

**Planning Statement (including
Design and Access)**

Proposal:
**Erection of three family homes
with upgraded access, parking and
amenity space**

Address:
**Walden Acres,
Wokingham Road,
Hurst,
RG10 0RU**

January 2023



**St Edwards
Design & Planning**



**St Edwards
Design & Planning**

St Edwards Design & Planning,
ID Maidenhead,
Vanwall Road,
Vanwall Business Park,
SL6 4UB.

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared and submitted in support of the accompanying full planning application for the erection of three dwellings (a semi-detached pair and a single detached dwelling) with associated upgraded access, parking and amenity space at Walden Acres in Hurst. This follows a previously withdrawn application for broadly the same proposal.
- 1.2 The reason that the previous application was withdrawn was due to a change to the red line associated with the site area and due to provide the opportunity to respond to the comments raised by the local community and the Protect Hurst Action Group (PHAG). A separate **Community Involvement** statement accompanies this Planning Statement which covers this matter in more detail. It is hoped that interested members of the community will review this document given that it clarifies a number of misconceptions.
- 1.3 This application is again made by Mr T Drake and Mr R Drake, both longstanding local residents who grew up in the village, with Walden Acres being their family home. The application is also made by Churchgate Premier Homes, acting as agent, who are a local developer. As can be seen on their website, Churchgate Premier Homes are a niche developer who typically only build on small sites comprising 1 – 4 new homes. They are not a volume house builder.
- 1.4 The existing site comprises part of the oversized plot associated with Walden Acres, a detached dwellinghouse. The spacious plot has been maintained as manicured garden since the dwelling was built many decades ago. The site largely comprises open lawn and this application seeks to make more effective use of the land, which has otherwise become burdensome for the land owner to maintain and certainly surplus to requirements, for three well-appointed new homes.
- 1.5 A key rationale of the design approach is to propose a small scale development that would not cause any impact upon any existing residents. Part of the owners motivation in making this application is also to close the existing gap to the side of Walden Acres in order to prevent the

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land from being used by any future owner of the site as an access to the unrelated field to the north-east (off Broadcommon Road). The owners of the application site have no connection with the Broadcommon Road field whatsoever and are vehemently against the development of that field.

1.6 This application proposes the subdivision of the north-west side of the landholding to create three new plots which will make sensitive but more effective use of the land. The approach seeks to provide three family homes which exhibit a high level of design reflective of the traditional architecture found locally.

1.7 Public consultation has taken place, whilst not a statutory requirement, in order to seek the view of the local community. This has included both meeting with the Parish Council and reaching out to adjacent neighbours.

1.8 The application proposal takes into consideration the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2021) and the Government web-based Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) alongside the adopted Development Plan for Wokingham.

1.9 The following plans and reports are submitted in support of this application and should be read in conjunction with this statement:

- Completed application forms and Certificates;
- Completed CIL forms;
- Phase 1 Ecology Appraisal
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (prepared by Trevor Heaps)

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- Architectural Drawings:
 - Location Plan – 22.030.01
 - Existing Site Plan - 22.030.02
 - Proposed Site Plan in Context - 22.030.03
 - Proposed Visibility Splays - 22.030.04
 - Proposed Site Plan in Colour - 22.030.05
 - Proposed Landscaping - 22.030.06
 - Construction Management Plan - 22.030.07
 - Proposed Materials- 22.030.08
 - Proposed Plans and Elevations - Plot 1 & 2 22.030.10
 - Proposed Plans and Elevations - Plot 3 22.030.11
 - Proposed Streetscene - 22.030.12
 - Proposed Figure Ground - 22.030.13
 - Settlement Context Plan - 22.030.14

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2 APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 The application site comprises Walden Acres, a two-storey detached dwelling occupying a very large and oversized plot. Whilst dwellings in this locality have large plots, Walden Acres is exceptionally large.
- 2.2 The existing dwelling is of typically post-war design and, whilst it exhibits no particular architectural merit, it is not unattractive and is in a good state of repair. The dwelling benefits from an existing driveway access onto Wokingham Road to the south. The site also benefits from a secondary gated access point further northward along the south-western boundary. This access would be retained and enhanced to serve the three new dwellings.



