as there are only three access roads into the village. The route through Holwell is narrow in places and has several difficult, limited visibility corners. The route via Hitchin Road (Gladwins estimate 81% of traffic uses this route) necessitates driving through congested, narrow village roads including Royal Oak Lane and Walnut Tree Road (which has been closed several times in recent years due to flooding between Cotman End and Maltings Orchard). The third route out of the village along Shillington Road involves driving along West Lane which has also been closed several times in recent years due to flooding at the corner before Burge End Lane. Many of these roads are unsuitable for construction traffic, as was previously an issue during the construction of the Comice Meadows development when the traffic control system was ignored by lorries.

3.4 Conflict with Bridleway and Green Infrastructure

The significance of green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity in Pirton is recognised in Policy SP12, which serves to protect the landscape character, scenic beauty and locally sensitive features, particularly in relation to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is further supported by PNP 7 - which seeks to protect and enhance the setting of Pirton village in relation to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the surrounding rural landscape. This states that any new development must ensure that key features of the view can continue to be enjoyed including distant buildings and landscape features, sensitive village edges and rural approaches to the village. Clearly stated is the view from Highdown north to the Bury, the village and the Pirton Lowlands beyond - this proposed development will be clearly visible from the higher parts of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that border the village on the southwestern border. In addition, having properties which are 2.5 stories high will further compound the issue.

3.5 Destruction of Eastern Hedgerow and Green Buffer

The proposal removes a mature hedgerow and breaches the green corridor established in the approved Cala Homes scheme. This hedgerow forms part of a strategic green infrastructure buffer, previously accepted as the village's eastern edge. Its removal conflicts with Policy NE1 and the secured ecological mitigation secured through the Comice Meadows development permission. Additionally, PNP 4 encourages the retention and maintenance of existing trees and hedgerows and states where the boundary of a new development is adjacent to the edge of the village, existing hedgerows and trees should be protected to give the village a green and soft edge, which is not demonstrated by the proposal.

Condition 4 of 15/01618/1 states that: "None of the trees or hedgerows to be retained on the application site shall be felled, lopped, topped, uprooted, removed or otherwise destroyed or killed without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority". In addition, condition 5 states that: "The existing hedgerow to be retained to the eastern boundary of the application site shall be maintained at a height of between 6 and 8 metres unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority". These will both be violated by the proposed development.

3.6 Archaeological and Heritage Constraints

The site and surrounding area are archaeologically sensitive. The new access route traverses previously unsurveyed land, risking harm to undiscovered heritage assets. This undermines NPPF paragraphs 205–207 and Local Plan Policy HE1, which require proper investigation and mitigation.

3.7 Undermining the Cala Homes Design Principles

The Cala Homes scheme at Comice Meadows was carefully planned with community input to respect Pirton's form and setting. Its design included a green buffer, bridleway protection, low-density edges, and access hierarchy. The Gladman proposal tramples those principles: breaching the green parkland buffer, introducing urban-scale density eastwards, and compromising shared infrastructure. This erodes the spatial integrity established through Cala's approval.

3.8 No Demonstrable Need

The Council currently has a 3.9-year housing land supply. While this triggers the NPPF's tilted balance, it does not justify overriding major harms. Paragraph 11(d)(ii) confirms that planning permission should still be refused where the adverse impacts significantly outweigh the benefits. This is the case here, given the access, ecological, heritage, and settlement pattern conflicts.

4.0 Conclusion and Requested Action

This objection clearly states that the proposed development conflicts with numerous adopted policies in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, including SP1, SP2, SP6, T1, NE1, NE4, CGB1, HE1, and HS2. It also conflicts with several Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan policies PNP1, PNP2, PNP4, PNP7 and PNP11. It undermines the principles established by the Cala Homes scheme and introduces unacceptable new harms. The cumulative effect of inappropriate access, ecological loss, archaeological risk, and unjustified village sprawl clearly outweighs any marginal benefit of additional housing.

I respectfully request that the Council refuse this application.

Kind regards,



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