

Wards Cross House
Hogmoor Lane
Hurst
RG10 0DH



Ms C Davis
Case Officer
Control and Development
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

4th March 2026

Dear Ms Davis

**Objection to Permission in Principle (PiP) Planning Application 260353 for the Proposed Erection of a Maximum of 7no and Minimum of 5no dwellings including Formation of an Access from Broadwater Lane
Land North of Broadwater Lane, RG10 0DS and West of Hogmoor Lane, Hurst RG10 0DH**

I am writing to object to the Permission in Principle (PiP) Application 260353 on land north of Broadwater Lane and West of Hogmoor Lane submitted by Shorewood Homes Ltd. I have lived in Wards Cross House which is on the boundary of the Application Site since 1981.

The principal reason for my objection is that the proposal would directly contradict a recent Appeal Decision where it was concluded that development of the Broadwater Lane area of the Application Site would cause harm to the setting and significance of heritage assets and the Hurst Area of Special Character. It is very clear that granting Permission in Principle now would ignore the established findings at Appeal as to the material planning considerations identified in it. These remain relevant and would conflict with the relevant policies in the Framework and in the current and emerging Local Development Plans. That conclusion and this letter of objection generally in relation to heritage issues is supported by a Rebuttal Heritage Statement by Dr Richard Massey BSc, MA, PhD, MCIfA (5470) of Ridgeway Heritage Consultancy which I attach.

The proposal is also in conflict with the Council's spatial strategy and housing distribution policies. The location and intrinsic constraints of the Application Site would result in the proposal having a negative visual impact on rural and agricultural landscape character; it would remove land from agricultural use; increase the risk of local surface water flooding and have a negative impact on the residential amenity of surrounding properties particularly relating to loss of privacy and reduced security.

1 Permission in Principle Application (PiP) Process

1.1 I question the suitability of submitting a Permission in Principle Application for a Site located in a sensitive area on the settlement's edge bordered by veteran and protected trees in a Green Route Enhancement Area; adjacent to listed buildings and an Area of Special Character and which, in addition, has recognised flooding and drainage problems. This approach has clearly been selected in an attempt to cast a veil over the objections to the previous scheme which are rooted in fundamental principles that are equally applicable to this, or indeed to any proposal that could be made in this location.

1.2 The Applicant's assertion that the illustrative material submitted with this PiP Application shows that the harm to the setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets and other conflicting constraints can be overcome at the Technical Details Consent stage therefore is wholly unconvincing. Accordingly, the illustrative proposals are unacceptable but they are also non-binding and there is justifiable concern amongst residents that if Permission were granted, the Plans that ultimately come forward could be even worse than currently shown in terms of height, size, bulk and mass.

1.3 It is also foreseeable that Permission in Principle to develop a subdivision of a large, open field can result in incremental applications on the remainder of the field which could then be more difficult to refuse. Applicants can, in addition, withdraw from the 2nd Technical Details Consent stage and submit a Full Planning Application for larger dwellings and different layouts using the permission for the principle of development of the site.

1.4 At the first stage of this PiP Application however the main issue is whether the Site is suitable for any form of residential development having regard to its location, land use and amount of development. To the extent that it relates to the principle of development, this includes the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, the setting and significance of designated heritage assets and, if harm arises, whether this is outweighed by other material considerations.

2 Description of the Application Site

2.1 The Application Site is situated in designated countryside outside but bordering the settlement boundary of Hurst. It is a subdivision of an undeveloped open, green field of 3.2 hectares that lies adjacent to Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane. The existing physical boundary of the field in the north is defined by mature trees and vegetation and follows a distinctive enclosed field pattern that is shown on early 18th Century maps of the area. Large, open arable fields extend beyond the field to the north and separate Hurst and Whistley Green from the larger urban area of Twyford.

2.2 The Site is orientated from northwest to southeast with the settlement boundary of Whistley Green to the west and Hurst to the east. There is one existing private agricultural access point from the A321 Broadwater Lane.

2.3 The field boundary includes 7 protected trees and 4 registered veteran oaks. The Application Site is bounded to the south, northwest and southeast by the Hurst Area of Special Character. It is surrounded by 5 Grade II Listed buildings and 2 non-designated heritage assets.

2.4 The Application Site includes approximately 40% of the land on Broadwater Lane that was the subject of Planning Application 240583 which was refused and dismissed at Appeal APP/X0360/W/25/3359898 in 2025. This revised Application Site consists of two distinct development areas with indicative plots 1-3 on Broadwater Lane and indicative plots 4-7 to the east on Hogmoor Lane. It is proposed to link the two areas by an internal access road that will run across the open field from Broadwater Lane.

3 The Principle of Development and Past Planning History

3.1 There has always been considerable pressure for development on the Application Site and adjoining land or subdivisions of the same field. The Council have consistently found that the Site is unsuitable for development and permission has never been granted on this land, as shown below.

