



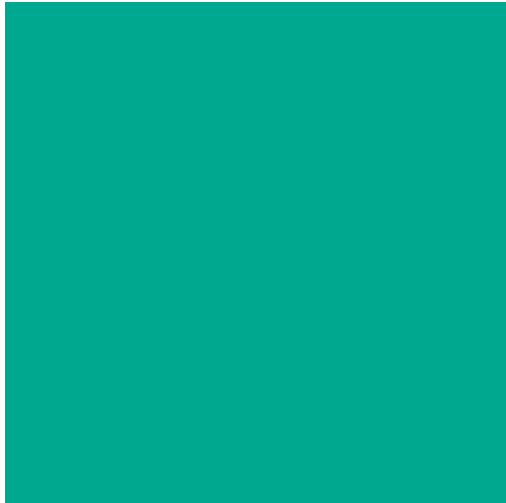
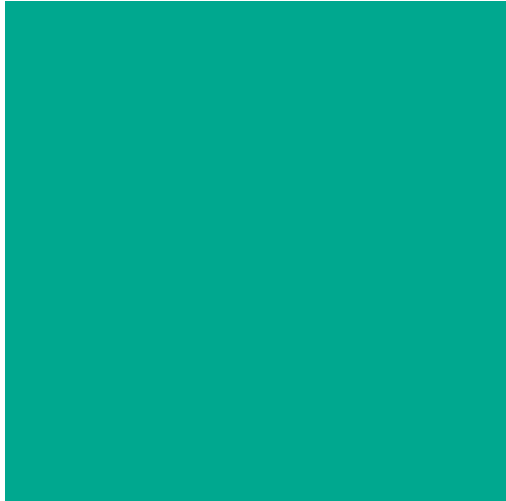
PLANNING STATEMENT

Site: The Studio at Pirton Court
1 Priors Hill
Pirton
SG5 3QA

For: M Scott Architectural Design Ltd

Project Ref: 25024

Date: 17 April 2025



Prepared by:
Kenya Sharland MPlan (Hons) MRTPI
Associate
Barker Parry Town Planning Ltd
33 Bancroft, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1LA
T: 01462 420224 / E: office@barkerparry.co.uk



CONTENTS PAGE

Section	Title	Page
1.0	INTRODUCTION	2
2.0	SITE CONTEXT	3
3.0	RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY	7
4.0	THE PROPOSAL	9
5.0	PLANNING ASSESSMENT	12
6.0	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	18

Plans and Documents Accompanying the Application

APPLICATION FORM
PLANNING STATEMENT BY BARKER PARRY TOWN PLANNING
1140 – 03 LOCATION PLAN
1140 – 01 EXISTING AND PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS
1140 – 02 EXISTING AND PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of our client in support of an application for full planning permission for a retrospective change of use of The Studio at Pirton Court, 1 Priors Hill, Pirton, SG5 3QA.

1.2 The description of development for the proposed scheme is as follows:

Change of use of part of the outbuilding to a studio holiday let/annex (retrospective).

1.3 This Statement demonstrates that the proposed scheme is supported by relevant planning policy and guidance for visitor accommodation in the district.

1.4 Section 2 of this Statement outlines the site context including relevant planning history. Section 3 provides a summary of relevant planning policy and Section 4 outlines the scheme proposal in detail. Section 5 assesses the proposals against the relevant planning policy and the final conclusions are set out at Section 6.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site includes the entire curtilage of Pirton Court which is a large detached dwellinghouse with gardens and outbuildings. The dwellinghouse benefits from a carriage-style driveway onto Priors Hill, both entrances are gated. The building relevant to this application is an outbuilding serving Pirton Court which is garaging/storage at ground floor, partly enclosed and partly cart-shed style, and a one-bedroom studio annex at first floor.
- 2.2 The application site comprises an area of c.2.2ha and sits at the edge of Priors Hill Road, next to the intersection between Priors Hill, Great Green and Hitchin Road. The site is in the village of Pirton, three miles northwest of Hitchin, Hertfordshire. Pirton itself is a Category A village, amenities within the village include two public houses, a tearoom and a village shop with Post Office.



