

# Hurst Village Society

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9<sup>th</sup> March 2023

E-Mail To; [Development.control@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Development.control@wokingham.gov.uk)

For the attention of the Case Officer, Development Control, Wokingham Borough Council, Planning Application Ref No; 230074

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re; Land adjacent to School Road and Orchard Road, Hurst. Outline Planning Application (Ref No; 230074) for the proposed erection of 24 dwellings with associated access and 15 car parking spaces for the local Primary School. Access only to be considered (with Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be reserved).**

Hurst Village Society (HVS) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above application.

In any response that it makes on any individual planning application, the Society, although not a statutory consultee, believes that it has a professional duty to raise only relevant material planning considerations. This is particularly the case when objecting to proposals, in that those considerations are both credible, and can be sustained under scrutiny by the Local Planning Authority, or subsequently by a Planning Inspector, if the matter is subject to an Appeal. In this way it is hoped that the reputation of The Society is maintained as being professional, transparent, and consistent such that its contribution to the whole planning process is both respected and valued, even by those who may disagree with the stance being taken in relation to a particular application or issue. The Committee also recognises that, whilst any submission on behalf of the Society is effectively but a single response in your public

consultation process, in meeting the criteria referred to above, we also need to reflect the views of our individual members, who of course also have the opportunity to make their own views to you as the Planning Authority directly.

Unfortunately striking this necessary balance in our submissions is in reality becoming more and more difficult due to circumstances outside our control.

We are of course referring to the fact that the Draft Local Plan Revised Growth Strategy is still at an early stage of preparation and therefore it is our understanding that it carries only limited weight in accordance within The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). HVS realises that arguments are put forward that because the existing Local Plan is in effect in place until 2026, applications submitted now should be assessed against policies included within that plan. We are not professionally qualified to make such a judgement and nor would we expect to do so.

In the same vein, as The Local Planning Authority is unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing supply, meaning that those planning policies that an application of this kind would be assessed against, are considered out of date and therefore again are policies to which reduced weight may be given. As a result the *“Tilted Planning Balance”* is engaged with the resulting presumption that permission will be granted unless *“the impacts do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole”*. This again is not a matter for us as a Village Society to comment on in detail and nor can we possibly make any assumptions as to how The Planning Authority will, in it’s professional consideration of any application interpret the significance or indeed a Planning Inspector at any subsequent Appeal. However the very fact that the Society is aware of these issues, and wishes to maintain credibility as referred to above, makes it very difficult to now comment on objections based on those restrictive policies, that are relevant in an application like this, such as development outside the existing settlement area, when not knowing exactly what weight may be given to them in the assessment of this particular application, and yet we fully understand the concern from individuals for not apparently doing so.

The Planning Inspector in The Land East of Lodge Road (Tape Lane) Inquiry in his Decision Notice dismissing the Appeal has provided some clarity on this point, by stating that just because important planning policies are considered out of date

does not mean they can carry no weight in the determination of an Appeal. He specifically refers to CP11 and in that particular Appeal determined that it should still carry significant weight, and also applied significant weight or full weight to other policies. Accepting that the Council is unable to demonstrate a deliverable 5 year Housing Land Supply he accepts that WBC because of the number of new houses completed, does typify a Council that is managing to boost the supply of housing over that which it planned for.

Unfortunately The Society is unable to turn to a Local Neighbourhood Plan for some supporting evidence (even accepting this again would be linked to any updated Local Plan), as no such plan for Hurst has been published and neither is there a timescale by when any such plan would be subject to the statutory local public consultation.

The Society, as it always does, has published details of this application on our website together with direct links to the WBC Planning Portal and we requested comments from members to inform this response. Two responses were received both of which were wanting to object to this application.

Having regard to the comments above the Society is pleased that a number of our members have individually made a submission, a number objecting to the proposals, and some in favour of the application, and that Hurst Parish Council will be formally responding as the statutory consultee, but Hurst Village Society has on this occasion decided not to make any specific recommendations in relation to either supporting or objecting to this application.

As always, the community of Hurst has responded to the public consultation and has provided you with detailed comments which The Society is confident you will take into account when making a decision.

It is nevertheless hoped that you will agree this response is pertinent to the application under consideration and helpful to you in that respect.

Yours faithfully,

John Osborne,

Hurst Village Society Committee