

## **Design Statement for Site off Holwell Road Pirton:**

### **“Land at Elm Tree Farm”**

*Prepared by the Pirton Parish Council.*

This Design Statement should be read in the context of the Local Development Plan; the draft Pirton Neighbourhood Development Plan; the Pirton Village Design Statement and the Pirton Village Character Assessment (prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan, latest draft April 2016).

Policies generally applicable include the Build for Life Principles and the Chiltern Conservation Board Position Statement on development affecting the Setting of the Chilterns AONB 2011.

The NPPF includes in its Core Principles that the different roles and character of different areas should be taken into account as well as the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It also highlights the need for good design which responds to local character and history, and reflects the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

#### **The Setting**

The site is formed from two large fields immediately outside of the current village boundary on the north eastern side of the village. Part of the site backs onto the village Conservation Area and a number of Listed Buildings. It faces out across Holwell Road to Bedfordshire and an extensive tract of agricultural land marking the Pirton Lowlands. The overall design of the development must recognise and reflect this position in the countryside.

The site will form a new introduction to Pirton from the Holwell Road. Currently there is a view from the road across the field to the Chiltern Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This view is one of the iconic views for Pirton as it places Pirton firmly in its setting at the foothills of the Chiltern Hills, which is an important facet of the character of Pirton. The overall design of the development in the layout of the site should continue to draw the eye to this view.

Whilst not a designated dark sky area, Pirton nonetheless is fortunate in preserving very good views of the night sky. There is very little light pollution from the village itself, and its distance from major centres of population – Hitchin, Stevenage and Luton - as well as the protection from such centres afforded by the Chiltern Ridge, ensures excellent viewing. Any new development must demonstrate how it will avoid contributing to any night time light pollution, and this site, in particular, as it forms the new edge between village and countryside, must take particular care not to add to

night time light pollution. Good Practice Guidance for the reduction of obtrusive light must be followed.

### **Density of Building**

The average density of building for houses in Pirton is 17 dwellings per hectare (dph). The highest density is 22 per hectare. The site is in the transitional zone between the village and the open countryside and so the dph should reflect this and the character of Pirton by being less than the average for Pirton. Slightly higher density may be appropriate in part(s) of the development where terraced or smaller semi-detached homes are envisaged. A lesser density will be expected where larger houses are located; the immediately adjacent area of Royal Oak Lane has a dph of just over 14.

Density is also an issue at the entrance to the development. Properties here should be set well back from Holwell Road, have front gardens and be well landscaped to provide a gentle introduction to Pirton. Any suggestion of urbanisation is to be avoided. A mix of open spaces, trees and varied housing layout should be maintained along the edges of the site, which will form a new edge to the village, in order to sustain the current characteristic blending of the village into the countryside with a soft edge.

### **Housing Mix**

The Pirton Survey 2015 showed a strong preference for two and three bedroom homes for young families and elderly downsizers. There was also a strong preference for single story bungalows for older residents. The housing mix for this development should reflect this, as well as provide affordable housing in accordance with the NHDC's policies.

Design should be varied, with larger detached housing dispersed among smaller properties. There should be no visible means by way of design to distinguish private housing from affordable housing, nor should affordable housing be "ghettoised" by placing it all on just one part of the site.

### **Design Considerations**

Although Pirton is a category A village in the emerging Local Plan, it is nonetheless of medium size with limited facilities. The nature of roads within and outside of the village, its position in the landscape, and within the setting of the Chiltern AONB, mitigates against large, urbanising estates.

The feeling of harmony between the village setting and the surrounding landscape must be preserved. Most properties in the village, both traditional and modern, sit within their own grounds, separated by open space and generally set back within the village in cul-de-sacs or the narrow country lanes leading to the village and within the village. In almost all areas the coherence and fit of development within the village is

enhanced by easy, safe and direct access to other areas of the village via a network of inter-connecting footpaths. This give a sense that Pirton is a village of one community rather than a collection of disjointed zones. This sense of interconnection and community must drive the overall design of the site which must reflect the serpentine nature of many streets in the village, and provide adequate and easy walking and cycle routes to the village centre. .

All but two of the houses in the village, traditional or modern, is of a maximum of two stories in height. This height restriction must be reflected in individual house design.

The village benefits from a mix of traditional housing styles and materials, with some examples of good modern design and use of modern materials. This gives a large palette of opportunity for individual house design, so maintaining the “mix” of styles that contribute to the character of Pirton. Account should be taken of the traditional mixes of roof and wall materials; simple detailing is encouraged to reflect much of the architecture in the village, but unnecessary features such as scalloped barge boards should be avoided. The use of a variety of chimney styles is encouraged to reflect the architecture of village houses, and brick work should be restricted to colours traditionally used in the village, red or “Arlesey White”, as well as rendered wall finishes painted white or pastel colours.

The use of bay windows and dormer windows is encouraged.

Additionally, there must be land allocated to parking and ground floor storage for items such as bins and bicycles.

Cars will not dominate the streetscape. Parking should be provided at a minimum scale of two cars per dwelling. The application for development must be specific about parking and other storage needs along pedestrian and cycle routes, such as signage, bins and seating, should be unobtrusive and of a design that reinforces and enhances the character of Pirton.

### **Biodiversity and Open spaces**

Pirton is a very green village with considerable numbers of trees and hedgerows and garden shrubbery contributing to its green and leafy feel, and encouraging the significant biodiversity. The hedges and trees provide green routes, shelter and sustenance for wildlife linking woodland, pasture and village-scape. This must be continued within the development, and provide green routes for wildlife into and out of the village and through the development, using indigenous species. Existing trees and hedgerows must be preserved and the overall design of the development should make good use of tree and hedge planting as part of the streetscape.

Individual plots should maintain good size front and rear gardens, bordered by hedges or materials that allow for the free movement of animals such as hedgehogs. Open plan frontages can be used. The majority of dwellings in Pirton are set back from the road and this feature is expected to be replicated in this development; with

some exception where the context may admit e.g. small terracing, in keeping with some examples of Victorian architecture in Pirton.

Pirton also benefits from a large number of open and green spaces, and generous verges such as that at Little Green add to the distinctive rural feel of the village and harmony with the surrounding countryside. This should be emulated within the development. Open space should be accessible, offering areas with seating for parents with toddlers and the elderly as well as play space for older children.

*This Design Statement is produced to assist the developer, the North Hertfordshire District Council Planning Committee, Planning Officers of the North Hertfordshire District Council, and residents of Pirton Village and Parish, to provide a substantial new development of mixed housing that is sustainable for Pirton and makes a positive contribution to living in Pirton now and in the future.*