

36 Martineau Lane  
Hurst  
Reading RG10 0SF

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Development Control  
Wokingham Borough Council  
Shute End  
Wokingham RG40 1BN

Sent by email to: [development.control@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:development.control@wokingham.gov.uk)

## LETTER OF OBJECTION

**PLANNING APPLICATION No: 252934** – Land at Lodge Road Hurst Wokingham RG10 0SG

**PROPOSAL:** *Full application for the proposed erection of 3 no. detached dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping and creation of a balancing pond.*

I write to OBJECT to this Planning Application with regard to this housing development in a wholly unsustainable location outside of the village settlement area for the following reasons.

### Site Location

This countryside Site location is integral to the character of the rural landscape, its ecology, wildlife and habitat within Hurst – including the grazing of sheep on the former landfill site undergoing remediation immediately to the west of the Site between Lodge Road (B3030) and the River Loddon.

This Site, and neighbouring fields, are an integral part of the characteristically pleasant landscape that is framed by mature trees and established hedgerows adjacent to Lodge Road with little or no verges and unmaintained ditches that have long since been rendered non-contiguous and ineffective.

Hence with regard to this Site, compounding existing local flood risk and impact based upon a site-specific drainage strategy reliant upon Hatchgate Ditch and an off-site drainage strategy that delivers absolutely no overriding wider flood relief benefit to Hurst's Landscape & Character or Community is nonsensical.

Historically, this Site and the surrounding area is outside of the established Settlement / Development Area for a good reason.

### Proposed Drainage Solution

#### Surface Water

This Site (and notably neighbouring land) currently fulfils a much-needed means of minimising the impact of surface water (pluvial and fluvial) flooding of property through on-site natural infiltration

into land extending into the wider area of fields that in any event regularly evidence surface water flooding.

That said, and in any event, there is no justification for discharging surface water, via an attenuation pond in an EA Flood Zone, onto property owned by others or raising an expectation upon neighbouring landowners to maintain their ditches beyond their original purpose as an EA river course or ordinary field ditches.

The Applicant's proposal to solely mitigate on-site flood risk (as opposed to its avoidance altogether) through the positioning of the proposed housing development and associated access route and hardstands away from currently known areas of on-site (50%) flooding (reference *Environmental desk study Figure 5 Page 29*) is noted, but nevertheless reliant upon the use of a SuDS system discharging into Hatchgate Ditch in a designated EA Flood Zones 2 area.

Hence reliance upon the discharging of surface water (pluvial and fluvial) from a Site specific attenuation pond in a Flood Zone 2 area into Hatchgate Ditch in a designated Flood Zone 3 area will merely exacerbate the risk of flooding within the Site. Clearly, the notion of locating the proposed housing to a less vulnerable on-site location via an on-site surface water network into an attenuation pond will simply compound the existing flood risk.

By way of example, the perennial debacle and impact of the flooding of road infrastructure, businesses and car parking in the close vicinity of the Showcase Cinema roundabout in Winnersh, not to mention disruption caused to road travel, is but testimony to questionable planning decisions predicated on "mitigating" impact as distinct from outright "avoidance" of unprecedented flood risk impact.

Mitigating the impact of addressing on-site flooding in this way affords no net benefit, and by implication this strategy would be at the risk of compounding surface water flood risk on neighbouring property that is already demonstrably at risk of flooding and already does so.

### **Sewage Treatment**

In the absence of any existing public sewerage network or connection to such, I note the Applicant's intent to formally delegate the operation and maintenance of an on-site sewage treatment plant to a management company resourced by 3 residents and responsible for the competent discharging of treated effluent into Hatchgate Ditch.

Given the extraordinary frequency by which water utilities, Thames Water in this instance, have resorted to the discharging of raw sewage into rivers, perish the thought that a handful of residents be deemed competent enough to be permitted by the Environment Agency to discharge only treated effluent under their management into Hatchgate Ditch – particularly in the event of operational problems arising.

The potential health risks to grazing livestock, wildlife and residents arising from the discharge of contaminated foul water into Hatchgate Ditch is considerable.

Such a foul water treatment strategy is thwart by risk and net harm beyond the Site and control of prospective new residents.

## Contaminated Land Risk

I refer to the supporting planning application document ... ***“Environmental desk study - Land to the east of Lodge Road, Hurst”*** with regard to the toxic waste landfill site that is currently the subject of ongoing remediation and monitoring ...

Para 10.1 Summary on Page 28 states ...

*“This report has highlighted the fact that although the subject site has seen no former activity, however; a co-disposal landfill site was present on a large area of land to the northwest, west and southwest of the site.*

*As such the report has identified a potential contamination concern due to the possible presence of ground gases which may have migrated away from the degrading waste towards the subject site.*

*In addition to this contamination source, the conceptual model has identified a number of pathway linkages, suggesting that there could be some degree of unacceptable risk to receptors; principally future site occupiers, although it is possible that the sub-surface building features and services could exacerbate this concern. In addition to this, surface water could become impacted also.*

*Despite the likely presence of groundwater beneath this site, these gases are unlikely to have any significant impact.”*

And in conclusion of this report, it clearly goes on to state ...

