

# Hopes for harmony as villagers unite against plan for new homes

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**A VILLAGE where a heated council meeting was said to be "like something out of an unusually toxic Vicar of Dibley episode" is hoping for more harmony.**

Plans to build homes on green fields in Hurst have sparked heated debate between different groups and people.

Last night a meeting was aimed at getting village groups working together. The spur was a new planning application to build about 200 homes between Lodge Road and Tape Lane. The size was earlier cut from 300 to 250 homes.

Mactaggart & Mickel Homes's plan would mean about 33% more homes than the existing 575 in the central village ward of Hurst. They've named the new estate Lodge Green.

Wokingham Borough Council has asked for views on the plan by March 18. The council will then decide if to give permission.

Last night's meeting was called by Hurst Parish Council chair Wayne Smith. He invited Hurst Village Society, Protect Hurst Action Group, the neighbourhood plan working group and the parish councillors along.



**CAMPAIGN:** Residents of Hurst are uniting against an application to build homes there *Picture: Sue Corcoran*

The meeting was held after *Wokingham Today* went to press.

On Monday Councillor Smith said: "The purpose of the meeting is to get the views of the various groups and decide how we take this forward to engage the rest of the village in the [borough council's] consultation."

A public meeting or a drop in session for villagers has been suggested.

Villagers hope the meeting will bring Hurst groups together so they can work well together. Hurst Village Society (HVS) says it will send round advice on which residents can base their comments in the consultation. Earlier, chairman Mrs

Newbold said HVS believed most Hurst residents did not want the development.

Protect Hurst Action Group (PHAG) will recommend its members object to the "inappropriate" application.

It says: "Join PHAG if you want guidance on how to object to this application effectively either by email

protecthurstactiongroup@outlook.com or Facebook"

Hurst Parish Council has yet to decide its view on the plan.

The planning application papers say Lodge Green would "create a high quality neighbourhood within a considered landscape setting, promoting health and well being and will shape a context responsive neighbourhood designed sensitively in Hurst."

*Wokingham Today* has reported that Hurst Parish Council's November minutes noted that the public forum part "became increasingly lively and acrimonious" and had to be closed down.

There was a disagreement between two villagers about how HVS dealt with development plans and allegations that PHAG was "shrouded in secrecy". HVS and PHAG adopted different tactics over an exhibition about the Lodge Road plan.

Discussion at the January parish council meeting's public forum, which included sites put forward for future development, was described afterwards as "like something out of an unusually toxic Vicar of Dibley episode."

■ **The Lodge Road planning application, number 220458, can be seen at [planning.wokingham.gov.uk](http://planning.wokingham.gov.uk)**