

4 | Assessment of Significance



Figure 4.3 Church of St Mary (C of E) (Grade: I, List Entry Number: 1347110)



Figure 4.4 Pirton Conservation Area



Figure 4.5 Elm Tree Farm House (Grade II, List Entry Number: 1308350)



Figure 4.6 4 - 6 Walnut Tree Road (Grade: II, List Entry Number: 1347097)



Figure 4.7 Ivy Cottage (Grade II, List Entry Number: 1103187)



Figure 4.8 5, Crabtree Lane (Grade II, List Entry Number: 1295337)

Section 5

The Proposed Development.

5 | The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development

- 5.1 The Proposed Development on the Site seeks to deliver 130 new homes in Pirton. The development would provide 2.40 hectares of green infrastructure space which would include walking and leisure routes as well as associated amenities.
- 5.2 The framework masterplan proposed sensitively integrates the housing parcels into a network of connected and accessible green spaces, which draw on the vernacular layouts. The landscaping for the development includes green and blue corridors with wildflower meadows and structural landscaping surrounding the development.
- 5.3 The height of the proposed development is in keeping with the traditional 2 storey residential height seen in Pirton. The primary route, running through the centre of the Site, is proposed to have slightly taller housing up to 2.5 storeys. The placement of the taller housing in the centre of the height would establish a stronger building frontage which would frame the streets and public spaces, emphasising this area as the heart of the development. The lower housing of the periphery of the Site will ensure that the development transitions with the existing built environment, as well as the open land.
- 5.4 The proposal is at outline stage with all subsequent detailed (aside from access) design for the dwellings to be secured via a reserved matters application.



Figure 5.1 Development Framework Plan

Section 6

Assessment of Effects.

Assessment of Effects

Pirton Conservation Area

- 6.1 Pirton Conservation Area is located to the south west of the Site, separated from the Site by the recent development of Comice Meadows.
- 6.2 The significance of the Pirton Conservation Area is primarily derived from the historic interest of the development of Pirton as a small rural market town in Hertfordshire. The Site is located closest to Character Area Three of the Conservation Area, which has a mixed architectural style and is the later phase of development within the CA, with buildings generally dating from 19th Century onwards. This part of the CA is understood as a later phase of historic development in the village's history, a village which has had several phrases of growth and development in its history.
- 6.3 The proposed development would represent the next phase of development to an area which has a history of piecemeal additions and would introduce additional built form into the wider setting of the Conservation Area. The Site is located in an area of the CA's wider setting which is already characterised by more built form as a result of the development of Comice Meadows.
- 6.4 The proposed development is proposed to be primarily 2 storey in height, with 2.5 storey houses proposed along the primary route within the middle of the development. This slightly increase in height would frame the streets and public spaces and emphasis that this is the central part of the development. The peripheral parts of the development will not exceed 2 storeys and this would ensure that the new development here not only responds to Comice Meadows but also facilitates the transition to open land to the east. The built form of the proposed development would be understood as a contextual addition to the village of Pirton.
- 6.5 The landscaping proposals, as set out in the DAS, demonstrate how the landscaping proposals would help to relate the built form of the proposed development to the existing landscape. The landscaping proposals incorporate existing vegetation and existing ponds into the landscape designs with a proposed meadow and trees added to the design. The southern aspect of the Site, closest the footpath which runs into the heart of the conservation area, would retain its rural character

- as a result of the generous buffer and landscaping proposed here.
- 6.6 Therefore, it is considered that whilst the proposed development would introduce further built form into the setting of the CA, the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved as a result of the proposed development. The key aspects of the Conservation Area's significance, such as the historic core of the village, the mix of historic architectural styles and the historic street layout, are retained by the proposals. Indeed, any direct contribution of the Site to the setting of the CA has been severed by the development of Comice Meadows and the rural setting of the CA is more readily understood from the fields to the north and west of the CA.
- 6.7 This is a position which was found by the Inspector in the appeal decision, who confirmed that there were no heritage concerns with the development of this site;
- "I consider that, subject to the necessary condition [with reference to archaeological matters], the proposal would comply with national policy18 on the conservation of the historic environment including non-designated heritage assets, which is echoed by ELP Policy HE4, and with NHDLP Policy 16, which envisages development subject to conditions in appropriate circumstances. The submitted evaluation would meet the requirements of NP Policy PNP8. (paragraph 60 of APP/X1925/W/17/3184846)*

Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area boundary

- 6.8 These assets have been grouped in this assessment due to their shared setting and location within the Conservation Area. The location of these assets within the village setting of Pirton and the Conservation Area is the key part of their setting as buildings within the rural village of Pirton, set around the Church. The rural character of the village is understood from the wide verges and winding roads, the mature greenery and the large plot sizes.
- 6.9 The Site is located in the much wider setting of these assets, beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area. The Site does not materially contribute to the setting of these assets, and the development of Comice Meadows severed any direct interaction of the Site and these assets. Views between the assets within the Conservation Area and the Site are very limited, and incidental in nature. This includes views from Grade I Church of St Mary, which is located 500m from the Site boundary.
- 6.10 The proposed development would introduce additional built form into the wider setting of these assets. The proposed development has been developed with its sensitive heritage context at the forefront of design, for example the 2 - 2.5 storey heights, housing parcel set amongst generous landscaping with 2.5 hectares of green space worked into the scheme and curved roads, would follow the vernacular style of the village of Pirton. The proposed development would be a contextual addition to the edge of the village in a area already characterised by modern, residential development.
- 6.11 Therefore, the development of the Site with residential built form which is in keeping with the character of the village is not considered to harm the significance of the listed buildings here.
- 6.12 Therefore, it is considered that there would be **no harm** to these assets as a result of the proposed development. This is a position which was found by the Inspector in the appeal decision, who confirmed that there were no heritage concerns with the development of this Site (see quotation above, at paragraph 6.7)

Section 7

Conclusion.

Summary

- 7.1

This heritage assessment has been prepared on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd to accompany a planning application for the development of the Site, land east of Pirton
- 7.2

This heritage assessment has identified all designated heritage assets within 500m of the site boundary, and provided a assessment against the Pirton Conservation Area and scoped listed buildings. The scoping is considered to be proportionate to the proposals and the potential impact upon the significance of these assets (as derived from setting). These have been grouped together for assessment purposes, and concludes that the proposals would preserve the special interest of the conservation area and the heritage assets.
- 7.3

While the proposals are acknowledged to produce some increase in the sense of urbanisation within the wider village, the change to the setting of the heritage assets would only be apparent within their wider area beyond the village core. The Site and the heritage assets are separated by existing built form and landscaping and there would only be a minor erosion of the wider agricultural landscape. The proposals would have no effect on the ability to appreciate these assets in their context, or impact upon the primary components of their special interest.

Policy Compliance

- 7.4

The proposed development is considered to preserve the identified heritage assets. This is in line with the following policy:

•

In line with NPPF Paragraphs 139, this report considers the proposed development to reflect the local design (and is in line with local design policy SP9).

•

In line with Paragraph 207, this report has assessed the significance of, and impact of the proposed development on, the heritage assets within a 500m radius of the Site to conclude that the proposed development would cause no harm and as such is in line with local heritage policy SP14.
- 7.5

To conclude, this application is considered to fulfil the correct policy tests as outlined in the NPPF (2024) and would therefore allow the discharge of the Council’s statutory duty under 66(1) the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990.

Appendix 1

Methodology.

Heritage Assessment

This report provides an assessment of the significance of identified heritage assets and the potential effects of the proposed development. It has been informed by:

- Relevant legislation, and national and local planning policy (see Section 2); and
- Best practice guidance set out in:
 - Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in the UK (IEMA/IHBC/CiFA, 2021)
 - Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008)
 - Good Practice Advice in Planning Notes (Historic England, various).