Figure 1 - Google Earth Image of the Site in relation to the wider context (2025)
- Site indicated in red.

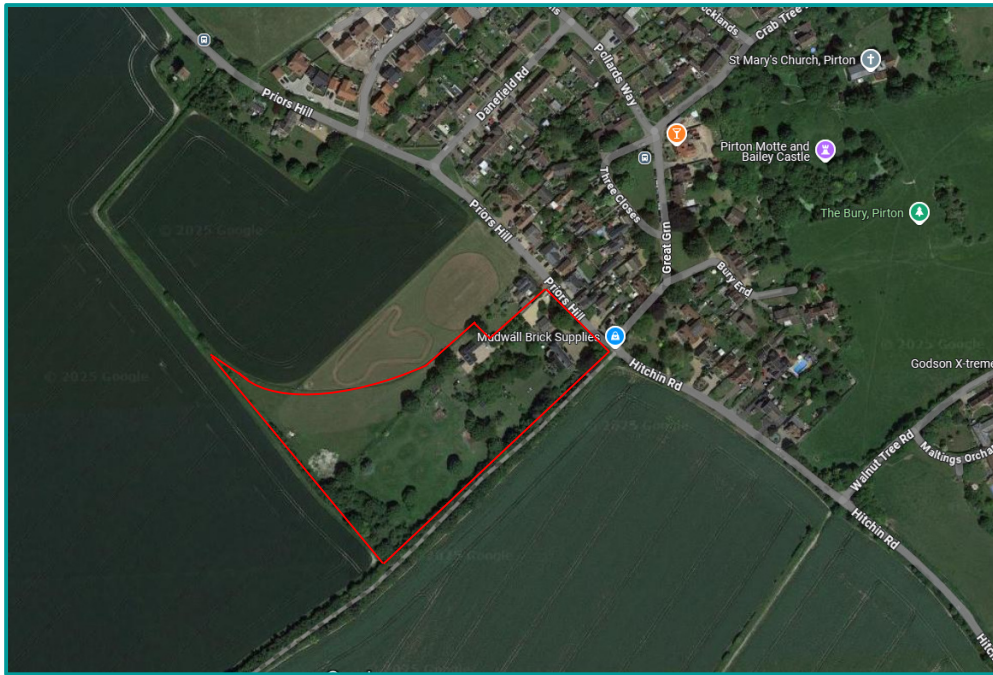


Figure 2 - Google Earth Image of Site (2025) - Site outlined in red

Planning Designation

- 2.3 The Site is just within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and falls within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. The site also sits just within the Pirton Conservation Area.
- 2.4 The Application Site is outside of, but immediately abuts, the village settlement boundary for Pirton which is defined as a Category A village.
- 2.5 An extract of the North Herts Local Plan Policies Map is provided below at Figure 3 outlining these designations.
- 2.6 The site is also within the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan area, but this development plan does not provide any further relevant designations for the site.

