

LAND NORTH-EAST OF BROADWATER LANE, HURST, BERKSHIRE

Appeal Statement



FORUM
Heritage
Services

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BROADWATER LANE,
HURST, BERKSHIRE**

Appeal Statement

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June 2026

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Appeal Statement (May 2026)

Executive Summary

A Permission in Principle (PiP) application for five to seven dwellings was refused by Wokingham Borough Council, partly on the basis of harm to the significance of four nearby Grade II listed buildings through development within their settings. This follows the appeal dismissal for a larger scheme for nine homes with a different layout within a larger area facing Broadwater Lane than the PiP application.

Setting is defined by the NPPF as ‘The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced’.

Historic England guidance states the importance of setting ‘*lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate that significance*’.

The PiP application was supported by a thorough description and assessment of the importance of the settings of the listed buildings prepared by Asset Heritage Consulting (AHC) in-line with the Historic England guidance of assessing the importance of setting.

Forum Heritage has been commissioned to review the impact of the proposals and provide a second informed decision. This appeal statement has been prepared by Bob Edwards BSc (Hons) PG Dip IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services (FHS). I have over 30 years’ experience working with the historic environment including as a Principal Conservation Officer at Hampshire County Council before founding Form Heritage Services in 2002. FHS has considerable experience in undertaking conservation area appraisals and character studies for local authorities.

From both the AHC assessment prepared as part of the application and, this additional assessment undertaken by FHS, it is clear that the area of the proposed development lies within the wider setting of the four listed buildings. However, in terms of the ability to experience the listed buildings or to understand and appreciate their significance, the site makes a minimal contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of the designated heritage assets.

The main element of the Council's objection relates to the site being largely unaltered since the listed buildings were constructed and so represents part of the original settings of the listed buildings. Thus, the Council claims the site strongly contributes to the significance of the listed buildings. Whilst some contribution to significance is accepted, the claim that the field in question makes a substantial contribution to significance when considered in reality is challenged. The limited contribution to significance means that for two listed buildings that face into the site: Bower Cottage and Parkers Cottage, the harm can reasonably be described as at the lower end of less than substantial. For Elder Cottage, which does not face the site, there is no harm to significance. Wards Cross House is strongly detached from the area of the proposed development by its orientation, modern development to the rear and trees within the extended curtilage of the house, and there will be no harm to its significance.

The AHC report concluded that there was a low level of less than substantial harm to Bower Cottage and Parkers Cottage, reduced from the previous Inspector's conclusion of a high level of less than substantial harm due to amendments, principally the reduction in numbers of houses facing Broadwater Lane, and setting the houses further back in the site. The Inspector had clearly stated that houses set further back caused less harm (DL para 29 re: Buttercups).

In response to the PiP application, the Council has not adjusted the level of harm it finds for Bower Cottage and Parkers Cottage following the previous Inspector's views. Additionally, whilst no harm was found in relation to Ward Cross House in the previous appeal, the Council now finds harm at the upper end of less than substantial as the illustrative plan shows the nearest house being closer to the western boundary of the listed building. As this is a PiP application, there is opportunity to amend the positioning to match that in the dismissed appeal where there was no harm found. Where there is a possibility of a minor amendment, the position of a building does not warrant a reason for refusal

Bower Cottage, Elder Cottage, and Wards Cross House have very tall roadside boundaries that substantially screen these buildings from view from the public realm, and in the case of Bower Cottage and Elder Cottage, block most of the visual relationship between the listed buildings and the site at ground level with walls and hedging.

The previous Inspector was concerned about increased noise and activity harming the site's positive contribution to the setting of listed buildings. This appeal shows a much-reduced development on Broadwater Lane of only two or three homes from Broadwater Lane and a single means of access set back which will not significantly alter noise or activity levels.

Enhanced planting to the roadside boundary and within the site should be considered as a material aspect of the proposed development which offers some mitigation to the change in use of the land.

The remainder of the site to the north-eastern fronting Hogmoor Lane has no impact on designated heritage assets.