Aerial view

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- 2.3 To the north-east (rear), the deep site backs onto paddock land located off Broadcommon Road and towards a number of existing houses which are also located off the same highway, albeit these houses are located away from the rear boundary of the site.
- 2.4 To the south-east side, Walden Acres is adjoined by the boundary of Willow Cottage, a large very heavily extended dwelling which has a linear footprint. This dwelling is part of the continuous built frontage of houses which continue along Wokingham Road to the south-east of the application site. This built frontage also contains a relatively dense cluster of houses behind, away from the highway.
- 2.5 To the front (south-west), the site fronts onto Wokingham Road, however, the site is heavily screened by an out-grown and diseased Leylandii hedge which is somewhat of an eyesore despite the screening it provides. Moreover, the hedge disrupts the view of the main house which is not necessarily a positive feature, given that historically the house was always visible from the highway because the hedge was kept manicured and shorter. Indeed, a key characteristic along Wokingham Road within this part of the village is that houses are generally visible.

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View from Wokingham Road towards application site (looking slightly north-west)

2.6 Finally, to the north-west side, the application site flanks onto a shared boundary with No.2 Keyers Bridge Cottage, one of a pair of semi-detached dwellings. Beyond this neighbouring house is a strong row of dwellings which front the highway, positioned in a very advanced location within their respective plots, close to the boundary with the road.



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View eastward from Wokingham Road towards Keyers Bridge Cottages



View eastward from further west along Wokingham Road

- 2.7 The application site falls within a long established residential part of the village, where built form is not only characterised by the frontage development, but also dwellings beyond. The site itself is located within a generally consistent built frontage which directly extends from the development limit of the village.
- 2.8 As with many parts of Hurst, the character along Wokingham Road is mixed, comprising some very good quality older housing stock, typically 19th Century, and some less significant post-war builds, although these are seldom unattractive.
- 2.9 The palette of materials found locally typically includes red brick and use of white / off-white render. There are examples of more modern development which uses a more varied palette of materials. Development is typically two-storeys in height comprising both detached and semi-detached houses.
- 2.10 Within the context of the village, the application site benefits from a highly sustainable location within the settlement, in walking distance of the village centre and benefitting from a good number local services, including schools, community facilities and the village shop.

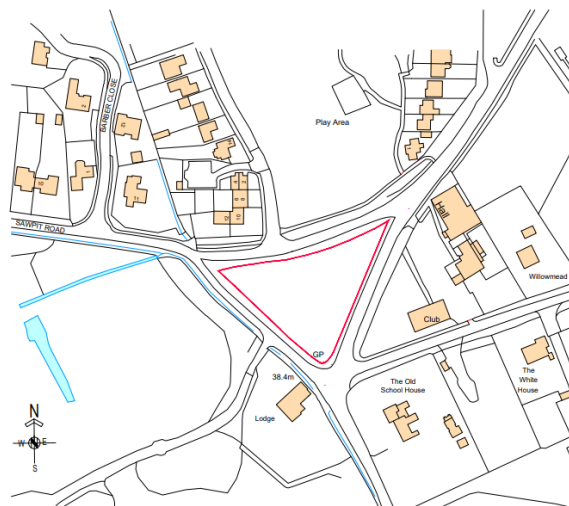
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2.11 The village is also relatively well served by bus routes and benefits from excellent transport links to wider distributor routes.

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3.4 Planning permission was subsequently granted by the Planning Inspectorate following an Appeal that was determined on 5th July 2022 (PINS ref: APP/X0360/W/21/3280255). The main elements of this Appeal Decision of specific relevance to the application site are; (i) the principle of development and (ii) the character of the area.

3.5 With regard to the principle of development, the Council took a very narrow view which fundamentally considered that sites within the settlement boundary of Hurst fall within the developed area wherein the Development Plan supports new housing and sites that fall outside of the settlement boundary are in the open countryside wherein new housing should typically be resisted.



Location plan extract (ref: ref: 211532)

3.6 In reality, the settlement boundary for Hurst is a somewhat arbitrary line on a map which does not truly dictate whether or not a site falls within the settlement / truly developed area. A narrow policy interpretation also assumes that on one side of the line the land is developed and on the other side the land is open countryside. Again, this bears no semblance to reality given that few villages have clearly distinct developed limits. Peripheral housing can be just as developed in some places as more central areas.