➤ Outline application for residential development	March 1956	Refused
➤ Outline application for residential development 3.65 acres	August 1963	Refused
➤ Outline application for residential development	August 1964	Refused
➤ Outline application for residential development 9.75 acres	Sept 1981	Refused
➤ Outline application for residential development 8.9 acres	Sept 1981	Refused
➤ Full application for 5no dwellings on subdivision of the same field fronting onto Hogmoor Lane	April 1998	Refused
➤ Appeal/X0360/A/98/298932/P9 for 5no dwellings	Nov 1998	Dismissed
➤ Application 240583 for 9no dwellings	March 2024	Refused
➤ Appeal/X0360/W/25/3359898 for 9no dwellings	October 2025	Dismissed

3.2 Records show that the entire field, and not just the frontages of Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane, was promoted as Site 5HU030 in the emerging WBC Draft Local Plan Update. The site area included the total PiP Application Site and the area of the large attenuation basin. The submission was controversial and the process by which it was identified, assessed and allocated was challenged. The Council assessed and reassessed the Site meticulously through the HELAA process and concluded that Site 5HU030 was unsuitable for development. The Council's comment on the WBC Delegated Officer's Decision Report at the 2025 Appeal states, Appendix 1, Page 7:

3.3 'The updated Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2024 acknowledged significant material considerations that impact the site, rendering the site unsuitable for residential development. The September 2024 HELAA concluded *"The context of the Site is considered unsuitable, being inappropriate in terms of established settlement form and pattern, landscape character and flood risk which has been identified through representations."*

3.4 The Site was excluded from the WBC Local Development Plan Submission document Regulation 19 stage in September 2024. This exclusion was vindicated by the refusal of Planning Application 240583 and the Inspector's Decision to dismiss the Appeal against refusal in 2025.

3.5 WBC Pre-Application Advice to Walsingham Planning in May 2023 regarding a scheme on Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane that was similar to the current application stated, *"Whilst there is identified conflict with policies within the Local Plan in principle, the weight afforded to those relevant local plan policies are reduced in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF however not to the extent in which the principle of development in this case is accepted given past over delivery and lack of overriding benefits."*

This Opinion was given when the emerging Local Plan was still at the Regulation 18 stage and the proposed scheme's public benefit was considered greater at 12 and not 5-7 dwellings. It was arrived at prior to the refusal of Application 240583 and the subsequent Appeal.

4 The Proposed Application Scheme

4.1 Application 260353 is for Permission in Principle (PiP) to erect a minimum of 5 and a maximum number of 7 dwellings on the subdivided area of the field fronting the A321 Broadwater Lane with an internal access road to a second area on Hogmoor Lane. There is only one viable entry point to the Site on Broadwater Lane.

4.2 The Site area is .96 hectares however it is significant that a large attenuation basin that is an essential part of a Sustainable Drainage Scheme to manage surface water runoff has been situated offsite and excluded from the Site's Red Lines without explanation. It has to be assumed that the Application Site has been tailored to meet the area threshold of under 1 hectare required for a PiP Application. Both Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane are recognised as having flooding and drainage issues that affect local residents as confirmed in a WBC Flood Investigation Report 2016 and a WBC Section 19 Independent Flood Investigation Report in 2024. It is questionable whether Permission in Principle for development ought to be granted in an area of known flood risk when there is no guarantee that a suitable drainage scheme will be realised and no certainty as to the future ownership, management or maintenance of a scheme.

4.3 Veteran Tree Root Protection Areas and poor visibility splays limit the access points on Broadwater Lane to one. There is no viable access point from Hogmoor Lane for highway safety reasons as the Y junction is narrow with inadequate visibility splays.

4.4 The PiP Application Site includes approximately 40% of the eastern area of the same site that was the subject of Application 240583 and the subsequent Appeal. That area of Broadwater Lane included as part of the Application is precisely where the Inspector concluded that development would cause the most harm to heritage assets, in particular Elder Cottage, Parkers Cottage and Bower Cottage. The proposed Hogmoor Lane section of the Site is also adjacent to the Hurst Area of Special Character which includes 17th Century Grade II Listed Wards Cross House and the Old Posting House. Longbarn and Munfin House have close intervisibility with the Application Site and are both non-designated heritage assets.

4.5 The Applicant asserts that excluding some of the development on Broadwater Lane is a response to the Inspector's objections to the original Appeal scheme. However by removing some dwellings from the Broadwater Lane frontage and replacing them with development on Hogmoor Lane, the negative impacts on the heritage settings have not been dispelled but have instead been extended by transferring part of the proposed development within Application Site to Hogmoor Lane.

Illustrative site layout plan



5 Principle of Development and Housing Land Supply

5.1 The current WBC Local Development Plan runs through 2026. The emerging Local Plan Update was submitted under the transitional arrangements of the 2023 NPPF in February 2025 and is now at an advanced stage having completed Examination 1st Stage Hearings and the strategic sites found to be sound. The 2nd Stage Hearings are being held in March with the Final Hearings in June with Adoption expected before the end of the year.

5.2 Policies in emerging plans do not have the same statutory force as those in an adopted development plan, however they can be of material consideration in decision-making in accordance with Paragraph 48 of the Framework which states that the degree of weight given to relevant policies depends on the stage of preparation of the emerging plan and the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies. While not yet adopted, the emerging WBC Local Plan Update is at an advanced stage with an assured future housing supply and begins to carry weight with regard to policies managing housing supply and distribution together with others that accord with the Framework.

5.3 The Council can currently only demonstrate a 2.5-year housing land supply. Paragraph 11(d)(i) of the Framework notes that applications should be approved using the presumption in favour of sustainable development unless *'the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed.'* Footnote 7 clarifies that assets of particular importance include designated heritage assets. The harm to designated heritage assets must be given great weight and given the harm that the Inspector at the Broadwater Lane Appeal recognised would be caused to the settings and significance of several listed buildings and the Area of Special Character, this points inescapably to the intrinsic unsuitability of the

location for development. The Inspector found that notwithstanding Footnote 7, the public benefits of 9 dwellings would not outweigh the harm he identified.

5.4 Dr Massey's Rebuttal concludes for the reasons that he sets out that any development as envisaged by the PiP proposal would remain at the upper end of less than substantial harm and would thus be unacceptable. Proposals that are at the lowest end of that spectrum are frequently refused because of the policy imperative that great weight must be attached to even the slightest harm. The proposal therefore conflicts with Paragraphs 205 to 208 of the Framework, Policies TB24 and TB26 of the Local Development Plan and Policies HE1 and HE2 of the Emerging Local Plan Update.

