

10 Cromwell Way Pirton SG5 3RD



Mr. B. Glover

Senior Planning Officer

NHDC

Letchworth Garden City

4 October 2025

Dear Mr Glover,

Re: 25/02064/OP Land Adjacent to 10 Hambridge Way/East of Walnut Tree Road
Pirton

I write to OBJECT to these proposals, as there is much more information required and a re-think of the indicative proposals, before a positive decision in principle should be made.

NPPF para 82 reminds us that “in rural areas, planning policies and **decisions** should be responsive to **local** circumstances and support housing development that reflect **local** needs...local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward exception sites and consider whether allowing some market housing on those sites would help to facilitate this”. This is not an exception site. It is therefore imperative that NHDC is responsive to local i.e. Pirton needs as expressed and evidenced in the Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan (PNDP).

1. The proposed site is **outside the Pirton Development Boundary**. This development boundary is clearly set in both the Local Development Plan and in the PNDP. See Local Plan SP2 and CGB1, and the PNDP Policy PNP 1.1. None of the exceptions to building outside of the development boundary apply.
2. The application form says that no **public footpath will be diverted**. Yet it is clear from the plans that public footpath 005 is to move from its present position. This requires clarification before approval can be given.
3. **Indicative housing – numbers and type**. I am pleased that Blakeney Homes intends to provide 40% “affordable homes” and the type of them, being 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms. However, the remainder, being market housing, are proposed as 4 bedrooms only. This is not acceptable. There is clear evidence in the PNDP that requires 2 and 3 bedroom market homes for young people and families: PNDP policy PNP1.2. This application should be refused until the indicative housing types are amended to better meet Pirton’s evidenced requirements.

Furthermore, 50 dwellings are too many. Despite the claims, there is insufficient green space within the proposed development, with the

attenuation basin taking up significant space. No play area is proposed, reliance being placed on the use of the neighbouring recreation field and playground, and the (private) facilities at Comice Meadows. At least 20 dwellings should be removed and the land used to increase garden space and community green space. Great care needs to be taken with this site, which is **Grade 2 Agricultural land**. There need to be clear benefits not only in terms of addressing housing need, but in terms of addressing ecological and biodiversity issues, community well-being and play space for children if such valuable agricultural land is to be lost.

The site is also **a transitional zone into the countryside**. The suggestion that some houses will be two and a half storeys high is not acceptable. Pirton is not a village where two and a half storeys are the norm.

4. **Access** – this is an interesting one. Access is to be via Cotman End, off Walnut Tree Road. Thankfully, the Pirton Parish Council has successfully argued for a 20mph speed limit for Walnut Tree Road which will make the increased traffic turning in and out of Cotman End just that little bit safer for other users of Walnut Tree Road, both vehicular and pedestrian. I do not think that sufficient attention has been paid to the increase in traffic that will be experienced once the construction of the new Recreation Ground Pavilion is complete. It is envisaged that the use of the pavilion will be greatly increased, with consequent increase in both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The access road to the Recreation ground for vehicles is not as much as 3 metres from the Cotman End Junction, with the potential for vehicles to queue into both roads, the Recreation Ground being a single carriageway, as is the proposal for the road from Cotman End in to the new development. I would like to see some work done on **the safety issues for users**, both pedestrian and vehicular (not to mention equestrian) of all roads involved.

Further, the creation of **a pinch-point of 3.7 metres** to get in to and out of the new development, crossing as it does a public footpath, looks highly dangerous, liable to create queuing traffic within the new development and on to Cotman End. Clearly this, and the overall increase in traffic, will adversely affect the residential amenity of residents in Cotman End. It also potentially creates a hazard for those using the public footpath, many of whom are children, as they cross over this junction. These issues are not addressed at all in the applicant's supporting documentation, and they are important material considerations. Please see PNDP policy PNP11. No consideration appears to have been given to the impact of this development should the application to build 130 dwellings on land east of Comice Meadows be granted (see PNDP Policy PNP11.3).

5. **Emergency Access**. I have no comment on this. What I do query, and very strongly, is the **suggested "improvement" to the junction of Hambridge Way and Walnut Tree Road/Royal Oak Lane and High Street**. What needs improving? There is very limited traffic using the short stretch of road along the

Hambridge Way, and this will not be increased by the proposed development. The width of the road enables it to be used for parking by nearby residents with no on plot parking (and by others), thus relieving the very difficult parking situation in that part of the village. The idea of putting pavements in will either result in no parking, thus putting pressure on nearby roads for yet more on street parking, or vehicles will merely park on the new pavements and pedestrians will continue to walk in the road. Why try to fix something that currently works perfectly well? I object strongly to this proposal.

