

PINS

- 3 SEP 2026

PLANNING APPEAL REF: 6014086

Land at Lodge Road, Hurst, RG10 0SG

(original planning number 252934)

RECEIVED

Full application for "the proposed erection of 3 no. detached dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping and creation of a balancing pond".

FORMAL OBJECTION

Submitted by: [REDACTED]

Address: 34 Martineau Lane, Hurst, RG10 0SF

Date submitted: 1 September 2026

My wife and I have lived in Hurst for 23 years. Our property is within 100 meters of the proposed development, an application to which I **strongly object**.

This is an addendum to my original letter of objection dated 7 February 2026, a copy of which I understand has been provided to the appeal.

Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) **refused the application** in March 2026. The developer has now appealed that refusal. The council officer recommendation was firmly against the scheme: the officer concluded that **the adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits**.

Six reasons for refusal were given. I agree with each of them, but specifically wish to comment on reason for refusal 4:

"In the absence of a satisfactory Flood Risk Assessment and the Environment Agency objection, the proposed development has failed to demonstrate it would have an acceptable flooding and drainage impact contrary to Core Strategy policy CP1 and CP3, MDD Local Plan Policy CC09 and CC10 and Section 14 of the NPPF."

In my opinion the appeal documents submitted by the Appellant, which includes a new Flood Risk Assessment fail to overcome the above reason for refusal.

Accordingly I urge the inspector to disallow the appeal.

My opinion is based on the following reasoned assessment of the known flood risks at the proposed development site, the adjoining land to the east and south and the real life flooding risks that this development poses upon my own property within 100 meters to the south.

1. Introduction

This objection responds to the Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement and associated drainage strategy. It challenges the proposition that the proposed development has been demonstrated to be safe for its lifetime and will avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere.

The objection is based on the evidence presently before the appeal. It does not accept that the proposed mitigation has been demonstrated to provide a safe, sustainable and deliverable drainage and sewerage solution for this particular site.

Particular concern arises from the combination of fluvial, surface-water and groundwater constraints, together with unresolved matters concerning floodplain storage, the attenuation basin, the receiving drainage system and the disposal of treated foul effluent.

Sources: Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, pp.1–2; Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §5.

2. Environment Agency requirements

The Environment Agency required flood-risk evidence to address climate change, direct compensation for any loss of floodplain storage associated with the 1% AEP event plus climate change, and finished floor levels above the relevant design flood level.

The Appellant states that these matters have been addressed. The objection is that the evidence does not demonstrate their satisfactory resolution with sufficient certainty to establish that the development will avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Sources: Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §§4.6–4.15 and §5.1–5.2; Wokingham Borough Council Officer's Report, Flooding and Drainage section.

3. The Appellant's flood-risk case

The Appellant relies principally upon locating the three dwellings in Flood Zone 1, raising finished floor levels, providing an attenuation basin, controlling surface-water discharge and providing compensatory storage.

Those measures are not, in themselves, sufficient to establish acceptability. Their effectiveness depends upon their interaction with the existing floodplain, groundwater conditions and receiving drainage system.

Sources: Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §§4.6–4.14; Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C.

4. Climate change and design flood level

The Appellant identifies 37.36m AOD as its design flood level after considering the Flood Zone 2 extent and the topographical survey.

The written appeal evidence states that the attenuation basin rim will be increased to a minimum of 37.36m AOD. However, the submitted drainage drawing identifies the attenuation pond crest as 37.26m AOD.

This apparent 100mm discrepancy is material. It undermines confidence that the drainage design shown on the submitted drawing corresponds with the flood level relied upon in the Appellant's written case. It is particularly significant because the attenuation basin is a principal component of the proposed flood-risk mitigation.

Source: Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §§4.6–4.13.

5. Floodplain compensation

The Appellant accepts that the attenuation basin is located within Flood Zone 2 and within an area affected by surface-water flooding. It states that compensatory storage is provided elsewhere within the site, but does not explain where nor prove its adequacy.

The objection is that the appeal material does not transparently demonstrate the quantitative relationship between floodplain storage lost through the proposed works and the replacement storage said to be available.

