

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260353
Site Address:	Land North of Broadwater Lane and West of Hogmoor Lane, Hurst
Expiry Date:	3 April 2026
Site Visit Date:	23 February 2026
Proposal: Permission in principle application for the proposed erection of a maximum of 7 no. dwellings (or a minimum of 5 no. dwellings), including formation of an access from Broadwater Lane.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB25 – Archaeology TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Joint Minerals and	M2 – Safeguarding sand and gravel resources

Waste Plan (JMWP)	
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside SS10 – Meeting our housing needs C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H3 – Affordable housing FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design NE6 – Valued landscapes DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH5 – The historic environment DH6 – Archaeology HC5 – Environmental protection
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document A Design for Hurst

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
240583	Outline application for the proposed erection of 9No dwellings and associated access (with Landscaping, Layout, Scale and Appearance reserved and only Access to be considered).	Refused 29/11/24 and dismissed at appeal
981273	Proposed Erection Of 5 Detached Dwellings and Garages	Refused 07/07/98 and dismissed at appeal

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection
WBC Drainage – No objection (subject to condition)
WBC Highways – No objection
WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) (Affordable Housing) – Request an in leiu financial contribution towards affordable housing

WBC Landscape and Trees – Objection WBC Built Heritage Officer – Objection WBC CIL - The proposed development will be liable for CIL as it involves the creation of 1 or more new dwellings. CIL liability will be calculated at the technical details consent stage. WBC Education (School Place Planning) – No comments received WBC Ecology Newts – Request further information prior to determination WBC Ecology – No objection WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received
External
Thames Water Utilities Ltd – Wished to make no comments Berkshire Archaeology – No objection (subject to condition) Binfield Badger Group -

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	St Nicholas Parish Council object on the following grounds: • Impact on existing settlements • Flooding • Unsustainable location • New Wokingham Local Plan should be given some weight where Hurst has been identified as an area for limited development • Landscape and visual impact <i>Officer comment:</i> <i>The above will be considered and discussed in the report</i>
Ward Member(s)	Cllr Conway made a listing request for the application to be heard by the Planning Committee should the officer recommendation be to grant permission. Stated the proposal to be “<i>an inappropriate attempt to overcome the objections made in a previous appeal decision</i>”
Neighbours	89 comments have been received in objection relating to the following matters: • Impact on Listed Buildings • Site is located in the designated countryside • Impact on Hurst area of special character • Proposed houses will not make meaningful contribution to housing land supply • Flooding in Hogmoor Lane • Will cause surface run off • Attenuation basin falls outside of red line boundary is concerning as how could it be secured • Erosion of countryside setting and urbanisation of the landscape • Further development in the village is unsustainable • Land should remain in agricultural use

	• Unsustainable location for development in terms of access to non motorised forms of transport and facilities • Findings of previous appeals are relevant to this proposal • Vegetation loss • Erode settlements between Wards Cross/ Hurst Village and Whistley Green • Impact on biodiversity from hedge removal • Road and bell mouth would urbanise appearance of the surroundings • Proposal does not meet PiP criteria • Impact on Green Route • Impact on Haines Hill valued landscape • Removal of veteran trees • PiP application is inappropriate • Higher land on Hogmoor Lane will dwarf other houses Officer comment: <i>This matter relates to the scale final design of any future dwellings. Careful design may be required as a result of topography and would be considered at Technical Details Consent stage.</i> Officer comment: <i>The above will be considered and discussed in the report</i> • Will impact views Officer comment: <i>Views are not a material planning consideration</i> • If approved, would leave open potential to extend development across the land Officer comment: <i>Each application would be assessed on its merits. Officers cannot pre-judge or speculate on future scenarios</i> • No urgent need for development Officer comment: <i>The Borough does not have a 5YHLS and therefore is in need of housing. The tilted balance therefore applies to all residential proposals submitted</i> • Inadequate sewer provision Officer comment: <i>This would be assessed further at technical details consent stage</i> 1 further comment has been received stating: Proposal seems reasonable and will expand number of homes in the area
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	Officer comment: The above is noted
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site comprises of a curved parcel of land stretching between Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane. To the west of Broadwater Lane is linear residential development with scattered Listed Buildings. To the north of Broadwater Lane (which encapsulates the application site) is open, largely undeveloped land. Hogmoor Lane is a narrow Lane, again with residential development, on both sides of the Lane, but with a gap in built form at the application site.



Figure 1: Application site indicated in red, in the context of Broadwater and Hogmoor Lanes

Proposal:

The application is for permission in principle, as provided for in the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle from the technical detail. Planning permission does not exist unless both the Permission in Principle (PiP) and the Technical Details Consent (TDC) are approved. This application relates to the first of these two stages. As the application does not relate to technical details and as such, the submitted plans are taken to be illustrative only.

PiP is sought for the erection of up a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 7 dwellings. This is in line with the PPG's advice that the amount of residential development must be expressed as a range, indicating the minimum and maximum amount of new dwellings which are, in principle, permitted.

A site plan has been provided alongside the application. Access to the site is proposed from a single access point (approx. 19m in width and 200m in length) off of Broadwater Lane only.

The PPG advises that the scope of PiP is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Whether permission in principle should be granted bearing in mind the effects of the proposal's location, land use and amount of development on material considerations is required to be considered.

Third party comments have stated that the permission in principle application route is unsuitable for this site, given the site complexities and constraints. However, the LPA are required to assess each valid application put before them.

There was also concern from third parties that the red line boundary has been curated to exclude the attenuation pond (which is situated outside of the red line boundary within the blue line boundary). PiP applications can only be made on a site area of a maximum size of 1ha. If the attenuation pond had been included in the red line boundary it would have taken the site area to above 1ha and therefore the PiP route would have not been available to the applicant.

The submitted PiP plan shows an attenuation basin outside the red line boundary, within land identified by a blue line as being under the applicant's control. Drainage is a technical matter that would be assessed at the TDC stage; however, the PiP stage must still define all land necessary to deliver the development in principle. Any drainage infrastructure essential to the acceptability of the proposal would need to be located within the red line area, as PiP cannot rely on the future use of land outside that boundary, nor can mitigation on blue-line land be secured through the PiP process.

Accordingly, the attenuation basin shown outside the red line does not form part of this PiP application and cannot be relied upon at this stage. If, at TDC stage, the drainage strategy requires an attenuation basin or other infrastructure, this would need to be accommodated within the approved red-line site boundary or through a separate planning permission for off-site works.

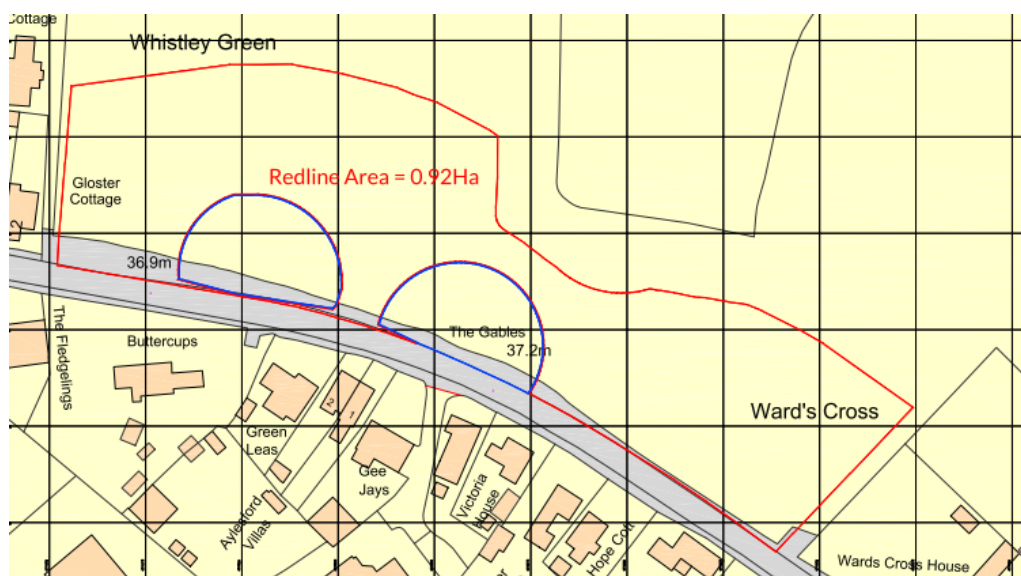
The proposal follows on from a recent appeal scheme (240583), as outlined in more detail below. However, broadly speaking, the appeal scheme intended a linear development of housing along the northern side of Broadwater Land while the current proposal has shifted the application site approx. 135mm eastwards with a revised development envelope that encompasses both frontages on Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane. Vehicular access is only proposed from Broadwater Lane.

