

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	260353
Address:	Land North of Broadwater Lane and West of Hogmoor Lane, Hurst.		
Proposal:	Permission in principle application for the proposed erection of a maximum of 7 no. dwellings (or a minimum of 5 no. dwellings), including formation of an access from Broadwater Lane.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9) PiP		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☐ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☒ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

1. SITE LOCATION

The site is located within the countryside, Policy CP11 applies. The site has not been identified for development in the local plan. The east and west site boundaries are adjacent to the 'Hurst Village Centre Area of Special Character' (ASC). The site and land to the west provide a backdrop to the ASC and influence the edge of settlement location of the site.

The site is an open area of pasture located to the north of Broadwater Lane and farmland west of Hogmoor Lane creating a curved shape partially backland development. Broadwater Lane is a '*Green Route Enhancement Area*', which encompasses the highway verge and hedgerow. There are several Grade 2 listed buildings opposite and to the west of the site that further enhance its special character and include; 3No. Grade 2 listed buildings known as Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage and Elder Cottage which is diagonally opposite to Hunters Lodge on Hogmoor Lane which also Grade 2 listed.

Opposite Hunters Lodge on the east side of Hogmoor Lane is the Old Posting House also Grade 2 listed. The corner of Hogmoor Lane and Broadwater Lane is an important junction in landscape terms, as it widens to Broadwater Lane and contains

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a landscaped feature between the exit and entrance arms of the road reinforcing an important node in the Area of Special Character which is also characterised by landscaped boundaries, character walling in views to the east and west.

The rural character of Hogmoor Lane is enforced by its narrow winding natural form and significant stretch of open views to the west between dwellings which afford views of a pastoral landscape of fields lined with mature and veteran trees that form an important edge to the ASC and glimpsed connections of the wider countryside beyond. These will be lost if proposed development is allowed.

2. CHARACTER OF SETTING

Hurst comprises of 3 villages separated by small gaps such as that of the site and land to the west of the site. They lend a sense of permeability to the settlement allowing views through to the landscape north and east of Broadwater Lane and a sense of the open land to the west that forms a backdrop to the ASC.

There are several ASCs in Hurst which reflect the scattered character of the settlement and includes 'Wokingham Road Hurst', 'Poplar Lane, Hurst', 'The Old School House Hurst', and 'Hurst Conservation Area' to the south which includes the pub, church and alms-houses.

The areas of special character (ASC) create a distinctive crenelated pattern from Whistley Green in the north to Penelly Lodge in the south, within which there are pauses accounting for more modern development, and open spaces which are a feature of a 'loose village' (see WBC Design Guide) defined by the dominance of landscape. These villages are generally more spacious with less enclosed streets where landscape and the rural hinterland has an opportunity to penetrate the village with trees and vegetation. The site setting is typical of this pattern, with open fields and views to the east, west and north-east of the site.

The 2005 "Design for Hurst" Parish Design Document identifies that "ribbon development usually on one side of the road" is a typical local feature. *"Landscape Setting and Character – Objectives" the document notes that "The green gaps and rural vistas between buildings and settlements need to be preserved. To this end, further development within the rural areas surrounding the village, such as extensions of existing ribbon development along Davis Street, Forest Road and the A321 Wokingham Road are likely to be inappropriate".*

Although Broadwater Lane is not named, the A321 is an extension of Broadwater Lane and green gaps are typical of this part of the village. Although the Inspector in his report for APP/X0360/W/25/3359898 in August 2025 stated *..'it was difficult to assess when on the ground on this part of Broadwater Lane where these respective settlements (of Hurst and Whistley Green) begin and end meaning there is no obvious gap between the 2 settlements in this particular location..' he was clearly referring to the south side of Broadwater Lane and not the north where the site to the west (subject of the appeal) makes a pleasant backdrop to Broadwater Lane.*

3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The site is located in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBLCA) Area C2 – ‘Hurst River Terrace’ (HRT) a landscape of moderate quality and sensitivity, with a modest capacity for change. The Key characteristics include;

Flat lowland landscape containing a network of water features from field ditches to scattered farm ponds.

C2 LCA is a simple agricultural landscape of mainly arable farmland and pasture, with an open character with few boundaries marked by vegetation and where hedgerow and roadside trees are scarce and scattered.

Villages are located around historic cores, such as Whistley Green and Hurst which is within the Area of Special Character. New linear development is aligned along roads and rural lanes with fine early buildings/character unified by red brick. It is a rural and tranquil area with wooded horizons from adjacent Loddon valley.