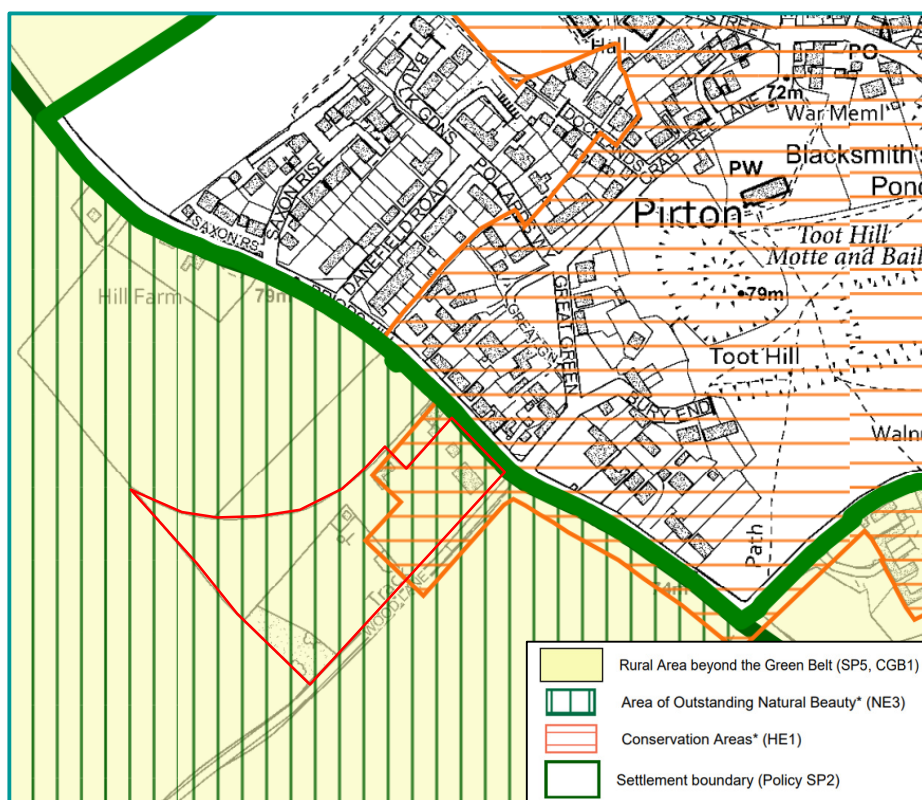


Figure 3 – Extract of adopted Local Plan Policies Map with relevant Key and site outlined in red.

Relevant Planning History

- 2.7 On 23 May 2018, full householder planning permission was granted for the erection of a detached garage and storage building including home office at first floor at Pirton Court, 1 Priors Hill (LPA Ref. 18/00760/FPH). This building had an external staircase to access the office in the front half of the first floor.
- 2.8 On 5 November 2019, a Non-Material Amendment (NMA) was granted for the insertion of six rooflights (LPA Ref 19/02417/NMA). The decision notice states *"For the avoidance of doubt the drawing number approved as a Non-Material Amendments is as follows: - 19/PC/3A"*.
- 2.9 Whilst not explicitly stated in the description of the NMA, plan 19/PC/3A showed the removal of the external staircase as seen below on the comparison between the original and NMA front elevations. The rooflights

approved as part of the NMA are located on the part of the barn which originally did not have first floor accommodation, but the intention from adding rooflights was clearly to create floorspace here even though no floor plans were provided as part of the NMA.



Figure 4 – Originally approved front elevation from Plan 003B with external stairs.



Figure 5 – Approved NMA front elevation from Plan 19/PC/3A with no external stairs.

3.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY**

3.1 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted on 8 November 2022. The Local Plan forms part of the Development Plan for the District, alongside Neighbourhood Plans for certain areas and the adopted Minerals Local Plan and Waste Local Plan.

North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031

- Policy SP1: Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire
- Policy SP2: Settlement hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
- Policy SP6: Sustainable transport
- Policy CGB1: Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt.
- Policy ETC8: Tourism
- Policy D1: Sustainable design
- Policy D2: House extensions, replacement dwellings and outbuildings
- Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters
- Policy T2: Parking
- Policy SP9: Design and sustainability

Pirton Neighbourhood Plan

The Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan (2011-2031) was made on 27 April 2018. Key policies relevant to the proposal are as follows:

- Policy PNP 2: Design and Character
- Policy PNP 8: Heritage Assets and Archaeological Heritage
- Policy PNP 10: Support for Local Business
- Policy PNP 13: Car Parking

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)

3.2 The NPPF is an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications, and it clearly sets out that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should take a positive approach to decision-making. Paragraph 38 states that LPAs should work proactively with applicants to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

3.3 A presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the NPPF. Paragraph 88 outlines that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, including through conversion of existing buildings as well as sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

3.4 The following SPDs are considered relevant to the proposed scheme:

- Design SPD July 2011
- Vehicle Parking at new Development SPD (2011)

4.0 **THE PROPOSAL**

4.1 The proposed scheme seeks retrospective full planning permission for:

Change of use of part of the outbuilding to a studio holiday let/annex (retrospective).