Under the requirements of the above policy and guidance, the process of heritage impact assessments can be summarised as involving three parts:

- Understanding the cultural significance of identified designated and non-designated heritage assets and their setting;
- Understanding the nature and extent of potential effects on significance and settings of identified heritage assets; and
- Making a judgement on the impact that the Proposed Development may have on significance and setting.

There are two ways in which the Proposed Development can affect heritage assets:

- by physical changes to the fabric, use and visual appearance of designated or non-non-designated heritage assets (known as direct effects); and
- by changes to the setting of designated or non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity (known as indirect effects).

Understanding Significance

Heritage assets are defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: ‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)’.

The setting of a heritage asset is defined as: ‘the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral’ (NPPF, Annex 2).

Non-Designated Heritage Assets (‘NDHAs’) are defined as buildings, structures and places which have a degree of heritage significance but do not meet the criteria for designation: ‘Only a minority [of buildings] have enough heritage significance to merit identification as non-designated heritage assets’ (PPG paragraph 039).

NPPF paragraph 207 requires the significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by the Proposed Development to be described in a proportionate manner. The methodology used here for understanding the significance draws from the approach set out in Historic England’s Conservation Principles and NPPF Annex 2 by defining heritage interests. As defined in the PPG (Historic Environment, para 06), the heritage interest may be:

- Archaeological;
- Architectural and artistic; and/or
- Historic.

It is important to note that understanding significance is primarily a descriptive exercise. However, guidance by IEMA, IHBC and CiFA identifies that ‘importance’ can be defined and scaled as ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ or any other simple scale that offers a form of gradation. This is done in broad terms, as per Table H1. The ability to scale assets, including differentiating those of ‘highest significance’ is also established in the NPPF (i.e. para.213).

As identified in NPPF paragraphs 207 and 208, significance can also derive from the setting of a heritage asset. HE’s GPA3 guidance gives general advice on understanding setting and how it may contribute to significance. This assessment follows the staged approach set out in GPA3 guidance to identifying the level of contribution that setting makes to the significance of heritage assets.

Assessing Effects

Legislative and policy requirements for the assessment of effects on heritage assets require the assessor to establish whether the value is preserved, better revealed/enhanced or harmed as a result of the Proposed Development.

Beneficial effects occur when the Proposed Development would enhance the value or contribution of the setting to value of heritage assets.

Should harm arise to the significance or contribution of setting to significance of designated heritage assets, there is a requirement in NPPF paras.212-215 to determine whether the level of harm amounts to ‘substantial harm’ or ‘less than substantial harm’. Any harmful impact to the significance of a designated heritage asset should require a clear and convincing justification and be weighed against the public benefits of the Proposed Development. Great weight should be given to asset’s conservation, the greater the harm, the greater the benefits that will be needed to justify approval.

For any harm to NDHAs, NPPF paragraph 216 requires balanced judgement with regard to scale of harm or loss and significance.

As established in Bramshill (2021) and Whitechapel Bell Foundry (2021) , when assessing effects, it is possible to undertake an internal heritage balancing exercise where relevant heritage harms and heritage benefits can be balanced to come to a ‘net’ position.

Significance	Designation of Receptor
Very High	Site acknowledged of international importance World Heritage Site
High	Grade I or Grade II* Listed Asset Scheduled Monument
Medium	Grade II Listed Asset Conservation Area
Low	NDHAs of higher local importance (including local listing) Designated Heritage Assets compromised by poor preservation
Very Low	NDHAs of lower local importance or compromised by poor preservation.

Table H1: Heritage Importance
Table H1: Heritage Significance



Delivery | Design | Engagement | Heritage | Impact Management | Planning
Sustainable Development | Townscape | Transport

Edinburgh : 11 Alva Street | Edinburgh | EH2 4PH

Glasgow : 177 West George Street | Glasgow | G2 2LB

London : Da Vinci House | 44 Saffron Hill | London | EC1N 8FH

Manchester : This is The Space | 68 Quay Street | Manchester | M3 3EJ

Birmingham : The Colmore Building | 20 Colmore Circus Queensway | Birmingham | B4 6AT

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