The **Landscape Strategy** for LCA C2;

- to maintain the landscape character of C2 LCA is to conserve and enhance the quiet rural and agricultural landscape with its scattered rural farmsteads and small red brick villages connected by narrow and rural lanes.

The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are;

- the open views overlooking the adjoining floodplain of the Loddon. There are opportunities to enhance the landscape through restoration and management of the hedgerows. Opportunities also exist to restore lost wetland and grassland habitats and reinstate woodland planting, which may mitigate the influence of the M4/A329 (M).

In terms of development, the aim of the Landscape Strategy is;

- to conserve the low-density pattern of settlement centred around Hurst and Whistley Green.

Each description of the character areas within the LCAs include ‘Valuable Landscape Attributes’ which for C2 are;

- **Peaceful and open character** of the undeveloped arable and pastoral landscape when removed from the intrusion of major roads to the south, which provides an escape in close proximity to the urban population.
- **Rural settlement pattern** of small villages with historic cores and farmsteads unified by the cohesive use of redbrick which provides a cultural record of the past and adds local distinctiveness.
- **A network of narrow rural lanes** with characteristic roadside ditches which contribute to scenic quality.

- **Small wetland habitats**, including drainage channels and numerous farm ponds which are valued for flora and fauna.
- **Gently undulating terrace landform provides open and clear views** to the wooded backdrop of the adjacent Loddon Valley.

We have assessed the site and its surroundings against Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (2013);

- Landscape Condition
- Scenic Quality
- Rarity
- Representativeness
- Conservation Interest
- Conservation Value
- Perceptual Qualities
- Associations

I assess that the site and the site surroundings demonstrate all of the qualities above with further investigation to be carried out on 'association'. It is clear the site and surrounding landscape contain numerous VL attributes.

- The **landscape condition** is moderate across the whole of the LCA however the physical landscape, rural settlement pattern and openness of the rural landscape is intact. The landscape around site is of a higher quality
- There is **scenic quality** in views along Broadwater Lane to the east and west, of the backdrop the site, and land to the west of the site provide to the setting of the ASC, and importantly the views from Hogmoor Lane through the gap between Long Barn and Apple Tree Cottage which are important to the recreational routes from Hogmoor Lane such as PRoW STNH9.
- The site and wider area of pastoral fields to the west, are **rare** in that they have Veteran trees identified on the ATI, located in the field boundary hedgerows which themselves are a rare feature, so as to elevate the rarity and landscape value of the site and its setting.
- The site and immediate setting is **representative** of the Valuable Landscape Attributes described in the C2 LCA.
- The **conservation** interest is represented by the listed buildings to the south and east, as well as the veteran and mature trees within and around the site.
- **Recreation value** – Hogmoor Lane in particular is a narrow country lane that leads to the wider countryside and recreational routes. T
- The site and its immediate surroundings have a **perceptual quality** of timelessness and tranquillity .

Its is clear from the descriptions in the C2 LCA, from the presence of several Veteran trees, mature and intact high quality hedgerows in combination with the views across the landscape from narrow and rural lanes, such as Hogmoor Lane and at Broadwater Lane, and the pastoral backdrop to the ASC, the quality of the landscape features combine to elevate the quality the surrounding landscape of the site above moderate.

Landscape Character Assessment has no hard and fast edges and areas of higher quality landscape will be present within one which is low or moderate.

Landscape Character Assessment is a positive tool to guide new development and land uses in a way that understands local variations in landscape character and protect and enhance the special qualities of local distinctiveness and a greater understanding of key sensitivities in understanding what is valued and why.

The WBLCA is a Borough level assessment so there will always be higher quality areas of landscape in a much wider LCA.

It is important for the applicants to undertake a LVIA to identify those qualities related to the landscape in around that particular site. No such document is submitted with the PIP.

There is a clear lack of information provided by the applicant regarding the impact of the proposed development on the landscape. As a requirement of Local Plan Policies CC03 & TB21 any application within the countryside will need to include a LVIA in order to consider these impacts and show how the development has addressed them. As far as I can see this has not been considered at all and therefore the application is contrary to both policies.

