

Pirton Parish Council

Parish Clerk:
Dr Janine Budd
Pirton Pavilion, Walnut Tree Road, Pirton SG5 3PX

Email clerk@pirtonparishcouncil.gov.uk



Mr Ben Glover
Planning Officer
NHDC
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
8 May 2026

Dear Mr Glover

RE: Land Adjacent to 10 Hambridge Way Pirton 25/02064/OP

We are writing in response to the latest consultation on this proposed development. We confirm the points made in the response to the first consultation. Here we focus on three areas: Access, Highways and Biodiversity.

Access To Pirton Recreation Ground:

The Pirton Recreation Ground has recently benefited from the construction a new Pavilion and community centre. This was a long and difficult project, particularly in securing the necessary funding. Funds were received from the Football Foundation, a loan taken out by the Pirton Parish Council (PPC), the Pirton Sports and Social Club (PSSC), S106 monies, substantial donations from villagers, the Rands Trust and £50,000 from an NHDC grant. This was, and is, a hugely ambitious project whose success is critical to village infrastructure and community health and well-being. It not only improves sports facilities but also provides opportunities for new communal activities, including a café.

It has only just opened and the PSSC, licenced by the PPC, is already making great strides in meeting community needs. The importance of the Pavilion cannot be overstated.

To access the Pavilion, there are two routes. One is the private right of way belonging to the Pirton Parish Council for vehicular and pedestrian traffic over part of the neighbouring property. This access is increasingly unsuitable for mixed vehicular/pedestrian traffic, particularly with the growth in the population of Pirton in the last 6 years, and the increased footfall that the new Pavilion is bringing. The second route is pedestrian access via Public Footpath 005.

Footpath 005

The background to our concerns is quite telling. The original planning application (21/01392/FP) made by Blakeney for 10 houses in what is now Cotman End stated that there were no changes proposed to Footpath 005. However, Footpath 005 was blocked for some considerable time.

Subsequently, there were two applications to change its route, one under the correct diversion procedure with HCC and one under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The former has not proceeded, and the latter was entirely inappropriate for footpath diversion and also did not proceed.

The original application also made great play of the fact that Footpath 005 would be treated sensitively with boundary treatment that "will prevent the footpath being enclosed completely and complement the countryside setting of the development". We subsequently learnt that the land over which the footpath runs, had been sold to the owner of the adjoining property who wished to enclose the land and move the footpath (even though we believe it to be part of communal green space). We did not support this and the enclosure has not gone forward. However, trees planted along the route have died and have not been replaced.

The footpath was blocked during the construction phase, for a considerable period of time, forcing pedestrians to use our vehicular access, which was far from ideal, as there are no pavements and it is only 10 feet wide. When the construction phase ended and the site fence came down, we discovered that there was a perimeter fence blocking Footpath 005 and an alternative route had been constructed.

There then ensued a protracted dispute in which Blakeney Homes questioned the route of Footpath 005. This was not resolved for several years until HCC confirmed the route to be correct.

Eventually, the perimeter fence was dismantled and Footpath 005 was unblocked. The second alternative and unauthorised route was then blocked by a third party, although more recently this has been unblocked. We did wish to improve the exit for Footpath 005 but were not able to get consent from the landowner.

It is, therefore, not surprising that we are sceptical that Footpath 005 will be dealt with appropriately. This application also states that Footpath 005 will not be diverted. We do note that the plans show that access will also be available via the estate road pavements.

Firstly, whilst the current application has a response from Highways (see AN5) that the Footpath should not be obstructed, that response goes on to state that a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) may need to be applied for. With the original smaller development, such an order led to no pedestrian access during the construction phase. We believe that the same will inevitably occur if a TTRO(s) is successfully applied for. A lengthy temporary closure would be potentially very difficult for the successful operation of the new pavilion. The only access option for pedestrians would be our private Right of Way. The mix of pedestrians and vehicles along this route, as we noted above, is becoming difficult for both, particularly pedestrians, and is positively dangerous after dark.

It should be noted that there is a planning application (26/00116/FP) currently being considered for new housing utilising the drive over which we have our right of way. This could lead to that vehicular and pedestrian access being potentially closed whilst improvements are made. In addition, that route could be used for construction traffic, which would make it wholly unsuitable for pedestrians. If that application were granted (also see comments under Vehicular Access), then the Recreation Ground might, for a period of time, have no access for vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

We must stress that any TTRO to close pedestrian access for the construction phase of the proposed 50 houses would be strongly resisted. The Applicants must be required to show how pedestrian access will be maintained before any planning permission is granted and construction commences. Otherwise, we fear that we might see such TTRO(s) extending for 1-2 years, which will be unacceptable to the community and seriously harm the development of the Recreation Ground.

Footpath 005 has already been changed adversely. It crosses an estate road with no dropped kerbs and now will have to cross another estate road with far greater traffic. We note that £30k has been reserved for footpath improvements. We trust that this does not include any works to pave or tarmac Footpath 005 as it passes through the Recreation Ground. This was mooted to the PPC by HCC. We were strongly of the view that this is unnecessary and counter-productive and a waste of funds. The grass over which Footpath 005 passes is well drained and it would yet further urbanise what was once a true countryside footpath.

