

Appendix 1 – Statement from WBC Built Heritage Specialist

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following Statement of Case (Heritage) is submitted in relation to the appeal against the Local Planning Authority's decision to refuse permission in principle under application ref: 260353 for '*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.*'
- 1.2 The application was refused by the Local Planning Authority on 30th March 2026. The reasons for the Local Planning Authority's refusal of the application are set out below:
- (1) The proposal, by virtue of its location, represents unacceptable unplanned development outside of development limits within the designated countryside which is contrary to the spatial objectives of the development plan. This is contrary to policies CP1, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy along with the NPPF.
 - (2) The proposal, by virtue of its location and amount of development, would fail to suitably assimilate into the established landscape and character of the surrounding area, and would fail to retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character. This is contrary to policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and policies TB21 and TB26 of the MDD, along with the Wokingham Council Borough Design Guide SPD (2012), Landscape Character Area Assessment (2019) and NPPF.
 - (3) The proposal, by virtue of its location, would fail to conserve or enhance the setting of four designated heritage assets in the form of Grade II Listed Buildings (Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage, Elder Cottage and Wards Cross House). This is contrary to policy TB24 of the MDD and the NPPF.
- 1.2 This Statement of Case (Heritage) relates reasons nos. 2 and 3.
- 1.3 The application to which this appeal relates was made by Sherwood Homes whose previous scheme (LPA ref. 240583) for 7no. detached dwelling on open agricultural land to the northside of Broadwater Lane, between Ward Cross and Whistly Green, was refused by the Council and subsequently dismissed at appeal. The appeal site forms part of this previous scheme's site, namely the land to the west, off Broadwater Lane. Part of the appeal site to the east was the subject of the 1998

refused application (LPA ref. 981273) for 5no. detached dwellings and associated garages.

2. LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 2.1 Statutory duties relating to proposals affecting listed buildings and conservation areas are contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, notably Sections 16, 66, and 72. In determining the application, the Council performed its duty under Section 66 of the Act as to have “*special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting*”.
- 2.2 Central Government planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024. Section 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment, although the Framework should be read as a whole. Further guidance is provided by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which is regularly updated.
- 2.3 The Section 16 of the NPPF and the PPG emphasise the need for a clear understanding of the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution that its setting makes to its significance, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, including from development within its setting, requires clear and convincing justification. Where less than substantial harm is identified to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the NPPF states that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The PPG explains that public benefits can include heritage benefits. In determining the application, the Council identified harm to the significance of the heritage assets.
- 2.4 When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, the NPPF states that great weight should be given to its conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be, irrespective of whether the harm amounts to substantial harm, or less than substantial harm to its significance. In determining the application, the Council gave great weight to the assets’ conservation.

- 2.5 The NPPF further stipulates that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, which includes being sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. The National Design Guide (2021) Section C2 emphasises the importance of heritage and context when considering the merits of a design.
- 2.6 Section 47 of the NPPF requires an application for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant development plan policy context for this appeal comprises the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy (2010), Managing Development Delivery (2014), Borough Design Guide (2012) and Landscape Character Assessment (2019) and Historic Environment Topic Paper (HETP) (2024) evidence base to support the Local Plan Update.
- 2.7 The Council considered that the appeal proposals would be contrary to Policies TB24 and TB26 of the Wokingham Managing Development Delivery Local Plan which state:

Policy TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)

1. Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas are shown on the Policies Map.

2. The Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:

a. Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.

b. Supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk.

3. Proposals for building works shall retain or incorporate existing features or details of historic or architectural significance or design quality into the scheme.

Policy TB26: Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character

- 1. Areas of Special Character are shown on the Policies Map.*
- 2. Planning permission will only be granted for proposals to or affecting Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character where they demonstrate that they retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the building or area and its setting.*
- 3. Proposals that involve the demolition of a Building of Traditional Local Character will require strong justification.*

2.8 And thus conflicts with Policy CP3(c) (related to heritage) of the Core Strategy, which states:

CP3 - General Principles for development Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

- a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;*
- b) Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;*
- c) Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.*
- d) Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;*
- e) Use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;*
- f) Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;*
- g) Provide for a framework of open space in secure community use achieving at least 4.65 ha/1,000 population provision together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space;*
- h) Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities;*
- i) Do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land; and*
- j) Do not lead to a loss of community or recreational facilities/land or infrastructure unless suitable alternative provision is available.*

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the above criteria through the submission of Design and Access Statements, clear and informative plans, elevations and streetscenes and where required Masterplans, Development Briefs, Concept Statements and Design Codes.

