

**RE: Revised Planning Application 230074 - Land adjacent to School Road and Orchard Road Hurst Reading.**

ST NICHOLAS HURST PARISH COUNCIL (SNHPC) reaffirm their previous objection, copy attached, with regard to the amendments to the application submitted on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023 we object as follows:.

- 1) Hurst is not a sustainable location as confirmed by WBC and planning inspectors at numerous appeals, ranging from 1 to 200 dwellings (as detailed in our original objection).

Since the original application, WBC have refused planning application 223805 for 33 dwellings for the nearby Land at Broadcommon Road Hurst. WBC refused this application for the following reasons:

- *Being an unsustainable form of development in the countryside*
- *The suburban or overly urban appearance, layout and pattern of development is at odds with the linear and detached pattern of dwellings on nearby roads’.*
- *The proposed development would have a major adverse visual impact on the landscape of the area and the increase in the amount of activity and magnitude of change to the landscape is unacceptable; Does not encourage a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport’.*

In addition, the WBC Statement of Case for the Appeal for 3 dwellings at Walden Acres, Wokingham (Application 230201 - APP/X0360/W/23/3322416) in March 2023<sup>1</sup> argued the following (page 2) when WBC were comparing the 3 dwellings appeal with the 200 dwellings in the Land at the East of Lodge Road Appeal (Dismissed 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2023, APP/X0360/W/22/3309202). ***"The most important policies for the current appeal are materially similar with respect to the countryside location, impact on character and appearance of the area, unsustainable location and highway safety"***.

All of the above comments from WBC for both Broadcommon Road application and the Walden Acres appeal are relevant and apply to this amended application. As with the proposed development at Walden Acres, the residents of this proposed new development will have to cross the busy A321 twice to access the local convenience store.

The removal of one dwelling still means that SNHPC’s original sustainability argument (Page 28 of original objection) regarding the lack of pre-school spaces (it is still full and has a waiting list), the pupil yield of the proposed development for the primary school of approximately 9 additional children has been further exacerbated by the additional dwellings given permission in the village and the village school does not have the capacity to take all of these children. This will mean that nearly all primary school children and pre-school children from the new development will have to travel further afield to another school, all of which will be made by car. This increase in traffic to and from the development will be at a time when children will be walking to the primary school and pre-school.

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<sup>1</sup> LPA Statement of Case – Walden Acres [ViewDocument \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](https://www.wokingham.gov.uk)

As evidenced in previous dismissed appeals, there are no secondary schools in the vicinity within safe walking or safe cycling distance and due to the poor public transport service, every secondary school child will have to travel by car to and from secondary schools further afield.

- 2) The SNHPC arguments remain regarding public transport; The bus timetable has not changed (refer to original objection Appendix 6) there is still a poor, unreliable service to and from Hurst. There is no bus between 07.23 and 09.21 and no further funding has been confirmed, neither has the amended application made any provision to improve the public transport service.
- 3) Reduction of the number of dwellings from 24 to 23 will not mitigate the significant harm and lack of sensitivity to the surroundings. caused by the density and mass in both Orchard Road and School Road. It will have major adverse effect on an ASC and adjacent heritage asset, Vine Cottage which is a Grade II Listed Building.
- 4) The removal of the access at Orchard Road, means all traffic for the revised proposed development, i.e. 23 dwellings (instead of 9 dwellings), and the proposed school car park for 15 vehicles will be going in and out of School Road. This will cause a safety issue for children and parents using the Village Hall car park to walk to and from school and those walking to and from school from Martineau Lane and the wider area having to traverse two additional accesses. The memorandum from Gordon Adam of WBC Highways on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023 states that '*Parents appear not to use the Village Hall car park for drop off and pick up*', SNHPC refute this statement as parents consistently use the Village Hall car park and walk their children along the proposed site frontage.

This amended proposal is in conflict with NPPF Paragraph 116 in that it does not create a place that reduces conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. By introducing 2 new access points to a major development on the road and pathway to the local primary school is a conflict as it introduces a further danger to those children/adults who are walking to and from the School and the residents wishing to walk to Village Hall.

