

Landscape Strategy

Site

Land East of Walnut Tree Road, Pirton, Hertfordshire, SG5 3PX

for

Blakeney Homes Ltd

13 August 2025



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Site Description

The proposed development of land south of Hambridge Way, Pirton Hertfordshire. The proposals include approximately forty-six dwellings in a mix of detached and semi detached. A public open space is proposed in the eastern portion of the site. The development will site within a boundary of approximately 3 hectares formed by two pasture fields.

The site on the eastern edge of the settlement boundary of Pirton, a large village developed around a medieval centre, and includes numerous sites of archaeology and scheduled monuments. The surrounding landscape is rural, mainly arable fields of a large size.

The site is accessed Walnut Tree Road in the west along the Cotman End carriageway entering the site in the southwestern corner where there is an existing gap in the boundary trees. At present the site is accessed from the single lane route to the Pirton Recreation Ground which lies to the south.

The boundaries of the two field enclosures consist of mixed species hedgerows and trees. To the south is a substantial hedge of hawthorn, field maple, dogwood, elm, hazel and a line of mature ash trees. To the east an older hedgerow of ash and alder buckthorn creates a strong screen to views from the east. Along the northern edge is a wide verge of hedgerow plants and trees including hawthorn , field maple with oak, field maple and lime and hors chestnut trees. The western edge has some scrub under storey with mature horse chestnut and sycamore trees. There are some breaks in hedgerows for access, and the northern hedgerow is un-managed and has gaps in places. A non-continuous largely defunct hedgerow divides the field enclosures.

The site has Public Rights of Way on the northern, eastern and southern boundary. The named trail ‘Icknield Way’ lies on the northern edge. There is a strong network of footpaths within the surrounding landscape.

Opportunities and Constraints

The site offers an established setting for a new housing in a suburban edge environment, close to the village centre and services.

The mature trees and hedgerows on she boundaries provide an instantly mature and tree’d backdrop to new homes.

A nationally important footpath lies on the northern edge.

The site is partially overlooked from the west and north, however these are seasonal views

The proposals allow for an improvement in the landscape management of the site to promote biodiversity, use of permeable surfaces and the planting of new trees.

Design evolution

The design has south to replicate the successful development to the north, where intimate courts or cul-de-sacs create small communities and create intimate settings for dwellings. The design principles follow:

- New built elements sit comfortably within the field boundaries
- Heights of ridge lines follow the existing pattern of development

- Density reduces as proposed dwellings are laid out towards the east
- Views to important landmarks have been preserved
- POS on the eastern edge follows design guide and links to POS to the north and PRoWs on site boundaries
- Utilising the natural breaks on boundaries for vehicular and pedestrian access points
- On site cycle and refuse storage
- Opportunities for wildlife provision

Design Considerations

The landscape design process has sought to provide a suitable setting for the settlement edge and integration into the suburban fabric of Pirton.

The North Herts Design Guide (2011) principles for design include:

- Character (sense of place and history)
- Continuity and Enclosure (distinguish between public/private space)
- Quality of the Public Realm (sense of well-being and amenity)
- Ease of movement (connectivity and permeability)
- Legibility (ease of understanding)
- Adaptability (ease of change)
- Diversity (ease of choice)
- Quality of Private Space (useability)
- Sustainability (reducing Car parking)

The layout reflects the lower density of housing away from the village core. The site is a contained and will not affect areas of historical significance.

The building line has been designed to be line with surrounding residential blocks and to present open frontages onto the main spine road an the POS on the eastern edge. The houses are clustered on cul-de-sacs to mimic the development to the north. Play provision is accessible 60m to the north.

The proposals will allow for the continued access to the countryside with good connectivity to the surrounding footpaths whilst presenting a soft settlement edge on the eastern edge.

Pavements and informal footpaths within the development link to routes to the village centre and the countryside and circulate within the site itself.

The layout allows for adequate parking within the curtilage of individual properties and provision for visitor parking.



Access and circulation

Pedestrian

The design of pedestrian routes across the site links to the centre of the village; to the relatively new development to the north; and the recreation ground to the south.

Pavements create more formal routes from within the development to link with the roadway to the southwest and informal routes to the east.

Cars

Car parking provision is off street either to the frontage of properties or garage provision to the rear or new homes.

Typically of the newer development roads end in cul-de-sacs and the proposals will not lead to more vehicle movements within Hambridge Way or some lanes within the village. Generous resident and visitor parking on site will not lead to congestion in the village centre which is within 50m. The village provides pre secondary schooling within walking distance, less than 400m away. School buses serve the area with links to Hitchin, which has numerous choices for High School.