3. SITE CONTEXT

- 3.1 The appeal site comprises of an arcing band of land, presently in agricultural use, to the north of Ward's Cross at the junction of Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane. The site wraps around the north-western and north-eastern sides of the curtilages to Wards Cross House (Grade II listed under the name 'Hunters Lodge') and that of Long Barn (part formed from the historic agricultural barn associated with the Wards Cross farmstead), to extend along Broadwater and Hogmoor Lanes. The sole vehicular access for the site would be formed off Broadwater Lane. The appeal site does not contain any built heritage assets.
- 3.2 The stretch Broadwater Lane between the Whistley Green junction of Lodge Road and that of junction at Ward's Cross with Hogmoor Lane, in which the western part of the appeal site lies, joins together the historic settlements of Hurst (to the south-east) and that of Whistley Green (to the north-west). On the opposing south-western side of Broadwater Lane, adjacent the appeal site, there a number of existing dwelling, several of which hold listed building status, along with other 19th and early 20th centuries buildings, and which until after 1960 OS map edition, when there was the main of additional infill housing development, had still formed a porous string of development between the two historic centres, with open farmland to the north and east of the road and dwellings. The south-western end of Hogmoor Lane has changed little in the last century, with the exception of 'Badgers Lodge', a large detached dwelling built in 1994 in the manner of a 16th century farmhouse using reclaimed timbers.
- 3.3 The indicative proposed site plan shows the appeal site to be effectively divided into two areas of built form. To the west off, and facing, Broadwater Lane are plots 1-3, set back from the highway, and to the east, facing Hogmoor Lane are plots 4-7. It is not proposed to access plots 4-7 from Hogmoor Lane, instead these properties would be accessed via link road from Broadwater Lane. The scope of permission in

principle application is, however, limited to location, land use and amount of development (PPG para. 012 Reference ID: 58-012-20180615)

- 3.4 The site abuts and lies adjacent to Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character (AoSC) where it is focused around the Ward's Cross junction of Broadwater Lane with Hogmoor Lane, which runs off in a north easterly direction. Around this intersection of the two roads are a several listed buildings, with Wards Cross House (Grade II) lying immediately adjacent to the site, and Elder Cottage (Grade II), Parkers Cottage (Grade II) and Bower Cottage (Grade II) lying directly opposite the south-western boundary to the site, on the opposite side of Broadwater Lane. Further to the west of the site lies a listed building called Buttercups (Grade II), and to the south of Hogmoor Lane, opposite Wards Cross House lies The Old Posting House (Grade II). The appeal site also lies within the setting of two non-designated heritage assets, Long Barn (immediately adjacent) and Munfin further along Hogmoor Lane.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF AFFECTED HERITAGE ASSETS

- 4.1 Significance is defined by the NPPF (Dec 2024) as:

“The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.”

- 4.2 Listed Buildings (Designated Heritage Assets)

- 4.2.1 Wards Cross House (statutorily listed as Hunters Lodge)

Wards Cross House is a 17th century timber framed farmhouse with cross wing, altered and extended in the 20th century, located on the junction of Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane. The building is of two-stories, mainly with white painted render, with some exposed timber framing, under a hipped and half-hipped roof structure. The building was the farmhouse for the former farmstead, which includes

the property now known as 'Long Barn' – which is part formed from a likely 18th century cartshed – as well as a number of other ancillary buildings which have been demolished. As a farmhouse, the building had a functional relationship with the land that surrounded it, specifically that land to the north-east, north and north-west (which forms the appeal site). Whilst no longer in the same ownership, nor farmed by the farmstead, this land forms an important setting and element to the building's significance, in that this was the associated agricultural land for which the purpose of the building was constructed. Further to this, the open field setting provides contemporary contextual understanding of the former farmstead, allowing for greater appreciation of the historic significance of the listed building.