- 5) The proposed 15 space car park for the school will not adequately accommodate the number of cars that park along School Road during pick up and drop off. The number implied by the applicants transport statement does not take into account the number of cars that are parked North of the entrance to the School and underestimate the number of cars driven to and from the School. Images 1 to 16 below evidence on different days how busy this is and even with the utilised overflow in the Village Hall Car Park and the provision of the proposed car park, there will be a significant surplus of cars (in the region of 20) which will park on School Road, either side of the proposed access to the development and proposed access to the car park.

It is suggested by the Transport Statement that to encourage parents to use the proposed car park, that parking restrictions can be introduced, there is not enough alternative parking in the area to support this and this in turn will cause more parking and safety issues within the area and detrimentally affect the community.

As there is no control over the car parking, ultimately, as previously stated in our original objection, there is nothing to stop the new residents or existing residents utilising this parking. Combined with the additional two access, will cause issues with the safety of the children walking to and from the school to their homes and cars.

On any given day, the number of cars parked during the day (outside school pick up and drop off) along the Southern part of School Road (between the School and the Village Hall) can vary between 2 and 12 cars. This in turn will increase with the introduction of a development with the minimal amount of parking required for each dwelling.

**Image 1:** Hurst Village Hall Car Park  
**13 December, 2023 at 15.19**



**Image 2:** Hurst Village Hall Car Park  
**13 December, 2023 at 15.19**



**Image 3:** School Road, South of Entrance towards Village Hall (opposite Tape Lane access and parallel with Sawpit Road junction)  
**13 December, 2023 @ 15:18**



**Image 4:** School Road, South of Entrance (opposite Tape Lane Access and Dorndon House access)  
**13 December, 2023 @ 15.21**





**Image 5:** School Road, South of School Entrance looking from the Village Hall Car Park Entrance  
**13 December, 2023 @ 15.19**



**Image 6:** School Road South of Entrance – pedestrians walking where the proposed access to car park will be.  
**11 January, 2024 @ 08.35**



**Image 7:** School Road, North of entrance to School, looking towards A321.  
**11 January, 2024 @ 08.37**



**Image 8:** School Road North of entrance to School  
**11 January, 2024 @ 08.38**





**Image 9:** School Road, South of School entrance  
11 January, 2024 @ 08.39



**Image 10:** School Road, South of School entrance opposite Dornden and Tape Lane.  
11 January, 2024 @ 08.40



**Image 11:** School Road, North of School access (by Barleycorn)  
11 January, 2024 @ 15:01



**Image 12:** School Road, North of School Access  
11 January, 2024 @ 15.02



**Image 13:** School Road, South of School Entrance

**11 January, 2024 @ 15:10**



**Image 14:** School Road, South of School Entrance

**12 January, 2024 @ 08:35**



**Image 15:** School Road, South of School Entrance

**12 January, 2024 @ 08:39**



**Image 16:** School Road, South of School Entrance. Pedestrians walking where proposed access to development is.

**12 January, 2024 @ 08:40**





**Image 17:** School Road, North of School Entrance – parking from ‘Barleycorn’  
**12 January, 2024 @ 08.40**



**Image 18:** School Road, North of School Entrance  
**12 January, 2024 @ 08.40**



- ON the 13 December, 2023, during the afternoon pickup there were 30 vehicles in total parked along School Road and a further 20 parked in the Village Hall car park (50)
- ON the 11 January, 2024 during the morning drop off there were 17 vehicles parked South of the School access (towards Village Hall) and 19 vehicles parked North of the School access (towards A321) with 15 in the Village Hall Car Park (51)
- ON 11 January, 2024 at 15:00 pickup from school, there were 25 cars parked South of the School access and 20 vehicles parked North of the School Access and 14 parked in the Village Hall Car Park (59).
- On 12 January, 2024 between 8.30 and 08.40 there were 27 cars parked South of the School Entrance and 17 parked North of the School Entrance, with approximately 10 cars parked in the Village Hall Car Park. (54).