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Appeal Statement (May 2026)

**Bob Edwards BSc (Hons) PG Dip IHBC MCIfA
Director, Forum Heritage Services**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Shorewood Homes applied for Permission in Principle (PiP) for five to seven houses on land to the north of Broadwater Lane and west of Hogmoor Lane (260353). This application was refused by Wokingham Borough Council. The PiP application followed a previous application for outline planning permission for up to nine houses in a larger area (240583) which was refused at appeal (APP/X0360/W/25/3359898).
- 1.2 To inform and support the recent PiP application Asset Heritage Consulting (AHC) was commissioned to prepare a heritage statement, which presented detailed assessments of the importance of the settings of the nearby listed buildings.
- 1.3 Forum Heritage Services (FHS) was commissioned by Shorewood Homes to make a further assessment of the potential impact of the proposals upon the significance of the four Grade II listed buildings, and to review the arguments presented by the Council in their reasons for refusal, and in respect of the conclusions of the previous Planning Inspector to the planning appeal for nine homes.
- 1.4 This appeal statement has been prepared by Bob Edwards BSc (Hons) PG Dip IHBC MCIfA, Director of Forum Heritage Services. I am a full member of the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) and a full member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA). As a Director of Forum Heritage Services, a historic environment consultancy I founded in 2002, I have over 30 years' experience of dealing with all aspects of historic environment management including the preparation of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans produced for local authorities across the south of England and Wales,

as well as character assessments for urban areas including Southampton and Grantham.
Prior to founding FHS I was a Principal Conservation Officer at Hampshire County Council.

2.0 THE POLICY & GUIDANCE CONTEXT

- 2.1 Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local authorities to preserve or enhance listed buildings and their setting:

In considering whether to grant planning permission or development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have a special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

- 2.2 Paragraphs 207 and 208 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) identify the importance of understanding the significance of heritage assets before proposing change and weighing any potential harm against the public benefit which may accrue from the proposed changes:

207. *In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

208. *Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.*

2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (Annexe 2 Glossary) defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

2.4 The Historic England Guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (2nd edition, December 2017) states that:

'Setting is not itself a heritage asset, nor a heritage designation, although land comprising a setting may itself be designated. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of the heritage asset or the ability to appreciate that significance' (p.4)

2.5 The HE guidance sets out a staged approach to the assessment of understanding the significance of setting:

- 1 Identification of heritage assets and the extent of their settings
- 2 Assess whether, how and what degree the settings make a contribution to the significance of the heritage assets
- 3 Assess the effects of the proposed development, whether beneficial or harmful on the significance
- 4 Explore ways to maximise enhancement and avoid or minimise harm
- 5 Record the process

2.6 The guidance also states that views which particularly contribute to the significance of heritage assets include those where the relationship between the asset and other historic assets or places or designed views.

2.7 The heritage-related development policy, TB24 of Wokingham Borough Council Development Plan Managing Development Delivery (MDD), is relevant to this appeal:

Policy TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)

1. *Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas are shown on the Policies Map.*
2. *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.*
 - b. *Supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk.*
3. *Proposals for building works shall retain or incorporate existing features or details of historic or architectural significance or design quality into the scheme.*

3.0 PROPOSAL & REASONS FOR REFUSAL

3.1 Permission in Principle for a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 7 dwellings is being sought for an area of land lying on the north side of Broadwater Lane, Hurst, and west of Hogmoor Lane. The development would be approached via a new access from Broadwater Lane.

3.2 In relation to listed buildings, the Council's refusal stated:

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.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE OF THE SETTINGS OF THE LISTED BUILDINGS

- 4.1 The importance of setting is defined as what it contributes to the significance of the heritage assets. Therefore, the significance of the heritage assets must be reviewed and understood before assessing how the setting contributes to that significance.

Significance: Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage and Elder Cottage

- 4.2 **Bower Cottage and Parkers Cottage** are both small timber-framed cottages of 17th and (according to the list description) late 18th century date respectively. Both have a gable-end chimney stack and are clearly very modest buildings but have been substantially extended. These relatively low status cottages may be examples of encroachment onto roadside waste or the homes of small-holders or landless labourers.

- 4.3 **Elder Cottage** appears to have been a larger house, the central gable possibly representing a cross-wing to a hall range. The special architectural or historic interest of these buildings will principally be in their fabric, especially the timber-framing, both for its archaeological and architectural interest, and any elements of internal character such as plan form, fireplaces, staircases and other internal joinery, and the illustrative historic interest conveyed by the date, scale and form of these cottages.

