

# Hurst Village Society

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Founded



**14th March 2024**

e-mail to; [Development.control@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Development.control@wokingham.gov.uk)

**For the attention of the Case Officer, planning application Ref No; 240198**

Dear Sir /Madam

**Re; Hatchgate Farm, Lines Road, Hurst, Wokingham. Full application for the proposed erection of 5 No. residential dwellings and change of use of retained agricultural buildings Class E(g) commercial 6 No. units/employment use. Following the demolition of existing outdated agricultural building.**

Hurst Village Society Committee (HVS) has welcomed the opportunity, of studying (within the Committee's mandated remit of the adopted HVS planning guidelines) what is a very detailed and comprehensive Design and Access Statement, together with the associated relevant technical analyses which form part of this application. This should be seen as both a unique and an exciting mixed use development, and one which could bring much needed vitality and prosperity to the local community. As such the development proposals should be supported. This is particularly the case when examining the planning context which appears to support the development.

In that respect it is important to recognise that the conversion and change of use of former agricultural buildings both in the immediate location and also to the South of the site along Dunt Lane has previously been shown to be acceptable and that changes to accommodate such development can be made. There are examples of changes from agricultural to residential use both in the locality, and within the boundaries of Hatchgate Farm which show that such alterations can be made successfully and sympathetically. The HVS Committee considers that it is important to recognise that there is no evidence that the location of the site, when dealing

with changes to the former milking parlour, was considered as being an unsuitable location or that the permitted changes to those buildings would in any way give rise to an unacceptable impact on the countryside. It is of course for the Planning Authority to make the definitive judgement in respect of this application, but HVS takes the view that, notwithstanding the need to treat every individual planning application on its own merits, the fact that buildings have already been converted in the immediate locality is a material consideration when looking at any subsequent application such as this, not only with regard to the principle of development but also the design detail.

These development proposals are reliant on utilising space currently occupied by existing agricultural barn structures to deliver five new homes alongside up to 800 square metres of new commercial space. In this respect the application has to be considered in accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in that existing, but redundant, agricultural buildings are being reused, and that empty and derelict agricultural buildings are to be demolished. In respect of the latter using the policy in this way is seen as positive in that those structures will not fall into even greater disrepair and thus become an eyesore in the local environment. HVS believes the development proposals in terms of the conversions and rebuilds will not extend beyond the current footprint of the existing structures, which will of course be confirmed by the Planning Authority.

The stated purpose of the planning system in the NPPF is to contribute to achieving sustainable development, and the three overarching objectives, namely an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective, would appear to be met by this mixed use application and could positively input to the local community meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Whilst recognising that these proposals are clearly outside development limits and in the countryside, the stated exemptions to CP11 would appear to permit the development in that they do not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings, and the development is either contained within buildings which are appropriate for conversion or in the case of the replacement of already dilapidated buildings, will bring about an improvement to the local environment whilst not resulting in an inappropriate increase in the scale, form, or footprint of the original buildings.

HVS always welcomes pre-application discussions in applications such as this and understands these have taken place in this case. The Society has to assume that the

significant issue of any potential detrimental impact on the local highways has been examined in detail with the Local Highway Authority, and in particular any issues relating to the limited access to the site because of its rural position, suitably addressed to their satisfaction. In the same way the Society will rely on the expertise of the Planning Authority in ensuring any requirements as regards opportunities for sustainable travel are delivered.

The design for the high quality proposed homes can be assured by conditions, as can ensuring the required Bio Diversity Net Gain of 10%.

In conclusion HVS welcomes this small mixed-use development, welcoming the new commercial space, and also the fact that these proposals including new homes are on a site of less than one hectare, recognising national planning policy.

Any potential growth that can be brought forward from small and medium size sites such as this needs to be very closely examined in a pragmatic and holistic way, as looking at small scale developments in as positive a manner as possible, particularly in rural villages such as Hurst, will surely reduce the risk of any reliance into the future on so called "speculative" large scale inappropriate planning applications in order to bolster the local housing supply.

Yours faithfully,

John Osborne, on behalf of the Hurst Village Society Committee