

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	26/00116/FP
CASE OFFICER:	Thomas Howe
APPLICATION SITE:	19 Walnut Tree Road Pirton Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 3PX
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Erection of four detached dwellings and detached garage to serve plot 4 including hard and soft landscaping, parking and creation of vehicular access.

RECOMMENDATION:

There is **AN OBJECTION**. The scheme will not satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2) (LBC) and /or 66(1) (FP/FPH) and/or 72(1) (both) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

SUGGESTED CONDITIONS:

n/a

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on character and appearance of the conservation area – Extracts for the Conservation Area Appraisal are copied below for context.

“Pirton Conservation Area encompasses the core of the Pirton village, a historic rural settlement with an extensive history. Located in North Hertfordshire, three miles northwest of Hitchin, 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. Although long since lost, the site of the castle and original village remain an important area of green space designated as a scheduled monument at the heart of the Conservation Area”.

“The Conservation Area exhibits a host of styles, although the overall appearance of Pirton is traditional and typical for the region. Timber framed medieval houses are nestled in between Victorian terraces, scattered with examples of former farmsteads and barn conversions in the village core. Local materials, such as Arlesey brick, dominate the street scenes, complemented by examples of thatch and rendered dwellings. Due to the geology of the area, stone is uncommon and features only on the most important of buildings, such as St Mary’s Church. Hedgerow, grass verges and large garden plots give the Conservation Area a sylvan quality, interconnected with the

surrounding agrarian landscape. Although much of the village's past remains underground and is not easily discernible to the modern eye, the archaeological potential for further discovery stresses the Conservation Area's position as an important, highly valuable resource from which much can be learnt about past cultures. Toot Hill and The Bury dominate the Conservation Area due to their large size, however the two other scheduled monuments within the Conservation Area are too highly significant as areas of discernible history, indicative of how people lived and worked within Pirton in the last 2000 years".

Number 19 is not considered to make a neutral contribution the character of the conservation area being a large 20th century dwelling with later additions. Its position on Walnut Tree Road not representative of the ribbon development of the road.

This application now proposes 4 new dwellings with the retention of the existing dwelling which although an improvement from the pre application scheme still raises concerns in terms of impact to the character of the conservation area. Please see below.

The 2023 Appraisal document states

"Pirton is a historic settlement and has been subject to a considerable degree of infilling and building on larger gardens and backland sites. It is considered that further development in this way would most likely harm the character of the Conservation Area. The more substantial domestic properties within the outer section of the Conservation Area are enhanced by the setting provided by their reasonable and proportioned gardens...the creation of further development, such as cul-de-sacs or ribbon development, on the village fringes, would lessen its rural character and compromise how the surrounding landscape is experienced within the Conservation Area."

Given this statement and the proposed development will degrade the overall character of the conservation area. Continual reference has been made to the Cotman End development and that is noted. In my view this additional development would cause less than substantial at a medium level due the erosion of the historic rural settlement where:

"Hedgerow, grass verges and large garden plots give the Conservation Area a sylvan quality, interconnected with the surrounding agrarian landscape".

In light of the above comments, I raise an objection.

Site Context:

"Pirton Conservation Area encompasses the core of the Pirton village, a historic rural settlement with an extensive history. Located in North Hertfordshire, three miles northwest of Hitchin, 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. Although long since lost, the site of the castle and original village remain an important area of green space designated as a scheduled monument at the heart of the Conservation Area".

[Please provide an overview context and include a link to the listing.](#)

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Please see summary section above.

HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:

NPPF (December 2024):

The Local Plan and NPPF

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 and the policies contained within it i.e., Policy HE1. The plan was adopted November 2022.

The relevant paragraph numbers at Section 16 of the July 2021 version of the NPPF have been changed as follows:

197. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

199. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

200. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.....

202. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

206. Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) – December 2017

At para 14 under the sub-heading 'Landscape Assessment and Amenity' it states that *"Analysis of setting is different from landscape assessment. While landscapes include everything within them, the entirety of very extensive settings may not contribute equally to the significance of a heritage asset, if at all. Careful analysis is therefore required to assess whether one heritage asset at a considerable distance from another, though intervisible with it – a church spire, for instance – is a major component of the setting, rather than just an incidental element within the wider landscape."*

At para 17 it states (my emphasis in bold): *“All heritage assets have significance, some of which have particular significance and are designated. The contribution made by their setting to their significance also varies. **Although many settings may be enhanced by development, not all settings have the same capacity to accommodate change without harm to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate it.** This capacity may vary between designated assets of the same grade or of the same type or according to the nature of the change. It can also depend on the location of the asset: an elevated or overlooked location; a riverbank, coastal or island location; or a location within an extensive tract of flat land may increase the sensitivity of the setting (i.e. the capacity of the setting to accommodate change without harm to the heritage asset’s significance) or of views of the asset. This requires the implications of development affecting the setting of heritage assets to be considered on a case-by-case basis.”*

Relevant National Guidance i.e. Historic England:

Other relevant documents (Please specify):

CONCLUSION:

[Please see summary section above.](#)

OFFICER: Tricia Craggs

DATE: 23 March 2026