



Design & Access and Heritage Statement

Extensions & Alterations

81 High street,
Pirton, Hitchin
Hertfordshire,
SG5 3PU

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This statement has been prepared within the context of the following key sources of advice and guidance:

- *'Design and access statements: How to write, read and use them'*. CABE, 2006
- *www.planningguidance.communities.gov.uk (as substituted for archived document 'Guidance on information requirements and validation'*. Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2010)
- *The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015*

This assessment has also been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states:

"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

1.0 | INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared by MDP Architects to accompany an application for planning permission for the extension and alteration of 81 High Street, Pirton, Hitchin. This report is intended to provide background information on the proposals and their development, and to discuss the principles of the proposals including layout, form, access, materials, and landscaping. There is also later discussion surrounding the heritage impacts of the proposals; the building is locally listed and sits to the eastern end of the Pirton Conservation area.

Site Appraisal

The site at 81 High Street, Pirton, Hitchin sits along the south-east area of Pirton high street and is situated within a predominantly residential area. Pirton is on the northern edge of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is surrounded by an agricultural landscape. The village has a compact, triangular layout, orientated around St Mary's Parish Church and the remains of Pirton's long demolished motte and bailey castle and original medieval settlement. The property itself faces Blacksmiths Pond, which has further attachments to the surrounding Pirton Vicarage Nature Area to the west and southern surrounding fields and greenery. To the east of the property, larger scaled detached housing is dominant to the streetscape, providing a contrast to the primarily terraced and semi-detached buildings found to the west of the site. The existing building sits on a site of approximately 390sq.m. and has a footprint of approximately 70.9sq. m.

The property sits at the western end of a row of terraced houses forming a 'Non-Designated Heritage Asset', or 'Locally Listed' group of buildings, as described by Pirton CAAMP as:

"Properties which feature typical local and traditional materials, such as Arlesey brick, lime render, natural slate and handmade tiles contribute positively to the Character Area.... 81-91 High Street, A short terrace of six brick cottages, with the flanking cottages featuring a street fronting gable. Number 81, on the northern edge, has been extended to the side."

The property sits to the eastern end of the Pirton Conservation area- categorised as Character Area 3 of the 2023 Pirton Conservation Area appraisal. The property is in proximity to several locally and nationally listed buildings and areas. The Grade I listed parish Church of St Mary (1347110), which dates from the 11th century and is enclosed by one of the baileys of the castle, sits approx. 200m to the south west of the site. Approx. 20m to the south is the locally listed Blacksmiths Village Pond

(HER 12426), a remnant of a medieval moat surrounding the Toot Hill castle bailey, which sits on the opposite side of the high street road and is the one of the first visible points from the application site. Also located further north south on the High Street is the Grade II listed Pirton Methodist Church (1175488). Five former manor houses in the parish are Listed: Burge End Farmhouse (Grade II), Docwra Manor (Grade II), Hammonds Farmhouse (Grade II*), Highdown House (Grade I), and Rectory Manor Farmhouse (Grade II*). A Grade II* Listed 16th century tithe barn is at Rectory Manor Farm.

Approximately 230m to the south west sits the Pirton Vicarage Nature Area, a conservation area which also forms the northern edge section of the Chilterns AONB. The site is not a part of the north Hertfordshire Green Belt.



Southern elevation of the property as seen from High Street



*Property as seen from the rear, showing late C20 extension + later C21 single storey extension.
Location of proposed extension shown in red.*

Site Proposals

The proposal consists of a rear extension, comprising two storeys, to extend the downstairs living accommodation and to provide additional space at first floor. The two-storey extension on the north west corner will provide additional living space on ground level for occupants, whilst also having the added benefit of creating additional space at first floor. The ground floor will feature an expansion off the kitchen area, introducing a bright and airy garden room designed with bi folding doors that provide seamless access to the outdoor space at the rear of the property. The first floor will see the creation of a master bedroom complete with an en-suite bathroom and dressing section directly off the landing.

2.0 | DESIGN

2.1 | Use

The existing building is currently used as a single dwellinghouse. The grounds surrounding the property form a residential garden space, with a driveway located to the south side of the property.

