

Pirton Parish Council

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Thomas Howe,
Senior Planning Officer,
NHDC,
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
23 February 2026

Dear Mr Howe,

Planning Consultation 26/00116/FP at 19 Walnut Tree Road Pirton Hitchin Hertfordshire SG5 3PX

Thank you for consulting the Pirton Parish Council regarding this application to build 4 dwellings of 4 and 5 bedrooms in the garden of 19 Walnut Tree Road. At the moment we must object to this application as there are number of issues that require further investigation by the applicant before a fully informed conclusion can be reached.

The application site benefits from being within Pirton's development boundary. We agree with the Heritage Statement that the development's impact on the setting of the Scheduled Monument that is the Bury and Toot Hill is likely to be low. If the Ecology report is accepted, there would seem to be ample and welcome scope for at least 10% biodiversity net gain on site, subject, of course, to very strongly worded conditions.

As to the new road, any improvement is a welcome. If planning permission is granted, we would hope that it would be possible for the whole length to be widened and tarmacked. Clearly, with the new pavilion about to be opened, there will be a significant increase in traffic, which the developer should take into account.

At the moment the Pirton Parish Council has an unrestricted right of way for itself, and those it authorises, over the 10 foot wide track. Should the track be widened for a new access road into this site, clarification as to the right of way will be required; either confirming the 10 foot wide limit only, or granting a right across the whole new width.

In addition, we have the following concerns which should be addressed before any permission can be granted:

1. Archaeology

The site is within an Archaeological Alert Area according to the Local Development Plan and the Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan. Although there is a lengthy desk based archaeological assessment (DBA), this is not recognised, and there is very important information missing from it. For example, although the 1818 Enclosure map is mentioned and a referral made to the Pirton Local History website, we are surprised that it is not reproduced in the DBA along with the many other maps and plans reproduced there. It is a piece of information crucial to the archaeology as it shows a roadway with buildings on the site at that time. As it stands, it has enabled the author of the Geo-Environmental Report to be misled into suggesting that there has been no previous building on the site until the 1960s when "The Vicarage" was built. On the contrary, the 1818 Enclosure map clearly demonstrates the existence of buildings on the site, part of the area

known then as Cotman End (the remainder of Cotman End is under the orchard in the grounds of Walnut Tree Farm).

We are also surprised that the 1987-8 earthworks survey plans covering the Bury, Toot Hill, Maltings Orchard, and the application site, undertaken by the then North Herts Museums Archaeological team are not reproduced in the DBA since again they contain crucial archaeological information. Until levelled to form the garden of The Vicarage, the earthworks would have been similar to those to be seen on the Bury and at Maltings Orchard. Their remains are clearly under the garden and will be very badly damaged, if not destroyed, by any building development. They must be recorded.

In accordance with NPPF para 207, NHDC Local Development Plan Policy HE4, and Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan policy PNP 8.3, given the status of the area, and the significance and likelihood of archaeological remains on the site, the DBA should be accompanied by a field evaluation (e.g. trial trenching and geophysics) so that the impact of the development on the significance of the heritage assets can be assessed. This may indicate that further pre-determination field evaluation, excavation or mitigation secured by condition are required.

We are also puzzled by the in-filled pond on the DBA being named Larkin's as that is the name of a pond on the Bury adjacent to Walnut Tree Road. We can see that this error is contained in the NHDC Conservation and Management Plan for Pirton 2023 and presume this is the source of the error here.

2. Housing Needs, Scale, and Parking

Pirton does not need any more 4- and 5-bedroom houses. Please see the Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan, Policy PNP 1.3 and 1.4. Despite these policy provisions, Pirton has not seen many smaller properties built for sale in the lifetime of the Plan to date. For example, at The Pryors of 15 dwellings, 14 are 4/5 bedrooms, only 1 is a 3-bedroom house; at Comice Meadows, there are 43 4/5-bedroom dwellings and only 6 of 3 bedrooms. Taking into account smaller or individual developments, for every 3-bedroom priority-need home, 5 non-priority need homes are built.

The proposed heights of the dwellings will be well above the Pirton norm. The vast majority of houses in Pirton are at or below 8.9 metres in height, including those on the Comice Meadows and The Pryors developments. Two dwellings on what is now Cotman End were proposed at 9.8 metres, and reduced at the planning committee to 9.1 metres. These four properties therefore should be no more than 9.1 metres in height, and, as part of an edge of village development, should preferably be lower. A new precedent on heights not compatible with the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan should not be set. Please also see Pirton Neighbourhood Plan policy PNP 2.9.

Each property is to have 3 parking spaces, as it should be. However, there is a reliance on garages once again to provide one of these. We have already seen at Cotman End a successful application to convert the garage into accommodation and the unsatisfactory squeezing of a new space on to the forecourt where there was once a flower bed, thus reducing the planned landscaping and biodiversity of the development. We cannot force anyone to use their garage as a parking space, but at the very least we would ask that there be an Article 4 direction that they cannot be converted. We make these comments in the knowledge of the difficult parking issues that the village as a whole experiences, and, considering the proposed layout, that any visitors (authorised or not) may block access particularly to Plots 2/3/4.

3. Geo-Environment, Waste Water and Flooding

As noted within the Geo-Environmental Report, a water-pipe crosses the site, carrying waste water on to the wider circuit of watercourses north of the site. This pipe takes water from the watercourse bordering the Bury on Walnut Tree Road, which takes excess surface water from the Bury, Larkins Pond (it is on the Bury, not in the garden of this property), and from Blacksmith's Pond. It is not mentioned that it also now takes all surface water from the properties at Cotman End, which appears to have resulted in flooding on to Walnut Tree Road in periods of heavy rain. The water passes through a pipe under Walnut Tree Road, and the pipe continues across the site and discharges into a ditch running between the site and the Pirton Recreation Ground. No attention seems to have been paid to the increase in surface water drainage into this ditch from the almost completed Sports and Community Pavilion, and the parking areas to be constructed. This should be brought to the attention of the HCC Flood Authority and the authors of the Geo-Environmental Report for comment and assurance that flooding will not be an issue.

The Design and Access Statement does not indicate whether the roadway into the development will be private or adopted by HCC Highways. In the event of it remaining a private road, we would ask for a condition for low-level lighting through the development as providing the least light pollution for the dark skies at this end of the village, and to cause the least disturbance to wildlife. Please see Pirton Neighbourhood Plan PNP 2.11.

Yours sincerely,



Jill Rogers
Chairman, Pirton Parish Council