4.2.2 Bower Cottage

Bower Cottage is a 17th century timber framed building, altered and extended in the 19th and 20th centuries. Two bay boxed framed, curved wind braces with a gable Queen strut roof and infill brick nogging, whilst a high amount of the building's significance is drawn from the historic and architectural interest, the unchanged historic landscape opposite provides a contribution to its significance through the historic contextual setting.

4.2.3 Parkers Cottage

Parkers Cottage is an 18th century timber framed building, altered and extended in the 20th and 21st centuries (the building had recent approval for further alterations which at the time of writing has mainly been completed). Two bay boxed framed, with straight bracing, under a thatched roof, whilst a high amount of the building's significance is drawn from the historic and architectural interest (despite the later additions), the unchanged historic landscape opposite provides a contribution to its significance through the historic contextual setting.

4.2.4 Elder Cottage

Elder Cottage lies directly adjacent to Parkers Cottage, to the south-east, and is perhaps the oldest building in this historic enclave. The building is 16th century in origin, altered in the 17th century and now with an L-shape planform. From physical and cartographic evidence as well as accounts, the building may have been reduced, and thus historically of a higher status. A high degree of significance is

drawn from the surviving fabric, and the historic and architectural interest. Whilst the building has a lesser degree of intervisibility with the appeal site, significance is still drawn from the setting and contextual vicinity. The (later) front garden wall (curtilage listed) strongly contributes the streetscape and when both are taken in combination with the adjacent Parkers Cottage provides an important component of the character and appearance of the AoSC.

4.2.5 The Old Posting House

The Old Posting House is a 16th century timber framed building with a Queen post gabled roof form, infill brick noggin panels, altered and extended in the 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. The current primary elevation faces south towards Broadwater Lane, however there is an appreciation of the building is from north-west, from Hogmoor Lane, of which the original structure – a two bay late 16th century – faced. The (now attached) barn elevation ends on to the lane, immediately abutting the highway, and when appreciated in combination with Long Barn opposite provides a significant contribution to the rural character of the AoSC. The barn structure - a late 16th/early 17th century element with two Queen post gable ends (now within the building) and a Raking Queen strut roof form, which, due to the combination of these two forms, we can comfortably date the barn to between 1580 and 1650, and thus likely to be concurrent with the original house. The barn was subsequently extended, with an inserted floor and slate covered roof and weatherboarded clad walling, and attached to the main house at the other end. The Old Posting House and associated barn strongly contribute to the character and appearance of the of the AoSC and draw their significance not only from the architectural and historical interest but to their setting, notably the transition from the open landscape of Hogmoor Lane into the built historic cluster around Ward's Cross.

4.2.6 Buttercups

Buttercups a two-bay 17th century timber framed building in origin, heavily altered and extended on both flanks in the 18th and 19th centuries. Roughcast, painted brick with some exposed framing and a tile hung perpendicular gable to the front. The building draws its significance primarily from the architectural and historic interest, but also from the contextual setting, specifically the undeveloped rural landscape to

the north and east and the historic relationship with the other buildings at Ward's Cross and at Whistley Green.

4.3 Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character (Non-designated heritage asset)

4.3.1 Areas of Special Character (AoSC) are areas or groups of buildings that are of a consistent period or character, but where a Conservation Area designation may not be justified. Such areas have local value and may be designated through local listing as Areas of Special Character. Areas of Special Character were initially identified through a built environment survey that informed the 1994 Wokingham District Plan. Since then, this local designation and the areas identified were reaffirmed through the adoption of the Managing Development Delivery Document (MDD) in 2014, in accordance with MDD Policy TB26 'Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character'.

4.3.2 The Village Centre, Hurst Area of Special Character is one of a series of such areas, established in 1994, that gave recognition to historic settlement areas within the borough, which whilst not meeting conservation area quality however contained historic and traditional buildings and/or settlement layout such that these areas are acknowledged to be of local historic interest.