5.5 The progress of the Local Plan Update, including the completion of Stage 1 Examination Hearings and the confirmation that the strategic allocations are sound, means that the Council is now almost at the point of restoring a full and deliverable five-year housing land supply. The current shortfall is therefore a short-term, transitional position rather than an ongoing structural deficit. In this context, the proposed 5–7 dwellings would make only a negligible contribution to housing supply and carry very limited weight in the planning balance. Of course, if granted, the harm that would arise from the realisation of the proposed development would not be short-term or transitional but would instead be permanent.

5.6 The Council will very soon be able to meet its housing requirements through the strategic sites and other appropriate sites that do not conflict with the Development Plan and once the housing land supply adequacy is regained then there will be no possibility of the planning balance being struck favourably to development in this location. This Site, in contrast, to those that have been found suitable for allocation, is heavily constrained and demonstrably unsuitable for development in principle and its conflict with heritage, landscape and spatial strategy policies cannot be justified.

6 Principle of Development and Sustainability of Location

6.1 Hurst is defined as a Minor Settlement in the Settlement Hierarchy and is one of the least sustainable locations in the Borough with few key services, a limited public transport system, poor walking and cycling opportunities to the nearest services and facilities which are situated further afield and not within convenient walking distances.

6.2 The Inspector at the Broadwater Lane Appeal considered that even though services and public transport in Hurst are limited, the Site is in a sustainable location for a small number of houses. His opinion was based primarily on what he perceived as the public transport options of the bus service to Twyford Station and residents having access to some limited services within the village. Other Inspectors' Decisions have disagreed with this opinion, including those for small sites in Hurst such as Walden Acres, Wokingham Road, Hurst APP/X0360/W/23/3322416 for 3 dwellings which was dismissed in 2023 and The Old Rose Garden, Orchard Road, Hurst, Planning Permission for 1 dwelling APP/X0360/W/19/3226711, dismissed in 2019. Both Appeals were dismissed principally on grounds of unsustainable reliance on the private motor car and environmental harm. Future occupants of this proposed development will be heavily reliant on the private motor car for day-to-day needs such as secondary schools, medical and dental services, shopping and recreational facilities. The proposal is in conflict with Policy CP6 and emerging Policy TR1 Managing Travel Demand

6.3 The scale of the proposed development is compatible with a Minor Settlement Location however the Appeal Site lies outside the settlement boundary in designated countryside and therefore conflicts with the spatial strategy in the Development Plan and the Emerging Local Plan Update.

6.4 The Inspector at the Broadwater Lane Appeal agreed that the proposal conflicted with the Plan's Development Strategy and Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy, Policy CC02 of the MDDP which seek to direct development to locations within settlement boundaries and CP11 regarding development outside settlement limits. He gave this limited weight seemingly because the Council officer attending the Hearing found difficulty in articulating the harm that would arise from these policy conflicts. Hopefully this reasoning can be bolstered in the Officer Report dealing with the present Application, perhaps also by reference to the emerging Local Plan Update which is now further along its path towards adoption and thus that much more certain and deserving of incrementally greater weight to be attached to it. Stage 2 Hearings are due to reconvene on 17th March and be completed in June with Adoption expected during this year.

7 Principle of Development and Policies in the Development Plan and Emerging WBC Local Plan Update

7.1 The Wokingham Borough Council Development Plan consists of Core Strategy DPD (2010) and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) (MDD). Supporting adopted Supplementary Planning Documents include the Landscape Character Assessment (2019) the Borough Design Guide (2012) and Design for Hurst (2005).

7.3 The Cross Cutting Policies are CC01 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development; CC02 Development Limits; CC03 Green Infrastructure and CC09 Development and Flood Risk together with Landscape and Heritage Policies TB21 Landscape Character and TB26 Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character.

7.4 Planning Policies in the emerging Local Plan Update clarify and strengthen the Council's spatial strategy. Key relevant Policies for the purpose of this Application are Policy SS1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development; SS4 Development within or adjacent to Minor Settlement and Policy SS5 Development in the Countryside; Policy NE2 Landscape character and countryside protection; NE3 Green & blue infrastructure, Trees, Ecology; HE1 Designated Heritage assets and HE2 Local heritage and Areas of Special Character.

8 Principle of Development and Conflict with Key Policies in the Local Development Plan

8.1 Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3 Sustainable Development Principles and Emerging Policy SS1. The proposal does not comply with key criteria set out in Policy CP1 or emerging Policy SS1 which, while aligning the presumption in favour of sustainable development with the NPPF, requires decisions to be made in accordance with the Development Plan, confirms that proposals must contribute positively to environmental, social and economic objectives and states that development must avoid harm to heritage assets, landscape character, biodiversity and flood risk area.

8.2 Policy CP6, Managing travel demand and Emerging Policy TR1. Although opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas, the policy is generally consistent with the Framework in that it prioritises walking, cycling and public transport over car use. Future occupants of the proposed development will be heavily reliant on the private motor car. Emerging Policy TR1 seeks to avoid development in those locations where sustainable transport cannot realistically be achieved unless exceptional justification exists.

8.3 MDDL Policy CC01 Presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Policy broadly reflects the Framework's requirements. Footnote 7 of the Framework Policy 11(d) (i) applies and the benefits of the proposal have to be weighed against the harm caused to heritage assets in the planning balance.