Importance of Setting: Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage and Elder Cottage

- 4.2 Beyond the domestic curtilage of these cottages, the principal aspect of the setting of these listed buildings is their relationship to Broadwater Lane. This is the primary area from where the cottages are experienced, and their significance can be understood and appreciated. However, Broadwater Lane is not the quiet rural lane it would have been in the 19th century – it is a relatively busy main road (A321) and so has changed considerably in character from its historic form as illustrated in the AHC Heritage Statement (Figures 1 – 3). Whilst **Bower Cottage** stands close to the street frontage, there are substantial boundary treatments to the front of **Bower Cottage and Elder Cottage** which form a strong physical boundary between the road and the cottages. These boundaries restrict the ability to experience the listed buildings from the street apart from at the access points to the properties. However, despite the later 19th century and modern infill between the cottages, the relationship of the

cottages to the road and as a small group of timber-framed cottages, which stand in contrast to, for example, the late 19th century houses along the road south-east of its junction with Hogmoor Lane can be perceived as a group reflecting an historic area of development, which contributes to the importance of the settings of these listed buildings.

4.4 There is no evidence there was a historic association between these cottages and the site in terms of ownership or use that would add to the significance of the listed buildings. The relationship is incidental rather than designed or intentional. It is not possible to be certain that the area of the proposed development site was as open to view as it is today – it is possible that there was a substantial hedge blocking views into this area in the past, as is the case to substantial lengths of the roadside boundary further along the A321 to the north of Whistley Green.

4.5 Due to its substantial front boundary, **Bower Cottage** has no direct visual relationship with the site at ground floor level although the upper floor windows do over-look this landscape. **Parkers Cottage** stands closer to the street frontage and currently has no boundary to the pavement but consent has been granted for a wall 0.7m high with hedging behind. The cottage therefore has views to the site although there is some screening due to the trees and other planting to the boundary in the area opposite the listed building. **Elder Cottage** faces across the road to what is now part of the domestic curtilage of **Wards Cross House**, now defined by a tall close-boarded fence with concrete posts of suburban character set in front of a hedge, and with many trees blocking longer views. In the mid-19th century this western part of the curtilage was an orchard. The upper floor has angled, glimpsed views to the fields only.

4.6 There is no direct functional relationship between the cottages and the site, this area of agricultural land is likely to be generally largely unaltered since the cottages were built. The Historic England guidance on assessing the importance of setting states:

‘Settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed or formed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to significance but settings which have changed may also themselves enhance significance, for instance where townscape character has been shaped by cycles of change over the long term.’

Thus, both settings that haven't changed and settings that have changed can contribute to the significance of a heritage asset. Thereby, all settings need to be assessed for how they actually contribute to the significance of the heritage assets, and to understand how the setting allows the heritage asset to be experienced, and its significance understood and appreciated.

4.7 Whilst the site's use as agricultural land is likely to have been in use as such when the cottages were built, that does not mean that there was the level of visibility across this area of landscape as there is today. It is likely that the fields were bounded by hedges, possibly substantial hedges that would have completely screened this landscape from view from the road – the original setting is quite likely to have been a view to a hedge rather than a view across an open landscape. The reinstatement of a continuous hedgerow to the roadside boundary, which could be undertaken without the need for any consents from the local authority, would close off ground level views to the fields.

4.8 The site's historic land use (agriculture) existed before the buildings were constructed and forms a part of the historic setting of the listed buildings. This makes a limited contribution to the significance of **Bower Cottage and Parkers Cottage**, and a further reduced contribution to the significance of **Elder Cottage** which does not directly face the field. The most important parts of the original or historic settings – the relationship to the road and the relationship between these historic buildings forming a small group remains largely intact.

Significance: Wards Cross House

4.9 **Wards Cross House** is a 17th century timber-framed former farmhouse which retains some of its associated former working buildings (now converted) to the north-east of the house alongside Hogmoor Lane. The significance of the house lies primarily in its timber-framing and historic fabric (although little of the timber-framing can be seen externally), and internal features such as the ingle fireplace. Whether the historic plan form survives, or other internal features such as historic staircase and internal joinery survives is not known. The large modern extensions to the rear are not of special interest.