Background Information:

This application follows the refusal of outline planning application 240583 for the erection of 9 dwellings (see planning history), albeit the site area between this proposal and the former are not identical, as outlined above, but partially incorporate the same area of land to the east.



Location plan for this current application



Location plan for refused application 240583

This previous application was refused for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposal represents unacceptable unplanned development outside of development limits within the designated countryside which is contrary to the spatial objectives of the development plan. The proposal as a whole would not fall into any of the exceptional categories, as identified by CP11 of development plan and is unacceptable in principle. This is contrary to the NPPF (2023) and policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP9, CP11 and CP17 of the Core Strategy (2010), policies CC01, CC02 and CC03 of the Managing Delivery Document (2014), the Borough Design Guide SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).*
- 2. The proposed northern and central accesses to the site from Broadwater Lane would significantly harm and lead to the degradation of off-site veteran trees T014 and T016 which form an irreplaceable habitat. Development within the root protection area of the*

veteran trees with no acceptable buffer zone, mitigation or compensation fails to respond to the Ancient Woodland, Ancient Trees and Veteran Trees: Advice For Making Planning Decisions (2022), prepared by Natural England and the Forestry Commission. There are no wholly exceptional reasons and suitable compensation strategy exists to overcome degradation to this irreplaceable habitat. This is contrary to paragraph 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) and CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery (2014).

3. The proposed development will have a negative and detrimental impact on the landscape and character & appearance of the area by virtue of the loose urban grain derived from up to 9 dwellings, three access points and site constraints such as the narrow plot and off-site veteran trees, loss of the historic settlement gap and extension of suburban linear development into a sensitive open green field. The proposal poses a significant adverse harm to the character of the and appearance of the Countryside, Hurst River Terrace landscape character area. The proposal is therefore contrary Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy (2010), Managing Delivery Document (2014) Policies CC01, CC02, CC03, and TB21 and to the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

4. The proposed development comprising 9no. Residential dwellings and 3no. access points onto Broadwater Lane would fail to protect and enhance the Haines Hill Valued Landscape by virtue of the land use resulting in the coalescence of Whistley Green and Hurst Village settlements. This is contrary to paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy (2010) and CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014).

5. The proposal would result in the loss of the historic settlement gap between Hurst Village and Whistley Green, replacing this with suburban linear development which detrimentally harms the edge and setting of the Hurst Area of Special Character. Due to the loss of an open green field which is an important rural characteristic of the to the setting of the Special Character Area. This is contrary to TB26 of the Managing Delivery Document (2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

6. The application site is within an unsustainable location that would result in future residents relying on private motor vehicles or day to day needs by reason of the countryside location outside of settlement limits, the limited facilities within Hurst that would be within a safe and convenient walking distance, quality of the walking/cycling & environment and limited public transport links. The proposal would not encourage a modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport. The proposal is contrary to policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy (2010), CC01 and CC02 of the Managing Development Delivery (2014), the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document and section 8 & 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

7. In absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposal fails to provide off-site drainage measures (swale) to mitigate the impact the proposal would have on surface water drainage, contrary to CC09 of the Managing Delivery Document (2014) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

8. In absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposal fails to provide an adequate provision for affordable housing, contrary to CP5 of the Core Strategy and section 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).

9. In absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposal fails to secure biodiversity net gain measures. This is contrary to CP7 of the Core Strategy and TB23 of the Managing Delivery Document (2014).

10. In absence of a completed legal agreement, the proposal fails to secure the off-site permissive pedestrian connection between Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane. The proposal fails to comply with CC03 of the Managing Delivery Document (2014).

The refusal was appealed and dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate, albeit the reasons for the appeal being dismissed were only in relation to veteran trees and the impact on Listed Buildings and Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character. Ultimately, as the proposal resulted harm to an irreplaceable habitat (veteran trees) and no wholly exceptional reason and adequate mitigation existed, the tilted balance in favour of granting development was disengaged as per paragraph 11(d)(i) footnote 7 of the NPPF, and the appeal failed.

It is also noteworthy that the appeal associated with the refusal in 1998 was also dismissed and contained land that is within this current application site; that fronting Hogmoor Lane. This parcel of land was not incorporated into the 2024 refused scheme.

It is acknowledged that this 1998 decision was made under a different development plan and predates the NPPF. Nevertheless, the reasons for the refusal/ dismissing of the appeal related to the proposal's impact on the character of the area, resulting in the loss of a 'gap' and scale, size and massing of the proposal would be incongruous and out of character with the semi-rural setting of the Lane. The proposal was also unacceptable in relation to highway safety.

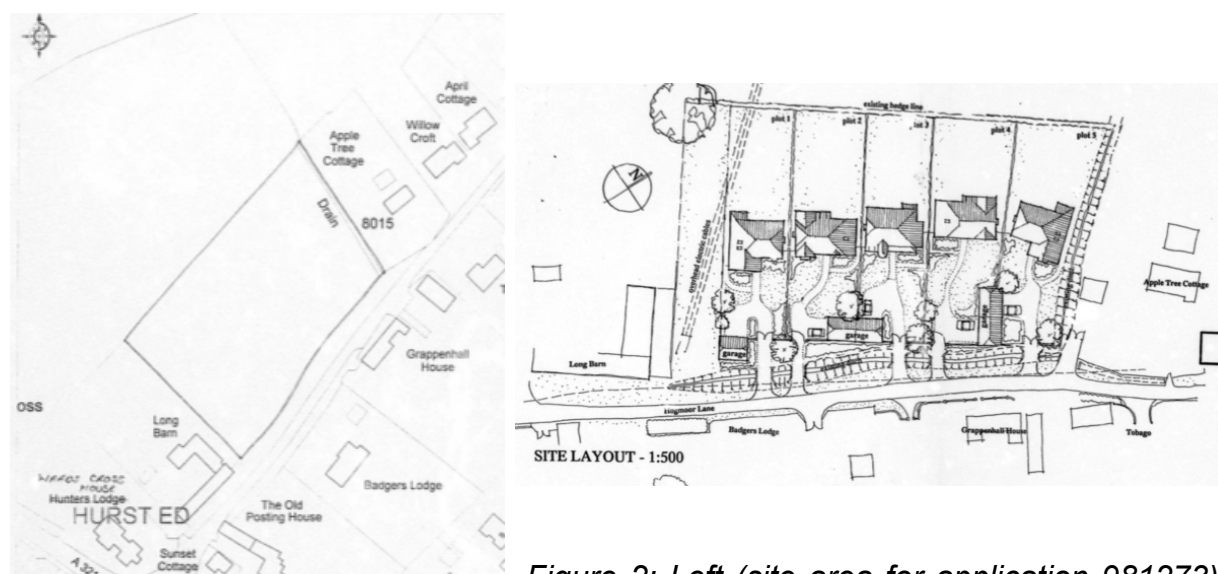


Figure 2: Left (site area for application 981273) and right: site plan for the same application

Principle of Development:

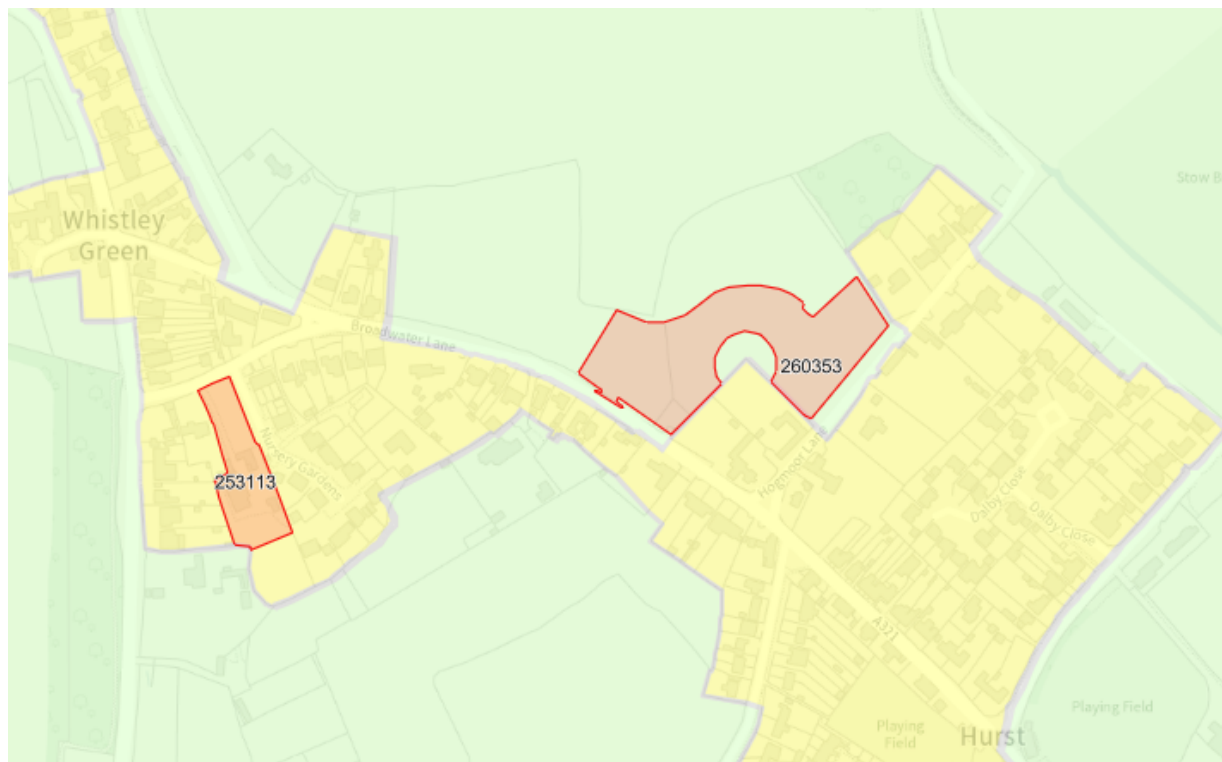
a) Adopted Development Plan

i) Spatial strategy

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The spatial strategy for the Borough is outlined in policy CP9 of the Core Strategy. This directs development to within settlement limits. The settlement limits are split into three categories depending on the sustainability of those locations; Major, Modest and Limited development locations. The development plan steers Major developments to sustainable Major settlements with the best services, facilities and infrastructure.

Whilst the site is located adjacent/ partially bordering around the Limited Development Location of Hurst, the entirety of the site is located within the Wokingham Countryside, as can be seen below:



Policy CP11 dictates development within the countryside. Its overarching aims are to maintain the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. The policy states that development will not normally be permitted unless one of the 7 exceptions for development is satisfied which are:

1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in

the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and

3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or

4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;

5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:

i) Bring about environmental improvements; or

ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.

6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;

7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.

The proposal does not meet any of the exceptions outlined above.

Whilst this is the case, it does not automatically conclude that development within the countryside is unacceptable and attention then has to turn to the overall aims of policy CP11 and whether the proposal would comply with these.

Under the recently refused and appealed application (240583) the LPA concluded that whilst the villages of Hurst and Whistely Green fall under the same settlement limit (Hurst), they are historically and physically separate, and this is set out in the Council's Landscape Character Assessment (2019) and Valued Landscape Topic Paper (2024). The previous development was considered to infill one of the only remaining open fields separating Hurst and Whistley Green and erode the gap between these two historically separate villages which conflicts with this overarching aim of CP11. However, the Inspector, in their judgement on the appeal, gave limited weight to the conflict with CP11 and on discussion of settlement coalescence stated:

The appeal site and the wider countryside beyond make for a pleasant backdrop to Broadwater Lane. The residential development on the opposite side of Broadwater Lane is largely continuous, linking Hurst and Whistley Green. This makes it difficult to assess when on the ground on this part of Broadwater Lane where these respective settlements begin and end meaning that there is no obvious gap between the two settlements in this particular location (para 35).

Despite the conclusion by the Inspector, it is worth noting that this proposal would only see the partial closure of this gap along Broadwater Lane, however open land to the west would be retained, and so the erosion of the 'gap' in full would now not occur. Given the Inspector's previous conclusions, it is not considered that development in the parcel of land fronting Broadwater Lane would result in settlement coalescence.

Development within the eastern parcel of the site (that infilling between existing properties on Hogmoor Lane) is an element of this proposal that differs from the recently dismissed appeal but does resemble the 1998 refused scheme. This too would

not result in settlement coalescence, but rather would represent an infill development, connecting two edges of the Hurst settlement.

As such, Officers are of the view that this development would not conflict with the overarching aim of policy CP11 which is to maintain the separate identity of settlements.

Turning to the second overarching aim of policy CP11, which is to maintain the quality of the environment, this is a multi-faceted assessment that will incorporate other material considerations (those discussed in this report). As such, a judgement as to whether the scheme complies or conflicts with this second overarching aim will be made in the planning balance section at the end of this report. It should be noted that the Inspector did not appear to explicitly mention the policy CP11 overarching aim of maintaining the quality of the environment in their decision, however that does not mean it should not factor into the assessment of this application.

ii) Locational sustainability

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice and are located where there are or will be at the time of development choices in the mode of transport available and which minimise the distance people need to travel.

Within the Inspector's decision on the previous scheme (240583), they stated the following in respect of the site sustainability for 9 new dwellings (paras 43 - 45):

I noted that whilst the footpaths adjacent to the roads within Hurst are at some points narrow and require pedestrians to cross where only provided on one side it would nonetheless be entirely possible for future residents to access the primary school by walking to it. Further, I noted that the public house, the Elephant and Castle at Whistley Green was located close to the site. There is also a convenience store near to the site and although that is currently closed, confidence was expressed at the Hearing by various parties that this would be re opening shortly.

Whilst bus services are somewhat limited, it was clarified at the Hearing that it would be entirely possible to, for example, catch a bus to Twyford, board a train, and arrive within central London in time for a day of work.

Therefore, whilst services and public transport options are more limited than would be the case within a more urban area, the development would not be for a large number of houses and those limited number of residents would have access to some services and facilities, whilst also being afforded the option of using an alternative means of travel to the car to access services and facilities elsewhere.

In view of the Inspector's decision, WBC Highways have raised no objection to the scheme on site sustainability grounds for the erection of up to seven dwellings, which is at least 2 less than the previous larger scheme.

iii) Minerals and waste

The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan ("Joint Plan") was

adopted by Wokingham Borough Council on 19 January 2023. The Joint Plan identifies site allocations and extensions to help provide a future supply of sand and gravel extraction. However, despite these allocations, there remains a shortfall of supply during the plan period. The policy response to address the shortfall is the identification of a 'Minerals Safeguarding Area' (MSA), where Policy M2 of the plan applies, and also an 'Area of Search' where Policy M4 applies. This approach is to demonstrate the potential for, in effect, windfall provision within the Plan area. The site is within the MSA and contains soft sand arising from historic river deposits. Policy M2 aims to seek to protect mineral resources against unnecessary sterilization by non-minerals development.