A number of residents, including many concerned parents with children at the School, have also testified in the most recent comments regarding this amended application, how many cars park along School Road – confirming that the number of parked cars are significantly over and above that indicated by the applicant’s Transport Statement and WBC Highways comments and that the proposed car park is tokenistic and will not mitigate the parking issue. They also identify safety concerns over the introduction of 2 additional accesses which they will have to negotiate on their walk to and from school and pre-school, etc.

- 6) There is no revised Road Safety Audit, even though the access has been changed and therefore the numbers of cars have increased from the proposed development onto School Road; HPC challenged the original flawed Transport Statement including the TRICS analysis which has been ignored.
- 7) All swept path assessments provided presume there are no cars parked close to the access. This will not be the case at the busiest of times when children/parents are attending school. As SNHPC have identified, the 15 space car park will not alleviate the street parking. Particular problems will occur for vehicles turning left into and out of the residential access and turning left out of the car park as the vehicles will have to cross over the road if there is a parked car and this in turn will conflict with those ingressing or egressing to and from Tape Lane as both accesses are within 15 metres of Tape Lane exit onto School Road. Tape Lane is a designated 'Safe route to walk to school', the increase in traffic movements and mayhem will be at its worst at the very time it should be safe.
- 8) In the original plans only 1 protected tree was to be removed along School Road; This amended proposal has now increased this to 3 protected trees along School Road and a further tree to be removed in the middle of the development. This will significantly change the visual amenity; harm the rural street scene and adversely affect the character of the area, thus making the inappropriate mass and density of the dwellings highly visible from School Road and the Area of Special Character.
- 9) It is a major development outside the development limit. It was not allocated in the emerging WBC LPU which is yet to go to Regulation 19.
- 10) There will be significant harm caused by the density and mass of the introduction of 23 dwellings in the countryside. The density will fundamentally alter the character of the place and does not shape the way the community would wish. The overmassing will not reflect the diverse character of the village, in particular that of School Road and Orchard Road.
- 11) The revised application also states that the footpaths in Hurst are more than sufficient to support walking around the village. SNHPC refute this statement as the recently dismissed appeal decision for Land East of Lodge Road (Para 82), Inspector David Wildsmith stated that *'However it is not just distance which has to be considered, but also the standard of the network available to pedestrians. Put simply, the existing network of footways within this settlement is not good.'* Also at Paragraph 93 he states *'I share the view of both the Council [WBC] and the SNHPC that the 128/129 bus service is unlikely to be seen as an attractive alternative to the private car, and therefore would not offer the residents a genuine choice of transport modes'*.
- 12) Neither does this amended proposal improve or address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility who have to use the poor footpath network in the village. As acknowledged by past Inspectors and WBC (all identified in SNHPC previous objection in March 2023) as lacking continuity, too narrow and poor condition.



13) Contrary to the NPPF (2023) Paragraph 89 (Section 6 – Rural Communities) which states '*... it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport)*'. This amended application does not improve the access on foot, by cycling or public transport as it does not mitigate the existing poor network of narrow and lack of continuous pathways criticised by inspectors and argued by planning officers for decades. Therefore SNHPC reiterates that, as with all existing residents, the new residents of this proposal will have an over reliance on the motor car to access services further afield such as shopping, doctors, dentists, secondary schools etc.

Overall, the adverse impact of allowing this amended application for inappropriate development is not sensitive to its surroundings (contrary to NPPF 2023 paragraph 89) and would significantly and demonstrably harm the community, the environment and outweigh any benefits, when assessed against the policies in the current Local Plan and also the NPPF (2023) taken as a whole.

Wokingham Borough Council have persistently and consistently over decades argued that Hurst is not a sustainable location, whether it be for 1 or 200 dwellings. This application is no different and SNHPC request that this application be refused.

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