Importance of Setting: Wards Cross House

- 4.10 The former farmhouse was set slightly back from the road with its principal elevation facing Hogmoor Lane rather than Broadwater Lane, the house looking over the nearby road junction. The house has been substantially extended to the rear, and its domestic curtilage has been extended into what was an orchard in the mid-19th century and is now an area with many trees providing a strong barrier with the site.
- 4.10 Beyond the original domestic curtilage, which is much altered, the now converted farm buildings are of high importance in terms of the setting of the former farmhouse as it is only the presence and character of these buildings that allow a clear understanding of the agricultural function and history of the house.
- 4.11 The house is now substantially screened from view from the passing roads, so that it is difficult to experience the listed building or understand and appreciate its significance. However, the relationship between the house and the roads is an important aspect of the setting of the listed building which makes a minor contribution to the significance of the listed building.
- 4.12 **Wards Cross House**, when it was part of a working farm, was associated with the surrounding agricultural land, including the site so there is a historic association between the listed building and the land. However, the house turned its back on this landscape and has been further detached from the land by the extension of the curtilage to the west of the house and the extent of tree planting that provides a substantial screen between the house and its former land. It is considered that whilst the land along Broadwater Lane is within the wider setting of the listed building, it makes no meaningful contribution to the special interest of the designated heritage asset. In relation to the land fronting Hogmoor Lane, the former farmhouse cannot be seen in the context of this land and so it makes no meaningful contribution to the significance of the listed building.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT OF PROPOSALS

- 5.1 This assessment of impact reviews the proposal in relation to the individual listed buildings, considering the conclusions drawn in AHC's heritage statement and the Council's response to the PiP application. Where applicable, the Inspector's comments and conclusions to the previous appeal are also reviewed. It will then discuss some general points about the impact on setting.

Bower Cottage

- 5.2 AHC's heritage statement found that the PiP proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the heritage asset, the harm being at the low end of less than substantial whilst the Council found the harm to be at the higher end of less than substantial to reflect the findings of the Inspector for the previous scheme.

- 5.3 In my opinion, if there is any harm to the setting of **Bower Cottage**, it is at the **lowest end of less than substantial**. The Inspector, in para. 21 of the appeal decision stated that:

'As with Buttercups, it [Bower Cottage] has a slight degree of visual separation from the appeal site by reason of a brick wall and hedging which forms its front boundary treatment.'

The previous appeal scheme extended further along Broadwater Lane and would have had a greater level of visibility when viewed from or through the entrance of the property (or from the upper floor). The previous Inspector stated the substantial barrier between **Bower Cottage** and the site only created a 'slight degree of visual separation'. That does not reflect the position on the ground: the reality is that apart from the view through the entrance of the property, it is barely possible to experience the listed building from Broadwater Lane, with no more than the roof being visible over the boundary, and as such, there is limited opportunity to understand or appreciate the significance of the heritage asset.

- 5.4 It is notable that the Inspector examining the previous larger scheme, which extended into the area of the field opposite Buttercups (Grade II) found that:

'The harm would be at the lower end within the less than substantial category for Buttercups given the development would be set further back at this end of the site' (para. 29). [My emphasis]

The current proposal, in response to the previous Inspector's conclusions, has set the houses facing onto Broadwater Lane further back into the site with enhanced planting along the roadside boundary. Whilst the greater set back in relation to Buttercups resulted in the harm being assessed at the lower end of less than substantial by the Inspector, the Council has not adjusted their position to reflect the change in the current scheme. The Inspector made it clear that being set further back into the site and away from the street frontage reduced the level of less than substantial harm, and this view is supported by both AHC and my own assessment.

Parkers Cottage

5.5 **Parkers Cottage** does benefit from a more open relationship to the site, although a wall and hedge to the front boundary have been approved. The ability to look across this area of farmland is unlikely to have been designed or intentional, and it is quite possible that the view would have been to a roadside hedge enclosing the field where now a wire fence provide the enclosure for stock. The AHC heritage statement found that the PiP proposal would cause harm at the low end of less than substantial whilst the Council found the harm to be at the higher end of less than substantial. The Inspector found 'towards the higher end within the less than substantial category' in relation to the previous appeal.