8.4 MDDL Policy CC02: Development limits and Emerging Policy SS4, Development within and adjacent to Minor Settlements. The proposal does not comply with the policy CC02 as it is located outside development limits; does not respect the transition between the built-up area and open countryside and will have a negative visual impact on the surrounding countryside and existing settlement pattern. Emerging Policy SS4 strengthens the strategy with regard to preventing ribbon development, protecting settlement separation and resisting edge of village sprawl. The proposal does not meet the criteria for development adjacent to minor settlements as it is not an infill development. The Inspector at the Appeal that involved the same site in Hogmoor Lane (T/APP/X0360/A/98/298932/P9) in 1999, confirmed that the Site's frontage of 80 to 90 metres is "*a substantial gap in the street scene and greater than would normally be termed an infill plot.*"

Policy SS4 (3) also states "*residential development on unallocated sites adjacent to minor settlements will be refused. This includes when a five-year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated or the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was below 75% over the past three years.*"

8.5 MDDL Policy CC03: Green infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping and Emerging Policy NE3 Green and Blue Infrastructure: The proposal is located in a Green Route Enhancement Area and is not compliant with the aims of this policy. The wide bell mouth access on Broadwater Lane will cause a noticeable loss of vegetation. Policy NE3 strengthens the protections in CC03 particularly veteran trees and ecological connectivity.

8.6 MDDL Policy CC09: Development and Flood Risk (from all sources). The Application Site and surrounding areas are susceptible to groundwater flooding, surface water and wastewater flooding with significant flooding events occurring twice in the past ten years as recorded in WBC Flood Investigation Report 2016 and Section 19 Flooding and Drainage Report 2024. A proposed sustainable drainage scheme is situated offsite with no clear indication of future ownership, management or maintenance.

8.7 Policy TB21 Landscape Character and Emerging Policy NE2 Landscape and Character. The proposal is not compliant with this Policy as it proposes development that will be a significant incursion into the open countryside and land separating Whistley Green and Hurst. It is in direct

contradiction to the Issues, Aims and Guidance of the WBC Landscape Character Assessment C2 Hurst River Terrace. Emerging Policy NE2 requires that development conserves and enhances landscape character; protects settlement separation and encroachment into the open countryside; requires proposals to respect key views, rural tranquillity and historic field patterns; requires development to be appropriate in its landscape context and avoid urbanising rural areas.

8.8 Policy TB24 Designated Heritage Assets and Emerging Policy HE1 Heritage assets. The proposal is not compliant with the Policy in that it would fail to conserve and enhance the setting of the designated heritage assets that have close intervisibility with the Appeal Site including Parkers Cottage, Bower Cottage, Wards Cross House and non-designated heritage assets of Longbarn and Munfin House as discussed in the Rebuttal Heritage Statement accompanying this objection. Policy HE1 is fully aligned with the NPPF and requires the conservation and enhancement of the significance and setting of listed buildings. Harm to designated heritage assets must be clearly justified and will only be permitted where public benefits outweigh harm; it also emphasises that setting includes views, landscape context and historic relationships

8.9 Policy TB26 Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character and Emerging Policy HE2, Local Heritage and Areas of Special Character The Application Site is bordered by the Hurst Area of Special Character. The proposal is not compliant with the Policy as it introduces a wide bell mouth access within the Area of Special Character and a modern suburban housing estate within the setting of an Area of Special Character. It will have a negative visual impact that will not retain or enhance the traditional, historic, local and special character of the area. Emerging Policy HE2 requires development to preserve or enhance the character, appearance and setting of Areas of Special Character and avoid suburbanising forms of development that erode historic rural character

8.10 Patently, the proposal is not compliant with key policies in the Development Plan or the Emerging Local Plan Update.

9 Location and Harm to the Setting and Significance of Close Heritage Assets

9.1 Broadwater Lane.

The Applicant's covering letter is accompanied by a Heritage Statement by Asset Heritage however the assessments and conclusions in this Statement are not agreed. As noted above, this objection is supported by a Rebuttal Heritage Statement by Dr Richard Massey of Ridgeway Heritage Consultancy which supports the Inspector's opinion and conclusions in his Appeal Decision and fundamentally disagrees with the assessment of the levels of harm in the Applicant's Heritage Statement.

9.2 The Applicant is seeking to present this PiP Application as acceptable by submitting Illustrative Site Layout Plans including proposals for setback and landscaping. These proposals are non-binding and carry little or no weight at this stage. However, more fundamentally the levels of harm identified by the Appeal Inspector point to the conclusion that any development on this Site would be unacceptably harmful, which chimes with the conclusions of Dr Massey. Accordingly, the Applicant has no recourse

but to fall back on an attempt to refute the levels of harm that were identified in the Inspector's Decision, in effect having to argue that it was wrong.

9.3 The Applicant proposes that by reducing the number of houses from four to three in this area and using setback and planted buffer zones there will be no harm to nearby heritage assets or the harm will be downgraded. There is heavy reliance on the Asset Heritage Statement and it is assumed that the Applicant's own consultant's conclusions are intended to supersede the Inspector's reasoned judgment, even though the Inspector's findings were independent and authoritative and must thus carry substantial weight. The effect is an attempt to contest matters already determined at a recent Appeal.

9.4 The Applicant seeks to convince himself that the Inspector's assessment of the importance of the setting of the heritage assets is incorrect. The Inspector's opinion clearly stated that any houses, even with setbacks and landscaping, would '*significantly undermine*' the Site's quiet, open rural environment that makes a strong, positive contribution to the setting and significance of the heritage assets and Area of Special Character.

