

PLANNING REF : 260353
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Sunset Cottage
: Hogmoor Lane, Hurst, Berkshire
: RG
SUBMITTED BY : Miss Lisa Grantham
DATE SUBMITTED : 07/03/2026

COMMENTS:

I write to register my strong and unequivocal objection to the above planning application. This proposal should be refused outright. It is not a new application it is the latest in a persistent series of attempts by the same developer to force residential development onto land that your Council, and independent planning inspectors, have repeatedly and correctly refused. The developer has now reduced the number of proposed dwellings from 12 to 9, and now to 5-7. The scale has changed. The fundamental problems have not.

I urge the Committee to see this application for what it is: a deliberate strategy of attrition incrementally scaling back numbers in the hope that, eventually, the Council's resolve will weaken. It must not.

1. Outside Settlement Boundary Development in Designated Countryside

This site lies outside the established settlement boundary of Hurst, in designated countryside. The site is fragmented split between Broadwater Lane and Hogmoor Lane, connected only by an internal access road crossing open agricultural land. This is not an infill site. It is not a rounding-off of an existing settlement. It is incursion into open countryside, and it is precisely the kind of development that settlement boundaries exist to prevent.

2. A Planning Inspector Has Already Refused This. Recently.

This is not a matter of opinion or interpretation. A planning application for 9 dwellings on the Broadwater Lane section of this very site was refused by this Council and the subsequent appeal was dismissed by an independent inspector as recently as October 2025 just months ago.

The inspector was explicit: development on this site would significantly undermine the setting and significance of the nearby Grade II listed buildings, including Parker's Cottage and Bower Cottage. Crucially, the inspector stated that even with further setbacks or additional landscaping, the principle of development on this site was unacceptable. The developer now proposes reducing 4 units to 3 and widening a buffer zone. These are minor cosmetic adjustments to a scheme the inspector already rejected on principle. They do not address the inspector's fundamental objection. The Council should not be distracted by them.

3. Harm to Heritage Assets and the Area of Special Character The Broadwater Lane site was specifically assessed during the emerging Wokingham Local Development Plan process in 2024 and was not considered suitable for allocation. The Hurst Area of Special Character extends across and borders this site. The historic, rural character of this land makes a genuine and positive contribution to the setting of the listed buildings and to the character of the area. The proposed access from Broadwater Lane alone a bellmouth 15 metres wide would require significant loss of vegetation in the green route enhancement area. This is not a minor access point. It is an industrialised entrance that would permanently and visibly alter the character of this lane within the Area of Special Character.

4. Hogmoor Lane: An Inspector's Decision That Still Stands

A planning application for 5 houses in Hogmoor Lane was refused and the appeal dismissed in 1999. That inspector's findings remain directly relevant today. The lane has not changed. The inspector found that the 80-90 metre site was too substantial to be treated as normal infill, that it made a significant contribution to the semi-rural character of the lane, and that development would create a harmful and urbanising effect. The site is raised above the lane large modern houses here would visibly dominate and overshadow their traditional neighbours. Nothing about the current application addresses any of this.

5. Flood Risk: A Serious and Unresolved Concern

Hogmoor Lane has a documented and recurring history of flooding. Residents were affected as recently as 2023. Environment Agency flood mapping updated in 2025 identifies significant flood risk immediately north of this site.

What makes this particularly alarming is that the applicant has deliberately redrawn the site's red line boundary to exclude the proposed attenuation basin and flood mitigation measures. This has been done for one reason only: to keep the site area below one hectare and thereby meet the threshold for a permission in principle application. The flood mitigation infrastructure is off-site, with no clear ownership, no management plan, and no enforceable maintenance commitment. The Committee should not approve development in a known flood risk area where the developer has excluded the very mitigation measures from their own application boundary.

6. Rural Amenity, Landscape, and Community Loss

This land provides something that, once lost, cannot be recovered: spectacular open views across green fields as far as Whistley Green. The historic lanes connect to a network of footpaths and bridleways, forming part of the River Loddon circular walking route, used regularly by walkers, cyclists, and riders from Hurst, Twyford, and the surrounding area. Ward's Cross House and the Old Postings House are Grade II listed. Long Barn and Munfin House are non-designated heritage assets. The rural amenity value of this site is exceptional and irreplaceable.

7. The Precedent Risk: This Is Exactly How Fields Get Built On

Granting permission in principle for part of a large, open, subdivided field creates a precedent that is extremely difficult to resist in future applications. It is well-established in planning practice that incremental permissions on parts of larger sites eventually make

further development of the remainder near-impossible to refuse. This developer paid approximately 1 million for this agricultural land. The commercial pressure to maximise returns on that investment will not disappear. Permission for 5-7 units today is not the end of the story it is the beginning of a longer one. The Council must consider not just this application in isolation, but what approving it signals and enables.

Conclusion

This application fails on every material planning consideration: it is outside the settlement boundary; it harms designated heritage assets and the Area of Special Character; it has been refused by this

Council and dismissed on appeal as recently as October 2025; it presents unresolved and serious flood risk; it would destroy irreplaceable rural amenity and landscape; and it sets a dangerous

incremental precedent for a much larger site.

The developer has now submitted versions of this proposal on four or five separate occasions over the past five to six years. Each refusal has been correct. This application deserves the same outcome, and I respectfully but firmly call on the Committee to refuse it without hesitation.