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- 3.7 It is therefore always important to consider the spirit and purpose of Development Plan policies when applying the planning balance, rather than taking an ‘all or nothing’ approach to settlement boundaries as they appear on the Proposals Map.
- 3.8 In respect to the principle of development, the Inspector found that the Council were unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and in the absence of this, the Development Plan policies with respect to housing are out of date in any case. The planning balance was therefore in favour of planning permission being supported given the requirements of the NPPF which respect to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 3.9 Turning to the impact upon the character of the area, the Council’s reason for refusal determined that the site was an undeveloped area of rural land and the proposal would have an urbanising and detrimental impact upon the character of the area. It is important to note that the Appeal site also fell within the ‘Area of Special Character’.
- 3.10 The Council’s position did, however, somewhat lack balance, failing to acknowledge that the site was not necessarily in a wholly rural location, but actually on the edge of the village, within an area that was characterised by scattered residential development. The Inspector concluded that the site *“represents the transition between the more linear and urbanised form of development to the north off Martineau Lane and the more sporadic and less dense nature of the dwellings to the south. Overall, Hurst has a fairly varied character and form, scale and design of development.”*
- 3.11 The Inspector further concluded that *“In visual terms, I consider that the proposal would cause limited and localised effects on the appearance of the countryside because of the relatively contained nature of the site and its surroundings, and the retention of trees and hedgerows along its peripheral boundaries. In my view, as a consequence of the retention of the majority of the peripheral trees and hedgerow, the visual effects of the proposed development would be very localised and minor adverse.”*

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- 3.12 The Inspector's approach very much considered the 'real world' implication of the development in the sense that the visual impact, in reality, was favoured over the more hypothetical 'default' stance that any development would be harmful to the character due to being outside of the developed limits. In this respect, the Inspector clearly placed significant emphasis on the boundary treatments, specifically the retained trees and hedgerows that would certainly soften and screen the proposal, limiting any visual impact or actual loss of character.
- 3.13 With regard to the Area of Special Character, the Inspector also look a very pragmatic interpretation of the Council's policy, noting the actual character of the area and concluded that *"In summary, I do not consider that the cul-de-sac form of the relatively low density proposed development would unacceptably contrast with the pattern and form of development in the village. In addition, I consider that the form, scale, mass and design of the proposed dwellings would be compatible with nearby buildings and would be sensitive to the character of the area."*
- 3.14 Overall, whilst the Inspector found a technical conflict with policies regarding character and particularly the sites location within the Area of Special Character, the Inspector found the actual harm to be limited or moderate. When taking the overall planning balance, therefore, the Inspector found the proposal to be acceptable and duly allowed the Appeal.
- 3.15 The Appeal Decision also dedicates a section to the location of the development site in relation to the village and draws strong conclusions that the site would fundamentally be sustainable for new homes.
- 3.16 This Appeal Decision contains many key considerations which are relevant to the application site (the subject of this Planning Statement). These conclusions are especially pertinent given that the application site is clearly in keeping with an established row of houses within a wholly more developed part of the village periphery and the fact that the site is already in a residential use, adjoined by existing dwellings on either side and not an undeveloped parcel of land.

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3.17 Furthermore, the application site is just as well screened, but importantly does not fall within the Area of Special Character.

3.18 The site at Sawpit Road, the subject of the Appeal, sets useful parameters for the application proposal. The applicant notes, however, that the Sawpit Road site itself is highly unusual and not a typical development site.

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4 APPLICATION PROPOSAL

4.1 The planning application proposes the erection of three new family dwellings with associated improved access, parking and amenity space. The site measures approximately 1540sqm in total area.

4.2 Plot 3 is a detached dwelling (4bed) dwelling, whilst Plots 1 and 2 form a pair of semi-detached cottage style dwellings (both 3bed plus study). The dwellings would be accessed via the retained vehicular access point which will lead to a shared parking and turning area.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

4.3 The site falls outside of the defined 'developed area' of Hurst wherein the principle of development would otherwise typically be supported.

4.4 Section 1 of MDD Policy CC02 confirms that development limits for each settlement are defined on the Policies Map and that proposals at the edge of settlements will only be granted where the development, including boundary treatments, is within development limits. The drafting of the policy is somewhat unusual in that it refers to "proposals on the edge of settlements" yet requires these to be within the development limits as opposed to being outside of the technical limits.