Paragraph 25, *"From Broadwater Lane these buildings are currently experienced and perceived with a largely quiet, open and rural environment because of the character and appearance of the appeal site and it is likely that these buildings will have always been set against that backdrop."*

Paragraph 26: *"The attributes of the site contribute positively to the setting and therefore the significance of the four listed buildings. Historic England guidance on the setting of Heritage Assets advises that settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed are likely to contribute particularly strongly to significance."*

The Inspector stated in Paragraph 27 that the Site's positive contribution as the setting of the heritage assets would be significantly undermined through increased noise and activity on the site as well as houses. He went on to state that *"This would be the case even if some dwellings were to be set back from Broadwater Lane and even if a scheme of landscaping were to be implemented."*

It is clearly the Inspector's opinion that any development in the location of the Application Site would be inherently harmful to the setting and significance of the listed buildings.

9.5 The Applicant has responded by stating that reducing the number of houses fronting Broadwater Lane is a material change however this will only reduce the level of impact on Grade II listed Buttercups and not on Elder Cottage and in particular on Parkers Cottage and Bower Cottage.

The Applicant also states that the Inspector's opinion is "*questionable/unusual*" because of the presence of the Broadwater Lane road however historically the road has always been in front of the listed buildings and is shown on the earliest maps of the area, it was first metalled in 1931.

9.6 The Inspector stated in Paragraph 28, *"The proposal would cause harm to the setting of Buttercups, Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage and Elder Cottage. The arising harm to the significance of the assets would be less than substantial."*

Paragraph 29 states *“The harm would be towards the higher end within the less than substantial category for Bower Cottage and Parkers Cottage given that they are fully opposite the appeal site and have a close relationship with it.”*

The Applicant has responded by stating that the increased separation and double screening from existing and proposed planting would result in reducing harm to the lower end of Less than Substantial at worst. This is in direct contradiction of the Inspector’s Statement in Paragraph 27 that any development, even with setback and planting, would result in significantly undermining the positive contribution the Application Site makes to the setting and significance of the heritage assets and the Area of Special Character. It is also of note that the proposed retention of ‘existing planting’ is not within the Applicant’s control as the verge is WBC Highways land.

9.7 The Inspector in the local Barkham Manor Farm Appeal (APP/X0360/C/16/3142135) stated in Paragraph 55, *“In any event screening unpalatable development is not a good approach as it could be repeated, too often to the detriment of the local landscape.”*

9.8 The Inspector at the Woodlands Farm Appeal (APP/XO360/C/21/3270397) stated that *“The purpose of landscaping is to enhance development not to hide unacceptable visual intrusion. It is not reasonable to impose maintenance conditions for landscaping in perpetuity and therefore reliance on landscaping to hide an unacceptable form of development is also not reasonable”*.

9.9 Appeal Decisions consistently demonstrate that Permission in Principle cannot be granted where the location itself gives rise to unavoidable harm to heritage. Inspectors have repeatedly held that, even in the absence of detailed design, development that would erode the rural setting of listed buildings, diminish the character and appearance of local Areas of Special Character or interrupt historic settlement form is unacceptable in principle.

9.10 This principle is demonstrated by several Decisions dismissing Appeals against refusal of PiP Applications where the location affects the setting and significance of heritage assets, for example:

- Land at Cleeve Road, Middle Littleton, Worcestershire, Appeal against the refusal of a PiP Application for 9 dwellings APP/H1840/W/23/3335286 2024, dismissed in 2024 by reason that the location of the development site would result in harm to the rural character and appearance of the area which would adversely affect the setting of a Listed Building.
- Land off Station Road, South Cerney, Cirencester, Appeal against the refusal of a PiP Application for 3 dwellings APP/F1610/W/25/3369472 2025 was dismissed by reason of the location of the proposal posing harm to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area and the setting of close listed buildings and a non-designated heritage asset.

9.11 The Inspectorate’s Decisions confirm that the open, undeveloped qualities of land contributing to the significance of nearby heritage assets are fundamental constraints that cannot be mitigated through later technical details. The same position applies with this Application, the contribution the Application Site makes to the setting, legibility and appreciation of designated heritage assets is intrinsic to its location. The introduction of urbanising residential development in this location would inevitably result in the upper range of less than substantial harm that is not outweighed by any public benefits.

Appeal practice establishes that such harm is sufficient to justify refusal of a PiP proposal in accordance with Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

9.12 It must be noted that were the proposal to be allowed, this would fundamentally alter the views from which the listed buildings and the settlement in general are experienced as well as the views out from it across the open countryside that currently exist. Where currently there is openness and rurality, there would be enclosure and obstruction to views as currently enjoyed.

10.1 Location and Harm to Heritage Assets, Hogmoor Lane

The Application Site extends to four indicative plots fronting onto Hogmoor Lane. The Hurst Area of Special Character extends to the boundaries of Wards Cross House which is a 17th Century Grade II Listed Building and Longbarn which is a non-designated heritage asset of historic interest. The Area of Special Character also includes the Old Post House which is a 17th Century Grade II Listed Building. Munfin House has close intervisibility with the Application Site and is a non-designated heritage asset.

10.2 Dr Massey's Rebuttal Heritage Statement provides expert analysis of the effect of the proposed scheme in this location and the level of harm posed to individual surrounding heritage and non-designated heritage assets. There is fundamental disagreement with the estimations of harm presented in Section 6.2 of the Applicant's Heritage Statement.