- The volume of floodplain storage affected by the works is not clearly demonstrated in the material relied upon.
- The relationship between storage lost and compensatory storage is not sufficiently transparent.
- The levels at which compensatory storage operates are not clearly established.
- The evidence does not satisfactorily demonstrate that compensation remains effective under the relevant climate-change and wet-ground conditions.

The conclusion that floodplain storage is adequately compensated is therefore not established by the evidence with sufficient certainty.

Sources: Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §§4.11–4.14; Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C.

6. Groundwater

The Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Statement states that the site is not identified as being within an area susceptible to groundwater flooding, relying upon the Wokingham Strategic FRA.

The Council's evidence takes a materially different position. It identifies the site as having very high groundwater susceptibility and records groundwater emergence mapped at or very close to ground level. The Council's Drainage Engineer also raised concerns about the feasibility of the drainage strategy, including the location of the attenuation basin in an area affected by fluvial flooding and consistently high groundwater levels.

This is a significant evidential conflict. Groundwater conditions have a direct bearing upon the operation of the proposed drainage infrastructure.

The attenuation basin is located in the part of the site where the groundwater and flood-risk constraints are most relevant. The evidence does not satisfactorily demonstrate that the basin will retain its intended storage and hydraulic function when groundwater levels are high.

The groundwater issue therefore materially weakens the Appellant's claim that the proposed drainage strategy is safe and reliable.

Sources: Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, pp.22–23; Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §§4.6 and 5.2.

7. Attenuation basin

The drainage drawing identifies an attenuation pond with an invert of approximately 36.25m AOD, a crest/CL of 37.26m AOD and a controlled discharge rate of 1.1 l/s.

The presence of an attenuation basin does not establish that sufficient attenuation is provided. The appeal evidence does not permit the effectiveness of the basin to be established with sufficient confidence in the context of the site's floodplain and groundwater constraints.

Of particular concern is the basin's location within Flood Zone 2 and an area affected by surface-water flooding. A drainage feature intended to provide flood mitigation is itself exposed to the flood conditions that it is intended to help manage.

Sources: Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C; Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §§4.11–4.14.

8. Surface-water discharge at 1.1 l/s

The proposed maximum surface-water discharge is 1.1 litres per second. A restricted discharge rate is potentially beneficial, but the rate alone does not demonstrate that the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere.

The appeal material records concerns regarding poor drainage, drainage connections and the condition of Hatchgate Ditch.

There is insufficient evidence before the appeal to establish that the receiving system has adequate capacity to accept the proposed discharge under the wet-weather conditions most relevant to flood risk. This is further considered below.

The proposed rate of 1.1 l/s should therefore not be treated as, by itself, demonstrating a safe surface-water solution.

Sources: Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C; Wokingham Borough Council Officer's Report, Flooding and Drainage section; Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, pp.4–5.

9. Access and residual flood risk

The Appellant states that the dwellings and their access and escape routes are outside areas at risk of flooding. The Council's evidence and representations identify flood risk affecting parts of the wider access, turning and garden areas.

The presence of residual flood risk associated with access and circulation is relevant to the claim that the development is safe for its lifetime. The Appellant's broad statement that access is not at risk does not satisfactorily resolve the differing evidence concerning the mapped flood extents.

Sources: Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §4.7; Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, pp.22–23.

10. Foul-water and sewerage strategy

The drainage strategy identifies three individual foul-water package treatment plants, each described as "Klargester Bioair 2" or similar. Proposed foul sewers connect the dwellings to these treatment plants.

The apparent arrangement is therefore: dwelling → foul drainage pipework → individual package treatment plant → treated effluent → final disposal.

The use of package treatment plants is not, by itself, evidence that a complete and satisfactory sewerage solution has been demonstrated. Treatment of foul water and disposal of the resulting effluent are separate stages of the system.

Source: Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C.

11. Final disposal of treated effluent

The most significant deficiency in the foul-water evidence is the lack of a clearly demonstrated complete disposal route for treated effluent from the three treatment plants.

The material reviewed does not adequately establish the discharge rate of the treated effluent, the capacity of the receiving environment, or the relevant regulatory arrangements.