4. ARBORICULTURE

Arboricultural Implications Report Proposed Development at land North-West of Hogmoor Lane – Ref. SJA AIR 25633-01

The tree survey was carried out in the winter when trees were not in leaf. The site is .96ha located to the north of Broadwater Lane which abuts the SW site boundary. The north and west boundaries are adjacent to a field and trees line part of the northern site boundary. The south-east boundary is adjacent to Hogmoor Lane. Again, as with the previous application, the redline boundary within an overall larger field parcel with no relationship to the wider landscape features or the existing pattern of development including the listed building to the south.

Trees on the site are protected by TPO 1728-2020 and 1788-2021 and include 5 trees along the southern site boundary with Broadwater Lane protected by TPO 1788-2021 consisting of 3 Sycamore and 2 Hornbeam. Close to the northern site boundary are 2 Veteran trees protected by TPO 1728-2020 which are both Oaks trees. Within the northern corner of the property known as Long Barn, is an Oak tree protected by TPO 1788-2021.

A total of 35 single trees and 7 groups of trees are growing within or immediately adjacent to the site. Of these *Quercus robur* (English Oak) is the most common. There are 4 Veteran trees, 9 mature trees and 22 semi-mature trees, but few young trees. The arboricultural character of the site reflects the wider arboricultural landscape.

Trees 10,11,34 and 35 growing around the periphery of the site are listed as Veteran trees on the Ancient Tree Inventory, and the tree survey identified 4 veteran oaks 9,10, 11 and 35, and 2 Notable Oak trees Nos. 1 and 34. Buffer zones have been

allocated to the Notable and Veteran trees. G5 is a long established belt of trees growing along the northern edge of the field.

There are 4 No. trees unsuitable for retention; 16, 29, 32, 33 beyond 10 years. There are 8 mature trees growing on or immediately adjacent to the site with long term potential and some visible from public viewpoints making a significant contribution to the landscape.

There are 4 category 'A' trees; 1, 9, 10, 11 and 4 trees and one group of trees of B category trees. The remaining 21 trees and 6 groups are C category.

The proposed layout has been overlaid with a tree constraints plan which identifies trees to be removed to accommodate the proposed development, and those to remain that must be protected. The Tree Protection Plan shows how trees will be retained and protected.

A 20m section of boundary vegetation (G7) and 2 dead Sycamore (32 and 33) will be removed to facilitate the entrance. The Sycamores are protected by TPO 1788/2021. This will have a significant adverse impact on the landscape character of Broadwater Lane and change it to an urban character which cannot be mitigated in the short term.

All trees to be cleared are young, semi-mature or small. No pruning is required. Dwellings will be located within 6.5m of the extent of tree canopies to be retained.

A Veteran tree Buffer Zone has been applied, this is the minimum protection area required by Ancient and Veteran trees and woodland. In this case additional space has been provided to the buffer zones and development does not include structures or buildings within 4.5m of the edge of the buffer zone. A Veteran and Aged Tree Management Plan could be conditioned to ensure best practice during construction and future management of the development.

The Tree Protection Plan SJA TPP 25633-041 based on Dwg. 8543 F04. The tree protection plan overlays the proposed site layout and meets with BS5837:2012 and Policy CC032/d.

5. SITE PROPOSALS

The Proposed Site Plan – Drawing No. 8543 F04 – January 2026 is submitted with the application.

The layout shows Plots 1-3 accessed via Broadwater Lane. The access is 19.50m wide and results in the removal of 2 dead trees T32 and T33, and possibly more vegetation on lower branches of other trees within a visibility splay which adversely impacts the ASC and the VL. It is noted that the proposed access from Broadwater Lane is one of the 2 accesses proposed at the most recent application, which was accepted as sustainable by the Inspector at the recent appeal.

The dwellings are set back from Broadwater Lane by 31.20m behind proposed landscaping which will not or ever be of the same scale and level of landscape

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permanence. The layout does not respond to an existing building line as there is no precedent set by Hunters Lodge which is on Hogmoor Lane.

The access road is located opposite Bower Cottage which is listed, and Hope Cottage. The proposed modern dwellings will be located in a pocket of land that extends from Broadwater Lane around the back of Hunters Lodge and Long Barn to further development in the gap between Long Barn and Apple Tree Cottage, a distance of 92m.

The access road extends an arm to the east to access Plots 2 and 3 before arcing around the back of Hunters Cottage and Long Barn to access Plots 4-7, where an internal drive set back from Hogmoor Lane is proposed to access the dwellings.

