

MEMORANDUM

From:	Built Heritage Officer		
Service	Green Infrastructure	App No:	261624
Address:	Land West of Hogmoor Lane, Hurst		
Proposal:	Permission in principle application for the proposed erection of a maximum of 2 no. dwellings (or a minimum of 1 no. dwelling), including formation of an access from Hogmoor Lane.		
Heritage Assets:	Ward Cross House (listed as Hunters Lodge) – Grade II listed building Old Posting House – Grade II listed building Long Barn – Non-designated heritage asset Munfin House – Non-designated heritage asset Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character (AoSC) - Non-designated heritage asset Under the NPPF (2024) and in the Council’s Local Plan policies, listed buildings are classed as designated heritage assets whilst the Council identified Areas of Special Character and those identified historic buildings not of listed building status are viewed as being non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs).		
Site Visit Made:	Yes		

Summary Of Recommendations

Objection

Comments On Proposal

The application site comprises of an area of undeveloped, open land, presently in agricultural use, to the north-west of Hogmoor Lane, Ward’s Cross, within the parish of St. Nicholas Hurst.

To the south-west of its boundary, the application site directly abuts the Village Centre (Hurst) Area of Special Character (AoSC) where it is focused around the Ward’s Cross junction of Broadwater Lane with Hogmoor Lane. Around this intersection of the two roads are a concentration of historic buildings, including

Wards Cross House (Grade II) lying south-west of the site, and the related Long Barn, a NDHA (formally part of the same farmstead), as well as The Old Posting House (Grade II), located diagonally opposite to the south. The application site also lies within the setting of Munfin House, directly opposite the site to the south-east, on Hogmoor Lane.

The application site also lies within the wider setting of Elder Cottage (Grade II), Parkers Cottage (Grade II) and Bower Cottage (Grade II).

Background

In 2024 an outline application was made (ref. 240583) for 9 no. detached dwelling with a new vehicular access of Broadwater Lane on a strip of the open arable land on the northern side of Broadwater Lane from the boundary to Gloster Cottage to the west stretching eastward to just shy of the rear boundary to Ward Cross House. That application was refused by the Council in part as *“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”* and because *“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 Building.”* An appeal was lodged by the applicant that was dismissed, with the Planning Inspector citing as one of the reasons for dismissal being they *“found that the proposal would harm the significance of the AoSC.”*

Earlier this year (2026) the applicant made an application (ref. 260353) seeking permission in principle or the proposed erection of a maximum of 7 no. dwellings, including formation of an access from Broadwater Lane for a revised site consisting of eastern portion of land on Broadwater Lane that had been part of the previous application, albeit now extending to the rear boundary to Ward Cross House (and part of that to the adjacent Long Barn), along with arable land fronting onto Hogmoor Lane. The application was refused in part for the same reasons as that for the 2024 application in that *“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”* and due to 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...”*. The applicant is presently appealing that refusal decision. At the time of writing, no determination has been made on the appeal.

This current application, which seeks permission in principle for up to 2 no. detached dwellings, including the formation of an access from Hogmoor Lane, comprises part of the previous application/appeal sites, namely the eastern part, that of open arable land, slightly set back behind a drainage ditch, fronting onto the north-western side of Hogmoor Lane between the boundary of the grounds of Long Barn, at the south-western end of Hogmoor Lane and that to the north-east of the lane form by grounds to April Cottage (formerly Nos.1 & 2 Hogmoor Lane).

With the width/depth of the site being marginally greatly and in so doing being more or less in line with the depth of the residential plots of Long Barn and of April Cottage that bookend the site.

Considerations

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. 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."*

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.

Whilst setting is not limited to intervisibility, due to the relative and increased distance (as compared to the previous site boundary), development at the application site would not be considered to have a harmful (in terms of the NPPF) impact upon the setting of Elder Cottage, Parkers Cottage, Bower Cottage and Buttercup (all Grade II listed). As such, no further assessment of these designated heritage assets is undertaken.

Cartographic evidence from the 18th century onwards demonstrates that the application site has never been developed, and that there is 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 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.

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 the development of the manor (granted by Henry VIII to Richard Ward) and increase in wealth and status.

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.

Given the nature of the application site as a valuable open land which not only historically contributes to, but also visually informs, the character as a rural settlement, any built development would have a detrimental visual and spatial impact on the wider AoSC, and specifically an appreciable localised impact from the sensitive Broadwater and Hogmoor Lanes area. The rural setting (including the application 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 application 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.

Designated Heritage Assets

Wards Cross House (Grade II) 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-west and north-east (which forms the applications site). Whilst no longer in the same ownership, nor farmed by the farmstead, the application site 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 to the north-east provides contemporary contextual understanding of the former farmstead, allowing for greater appreciated of the

historic significance of the listed building. To introduce built form, and thus remove the agricultural aspect of the setting to the north-east, 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 low level within this scale, being that the proposed development would introduce a suburban 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.

The Old Posting House (Grade II) 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 Old Posting House and associated barn positively 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. However, due to the set back nature of the building, as well as the lack of tangible evidence that the application site formed part of the functional holding of the building (as compared to Ward's Cross House), whilst the wider rural setting of the listed building would be eroded, this would not reach the level of 'less than substantial' harm in NPPF terminology. This assessment is consistent with the LPA's consideration for the previous applications.

Non-designated heritage assets (NDHAs)

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 as-yet uncertain, with no internal assessment being able to take place as part of this application. 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 (application 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. As noted above, development of the application site would seek to

undermine and remove the agricultural setting, immediately to the north-east of the NDHA, which partly informs its significance. As such, harm would arise to the significance of the NDHA.

Munfin House (previously Grappenhall) is located outside the AoSC to the north-east, along Hogmoor Lane, and directly opposite to the application site. The building is identified as a non-designated heritage asset. 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. There can be no doubt that the development of the land opposite would seek to erode the setting, and thus the character of this vicinity, however, in purely heritage terms, the NDHA draws some, but limited, significance, from this setting, being that it was not part of its holding, or at least there is no evidence to suggest so, although the land does form part of its contextual setting. Consistent with the LPA's previous assessment, it would be considered no harm would arise to the significance of the NDHA – purely in heritage/NPPF terms, not in overall character or urban morphology terms.

Conclusions

Development of the application 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.

The proposed development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset of Ward's Cross House, a Grade II listed building. 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, Richard Ward, and his issue – and the consequential conflicting urbanisation character. The proposed development would also give rise to harm to the significance of Long Barn, as a NDHA, for the same reasons. For clarity, due to the reduced development area (as compared to applications 240583 and 260353), the less than substantial harm remains, but is lessened, identified to be at the lower end of the accepted spectrum.

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.

Through location, form and quantity of the development, the proposals would fail to preserve the setting of the listed building. The Council must perform its duty under

section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as to have “*special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting*”.

In making the above assessment, the current and previous applicant/appellant’s heritage statements (Asset Heritage Consulting and Forum Heritage Services) have been taken into account. The heritage assessment (Ridgeway Heritage Consultancy) as commissioned, and submitted to the LPA, by Wards Cross House, objecting to the application, has also been considered in the course of this assessment.

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. As such, an objection is raised to the application from a heritage perspective.

Date:	11/08/2026	Signed:	Roderick McDonald Built Heritage Officer
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