4.2 The below sections outline the accommodation provided as part of the holiday let as well as access details.

Entrance

4.3 Access to the holiday-let is from the ground floor of the building. There is an entrance hall with ground floor shower room and stairs to the first floor. This is entirely contained from the remainder of the ground floor garage areas. Although not formerly shown on the approved plans, as no ground floor plan was provided, this access arrangement to the first floor was created by the 2019 NMA approval which removed the external staircase from the approved plans. Parking for one vehicle is available on hardstanding outside the entrance as can be seen in Figure 6 below.



Figure 6 – Photograph of separate ground floor entrance to the holiday-let.



Figure 7 - Photograph of the Entrance Hall and Stairs and the Door to the GF Shower Room

First Floor

- 4.4 The annex/holiday let has an 'L' shaped open plan studio layout at first floor with a kitchenette, double bed area and living area. There is also a storage cupboard housing all the linen etc for the lets.

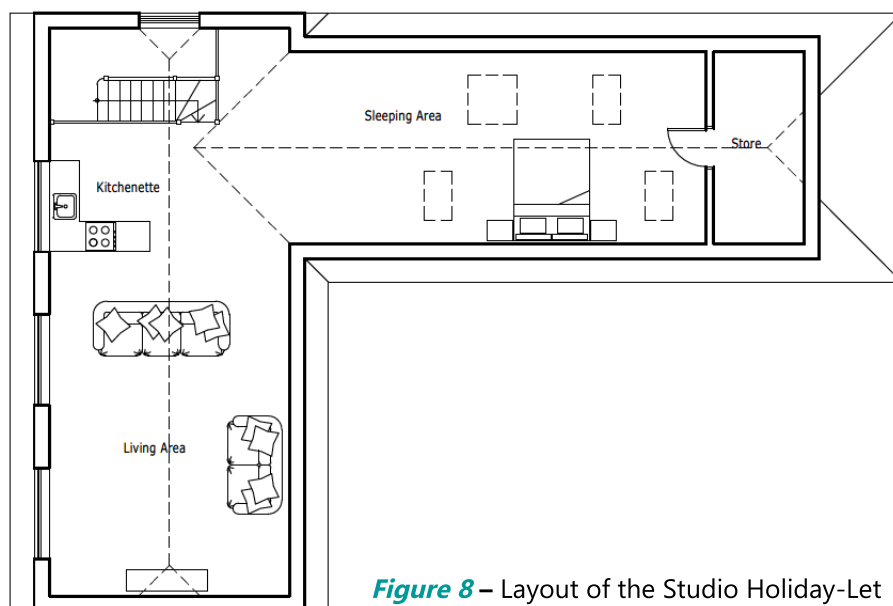


Figure 8 – Layout of the Studio Holiday-Let



Figure 9 – Photo of the bedroom area and storage cupboard.

- 4.5 The bedroom area is served by the four rooflights. This is a slight reduction from the six which were proposed/approved as part of the 2019 NMA.



Figure 10 – Photos of the living-kitchen-dining area.

- 4.6 The kitchen-living area comprises a small kitchenette with compact oven and a dining area with two chairs as well as a TV area with sofas. This section of the first floor is served by three dormer windows.
- 4.7 The overall holiday let accommodation is high quality and generously sized for a maximum of two guests during any stay.

