

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	261624
Address:	Land West of Hogmoor Lane, Hurst.		
Proposal:	Permission in principle application for the proposed erection of a maximum of 2 no. dwellings (or a minimum of 1 no. dwelling), including formation of an access from Hogmoor Lane.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9) PiP		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☐ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☒ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

Site Location and Setting

The site is a field in the countryside located along the north-west side of Hogmoor Lane in Hurst between Apple Tree Cottage to the north, and Long Barn to the south. Long Barn is located within the Area of Special Character known as 'Village centre Hurst', and is adjacent to countryside. The open space/the site is between these 2 dwellings measures roughly 85m wide and 52m deep and comprises part of an agricultural field with trees to the southern and northern plot boundaries and which contains a veteran tree.

Currently the site is open land and facilitates far reaching views across the site and beyond to more fields lined with mature and other Veteran trees. These are high quality landscape features which can be seen in views from Hogmoor Lane which connects with PRow STNH9, and from walking along Broadwater Lane.

There are no protected trees on the site, but there is veteran tree just outside the site boundary within the rear NW corner of the garden of Long Barn. The tree surveyed as T1 Oak in the tree survey is protected by TPO 1788-2021. The site boundary follows the line of the Veteran tree Buffer Zone which is measured at 15 x girth diameter at 1.5m from the ground. This is intended to protect the tree from development however there is no information on how the transition to the buffer zone may be dealt with.

Landscape Character

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

- Flat lowland landscape containing a network of water features from field ditches to scattered farm ponds.
- C2 LCA is a simple agricultural landscape of mainly arable farmland and pasture, with an open character with few boundaries marked by vegetation and where hedgerow and roadside trees are scarce and scattered.
- Villages are located around historic cores, such as Whistley Green and Hurst which is within the Area of Special Character. New linear development is aligned along roads and rural lanes with fine early buildings/character unified by red brick. It is a rural and tranquil area with wooded horizons from adjacent Loddon valley.

The **Landscape Strategy** for LCA C2;

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

The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are;

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have assessed the site and its surroundings against the presence of features contained in Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (2013);

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

I assess that the site and the site surroundings demonstrate all of the qualities above. It is clear the site and surrounding landscape contain numerous VL attributes

- The **landscape condition** is moderate across the whole of the LCA however the physical landscape, rural settlement pattern and openness of the rural landscape is intact. The landscape around site is of a higher quality
- There is **scenic quality** such as views of key landscape features from both Hogmoor Lane looking across towards the fields to the mature tree and Veteran tree boundaries. Views from travelling on foot or in a vehicle east and west, Broadwater Lane and the backdrop of mature hedgerows of various native tree species. The land contributes to the setting of the ASC, The views from Hogmoor Lane through the gap between Long Barn and Apple Tree Cottage are important to the recreational routes from Hogmoor Lane such as PRoW STNH9.
- The site and wider area of pastoral fields to the west, are **rare** in that they have Veteran trees identified on the Ancient Tree Inventory and are located in the field boundary hedgerows which themselves are a rare feature within the LCA, which elevates the rarity and landscape value of the site and its wider setting.
- The site and immediate setting is **representative** of the Valuable Landscape Attributes described in the C2 LCA.
- The **conservation** interest is represented by the listed buildings to the south and east, as well as the veteran and mature trees within and around the site.
- **Recreation value** – Hogmoor Lane in particular is a narrow country lane that leads to the wider countryside and recreational routes. T
- The site and its immediate surroundings have a **perceptual quality** of timelessness and tranquillity .

It is clear from the descriptions above and the combination of landscape features including several Veteran trees, mature and intact high quality hedgerows and the views across the landscape from narrow and rural lanes, such as Hogmoor Lane

and PRoW STNH8 and the pastoral backdrop to the ASC, combine to elevate the quality the surrounding landscape of the site above moderate.

Valued Landscape

Paragraphs 187(a) and (b) of the NPPF state that development should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland

A number of Valued Landscapes within Wokingham Borough were initially identified through a Topic Paper on Valued Landscapes by WBC dated January 2020 to respond to paragraph 187 (a) of the NPPF and prepared as part of the evidence base for the Emerging Local Plan Update and associated Policy NE6. Further work has recently been undertaken to make refinements to the boundaries of the valued landscape areas to update the assessment and this has now been published in the Valued Landscapes Assessment dated September 2024 as part of the evidence studies produced for the Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19).

It is noted that the application site falls within the 'Haines Hill' Valued Landscape. The NPPF indicates that these landscapes will need to be protected and enhanced, so therefore we will need to understand how development on this site can address this aspect.