4.3.3 The HETP assessment states that: *"The area has a largely linear layout, with the majority of built form concentrated on Broadwater Lane which links the settlements of Whistley Green and Hurst. The area is predominately residential, comprising two-storey semi-detached and detached buildings of a variety of ages and designs, featuring a mix of brick and white render elevations. Broadwater Lane is heavily vegetated on the stretch of road between Hurst Village and Whistley Green, with many mature trees and open fields on the northern side of the street. The AoSC encompasses the Hurst Cricket Club to the south, as well as Hurst Lodge, a Grade II* listed building and its adjacent Locally Listed Historic Park and Garden. There are also a number of Grade II Listed Buildings within the area, dating from the 16th to late 18th century."*

4.4 Other non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs)

4.4.1 Long Barn

Long Barn refers to a now residential dwelling, which is formed part from the 'long barn' which runs parallel to Hogmoor Lane – for clarity, it is only the historic barn element of the property which is identified as a NDHA. The barn was associated with the Wards Cross House farmstead and provides tangible evidence of the former farmstead's character. The exact age of the barn is uncertain, with no internal assessment being able to take place as part of this appeal. The linear form is raised on a brick plinth of approximately 15 courses, primarily in a Header bond, (presumed) timber frame structure clad in weatherboard, under a hipped roof. From the presence of Queen Closers on the plinth we can assume the length of the building is unaltered, and thus taken with the other elements can conject that the building may have been a cartshed-cum-shelter dating from the 18th century (this is caveated as a full inspection has not been possible). In any rate the historic barn strongly contributes to the character and appearance of the AoSC and to the setting of the neighbouring listed buildings, notable Wards Cross House, its former host. This is particularly emphasised due to the historic relationship between the built form and the land (appeal site) in that the barn was built specifically in relation to the land, and the functional purpose of it, thus giving rise a tangible connection and resultant contribution to the asset's significance.

4.4.2 Munfin House

Munfin House (previously Grappenhall) is located outside the AoSC to the north-east, along Hogmoor Lane, and is identified as a non-designated heritage asset within the HETP. The age of the building is uncertain, as whilst it presents as a 19th century 'Tudorbeathan' recreation, it may contain earlier fabric. Due to the historic form and materiality, the building positively contributes to the setting of the AoSC, and to the nearby listed buildings.

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE ASSETS

5.1 As identified, the appeal site does not contain any built heritage assets, and thus the impact of the proposed development is solely to the setting of the identified heritage assets.

5.2 Historic England's The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) advises: *"Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced and may therefore be more extensive than its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not."*

And that:

"The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places."

5.2 Setting, therefore, is not just the visual link between buildings and environments, but in part the way in which they are experienced and understood. Detachment through vegetation and trees, either extant or proposed, can provide a defined visual distinction between environments, however a landscaped boundary can be subject to change. Trees can easily be felled, hedges lost and thus there may not always be such detachment between buildings. As such, whilst the visual aspect plays a part of the character of the setting, it is the encompassing environment which truly defines how the assets are experienced and appreciated.

5.3 To understand the appeal site's contribution to the setting, and thus significance, of the identified heritage assets, it is important to assess the historical development of the area.

- 5.4 The appeal site was part of the manor of Whistley, first documented in a charter of AD 968, when King Edgar granted ten hides of land to Abbot Wulfstan of Abingdon Abbey. Following the Norman Conquest, the Domesday Book (1086) records Whistley as remaining under Abingdon Abbey's ownership, although reduced to seven hides, it demonstrates the manor's continuing economic significance. During the late 11th century, the Abbey established a chapel to the south of the manor at Hurst (St. Nicholas'), around which the later village developed, gradually superseding Whistley as the parish focus during the medieval period.
- 5.5 The Late Middle Ages brought clearance of Windsor Forest in the area which was subsequently divided into additional manors to the south. Abingdon Abbey still held Whistley (including the appeal site) until it was seized by Henry VIII in 1538 during the Dissolution, and granted to Richard Ward (d. 1577), at the time the Sub-Treasurer of the King's Household. Ward became lord of the manor of Hurst and Hinton and married Colubra, a daughter of William Lambede of Chertsey - they had 17 children. He was powerful and successful within the Royal Court, being appointed Sub-Treasurer, then Treasurer to the Crown during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth I. He also held the positions of 'Porter of the outer gate' at Windsor Castle and 'Keeper of the Armoury and Ordnance'. There is an exceptionally special and rare gold and enamelled ring on display at Reading Museum that was given to him by Henry VIII. Ward built Hurst House in the 1540s to the south-west of the settlement, but there been suggestion by local historians that he lived at the Old Posting House until his new house was completed. The current building appears to date from slightly later in the 16th century, so this assertion may be incorrect. However, it may be the case the building is slightly earlier than the stylistic form allows for, or perhaps there was an earlier building on this site that was subsequently re-built – these are uncertain quantities. What is more certain is that the etymology of Ward's Cross, derives from the newly appointed lord of the manor, and that the appeal site formed part of Abingdon's and then Ward's manorial holding from which it derives significant historical interest.
- 5.6 Cartographic evidence from the 18th century onwards demonstrates a remarkable continuity in the settlement morphology and agricultural landscape surrounding Whistley Green and Ward's Cross. Maps by Rocque (1761), Pride (1790), the Hurst

