

Objection Letter – Planning Application 253113

Replacement Dwelling at Clear View Cottage, Whistley Green, Hurst (RG10 0DU)

To: Development Management
Wokingham Borough Council
Re: Planning Application 253113

Dear Sir / Madam,

We are writing to further object to Planning Application 253113 for the demolition of Clear View Cottage (previously known as Valley Nurseries) and its replacement with a substantially larger dwelling.

This objection draws on the findings of the Council's Conservation Officer, the subsequent response by ET Planning and the original objection submitted on our behalf, all of which highlight significant policy conflicts and material planning harm.

1. Clear View Cottage is a recognised Non Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA)

Clear View Cottage is identified in the WBC Historic Environment Topic Paper (2024) as a non designated heritage asset that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the Whistley Green & Hurst Area of Special Character (AoSC). Based on available historical records, Valley Nurseries is a recognised site with a long standing history.

It forms part of the historic Whistley Green Farm settlement and may have originally been the earliest farmhouse on the site, predating the later Whistley Green Farmhouse. Its form, age and contribution provide clear heritage significance, which national and local policy require to be preserved.

Our adjoining property, Whistley Green Farmhouse, is also an NDHA, meaning the historic relationship between the two buildings is itself of recognised value and is a material consideration in assessing the impact on significance.

The demolition of Clear View Cottage represents total loss of a heritage asset, which constitutes substantial harm and requires clear and convincing justification under the NPPF.

2. The Application fails to provide the proportionate heritage assessment required by the NPPF

The NPPF requires a heritage statement where proposals affect heritage assets. The Conservation Officer confirms that no such assessment was submitted, leaving the application "devoid of appropriate information".

Furthermore, the further response by ET Planning offers no structural report or technical evidence to now justify demolition. The NPPF makes clear that harm arising from neglect should not be taken into account in decision-making.

This absence of information weighs significantly against the proposal and undermines its ability to be properly assessed.

3. The proposed replacement dwelling is excessively large, overbearing and out of keeping

3.1 Scale, Mass and Height

Our original objection submission demonstrates that the proposal would:

- increase floorspace from ≈180 sqm to 580 sqm, more than tripling the size of the existing dwelling;
- increase height by 2.75 metres, towering above our neighbouring Whistley Green Farmhouse;
- produce a structure more akin to a manor style dwelling than any property characteristic of the area.

The Conservation Officer confirms the new structure would be “vast”, “by far the largest dwelling in the vicinity” and inappropriate for the slender plot.

This directly conflicts with Policy CP3, which requires development to respond appropriately to the scale, massing, height and built form of its surroundings.

3.2 Design Quality and Architectural Response

The Conservation Officer finds the design to be contrived, disjointed and confused, combining Neo-Victorian and Tudor revival elements unsuccessfully, failing to preserve local character or respond to context.

This also conflicts with Policy TB26, which requires development to enhance the traditional and historic character of Areas of Special Character.

4. Harm to the Area of Special Character (AoSC)

Both the Conservation Officer and our original objections highlight that:

- the site directly adjoins the AoSC,
- Clear View Cottage and Whistley Green Farmhouse both positively contribute to it;
- The proposed development would result in substantial harm to the significance and setting of the ‘remaining’ Whistley Green Farmhouse, and

- the proposed development would erode its visual integrity, scale and historic coherence.

The demolition of a confirmed heritage positive building, coupled with its replacement with an oversized and architecturally incompatible structure, represents an unacceptable level of harm to the AoSC setting.

5. Severe and unresolvable harm to Neighbouring Residential Amenity

Our original objection demonstrates that the proposal would:

- create an overbearing two storey mass running the full depth of the rear garden;
- introduce a two storey glass atrium and several first floor windows directly overlooking private garden space, garden rooms and internal rooms;
- remove the ability to introduce effective screening due to the building's scale and the applicant's land control.
- Furthermore, ET Planning's attempt to downplay the harm arising from this proposal understates the extent of the impact. Site context and relationships clearly demonstrate that the scheme would have a detrimental impact on the historic character of the area, as well as on light levels, (particularly early morning and late afternoon sunlight), and neighbouring privacy. This is also reflected in a number of third-party objections.

These impacts conflict with Policy CP3, which requires development not to harm the amenities or quality of life of adjoining occupiers.

6. Policy Conflicts

The combined assessments confirm conflicts with:

- Policy CP3 requires development to be appropriate in terms of scale, massing, height, layout, built form and character, and to deliver high-quality design that respects the local environment and amenity.
- Policy TB26 requires development to retain and enhance the traditional, historic and local character of Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character, and requires strong justification for their demolition
- The Borough Design Guide requires development to respond positively to local character, including heritage assets and their settings.
- The NPPF (2024) requires the conservation of heritage assets, proportionate assessment of their significance, and clear and convincing justification for any

harm or demolition, with decision-making based on the balance of harm and public benefits.

Conclusion

The proposal results in:

- total loss of a recognised heritage asset,
- significant harm to the AoSC and neighbouring properties
- a replacement dwelling wholly out of proportion and character, and
- material loss of residential amenity to neighbouring occupiers.

No clear public benefits have been demonstrated that would outweigh this level of harm. The application therefore clearly fails to accord with the NPPF, Local Plan policies CP3 and TB26, and the Borough Design Guide.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that Planning Application 253113 be refused.

Yours faithfully

Edward & Lisa Lunn