

Wokingham Borough Council
Development Control
PO Box 157
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 1WR

Our ref: WA/2024/131683/01-L01
Your ref: 242067

Date: 29 October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED ERECTION OF UP TO 99 NO. DWELLINGS, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, OPEN SPACE, PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE LINKS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND OTHER ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS POINTS ON LODGE ROAD AND TAPE LANE WITH REQUIRED IMPROVEMENTS. (ALL MATTERS RESERVED EXCEPT FOR MEANS OF ACCESS.) LAND BETWEEN LODGE ROAD AND TAPE ROAD, HURST RG10 0EG

Thank you for consulting us on the above application on 20/08/2024.

Environment Agency Position

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) we object to the proposed development due to it's unacceptable risk to the environment. We recommend that planning permission is refused for the following reasons.

Environment Agency position - Flood risk

We have reviewed the following documents:

- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, Land East of Lodge Road, Hurst, MacTaggart and Mickel Strategic Land, SLR Consulting Ltd, project no. 432.010035.00001, 19th July 2024, revision P02
- Illustrative Masterplan, project no. 1422, drawing no. 003-01, revision B, 15/07/2024, Mosaic
- Design & Access Statement, July 2024, Mosaic

In the absence of an acceptable flood risk assessment (FRA) we **object** to this application and recommend that planning permission is refused.

Reasons

The submitted FRA (ref. Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, Land East of Lodge Road, Hurst, MacTaggart and Mickel Strategic Land, SLR Consulting Ltd, project no. 432.010035.00001, 19th July 2024, revision P02) does not comply with the requirements for site-specific flood risk assessments, as set out in paragraphs 20 to 21 of the Flood Risk and Coastal Change planning practice guidance and its site-specific flood risk assessment checklist. This proposal also fails to comply with the Wokingham Borough Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, May 2023. The FRA does not therefore adequately assess the flood risks posed by the development.

In particular, the FRA fails to:

- Provide a design flood level for the 1% Annual Exceedance Probability flood extent plus an appropriate allowance for climate change (1%AEP+CC), therefore it is unclear what impact the development may have on flood risk, and whether or not the development would be safe for its lifetime.
- Take the impacts of climate change on fluvial flood risk into account.
- Demonstrate that finished floor levels will be set above the 1% annual exceedance probability (AEP) flood level with an appropriate allowance for climate change.
- Demonstrate that the development would not adversely impact floodplain storage.
- Demonstrate that the requirement for a buffer strip of at least 8m to the main river has been met.
- Consider the impact of the proposed new crossing over the main river.

Overcoming our objection

To overcome our objection, the applicant should submit a revised FRA which addresses the points highlighted above. If this cannot be achieved, we are likely to maintain our objection. Please re-consult us on any revised FRA submitted and we'll respond within 21 days of receiving it.

Informative - Advice to the applicant

Detailed fluvial modelling

There is a main river (Hatchgate Ditches) along part of the Western boundary of the site. There is no Jflow or detailed modelling available for this river. While the site is in Flood Zone 1, this is due to the lack of data rather than a lack of flood risk. For a Major development of this size we would expect detailed modelling of the watercourse to be provided in order to gain an accurate assessment of flood risk at the site. Note that the Wokingham Strategic Flood Risk Assessment also states on page 44 that "In areas where no modelling is present, this may require development of a 'detailed' hydraulic model".

For more information about requirements for detailed modelling please refer to [Using modelling for flood risk assessments - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/using-modelling-for-flood-risk-assessments). Once modelling has been

carried out, a design flood level can be calculated. This can be used to demonstrate the finished floor levels of the proposed dwellings are set high enough, and that there will not be an adverse impact on floodplain storage.

Climate change

The FRA will need to calculate an appropriate allowance for climate change using those advised in ['Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances'](#)

Buffer strip

As outlined on page 84 of the Wokingham Strategic Flood Risk Assessment "A buffer strip of 8m is required from any main river." It is currently unclear what is being proposed within 8 metres of the main river - some of the development at the southern end of the site is in close proximity to the river. The FRA should demonstrate that a buffer of at least 8m to any river designated as a 'main river' is provided across the site.

River crossing

The proposed new access to the site from Lodge Road crosses a main river, however this has not been assessed in the Flood Risk Assessment. It is therefore unclear what impact this would have on flood risk.

Informative

The applicant may require a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) to undertake the proposed works as the main river [Hatchgate Ditches] runs adjacent to the site. As submitted, it is **unlikely that a permit would be granted**. The applicant would need to demonstrate that the proposed works will not adversely impact on flood risk or the watercourse.