The application covers an area approximately 0.96 hectares in size and a 3 hectare threshold is reflected in the supporting text under Policy M2, which states "*A minimum plot size of 3 hectares will apply in the safeguarding process to avoid repeated consideration of prior extraction where this can be assumed to be uneconomic, due to the small size of the parcels of land involved.*"

Therefore, given the site's relatively modest scale and below the threshold specified within Policy M2, it is unlikely to be a viable commercial operation or impact any other commercial operations. The location of the site is within close proximity to sensitive land uses such as residential dwellings would also impede the suitability of the site for any mineral extraction given the buffer zones outlined by the JMWP.

b) Emerging Local Plan Update

The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and MDD local plans, is at Regulation 22 stage as it has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. As per paragraph 49 of the NPPF:

Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);

b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and

c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)

As a whole, the LPU is still given limited weight, despite its advance stage of preparation. This is owing to unresolved objections to a great number of the policies contained within it. However, those policies highlighted in yellow in the policy table earlier in this report are those that have received less objection and therefore are considered by Officers to individually hold moderate weight in the determination of this application. All the others hold limited weight. The policies that hold moderate weight will feed into/ be considered in their relevant sections in this report.

c) Housing Land supply

The borough currently does not have a 5 year housing land supply. Recent data shows the borough having a 2.5 year housing land supply as a result of previous over-delivery, rather than current under-delivery. Nevertheless, as a result of the shortfall, the borough's policies are 'out of date' in accordance with paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF (2024). Therefore, permission for development should be granted *"unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination"* (paragraph 11 d(ii) of the NPPF, 2024).

d) Loss of existing land use

Core strategy policy CP1 states that development should *"7) Avoid areas of best and most versatile agricultural land"*. BMV agricultural land is grades 1, 2 and 3a of the agricultural land classification.

The site is located within an existing agricultural unit, and the Council records show site constitutes grade 3 (a or b not known) best most versatile agricultural land ("BMV"), therefore the proposal has potential to result in the loss of BMV land.

Given the modest size of the application site at 0.96 hectares and configuration, it would mean the loss would likely have a negligible consequence for any crop growing enterprise. The site is understood to have been more recently used for grazing rather than arable farming. On this basis, it is not considered that this weighs significantly against the use of the site for any other purposes.

The loss of any BMV land conflicts with policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and Section 15 of the NPPF, but for the reasons identified above has limited weight in the overall planning balance considering the relatively diminutive size of the plot land.

e) Summary on principle of development

The site is located outside of settlement limits in the countryside. It fails to meet any of the specified exceptions for development outside of settlement. When turning to the overall aim of the policy, it would not result in settlement coalescence. When assessing as to whether it would maintain the quality of the environment, this will be considered in light of other material considerations with a final assessment being made at the end of this report. The site is considered a location that is adequately sustainable for up to 7 households and the loss of the existing land use is a policy conflict, albeit mitigated due to the relatively small size of the site.

Officers acknowledge the tilted balance is engaged, as per paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF and the judgement regarding whether the adverse impacts of granting permission significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits will be returned to in the overall planning balance.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on landscape and character and appearance of the area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy sets out general principles for development and states that development should be of an appropriate scale, activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design.

Policy TB21 of the MDD states that proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

RD1 of the Borough Design Guide states that new development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character.

The site is within the Haines Hill valued landscape according to the Wokingham Borough Council Valued Landscapes Assessment, September 2024 Topic Paper to support the preparation of the LPU. As not adopted, the Topic Paper can only hold limited weight.

The site is also located in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBLCA) Area C2 – ‘Hurst River Terrace’, a landscape of overall moderate quality and sensitivity, with a modest capacity for change.

The Landscape Strategy for LCA C2 is:

to maintain the landscape character of C2 LCA is to conserve and enhance the quiet rural and agricultural landscape with its scattered rural farmsteads and small red brick villages connected by narrow and rural lanes.

The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are;

- the open views overlooking the adjoining floodplain of the Loddon. There are opportunities to enhance the landscape through restoration and management of the hedgerows. Opportunities also exist to restore lost wetland and grassland habitats and reinstate woodland planting, which may mitigate the influence of the M4/A329 (M).

In terms of development, the aim of the Landscape Strategy is;

- to conserve the low-density pattern of settlement centred around Hurst and Whistley Green.

Each description of the character areas within the LCAs include ‘Valuable Landscape Attributes’ which for C2 are;

- **Peaceful and open character** of the undeveloped arable and pastoral landscape when removed from the intrusion of major roads to the south, which provides an escape in close proximity to the urban population.
- **Rural settlement pattern** of small villages with historic cores and farmsteads unified by the cohesive use of redbrick which provides a cultural record of the past and adds local distinctiveness.
- **A network of narrow rural lanes** with characteristic roadside ditches which contribute to scenic quality.

- **Small wetland habitats**, including drainage channels and numerous farm ponds which are valued for flora and fauna.
- **Gently undulating terrace landform provides open and clear views** to the wooded backdrop of the adjacent Loddon Valley.

Assessing the quality of the landscape

The WBC Tree and Landscape Officer has assessed the site and its surroundings against Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (2013):

- Landscape Condition
- Scenic Quality
- Rarity
- Representativeness
- Conservation Interest
- Conservation Value
- Perceptual Qualities

The Tree and Landscaping Officer considers the site surroundings demonstrate all of the qualities above:

- The **landscape condition** is moderate across the whole of the LCA however the physical landscape, rural settlement pattern and openness of the rural landscape is intact. The landscape around site is of a higher quality.
- There is **scenic quality** in views along Broadwater Lane to the east and west, of the backdrop the site, and land to the west of the site provide to the setting of the Area of Special Character, and importantly the views from Hogmoor Lane through the gap between Long Barn and Apple Tree Cottage which are important to the recreational routes from Hogmoor Lane such as PRow STNH9.
- The site and wider area of pastoral fields to the west, are **rare** in that they have Veteran trees identified on the ATI, located in the field boundary hedgerows which themselves are a rare feature, so as to elevate the rarity and landscape value of the site and its setting.
- The site and immediate setting is **representative** of the Valuable Landscape Attributes described in the C2 LCA.
- The **conservation** interest is represented by the listed buildings to the south and east, as well as the veteran and mature trees within and around the site.
- **Recreation value** – Hogmoor Lane in particular is a narrow country lane that leads to the wider countryside and recreational routes.
- The site and its immediate surroundings have a **perceptual quality** of timelessness and tranquillity.

It is clear from the descriptions in the C2 LCA, from the presence of several Veteran trees, mature and intact high quality hedgerows in combination with the views across the landscape from narrow and rural lanes, such as Hogmoor Lane and at Broadwater Lane, and the pastoral backdrop to the Area of Special Character, that the quality of the landscape features combined elevate the quality the surrounding landscape of the site above 'moderate'.

Therefore, whilst the overall C2 Landscape Character Area is described as being of moderate quality, the part of the Landscape Character Area that contains the site and its immediate surroundings are considered to be of higher quality.

It should be noted that the applicant has not provided a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for consideration under this application.

Assessment of proposals on the landscape and surrounding area

As described above, the landscape surrounding the site is considered a higher quality part of the C2 LCA. As a result, proposed development has to have an enhanced emphasis in suitably responding to surroundings.

Given the limitations of what can be considered under a PiP application, it must follow that the proposed layout identified in the Proposed Site Plan is for indicative purposes only, although this is not expressly annotated on the plan itself. Given the somewhat unusual shape of the site and the fact that only a singular access is proposed, Officers consider that there is a reasonable degree of confidence that an access road identical or similar to that of that shown on the indicative layout will be required.

Properties are indicatively shown as being arranged in a linear form which is reflective of the immediate surroundings on Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane. Whilst arranged in a linear form, they would not operate in such a way that is reflective of surroundings, most notably because of the internal access road, which as discussed above, will be required to be incorporated into any layout due to the singular access point.

The proposed layout creates an access loop between the two areas of development within the site. The road is a convoluted and excessive development in the countryside that has a greater impact on the landscape than is warranted to serve a maximum of 4 dwellings.