5.6 The proposed development will result in a change to the landscape opposite **Parkers Cottage** which may be regarded as being at the **low end of less than substantial**, marginally higher than that for **Bower Cottage**. The proposed development is to be set further back from the frontage compared to the previous appeal and, as with the Inspector's finding that the greater distance from the frontage reduced the level of harm to Buttercups in that scheme, so it should be the case with regard to **Parkers Cottage**. Given that the change is within an area that provides very limited opportunity to actually experience the listed building, or understand and appreciate its significance, it is considered that there is no justification for a finding of harm at the higher end of less than substantial.

Elder Cottage

5.7 **Elder Cottage** does not directly face the site, instead this cottage looks towards the curtilage of **Wards Cross House**. Asset Heritage Consulting found no harm to the setting of this listed building, but the Council found a low level of less than substantial harm as that was the Inspector's conclusion in the previous appeal.

5.8 **Elder Cottage** is substantially screened from view from the public realm by a tall boundary wall and hedge which, is in close proximity to the building and does not allow the building to be fully experienced, understood or appreciated. The listed building does not have a direct relationship to the site, only having an angled view from the western end of the building's first floor to the site.

5.9 As with the other listed buildings, the Council has not adjusted their assessment of impact to reflect the changes to the proposal from the previous appeal:

'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.' (WBC Officer Report, March 2026)

The relationship with **Elder Cottage** has changed so that there will be no meaningful physical relationship between the site and the listed building, and the reduction in impact from setting the houses further back from the Broadwater Lane frontage, as found by the previous Inspector to reduce the level of harm, is not reflected in the Council's response.

5.10 Having made my own assessment of the importance of the setting of **Elder Cottage**, it is considered that the proposed development will result in **no harm** to the significance of the listed building in terms of the ability to experience the listed building or to understand and appreciate its significance.

Wards Cross House

5.11 **Wards Cross House** stands at the junction between Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane, facing away from the site. The house has substantial modern extensions to the rear, and the curtilage has been extended to the west into what was an orchard, and which is now an area with numerous trees that creates a substantial buffer between the listed building and the proposed development site. The historic part of the listed building cannot be seen from the proposed development area. Asset Heritage Consulting found no harm to the setting of this listed building, whilst the Council took that view that there was a high level of less than substantial harm. Notably, the Inspector did not find any harm to this listed building in the previous appeal.

5.12 In my opinion, there will be **no harm** to the ability to experience the listed building, or the ability to understand and appreciate its significance. The proposed development will not be seen in association with this listed building, and it is unlikely that there will be any inter-visibility between **Wards Cross House** and the development. There is no strong visual relationship to the site, the only link between them is the fact that this was formerly agricultural land farmed from this house. There is no firm visual link between the former farmhouse and the site, although it is adjacent to the curtilage. The change of use will not harm the significance of the listed building – it will continue to be read as a former farmhouse only by the presence of the converted farm buildings. As the nearest house can be set at the same distance from the western boundary as the previous appeal layout to **Wards Cross House**, there is no justification for the finding of harm in this appeal.

General points regarding impact on setting

5.13 The first point that needs to be discussed is the level of harm found by the Council to the PiP application, and by the Inspector to the previous appeal, particularly where the level of harm has been found to be at the high end of less than substantial. Looking at the level of harm as being on a sliding scale, any harm being caused by the proposed development can only be seen as relatively minor – and at the **low end of less than substantial** at most because of the material changes made to the proposals in the PiP application in direct response to the previous Inspector's comments.

