

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: 31 August 2025

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1. Introduction

This document sets out my objection to the planning application submitted by Gladman Developments for up to 130 dwellings on land east of Drovers Way, Pirton. The objection is based on planning policy and highlights unresolved and serious concerns of access, impact on the environmental and nature, village character, infrastructure, and policy non-conformity. This submission draws on adopted policies within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011–2031), the December 2024 revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and material planning history associated with the site.

2. Planning Context and Site Designation

The site is predominantly 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 Local Plan. Previous applications for residential use on this site have been refused and dismissed at appeal. As such, this application should be refused in a consistent fashion.

3. Policy-Based Objections

3.1 Development Outside Settlement Boundary – Urban Sprawl

The proposed development sits outside Pirton's built form and into open countryside. This conflicts with Policies SP2 and CGB1, which direct development to defined settlements and seek to restrict unjustified encroachment. The proposal would result in sprawl, contrary to the character of Pirton as a small rural community.

3.2 Inadequate Vehicular Access via Coopers Elms

The sole vehicular access proposed via Coopers Elms is completely inadequate. This route is not designed for high traffic volumes or construction traffic and would seriously impact the existing individuals who live there. The cul-de-sac is currently a safe place for children to play and the additional volume of traffic would result in road safety issues.

Manual for Streets 2 recommends two points of access for schemes exceeding 100 dwellings. The proposal would generate an additional 75 cars using Coopers Elms between 8am and 9am on weekdays. The proposal would create safety and congestion risks, breaching Local Plan Policy T1.

The roads into the village are unsuitable for an increased volume of traffic. Access from the north via Holwell is unsuitable for any further traffic and includes narrow single file elements together with a 90 degrees blind bend.

3.3 Conflict with Bridleway and Green Infrastructure

The proposed access route crosses Bridleway PRow13 (Hambridge Way), a public right of way valued for recreation and rural access. Its conversion into a vehicle crossing would degrade this heavily used amenity, pose safety risks to walkers and horse riders, and sever the green corridor. This contravenes Policies NE4 and SP6.

3.4 Destruction of Eastern Hedgerow and Impact on Nature

The proposal removes a mature hedgerow which forms part of a strategic green infrastructure buffer, previously accepted as the village's eastern edge. Its removal conflicts with Policy NE1 and the ecological mitigation secured through Cala's permission.

The site and adjacent fields have a wide variety of fauna, birds and other wildlife including buzzards and other birds of prey. If the buzzards are European Honey Buzzards then these are protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and cannot be disturbed when nesting. The type of buzzard present needs to be determined before planning can be considered.

3.5 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.

3.6 Unsustainable Scale of Development

An additional 130 dwellings would overwhelm Pirton. The village recently absorbed 78 homes at Comice Meadows and the population of the parish has grown by 14% in the ten years between 2011 and 2021, a rate of growth that is three times higher than in North Herts overall. This proposal would likely double that growth, overloading infrastructure, services, and harming village character. It conflicts with the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan, and its scale breaches SP2 and SP1's emphasis on proportionate development.

In addition, the density of the proposed development at 32.1 dwellings per hectare is inconsistent with the existing density in the village and would adversely change the character of Pirton.

The additional homes would place unsustainable pressure on the provision of water pressure and sewage system to the detriment of existing residents. This point has been detailed in the objections provided by both Anglian Water and Affinity Water.

3.7 Undermining the Cala Homes Design Principles

The Cala Homes scheme 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 ignores 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. Conclusion and Requested Action

This proposal conflicts with numerous adopted policies in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, including SP1, SP2, SP6, T1, NE1, NE4, CGB1, HE1, and HS2. 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.