

PLANNING REF : 242067
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Castle Close
: Lodge Road, Whistley Green
: RG100EH
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Mark Campbell
DATE SUBMITTED : 16/09/2024

COMMENTS:

Whilst I understand the need for more housing across the country and region, Hurst is NOT the correct location for a development of this size as confirmed by the recent planning inspectors findings the last time development was proposed on this site. I wish to register my strongest OBJECTION to this planning and hope that the planning team dismiss it as soon as possible without wasting any more time or money.

When we moved to Hurst in 2004, its rural nature was one of the biggest selling points of the location as I am sure the majority of residents would agree. Hurst is a small village with limited facilities and this is one of the many things we love about it. The addition of a large development of this scale detracts from the rural character turning our green and open countryside into yet another urban sprawl.

As already communicated when this location last went to planning, I would like to object to this application on the following grounds:

Wokingham borough council has a local plan for housing and this location is NOT included in this plan.

The location is a greenfield site and a designated area of countryside which is outside of the development limits of the village and the concern is that the approval of this application opens the flood gate for development of other greenfield locations around Hurst.

The Hurst primary school is already at capacity and has no known plans to expand.

The surrounding secondary schools are also at capacity and it is my understanding that in the last few years Wokingham borough council were regularly having to find places outside of the borough to accommodate pupils. From what I am hearing from this year's cohort of children, no new families were allocated places at their chosen schools of The Piggot or The Holt unless they had siblings there already.

Twyford doctors surgery is the closest surgery and again is already oversubscribed.

Hurst has very few local amenities (a single shop and post office, which means people are reliant on private transport to access amenities further afield.

The public transport through the village is very poor with limited schedules and destinations which again increases the dependence on private vehicles.

For those residents with secondary school aged pupils, there are very few schools which work for public transport, again increasing

the dependence on private transport.

If you look at the typical car ownership these days, it is common for each household to have at least 2 cars. This along with the dependence on private transport due to the location of Hurst will have a significant impact on traffic through the village and surrounding areas. We have already seen a noticeable increase in traffic in the last few years with the major developments around Wokingham.

With an increase in traffic comes an impact on safety and speeding is already a huge problem through the village. Getting into and out of my driveway on Lodge road (both on foot and in my car) is already a challenge. Adding more traffic to the area will increase this problem for other existing residents and it's only a matter of time before a serious accident occurs.

Tape Lane is a designated safe walking route for the local school. It is also supposed to have restricted vehicular access which is already widely ignored. This combined with the lack of public footpaths, the need to constantly cross roads (often around cars forced to park on the pavements) when walking and the additional influx of cars puts people's safety at risk.

Providing new pedestrian and cycle routes within the new development does not help the challenges around the wider village.

The chosen location hosts a wide range of wildlife and greenery which will be dramatically impacted by the development. Including the removal of hedgerows. In the area, the water will need to go somewhere and the concern is that this will result in flooding the surrounding properties and roads. The assumption that the existing ditch network can cope is just not realistic. Broadwater Lane regularly floods and has caused issues for several of the properties on that road. The detailed report provided already by Mr A A Butler covers this in far more detail and should NOT be ignored.

The regular flooding also has a huge impact on the drainage and sewage as the local pumping stations are already running at capacity and

Thames Water has not committed to any upgrades or increase in capacity. The properties on Lodge road (as well as other areas surrounding the proposed development area) regularly have issues with the drains being backed up caused by surface water overwhelming the pumping station meaning we cannot flush toilets, use washing machines or shower as the water has nowhere to go. Adding another 100 houses into the network will mean that the issues we already experience will happen more often and will likely be worse.

When I look through the application and compare it to the previously rejected plans, there are a number of "bribes" on offer which are uncommitted, require buy in from third parties and are highly unlikely to be implemented.

Re-routing the existing bus through the new development whilst on the other hand proposing a private bus service is laughable. Why would the bus company agree to this if a private service is being offered which will take away their customers. The proposed private service also

makes no sense on many other layers. Why would new residents fund a service which they are unlikely to use (along with the other resident funded facilities being suggested). Not everybody commutes by train into London or the surrounding towns, and the chance of any of the families getting their children into the Piggot school unless they already have siblings there are highly unlikely given this year's allocations in which no new places were allocated.

Adding a cycle lane into Twyford again makes no sense. From a personal lived experience, drivers regularly flout the existing speed limit between Hurst and Twyford and are happy to overtake and ignore the current hatched road markings.

Suggesting that the pavement be widened through the village is completely unrealistic without turning the road into a single lane carriageway. As can be seen by anybody who knows the village, the residents along the main road already have limited parking since blue yellow lines were introduced at the end of Tape Lane and removing additional space to park is not only unfair on the residents but would simply move the parking problem elsewhere. There have already been numerous reported incidents of cars being damaged and written off due to inconsiderate and dangerous driving through the village.

As we have seen with previous applications which have been granted, this application states that "All matters reserved except for means of access". So in reality, what are the developers actually committing to. We saw recently with the sawpit development that developers apply for one thing, build whatever they like (bigger taller homes with more rooms) and retrospectively apply for permission on the hope that the council then simply puts a tick in the box. Please let's not let this happen again!