Refuse vehicles and fire emergency trucks

Movement through the site allows for refuse and fire vehicles to reverse and leave the site in forward motion.



MOVEMENT KEY:

Existing Public Right of Way	Vehicular access
Informal footpaths	Cycle routes

Hard landscaping

Materials used in the village reflect development over time and a variety of styles. Timber picket fences and soft road edges are characteristic of the village core. Later development have open frontages to individual dwellings and deep grass verges are common.

The materials palette will be high quality and suitable for the suburban fringe character of the location.

With warmer hues found in the local context should be used throughout the scheme, the specification will provide a robust surface suitable for the intended uses.

Less formal areas of pedestrian routes will use a small, staggered bond setts in the natural colours.

Hard landscaped areas should use 'natural' hues in keeping with the settlement edge location. This should be permeable where possible. The change in materials signposts shared surfaces and parking bays. Tarmac roads should use a soft grey and avoid heavy black capping, over engineered kerbs and excessive signage.

Pathways through the POS and linking to rights of way on the boundaries of the site should be a soft hue and use material such as 'hoggin'.

SuDs

The site offers surface water attenuation within the POS on the eastern portion of the site which can also provide biodiversity planting opportunities.

Boundary treatments

The wider site enclosure will retain the native species hedgerow and tree lines.

The rear garden area should be design to reduce the extent of timber close boards fencing in public view.

Boundaries in the public realm should be open or have hedging to define the property edge.

Seating

Benches in the POS should be simple, timber and suit the naturalistic setting on the settlement edge. Any play provision should also be timber and reflect that in existence to the north of the site



Example of Concrete block permeable paving 'Harvest'



Example of permeable Block Paving 'Charcoal'



Example of picket fences within the village



Example of sandstone 'grey multi'



Broxap natural timber bench



Play area in POS to north with timber play furniture and picket fence



Traditional soft edge to housing



New housing to the north integrated with soft edges

Planting palette

The site is on the settlement edge with open countryside to the east. A soft planting palette using native, or naturalistic planting would compliment the location.

The proposals allow for extensive planting of nectar rich flowering shrubs and perennials which would be an improvement in biodiversity from the species poor grassland. Native ferns and grasses blended into the shrub planting will lead to a more natural look to planting suited to the location.

Attenuation basins provide conditions to have a greater range of wildflower and grasses suited to damp conditions, whilst the POS can be managed as a wild flower meadow.

Refuse and cycle storage areas should be enclosed by planting.

The existing boundary screening is in the public realm to the north, east and southern edges which will allow for these to be managed for screening and wildlife benefit within a landscape management plan.



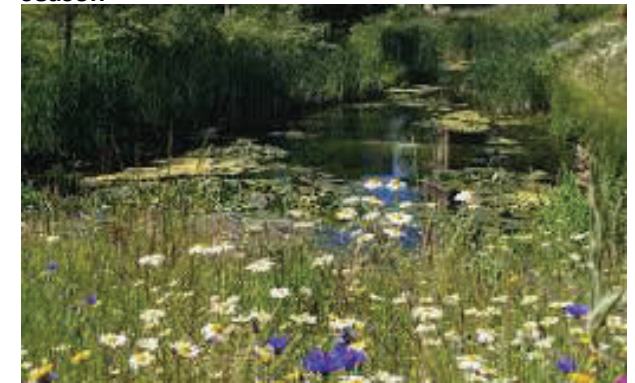
Large shrub planting on boundaries (Dogwood)



Flowering shrubs for long nectar producing season



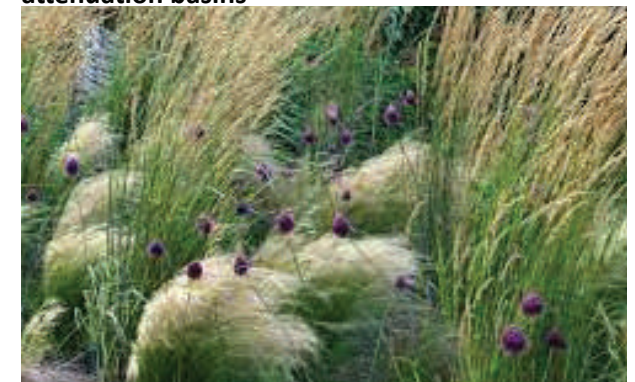
Wildflower and native grasses within the POS



Native planting suited to damp conditions in the attenuation basins



Herb planting including Rosemary



Informal shrub border with ornamental grasses



Native ferns



Native grasses

Tree planting

The site benefits from a green backdrop provided by the substantial boundary vegetation. This will provide a soft landscape setting for new built elements.