4.5 Typically, such wording would be included to support development on peripheral sites which are just outside of the developed limits, thereby acknowledging the existence of parts of the built-up part of the settlement and / or the transitional interface commonly found around villages, which might technically be beyond the line of the 'developments limits' as drawn on the Proposals Map.

4.6 In this regard, the location of the proposed development would conflict with MDD Policy CC02 based upon a direct interpretation of the policy. The purpose of the planning system in

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England, however, is to apply balance to planning policies taking material considerations into account.

4.7 In this respect, it must be acknowledged that the application site falls within a well-established developed and wholly residential part of the village. The site is also comfortably within the true developed area (rather than at the edge of it). Both visually, in terms of the physical character of the area and socially, these houses clearly form part of the developed area of the village despite falling foul of the 'development limit' as defined by the Proposals Map. Taking an objective assessment of the purpose and intention of the development limits, there is an extremely strong case that this part of the village should be included.

4.8 The below OS Map extract illustrates the character of the site and the fact that it falls within an established and relatively developed part of the village. The 'developed' part of the village are shown in grey (i.e. dwellings and associated plots, ancillary residential land, school, businesses, etc) with the buildings in dark grey. The undeveloped areas are shown in white (i.e. open countryside in the form or agricultural fields and paddocks).

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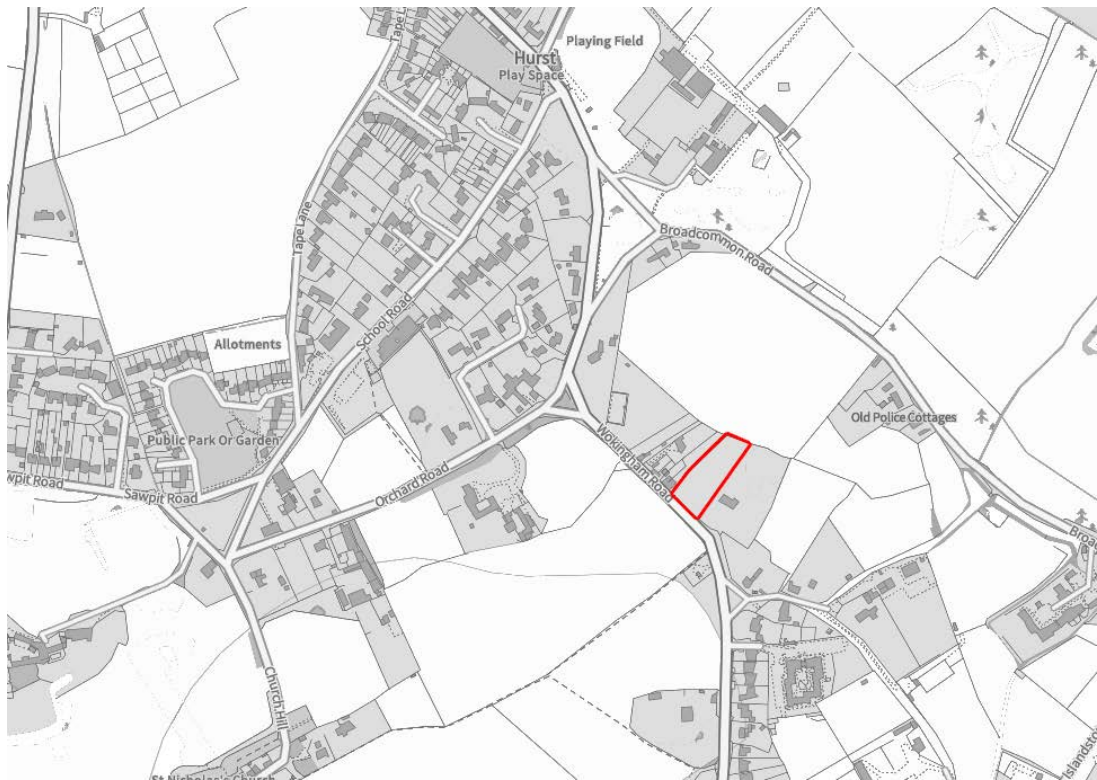


