

26/00116/FP 19 Walnut Tree Road, Pirton

I am writing on behalf of the North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society. This planning application site is within the defined Pirton village Archaeological Alert Area/Area of Significance in the Local Plan.

The Society OBJECTS to this planning application because it provides insufficient information regarding the archaeological implications of development on this plot.

While there is an archaeological desk-based assessment report provided with the application, the report fails to highlight the great significance of the

known and potential archaeological evidence on the plot, for instance, not reproducing the 1818 Enclosure Map which is of crucial importance for understanding that evidence.

The 1818 map, and other early nineteenth century maps, show that there were buildings on the application site at that time, almost certainly houses and barns,

probably originating in the Medieval period. They were located either side of a length of former road, probably a hollow-way, now marked by the drainage ditch

which runs across the site. This roadway linked Walnut Tree road with another hollow-way road running approximately north-south along the boundary between the application site

and the recreation field, also with buildings fronting it in the early 19th century. Both lengths of road were part of an extensive Medieval and post-Medieval village road network,

some abandoned parts of which survive as earthworks on Great Bury, Maltings Orchard and elsewhere, as shown on the attached maps and North Hertfordshire Museums 1987-88 surveys and interpretations.

Extensive archaeological investigations prior to the housing development on Bannisters Close, now called Cotman End, immediately neighbouring the

application site on its west side, revealed evidence for settlement on the site from the middle Saxon to late Medieval periods, with evidence for Roman settlement also.

Archaeological test pits on the immediately neighbouring land to the east revealed evidence for settlement from c.1100 AD to the post-Medieval period (see 2019,

Archaeological Test Pit Excavations in Pirton, Hertfordshire, 2007-2014 by Catherine Collins with Helen Hofton and Gilbert Burleigh, Access Cambridge Archaeology;

this report is in the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record). This evidence from the immediately adjacent plots serves to emphasise the archaeological potential of the application site.

What is needed now, pre-determination of the application, is field evaluation of the site by means of geophysical surveys and trial trenching. It is likely that any buried archaeology is well-preserved

so field evaluation needs to be carefully designed and on an adequate, not minimal, scale. Geophysical surveys should be at least resistivity and magnetometry using closely-spaced measurements. A third methodology should be

considered as well. Perhaps radar or some other method. There would have to be compelling reasons for not deploying a third methodology. The design and layout of the trial trenching would depend on the geophysical results as well as the map evidence.

Following the results and findings set out in a field evaluation report, further open-area excavations might well be required either pre- or post-determination. It may be that better preserved archaeology should remain undisturbed by groundworks,

perhaps as an open-space. Any permission granted would require appropriately worded planning conditions, including for assessment and final published reports.

All the above comments are in line with the relevant paragraphs in the National Planning Policy Framework, the NHDC Local Plan relevant policies and the relevant policies in the NHDC approved Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Dr G. R. Burleigh, BA(Hons.), PhD, DipMA, AMA, MCIfA, FSA.

Hon. Field Officer,

North Hertfordshire Archaeological Society.

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