This internal road is particularly at odds with the pattern and grain of development and gives the appearance that those dwellings on Hogmoor Lane will be 'shoehorned' into the site. The presence of 4 dwellings on Hogmoor Lane would represent a denser development than found elsewhere on Hogmoor Lane, where properties are generally set in spacious plots. For example, on the eastern side of Hogmoor Lane (opposite the application site), density equates to approx 4 dph. To the west of Hogmoor Lane (application site side), it is acknowledged dwelling density is higher towards the northern end. However, the openness/ visual break in the landscape that the application site provides helps alleviate the perception of this, and when looking at the character and density of Hogmoor Lane as a whole. The proposal, with 4 dwellings on the Hogmoor Lane side, would equate to a density of approx 13 dph. This, combined with the higher density development already to the north (approx 10 dph), would substantially imbalance the density and built form of east and west of Hogmoor Lane, and would result in a stark change to the perception of overall low density and spaciousness on Hogmoor Lane. Whilst it is appreciated that fewer than 7 dwellings could be provided on this site (as a minimum of 5, maximum have been applied for), and therefore fewer than 4 could be provided on Hogmoor Lane, Officers have to be

satisfied that the maximum amount applied for can be accommodated, which is not the case.

When viewed from Hogmoor Lane, these four dwellings would appear inaccessible and alien in their setting along this rural road/track. There would be no obvious perception of how pedestrian, or vehicle, access is provided to these units. This highlights that the proposal is poorly designed in this respect as it would create a development that fails to provide a legible integration within the context of the existing surrounding built form.

The higher density, and internal road arrangement, gives the scheme an 'estate' appearance rather than a 'loose village' appearance, as referenced in the Borough Design Guide (2012) which is dominated by landscape, spaciousness and less enclosed streets where landscape and the rural hinterland has an opportunity to penetrate the village with trees and vegetation. The site setting as existing is typical of this pattern, with open fields and views to the east, west and north-east of the site. The layout is in an excessively urban form, and obstructs important views across the landscape, through the site from Hogmoor Lane to the Veteran trees lining the pasture fields behind Broadwater Lane.

Overall the proposed location and amount of development would result in a scheme that would be harmfully out of keeping with the surrounding landscape and character and would result in an urbanisation of the area.

As such, by reason of its location and amount of development, the proposal would conflict with policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, TB21 of the MDD and Borough Design Guide and the aims and strategy of the C2 LCA.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on heritage assets:

Policy TB24 of the MDD states that *"The Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:... a) Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views"*

The following heritage assets have been identified in the vicinity of the site:

Hogmoor Lane

Ward Cross House– grade II listed building.
Old Posting House – grade II listed building.

Broadwater Lane

Elder Cottage– grade II listed building.
Parkers Cottage – grade II listed building.
Bower Cottage – grade II listed building.
Buttercups – grade II listed building

Hurst Area of Special Character – LPA classification (non-designated heritage asset)

Under the NPPF (2024) and in the Council's Local Plan policies, Listed Buildings are classed as designated heritage assets whilst the Council identified Areas of Special Character and buildings as non-designated heritage assets.

The application site does not contain any designated heritage assets (Listed Buildings), and therefore the proposal will not have a physical direct impact on these assets. However, the development would have an impact to varying extents on the setting of nearby listed buildings and how they are perceived.

Within the appeal decision for application 240583, the Inspector concluded the following levels of harm to the settings of nearby Listed Buildings:

Buttercups: *Less than substantial to the lower end as given the development would be set further back at this end of the site*

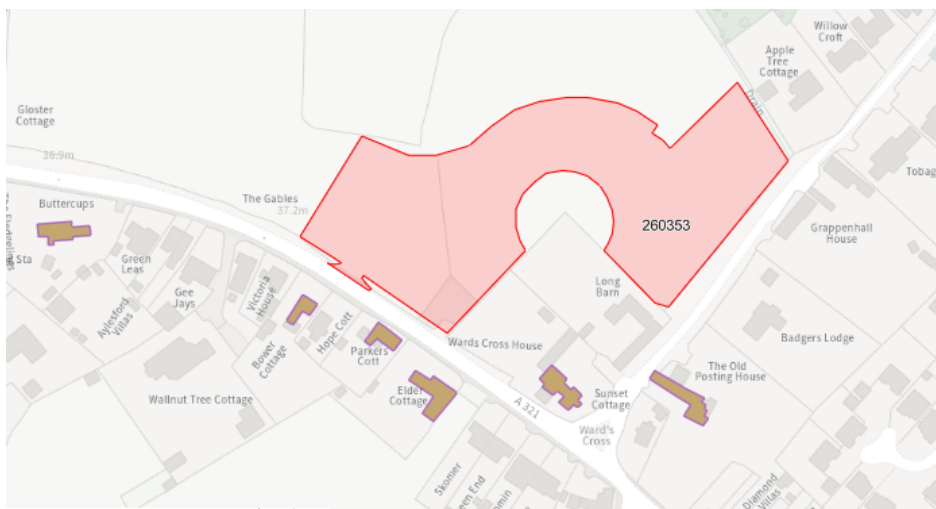
Bower Cottage: *Less than substantial to the higher end as asset is fully opposite the appeal site*

Parkers Cottage: *Less than substantial to the higher end as asset is fully opposite the appeal site*

Elder Cottage: *Less than substantial to the lower end given its positioning slightly further along on Broadwater Lane not fully fronting the site.*

Due to the amended site location under this application compared to the previous appeal, some designated heritage assets that were not previously considered now need to form part of this assessment. These are: Wards Cross House and The Old Posting House (both on Hogmoor Lane).

Below is the site (in red) in the context of the aforementioned Listed Buildings (in brown):



Assessment:

Upon consultation with the WBC Built Heritage Officer, it was concluded that as a result of the revised site location, and a separation distance of 90m, there would be no harm

arising in relation 'Buttercups'. Likewise no explicit harm to the setting of The Old Posting House or non-designated heritage asset Munfin House was identified by the Built Heritage Officer.

Attention therefore turns to the other referenced designed heritage assets: Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage, Elder Cottage and Wards Cross House.

Given this proposal relates to a portion of the same land as the previous appeal site, conclusions made in the Inspector's decision are of relevance to this new scheme.

Impact on Heritage assets on Broadwater Lane (Parkers Cottage, Bower Cottage and Elder Cottage)

The part of the application site on Broadwater Lane is separated from Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage and Elder Cottage by Broadwater Lane. The Inspector had due regard to the separation of the previous site with heritage assets on Broadwater Lane and also noted that *"the setting of the listed buildings has suffered some erosion through the introduction of more modern infill development on this side of Broadwater Lane"* (p.24).

Notwithstanding this, in para 25 of the Inspector's decision, it states that *"from Broadwater Lane, these buildings are currently experienced and perceived within a largely quiet, open and rural environment because of the character and appearance of the appeal site. There is nothing to indicate any history of development on the appeal site and it is likely that these buildings will have always been set against that backdrop. This relationship can be appreciated both from within the appeal site and from Broadwater Lane."*

Historic England guidance on the setting of Heritage Assets advises that settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to significance (Historic England, The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) p4.).

With the revised application site under this application, it would still result in a degradation of the *"largely quiet, open and rural environment"* that these three listed buildings have always been set against. Whilst the erosion of the backdrop has been reduced through the retention of open land to the west, this proposal would still see development that would be contained in an area of sensitivity; directly opposite 2 x listed buildings (Bower Cottage & Parkers Cottage). The direct relationship between the Listed Buildings and the site was the reason for the high level of identified harm. This has not changed as a result of the proposal, despite dwellings now being set further back and proposed to be behind planting. The Inspector explicitly stated, in para 27:

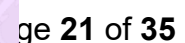
That positive contribution [that the former appeal site/ the portion of the current application site fronting Broadwater Lane makes] would be significantly undermined through increased noise and activity on the site as well as the physical presence of nine well sized houses. This would be the case even if some dwellings were to be set back from Broadwater Lane and even if a scheme of landscaping were to be implemented. (author emphasis)

The relationship with Elder Cottage also remains unchanged, albeit the proposal would not be fully opposite this heritage asset. Once again, the set back of dwellings and planting are not considered to overcome the harm arising to the setting of this asset.