Fig.1 – OS Map showing developed area of settlement

- 4.9 The application site is therefore part of a relatively continuous built frontage along Wokingham Road which extends directly from the ‘development area’ of the village as defined by the Proposals Map.
- 4.10 Core Strategy Policy CP11 indicates that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted, subject to certain identified exceptions. The proposed scheme does not fall within the scope of those exceptions, however, it follows that, given in real terms the application site is part of the residential area of the village, the proposal would not undermine the aims of the policy. This is especially so given the proposal would effectively infill a gap between the existing dwellings to the south-west (and the host dwelling to the east (and the houses beyond)). Furthermore, there are no nearby settlements to the south-east of Hurst that would be within a proximity whereby coalescence would be a concern.

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- 4.11 Accordingly, it is considered to be unequivocal that the proposal would not dilute the separate identity of the village nor impact upon the quality of its environment. It is crucial to note that the policy does make allowance for proposals that may technically otherwise be in conflict by stating “proposals outside of development limits will not **normally** be permitted” (our emphasis). Clearly, therefore, the policy is worded in a way that allows the LPA to make a balanced judgement based upon the aims of the policy and the specifics of the site.
- 4.12 Accordingly, it is considered that the application site can be considered to comply with the purpose of Policy CP11 and therefore the principle of development can be considered acceptable.
- 4.13 The case for the principle of development being acceptable is further supplemented by the status of the land. Given that the site falls within a semi-rural location, technically outside of the developed limits according to the Proposals Map, it can be considered that the site, which is garden land, does not fall within a ‘built-up’ area.
- 4.14 Accordingly, as defined by the NPPF, the site can be said to technically constitute ‘previously developed land’. The NPPF does not define the term ‘built-up’ and so the common understanding of the term should be used. The Collins Dictionary defines the term as “*A built-up area is an area such as a town or city which has a lot of buildings in it*”. It would not therefore readily be used to describe a village location and especially not a peripheral village site.
- 4.15 The NPPF dedicates an entire chapter to making effective use of land which emphasises the need to give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land to deliver housing.
- 4.16 Chapter 11 of the NPPF encourages local planning authorities to make an effective use of land, particularly previously developed land. Paragraph 120(c) specifically advised that decisions

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should: “give **substantial weight** to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes...” (our emphasis).

4.17 It is considered that whilst the site falls outside of the ‘development limits’, it is unequivocally within the village settlement and therefore paragraph 120(c) is directly applicable.

Housing Land Supply

4.18 It is understood that the Council are still unable to demonstrate a robust and evidence based 5 year housing land supply. Accordingly, as confirmed by the Appeal Decision at Sawpit Road, the Council’s policies with respect to housing can be considered out of date.

4.19 Accordingly, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies and new housing should be supported.

4.20 The NPPF does advise, however, that isolated dwellings in the countryside should be avoided (paragraph 80). In accordance with ‘The Braintree Case’¹ the site would clearly not be isolated and therefore dwellings should not be avoided on this site.

4.21 Furthermore, given the Inspector’s findings regarding the location of development in the Appeal Decision for Sawpit Road (paragraphs 40 – 53), the fact that the geographic considerations in terms of distance from the village centre and connectivity are very similar, the site can clearly be considered as sustainable and well-related to the village centre.

4.22 With regard to housing need, it is a matter of fact that the south-east of England continues to experience a housing shortage, hence the Government has introduced the requirements for LPA’s to have a rolling 5 year housing land supply as well as longer term trajectories.

4.23 Paragraph 60 of the NPPF confirms the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. Paragraph 74 confirms that s. Local planning authorities should identify and

¹ Braintree DC v SSCLG [2018] Civ 610

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update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies.

- 4.24 Paragraph 68 confirms that local planning authorities should also have planning policies in place which identify specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan.
- 4.25 Accordingly, the five year delivery of specific sites is not a minimum. This is especially the case in light of the Secretary of State's affirmation of the Inspector's statement in the 'Money Hill case'² that "*there is also a current national imperative to boost the supply of housing*" and his conclusion that "*significant weight (be attached) to the fact that the proposed development would providenew homes*". This was against a context where the Council could demonstrate a five year supply of housing land.
- 4.26 Accordingly, regardless of the Council's 5 year housing land supply position, it is clear that the Council should ideally be able to demonstrate that growth is also considered for the 6-10 year and 10 – 15 year periods. Significant weight must be therefore be given to housing delivery.
- 4.27 In weighing the planning balance, considering Paragraph 11 of the NPPF (the presumption in favour of sustainable development) it is considered that the proposed dwellings should be supported in principle when weighing the purpose and aims of the Development Plan policies and considering housing need.