- 5.14 It is clear that the special architectural or historic interest or significance of all the listed buildings being considered lies primarily within the fabric of the buildings, particularly the timber-framing, as well as factors such as the form and scale of the properties, and internal features such as plan form etc. There are no changes being made to the physical structures of any of the listed buildings. The proposals will also not impact on the illustrative historic interest of the listed buildings.
- 5.15 When the importance of the settings of the listed buildings is assessed, it is clear that there are different aspects of setting that make varying levels of contribution to the significance of the listed buildings, for example, their curtilages, their relationship to Broadwater Lane from where the buildings are primarily experienced by the public, and the loose grouping of the buildings which is apparent when moving along Broadwater Lane, even though there is limited opportunity to see the houses together. These elements of the settings of the listed buildings which are of the highest level of importance will not be impacted and there will be no harm to the significance of the heritage assets.
- 5.16 The proposals relate to an area of land which, for the properties on Broadwater Lane itself, has no functional or historic association other than it was there when the houses were built. Two of the three houses (**Bower Cottage and Elder Cottage**) have closed the view to the site by the creation of substantial boundaries screening the fronts of the houses, and so clearly, the visual relationship to this land is not considered highly important.
- 5.17 The proposals will result in a change to the wider setting of the heritage assets, but it will not impact on the ability to experience the listed buildings or understand and appreciate their significance – the key test of impact on setting. When all the factors that contribute to the actual significance of the listed buildings are taken into account, the proposed development of part of the field opposite the listed buildings, with the houses set well back from the street frontage and the listed buildings, and with the boundary and intervening planting enhanced so that the listed buildings and the proposed houses will not be seen together in views along Broadwater Lane, this can only have a very minor impact at most on the actual special architectural or historic interest of the listed buildings.
- 5.18 The Inspector examining the previous appeal referenced impacts in relation to the introduction of noise and activity. Whilst Historic England do refer to the possible impacts of

noise and smells on setting and the experience of a heritage asset in their guidance on setting, it is questionable whether in what is now large village such as Hurst, and along a main road, that the additional noise and activity created by two or three houses (compared to nine houses previously) and set well back from Broadwater Lane would result in a level of additional noise or activity that would materially harm the experience of the listed buildings.

- 5.19 A considerable difference in the PiP application from the previously dismissed appeal is this proposal now requires only a single point of access compared to the three previously proposed. In terms of the character of the lane and its contribution to the setting of the listed buildings, the present scheme is far more sensitive to the settings of the listed buildings.
- 5.20 The ability to mitigate impacts of a proposal through landscaping appear to be more commonly rejected by some planning authorities as representing a material consideration. Whilst it is accepted that screening poor development through planting is not an acceptable justification to grant approval, where the development is of an appropriate form and scale, and where impacts on heritage assets are relatively minor, factors such as the ability to enhance, and in places, re-establish the boundary hedge and provide other planting should be given due consideration as part of the overall proposals.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Following examining the settings of the Grade II listed buildings, there will be a **very low level of less than substantial harm to Bower Cottage and Parkers Cottage** as these cottages have a direct relationship to the agricultural land across the road from them, even though Bower Cottage has a substantial boundary which cuts it off visually from the proposed development area at ground level (and to Parkers Cottage to a lesser extent).
- 6.2 The proposed development will not impact on the ability to experience any of the listed buildings, or to understand or appreciate their significance – the key test of an assessment of impact on the importance of setting. All of the most important aspects of the settings of the listed buildings will be unaltered.
- 6.3 It is accepted that the site is likely to have been in agricultural use when the listed buildings were constructed. However, the cottages had no functional or historical relationship with this land, whilst there is a contribution to significance, the proposed development does not contribute particularly strongly to their significance, and that the impact on the significance of **Bower Cottage and Parkers Cottage is at the very low end of less than substantial, with no harm to Elder Cottage** which faces the curtilage of Wards Cross House. Whilst the land appears to have been farmland associated with Wards Cross House, there is no meaningful relationship between the house and the proposed development site. No harm was found in the previous application, and a similar positioning of the nearest plot to the boundary of **Wards Cross House should result in the same decision of no harm.**
- 6.4 Within a settlement which overall has relatively large areas of modern housing estates, and where Broadwater Lane is not a quiet rural lane but a fairly busy main road – it is considered that any additional domestic noise and activity generated by the proposed development, with fewer homes facing the road than the previous appeal, will not represent a harmful change to the settings of the listed buildings.
- 6.5 This proposal will have a much-reduced impact on Broadwater Lane with a reduced number of houses to this part of the site (2-3 instead of 9), only one access point rather than the three previously proposed, greater set back and separation from listed buildings along with substantial planting. These changes represent a major difference in terms of the character

of this section of the road and so impact on the settings of the listed buildings compared to the previous appeal.

6.6 In my opinion, the very low level of less than substantial harm, which is at least partly mitigated by the planting proposed, needs to be balanced by any public benefits offered by the proposed development.

6.7 Accordingly, I conclude that the application accords with Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, National Policy in the NPPF, TB24 of Wokingham Borough Council Development Plan Managing Development Delivery and respectfully suggest that the appeal should be allowed.