



e-mail to Development.control@wokingham.gov.uk

1st August 2023

For the attention of the Case Officer, Planning Application Ref; 231333

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re; Ashdown Farm, Maidenhead Road, Hurst, R40 5RR. Full Application (ref;21333) for the proposed change of use of land to a mixed use of residential and the keeping of horses, plus the erection of 1No. detached five bedroom dwelling and garage with associated parking, landscaping and swimming pool.

Hurst Village Society (HVS) welcomes the opportunity to comment on this planning application and in so doing would wish to register it's objection to the development proposals as submitted to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).

The Planning, Design and Access Statement which accompanies the application is detailed in so far that it properly addresses the Planning History of the Site and provides a Policy Assessment highlighting the various national and local planning policies against which the development proposals must be judged. In addition the document quite correctly states that a material consideration in the determination of this application (the actual text in the document refers to "appeal" which at this stage of the planning process is clearly an error) is the absence of a 5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS). However the document fails to provide the proper context in which certain issues should be considered or indeed any compelling planning arguments as to why relevant planning policies can be disregarded or any evidence

that the development proposals can properly be considered to fall within any of the accepted exceptions.

HVS considers this application is unacceptable in that it attempts to deliver a large residential development in an inappropriate position in the countryside “by stealth” by linking it to a previous planning permission granted in 2020 for a change of use of land from agricultural to the keeping of horses, plus the erection of a hay barn and stable building (Ref; 202103). The comments made by the Planning Authority at that time made it very clear that “the buildings hereby approved would constitute inappropriate development in the countryside if it were not for the proposed equestrian use.” The Society believes that the development proposals seek to effectively make the substantive use of the land, residential, which would be in conflict with the planning permission granted which was on the basis of the main use of the land being equestrian with permission granted for the barn and stable building as ancillary to that use eg “for stabling, tack and feed store, mower store and storage of hay bales and straw”. The implication is very clear that this application for a residential development of this size on this site in a countryside location should be seen as inappropriate and refused.

The applicant correctly states that the Council cannot demonstrate a deliverable 5 year Housing Land Supply. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that in such circumstances the policies which are most important for determining the application have to be considered out of date meaning the so called “tilted balance” comes into play. However it is important to put this into context following a recent Planning Appeal in Wokingham (Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/22/3309202 Land East of Lodge Road, Hurst) where the Planning Inspector in dismissing the Appeal made it clear (albeit in relation to the Appeal but which must be true also in relation to an Application) “being considered out-of-date does not mean that these policies can carry no weight in the determination of this Appeal”. In sections 31 and 32 of the Appeal Decision Notice he goes further stating that whilst WBC is currently unable to deliver a 5year Housing Land Supply, if one considers their performance in previous years in respect of housing completions “ this does not signify a Council that is failing in terms of housing provision, but rather, one that is performing well and managing to boost the supply of housing over that which it planned for.” As a consequence HVS respectfully suggests that CS Policies CP9 and CP11 should still carry significant weight in the consideration of this application. The Society believes that if this line of thinking is accepted then planning permission must be refused under the “tilted balance” because “any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.”

In relation to CP9 HVS considers the development proposals in the application would not qualify as a rural exception site, and whilst it is accepted that the definition of “isolated” can be questioned, this is a site that quite properly in



planning terms can be considered isolated which was acknowledged by WBC as the Planning Authority in 2020.

In relation to CP 11 The Society has consistently objected to development proposals that are outside the local development limit unless they qualify under one of the associated exceptions, or where we have considered it appropriate to take a more pragmatic view, in relation to existing circumstances, such that have allowed us quite properly, we believe, to designate development proposals as genuine “infill”. This is not such a case and the application should be refused because it relates to a site that is clearly outside the development limits in open countryside .

These are the main objections, in the Society’s view, to this application but we would like to go on record as being unconvinced by the applicant’s arguments in relation to Sustainability, Transport, Biodiversity and the Local Landscape, but have no doubt that these elements of the application will be scrutinised in detail by WBC’s experts who are statutory consultees to such a planning application.

Hurst Village Society reiterates our objection to this application, and hope that our comments are helpful in your deliberations.

Yours faithfully,

John Osborne,

On behalf of Hurst Village Society