10.3 The Applicant's Heritage Statement Paragraph 4.9 states that *"there are no public views from the AoSC directly across the Hogmoor Lane part of the Site."* *"The Site does not however form views of or form a significant backdrop to key views of the historic buildings included in the AoSC and as an element of the latter's physical setting does not make any appreciable contribution to its significance"*. This claim is inaccurate and does not represent the actual situation, as a site visit demonstrates. A WBC approved and commended community project to clear a drainage ditch that had become overwhelmed by dead self-set trees, bracken, nettles and bramble scrub had the effect of restoring impressive views from the Lane. There are unrestricted views westward and north-westward from Hogmoor Lane across open fields as far as Whistley Green Cottage, which is a non-designated heritage asset. Existing westward views from the Lane incorporate an open fieldscape and emphasise its rural character, this character would be wholly altered by the proposed modern development along its frontage.

10.4 The visual impact of development in this location would be amplified by the fact that the ground level of the field sits approximately 0.5–1 metre above Hogmoor Lane, a difference that is clearly perceptible when travelling in this area of the Lane. The Applicant's Supplementary Flood Risk Statement further requires finished floor levels to be raised by an additional 0.4–0.7 metres above existing ground levels to mitigate against groundwater flooding. The combined effect would be to elevate the proposed dwellings significantly above the Lane, resulting in tall, modern buildings that would dominate and overwhelm the neighbouring traditional properties. This elevated massing would introduce a pronounced suburban character into a historically rural area that would be wholly out of keeping with the established scale, form and setting of the surrounding traditional buildings.

11 Location and Harm to the Setting of the Hurst Area of Special Character

11.1 The Illustrative Site Plan shows indicative plots 1-3 forming a row of 3 houses on Broadwater Lane that is unrelated to any physical feature, the settlement boundary or the existing build line. A row of modern houses will be visually incongruous and introduce an urbanising effect into the setting of the Hurst Area of Special Character. It would not respect the transition between a built area and the open countryside and would be a significant incursion into the land that forms the historic separation of Hurst and Whistley Green.

11.2 The Application Site is not simply part of an uncharacterised area of farmland but comprises part of a legible historic landscape which is contemporaneous with adjacent heritage assets that form the Area of Special Character.

11.3 The proposed linear row of four modern dwellings on Hogmoor Lane would intrude directly into the setting of the Hurst Area of Special Character, introducing a suburban building line entirely at odds with the established pattern of development. The surrounding historic properties, Wards Cross House, the Old Posting House, Longbarn and Munfin House and Appletree Cottage sit within generous plots and read as part of a dispersed rural settlement form. Four houses of modern construction would, by contrast, introduce a tight, uniform frontage that would urbanise the Lane, erode its spacious rural grain and diminish the historic character that the AoSC designation seeks to preserve.

11.4 The harm is compounded by the engineered access road required to serve the dwellings, which would run parallel next to Hogmoor Lane at a noticeably higher level. Vehicles travelling along this elevated internal road would appear visually incongruous, creating an intrusive, artificial feature and fundamentally altering the quiet, rural experience of the Lane. This engineered arrangement would neither respect the historic landscape setting nor conserve the special qualities of the Area of Special Character, contrary to Policies TB26 and emerging Policy HE2.



Hurst Area
of Special
Character

12 Location and Conflict with the Landscape Character Assessment C2 Hurst River Terrace

12.1 The Application Site lies within the C2 Hurst River Terrace Landscape Character Area. Key characteristics of the Hurst River Terrace are flat lowland; a network of water features; a simple agricultural landscape of mainly arable farmland with pasture; an open character; villages that are located around historic cores including Whistley Green and Hurst; a rural tranquil area and wooded horizons

12.2 The Landscape Strategy for the C2 Hurst River Terrace LCA is to conserve and enhance the quiet, rural and agricultural landscape and in the context of the Application Site, *“The aim is to conserve the low-density pattern of settlement centred around Hurst and Whistley Green.”*

12.3 Page 112, Key Guidance is *“To conserve the peaceful and open rural character of the open landscape between adjacent village centres to protect the individual identity of settlements and retain their sense of physical and visual separation in particular protect the sensitive areas of open land remaining between Hurst and Whistley Green.”*

12.4 The field of the Application Site provides the essential physical and visual separation between Hurst and Whistley Green. Its open, tranquil and uninterrupted agricultural character is a defining physical and visual feature of the two settlements and contributes strongly to their individual identity. The proposed incursion of three modern dwellings in a linear row on the edge of the village, unrelated to any existing built form and contrary to the established grain of development, would represent a clear encroachment into this open landscape. The introduction of domestic gardens, close-boarded fencing, parked vehicles and the everyday activity associated with modern housing would erode the area’s rural tranquillity and diminish the historic, traditional setting that characterises this part of the village. The proposal will not conserve or enhancing the key characteristics of the landscape, rather it would suburbanise an otherwise open and undeveloped field, weaken a historic area of settlement separation and undermine the distinctive rural identity of the area. The proposal conflicts with Policies TB21 and NE2.

13 Location and Haines Hill Valued Landscape Designation

13.1 The Site is proposed by the Council as an extension of the Haines Hill Valued Landscape Designation in the emerging Local Plan Update. Valued Landscape will be discussed at Examination Hearings in March. The Inspector stated that he *‘was not confident’* that the Appeal Site should be considered as Valued Landscape. The Applicant states in response that *‘the evidence does not demonstrate the site as Valued Landscape’*.

13.2 The Inspector’s comment does not materially weaken the Council’s case for designating the location as Valued Landscape. His comment was limited, unexplained and not determinative, whereas the Local Plan process requires a full, evidence-led assessment of landscape value across a much larger area. He found in addition that the Site’s largely quiet, rural and open environment makes a strong, positive contribution to the setting and significance of heritage assets and the AoSC. These are precisely the attributes that underpin Valued Landscape status.

13.3 The Applicant has stated that the 2025 NPPF proposes to remove reference to Valued Landscape however the NPPF is still in draft form and is undergoing consultation after which the wording may change. The proposed exclusion of the term Valued Landscape does not remove the underlying protections but intends to restructure them through national policy and Local Plans.

