

PLANNING REF : 242067  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Martineau Lane  
: Hurst, Berkshire  
: RG10 0SF  
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Michael Thomson  
DATE SUBMITTED : 08/09/2024

COMMENTS:

Planning Application no 246067 - Land Between Lodge Road and Tape Lane Hurst RG10 0EG.

This location was the subject of a Dismissed Appeal APP/X0360/W22/3309202 in 2023 on the grounds that Hurst and this site are unsustainable with inadequate infrastructure and cannot support a further 200 houses.

This application 246067 from the Developer is aiming to show by halving the number of houses to 99 along with a range of incentives around alternative safe modes of transport will reduce the harm and increase the benefits to make Hurst a more sustainable location. All the incentives will require and depend on 3rd party support, permissions, approval and funding that make them all highly unlikely to occur.

For example:-

1. The minibus is not a viable commercial proposition, I have some personal experience of setting up a commercial minibus service and this service would not interest any commercial bus operator. In addition, why would the residents want to pay a service charge for a bus running to Twyford and Wargrave Piggot when the Piggot school is already full and will come under increasing pressure from the new 250 homes to be built in Twyford. There will be no space now or in the future for children in schools north of Hurst.

2. The proposed changes to footpaths, kerb lines, footways and advisory cycle lanes are all tinkering that produce no fundamental change for walkers and cyclists. The paths remain narrow, the country roads are narrow carrying high levels and increasing levels of traffic from juggernauts to cars with no street lighting making all the local roads dangerous for cycling and walking. Certainly not safe for child cyclists going to school.

If you live in Wokingham, Bracknell or Reading you can reach day to day amenities eg school, food shopping, entertainment and employment without a car or with limited car use making those urban areas "Sustainable". In Hurst you can only reach those day-to-day amenities by using a car and why it is determined as "Unsustainable". Hurst village is designated as a Tier 3 Limited Development with no higher order services and 4.2km to the nearest high tier location in the WBC Local Plan Update Settlement Hierarchy Assessment (November 2018).

In fact, our local facilities have diminished over the last two years as the bakery no longer functions and the food take-away and caf that later ran from the same location have also ceased to trade. In addition, the post office has reduced its opening times to half a day Monday to Saturday and closed on Wednesdays. This is from open 5 days a week plus a half day on Saturday.

This site is in designated countryside and is contrary to WBC Core Strategy Policy CP11. It does not meet any of the exemptions either, under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF (2021)).

In addition, the argument made by the Developer in their first application 220458 relating to WBC not having a 5-year land supply was dismissed in the Appeal APP/X0360/W22/3309202 because they had been overdelivering and in effect built faster than had been planned. This situation still applies.

The site was submitted for consideration for the WBC Local Plan Update (2021). The council did not allocate because the development would adversely impact pattern and character of the landscape and increase cars that would impact on the rural/local road network. In addition, they considered that journeys to amenities eg schools, GP's, shops would need a car.

There appear to be some serious omissions from the "Ecological Report" around hedgerow inclusion and removal, removal of 2 oak trees, numbers of protected species recorded on the site and an incomplete Bat survey. I presume this is how the Developer can increase biodiversity by 11% on a field never touched by human activity, considered to be grade 3a and 3b best and most versatile land after building over most of the land, installing street lighting with human activity from inhabitants from 99 houses.

On the southern boundary, where the site meets the Tape Lane allotments, there is a large tree that is alive at dusk in the summer evenings with bats of many sizes. They also fly in my garden that is about 100 yards from the tree. This colony will be destroyed after several years of house building, introduction of street lighting and human activity. The bat's food source of bugs and insects in the field will be destroyed.

The site is within the designated Defra/Natural England "Network Expansion Zone" in their National Habitat Network Mapping and is important for the local wildlife habitat. The development would fragment the ecology of the area and would compromise the implementation of the National and Local Nature Recovery Network that goes against the NPPF, Environment Act 2021 and WBC's Biodiversity Action Plan.

Surface water continues to be a problem with high levels of run off water in wet weather causing flooding in Tape Lane. The lane has been impassible due to flooding from run off from the field on 2 occasions in the last 12 months. I have not seen Tape Lane completely closed before by flood water in the 10 years I have lived in the village.

This has been a worrying development and raises serious questions over what will happen to the water table if you build over the field that currently cannot absorb all the rain water so will only get worse if you build over it.

WBC's Planning Policy CP2 states that any new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities including the provision of community facilities. This

development will increase the rural village headcount by circa 450 people but does not provide anything towards the community infrastructure, social care, education or cultural facilities.

WBC core strategy states everyone has good access to services such as schools and health/community facilities fit for the 21st century. There is no evidence to say how this proposal will support that strategy to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Hurst now or into the future.

WBC declared a "Climate Change Emergency" with a target of "Net Zero by 2030". To meet this target all residents will have to reduce their carbon footprint that includes such things as travel for goods and services. New homes in Hurst cannot meet these criteria because you need a car to travel to obtain goods and services making this location unsustainable. We also need to protect nature, not destroy and build on fields of high-quality land and destroy ancient biodiverse hedgerows, trees and habitats. This development conflicts with the WBC CCE Target.

Hurst is a strong and vibrant rural community that has no need for this type of development. The village has contributed and will continue to contribute to the need for new homes but in a proportionate way in line with preserving the unique nature of the village rural community.

Both National and Local government need to build more houses but they need to be affordable and linked to versatile and well-connected communities and facilities that do not rely on a car to meet every day living needs. Land in Hurst is expensive and homes are expensive starting at 400,000, at least. These houses make no impact on the affordable housing waiting list only provide high profits for developers.

This development brings not benefits to Hurst only harm.

For all the above reasons I OBJECT to this application and ask WBC to REFUSE this application.