LAYOUT

² Money hill 13 Appeal Ref: APP/G2435/A/14/2228806. Land North of Wood Street, Money Hill, Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

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- 4.28 The proposed layout has been designed to fully respect the character of the area. The position of the dwellings has been informed by the existing houses to either side which includes the 'host dwelling' of Walden Acres.
- 4.29 Given the adjacent dwellings to the north-west occupy a very advanced position close to the highway, and Walden Acres itself is located much further back into the plot, the proposed dwellings are purposefully staggered to provide a transition between the two. This maintains a sense of building line.
- 4.30 Moreover, this ensures that the highway frontage is reinforced and enhanced, highly sympathetic to the character along this particular part of Wokingham Road and providing a pleasant and suitable interface between the built and natural environment.
- 4.31 The positioning of the dwellings has purposely been designed to minimise any impact on neighbouring amenity, with a flank-to-flank relationship created with both the neighbouring dwellings and each of the new dwellings respectively. This avoids any overlooking or privacy impacts.
- 4.32 Given the very generous separation distances to the sides, coupled with existing and enhanced boundary screening, the proposals would also not result in any material impact in terms of loss of light or being overbearing.
- 4.33 The access would be provided on the south side of the site via the existing access point. This would be enhanced to serve the new development. A large frontage area would allow for parking and very generous boundary planting. At present, the site suffers from an outgrown and diseased Leylandii hedge along the site frontage, effectively an eyesore. This would be removed and replaced with a species rich native hedgerow and specimen tree planting.
- 4.34 This will ensure both a highly level of screening is retained whilst significantly improving the appearance of the site with respect to the streetscene. Furthermore, this adds a significant biodiversity enhancements.

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- 4.35 Parking is provided to the front of each respective unit home with sufficient space for turning. The 3bed dwellings would benefit from 2 parking spaces whilst the 4bed detached dwelling would have 3 spaces. The parking and turning area is such that it can easily accommodate ad-hoc temporary visitor parking.
- 4.36 Each dwelling would benefit from very large gardens with sheds to provide for cycle and garden storage. Bins would be stored in the rear gardens with collection from the kerbside.
- 4.37 Overall, the proposal would have a regular layout which makes effective use of the land and takes into consideration highway safety, neighbouring amenity and the character of the area.



Proposed site plan extract

DENSITY

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- 4.38 The NPPF places significant emphasis on the need to drive up density, particularly on previously developed land within sustainable (i.e. settlement) locations such as Hurst. Specifically the NPPF includes the subsection at page 36 titled 'Achieving appropriate densities'.
- 4.39 The relevant paragraphs of this section of the NPPF confirms that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient and to avoid homes being built at low densities, ensuring that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.
- 4.40 Whilst the application site could clearly accommodate more development, character remains an important consideration. The proposal is therefore purposely very low density, lower than that of the neighbouring dwellings to the north-west.
- 4.41 Whilst the proposal would therefore have a lower density, this is considered to strike a balance between making more effective use of the land about also responding to the character of the area.
- 4.42 In summary, whilst the density proposed would clearly be low, this is considered to be appropriate and in keeping with the prevailing density of the area and would provide a subtle transition between the slightly higher density houses to the north-west and the slightly lower density houses to the south-east.

DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

- 4.43 The form of the development clearly takes precedent from the existing development in this area with respect to the general layout and arrangement. This section of Wokingham Road is typically suburban / semi-rural in character, primarily characterised by traditional architecture fronting onto the highway.
- 4.44 Hedgerows and intermittent tree planting within frontages associated with dwellings is typical along this section of the highway, whilst more open frontages are generally more prevalent.

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4.45 With respect to the character of the area, whilst dwelling types and styles is mixed, the key architectural merit along this part of Wokingham Road is clearly derived from the older housing stock. These characterful dwellings tend benefit from key architectural details including; use of red brick and white render, gable end roofs and half-hipped roofs, red clay tiles and window bar details to fenestration including some use of sash windows.