***“In view of the above conclusion further assessment of risk would need to be undertaken in the form of precautionary ground gas monitoring”***

Should Wokingham Borough Council be minded to approve this Planning Application, this salutary warning should not be ignored and suitably the subject of further assessment and ownership of its findings and actions arising in the form of pre-site works Conditions being in place and enforced, and not as stated on Page 29 ... see paragraph commencing ... *“It is further recommended that an informal observation strategy should be put in place during ...”* and concluding ... *“In the event of any discovery of potentially contaminated soils or materials ... the risk reassessed accordingly”*

As a long standing resident in Hurst for the past 32 years I am minded by this report that even after a long period of water washing of the landfill material and discharge of water into the contamination (leachate) ditch adjacent to the landfill site in Lodge Road, that subsequent to housing development near to this toxic waste site in Sandford, residents experienced instances necessitating the restricted use of BBQs in back gardens.

Hence, in approving this planning application, the risk of causing considerable harm to future site occupiers should not be ignored given the very close proximity to this former landfill site.

Suffice to say it is inconceivable that the risk and potential for harm from what was a former toxic waste site cannot be resolved through a desktop study such as that submitted. The existence of boreholes along Howards Way, across the road from the Site, should serve as a stark reminder of the waste site’s legacy.

This Full Planning Application should be the subject of a formal *Environmental Impact Assessment* and review by both Thames Water and the Environment Agency NOT just an *Environmental desk study*.

## **Highway Safety**

As a derestricted unlit country road, Lodge Road (B3030) is renowned for speeding and non-compliance with the 40mph speed limit (in part) past the site and its proposed access. For the most part, road edges are broken and unmaintained, flooded and unfit for pedestrian use.

Roads in Hurst are fundamentally dangerous and frequently used as local commuter rat runs.

## **Access**

The proposed Site access is currently little more than a slightly set back relocated field gate, flanked by hedging that would doubtless need to be wantonly cut back heavily in order to facilitate adequate sight lines and larger vehicle manoeuvrability.

Vehicular access onto Lodge Road is distinctly unsafe, and downright dangerous for any adult or child, be that as a cyclist or pedestrian. Nearby access to/from Sawpit Road and Lodge Road is hardly an exemplary example of safe highway design standards.

In the absence of any contiguous footpath along Lodge Road, the potential harms to pedestrians and cyclists are considerable – children would always need to be accompanied by an adult.

In short, Site access is unsafe and it affords no benefit other than to motor vehicles.

The resultant harm to the roadside landscape would be considerable as would car headlights playing across the fields towards Tape Lane.

## **Public Transport**

There are no public bus services along Lodge Road passing the proposed Site access or indeed any footpaths leading to a limited number of bus stops in Whistley Green and Hurst village centre.

This situation simply reinforces Hurst's unsustainable location and lack of transport service, thereby increasing further dependency on greater car usage and inevitably compounding the consequences of unplanned roadside car parking for Twyford Station as featured recently on BBC News.

Hurst lacks a sustainable and viable bus service.

## **Community Facilities and Services**

Hurst has limited and basic facilities such that new residents will inevitably always be dependent for the most part on travelling by car for employment, shopping, schools, sports activities and recreational purposes.

Hurst is designated as a Limited Development Location for good reason and rightly branded as an unsustainable location.

## **Flood Risk and Impact**

The Hurst and Whistley Green landfill site and a now non-functional discontinuous Hatchgate Ditch route and its infamously unevidenced River Loddon discharge location that is frequently referenced by Developers, to considerably out of date mapping bears no reality to the real world and in any event does not identify a credible discharge solution in support of the proposed SuDS drainage solution and on-site foul water treatment.

## **Infrastructure**

In summary ...

The Site lacks any onsite utility infrastructure or connections to utility services in Lodge Road – be that electricity supply, gas supply, public foul water sewerage or surface water drainage.

Hence it is noted that the Applicant is reliant upon wholly on-site sustainable drainage solutions and the viability of a surface water Balancing Pond (aka attenuation pond) discharging into Hatchgate Ditch in the belief that this will negate the need for any public network connections.

The proposed drainage strategy precludes the mitigation of offsite flooding and impact upon neighbouring properties.

In the recent Lodge Road Appeal Decision (APP/X0360/W/25/3364304) it was established that Hatchgate Ditch was not a contiguous or adequately maintained EA main river due to its questionable off-site surface water discharge capabilities and unevidenced off-site discharge location.

For the aforementioned reasons I urge you to REFUSE this Full Planning Application.

Jonathan Norris