Enclosure Map (1812), the Tithe Map (1842) and successive Ordnance Survey editions (extracts included in the appendix) consistently depict an open agricultural landscape characterised by long-established field boundaries, dispersed farmsteads with road and track alignments that remain largely intact today. As far as can be reasonably assumed, Wards Cross House, The Old Posting House and Bower, Parkers and Elder Cottages can all be discerned throughout the map regression with the infill appearing the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Collectively, this demonstrates the exceptional survival of the area's post-medieval landscape framework and reinforces its archaeological and historic landscape significance.

- 5.7 The area around Ward's Cross appeared to develop as a hamlet in the 16th century and later into the 17th century, with a number of the surviving buildings broadly contemporary in their construction. These buildings would have been built in association with farming the immediate land, and thus have a strong interrelationship with the landscape. As the farming became more successful, more buildings were built, consistent with Richard Ward's development of the manor and increase in wealth and status.
- 5.9 The Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character is designated not only for the built form in the vicinity, but also the landscape and setting, as it the combination of all the various elements in the area that contribute to its 'special character'. The character and appearance of an area ultimately derives from its historical development, in that *why* the buildings were built where they are, *why* the buildings look and function as they do (or did) and *why* the landscape is how it appears.
- 5.10 The AoSC encompasses part of the settlement of Whistley Green and part of the settlement of Hurst, with Broadwater Lane being the primary road serving the AoSC and linking the two settlements. Part of the appeal site's frontage is explicitly mentioned within HETP assessment, stating: "*Broadwater Lane is heavily vegetated on the stretch of road between Hurst Village and Whistley Green, with many mature trees and open fields on the northern side of the street.*"
- 5.11 Given the nature of the appeal site as a valuable open land which not only visually buffers and separates the two settlements, but informs the character as a rural

settlement, any built form development would have a detrimental visual and spatial impact on the wider AoSC, but a more appreciable localised impact from the sensitive Broadwater and Hogmoor Lanes area.

- 5.12 Policy TB26 states: *“Planning permission will only be granted for proposals to or affecting Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character where they demonstrate that they retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the building or area and its setting.”* There can be no doubt that the development of built form here, notwithstanding any landscaping mitigation (which cannot be considered under a PiP), would detrimentally alter the views and established context of the AoSC thus failing to... *“retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the building or area and its setting.”*
- 5.13 Historic England’s *The Setting of Heritage Assets, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition)* advises: *“Settings of heritage assets which closely resemble the setting at the time the asset was constructed or formed are likely to contribute (to their significance)”* As had been demonstrated, the appeal site is unchanged since at least the 16th century and whilst some modern infill has sought to erode this context, Ward’s Cross can still clearly be appreciated as a post-medieval nuclei development, with the landscaping setting greatly contribution to this understanding.
- 5.14 The rural setting (including the appeal site) of the AoSC can be particularly appreciated when travelling along Hogmoor Lane from the north-east. The lane is very rural and verdant in character with scattered historic dwellings (including the 18th century ‘White Cottage’ and ‘Thatched Cottage’) – there is very much the feeling of being isolated and travelling along a historic route as it navigates field boundaries. Further to the south-west more built-form arrives, but there is still a sense of that rural – to semi-rural character, this is, in part, informed by the appeal site to the north of the lane. From travelling from this direction, the end of the long barn of Wards Cross House (former) farmstead is prominent and reinforces the rural and agricultural character of the vicinity. It is only when you arrive at the Ward’s Cross itself as a junction does the character shift from semi-rural to village in nature.

