

**Minutes of the meeting of the Hurst Neighbourhood Plan Working Group
Held at The Castle Inn, Thursday, 13th January, 2022 at 7.30**

PRESENT: John Edwards (Chairman), Lou Robinson, Duncan Kendall,
Penny Curry (Secretary)

APOLOGIES: Gemma Moore, Mac Stephenson, Wayne Smith

0165: Prejudicial Interests. Wayne Smith recused himself from the meeting as there would be a clear conflict of interest in his capacity as Borough Councillor for Hurst and Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement for WBC.

0166 **Minutes**
The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd December, 2021 were approved.

0167 **Matters arising**
Biodiversity Boost: LR stated that TVERC confirmed between 6000 and 7000 records dating between 2018 and 2021 from LWT had now been added to their database. They also confirmed that whilst there were an additional 34000 (1976 to 2017) records, they were much older and it was thought there was considerable cross over with those records submitted by Berkshire Birds, although these would not cover fauna and flora.

Views for Landscape, Green Areas and Views Report: DK will start to compile a dossier when the weather improves. DK acknowledged receipt of the map from JE of where the most likely photos were needed but it was agreed that much of it would be left to his discretion.

Funding for Landscape Assessment: Parish Council approved funding of up to £5000 to prepare a Landscape Assessment Report.

Funding for Transport and Highways Report: Parish Council approved funding of up to £5000.

Funding for miscellaneous reports and expenses: Parish Council approved funding of up to £2000.

Meeting was held between Ian Bellinger and James McCabe WBC Growth and Delivery on 17 December, 2021 to discuss the LPU/HNP.

0168 **Correspondence**
Document received from D. Pleave 'An answer to comments regarding our site, 5HU002', dated 12th January 2022
Email from M Usher via Parish Council, dated 8th January 2022 regarding NP allocation of sites.

ACTION: JE to direct MU to Minutes.

0169 The discussion proceeded regarding the meeting held between Ian Bellinger (IB) and James McCabe (JM), WBC LPU Revised Growth and Delivery Team and JE and LR (virtual meeting held on 17th December, 2021). JE brought the WG up to date with the meeting whereby the topics discussed were:

- Proposed Value Landscape Areas (PVLAs), Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) and wildlife fragmentation/connectivity;
- Housing Need Assessment for Hurst and Site Allocations
- Neighbourhood Plan Development Orders
- Wildlife Corridors/Green Corridors
- Possibilities of Biodiversity Offsetting to Hurst

0170 Presentation by Deborah Pleace (DP) and John McCarthy (JM) (Landowners and developers) for allocated site 5HU002 Land adjacent to Whistley Green Cottage seeking support. A document 'An answer to comments regarding our site, 5HU002' had been previously submitted and circulated prior to the meeting. They spoke for 15 minutes encouraging us to support their allocation. DP and JM left the meeting room after their presentation.

0171 The meeting resumed at 2015. The following documents were tabled at the meeting to enable discussion:

- HELAA 2F table for Assessing Deliverability (All sites submitted in Hurst)
- HELAA 2D table for Assessing Availability (All sites submitted in Hurst)
- Sustainability Appraisal Interim Report (pp44- 45) for Hurst
- Table for comparison of HELAA Sites in Hurst 2c Development Potential Suitability for:
 - Land North of London Road and East of A329M (5HU051)
 - Land Adjacent to Whistley Cottage, Broadwater Lane (5HU002)
 - Land Northwest of Hogmoor Lane (5HU030)
- LCA C2 Hurst River Terrace (Sites 5HU002 and 5HU030)
- LCA I1 Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland (Site (5HU051)
- Bellway Homes publicity for Amen Corner site (part)
- Draft document of Potential Wildlife Corridors and Green Corridors through Hurst
- Hurst NP Household Questionnaire responses.

The WG referred to other documents during the meeting which were relevant.

Methodology for the discussion and the decision making process was agreed by the group as follows:

- The overall strategy proposed by WBC in the attainment of housing allocations
- The proposed SD site of Hall Farm and other master planned SDL sites (Ashridge and Ruscombe)
- Housing Need in Hurst
- WBC Housing Need and Delivery for the last 5 years.
- HNP Household Questionnaire and Community Consultations analysis and outcome
- Numbers v. Sustainability v. Climate Emergency – where do we sit?
- HELAA Assessments for allocated and some unallocated sites in Hurst
- Biodiversity impact
- HNPWG, proposed future designation and the impact of the allocations.

0172 Overall Strategy by WBC for housing allocation:

Discussion took place and it was agreed that the overall strategy proposed by WBC was the right way to go.