2.2 | Amount

The existing property is a semi-detached two storey C19 property and sits on a site area of approximately 390sq. m. The building itself occupies a footprint of approximately 70.9sq. m. and has an internal floor area of approximately 110.7sq. m.

It is proposed to extend the footprint of the building with a two-storey extension at the rear, increasing the footprint by 18.6sq. m. to 89.5 sq. m., and increasing the internal floor area to 144.7sq.m.

2.3 | Layout

The building is formed of several phases of accumulative development, featuring a two-storey extension to the side and a later single storey extension to the rear. The eastern end of the front façade represents the earliest part of the building's development, with the later subservient C20 addition of a two storey extension followed by the later C21 single storey lean-to extension at the rear of the property. Each of the previous extensions have mimicked the distinctive brick banding detailing and architectural style that align with the character of the property. Despite the multi development and modifications, the internal layout remains well organised.

The proposed design has taken into consideration the unusual site boundaries to the northern (rear) side of the property, which in turn influenced the configuration of the proposed extension and its layout. The majority of the site is offset somewhat from the house, with most of the garden space to the west of the property and only a small area of garden directly to the rear (north). The new bi-folding doors have therefore been positioned on the western side elevation rather than the northern facing rear elevation, in order to enhance the relationship with the garden and respect the site boundaries, whilst also allocating sufficient room for amenity space directly adjacent to the new doors. This choice not only maximises natural light and views but also ensures better integration with

the existing landscape. The proposals also maintain the connection of the kitchen to the newly proposed garden room and in turn the direct connection to the garden space.

To mitigate any potential impact on neighbouring properties, the proposal adheres to the 45-degree rule from the centre point of the nearest window of the eastern neighbour. This guideline ensures adequate light is maintained and minimises any potential overbearing impact, and it is therefore considered that the proposals do not present any excessive impact upon neighbouring properties.

2.4 | Scale

The proposal has been considered with regard to both the existing property and its general pattern of development, as well as the surrounding properties and the general character of the conservation area. It is clear that the development of the property has come in stages over its lifetime and has adopted a pattern consistent with most development from the previous few centuries.

The proposed extension's width has been restricted to ensure that the roof does not exceed the existing ridge line, thereby preserving the character of the building and its surroundings, and to ensure that it does not encroach beyond the 45 degree line to the neighbouring window as discussed earlier. Additionally, the pitch has been matched to that of the existing roof structure, ensuring architectural cohesion whilst also ensuring that the proposed two storey successfully integrates with the original dwelling. This approach not only enhances the aesthetic appeal but also aligns with local planning guidelines regarding building height and design consistency.

2.5 | Landscaping

The general landscaping to the property will remain relatively unchanged by the proposals. The extension sits within an area of existing hard standing between the property and the garden greenery to the north. The patio will be extended to the west directly adjacent to the bi-fold doors to provide an external seating space directly opening out from the new bi-fold doors of the two-storey extension.

2.6 | Appearance

Most buildings within the Character Area date from the nineteenth century or later, meaning they are predominantly brick built rather than timber framed and rendered. Good examples of Arlesey brick buildings are present mainly on the High Street alongside features of a street fronting gable, the light colour and appearance of which are a strong component of the Character Area.

The extension has been designed to harmonise with the existing building and its materials. The general materiality of the extension will mimic that of the main building, using local Arlesey white bricks with a slate roof to complement the character of the existing building group. The design approach prioritises the continuation of the buildings historical integrity whilst accommodating additional living space to suit the applicant's needs. The distinctive red brick brick banding as seen on the existing property and those surrounding, has been integrated into the proposal.

Additionally, the proposed windows of the extension will replicate the existing style to ensure consistency. To address privacy concerns, the new first floor window on the western side elevation of the proposal will be fitted with frosted glass to mitigate any overlooking into neighboring properties, whilst also allowing for additional natural light to the internal spaces. New and replacement windows are proposed in white uPVC. Although not generally considered appropriate within a conservation area, most of the buildings within this group feature modern uPVC casements, including the application property. On balance, it is therefore not considered appropriate to adopt a different window style or material for any new windows, in order to ensure harmony and continuity with both the existing building and others within the group.



