

Land West of Leighton Buzzard Road, Hemel Hempstead



Image Credit: Fairfax Strategic Land Ltd

New residential community within the north Green Belt of Hemel Hempstead and setting of the historic village of Piccott's End

CLIENT

Fairfax Homes Strategic Limited

LPA

Dacorum Borough Council

STATUS

Planning permission granted

SERVICES

Heritage and Townscape, Expert Witness

Our role

- Our specialist built Heritage team have worked together with the wider multi-disciplinary team assembled by our mutual client since 2020 in promoting the residential development on this well-connected greenfield site at the northern edge of the new town of Hemel Hempstead. Our team first provided expert advice on the relevant built heritage asset matters and as a key input to initial design development work and the wider planning strategy.
- The key constraints included the proximity of the Piccott's End Conservation Area; where the site fell within the wider landscape setting, the setting of a large number of statutory listed buildings within the village, and also the closer proximity of a schedule monument (Roman villa) as a buried feature.
- Our team contributed to informed and constructive engagement at pre-application stage with officers at Dacorum Borough Council, and also discussions with the county and Historic England.
- Our team prepared a comprehensive Built Heritage Statement in support of an outline application for the proposed development of the site, supported by parameter plans, illustrative masterplan and Design and Access Statement. This scheme sought permission for up to 390 dwellings, including up to 50% affordable housing and 5% self-build, a residential care home for up to 70-beds, along with associated landscaping and open space with access from Leighton Buzzard Road.

Results

- This application was refused by the local planning authority in 2023; citing reasons including spatial and visual harm to the openness of the Green Belt, as well as harm to the significance / setting of nearby designated heritage assets. An appeal was subsequently launched by our client in response.
- Our team provided detailed evidence and Expert Witness on built heritage matters at appeal and Public Inquiry in 2025. It was also during the extended period between submitting the appeal and its determination that the site was determined in agreement with the LPA to be Grey Belt land.
- The appeal was allowed by the Inspector. The Inspector agreed with our assessment that any harm to the significance of designated heritage assets was at a low level, and also that in overall terms this would be outweighed by identified wider public benefits offered by the scheme as a whole. It was decided that these heritage impacts did not provide a strong reason for refusal for the purposes of interpreting paragraph 11 (d) (i) of the Framework. Nor was it deemed to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

Turley