4.46 Further along Wokingham Road to the south-east, there is a greater variety with more recent housing stock neighbouring older and more characterful housing.



Dwellings on Wokingham Road to the south-east

4.47 The proposed dwellings have therefore been designed to reflect a very high standard of architecture.

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- 4.48 The detached dwelling would be more modern in appearance, representing almost a barn-conversion style, with use of dark stained timber cladding with a red clay tiled roof.
- 4.49 The semi-detached pair adopt a far more traditional appearance, with a cottage style appearance and architectural features found locally. This includes the use of gable fronted dormer windows, red brick and red clay tiles.
- 4.50 The result is considered to be a very high quality design approach with would respect the character of the area. Accordingly, the proposal would reinforce and actively enhance the streetscene and the wider character of the area.
- 4.51 The scale of the dwellings would entirely reflect the neighbouring development, with all of the units being two-storeys in height. Collectively, with the design and layout, the approach taken would ensure that the proposed dwellings would sit comfortably on the site and certainly would not be cramped nor out-of-place given the character of the surroundings.
- 4.52 The palette of materials would entirely reflect the local vernacular including the use of a local red stock brick of consistent tone (rather than a 'multi' brick). A red clay roof tile will be used to provide sensitive and attractive finish. For the detached house, a dark stained timber with modern glazing provides a sympathetic contrast that maintains a rural stylisation which is in keeping with the local mixed vernacular.



Proposed street section extract

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- 4.53 Overall, given the design and appearance of the proposed dwellings, the proposal is considered to be entirely sympathetic to the character of the area and would actively reinforce and improve the streetscene.

NEIGHBOURING AMENITY

- 4.54 The proposed dwellings would not have any first floor habitable room windows in any side elevations with the exception of obscure glazed bathroom / en-suite windows. This would ensure that there would be no direct overlooking or loss of privacy to the sides, neither between the respective new dwellings, nor towards any neighbouring properties.
- 4.55 Very generous separations distances would be provided to the sides which, coupled with the existing boundary treatments, would ensure that the development is very neighbourly and would not cause any material impact upon any existing neighbours.

AMENITY SPACE

- 4.56 Each dwelling would benefit from very large private rear gardens which, given both the length and the depth of the amenity space provided, would provide exemplary amenity space, appropriate for modern family living.
- 4.57 The gardens would also typical residential storage needs including for waste and recycling bins and to accommodate a normal garden shed which would provide garden storage and secure weatherproof storage for bicycles.

ACCESS, PARKING AND WASTE

- 4.58 The existing site benefit from a singular vehicle access point which would be retained and improved to serve the three new dwellings.

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- 4.59 The site benefits from straight visibility to the north and achieves the requisite visibility splays as required for highways safety. To the south, the highway does bend slightly and the site benefits from being on the outside of the curve and therefore also achieves the requisite splays in this direction. Accordingly, the new access would benefit from requisite and safe visibility splays for both vehicles and pedestrians.
- 4.60 For Plots 1 & 2, two parking spaces will be provided in accordance with the Council's standards for 3bed dwellings. Plot 3 would benefit from 3 spaces provided under an attractive oak beam car port, in accordance with the Councils standards for 4bed dwellings.
- 4.61 Ad-hoc additional parking is provided to the front of the bays which would serve as temporary parking for visitors.
- 4.62 Overall, the parking provision, access arrangements and turning space meets the Councils standards and the site would benefit from safe access allowing cars to enter the site, park, turn and then leave in a forward gear.
- 4.63 Naturally, the number of vehicle movements associated with only three family dwellings would not be significant in highways terms given that the site accesses onto Wokingham Road.
- 4.64 With respect to cycle parking, each dwelling would benefit from secure rear gardens which contains a domestic garden shed. This would serve to provide typical garden storage and secure and weatherproof parking for cycles.
- 4.65 Each dwelling would benefit from bin stores located within the gardens. Collection would be from the kerbside.
- 4.66 Accordingly, the proposal would also make sufficient provision for cycle storage, and waste storage and collection as required by the Council's policies.

Biodiversity and Landscaping

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4.67 The application is supported by a detailed Phase 1 Ecology Survey completed by Albion Ecology (Dr Jonty Denton) a leading ecologist in the UK. This survey confirms that the site mostly comprises semi-improved lawn and ornamental tree species.