Examples of existing double-glazed uPVC casement windows + examples of the distinctive brick banding

3.0 | ACCESS

3.1 | Vehicular & Pedestrian

The proposals do not seek to alter vehicular access to the site, which is formed by a driveway to the south corner of the site to the left of the front door. Pedestrian access to the site is unaltered, with the building currently benefiting from two entrances: one main front door, and another at the rear through the single-storey porch.

The site is well-connected with easy access to major road networks and public transportation options. Local amenities including shops, schools and recreational areas are within walking distance, promoting a pedestrian friendly environment.

3.2 | Inclusive Access

The existing building is of an age and character that is not necessarily suited to those with additional needs. However, where practical, step-free access will be provided to assist those who may visit the house.

4.0 | IMPACT ON HERITAGE ASSETS

Although the application property is not itself a listed building, the group of buildings on High Street that the application property is part of are locally listed and therefore classified as a 'non-designated heritage asset' in planning terms.

In addition, its location in the Pirton conservation area and in close proximity to listed heritage assets, these being 'designated heritage assets', requires that a proper assessment is made on the impact of the proposals upon these heritage assets.

4.1 | Review of Associated Assets

National Heritage List for England (NHLE)

Church of St Mary | Grade I (NHLE 1347110)

Burge End Farmhouse | Grade II (1175262)

Docwra Manor | Grade II (1175493)

Hammonds Farmhouse | Grade II (1175235)*

Highdown House | Grade II (1175442)

Rectory Manor Farmhouse | Grade II (1103158)*

Of these entries, none are likely to be impacted by the proposals taking into account either their location in relation to the site or their relative significance over and above the conservation area in general.

Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER)

"Heritage assets are defined in 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.'"

There are numerous listed buildings and scheduled monuments outside the Conservation Area boundary which contribute to the understanding of how Pirton developed and therefore the requirements of planning within the area. These include Pirton Grange, a Grade II listed building north of the village and the scheduled monuments at Knocking Knoll and Pegsdon Hills.

The following non- designated buildings are considered to make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of Pirton conservation area:

71 Shillington Road

45-57 West Lane

Pirton school

51-65 High Street

1-5 Little Green

The Motte and Bailey public house

1-4 Priors Hill

6 Priors Hill

Pirton Court

Of these remaining entries, none are likely to be impacted by the proposals taking into account either their location in relation to the site or their relative significance over and above the conservation area in general.

4.2 | Impact on Non-Designated Heritage Assets (excluding Application Property)

As discussed above, there is unlikely to be any impact on any of the identified non-designated heritage assets from the works. These assets are all either isolated in their scope and/or significance, or are a sufficient distance away from the proposals that there is to be no tangible interaction with them.

4.3 | Impact on Designated Heritage Assets

As discussed above, and similarly to the impact on non-designated heritage assets, there is unlikely to be any impact on any of the identified designated heritage assets from the site. These assets are all again either isolated in their scope and/or significance or are a sufficient distance away from the proposals that there is to be no tangible interaction with them.

The proposed development has been designed with careful consideration for ensuring that the scale, materials and window placements harmonise and respect the existing character of the dwelling and the contribution it makes to the conservation area. By respecting the architectural features of the original structure, the proposal will not detract from the character or integrity of adjacent properties.

Additionally, all proposed extensions are confined to the northern elevation (rear) which is not visible from any public vantage point. As a result, the development will have no tangible impact on the public realm, preserving the visual and historical context of the area while enhancing the functionality of the dwelling. This approach will ensure that both the immediate and broader heritage landscape remains unaltered and respected, and is considered to strike an appropriate balance.

Therefore, taking into account the above discussion, it is considered that the proposals represent a pragmatic, considered extension to the existing building. They are not considered to detrimentally impact the character or setting of the Conservation area, nor are they considered to adversely impact upon either the host dwelling or any neighbouring properties.