Impact on heritage assets on Hogmoor Lane (Wards Cross House/ Hunters Lodge)

As well as the physical presence of built form visually affecting the backdrop of the heritage assets, Officers are aware, and the Inspector highlighted that, general activity and potential aural disturbance are also considerations in the setting of a heritage assets. This is referenced in the 'The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)'. With this scheme being both closer to western boundary to Ward Cross House and now extending around to Hogmoor Lane, it is believed in doing so the scheme will have an adverse impact to the setting of that designated heritage asset to a higher degree than the previous scheme. The level of harm attributed to this asset is once again less than substantial to the higher end of the spectrum.

The site is adjacent to the Village Centre (Hurst) AoSC, with the access on the boundary. Policy TB26 of the MDD states *“Planning permission will only be granted for proposals to or affecting Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character where they demonstrate that they retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the building or area and its setting”*.



The site (red) in context of part of the Hurst AoSC (purple)

One of the primary topics of discussion in the previously refused and appealed decision was the proposal's impact on the AoSC. Again, noting the application site is not identical to the refused scheme, the Inspector's comments on this matter will have to be applied where appropriate.

Paragraph 32 of the Inspector's decision is of note which highlights elements of significance of the AoSC. The Inspector stated: *"Its significance in part sits with its buildings which are of a variety of ages, designs and materials including buildings and features that are designated and non-designated heritage assets in their own rights"*.

The Inspector upheld harm to the AoSC when dismissing the appeal. However, the main reason for this was the degradation to vegetation on the site boundary with Broadwater Lane, particularly because of the harm to 2 x veteran trees. The Inspector concluded that the 2 x veteran trees make a *"positive contribution to the significance of the AoSC as a backdrop which frames the buildings within it"* (para. 33 of Inspector's appeal decision).

The harm to those trees was the only reason for why the Inspector resisted the previous application in AoSC grounds.

As will be discussed later in this report, the application site is now situated away from the 2 x veteran trees and therefore this is no longer a constraint of development. It is acknowledged that a portion of hedgerow and 2 x trees from the Broadwater Lane boundary will be removed to facilitate the access, however the Inspector appeared to focus on the harm the loss of mature/ high quality (veteran trees) would have on the boundary, rather than the loss of all vegetation on this boundary. As such, whilst this scheme would see the loss of some vegetation, that to be removed is of a lesser importance in terms of its quality and therefore its value to the landscape.

The WBC Built Heritage Officer referred to the diminished physical/ visual gap on the northside of Broadwater Lane, however acknowledged this would be less impactful than the previous scheme. Notwithstanding this, as discussed above, the loss of the 'gap' in the context of the AoSC was not where the Inspector identified harm. As such, there is no evidence that would allow Officers to arrive at different conclusion on this matter.

However, this proposal would see a more concentrated development, particularly around Ward Cross House and, as previously discussed, would be within the setting of numerous listed buildings. It would also see the infilling of land on Hogmoor Lane was not considered under the previous application, as this element is new to this scheme and must now be considered.

Looking at Topic Papers relating to the AoSC, it is noted that a feature of the AoSC is that development has a largely linear layout. According to the indicative site layout, the proposal would see linear positioning of dwellings down both Broadwater and Hogmoor Lanes. However, the connecting internal site road would mean that the site would not operate in a linear fashion. Occupiers of the dwellings on Hogmoor Lane would effectively be within their own estate which would be an out of keeping, urban arrangement. Given this site abuts two boundaries of the AoSC, it would be expected that an arrangement should be reflective or at least transitional with the adjoining AoSC. Instead, it would be a stark, overly urban contrast and would bring with it significant activity in the form of regular vehicle movements to serve the proposed properties fronting Hogmoor Lane. This has been discussed previously earlier in this report in respect of impact on the landscape/ character of the area and harm identified. This harm to the landscape/ character of the area would therefore also extend to the setting of the AoSC.

The NPPF only uses the terms substantial and less than substantial harm with respect to designated heritage assets rather than non-designated heritage assets, and therefore this terminology cannot be used here. However, Officers would attribute moderate to high harm to the non-designated heritage asset for the reason above.

Impact on Archaeology

Policy TB25 of the MDD states “Where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential or an area which is likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ. Where this is not practical, applicants shall provide for excavation, recording and archiving of the remains”.

Upon consultation with Berkshire Archaeology it was concluded that the site is within an area of archaeological potential, particularly for, but not limited to, Prehistoric and Medieval remains. However, the potential impacts of the development can be mitigated through a programme of archaeological work. This would have been secured via condition at TDC stage.

Heritage Balance

Within their heritage statement, the applicant has helpfully provided a break down of the level of harm attributed to each of the designated heritage assets:

Asset	Impact identified by PINS - 2024 scheme	Impact identified by assessment of 2026 scheme	Comments
Buttercups (GII listed)	LTS harm at lower end of scale	No harm	Development moved away from and out of sightline of this property, no effect on setting.
Bower Cottage (GII listed)	LTS harm at higher end of scale	LTS harm at lower end of scale	Roadside dwellings omitted from scheme and development set deeply back into site behind natural landscaping/planting.
Parkers Cottage (GII listed)	LTS harm at higher end of scale	LTS harm at lower end of scale	Roadside dwellings omitted from scheme and development set deeply back into site behind natural landscaping/planting.
Elder Cottage (GII listed)	LTS harm at lower end of scale	No harm	Roadside dwellings omitted from scheme

			landscaping/planting.
Ward's Cross House (GII listed)	No harm	No harm	
Old Posting House	No harm	No harm	
Area of Special Character (NDHA)	Moderate harm	No harm	Majority of field north of Broadwater Lane omitted from site; boundary vegetation retained and supplemented; no risk to trees T14 & T16.
Grappenhall/Munfin House (NDHA)	N/A	No harm	

The Council's summary on the harm is below, with comments as to why the revisions presented by the applicant are suitable to downgrade this level of harm to that they present:

Asset	Impact of Assessment of current scheme	Why the LPA's view differs from applicants
Buttercups	No harm	Agree with applicant as development now set suitably away from this asset
Bower Cottage	Less than substantial harm to high end of spectrum	Development being set back with landscaping is does not overcome concerns raised by Inspector (refer to para 27 of Inspector's appeal decision)
Parkers Cottage	Less than substantial harm to high end of spectrum	Development being set back with landscaping is does not overcome concerns raised by Inspector (refer to para 27 of Inspector's appeal decision)
Elder Cottage	Less than substantial harm to lower end of spectrum	Development being set back with landscaping is does not overcome concerns raised by Inspector (refer to para 27 of Inspector's appeal decision)
Wards Cross House	Less than substantial harm to high end of spectrum	Development brought closer to this asset/ wraps around the asset

Old Posting House	No harm	Agree with applicant as development set suitably away from this asset
Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character	Moderate to high harm	Inspector's concerns regarding AoSC overcome, however this scheme introduces new harm to the AoSC by way of the non linear operation of the site

Despite the difference in some conclusions with respect to the level of harm, it is agreed between the Council and the applicant that less than substantial harm does arise to heritage assets. As such, paragraphs 215 the NPPF come into play.

Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The public benefits of this scheme are very similar to that of the previous scheme. These are namely the provision of up to 7 dwellings in a suitably sustainable location which will contribute towards the housing stock for the borough. Future occupiers of the dwellings would contribute towards the local economy and in the short term, there would be the creation of jobs during the construction phase. There is the possibility of environmental benefits at a future technical details consent stage, albeit at the time of writing these are not known and cannot be secured via this initial PiP stage.

However, the proposal will result in less than substantial harm to a number of separate heritage assets, some of which to the higher end of the spectrum. As such, the harm that would arise overall is elevated due to multiple individual assets being affected. Given this cumulative impact, and the relatively modest and limited public benefits, these are not considered to outweigh the harm.

Paragraph 216 of the NPPF is also applicable with respect to the AoSC, of which is a non-designated heritage asset. Para 216 requires that *'in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset'*.

The scale of harm to the AoSC as a result of the proposal is considered to be moderate to high with the notable feature of the AoSC being its linear layout, as previously mentioned and also discussed in the landscape/ character of the area section of this report. By reason of the amount of development, and the shape of the site, it will result in an arrangement that in operation, will be at odds with linear development in the vicinity.