6. I think it is in the Landscape Strategy and Report that the claim is made that the development will increase the **amount of green space** in the village. But will it in reality? This will be a private estate with private roads. Will the village residents be prevented from using the green spaces if residents of the development who after all will be paying for the upkeep, object, and block access? I would like to see a clear statement from the applicants on this issue.

The Landscape Strategy (and elsewhere) refers to **play provision** 60 metres to the North of the site; being the playground within Comice Meadows. It is very small and was not designed for anything other than the children of residents. It is privately owned and managed. Reliance on this play provision may be misplaced. Also to the South is the Recreation Ground with children's playground. An extension to the facilities here will be needed, not at public expense, if this development is given permission.

I do not object to the development **roads being unadopted by HCC Highways**. This will, indeed, enable the applicants to "avoid intrusive lighting design "(Landscape Strategy para 5.2.3), which will indeed benefit wildlife and those who appreciate the dark night skies currently visible from this site.

Should outline planning permission be granted, this issue should be attached as a condition.

7. There appears to be some confusion on the supporting documents concerning **the boundary hedges**. At Landscape Strategy 5.3.3 it claims that all boundaries are in the public realm, except for the south-western edge. This is simply NOT the case, and requires clarification, not least because the new footpath connections to the exiting footpath network that are proposed (good) will not necessarily occur if any owner of a hedgerow objects.
8. **The Internal Hedge**: further work to clarify the condition and content of this hedge is needed. There are clear contradictions between various reports. First, please note that this is a long- standing and historical hedge, as can be seen from various old maps and plans of the village. The tree survey report lists considerably more species than the Landscape Report and calls it "in generally good condition." As such, it will be a vital source of food, roosting and nesting for many birds and bats. As much as possible of this hedge should be preserved within the design of the layout of the site, something that the current indicative layout does not include. Further work on an indicative layout is required.

9. **Sustainable Travel:** Pirton does indeed have a bus service and is well provided with connecting footpaths and cycleways. This does not necessarily amount to “sustainable travel,” given the severe limitations of the bus service, and the clear lack of enthusiasm from new residents (and existing) to commuting to Hitchin on foot or on bicycle. NPPF para 110 does not limit the need to have on offer a genuine choice of transport modes. Car will, alas, continue to reign supreme.
10. **Water:** Affinity Water: if planning permission is given, the recommendations of Affinity Water should be made conditions of the grant of permission. Anglian Water has not yet responded. We know that they have objected to the proposed development of 130 dwellings on land east of Comice Meadows the basis that the present foul and surface water systems cannot cope with more development in Pirton. This should be explored further by the applicants before a decision on the application is made.
11. **Archaeology:** I have read and support the response by Dr. Gil Burleigh on behalf of The North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society. The Desk Based Assessment makes no mention of the hollow way that runs across the western boundary of the site although it clearly shows on the maps and plans within the DBA Report. Cotswold Archaeology would have been appraised of this important feature if they had contacted the Pirton Parish Council in accordance with Pirton Neighbourhood Plan policy PNP8. Further work pre-decision should be undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology to amend their Report.
12. **Biodiversity and Ecology:** I have read the submission of Wild About Pirton and support its contents. In particular, given **Local** conditions and interest, the off-siting of biodiversity net gain is not acceptable (see PNPD policies PNP 4 and 5. and the Pirton Character Assessment that supports the PNPD). The enhancements proposed within the Landscape Strategy, Tree Survey, and Ecology Reports should be attached as clear conditions should outline planning permission be granted. There is reference to “the woodland” area of the site; it is not clear where this is and clarification would be welcome. I also support those who have written to request swift boxes.
13. **“Sustainability and Energy”:** the range of proposals made in the Turley report seem to be fine and I have no objection provided their recommendations are made subject to conditions should outline planning permission be granted.

Given the number of material considerations I have raised here, I urge the NHDC to either outrightly refuse permission at this stage, or encourage the applicant to improve the application to cover the points I have raised.

Yours sincerely,

Diane Burleigh OBE