5.0 **PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The outbuilding as a whole is lawful from its construction under planning permission 18/00760/FPH as amended by 19/02417/NMA. The building retains a direct ancillary relationship with the main house, Pirton Court, by providing garaging at ground floor level and by being used as an annex for the owners at certain points of the year. However, the first-floor accommodation is predominantly used as visitor accommodation via Airbnb.
- 5.2 The change of use which has taken place is an alternative use of an existing rural building to provide a modest proposal for rural economic development/diversification and therefore is supported by Local Plan (LP) Policy CGB1. The use of the first floor of the outbuilding as an annex/short-term let is the re-use of existing floorspace and remains as an ancillary building in the curtilage of Pirton Court. As such the use does not have an adverse impact on the openness or general policy aims of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt.
- 5.3 Policy ETC8 (Tourism) states that planning permission for tourism-related development will be granted, subject to the sequential approach set out in Policy ETC3 where it:
- a) Increases the attractiveness of the District as a tourist destination;
 - b) Improves visitor accommodation; or
 - c) Delivers sustainable tourist and visitor attractions in appropriate locations
- 5.4 The proposal is not a main town centre use as short-term lets of an annex still fall within Class C3, therefore policy ETC3 is not relevant. However, the use of the annex as a short-term let provide visitor accommodation in Pirton

which is a visitor attraction owing to its proximity to Hitchin, the AONB and its has its own historic interest as a village.

- 5.5 Further, the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan (PNP) sets out an explicit objective to support the rural economy by improving visitor facilities for the enjoyment of Pirton's countryside and rich heritage. The PNP also recognises that:

Pirton Village and its environs attract many visitors, notably walkers and cyclists drawn to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), including the Chilterns Cycleway and the Icknield Way long-distance footpath. Others visit the Scheduled Monuments of Toot Hill and The Bury or simply to enjoy a few hours in the countryside. The AONB provides opportunities for leisure activity and attracts walkers, cyclists and nature lovers keen to enjoy the beauty of the area and its wildlife. Many of those who use this AONB for leisure also visit the Village. This gives opportunities for improving the economy of the Parish and Village as well as acknowledging the contribution this 'asset' makes to the well-being of Pirton residents and visitors.

- 5.6 Policy PNP 10 also supports development proposals for new opportunities in keeping with the character of the village and its rural surroundings for new and existing businesses in Pirton.
- 5.7 The Local Plan also recognises that the rural area is a place for people to visit for tourism as well as leisure. Supporting paragraph 5.47 states that in the rural area, the Council will be supportive of appropriately located facilities that support the rural economy and rural businesses and which respect the character of the countryside. The Council will weigh the degree to which proposals can be accessible by a variety of modes of transport with benefits to the rural economy and the potential of widening access to the countryside.

5.8 The Council will consider all tourism-related development proposals that fall to be considered under this policy in terms of:

- the sustainability of the location, scale and extent of the development;
- the expected level of activity;
- the number of visitors;
- the intensity of use; and
- the impact on the highway network.

5.9 Matters of sustainability and the highway network are outlined in the relevant sub-section below. In terms of the extent of development, level of activity, and intensity of use, the proposal is a one bedroom studio allowing a maximum of two guests at any time, who are anticipated to travel to the site in one vehicle. No additional built form is proposed or required. The two visitors would be able to appreciate and access the local historic and natural environment. Therefore, the intensity of use is considered appropriate and not to give rise to any detrimental impacts. Additionally, the studio is an annex to Pirton Court as the main dwellinghouse and is used sporadically throughout the year by family members and friends of the homeowners/occupiers of Pirton Court. For the remainder of the year, the studio is let via Airbnb for guests to enjoy. As such, it is both an annex and a short-term let. Given its location, ownership status, attachment to incidental uses for Pirton Court and being on one title, the studio is not considered to be a separate dwelling but ancillary accommodation to the main house.

5.10 Overall, the proposed scheme provides visitor accommodation in a location that will benefit rural tourism in Hertfordshire and is supported by LP Policy ETC8 and PNP Policy 10 as well as general objectives of the PNP.

Heritage & Design



- 5.11 The proposal does not require any external alterations to the building. As such there are no material design implications arising from the proposal. The proposal is therefore appropriate for the character and appearance of the area.
- 5.12 The Pirton Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (March 2023) does not identify Pirton Court as a specific building of note or interest in the Conservation Area, it is not statutorily or locally listed. The significance and special interest of the Conservation Area is considered to stem from its retained combination of archaeological, architectural, and historic features as a collective. Pirton Court is on the edge of the village and the Conservation Area and its limited contribution to the character stems from its traditional rural character.
- 5.13 The proposed scheme relates to a retrospective change of use of incidental domestic floorspace to habitable accommodation within an existing, lawful outbuilding. No building operations are proposed and as such the proposal is not considered to have any material impact on the character or significance of the Conservation Area. The proposed use provides visitor accommodation which will actually enable the public to visit this historic village and appreciate and enjoy its heritage assets.
- 5.14 As such, the proposed scheme is considered to be acceptable in heritage, character and design terms and in accordance with LP Policy HE1 and PNP Policies PNP 2 and PNP 8.