This is particularly concerning in the context of the site's drainage and groundwater constraints. If treated effluent ultimately enters shallow ground or local drainage infrastructure, the high-groundwater and flood conditions identified by the Council become directly relevant.

Local objections recorded in the appeal material also raise concern that foul water would be treated on-site and discharged to ditches, with potential consequences for local flooding.

The existence of three package treatment plants should therefore not be regarded as demonstrating that the proposed development has an acceptable foul-water disposal system.

Sources: Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C; Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, pp.4–5.

12. Public sewer connection

The appellant states that connection to the public sewer, situated approximately 120 meters to the south of the site, would be uneconomic and has therefore proposed private package treatment plants with discharge of treated effluent to Hatchgate Ditch on the eastern side of the site. However, the appeal evidence does not adequately substantiate the assertion that connection to the public sewer would be uneconomic, nor does it demonstrate that the public sewer option has been properly investigated and discounted. The fact that Thames Water made no comments does not establish that connection is impracticable, unavailable or uneconomic, nor does it amount to approval of the proposed private sewerage and discharge arrangements. This is particularly significant given the concerns identified elsewhere in this objection regarding the suitability of Hatchgate Ditch as the receiving watercourse and the requirements of the **Environment Agency's Binding Rules**.

Sources: Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, consultation section; Appellant's submitted drainage/sewerage documentation.

13. Hatchgate Ditch – regulatory and year-round flow concerns

The objection is therefore strengthened by the Appellant's own evidence. The issue is not a hypothetical concern based solely on local observation. The Appellant's own ecology report (submitted April 2025) records that Hatchgate Ditch had fully dried out. In circumstances where the **Binding Rules** state that new sewage discharges must be made to a watercourse that normally has flow throughout the year, the proposed discharge into Hatchgate Ditch gives rise to a serious and substantive objection.

The same concern applies to the wider drainage strategy insofar as it contemplates discharge of surface-water runoff to Hatchgate Ditch. The surface-water and foul-water arrangements should not be conflated: the **Binding Rules** quoted above specifically concerns sewage discharges. Nevertheless, the seasonal absence of flow is plainly relevant to the suitability and capacity of Hatchgate Ditch as a receiving watercourse for any proposed discharge.

The Appellant's reliance upon Hatchgate Ditch is therefore particularly problematic because the ditch is both the proposed receiving environment and, according to the Appellant's own ecology report, a watercourse which can completely dry out. This creates a direct conflict between the proposed sewerage arrangement and the statutory general **Binding Rules** applicable to new small sewage discharges.

The proposed arrangement is consequently objectionable on a fundamental basis. A package treatment plant does not make the resulting effluent equivalent to ordinary surface water. The treated effluent remains a sewage discharge and, where it is discharged to surface water, the regulatory requirements governing such discharges apply. The **Binding Rules** expressly distinguish between discharges to surface water and discharges to ground, and Rule 19 is specifically directed to surface-water discharges.

The issue is therefore not simply that Hatchgate Ditch may have reduced flow during dry weather. The Appellant's own ecological evidence records the condition of the ditch, stating that in April 2025, "the ditch was found to have fully dried out". That evidence is particularly significant because it comes from the Appellant's own submitted ecological material and directly demonstrates that Hatchgate Ditch is capable of drying out completely. On the face of the evidence, that is difficult to reconcile with the requirement in Rule 19 that a new surface-water sewage discharge must be made to a watercourse that normally has flow throughout the year.

It must also be noted that at the point where the Appellant proposes to discharge their treated effluent is also where the horses, ponies and donkeys in the neighbouring field avail themselves of a drink. The Appellant has clearly not considered the impact of their proposal upon the neighbouring equines and wildlife.

Crucially, the appeal evidence does not demonstrate that the necessary Environment Agency consent or permit for the proposed discharge has been obtained.

Sources: Appellant's Ecology Appraisal, February 2025, Environmental Desk Study and Preliminary Risk Assessment, January 2026; Appellant's submitted drainage/sewerage documentation.