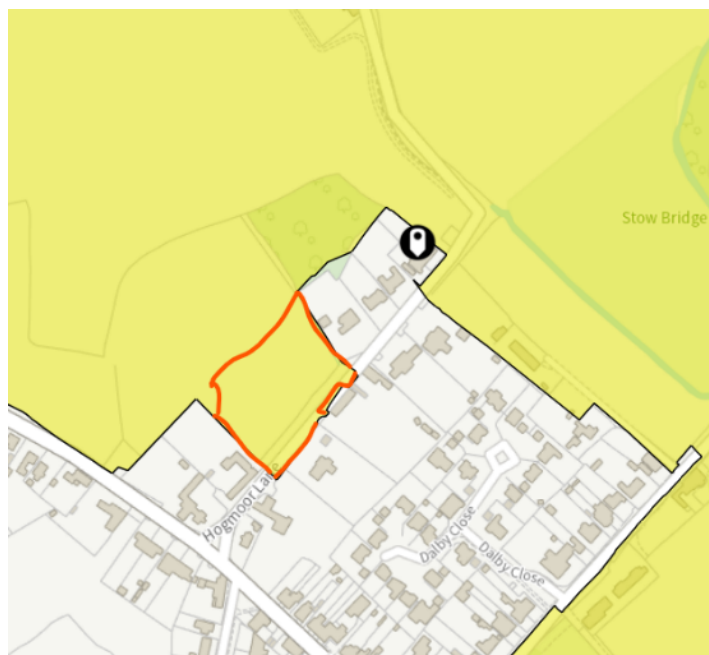


Fig. 1 Haines Hill VL in yellow shown in relation to the site outlined in red

The Haines Hill Valued Landscape wraps around to rear gardens of Wards Cross House and Long Barn, extends eastwards to include Hogmoor Lane and then forms an edge to the dwellings along the west side of Hogmoor Lane, Apple Tree Cottage, Willow Croft and April Cottage. As can be seen from the image below, the site and its surroundings have high local value and its character and scenic qualities and sensitivity should be respected.



Fig. 2 View from Hogmoor Lane across the site

Arboricultural Information

An Arboricultural Implications Report – ‘Land NW of Hogmoor Lane’ is received from SJA Trees. The Report is dated February 2026 Ref. SJA air 25633-01. This is the report that was submitted for the previous application that is now going through the appeal process (PA 260353).

The AIR includes the site within its survey, although it is not showing the site layout for this particular application. As the proposed design includes access to the dwellings from Hogmoor Lane there will be a requirement to remove some of the boundary hedgerow and potentially trees. An updated Arboricultural Implications Assessment to BS5837:2012 is required as part of the required technical information but must be shown to be compliant with Policy CC03 of the Local Plan.

Site Layout

Drawing ‘Proposed Site Plan – 2 Units – Rev. D Drawing No. 8543 F08

The layout shows Plots 1 & 2 accessed via a single entrance from Hogmoor Lane which will need to span the existing ditch within the highway verge. The highway verge spans the whole of the front of the site and consists of a ditch and a mostly Bramble hedge with some Elm. There are protected trees to the front garden of Badgers Lodge opposite the site and the informal landscaped edge to Hogmoor Lane consists of grassy verges with wildflowers, hedges, shrubs and trees. Its not clear how far the ditch extends from the site but it too is a feature that contributes to the scenic landscape setting.

The site boundary is set back behind the verge which is 6m wide. In the Tree Protection Plan TPP 25033-041 the hedge is shown as G2.

A cross over to access the site is mentioned in the Transport Note, which also raises issues relating to the visibility at the Hogmoor Lane/Broadwater Lane junction as being a potential constraint. Three options for the junction are discussed and I highlight Option 3 which would involve the removal of the central grass verge to form a new road. The central grass verge is an important feature of the village road network and the transition from village to countryside. It is a feature of an old village road / lane network and contributes to the Hurst Village ASC and should be retained. Changing / upgrading roads and lanes is a key issue affecting several of the borough's rural roads and needs to be avoided in this particularly sensitive location.

The proposed site access is 3.25m wide with some potential verge space either side. The driveway leads to a detached garage on each plot and the inclusion of a turning head. The drives are not excessive in scale currently. The plot sizes are generous.

The proposed dwellings are set back from the front boundary by 14.5m and 21m from the road edge. The dwellings are 34m apart and the garages are located in this gap. The dwellings are informally following the building line set by the 3 cottages to the north. Dwellings on the opposite side of Hogmoor Lane are less regimented although there are only 4.

As a result of development the expanse of the scenic view across the site to fields and trees in the west will be lost and the sense of permeability and views of scenic quality removed.

SUMMARY

The site is within the countryside and in the Valued Landscape. The combination of the features of the site and its surroundings have been assessed in accordance with GLVIA3 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (2013) and have been found to meet all of the features of Box 5.1, thus elevating the surrounding landscape of the site above moderate.

The site and its surroundings (see Fig. 1) are within the Haines Hill Valued Landscape. Paragraph 187b of the NPPF states;

....development should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);....

The proposals fail to protect the site and the views to the west and as such are contrary to the NPPF 187b.

The site is located in the countryside and its southern boundary is adjacent to the Hurst Village Area of Special Character. The site has not been identified for development in the Local Plan. Policy CP11 aims to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. None of the stated exceptions to the policy apply. The site represents an important visual breathing space from which to experience long views across the countryside and important and valuable features that contribute to it.

Although this is a development of just 2 dwellings, it will have impact on the landscape setting – as such a Landscape and Visual Assessment is required in accordance with Policy TB21 in order to assess the impact of development on the surrounding landscape features and other land uses such as residential properties and public rights of way.

By developing the site there will be a loss of permeability and restriction in valued views across the rural landscape of the Hurst hinterland. This will adversely affect pedestrians and walkers along recreational routes and lanes. As such the proposals are contrary to Policy TB21 as they fail to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

There is no information submitted with the application that demonstrate how the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment have been met including landscape strategy, landscape sensitivity and key issues, contrary to Policy TB21.

No updated information relating to trees has been submitted and the loss of trees and vegetation associated with the crossover has not been assessed.

There is potential adverse impact on the junction of Hogmoor Lane and Broadwater Lane which could lead to the loss of a central grass verge which is a historic feature of the village network of lanes and footpaths. It is important that the valued elements that contribute to the landscape setting are retained, protected and enhanced.

I am unable to support the application as it is contrary to National and Local Planning Policy.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	31.7.26	Signed:	BRC
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