

APP/X0360/W/25/336404

Appeal by: Mactaggart and Mickel Strategic Land

Site address: Land between Lodge Road and Tape Lane

Interested Party Statement

Sustainability – Services and Facilities

Nick Willson, Planning Lead, New Hurst Village Society

11 August 2025

Mr Salter,

I'm Nick Willson and I am Planning Lead for the New Hurst Village Society. The society attempts to represent the views of its members living in the village of Hurst. I'm going to talk now on Sustainability.

Inspector, the Village Society maintains that this location remains unsustainable for a development of this scale, and that the Council's Reason for Refusal 4, relating to services, facilities, and sustainable transport, still stands.

My colleague, David Boyd, will discuss, in more detail, sustainability from a transport perspective but as transport heavily impacts other aspects of sustainability in rural areas, I may touch on it in the next few minutes.

The appellant claims that their transport improvement measures will transform the sustainability picture. But their own Statement of Common Ground confirms that the Council does not agree. Per the Council's Reason for Refusal 4, none of these measures are agreed as making the location sustainable. The Council's position remains that this location is outside the settlement limits, distant from key services, and would leave residents reliant on private cars. And even if these transport measures were delivered, most are not secured.

Turning to **Schools**, the appellant highlights the local primary school's proximity to the proposed site. But that's proximity in theory, not in practice. St Nicholas CE Primary is currently four times oversubscribed for the 2025/26 intake and has been for several years prior. Many children are allocated places outside the village, which means parents must drive daily. That is baked-in car dependency. We are fortunate to have good secondary schools in the borough, but none are reasonably accessible by public transport, at the times required, to the destinations required. For that reason, most children are taken to school by car, as evidenced by the traffic congestion outside The Holt School, Wokingham, The Forest School, Winnersh, and The Robert Piggot Secondary School, Wargrave.

For **healthcare** needs, the nearest GP is over a mile away in Woodley. The route involves narrow, unlit lanes with no continuous pavements, and parts of it flood regularly in winter, making it impassable. That is not a realistic non-car journey for most residents, particularly the elderly and the young who most rely on GP services. And in any case, the GP surgeries in, Twyford, Wargrave, and Wokingham are actually the surgeries used by most residents, and they require the use of a car to get to appointments on time.

The village once proudly supported a butchers, a bakery, and a village stores. The butchers and bakery are sadly long gone, and the village stores most recently closed down in January 2025, having failed once previously in Apr 2023. While there is now an intention to reopen under new ownership, the reality is that it is a convenience store at best, and most residents drive out for every-day groceries, to supermarkets in Woodley, Twyford, Winnersh, and Wokingham.

Hurst has no pharmacy, no post office, and very limited leisure or cultural facilities. The NPPF emphasis importance of accessibility to services and amenities and other guidance says residents should be within 400–800 metres of most day-to-day needs. Here, that's simply not possible for the majority of essentials.

Capacity matters, not just proximity. The appellant often points to distance alone, to access these services. But in planning, accessibility is about both distance and capacity. A full school or a GP surgery with no appointments is not a sustainable local service. It's just a reason for more car trips.

In 2023, the Inspector found this location unsustainable for large-scale development, and that proposed improvements then would not fix the problem. The geography hasn't changed. The road network hasn't changed. The availability of local services hasn't improved. The scale of the proposal, 99 homes, is still substantial in the context of a Limited Development Location like Hurst. This is not infill or minor growth; it is a significant new urban edge in a rural setting, without the infrastructure to support it.

Finally, delivery risk matters. Many of the appellant's measures rely on third-party agreements or off-site works outside their control. There are no enforceable dates by which these must be in place before residents move in. That means early occupants will simply have no choice but to drive for most journeys, setting patterns that last for years.

Inspector, this is why the Council's Reason for Refusal 4, amongst others, still stands. The site is too far from key services, those services are already stretched, and the promised improvements are uncertain in timing and effectiveness. The adverse impacts on sustainability are clear and demonstrable, and they outweigh the benefits to existing and new residents alike.

Thank you