14. Hatchgate Ditch – connectivity concerns

The appellant is seeking to discharge both surface water and treated effluent into Hatchgate Ditch, designated an Environment Agency (EA) Main River. This river is one of a number of supposedly connected ditches which serve to drain Hurst in a northwesterly direction towards the River Loddon.

These EA assets are listed as follows:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 358998 | (Recorded as open channel, but in reality also partially consists of a culvert) |
| 378372 | (Recorded as an open channel, but in reality is no more than a series of disconnected swales. Part of asset 378372 has been lost to development) |
| 378428 | (Recorded as an open channel, but in reality this has been lost to the capped Hurst Landfill site operated by Summerleaze under permit EPR/BV72221V) |

As residents of Hurst will attest, the onward connectivity of the Hatchgate Ditch running on the eastern edge of the appellant's site is unknown. This matter was discussed in detail during the 2025 Appeal against the refusal to allow 99 houses on the adjoining Land at Lodge Road/Tape Lane. The Appellant in that appeal submitted documents which showed that despite the efforts of numerous contractors they were unable to disprove that a culverted section of Hatchgate Ditch within their land (and immediately north of the current appeal site) was blocked, nor prove that Hatchgate Ditch had an onward connection with the River Loddon.

The unknown state of Hatchgate Ditch has been acknowledged by both WBC/LFA and the EA. Indeed in an email dated 10 November 2025 the EA confirmed to me that after physically inspecting Hatchgate Ditch they were unable to confirm whether Hatchgate ditch had sufficient capacity, flow or through connectivity with the River Loddon. (EA case number EIR2025/36563).

The Appeal Flood Risk Assessment submitted to this appeal does not consider whether Hatchgate Ditch is fully connected. **Accordingly the Appellant has not provided adequate evidence to the appeal that their proposal to discharge surface water and treated effluent into Hatchgate ditch will avoid adding to the flood risk elsewhere.**

As an impacted neighbour, this is of great personal concern.

Sources: Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, Appellant's Appeal FRA, May 2026; Appellant's submitted drainage/sewerage documentation. Land between Lodge Road and Tape Lane PA 242067 (September 2024) Appeal dismissed October 2025.

15. Interaction between foul drainage and groundwater

The groundwater issue has particular importance for the sewerage strategy. High groundwater could materially affect the performance and reliability of the proposed system. The capacity and condition of the receiving system become material to both flood risk and environmental protection.

The appeal evidence does not satisfactorily demonstrate that the proposed foul-water system has been assessed against the full range of groundwater and flood conditions identified for the site.

Sources: Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, pp.22–23; Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C.

16. Maintenance and long-term management

The Appellant relies upon the proposition that the development would introduce a fully managed drainage system. The existence of private package treatment plants creates an additional long-term management burden.

The appeal evidence does not establish with sufficient clarity how the three treatment plants, associated foul drainage, attenuation infrastructure and flow-control arrangements will be maintained for the lifetime of the development, or how failures will be dealt with. This is material because failure of private foul-water infrastructure could have consequences beyond the individual dwelling, particularly on a site with identified drainage and groundwater constraints.

Source: Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C.

17. Why these are fundamental matters

The deficiencies identified are not isolated matters of minor detail. They concern the fundamental operation of the proposed drainage and sewerage strategy.

- The apparent inconsistency between the 37.36m AOD design flood level and the 37.26m AOD attenuation-basin crest affects the credibility of the submitted drainage design.
- The floodplain compensation case is not transparently demonstrated.
- The Appellant's position on groundwater conflicts materially with the Council's evidence of very high groundwater susceptibility.
- The attenuation basin is itself located in an area affected by flood risk.
- The proposed 1.1 l/s discharge rate does not, without demonstrated receiving-system capacity, establish that flood risk elsewhere will not be increased.
- The three package treatment plants do not, by themselves, establish a satisfactory final disposal route for treated effluent.
- The absence of comments from Thames Water does not resolve the suitability of the proposed private sewerage arrangements.
- The long-term reliability and management of the private treatment and drainage infrastructure have not been satisfactorily demonstrated.

Sources: Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §§4.6–5.5; Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, pp.22–23; Surface Water Drainage Strategy, Drawing 6244/001 Rev C.

