

PLANNING REF : 242067
PROPERTY ADDRESS : West Orchard
: Orchard Road, Hurst, Berkshire
: RG10 0SD
SUBMITTED BY : Mr David Hasler
DATE SUBMITTED : 18/09/2024

COMMENTS:

Planning Application no. 242067

Objection to planning

We can see no reason for your department to grant this speculative outline planning application that has been submitted for 99 Houses on land between Lodge Road and Tape Lane in Hurst (RG10 0EG). A previous application on this site has recently been refused on appeal.

We have lived in Hurst for over 25 years now and have witnessed first hand the slow erosion of life in the village from local and surrounding developments, with ever increasing traffic, and local roads being used more and more as rat runs. The scale of this proposed development would just exacerbate/accelerate that process. Not that I am against controlled and well managed development in Hurst, but this particular proposal is far and beyond what is acceptable in a semi rural location.

We realise this is only an outline application to determine whether or not the development is, in principle, acceptable, but the large number of 99 more homes close to the village centre represents a very large scale development for the small village of Hurst. This we understand may equate to 200 or more residents, 150 or more cars (and potentially around 400 more car journeys a day as public transport is very limited through the village to surrounding towns). Then there is the impact to our hard pressed and dwindling wildlife (Butterfly Conservation being the latest to highlight this), with the potential of many more metres of hedgerows being ripped out, thus losing a valuable wildlife corridor and the biodiversity that can provide. These green spaces should be preserved and enjoyed by Hurst residents and those from surrounding towns, traffic on our roads should be kept at a minimum so it is safe for all road users to use, from the humble pedestrian, dog walkers, horse riders, cyclists to cars etc. We fully support facts/information put forward already by the local Hurst Groups (New Hurst Village Society, Neighbourhood Plan and the Hurst Action Group) and do not believe we need to dwell on these here, but just to restate them: This proposed development is inappropriate because: It conflicts with the current Wokingham Local Plan Policies CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy; CC01, CC02, CC03, CC08, CC09, TB21 and TB23 of the MDD and the core planning principles and sections 5, 9, 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The land is a greenfield site and is designated countryside and outside the Development Limit of the Hurst village. This site was determined very recently as 'unsuitable' for development and has not been allocated in the recent proposed Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan Growth Strategy.

Wokingham Council has a 5 year deliverable housing supply and have delivered substantially above their housing requirement over the last few years and its new proposals do not include this site.

It is not sustainable: Our village has very limited infrastructure in terms of shops, poor public transport service, road networks and school provision. We do not have the infrastructure to sustainably support a development of this scale and density. It will lead to increased car use: As there is no reasonable alternative means of travel, and the nearest facilities are beyond reasonable and safe walking and safe cycling distance, occupants (like many of us) will be overly reliant on private cars to access facilities further afield, such as supermarkets, GP surgery, chemist, dentist, and vets etc. The increased numbers from the use of private cars will negatively impact the local network and increase the danger for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists who use the rural lanes (many having no footpaths or safe footpaths).

It will be disconnected from the wider area: The proposed walk and cycle ways do not lead to a network of safe, designated routes in the wider area. The proposed pedestrian and cycle routes lead to Lodge Road (B3030) which has a speed limit of 60/40mph and no pavement at the access point. This increases danger to pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed pedestrian and cycle accesses to Tape Lane (much of which is a narrow single lane road, with no footpaths and already has restricted access) will bring people onto a lane with limited safety; Pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles will be using the same route to access local amenities like the preschool, school village hall, village shop, bus stop and Martineau Green.

It will impact on the character and rural landscape of the village: It will detract from the distinctive sense and character of place that is the heart of our village. The proposal does not add to the overall quality of the area, neither is it sympathetic to the local character and history. It is contrary to the Council's Local Character

Assessment which is to conserve and enhance the rural character of the area: It does not naturally integrate with the existing settlement. The removal of the existing protected hedgerows to facilitate the proposed access points and necessary 200m visibility splays at Lodge Road would provide views revealing the built up, urban residential nature of the development.

There will be a loss of the green gap' between areas: The development will result in the loss of an important green gap which will lead to the joining up of the historical, distinct settlements of Whistley Green and the main settlement of Hurst and the settlement of Wards Cross. There will be a loss of open views, countryside, habitat and wildlife: This site has stood unchanged for centuries and is an important wildlife corridor, with an abundance of local wildlife habitat including protected and priority species on the site and adjacent fields. There is no evidence that the proposed development is permeable, or it will increase the biodiversity or link to the wider green infrastructure network.

There will be a risk of increased flooding: The Thames Water sewage pumping stations in Hurst are at full capacity. There are frequent issues caused by excessive rainfall and overwhelmed sewers resulting in flooding along Broadwater Lane and the wider area. Development would lead to increased pressure of the water infrastructure, overwhelming the drainage network causing damage to existing residents homes.

The loss of community valued rural, green fields: The recent community consultations for our Neighbourhood Plan highlights the significance of this field for the local community. The consultation revealed that residents requested this site to be protected and designated as a Local Green Space. There have been planning applications on this site since 1958, all of them have been refused/dismissed at appeal. Ultimately, this is not the right type of land to develop and not in the right place.

So we believe in supporting the people and the wishes of the residents of Hurst and therefore you must reject this application outright.

Regards
Dave Hasler & Karen Eden