- 5.15 Taking the historic context and the contemporary appearance, the proposed development would seek to harm the significance of the AoSC through the erosion to its setting.
- 5.16 The English Heritage commissioned research document *'Historic farm buildings: Extending the evidence base'* (2009) notes: *"All farmsteads contribute to the quality and local distinctiveness of the landscape, not just those groups of buildings that have been defined as being of special interest. The mapping of all farmsteads existing in the late 19th century provides the basis for a consistent understanding of inherited farmstead character at a landscape scale. In particular, it demonstrates clear links between landscape character and the date, density, distributions and the plan-form of farmsteads."* This research document was part authored by Bob Edwards of Forum Heritage Services, the Appellant's heritage advisor.
- 5.17 In the case of Wards Cross House, as a farmhouse, the building had a functional relationship with the land that surrounded it, specifically that land to the north-east, north and north-west (from which the appeal site is formed). Whilst no longer in the same ownership, nor farmed by the farmstead, this land forms an important setting and element to the building's significance, in that this was the associated agricultural land for which the purpose of the building was constructed. Further to this, the open field setting provides contemporary contextual understanding of the building and site as an agricultural farmstead, allowing for greater appreciation of the historic significance of the listed building. To introduce built form, and thus remove the agricultural aspect of the immediate setting, would seek to erode this appreciation leading to harm to the listed building's significance. This harm would be identified as less than substantial at a high level within this scale being that the proposed development would introduce a sub-urban character which directly conflicts with the historic setting. As the long barn NDHA forms part of the historic complex, this too, for the same reasons, would see its significance harmed through the proposed development.
- 5.18 With respect to Bower Cottage, whilst a high amount of the building's significance is drawn from the historic and architectural interest, the unchanged historic landscape

opposite provides a positive contribution to its significance through the historic contextual setting. Much like the other buildings in the vicinity it was likely constructed in relation to the surrounding agricultural function, in that as the prosperity of the post-medieval farming landscape increased – notably due to the coming of the new lord of the manor – new dwellings were built to house people working on, and associated with the land's function. To introduce built form, and thus remove the agricultural aspect of the immediate setting – of which there would be direct intervisibility - would seek to erode this appreciation leading to harm to the listed building's significance. This harm would be identified as less than substantial at a high level within this scale being that the proposed development would introduce an urbanising effect which conflicts with the historic setting.

- 5.19 Similarly to Bower Cottage, Parkers Cottage draws part of its significance from its contextual setting. Whilst constructed later than the other buildings in this cluster, this in itself demonstrates the continuing prosperity of the land through the continued need to building dwellings. As with Bower Cottage, to introduce built form, and thus remove the agricultural aspect of the immediate setting – of which there would be direct intervisibility - would seek to erode this appreciation leading to harm to the listed building's significance. This harm would be identified as less than substantial at a high level being that the proposed development would introduce an urbanising effect which erodes with the historic setting.
- 5.20 Elder Cottage lies directly adjacent to Parkers Cottage, to the south-east, and is perhaps the oldest building in this historic enclave. This is a relatively high status building and a substantial amount of significance is results from the historic and architectural interest. Whilst the building has a lesser degree of intervisibility with the appeal site, significance is still drawn from the setting and contextual vicinity with the ability to appreciate the historic context in which it was built still extant. Given this, less than substantial harm would arise to the significance through erosion of the historic setting, this less than substantial harm would be identified at a low level.

- 5.21 The LPA would respectfully disagree with the assessment put forward by the Appellant in regards to the contribution to the rural landscape setting of the heritage assets, and thus the impact upon their significance.
- 5.22 There is an inconsistency with the assessment methodology and conclusions of the Appellant's heritage advisor Bob Edwards of Forum Heritage Services, which is subsequently asserted in the appellant's main statement. For example, in the 2023 Sherborne St. John Conservation Area Review (independent evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan for site in North Hampshire), Mr Edwards states: *"The area where the relationship is particularly important in terms of the experience of the conservation area is the open agricultural landscape to the east of the main road to the north of No. 22 West End where the rural context of the village is seen from the main road. The area of setting of high importance extends southwards to the rear of Cranes Farm where the part of the historic relationship of the farmstead to its landscape has been retained – this is important to the setting of the listed farmhouse and the conservation area."*
- 5.23 In relation to the same area, in the 2024 Appeal, Land at Cranesfield (APP/H1705/W/23/3327082), a site in North Hampshire, Mr Edwards states in his supporting statement (para. 5.2.1) (commissioned by the local residents objecting to the proposed development) that:
- "Manor Farmhouse was a high-status farmstead located adjacent to the church in a position slightly detached from the main core of settlement. The farmhouse at present, with its historic former working farm buildings to the north, largely retains its historic setting. The proposed development will impinge on the setting in terms of the relationship between the farmhouse and the landscape to the north-west. Whilst the views to the west are partly screened by the substantial boundary running along the west side of the pond, views out to the landscape are possible and **it is considered that the relationship with the farmhouse with the agricultural landscape contributes to the significance of the listed building. Therefore, the proposed housing development will have a negative impact upon the significance of the listed Manor Farmhouse.** Screening to partly block views will not adequately mitigate the loss of the visual link to the open countryside."*

