



29th June 2022

E-Mail to; development.control@wokingham.gov.uk

For the attention of the Case Officer(s)

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re; Poppies Farm, Pound Lane, Hurst RG10 0RS, Planning Application No; 221590.
Full Application for the proposed change of use of the land for the siting of a
mobile home to form an agricultural worker's dwelling (Retrospective)**

Hurst Village Society (HVS) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above planning application. The Society is aware of a number of other planning applications in relation to Poppies Farm that have been submitted simultaneously eg.; Planning Application Numbers; 221593, 22194 ,221597, 221598 and 221567 and has considered all the various proposals "in the round". HVS wishes to bring this to the attention of Wokingham Borough Council as The Society believes that in supporting those applications which relate to an existing and developing agricultural and NEET (Not in employment, education or training) facility, it follows that it is then appropriate for The Society also to positively support this application to create an agricultural worker's dwelling on the site to ensure the ongoing viability of Poppies Farm as an agricultural facility.

In supporting this application (and the others referred to above), I on behalf of HVS have had the opportunity of visiting the site and have benefitted from a full and frank discussion with the applicant, Mrs Joanna Robertson about her aspirations and proposals for the future of this facility and it's role within the local community.

HVS is persuaded by the arguments and detailed information put forward in The Planning, Design, and Access Statement and the accompanying Agricultural Statement, and therefore supports the proposals and recommends the approval of this, and the associated applications (and to which individual letters of support have been submitted to the Planning Authority).

The Society is aware of the relevant planning history related to this site and in particular the refusal of planning application (Ref; 182402) in February 2019 and the subsequent Appeal Decision (Ref APP/X0360/W/19/3234343). HVS believes that in terms of the viability of any future agricultural facility at Poppies Farm, the Supporting Agricultural Appraisal satisfactorily addresses the matters raised as reasons for refusal by both The Planning Authority and The Planning Inspectorate. Importantly, the Accounts submitted as part of the application demonstrates that the agricultural enterprise is able to return a profit sufficient to cover any notional charges for rent, labour and return on capital investment. In addition the Agricultural Appraisal carried out by properly qualified agricultural consultants has determined that “The business is currently viable, and is sustainable both now, and in the long term” and if the applications are approved as submitted this will allow the business to recover fully and meet the proposed livestock numbers.

If the Planning Authority agrees with The Society’s understanding and interpretation of the Agriculture Appraisal, that the “functional” need exists and the enterprise is viable going forward, it follows that the essential need for a rural workers dwelling has also been established .

However HVS is aware of the Local and National Planning Policies that seek to control development in the countryside, but again believes the supporting documentation to this application makes it clear as to how and why these relevant planning policies have been complied with. Clearly as stated in The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the development of isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless, as has been shown in this case “there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.” NPPF is also clear on the criteria as to how this need can be assessed and again HVS is persuaded, that this application satisfies these criteria.

The Society, whilst supporting the concept of “Planning Balance” has always in considering applications of this nature, needed to be convinced that any proposals don’t conflict with Wokingham Borough Council’s Core Strategy Policy CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside) whereby these won’t normally be permitted except where “ It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the Borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and or promotes recreation in, and

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enjoyment of the countryside.” This application for an agricultural workers dwelling, therefore in the view of HVS is covered by this exception, does not conflict with CP11 and should be approved. The mobile home which is in situ and for which approval is sought, is single storey with a pitched roof and does not have any detrimental effect on the local countryside.

The future use of this site needs to be established and it is suggested that there is now an ideal opportunity for this to take place. There is a real commitment and expertise on behalf of the applicant and in support of this, it is therefore hoped that in this instance the Planning Authority will base their decision in relation to these proposals “in a positive and creative way” thereby helping to create “the conditions in which this business can invest, expand and adapt”, so supporting a prosperous local rural economy by allowing “the development and diversification of this agricultural business”.

Yours faithfully,

John Osborne, on behalf of Hurst Village Society