

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242430
Site Address:	Hurst Village Hall, School Road, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0DR
Expiry Date:	8 April 2025
Site Visit Date:	17/02/2025
Proposal: Full application for proposed single storey timber building following demolition of the existing scout hut.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Areas of Special Character
- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
- Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
- Landscape Character Assessment Area
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone Minor

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation

Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List
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PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
030893	Proposed new pitched roofs to existing flat roof hall and new high level windows.	Approved, 08/08/2003
152612	Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey rear extension for the storage of tables and chairs.	Approved, 28/01/2016

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objections.
WBC Highways – Further information requested.
WBC Green Infrastructure – No comments received.
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objections, subject to a condition.
WBC Ecology Newts – No objections, subject to a condition.
WBC Sports Development (Places and Neighbourhoods) – No comments received.

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	St Nicholas Hurst Parish – Supports application.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description and Proposed Development:

The application site relates to a single-storey building situated within the grounds of Hurst Village Hall, located in the centre of Hurst, a rural village within Wokingham Borough. The site is surrounded by a mix of residential properties, open green spaces, and mature trees, which contribute to the character of the village.

The application seeks the demolition of an existing derelict single-storey Scout hut and the construction of a replacement single-storey building for use by the Parish Council and local Scouts.

It should be noted that amended plans were submitted by the agent and received on 05/08/2025. Initially, a 24-metre x 12 metre replacement building had been proposed along the north-west side boundary of the application site. The amended scheme now proposes a 23 metre x 12 metre replacement building, occupying an identical

footprint and siting to the existing building, positioned along the southern side boundary fronting Orchard Road.

This application will be assessed on the basis of these amended plans.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located outside of development limits, where Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy applies. Policy CP11 of the Borough Core Strategy states that, in order to protect the distinct identity of settlements and maintain environmental quality, proposals outside development limits will not normally be permitted, except where, inter alia:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement;

The application proposes the demolition of an existing derelict single-storey Scout hut and the construction of a replacement single-storey building for use by the Parish Council, for day and evening classes, weekend hire for social events, and continued use by the Scouts (1st Hurst Air Scouts) and Youth Club. These activities provide a clear community benefit, facilitating recreational and social engagement within the countryside, and therefore align with criterion 1 of Policy CP11.

With regard to criterion 2, the proposed replacement building would occupy a footprint identical to that of the existing structure, therefore no additional encroachment or expansion of development beyond the existing situation would arise.

In terms of criterion 3, although the proposal would not necessarily bring about significant environmental improvements in the traditional sense (such as biodiversity enhancements or landscape restoration), the demolition of the existing derelict structure and its replacement with a modern, fit-for-purpose community facility would enhance the overall quality and functionality of the site. The new building, designed to better serve community needs, would offer an improved appearance compared to the existing outdated and deteriorating structure. Given this, while environmental benefits may be limited, the overall planning benefits of the proposal – including improved usability, aesthetics, and community provision – would outweigh any minor concerns.

On balance, the proposal is considered to meet criterion 3.

Overall, the proposal is deemed to accord with Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and is acceptable in principle.

Impact on Built Heritage and Character of the Area:

The application site is located within 'The Old School House' Area of Special Character (ASC), a designated non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). It is also within the immediate setting of other NDHAs, including the late 19th-century former Working Men's Club and the 1920s Hurst Village Hall. These buildings, by virtue of their age, architectural quality, and historic significance, contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area

The existing Scout hut is a prefabricated concrete and timber structure, estimated to be 30-40 years old. Its shallow dual-pitch roof and utilitarian design offer little architectural merit, and it does not contribute positively to the character of the ASC or the setting of nearby NDHAs. Consequently, the Council's Built Heritage Officer has raised no concerns regarding its demolition from a heritage perspective.

In terms of the proposal's impact on local character, the replacement structure is generally in keeping with the site's established use and scale and would represent a significant improvement in appearance through the use of modern materials, which could enhance the immediate setting. The building's footprint would be identical to the existing structure, positioned along the southern side boundary of Orchard Road. Its scale and form would therefore be consistent with the current arrangement on the site and would largely be screened from view by existing boundary vegetation.

The Council's Built Heritage Officer has advised that the final choice of materials and finishes should be secured by condition to ensure compatibility with the historic context. A suitable condition will be attached to any approval.

Overall, the proposed development would not adversely impact the character of the area or area of special character, the inclusion of a condition to finalise materials and finishes would ensure that the scheme remains sensitive to its historic and rural setting.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Due to the design and positioning of the proposed development, there are no concerns regarding loss of light, overlooking, or overbearing impacts on surrounding properties.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The footprint and level of facilities provided by the new building would be comparable to the existing structure. As a result, the Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the application and determined that there will be no additional demand for car parking, and no negative impacts on highway safety. As such, no highways-related objections have been raised, and the proposal is considered acceptable from a highways

perspective.

Flooding and Drainage:

The proposed development is located within Flood Zone 1, according to Environment Agency mapping, with a low risk of surface water flooding. As the replacement building would occupy an identical footprint to the existing structure, there would be no increased risk of flooding on or off the site. Accordingly, no adverse flooding or drainage impacts would arise.

Landscape and Trees:

Whilst no designated or protected trees are located within the application site itself, the southern and northern boundaries are defined by a row of mature trees which make a positive contribution to the character and visual amenity of the area. Given the siting of the proposed replacement building directly adjacent to this tree line to the south, it is necessary to assess the potential impact of the development on the root protection areas (RPAs) of these trees.

Agricultural information, including an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), tree survey, and Tree Protection Plan, was submitted by the agent on 11/08/2025. The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer have reviewed this information and considers the details acceptable, although they have advised that repositioning the building northwards by approximately 5 metres would better safeguard the long-term growth of the mature trees along the south-western boundary and reduce the likelihood of future pruning or removal.

Notwithstanding this advice, the proposed replacement building is of identical scale to the existing structure and would be sited on the same footprint, on the existing concrete slab. As noted in paragraph 3.3.1 of the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), should it be necessary to strengthen this slab, this would be carried out above the existing slab rather than through excavation, thereby minimising any potential root damage. Given this, and provided that all tree protection measures are fully implemented and adhered to during construction (secured via an appropriately worded condition), it is not considered necessary to reposition the building. The proposal is therefore unlikely to result in any materially greater impact on the health or longevity of the boundary trees, and the visual and amenity contribution of these trees to the character of the area would be preserved.

Ecology:

The applicant has provided an ecological report (GCN Habitat Assessment, John Wenman Ecological Consultancy, Report ref.: R2819_GC_N_a, dated December 2024). A District Licensing Officer on behalf of NatureSpace has reviewed this application and is satisfied with this report which has been produced to a high standard.

The site is within a red impact risk zone and there are multiple historic records of great crested newts in the local area, as well as records dated to 2024 confirming the continued presence of a local population. However, the habitats within the application site are suboptimal for great crested newts, there are no ponds within the site and the

nearest pond is over 100m away. Given the distribution of ponds in the local landscape, it is possible that great crested newts may traverse the site when dispersing between ponds, and the ecological report identifies features within the site which great crested newts could use for shelter.

The ecological report concludes that there is a low risk of impacts to great crested newts and that this risk can be effectively controlled without licensing using reasonable avoidance measures, which are recommended in section 6.3 of the report. A suitable condition will be attached to any approval to ensure compliance.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	02 September 2025
Earliest date for decision:	5 March 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	10.09.2025