18. Grounds of objection

For the reasons set out above, the proposed development is objected to on flood-risk and drainage grounds.

The proposed mitigation relies upon a drainage system whose key components are affected by the flood and groundwater conditions that the system is intended to manage. The evidence does not satisfactorily establish that the attenuation, floodplain compensation and receiving drainage arrangements will operate as claimed under critical conditions.

In addition, the proposed foul-water arrangements are inadequately demonstrated. The identification of three package treatment plants does not resolve the fundamental question of how treated effluent will ultimately be disposed of safely and appropriately in the context of this site.

The combination of these matters gives rise to a substantive objection to the proposal. The drainage and sewerage strategy should not be regarded as having satisfactorily overcome the flood-risk concerns underlying the refusal of planning permission.

The Appellant has not demonstrated, on the evidence presently before the appeal, that the development would be safe for its lifetime or that it would avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Sources: Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, May 2026, §§4.6–5.5; Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026, pp.22–23; Wokingham Borough Council Officer's Report, Flooding and Drainage section.

19. Landfill gas and contamination risk

Taken together with the flood-risk, drainage and sewerage concerns identified elsewhere in this objection, the ground-gas issue reinforces the conclusion that the site has not been demonstrated to be suitable for the proposed residential development. The objection is not that development of land affected by potential contamination is legally impossible in every circumstance; rather, it is that the evidence presently before the appeal identifies a potential unacceptable risk to future residents arising from an ongoing source, and does not establish that this fundamental concern has been satisfactorily resolved.

In those circumstances, the Appellant's own identification of a potential ground-gas pathway and possible unacceptable risk to future occupiers cannot be dismissed as a theoretical concern. It forms a further substantive objection to the suitability of the site for residential occupation.

The adjacent landfill waste is understood to remain capable of degradation for many years. The Environment Agency's guidance for landfill operators recognises that landfill gas continues to be produced by waste and requires landfill operators to manage gas, including controlling sub-surface migration and maintaining site-specific gas management and monitoring arrangements.

The issue is particularly serious because the proposed development would introduce new residential occupiers onto land where the Appellant's own Environmental Desk Study acknowledges the possibility of an unacceptable risk to future site occupiers. This is a fundamentally different matter from a conventional, historic contamination issue where the source and pollutant pathway are no longer active.

The Council's planning evidence also records potential contamination and leachate risks associated with the nearby capped landfill. Government guidance confirms that contamination and the possible migration of ground gas from landfill are material planning considerations, particularly where residential development introduces new receptors. It states that, unless an initial assessment clearly demonstrates that contamination risk can be satisfactorily reduced to an acceptable level, further investigation and risk assessment will be needed before the application is determined.

The concern is not merely historic contamination. The identified source is degrading waste at the adjacent landfill, with the potential for ground gases to migrate onto the proposed development site. The risk is therefore associated with an ongoing process rather than a contaminant which can simply be assumed to have ceased to exist.

The Desk Study identifies a potential contamination concern "due to the possible presence of ground gases which may have migrated away from the degrading waste (at the landfill site to the northwest, west and southwest) of the site". More significantly, the report states that "there could be some degree of unacceptable risk to receptors; principally future site occupiers". These are the Appellant's own findings and are directly relevant to the suitability of the land for residential development.

The Appellant's Environmental Desk Study raises a serious concern concerning contamination and ground gases arising from the adjacent landfill site.

Sources: Environmental Desk Study and Preliminary Risk Assessment, (January 2026); Appellant's submitted drainage/sewerage documentation.

20. Sequential Test

The Appellant by its own admission has said that they would fail the Sequential Test if they had undertaken it. They did not undertake it because they claim reliance upon paragraph 175 of the NPPF (2024) which states:

"The sequential test should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding, except in situations where a site-specific flood risk DEMONSTRATES that no built development within the site boundary, including access and escape routes, land raising or other potentially vulnerable elements, would be located on an area that would be at risk of flooding from ANY source, now and in the future (having regard to potential changes in flood risk)."

The Appellant HAS NOT DEMONSTRATED, on the evidence presently before the appeal, that the development would be safe for its lifetime or that it would avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Accordingly the Appellant is disbarred from claiming exemption from carrying out the required sequential test, a test it admits they would fail for the reasons they eloquently state.