The proposal therefore conflicts with policies TB24 and TB26 of the MDD which seek to conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets and their settings. This scheme would not meet the lower threshold of at least conserving the setting of these assets.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on neighbouring amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development shall be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users. This is echoed by DH2 of the LPU.

From the indicative layout, there would be an approx. 40m between properties facing Boradwater Lane and those opposite on the other side of Broadwater Lane. This is in excess of the Borough Design Guide SPD which states there should be minimum 10m front-front relationship across the street.

Regarding the relationship with properties on Hogmoor Lane, the proposed dwellings (4-7) would indicatively be relatively in line with adjacent neighbours either side and with good separation off the boundaries.

As such, in principle, Officers are confident that the location and amount of development could be accommodated in principle without detrimentally affecting neighbours. The final layout would be provided at TDC stage where a more in-depth assessment on neighbouring amenity would occur.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to flood risk:

Policy CC09 of the MDD states that all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.

It is noted that a significant amount of third party representations have cited flood risk as an objection to the proposal and have noted flooding locally.

According to the Environment Agency's flood risk map for planning, the application site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is defined as the areas of lowest risk of flooding. However, it is noted that the site is within an area that experiences very high groundwater levels.

According to the PPG, Table 2: Flood risk vulnerability and flood zone 'incompatibility' outlies that 'More Vulnerable' development (which buildings used for dwellinghouses are as per Annex 3 of the NPPF (2024), Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification) is compatible in Flood Zone 1 without the requirement of a sequential or exception test. Development should aim to be located in areas of low flood risk, and as such, sequentially there is not a lower or more suitable flood zone for this residential development to be situated in.

Notwithstanding that, WBC Drainage Officers have acknowledged that the area experiences very high groundwater levels and so the applicant will need to further

demonstrate that the development can be carried out without increasing flood risk on or off site. This would be required at technical details consent stage, at which point any appropriate mitigation will also be required and could be secured.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the highway network:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should not lead to highway problems, along with providing for sustainable forms of transport.

Policy CC07 states that sufficient parking shall be provided as part of development proposals.

WBC Highways did not raise any comments or concerns regarding the location or amount of development on the highway network, in principle. Highway considerations would also be reviewed at TDC stage once the layout finalised.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on the natural environment (trees and ecology)

Policy CC03 of the MDD states that development shall protect existing trees and hedges and incorporate high quality landscaping.

Trees

As part of the indicative layout, a 20m section of boundary vegetation (G7) and 2 dead Sycamore (32 and 33) will be removed to facilitate the entrance. The Sycamores are protected by TPO 1788/2021. These are category U and C.

It should be noted that the proposed site location is now suitably positioned away from 2 x veteran trees on Broadwater Lane site which were a previous constraint for development under the 2024 refused scheme. Retained trees have been provided with adequate buffer zones under this application.

Notwithstanding this, WBC Trees & Landscaping have raised concern that the loss of these 2 x trees and portion of hedge will have a significant adverse impact on the landscape character of Broadwater Lane, the Green Route and change it to an urban character which cannot be mitigated in the short term. However, on balance, in light of the two TPO trees being removed being dead, that these play an integral part in the appearance of the area or will continue to do so in the long term. The loss of the hedge is acknowledged to be unfortunate, however it is a non-protected hedge of low classification. As such there are not substantial tree constraints to conclude that in principle, development could not satisfactorily be accommodated in relation to trees. Replacement planting would be secured and considered at TDC stage.

Ecology

The submitted covering letter indicates previous ecological survey work undertaken for the earlier appealed application. Those surveys identified the site supports a population of bats of county-level importance, with nine species recorded and two trees (T014 and

T016) containing features with potential to support a maternity roost; however, the proposal retains these trees and allows for appropriate veteran buffer zones, with detailed mitigation and survey requirements to be addressed at the TDC stage. Although the site lies within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone, the scale and nature of the proposed development do not trigger consultation with Natural England. On this basis, no ecological constraints have been identified that would prevent the site being considered suitable for development in principle and as such no objection has been raised by WBC Ecology.

In terms of Great Crested Newts specifically, NatureSpace have been consulted and advise that the site falls within the amber impact zone for great crested newts. There are 8 ponds within 500m of the development proposal. The closest of these is 280m to the northeast of the site boundary and there are recent records (2024) of great crested newt (GCN) within 500m of the site boundary. NatureSpace were therefore not satisfied that the applicant has adequately demonstrated that there will be no impact to great crested newts and/or their habitat as a result of the development being approved. However, Officers consider that these further ecological surveys could be requested at TDC stage. Given the site is an amber zone (so not the highest risk zone), it is not considered that Great Crested Newts present a fundamental constraint to resist permission in principle.

Planning Balance/ Conclusion:

The most important policies for determining the application are out of date by virtue of The absence of a 5 year housing land supply. Paragraph 11 of the Framework therefore states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

The proposal would provide several material benefits that weigh in favour of the application. The provision of new housing weighs substantially in favour of the scheme and there would be associated economic benefits as a result of the new population and during the construction phase, albeit the latter would be a short term benefit.

The benefits of the scheme are not dissimilar to those of the previous scheme, albeit the number of dwellings has since decreased from 9 to a maximum of 7. Therefore, although the provision of housing holds substantial weight, the number of units will be less, meaning the benefit of the scheme as a whole towards the borough's housing stock will also be proportionately less compared to the previous scheme. Given the appeal was dismissed, the benefits of 9 dwellings were not considered to outweigh harms.

Set against the benefits is the harm to the setting of multiple designated heritage assets as well as a non-designated heritage asset owing to the location of the proposed development. The level of harm to such assets largely remains unchanged to the previously appealed scheme. When performing the heritage balance (which is a straight, untilted balance), the harm was considered to outweigh the public benefits.

There has also been identified harm in landscape terms, and the site arrangement/ site shape means that the amount of development cannot be suitably accommodated or

integrated into the established character of the area and would conflict with qualities attributed to the landscape.

Lastly, the proposal is in conflict with the spatial strategy of the borough, being located outside of settlement limits in the Wokingham countryside. As discussed earlier in the report, the fact the proposal does not meet one of the normal exceptions for development is not automatic grounds to resist an application. Rather it has to be assessed as to whether the proposal would conflict with the overarching aims and intent of the policy. It was discussed that the proposal would not result in the overarching aim of preventing settlement coalescence, but the second overarching aim is to maintain the quality of the environment. It was discussed that this is a multi-faceted approach that factors in an array of material considerations. Taking these on board, Officers do not consider the proposal would maintain the quality of the environment to a suitable degree both in a historic and visual sense, owing to the conflict with heritage and landscape policies. As such, the proposal also fails to comply with Policy CP11 as it conflicts with this overarching aim.

Turning back to the matters which can be considered under a Permission in Principle application (location, land use and amount of development), the location of the development conflicts with the spatial strategy and will harm the setting of heritage assets. The location and amount of development has not been demonstrated to be compatible with the landscape/ surrounding area, with particular reference to the inevitable configuration of the site that will be required (i.e.. long access road linking two parcels of land)

This submission fails to suitably overcome some of the matters raised by the planning Inspector under application 240583. However, as assessed above, the change in site area also brings in new considerations and assessment the level of harm for which is comparable, or even greater than, that attributed to the appeal scheme.

