



North Herts Council
Development and Conservation
North Hertfordshire District Council
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Date: 12 December 2025
Our ref: 12177

For the attention of: Ben Glover

Application ref: 25/02064/OP
Location: Land Adjacent To 10 Hambridge Way Pirton Hertfordshire
Proposal/Description: Erection of up to 50 dwellings including affordable housing, together with amenity space, landscaping and all associated infrastructure and works (all matters reserved except means of access).

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Outline planning application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

Site Context:

The application site is located to the south-east of Pirton Village, within two rectangular shaped fields to the south of Hambridge Way. The Icknield Way Public Right of Way (PRoW 21) runs along the northern boundary of the site, connecting Pirton to Hitchin and beyond. PRoW 005 and 003 run along the eastern and southern boundaries. The boundaries of the site are defined by tall hedgerows, however they are fragmented in places.

Pirton Conservation Area partially adjoins the site on West Lane to the north, however is mostly separated from the area owed to the new adjacent development on Cotman End. The Playing Field is located to the south of the site. The Chilterns National Landscape is located around 400m~ from the site to the south of Pirton village.

Planning Policy Context:

North Hertfordshire Local Plan (Adopted 2022)

Policies to be considered that are relevant to landscape include Policy ENV2, ENV3, ENV4, NE1, NE2, NE7, NE8, SP9, SP12 and SP13.

Policy NE3 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is also considered relevant, owed to its location close to the site.

Pirton Neighbourhood Plan (Made April 2018)

The site is located in Visual Character Area 1.



The application should consider identified Views.. For example, View 1 from Highdown North provides elevated views over Pirton village where the development would be discernible.

PNP1 Meeting Local and Wider Needs, PNP2 Design and Character, PNP4 (Hedgerows, Trees and Verges), PNP5 Wildlife, PNP7 Key Views and Vista, PNP12 Connectivity.

Pirton Character Assessment

Within this assessment, the site is located within Important Views (Figure 45) 7 and 8.

Review of LVIA:

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Greenlight Environmental Consultancy (August 2025).

The LVIA does not provide a breakdown of the assessment of sensitivity for both landscape and visual into value and susceptibility. We would have expected definitions of both value and susceptibility to be provided with individual judgement criteria used to inform the sensitivity judgements.

Landscape Character

The site is located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 218 Pirton Lowlands of the North Herts Landscape Study. Key characteristics include the large arable open flat landscape, remnant hedgerows and woodland shelter around settlements.

We welcome the inclusion of the table on Page 45 summarising the judged landscape effects.

Within the LVIA, the site is assessed (Para 6.2.4 and 6.2.5) to have **low** sensitivity, **medium** magnitude of change and an overall **slight/moderate** significance of effect. We judge that the sensitivity for the site is higher than low. Based on Table 1 of Appendix 2, we judge the site has some sense of enclosure, with a mix of different vegetation on the boundaries and within the central hedgerow and is affected by some man-made elements outside the site on the edge of Pirton.

We also judge that the magnitude of change is higher than medium, where the perception of the small grassland fields on the village edge will be completely lost through development of the entire site. The central east-west hedgerow is also being removed to facilitate development, which further suggests that the LVIA has underassessed the impacts on the Site. We would therefore judge the site has a **high magnitude of change** and overall **moderate overall effect**.

We note that the summary in para 6.2.6 has incorrectly swapped the judgements for sensitivity and magnitude of change compared to the preceding paragraphs.

We do not disagree with the judgements on effects to landscape character outlined within para 6.3.6.

Visual Effects

We welcome the inclusion of the table on Page 55 summarising the judged visual effects.

Overall, we agree with the selection of visual receptors identified and assessed within the assessment and judge that the viewpoint photography has been taken from representative locations.

