

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Mary Caldwell  
Development and Conservation Manager  
North Hertfordshire District Council  
P.O. Box 480  
Hertfordshire  
M33 0ED

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

30<sup>th</sup> January 2015  
(Sent by email)

Dear Ms. Caldwell,

**Application No. 14/03369/1**

**Outline application (all matters except access reserved) for residential development on Lane on the north east side of Priors Hill and opposite Hill Farm, Priors Hill, Pirton.**

CPRE Hertfordshire objects to this application. As the application is outline only and the layout and number of units notional, we have confined our comments in this letter to those of principle only.

Approval of development on this site would pre-empt the outcome of ongoing consultation on the North Herts Draft Local Plan and subvert the democratic process, particularly the ongoing development of a neighbourhood plan by the community of Pirton in accordance with the Localism Act.

The site is currently subject to public consultation, designated as site PT1 on sheet A of the Draft Proposals Map. In the Planning Statement the applicant appears to assume that this means that the site is therefore available for residential development. It does not. The Council makes clear in its Statement Of Community Involvement that "The feedback received during these consultation periods will be used in the preparation and revision of the development plan document before moving onto the next stages." Until such time as the council has fully considered the outcomes from the public consultation and revised the development plan accordingly, there is no designation of this site for housing. The Planning Statement similarly refers to the inclusion of the site in the SHLAA as evidence of its suitability for housing, but as para 1.8 of the SHLAA makes clear, "The inclusion of any site in the SHLAA does not guarantee that it will ultimately prove acceptable for residential development."

With regard to the emerging Pirton Neighbourhood Plan, the applicant acknowledges that it is currently in development and states that they have been in discussion with the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. However we note from the Pirton Parish Council website that the Steering Group categorically deny that there has been any such discussions, either official or unofficial. (This also draws into question the assertion in the

Planning Statement that villagers want the village hall relocated to this site as part of this application.)

The minutes of a public meeting, held in Pirton on 6 January 2015 to discuss the current application state that there has been a very high response to consultation during the development of the neighbourhood plan and 88% of those who responded support the concept of a neighbourhood plan. However the majority did not support development of the scale envisaged in this application and the detailed responses to the questionnaire on the website indicate that only 11% were prepared to accept development beyond the village boundary, which this site is. The overwhelming preference was for several small developments.

We also note from the minutes of that meeting that the Council's portfolio holder for Planning and Enterprise stated that 'in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council had been tasked with finding areas to accommodate 12,100 new homes by 2031'. As we have previously advised the Council in our comments on the Draft Local Plan, in our view this is an erroneous interpretation of the NPPF.

The applicant makes a number of references to the approval of the small development of 11 houses to the immediate south east of the site (application no. 12/01795/1). That approval was made under the council's policies for exception sites in the rural areas. The current application would not meet the requirements of those policies in either the current Local Plan or the Draft Local Plan Preferred Options paper which is currently subject to public consultation.

Consequently before making any decision on this application we would urge the Council to carefully consider the views of the residents of Pirton.

Yours sincerely,



David Irving

cc Pirton Parish Council and Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group