0173 Proposed SDL Sites:

The group considered the merits and shortcomings of the preferred SD Site (Hall Farm) and compared it to the alternative master planned SDLs of Ruscombe and Ashridge, but on the

basis of landscape designation, sustainability, deliverability, economic benefit and the impact on Hurst overall, Hall Farm was best.

CONCLUSION: The Hall Farm preferred site was the least bad of all the SDLs and the group **support** this proposal.

0174 Housing Need in Hurst

The group referred to report of the meeting on the 17 December between IB/JM and JE/LR regarding specific HNA for Hurst which had been confirmed at that meeting, there was no HNA for Hurst.

CONCLUSION: Due to the increase from 15 dwellings for Hurst in 2019 compared to 60 dwellings in 2022, that this was purely a numbers game and 'Need' had nothing to do with the way the growth strategy for Hurst, and therefore the allocations for Hurst, had been calculated and allocated.

WBC Housing Need and Delivery over the last 5 years:

A lengthy discussion took place as to the merits or otherwise of 'squeezing' 60 more dwellings into the Parish, without being harmful to the landscape character, historical character and the community of Hurst as the school and pre-school are up to capacity etc. Whilst WG appreciated that the government had imposed the housing numbers on Wokingham and deliverability is key, WBC has proven to over deliver in the last 5 years and Hurst, as a Tier 3 Limited Development Location, has contributed towards this deliverability with the Valley Nursery Development, Tape Lane Social Housing, Hinton Road Almshouses and an additional Traveller pitch in Islandstone Lane. Over the last 20 years, Hurst has delivered in excess of 100 dwellings. The HNP Household questionnaire and Community Consultations were referred to in terms of what the community wanted over the next **20** years and it is evident that many did not want any additional housing and the overall majority did not want more than 50 dwellings during that time and then only where the character of the village would not be affected.

Numbers v. Sustainability v. Climate Emergency – where does Hurst sit?

A lengthy discussion ensued, and it was agreed that in light of the numerous planning applications that have been refused (past and present) on sustainability grounds, that the main settlement of Hurst and the settlement of Whistley Green are not sustainable locations, whether this is for a few dwellings or many. The justification for delivering dwellings in these settlements is in conflict with the NPPF (2021), WBCs own Climate Emergency declaration and the Environment Act (2021).

0175 Allocated Sites – HELAA

It was decided by the group at the outset, that sites 5HU002 and sites 5HU030 should be addressed separately for a number of reasons, not least because they are in two different settlements, even though WBC had chosen to 'group' them together, which the group found to be unhelpful and of some concern.

0176 Discussion on Site 5HU002 Land Adjacent to Whistley Cottage, Broadwater Lane

The HELAA 2c (2021) Suitability table was referred to but there were noted discrepancies due to the 'grouping' of this site with site 5HU030 and these were taken into account during the discussions. HELAA designated this site as '*Potentially suitable*'.

Previous planning applications and the recent dismissed appeal were discussed for this *potentially suitable* site, alongside consideration of the documents/correspondence and presentation that the landowners had given. Whistley Green Settlement is unsustainable - Site 5HU002 is outside the settlement limit and within the designated countryside. The 3 dwellings (indicated as being a farmhouse for the landowners, a three bedroom house and two bedroom single storey dwelling) would cause significant harm to the adjacent

designated and non-designated heritage assets (ASC), as would the significant harm to the setting of the character and landscape of the area; It would be difficult to achieve a 10% Net Biodiversity Gain on such a small plot with the considered over massing of 3 dwellings and their associated buildings of sheds, paving etc. Other considerations for this site were the potential for groundwater flooding and surface water flooding which would contribute to the already overwhelmed Thames Water Pumping Station for Hurst; Safe vehicle access to this site was considered to be an issue.

CONCLUSION: The group agreed NOT to support this *potentially suitable* site (5HU002).

0177 Discussion on Site 5HU030 – Land North West of Hogmoor Lane

The HELAA 2c (2021) Suitability table was referred to but there were noted discrepancies due to the ‘grouping’ of this site with site 5HU002 and these were taken into account during the discussions. HELAA designated as *potentially suitable*.

Previous documents/correspondence and the presentation given by Dr and Mrs J Lade were considered during the discussions. The site is in the Hurst main settlement (Wards Cross) is unsustainable, outside the settlement limit and within the designated countryside. A great deal of discussion surrounded this *potentially suitable* site including its relationship with designated and non-designated heritage assets, the adjacent Green Route, the potential harm to the relevant TPOs and Veteran Trees including Root Protection Areas (RPA), the positioning of access and a possible service road behind the dwellings, and the harm to the character of the landscape and historical setting of the adjacent ASC; Flooding issues in association with the Thames Water Pumping Station and also the potential of harm from flooding caused to the designated heritage assets within close proximity; The coalescence between the settlements of Whistley Green and the Hurst Main Village Settlement.

