

Mr Stuart Gregory
2 Gloster Cottage
Whistley Green
READING
Berkshire
RG10 0DY

10 Sept 2024

Planning application 242067 – Land between Lodge Road and Tape Lane RG10 0EG

Dear Wokingham Planning Team

I object to the reference application and ask for it to be refused by WBC.

Policy Adherence

This proposal is for an unacceptably high density (25 dph) estate on currently designated countryside which falls outside of the development limit of Hurst (CP11), unless there has been a change to WBC policy of which I am unaware. There is the potential for a surge of developer applications impacting the Borough under the formulating strategy of the Labour government. It is important for WBC to robustly follow their policy, and not set unusual precedents, in order to maintain the transparency of process, understanding of the individual and trust of the parishes. This proposal must be refused to maintain the rigour of existing CP11 policy.

Sustainable Growth and Climate Change

Whilst the site is outside the agreed zones for development, this site is within the Defra/Natural England habitat network expansion zone. Any measures to increase bio-diversity and re-wild areas of our Parish are must-do. It is a non-negotiable contract with future citizens to act now to preserve and protect our environment and to reduce the severity of the coming climate change. Growth and developments are important, but it is now more important to ask ourselves what sort of growth and development we want. Unsustainable growth that positively reduces bio-diversity, and more importantly re-wilding, is the only acceptable answer. This proposal has dishonest, greenwashed benefits that are essentially manufacturing compartments of green in order to lead to a weighted favour on benefits versus harms.

Village Character

The proposal significantly erodes the needed distinction between the settlements of Whistley Green and Hurst, which would visually coalesce. The scale of this development is unprecedented and completely out of keeping with character of village, leading to a permanent urbanised feel for Hurst. Furthermore, the land is a recognised Countryside area and is a key character for the village, evidencing Hurst's heritage of open spaces, equestrian sports and single-lane quiet roads. The proposal should be refused due to its inherent urbanisation of the village.

Transport for Schools

It is our family experience that there is not capacity at the Twyford Schools. This capacity requirement is a key assumption within the proposal. As residents of Whistley Green our eldest child was directed to a place at St Crispins, Wokingham. This was not elective as her Piggott year group was full. We are now in the situation that WBC provide a taxi for her travel to St Crispins due to the recognised unsuitability of the 128/129 bus timetable to meet school timings in Wokingham. The initiative within the proposal for a limited access private service towards Twyford would not address similar occurrences of non-elective placements in Wokingham. Clearly, the consequence would be to create expense on WBC transport budgets. I would urge a more responsible policy of public transport investment, with new routes leading to a greater Parish uptake of the current Borough-wide bus services, rather than adding new private fleet-schedules as a distraction.

Issues with Assumed Third Party Collaboration

WBC should reserve judgement on the weight of benefit whilst so many Proposal contributions are conditional on a wide variety of third party permissions. Third parties can only be assumed to act in their self-interest and the extent of their support, or time taken to secure their compliance, is fully unknown. It is not safe to approve this proposal with so many of these unknowns, which are advertised ambitiously as benefits.

Cycle Lane

In my opinion, as a very regular cycle commuter from Hurst to Twyford train station, for a cycle lane to be effective there must be a physical barrier separating the cyclist from the road. An Advisory Cycle Lane is only for visibility purposes, carries no legal weight and according to a 2018 study by TFL

[\[https://findingspress.org/article/18226-cycling-injury-risk-in-london-impacts-of-road-characteristics-and-infrastructure\]](https://findingspress.org/article/18226-cycling-injury-risk-in-london-impacts-of-road-characteristics-and-infrastructure), accessed 10 Sep 2024] increases the risk of cyclist casualties. In addition the perceived width of the available carriageway is reduced, which could well expose the cyclist to more dangerous driving practices. The cycle lane is not an obvious benefit.

Yours faithfully

Stuart Gregory

Hurst and Whistley Green resident since 2005