Highways and Sustainability



- 5.15 Pirton is a Category A village, and the application site touches the village boundary. The 89 bus runs from the centre of the village to and from Hitchin and takes 25 minutes, services are once every hour or so during the day.
- 5.16 The village shop, two pubs, and the Pirton Chapel Tearoom are all within a paved, 10-minute walk of the accommodation providing services to visitors.
- 5.17 Immediately adjacent to the entrance to the Application Site is the start of footpath Pirton 024/Bridleway Pirton 008 which is also part of the Chilterns Cycleway. There are also public footpath routes into Hitchin Town. The Studio therefore provides ideally located visitor accommodation for cyclists and ramblers who wish to enjoy this AONB.
- 5.18 The Site also has ample space for on-site parking within the curtilage with the accommodation being set above a large garage and parking area for the main house. The Studio only accommodates two-person stays in a double bed arrangement so there is typically only one vehicle per a stay. This has a *de minimis* impact on the local road network and no impact on highway safety.
- 5.19 Within this context, the studio annex is in an optimal location to provide short-term holiday lets for those wishing to visit this part of the Hertfordshire/Bedfordshire countryside for walking and cycling and therefore is sustainability located for the tourism market it intends to serve.

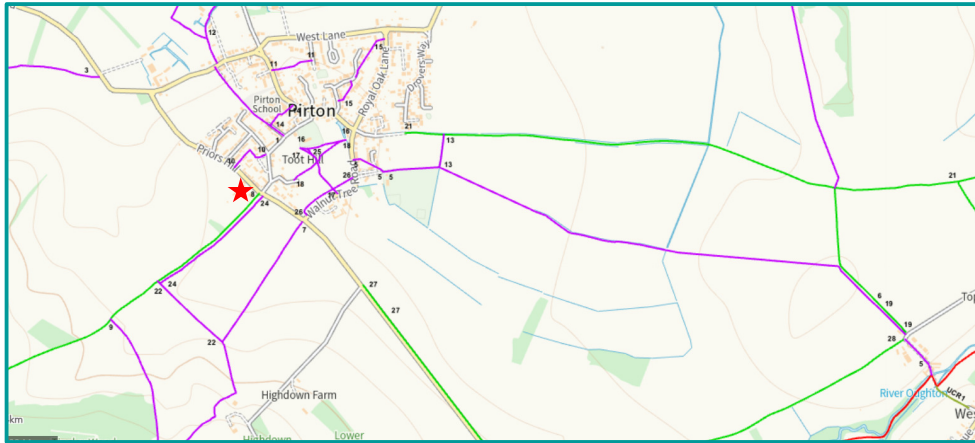


Figure 11 – Extract of HCC Rights of Way Viewer of PROWs (site location shown by red star).

- 5.20 Overall, the development will not result in any highway safety or sustainability issues and is compliant with all relevant local and national policy.

6.0 **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The studio annex/short-term holiday let has existed at the site for a number of years with no issues or concerns. The regularisation and retention of the modest ancillary accommodation is sought to ensure it can continue to support rural tourism in Pirton and North Hertfordshire so that visitors can appreciate the local natural and historic environment. This Statement has demonstrated that the proposal is not considered to give rise to any design, character or heritage impacts and is appropriately located.
- 6.2 Overall, the proposed scheme is supported by neighbourhood, local and national planning policy for rural tourism and visitor accommodation and the proposal does not result in any harm or detrimental impacts. As such, under the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the proposal accords with up-to-date planning policy and should be granted planning permission.