Tree species present on site boundaries with some additional species will lead to a wider biodiversity on site. Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) provides a light crown with profuse berries in autumn, birch (*Betula pendula*) and hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) are low water demand and and along with rowan make suitable street trees.

Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and oak (*Quercus robur*) are present in the vicinity and are suited to the POS where crowns can develop. Both species support numerous invertebrate species.

Mixed species hedgerow planting can be incorporated into individual dwelling frontages, and use to screen close board fences where necessary. Additionally the northern edge of the site hedgerow plants could be brought into better management and enhanced to improve screen and structure for nesting birds.

Recommended hedgerow species include:

Hawthorn - *Crataegus monogyna*

Field maple - *Acer campestre*

Dogwood - *Cornus sanguinea*

Alder buckthorn - *Fragula alnus*

Hazel - *Corylus avellana*

Crab apple - *Malus sylvestris*

The design process has been developed to retain as many trees as possible on the site boundaries.



Rowan



Rowan berries



Hornbeam



Lime



Silver Birch



Oak



Native hedgerow species: hawthorn; field maple; dogwood; buckthorn; hazel; crab apple



Native hedgerow managed for screening and wildlife

Ecology

The site lies adjacent open countryside and the site design maximises retained mature trees and hedgerow, for the continued use of wildlife.

Habitat boxes should be incorporated into the retained shrub and trees; and new buildings for foraging opportunities across the site.

Shrub and perennial planting will be design to ensure a long flowering season of nectar bearing plants. Shrub planting design should include a wide variety of species.

Ecological enhancements should include bird, bat and bug habitat boxes on new buildings, and within the shrub borders and trees. Log pile hibernaculs or refugia will be constructed using site won timber.

Providing mown routes through the wildflower meadow in the POS provides basking areas for reptiles and amphibians.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that mature trees should be retained where possible. Tree protection measures should be implemented according to BS 5837:2012 'trees in relation to design, demolition and construction'.

To improve biodiversity, it is recommended that berry producing native species are planted. These include:

Rowan - *Sorbus aucuparia*

Hawthorn - *Crataegus monogyna*

Dogwood - *Cornus sanguinea*

Alder buckthorn - *Fragula alnus*

To provide enhancement opportunities to local birds, the addition of house sparrow or swift nest boxes could be placed on the building. Other boxes suitable for birds such as blackbird or thrush could be placed on mature trees bordering the site. Examples of good bird box designs are found below and can be sourced at: <http://www.wildcareshop.com/product/nest-boxesartificial-habitats/bird-boxes.html>

Enhancements for bats w should include the addition of bat tubes or bricks within the construction of the new buildings. The Schwegler 2FE Bat box is suitable for use by all bat species which inhabit buildings. It should be at placed a height of at least 3m above ground level, insuring unobstructed access for bats and away from any light spill. <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/schwegler-wall-mounted-bat-shelter-2fe.html>

The creation of hibernacula/log pile within the woodland area of the site suitable for use by reptiles and amphibians which may be in the area and shelter for invertebrates.



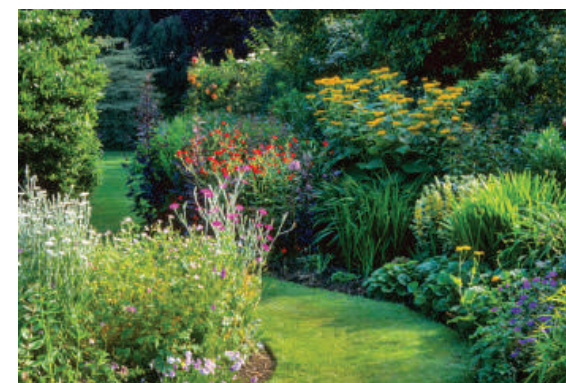
Schwegler 2FE Bat Boxes; southeast facing; 3m above ground level



Schwegler 17a Swift Box; northeast facing; 5m above ground if possible



NHBS Bird Box suitable for redstarts



Example of mixed shrub and perennial border



Retained trees and hedgerow on boundary of the site



Example of log pile refugia



Schwegler Bug Box; 1m above ground level



Example of mown paths through wildflower/grass meadows