When applying paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF, the harm arising as a result of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits and therefore the recommendation is to refuse permission in principle.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

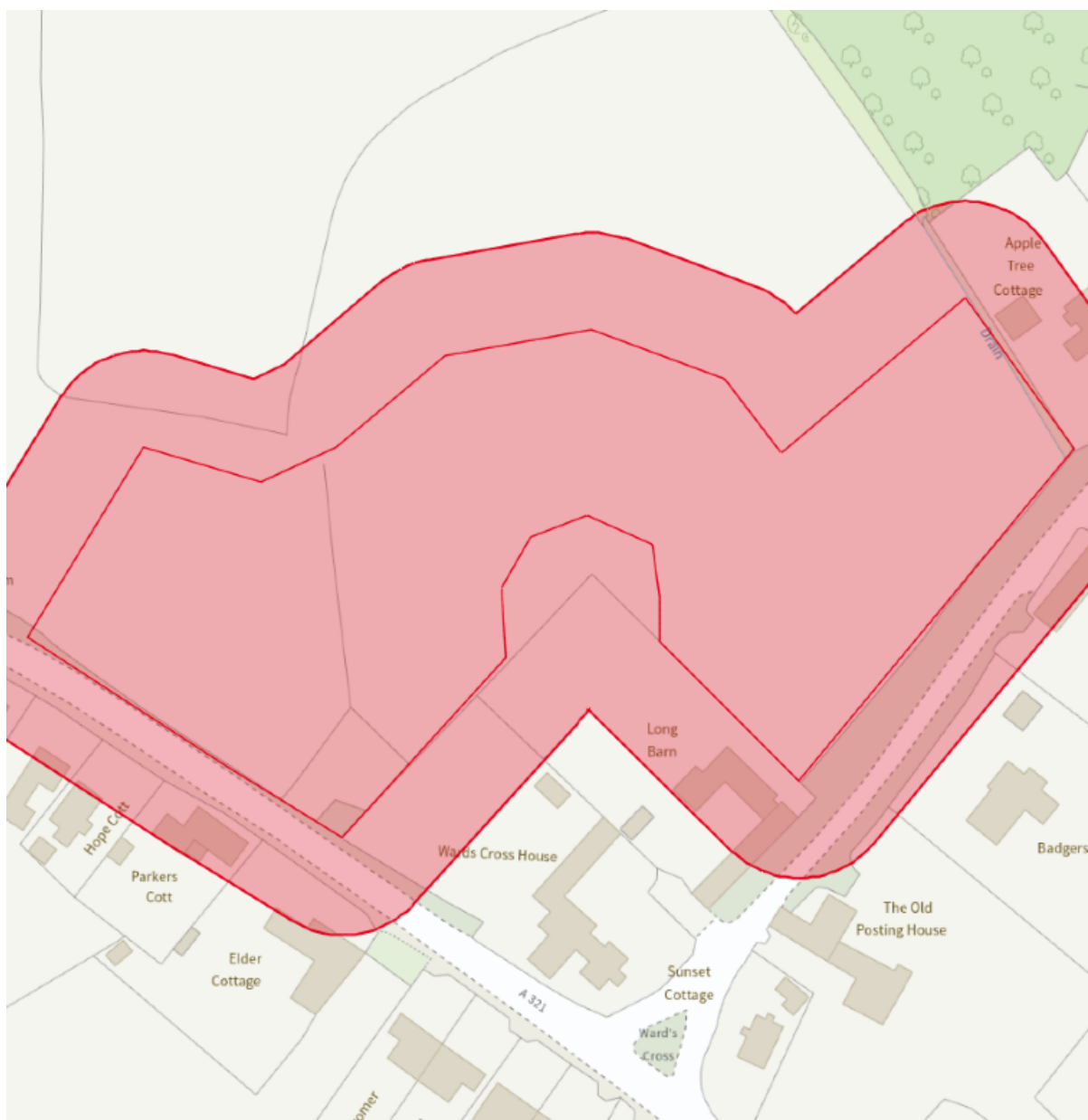
In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences,

issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refuse for the following reasons: 1. The proposal, by virtue of its location, represents unacceptable unplanned development outside of development limits within the designated countryside which is contrary to the spatial objectives of the development plan. This is contrary to policies CP1, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy along with the NPPF. 2. The proposal, by virtue of its location and amount of development, would fail to suitably assimilate into the established landscape and character of the surrounding area, and would fail to retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character. This is contrary to policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and policies TB21 and TB26 of the MDD, along with the Wokingham Council Borough Design Guide SPD (2012), Landscape Character Area Assessment (2019) and NPPF. 3. The proposal, by virtue of its location, would fail to conserve or enhance the setting of four designated heritage assets in the form of Grade II Listed Buildings (Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage, Elder Cottage and Wards Cross House). This is contrary to policy TB24 of the MDD and the NPPF.
Date:	30 March 2026
Earliest date for decision:	7 March 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	30.03.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS



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No legend

Affordable Housing Thresholds | Total count: 4

#	NAME
1	Outside Development Locations
2	Within Modest or Limited Development Locations
3	Within Modest or Limited Development Locations
4	Within All Development Locations

Scale and Location of Development Proposals | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Countryside	Countryside
2	Limited Development Locations	Hurst

Special Character Areas | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	
1	Area of Special Character	Village Centre, Hurst	
Green Infrastructure Routes Consultation Zone Total count: 1			
#	FEATURE_TYPE		
1	Green Route Enhancement Areas		
Areas of Search for Sand and Gravel Total count: 1			
#	OBJECTID	OBJECTID_1	
1	108	108	
Mineral Safeguarding Areas Total count: 3			
#	Type	SubType	
1	Soft Sand	Construction sand: Palaeogene: Thanet Sand Formation, Lambeth Gr Formation, London Clay Formation	
2	Sharp Sand and Gravel	River Terrace deposits	
3	Soft Sand	Construction sand: Palaeogene: Thanet Sand Formation, Lambeth Gr Formation, London Clay Formation	
Major Nuclear Sites Consultation Zone Total count: 1			
#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	PLANNING_NOTE
1	Consultation Zone - Major Nuclear Site	AWE: Special Case Zone	ONR also requests to be consulted on planning irrespective of distance from nuclear sites, for s Developments that either introduce a new haza the existing external hazards posed to nuclear
Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone Total count: 1			
#	Height Band	Wind Turbine	A
1	All works exceeding 150 metres (492.1 feet)	YES	Y
Submitted Sites Live Total count: 1			
#	SITE_REF	LUPP	ADDRESS
1	5HU030	Housing (C3 Planning Use Class).	Land north-west of Hogmoor L
EA Groundwater Zones Total count: 1			
#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Groundwater Consultation Zones	Groundwater Consultation Zone 3	Environment Agency (only if applicat contaminated land) – see separate she consult the Environment Agency
Historic Flood Extent Total count: 1			
#	FEATURE_TYPE		FEATURE_NAME
1	Environment Agency Historic Flood Outline		Historic Flood Map
Water Network Watercourse Consultation Zone Total count: 1			
#	watercourseName		form
1	No data		inlandRiver

Risk of Flooding from Surface Water | Total count: 6

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 100 year risk exte
2	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk ext
3	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk ext
4	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk ext
5	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk ext
6	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk ext

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability | Total count: 5

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	VI598	Ecology Office Infrastructure Te
2	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	VJ598	Ecology Office Infrastructure Te
3	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	VO598	Ecology Office Infrastructure Te
4	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	VR593	Ecology Office Infrastructure Te
5	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	VR595	Ecology Office Infrastructure Te

Badger Consultation Zones | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Badger Sett Consultation Zone	100 Metre Consultation Zone	Ecology Officer - Green Team
2	Badger Sett Consultation Zone	100 Metre Consultation Zone	Ecology Officer - Green Team

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Green	Consult NatureSpace for Major developme
2	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Amber	For Householder applications check HH La NatureSpace for all other types of develop

SSSI Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	IRZURL
1	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0101000322302-es=&location=479921,1%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	Name
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1	Landscape Character Assessment 2019	Hurst River Terrace
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Tree Preservation Orders Served or Confirmed | Total count: 5

#	TPO_REFERENCE	TPO_TYPE	RECORD_STATUS
1	TPO-1788-2021	Single	Confirmed
2	TPO-1788-2021	Single	Confirmed
3	TPO-1788-2021	Single	Confirmed
4	TPO-1788-2021	Single	Confirmed
5	TPO-1788-2021	Single	Confirmed

Listed Buildings Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	LIST_ENTRY	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	1136017	PARKERS COTTAGE	Conservation Architect and Building Contr

Wards | Total count: 1

#	Name of area	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Twyford, Ruscombe & Hurst Ward	0 m

Parishes | Total count: 1

#	Name of area	Closest Approximate Distance
1	St. Nicholas, Hurst CP	0 m