4.68 In order to demonstrate biodiversity net gains, the proposal includes a full soft landscaping scheme. This includes over 150m of species rich native hedge planting and 20 specimen trees (Birth and Hawthorne). Combined, this would provide exemplary biodiversity net gains and significant ecological improvements.

4.69 The new native species hedgerow with tree planting along the front boundary of the site would also provide an altogether more attractive soft landscaped buffer, improving the appearance of the site.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.70 The site is close to, but outside of, the Area of Special Character. This is a non-statutory designation which seeks to afford recognition to character elements deemed to be worthy of note but not so significant that they are worthy of being designated as a Conservation Area.

4.71 The Appeal Decision at Sawpit Road is very relevant with respect to the character, significance and weight afforded to the character area given that the Appeal site fell within the Area of Special Character.

4.72 Whilst not within the character area, and views from it being limited due to the retained and proposed boundary screening, the proposal would help to enhance and reinforce the character along this section of Wokingham Road. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to have a neutral impact at worst, but would likely enhance the character of the ASC through high quality architecture.

4.73 To the south of the application site, there is a public right of way (PROW) which travels directly south across farmland. Whilst views from this PROW are a material consideration when

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considering setting, the proposal would not fundamentally alter the existing enjoyment of the footpath. At present, views from the footpath towards Wokingham Road comprise views across fields, with a backdrop of low density housing on the opposite side of the highway. The existing built form therefore directly forms the setting of this part of the footpath. The proposal would not materially alter this character, whilst the replacement of the unsightly Leylandii hedge and its replacement with a native species hedgerow and specimen native tree planting would wholly improve the backdrop.

4.74 Beyond this planting, the dappled view of the three very attractive dwellings proposed would arguably enhance views and the enjoyment of the interface between the natural and built environment. It is accepted, however, that views are entirely subjective. In material planning terms, the proposal would not fundamentally affect the PROW, its setting, nor the enjoyment of footpath users.

4.75 With respect to affordable housing, the site would not exceed the 0.16ha threshold and as such no affordable housing requirement is triggered.

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5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In the absence of 5 year housing land supply, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle of the basis of weight afforded to the NPPF. Even if the LPA consider that the Council can demonstrate a 5 year supply, the Money Hill case is clear that the Council should be able to go beyond this and demonstrate longer term housing land delivery / growth.
- 5.2 Notwithstanding this, the Planning Statement explains why the proposal is considered to be inline with the aims and intentions of Policy CP11 and how the specific wording of the policy allows for the Council to take a pragmatic and balanced view, supporting housing on this site despite the land technically being beyond the development limits as defined by the Proposals Map. In the respect, the site clearly forms part of the built settlement area and is therefore considered to be appropriate for new residential development.
- 5.3 Section 2, paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out three overarching objectives, these are set out as Economic, Social and Environmental objectives. Overall it is considered that the proposed development would align with these aims. The proposal would fulfil economic objectives in terms of supporting growth. The proposal would result in the creation of temporary jobs during the construction phase of the proposed development and helping to sustain the local community thereafter through improved trade. A social objective would also be met as the proposal would provide additional housing and would make effective and efficient use of land, whilst giving regard to the local built environment. The proposal would also help to enhance the vitality of the local community, a critical requirement given the aging population.
- 5.4 The NPPF also places significant emphasis on the need to make more effective use of previously developed land, particularly in sustainable locations, requiring decision makers to give “substantial weight” to such considerations.
- 5.5 This planning statement has also explained how the design and layout of the proposal has been developed to create a cohesive and fundamentally neighbourly development which

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would not result in any significant impacts. The statement has also explained how the character of the area has been fully considered to create a high quality addition that would reinforce and enhance the streetscene.

- 5.6 Furthermore, this statement has explained why the land technically comprises previously developed land and accordingly significant weight should be afforded to making better use of the land in accordance with the NPPF.
- 5.7 Overall, it is considered that the proposal would not cause any demonstrable harm that would not otherwise be outweighed by the benefits.
- 5.8 Accordingly, in applying the planning balance, it is considered that the proposal would provide a positive and sustainable development comprising three sensitive family dwellings in accordance with both local and national policies.