Icknield Way/Hambridge Way PRow runs along the northern boundary and is a long-distance walking route. Owing to gaps in the northern boundary vegetation, there are some open views into the site (Viewpoint A) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: View from Icknield Way looking SW (9th December 2025)



Figure 2: View from entrance to POS along Icknield Way

The LVIA judges that views from Icknield Way National Trail have a **high sensitivity** to change and a **low magnitude of change**, resulting in a **moderate/slight** overall effect. We disagree with this judgement, and judge that the effects on the Icknield Way have been underassessed.

From the Icknield Way, long views are available over the grassland fields which characterise the eastern edge of Pirton, with the rising ground of the Chilterns in the background, visible

over the top of the hedgerows. We disagree that this view is only seasonal, owed to the lack of low-level hedgerow planting along this boundary, and gaps in the vegetation. Introduction of built form within the site may limit these views. We therefore judge that overall effects would be **moderate** for Icknield Way.

The long-distance views from the elevated land within the Chilterns National Landscape has been acknowledged and assessed (Viewpoint i). These have been judged to experience **effectively no change** (neutral). Whilst the new rooflines may be visible from this location, the development would have no more than a minor effect.

Review of the proposal/submitted information:

The proposed development requires the removal of the central east-west hedgerow which separates the site into two parcels. To facilitate the development, both A001 and A002 (Cat C) are proposed for removal. However, no Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been submitted for review which explicitly outlines the trees and vegetation proposed for removal. From a landscape perspective, our preference is for the existing landscape structure to be retained through a landscape-led approach that proposes the enhancement of the central hedgerow as opposed to its removal.

We therefore question whether alternative arrangements have been explored which retain the central hedgerow, therefore enabling the proposals to contribute to the Reconstruction aim of the 218 Pirton Lowlands Landscape Character Area (LCA), by promoting hedgerow restoration and planting of standard hedgerow trees.

The submitted Landscape Strategy (18 August 2025) currently makes reference to a previous layout version than that submitted in the Design and Access Statement. We would expect this strategy to be updated to reflect the current proposals.

We agree that the Public Open Space (POS) is best located to the eastern edge of the site, as this is the countryside edge and also has the potential to allow views from the more expose section of Icknield Way towards the Chilterns. Trees are indicatively located within the POS, however we judge that additional tree planting should not be proposed to avoid screening the long-distance views towards the elevated Chilterns National Landscape. The placement of trees should consider the retention of some longer views through the site.

Previous layouts proposed a direct link between the site and the Playing Fields to the south. We welcome this link and advise it is included within the current plans.

The dwellings to the south-east and north-east corners of the site could be orientated to act as a corner turner, providing a better frontage to the corners of the site.

Any development located within the root protection areas (RPA) of retained trees should be no-dig surface treatments. Protection fencing should also be proposed surrounding all retained trees and hedgerows, shown on a Tree Protection Plan.

Page 7 of the Landscape Strategy states that the attenuation basins provide opportunities for wildflower grassland planting. We advise that this is supplemented with a variety of other

planting, including tree planting, scrub planting and shrub planting to provide more visual interest, provide a soft barrier adjacent to the footpath, and increase biodiversity interest. Proposing only grassland will reduce the visual amenity of this large space. We also advise that the basin is made publicly accessible with mown grass in places, and shallow gradients (1:4 or shallower) to allow easy public access. We advise that the basin is not surrounded by a physical hard boundary, i.e. fencing.

Submission documents:

If minded for approval, we advise the following documents are submitted:

- An updated Landscape Strategy
- Hard Landscape Plan
- Soft Landscape Plan
- SuDS Strategy
- Landscape Management Plan

Summary:

Overall, we consider that there is capacity for some development within the application site. We have some difference in professional judgement related to the effects within the LVIA where we judge that the assessment has underassessed some of the impacts. The submission of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and Method Statement is required to outline the proposed impacts to existing vegetation on site. We advise that the above recommendations are considered within any forthcoming submissions, and ask that alternative layouts that retain the central hedgerow are explored.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

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Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of North Herts Council.

Please note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.