There is no access proposed from Hogmoor Lane. The 'Proposed Site Plan' 8543 FD4 shows the red line boundary extending across what is presently open space between Hunters Lodge and Apple Tree Cottage. The position of the red and blue line is such that within the redline there is a very narrow boundary and no opportunity for a meaningful landscape solution. The proposed layout creates an access loop between the 2 areas of development within the site. The road is an unnecessary added development in the countryside that has a greater impact on the landscape than is warranted by just 4 dwellings. The arrangement is out of character with the surrounding rural landscape.

It is noted that the attenuation basin is offsite. The basin and other elements of SuDs all need to be provided within the site boundary and space made available for them within a landscape led proposal. Although this is a Planning in Principle, it is difficult to understand how the elements of the site layout will work together and whether sufficient space is provided, particularly emphasised by design by the positions of the red and blue lines in the overall layout.

It appears that no matter what the layout is, the road will always need access from Broadwater Lane which will create a standalone pocket of development between Hunters Lodge and the first veteran tree T34 to the west. The access road will always need to curve around the existing dwellings to reach those facing Hogmoor Lane. The layout is an intensely urban form, and obstructs important views across the Valued Landscape. The layout is convoluted and dwellings are shoe-horned into the spaces which is completely different to other properties nearby. In this way the development fails to uphold the quality of the environment.

The quantum of development can only be achieved by a road connecting the 2 parts of the site, which highlights the fact that 7 dwellings is too many.

The impact on trees, and the character of Broadwater Lane which is a Green Route Enhancement Area, will be significant as it results in the removal of 2 trees (which are U category and need to be removed for safety), on the east side of the entrance, and potentially the removal of further lower stem vegetation and grass verge will open up overt views of Plots 1 – 3 and denude the setting of the listed buildings and character of Hurst Village Area of Special Character which will not ever be restored. Although landscaping is proposed within Plots 1-3, it will take a long time to mature, No replacement trees are proposed for T32 and T33.

The layout follows the buffer zone of tree T1 which leaves an areas of ground beyond the BZ .

A solid barrier to the front of Plots 4-7 and the filter road at the front does not respond to the existing pattern of development, and crucially removes views across the Valued Landscape which will permanently be lost.

The layout as indicated will cause harm to the landscape character with no appropriate landscaping shown to help mitigate the proposed development. This is contrary to policies CC03 and TB21 but also Core Strategy Policy CP3

6. SUMMARY

Planning in Principle

1.0 The development will require the removal of 2 dead Sycamores on the SE side of the entrance, which are not planned to be replaced which will lead to a gap of 31m associated with the access from Broadwater Lane. No other trees will be affected by development other than 2 Ash trees that are U category along the northern site boundary. (blue line).

2.0 The quantum of development proposed (7 dwellings) relies on the access located from Broadwater Lane and curving around the rear of existing Hunters Lodge and Long Barn to reach the 4 dwellings facing Hogmoor Lane. No matter how the proposed dwellings are arranged a connecting road to the rear of existing development of a curved nature will always be required from Broadwater Lane.

The linear development of the 3 dwellings along Broadwater Lane, as well as the access will conflict with the setting of the listed buildings and the ASC.

3.0 The access road from Broadwater Lane is a convoluted way of accessing Plots 2 and 3 by providing an access driveway behind a landscaped edge setback by 21m from Broadwater Lane which fails to follow the pattern of settlement here and in Hogmoor Lane where proposed dwellings are set back behind another estate road.

4.0 The Site Layout Plan proposes 2 areas of development are separated by a large area of open space landscaped outside of the Veteran tree Buffer Zone, but with nothing proposed for the space within the BZ. The north side of the access road has a swale that is connected to an offsite attenuation basin (as per the previous application). All attenuation will need to be within the site boundary and consist of different SuDS treatments, where sufficient space will need to be allocated for their function.

5.0 This smaller parcel of land leaves a large area of the field open, but crucially removes important views through the site from Hogmoor Lane to the Veteran trees lining the pasture fields behind Broadwater Lane. There is no certainty about the future use of the wider field or the potential impact of additional development in a tandem formation.

Therefore, I consider the combined adverse impact on the features of the wider character and setting of the settlement including the listed buildings and ASC cannot be sufficiently mitigated, by a reduction / change in the proposed layout and will

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harm these aspects which is contrary to policies CC03, TB21 of the Local Plan and CP3 of the Core Strategy

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
Date:	25.3.26	Signed:	BRC