Therefore their **admitted failure of the sequential test** should mean that the Inspector has no option but to **dismiss this appeal**.

Sources: Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, July 2026; Wokingham Borough Council Officer's Report, Flooding and Drainage section.

21. Conclusion

The appeal should also **be dismissed** insofar as **the proposal has failed to demonstrate an acceptable solution to flood risk, surface-water drainage and foul-water disposal**.

The evidence contains material uncertainties and inconsistencies concerning the design flood level, floodplain compensation, groundwater conditions, attenuation-basin performance, receiving drainage capacity and the final disposal of treated foul effluent.

These are fundamental matters. They go directly to whether the development would be safe for its lifetime and whether it would avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere.

For those reasons, the flood-risk and drainage objection by WBC remains well founded and should be given substantial weight in the determination of the appeal.

Accordingly I urge the inspector to disallow the appeal.

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Documents considered

- Appellant's Planning Appeal Statement, (July 2026).
- Appellant's Flood Risk Matters Appeal Statement, (May 2026).
- Appellant's Surface Water Drainage Strategy / Drawing 6244/001 Rev C.
- Appellant's Environmental Desk Study and Preliminary Risk Assessment, (January 2026).
- Appellant's Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (February 2025).
- Wokingham Borough Council Decision Notice (March 2026).
- Wokingham Borough Council Officer's Report (March 2026).
- Wokingham Borough Council (LFA) Drainage Consultation Response (January 2026).
- Environment Agency Consultation Response (February 2026).
- Environment Agency, "Discharges to surface water and groundwater: environmental permits" (updated 20 April 2026).
- Environment Agency, "SR2025 No 7: domestic sewage effluent with a maximum daily volume of 5 cubic metres per day to surface water" (20 April 2026).
- Wokingham Borough Council, Sustainable Drainage Systems Strategy – Hurst / Valley Nursery area, identifying Hatchgate Ditch as an Environment Agency Main River.
- Land between Lodge Road and Tape Lane PA 242067 (September 2024) Appeal dismissed October 2025.
- Environment Agency email (November 2025) (copy attached)

PLANNING APPEAL REF: 6014086

From: Thames Enquiries enquiries_thm@environment-agency.gov.uk

Subject: Request for information - Ref: [REDACTED]

Date: 10 Nov 2025 at 11:45:43

To: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

Thank you for your enquiry regarding the Hatchgate Ditch, and your continued interest in the condition of the river downstream of your property. We're sorry for the delay in providing a response to you.

We respond to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

Our observations of the river on a recent walkover in the Sawpit Road and Nursery Close areas that we were able to observe, showed that a good standard of vegetation maintenance had been carried out, and it was in a relatively good state to carry flow.

With regards to the section to the East of Lodge Road, where some of the culvert has been removed, we noticed some damage to the pipework that remained in situ. The landowner has been informed that there is some work to be carried out at this location in order for us to be satisfied that there is sufficient capacity and there are no blockages in the pipe. Our permitting team will continue to liaise with the land owner to determine this section of the river.

We have also been in correspondence with Wokingham Borough Council, who are the riparian owners of the river beneath the road, and have asked them to investigate whether the culvert is functional at this point. We are also awaiting the results of their investigation.

From this point where the river flows through land owned by Summerlease, we are happy that there is a connection good connection to the River Loddon. We have also written to this landowner to ensure future maintenance is carried out along ditch to the west of Lodge Road.

Please refer to the Open Government Licence which explains the permitted use of this information.

Rights of appeal

If you are not satisfied with our decision, you can contact us within two calendar months to ask for the decision to be reviewed. We will then conduct an internal review of our response to your request and give you our decision in writing within 40 working days.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the internal review, you can then make an appeal to the Information Commissioner Office, the statutory regulator for EIR and FOI. The address is: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire. SK9 5AF.

Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745 (national rate) | Fax: 01625 524 510 Email: casework@ico.org.uk | Website: www.ico.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

Customers and Engagement Team - Thames Area

Environment Agency

Please tell us how we did

To help improve your experience as a customer we are currently gathering feedback. If you would like to take part in a short customer satisfaction survey, please click the link below:

Environment Agency FOI Customer Satisfaction Survey

Planning Reference 252934
Appeal Reference 6014086
Land at Lodge Road, Hurst, RG10 0SG
Application for the proposed erection of 3 detached dwellings

Submitted by: [REDACTED]
Address: 34 Martineau Lane, Hurst, RG10 0SF

Date: 01 September 2026

I wish to make some further representations concerning this appeal, which are in addition to my initial objections submitted to Wokingham Borough Council on 6 February 2026. The further comments are as follows:

Reason for Refusal 1 - Inappropriate Development Within the Countryside

The appellant claims that "the new homes will have the feel of being part of Hurst". I strongly disagree. This site is well away from the village centre and in effect turns its back on the village. Every service available within the village is located quite some distance away, and the walk to reach them is not an easy one with no pavements and no street lighting in the immediate vicinity. The appellant relies heavily on the Willowmead approval as strengthening their case. However the Willowmead site is completely different, and far more centrally located within the village. I would respectfully request that you look at the two locations on your site visit and assess the fundamental differences between the two sites. Permission for development of one site in a limited development location does not imply automatic permission for all proposed developments. Limited development means just that - development is limited.

Reason for Refusal 2 - Character and Appearance of the Area

The appellant argues that the reduction in house numbers from the previous scheme (from five down to three) would help to lessen the impact of filling in a locally important green gap. However built development is still built development, whether it is three houses or five. The current open green field which serves as a physical and visual gap between settlements would be gone forever. The feeling of being in open countryside when driving along Lodge Road would be compromised and there would be the overriding impression that Whistley Green and Hurst were now joined. Building any number of houses on what is currently a green field still constitutes development in the countryside.

The Council described this gap as a critical break, which the appellant has queried. The wording the Council uses is persuasive:

Critical = extremely important
Break = a physical gap

Policy CP11 seeks to protect the separate identity of settlements and avoid coalescence. This proposal is entirely contrary to those aims.

Reason for Refusal 3 - Unsustainable Location

The crux of the appellant's argument is that Twyford Station is now on the Elizabeth Line. That in itself does not make the journey to Twyford Station any easier than it was in 2020 when the previous appeal was disallowed. Indeed the traffic accessing the station is now much heavier because of this very fact, making the journey harder than it was before. There is nowhere to park after 7am, cycles are often stolen, walking takes 40 minutes, and buses are infrequent or do not run at all.

The appellant describes the cycle to Twyford Station as "gentle". I can assure you that cycling from this site to Twyford Station is anything but "gentle". Lodge Road is an intimidating route with traffic sometimes exceeding the 40mph speed limit. Lodge Road and Broadwater Lane are unlit roads, making them dark in the winter months. Once onto Hurst Road towards Twyford it is uphill all of the way towards the station, with parked cars and even more traffic than on Lodge Road. This is hardly a gentle cycle, especially at rush hour!

Similarly walking this route is largely undesirable, even though it is possible. More than half of the route is unlit, and the permissive path is isolated, muddy, and dark in winter. There are no street lights until Broad Hinton on the outskirts of Twyford. The walk would take 40 minutes each way from this site, making a total of 1 hour and 20 minutes on top of the train journey and the onward commute at the other end of the journey.

I would therefore respectfully ask you to consider all of these factors on your site visit. Bring a bicycle and try the "gentle" cycle to Twyford. Walk the route and consider whether it is acceptable and desirable. Decide whether the bus times are convenient. Walk from this site to the nearest bus stop. Consider the additional cost of the bus (£6 per day) on top of the costs of the further onward commute. What if it is raining? What if it is dark? What if the bus is late or does not come at all? What if you decide to drive and the station car park is full?

So the Elizabeth Line is not the appellants golden ticket to approval of their scheme. If anything it has made Twyford Station much busier, and accessibility much harder. I have lived close to the appeal site for over 20 years and 99.99% of my journeys from home are made by car. This has not changed at all with the arrival of the Elizabeth Line.