(emphasis added). For reference the farmhouse in question was no longer in operation as a farm, nor the land owned by the farmhouse, and the development site was further in distance than Wards Cross is to the proposed built form subject of this appeal.

5.24 And within the Forum Heritage Services authored Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for Little Bookham (Mole Valley District Council, 2011, para. 19.2.1) it is stated: *“The fields immediately east of Manor Farm form part of **the rural character** of the Conservation Area and provide the **essential** setting to Manor Farm.”* (emphasis added)

5.25 Whilst it is fully acknowledged these examples are in different areas, different sites, buildings of differing ages and interests, the principle of assessment of significance explicates implies that the rural agricultural landscapes in the setting, and associated with listed farms **do** contribute to significance, and ergo harm would arise to significance through the removal or erosion of said landscape.

5.26 This is raised as this conflicts directly with the appellant’s evidence in that it is stated: *“In my opinion, there will be no harm to the ability to experience the listed building, or the ability to understand and appreciate its significance. The proposed development will not be seen in association with this listed building, and it is unlikely that there will be any inter visibility between Wards Cross House and the development. There is no strong visual relationship to the site, the only link between them is the fact that this was formerly agricultural land farmed from this house. There is no firm visual link between the former farmhouse and the site, although it is adjacent to the curtilage. The change of use will not harm the significance of the listed building – it will continue to be read as a former farmhouse only by the presence of the converted farm buildings”.* (Forum Heritage Servies Appeal Statement, June 2026). This is inconsistent with Mr Edward’s previous professional assessments and therefore seeks to undermine the appellant’s case.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Development of the appeal site would give rise to an urbanising effect which would erode the open verdant character of the area. The proposed development would fundamentally alter the sense of rurality within the immediate setting thus adversely impacting the established and historic contextual setting.
- 6.2 The proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the identified designated heritage assets, summarised below. The harm would arise from the removal of the historic setting – open, agricultural land associated with the development of Ward's Cross within the manor of Whistley and Hurst, developed by an important Tudor figure and his issue – and the consequential conflicting urbanisation character. The proposed development would also given rise to harm to the significance of the identified NDHAs for the same reasons.

Designated Heritage Assets:

Wards Cross House – less than substantial harm at a high level

Elder Cottage – less than substantial harm at a low level

Parker Cottage – less than substantial harm at a high level

Bower Cottage – less than substantial harm at a high level

Non-Designated Heritage Assets:

Long Barn – harm to significance

- 6.3 The proposed development would lead to harm to the significance of the Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character, a non-designated heritage asset. This harm would arise from the erosion of the rural landscape which informs its character, two-fold: as an unchanged post-medieval agricultural landscape associated with the manorial development and the interrelated setting of the historic buildings in the vicinity, and that it provides a contemporary verdant rural backdrop to the village character defined as an important quality of the area.
- 6.4 Through location, form and quantity of the development, the proposals would fail to preserve the setting of the listed buildings (S66, P(LBCA)A 90). The Council

has performed its duty under section 66 of the Act as to have “special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting”,

- 6.5 Given the identified harm, the proposed development would conflict with Policies TB24 and TB26 of the Wokingham Borough Council Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Appendix

Cartographic regression – map extracts with indicative site location



John Rocque's map of Berkshire, 1761



Hurst tithe map, 1840



OS of 1883

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn't require to be sent via secure methods.



OS of 1912

Private: Information that contains a small amount of sensitive data which is essential to communicate with an individual but doesn't require to be sent via secure methods.