14 Location and Landscape Character, Hogmoor Lane

14.1 The Hogmoor Lane section of the Application Site was the subject of a Planning Application for five dwellings with a subsequent Appeal dismissed in 1999 (T/APP/X0360/A/98/298932. The Lane has remained unchanged since that time with no additional development and the descriptions in the Inspector's Appeal Decision are still relevant including his assessment of the landscape character of the Site.

14.2 The Inspector's opinion was that the Site lies in the green gap between Hurst and Twyford which is situated 1 kilometre away across a flat field north of the Appeal Site. He stated that clear views of the Appeal Site could be obtained from the A321 and that the Site would also be visible from parts of a byway that links the A321 with Hogmoor Lane. He noted that the Site was too large for infill as 80- 90 metres forms a substantial gap in the street scene and makes a significant contribution to the semi-rural character of the Lane. The Inspector did not consider that the Site would be a logical rounding off of the built form of the village. He stated that the Site would be widely visible as a significant incursion into a relatively narrow belt of open land.

14.3 He noted that Hogmoor Lane is an area of low-density development which forms a zone of transition between the village and open countryside, that the buildings are of varying age with traditional detached dwellings in relatively large open plots. The proposed development would be closely spaced and the visual aspect would be heightened by the ground level of the application site being above the Lane. He also considered that the demand for patios, garden furniture and the paraphernalia of day-to-day living would add to the urbanising effect. The Appeal was dismissed principally on grounds of harm to landscape character, inadequate access and highway safety concerns regarding the Hogmoor Lane Y junction.

14.4 The current PiP application simply replicates a scheme that has already been found unacceptable in exactly this location. It would repeat the same suburbanising intrusion into the semi-rural character of Hogmoor Lane that the Inspector previously rejected. Nothing material has changed: the 80-90 metre gap remains a defining open break in the street scene, the rural transition between settlement and countryside is still highly sensitive and the introduction of a modern tall housing and internal access roads would again erode the historic, spacious, and agricultural character of the Lane.

14.5 Hurst is described in the Borough Design Guide as having a Loose Village form. Paragraph 2.3 states that *"the character of the villages is defined by a dominance of landscape. They are generally more spacious, with streets being less enclosed ...Landscape and the rural hinterland penetrate into the village with trees and vegetation between buildings and along boundaries. These villages generally consist of housing areas that have been built at various times, with the landscape creating a consistency*

in character." The Application Site is a typical example of where the landscape and rural hinterland penetrate into the village.

15 Location and Surface, Wastewater and Groundwater Flooding Risk

15.1 The area of the Application Site has been reduced to .96 hectares by excluding an engineered Sustainable Drainage Scheme (SUDS). The offsite drainage scheme, attenuation basin and swales will remain on private land and will have to be assured by a future unsecured 106 Agreement. Residents' concerns about the potential of the proposal to increase the risk of flooding to the surrounding area were raised during the last Application 240583 and supported by photographic evidence of flooding incidents affecting residents on both Lanes; the inclusion of a Wilsham Engineering Independent Brief Review; reference to the WBC Section 19 Flood Report by JBA Consulting and reference to the WBC Flood Investigation Report 2016.

15.2 While the offsite flooding and drainage mitigation measures no longer form a direct part of this PiP Application, the Applicant has submitted a Supplementary Statement on Flood Risk by Simpsons TWS. It is noted that *Figure 2.1 Flood Map for Planning*, outlines Application Site 240583 and not the current PiP Application Site. The Flood Risk Statement appears to rely on the same analysis as the previous Application with no evidence of updated calculations for the current Site and the Hogmoor Lane location.

15.3 Simpsons Supplementary Statement acknowledges the risk of groundwater flooding and advises that in order to prevent flooding onsite and for the effective functioning of wastewater systems, the finished floor Levels of the dwellings must be raised to well above pre-existing surrounding ground levels

15.4 The effect of raising the ground under and surrounding the new houses would be to increase the rate of rainfall runoff from the Site in a north and northeasterly direction. The runoff would be further increased by the impermeable surfaces such as roofs and any hardstanding. It is intended that the increased runoff would be accommodated by the SUDS swales and attenuation basin situated offsite on private land.

15.5 There are risks associated with this proposal. It is possible that the increased rate of runoff may be greater than anticipated; that the attenuation process fails to perform as planned or that the flood mitigation measures fail to manage the heightened rate of flow and the excess runoff would flow down Hogmoor Lane and be greater than the system of ditches can accommodate. This could lead to a recurrence or even a worsening of the flooding events that have previously affected Hogmoor Lane when it has been impassable with internal flooding of houses at its lowest point. It is also likely that the raised floor levels in the west of the site will increase the water draining towards the east and the garden of Longbarn that already floods in winter months.

15.6 There is a recognised issue with foul water flooding in Broadwater Lane immediately next to the Application Site. These events are not a 1:1000 or even 1:100-year risk but are recurrent, the latest serious incidents occurred in 2014 and 2021. Water from the surface water drains on the A321 can enter the sewer pipes during periods of heavy rainfall. The sewer pumping station at Broad Hinton to

the north of the Application Site becomes overwhelmed and a mixture of water and raw sewage flows out of the drains in Broadwater Lane to a depth of over .3 metres, flooding the road (which has had to be closed for several days) and residents' gardens. The Applicant's Statement on Flood Risk ignores this unpleasant and inconvenient feature of the location.

16 Location, Access and Connectivity

16.1 The constraints of the Site including Veteran Tree Root Protection and inadequate visibility splays result in only one viable access point from Broadwater Lane to both sections of the proposed development.