Reason for Refusal 4 - Flooding

This is probably the major weakness in the appellant's case. Other Hurst residents will address this subject in much more detail than I will. Suffice it to say here that the failure of the Sequential Test should lead to outright refusal of this scheme. Application of the exception test should only apply where suitable sites at lower risk of flooding are not available.

Five Year Housing Land Supply/Wokingham Local Plan Update

The appellant is relying heavily on the Council's housing land supply (HLS) of 2.5 years as at 31 March 2025 to argue that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies to their proposal.

Their appeal document is however silent on the progress of Wokingham Borough Council's emerging Local Plan Update (LPU). The LPU is currently being examined and on its adoption (expected in late 2026/early 2027) the housing requirement set out in the LPU will be used.

As part of the Council's evidence at the LPU hearings this summer they presented a Housing Trajectory Update Table (as shown in the table reproduced below) showing the current housing land supply at 31 March 2026. This confirms that the deliverable Housing Land Supply for the five year period from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2031 is between 5.5 to 6.2 years. As the LPU is at such an advanced stage these projected housing land supply figures should carry substantial weight.

Table 1: Housing land supply position 31st March 2026 – Updated to reflect corrected housing trajectory

	Updated Housing Trajectory	Removal of LVGV	Removal of SW Extension	Removal of LVGV and SW Extension
Housing requirement 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026	2,291	2,291	2,291	2,291
Completions and projected completions 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026	2,131	2,131	2,131	2,131
Over/under supply 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026	-160	-160	-160	-160
Housing requirement for period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2031	3,740	3,740	3,740	3,740
Overall housing requirement accounting for over supply / under supply	3,900	3,900	3,900	3,900
Overall housing requirement expressed as an annual requirement	780	780	780	780
Deliverable supply for period 1 st April 2026 – 31 st March 2031	5,776	5,251	5,696	5,171
Deliverable supply in years	7.4	6.7	7.3	6.6

Table 2: Housing land supply position 31st March 2026, plus application of 20% buffer in accordance with NPPF (2024) para. 78

	Updated Housing Trajectory	Removal of LVGV	Removal of SW Extension	Removal of LVGV and SW Extension
Housing requirement 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026	2,291	2,291	2,291	2,291
Completions and projected completions 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026	2,131	2,131	2,131	2,131
Over/under supply 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026	-160	-160	-160	-160
Housing requirement for period 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2031	3,740	3,740	3,740	3,740
Overall housing requirement accounting for over supply / under supply	3,900	3,900	3,900	3,900
Overall housing requirement expressed as an annual requirement	780	780	780	780
Overall housing requirement plus 20% buffer	936	936	936	936
Deliverable supply for period 1 st April 2026 – 31 st March 2031	5,776	5,251	5,696	5,171
Deliverable supply in years	6.2	5.8	6.1	5.5

Whether there is a housing land supply shortfall or not, the addition of a mere three houses is not worth sacrificing an open green field for in an unsustainable location.

Conclusion

Flooding constitutes a strong reason for refusal. Other interested party representations refer to this in more detail.

The five year housing land supply to 31 March 2026 is due to be published imminently. Early indications (as submitted by the Council to the LPU Inspectors) are that it will have dramatically recovered to over five years, and potentially to over six years. This should be given considerable weight, and would mean that there is no longer any presumption in favour of sustainable development.

And even if the appeal decision is based upon an HLS of only 2.5 years the harms of this scheme materially outweigh the benefits as follows:

- Development on a site at risk of flooding, which is worse than it was in 2020 with the updating of the Flood Maps in March 2025
- Unsustainable location - the Elizabeth Line does not make this site any more sustainable than it was in 2020, and if anything it has made access to Twyford Station worse
- Countryside location, outside of settlement boundaries
- The addition of a mere three houses is of negligible benefit, given the harms identified
- Detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the area
- Coalescence of Hurst and Whistley Green and erosion of the current green gap

The lack of a five year housing land supply does not turn an unsuitable site into a suitable one. In the words of Mr Philip Major in the 2020 appeal - "Put simply, this would be the wrong development in the wrong place". Prophetic words which still apply today.