

PLANNING REF : 242067
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Bethany Cottage
: Tape Lane, Hurst, Berkshire
: RG10 0DP
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Gary Richens
DATE SUBMITTED : 19/09/2024

COMMENTS:

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to express my strong objections to this proposed development and ask that this proposal is refused. I believe that it conflicts with several key planning policies and presents significant concerns regarding the village's biodiversity, infrastructure, and overall environment.

The site is situated outside the Development Limit of Hurst, in designated countryside, contravening Wokingham Borough Council's Core Strategy Policy CP11. It does not meet any of the exception criteria outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and I believe should therefore be rejected for this alone. The site has also previously been assessed as unsuitable for development in the WBC Local Plan Update due to its impact on the settlement's character, landscape, and rural road network. The emerging Local Plan (September 2024) confirms that the site remains unallocated.

The proposed 16-seater minibus service is financially unviable and insufficient, placing an unfair burden on future residents and failing to address key transportation needs. Its limited hours and routes will undermine existing bus services and do little to alleviate the increased private vehicle usage. Hurst already lacks essential services such as a GP, secondary schools, and adequate public transport, which forces residents to rely heavily on private cars, contrary to WBC's Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3, CP6, and CP11, and the NPPF's sustainable development principles.

Local schools are already at or over capacity. The development cannot guarantee sufficient school places, which exacerbates existing challenges for Hurst children accessing both primary and secondary schools. As the father of two children, only one of whom is currently of primary school age, this is of great concern to me, particularly as they and their peers approach secondary school age. Hurst children already face difficulties accessing secondary schools like Wargrave Piggott due to new developments and increasing local populations, and I fear adding to this will eventually cause severe problems for the local schools with too many children and not enough school places.

I also believe that the proposed minibus service will not effectively meet families' needs for school transport. It also fails to support out-of-village activities, increasing reliance on private vehicles. The proposed pedestrian and cycle paths do not connect safely to wider networks, and road safety is a concern due to increased traffic, particularly for equestrians, cyclists, and those with disabilities. The suggested infrastructure improvements such as widened footpaths and advisory cycle routes depend on uncertain third-party funding and permissions, making them a difficult proposal to successfully deliver. The proposed rerouting of

the 128 bus route through the development will also bring a large 128 bus in and out of Tape Lane, which will conflict with the residents who park their cars there (this is an access only lane) and the swept analysis clearly shows that the bus has to swing right across the road to gain entrance.

The site is Grade 3 agricultural land, classified as best and most versatile (BMV). The NPPF advises avoiding development on BMV land to ensure future food security. The ecological value of the site is also underestimated. Removal of key hedgerows and oak trees threatens wildlife corridors and habitats. The proposed development risks fragmenting important biodiversity areas, and the ecological assessment lacks up-to-date surveys and adequate mitigation measures.

The applicant's Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) underestimates the area's flood risk, which is confirmed to be every 1 in 3 years. Local drainage systems are already overwhelmed. In the event of a sustained period of heavy rain, my own property on Tape Lane already suffers from floods in both the front and back garden caused by blocked and overutilised drains and the proposed SuDS plan will further strain the Hatchgate Ditch and surrounding areas, exacerbating flooding issues.

I also believe that the proposed development contradicts WBC's Climate Change Emergency target of achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030. Destruction of greenfield sites and increased traffic will contribute to higher carbon emissions and exacerbate air quality issues.

Given these significant concerns, I urge Wokingham Borough Council to reject this proposal. The potential negative impact on Hurst's rural character, biodiversity, infrastructure, and environment must not be overlooked.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Gary Richens