16.2 The location of the access is inherently poorly connected to the existing footpath network and although pedestrian footways are not formally assessed at the PiP stage, the physical constraints of Broadwater Lane mean that no continuous footway can ever be delivered on the same side of the road to either the east or west of the Site. Pedestrians leaving the development would be forced to immediately cross the A321 and then cross it twice more when travelling either towards the centre of the village or towards Twyford.

16.3 The A321 is the principal route between Twyford and Wokingham carrying around 3500 vehicle movements per day, it is unlit with no controlled pedestrian crossing points. Any crossings would therefore be limited to dropped kerbs and tactile paving which is an inherently unsafe arrangement on a fast, dark road that cannot be mitigated through design.

16.4 The Applicant's suggestion of a secondary pedestrian access via a new bridge over the drainage ditch to Hogmoor Lane does not resolve the problem. Hogmoor Lane is a narrow, unlit rural lane with no footway and the Y-junction at its southern end is already hazardous with restricted visibility and the potential to cause conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.

17 Location and Rural Amenity

Hogmoor Lane is thought to be Saxon in origin and leads to a network of local footpaths and bridleways, it is part of the River Loddon circular walk. The Land is a valued rural amenity that attracts walkers, runners, cyclists and riders not only from Hurst and Twyford but from surrounding areas. The proposal will introduce a modern urban housing estate into the Lane that will significantly undermine its semi-rural character and local recreational value.

18 Change in Land Use

18.1 The field that encompasses the Application Site has always been in agricultural use either arable or grazing pasture for sheep and cows. It is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land although it has never been established whether this is Grade 3a (best and most versatile) or Grade 3b and the Applicant has not clarified this. The proposal would therefore result in the permanent loss of agricultural land.

18.2 The Applicant claims that the remainder of the field will continue in agricultural use but this will be limited. The proposal would divide the land and restrict access for farm machinery. The residual parcel would be functionally unworkable, reducing agricultural activity to a token gesture rather than a

viable land use. The proposal therefore represents a significant change of use that would erode the agricultural character and productivity of the wider field

19 Amount of Development

19.1 This PiP Application seeks approval for between five and seven dwellings divided into three on the Broadwater Lane frontage and four in Hogmoor Lane. The three Broadwater Lane dwellings would, by the Applicant's own indicative layout, occupy precisely the part of the Site where the Inspector has already confirmed development would harm the setting and significance of nearby listed buildings, that harm is unavoidable.

19.2 It may be considered that the dwellings could be moved to the Hogmoor Lane frontage however this is already physically constrained, visually exposed and surrounded by the Area of Special Character, designated and non-designated heritage assets and would cause equivalent harms. It cannot realistically accommodate all seven dwellings or even five without creating an overdeveloped, suburbanised enclave wholly at odds with its rural context.

19.3 Accessing the Hogmoor Lane plots from Broadwater Lane via an internal road driven across the open field is equally inappropriate and impractical. It would sever the historic field pattern, introduce urbanising activity into the centre of the field and create a contrived layout that fails to respect either the landscape or the settlement form. The Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane sections taken together demonstrate that the Site is fundamentally unsuitable for residential development in principle, regardless of whether the Applicant seeks five, seven or any number of dwellings.

20 Conclusion

The evidence set out in this objection demonstrates that the Application Site is fundamentally unsuitable for residential development in principle, when assessed against the three considerations of location, land use and amount of development.

In terms of location, the proposal would recreate precisely the same heritage, landscape and spatial harms that an Inspector has only recently examined and dismissed at Appeal. The Inspector's findings were clear and directly applicable to this PiP Application: development on this land would cause unavoidable harm to the setting and significance of multiple listed buildings and to the Hurst Area of Special Character and that harm cannot be mitigated by setbacks, landscaping or design. This alone provides a clear and compelling reason for refusal under Paragraph 11(d)(i) of the Framework.

When considering the Application in terms of land use, the Site lies outside the settlement boundary in open countryside and the proposal would erode settlement separation, disrupt a historic field pattern and introduce suburbanising built form into a sensitive rural landscape. The land is currently in long-established agricultural use and the proposal would result in the unjustified loss and fragmentation of that use with the remaining parcel rendered functionally unworkable. The Site is further constrained by poor access and unsafe pedestrian connectivity. These constraints are intrinsic to the land itself and cannot be resolved at the Technical Details Consent stage. The PiP process is not an appropriate process for a location where the principle of development is so clearly unacceptable.

In terms of the amount of development, the proposed five to seven dwellings cannot be accommodated without generating the very harms identified by the Inspector. The Broadwater Lane frontage would again harm the setting and significance of nearby listed buildings while the Hogmoor Lane section is already too constrained to accommodate the proposed amount of development without creating an overdeveloped, suburbanised enclave at odds with its rural context. The internal access road required to link the two areas would itself sever the historic field pattern and introduce urbanising activity into the centre of the field.

The emerging Local Plan Update is now at an advanced stage with strategic allocations found sound and the Council close to restoring a full five-year housing land supply. The contribution of five to seven dwellings carries negligible weight and little public benefit in the planning balance when compared to significant heritage and landscape harms. As already noted, the harms arising from the development would be permanent and the sole putative advantage in addressing the current housing land supply deficiency is ephemeral, given that it is about to be corrected in any event via the Plan process. Granting Permission in Principle would disregard a recent Inspector's Decision, undermine the spatial strategy, and create an unjustified expectation of development on a Site where the principle has been repeatedly and consistently rejected. I respectfully request that this Permission in Principle Application be refused.

Yours sincerely

Annette Lade