Highways and Vehicular Access

As previously stated, the PPC has a private unrestricted right of way to the Recreation Ground over land which belongs to the house known as The Old Vicarage. It is increasingly unsuitable for pedestrian traffic. However, it is the only vehicular access to the Recreation Ground. If planning permission is granted under planning application (26/00116/FP), then there will be alterations to the exit onto Walnut Tree Road and some widening of that access. If Footpath 005 is closed off at the same time as on-going construction work to widen the access road to the Recreation Ground, it could cut off access to the Pavilion. If that application were to be granted, then, with such works to be carried out and construction traffic, there would be no safe access for pedestrians or access at all. We are concerned as to how this will be handled.

Vehicular traffic will increase as facilities (such as the community café) come into effect at the new pavilion. The use of the Pavilion will now be on a daily basis and not just for evenings and weekend sport.

It is of concern to us that this increase in Pavilion traffic, together with increased vehicular movements pertaining to the development on the Old Vicarage, would coincide with the increase in traffic from the proposed additional 50 houses. Both our vehicular access and that of any new development will exit onto Walnut Tree Road with very little distance between the two. We realise that each planning application has to be considered on its own merits but in this case, we have two applications which could come into effect at the same time and potentially isolate the Recreation Ground and the Pavilion from both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The effect of that would be to imperil the use and growth of a facility that is critical to the infrastructure of the village and to the health and well-being of the community. It would put at risk the business of the Pirton Sports and Social Club, which manages the new pavilion and the Recreation Ground on our behalf.

Visitor Car Parking Spaces

In our original submission we stated that two car parking spaces within Cotman End would be lost with the new estate road. The Applicant has rebutted our claims that the two visitor spaces will be lost as they will be reinstated in the new development. The Applicant states that they "will be placed as close to the new access as is reasonably possible". As far as we can tell from the site plan, the nearest spaces might be opposite Unit 5. Visitors to the original development would be expected to drive over the Footpath 005 crossing of the estate road, then turn left and park in the bays in that street and then walk back into the original development. How they would even know that such bays existed is not explained and it is entirely impractical. Presumably they would be contesting with visitors to the new development who would also want to use them. The two developments are physically separate and such new spaces cannot be counted to rectify the fact that the original development would then be substandard for parking spaces. The danger is that this could lead to on street parking both within the original development and the access road.

Highway Improvements Off-Site

We thank HCC Highways and Blakeney Homes for the amended plan for "improvements" to the Hambridge Way/Royal Oak Lane etc. Junction, now taking into account the importance of that part of Hambridge Way for parking.

Travel Plan Statement: of course we approve the submission of a detailed travel plan. Who will monitor its implementation?

Sec.106/Planning Obligations.

We welcome improvements to our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure. The Pirton Parish Council has not been notified of, or consulted on, what HCC Highways may mean by such improvements. It would be helpful to know what is meant by this for our bridleways and footpaths and to be consulted on such matters as surface improvements and on any aspects that may materially affect the hedges, trees and ditches along such PROWs. We are also concerned about proposals affecting the High Street, where there is very little scope for enhancing cycleways or pedestrian routes without affecting its use for car parking.

We have noted the bus service contributions that are being sought and, of course, support this, as long as this really does result in fairly prompt improvements.

We would be grateful for clarification of the intended status of the on-site roads. Cotman End is a private road. We would welcome this continuing in to the new development, so that lower-level street lighting can be used than that which HCC Highways can mandate. This would preserve the dark skies which can currently be seen from the Recreation Ground, and also be better for wildlife.

Ecology/Biodiversity

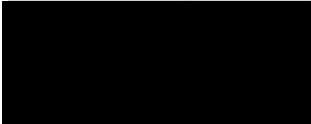
We have seen the comments of WildaboutPirton and endorse them.

We agree that this greenfield site should be delivering at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain on Site. We would not support off-site provision. The Proposed Pedestrian and Cycle Access affect PROWs 21, 5 and 13 and will mean a loss of hedges to make this access, which should be taken into account in the overall loss of biodiversity and habitat and the requirements for biodiversity net gain. It is good that Blakeney Homes has now signed up to the District Level Licencing Scheme to address any adverse impacts on Great Crested Newts in the area.

We would like more information about any proposed lighting scheme (see above), which may well be dependent on whether the applicant intends the roads in the development to remain private, like Cotman End, or be adopted by HCC Highways. This is important, because a low-level sensitive lighting scheme is essential for forging bats in particular, but also for all night-time fauna, reptiles, amphibians and insects.

Finally, while supportive of improvements to our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure (Sec.106 proposed contributions), we are concerned that these improvements should not be at the expense of the footpath/bridleway verges, ditches, trees and shrubs that line most of the way and that provide excellent habitats for reptiles, mammals and birds, and associated insect life.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Jill Rogers.

Jill Rogers
Chairman, Pirton Parish Council