The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 require a permit or exemption to be obtained for any activities which will take place:

- on or within 8 metres of a main river (16 metres if tidal)
- on or within 8 metres of a flood defence structure or culverted main river (16 metres if tidal)
- on or within 16 metres of a sea defence
- involving quarrying or excavation within 16 metres of any main river, flood defence (including a remote defence) or culvert
- in a floodplain more than 8 metres from the riverbank, culvert or flood defence structure (16 metres if it's a tidal main river) and you don't already have planning permission

The applicant should not assume that a permit will automatically be forthcoming once planning permission has been granted, and we advise them to consult with us at the earliest opportunity.

For further guidance please visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits> or contact our National Customer Contact Centre on 03708 506 506 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) or by emailing enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Environment Agency Position - Fisheries, Biodiversity and Geomorphology

We note that the proposed application is for outline planning, with all matters reserved except for access to the site. We note that the proposed access off Lodge Road would cross over a culverted section of a channel that is part of the Hatchgate Ditches and is classed as main river. No details have been provided with regards to the proposed access that show how the access works would interact with the watercourse.

As this development will take place on a culverted section of the Hatchgate Ditches which is main river, it will require a flood risk activity permit (FRAP) under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. We are unlikely to grant a permit for this proposal.

We therefore object to the proposed development, due to its impacts on nature conservation, physical habitats and Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements and recommend that planning permission is refused.

Reason(s)

In determining the FRAP for this development, we will consider how the development affects water biodiversity and the wetland environment, in line with the relevant legislation. We'll also assess its compliance with the Thames River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). The RBMP states that the water environment should be protected and enhanced to prevent deterioration and promote the recovery of water bodies. We therefore seek the removal of existing culverts wherever possible.

The proposed development may prevent the reversal of a substantial loss of watercourse habitat due to the existing culvert due to the creation of the proposed access road and the current outline landscape proposals for this area of the site.

This objection is supported by paragraphs 180 and 186 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which recognise that the planning system should conserve and enhance the environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, planning permission should be refused. Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

Overcoming our objection

It may be possible to overcome our objection by removing the culvert and re-instating an open watercourse. While this watercourse would require to be crossed by any access road, this could be done with a clear span bridge to allow the unobstructed flow of water and passage of wildlife beneath it. While a community orchard is currently proposed in this area, the layout of planting here should be realigned to accommodate an open channel.

Additional comments

If this objection can be overcome, we would wish to see the following issues addressed as part of the development.

The development proposed in the southern part of the site has the Hatchgate Ditch main river channel running south to north along the western boundary and a ditch (D2) along the southern boundary. We note that the proposed layout of the development is currently illustrative, but we have some concerns regarding the proximity of development to these waterbodies and their associated riparian corridors. Although there appears to be some form of set back proposed between the road and the watercourse along the western edge, no clear measurements have been provided. Added to this, a path appears to be proposed between the watercourse and the road.

With regard to the southern boundary, it is not clear whether a buffer zone to the ditch is proposed and, if so, how wide this would be. An extension to the allotments that lie to the south of the boundary is proposed, but this extension would lie within what should be a buffer zone and appears to ignore the presence of this ditch. Having allotment plots right up to the top of bank of the ditch is inappropriate and a buffer zone should be provided to ensure that the ditch and its riparian corridor are protected.

Various documents refer to enhancement of the watercourses/ditches and this is included within the Biodiversity Metric; it is unclear what this proposed enhancement consists of. Deculverting and re-naturalising the two channels would provide a better enhancement as this will improve connectivity along the channels and enhance their ecological value. This should be combined with the establishment of a buffer zone and improvements to the ecological value of the vegetation in these areas. The layout of the development should allow for variation of the width of the buffer zones along the watercourses/ditches rather than it being a straight line along the length, but these should be a minimum of 10 metres wide (measured from the top of the bank of the channels) and wider in places. These buffer zones should be free from built development including lighting, domestic gardens and formal landscaping. Care should be taken with any planting along these features to ensure that this does not lead to excessive shading of the channels.

Reference is made in the documents to the need for a lighting plan. This needs to cover both the construction phase and operational phase and should align with a Construction Environmental Management Plan. It is important that it is designed to ensure that there is no light spill onto the watercourses/ditches and the trees/hedges and riparian corridors associated with them.

Any ponds and wet SuDS features should be designed to maximise their ecological value, with a complex planform and shallow banks to allow the establishment of marginal vegetation.

A landscape scheme would be required and any planting within the riparian corridors/buffer zones should consist of locally native species of UK genetic provenance rather than cultivars or non-native species. A long-term Landscape and Ecological Management Plan would be required to ensure that these areas reach and maintain their ecological objectives.

Closing

If you have any further questions, please contact me at the email address provided.

Yours faithfully

Mr Oliver Murray
Planning Advisor