The group discussed that any development on the *potentially suitable* 5HU030 site would compromise the only available wildlife corridor that exists between the Tape Lane/Lodge Road fields opposite (which is situated between Skomer and Elder Cottage on the opposite side of Broadwater Lane) to the fields North West of Hogmoor Lane and beyond. Any harm to wildlife corridors is contrary to NPPF (2021) S15 regarding habitat connectivity and WBCs own Biodiversity Action Plan. This particular concern was raised with IB and JM at the recent meeting who were unaware of this issue and they specifically asked the NP to highlight this in their report to them.

CONCLUSION: The group agreed NOT to support this *potentially suitable* site.

0178 Discussion on site 5HU051 – Land North of London Road and East of A329M (Amen Corner)

This site is outside the settlement limit and designated within the countryside.

The HELAA 2c (2021) suitability table was referred to but there were noted discrepancies which the group took into account (Including failure to mention that Binfield was 1.5 km away).

This is a 3.21 hectare site remote from all the other settlements in the parish of Hurst. It is outside the settlement limit and in designated countryside. It is adjacent to a major completed development within Bracknell Forest ‘Amen Corner’ (Bellway Homes) of 380 dwellings and also a SANG (which is located in Wokingham Borough). WBC allocated 45 dwellings on this, although the HELAA suggested 48 dwellings. Prior to the meeting, LR/JE had looked at BFC planning application 14/00315/OUT and concluded that the BFC density calculations for the Amen Corner site was at 35 dph, which was considered appropriate for that site. LR reported that the WBC DPL Pattern Book methodology used for their calculations are based on 50% developable area/50% open space and dwellings at 30

dph. However, the SANG provided by WBC is not taken into account for the open space calculations for the BFC Amen Corner site, but the group considered it could be included as part of the open space calculation for site 5HU051. The Bellway Homes publicity document demonstrated how the site falls within the 380 dwellings at Amen Corner. The site is sloping and the housing would probably sensibly be grouped at the top of the site for all sorts of reasons, including being furthest away from the A329M and London Road. With a reconfiguration of the housing mix towards it being biased to the much needed 1 and 2 bedroom properties as indicated by the HNP Household Questionnaire, the group speculated that it was not unreasonable for 60 dwellings to be achieved on this site.

Looking at the sites accessibility, proximity to services and facilities, such as the neighbouring new primary school at Amen Corner, which is not at capacity, the regular bus services running from early morning to late at night every day of the week to Binfield (including Kings Academy Secondary School), Reading, Bracknell and Wokingham and the safe walking and cycling to Binfield less than 1.5 km with its shops and GP Surgery, together with the South of Amen Corner facilities (to service a further 700 new dwellings) and the introduction of the nearby promised pelican crossings the group concluded that is an eminently sustainable site.

It was agreed that any development on a greenfield site is always going to harm the biodiversity and habitat but with the close proximity of the SANG, leading on to the wider ecological networks and the additional open spaces on the nearby Amen Corner development, the working group believed that by planting trees and hedging and careful management, on the undeveloped portion of the site, it would achieve more than 10% biodiversity net gain.

CONCLUSION: The group **agreed to support** the allocation for site 5HU051 and would prefer an additional 15 smaller dwellings to be allocated here (making a total of 60 dwellings) which we believe would be achievable. This would then form a new separate, sustainable settlement within the Parish.

0179 Other Sites that were considered Potentially Suitable by WBC:

During the meeting with IB and JM, it was put to JE and LR that if they knew of any other sites which they considered would be preferable to the 3 sites allocated, to put this in the NP report. Alongside all of the submitted sites in Hurst for LPU, 3 sites that warranted consideration were discussed by the group:

- 5HU006 – Land to the North Side of Orchard Road, Hurst
- 5HU0052 – Land to the Rear of Vine Cottage, Orchard Road, Hurst
- 5HU019 – Land to the South of Beech Court, Wokingham Road, Hurst

CONCLUSION: None of the alternative sites were any more sustainable than those found to be *potentially allocated* on Broadwater Lane and therefore would be unacceptable for development. In addition, development on any of these sites would result in harm to the historical and landscape character, fragmentation of the wildlife corridors, significant biodiversity loss, loss of green space and visual amenity to the residents. It was of particular concern to the HNPWG that site 5HU0052 is also a proposed Local Wildlife Site and Biodiversity Opportunity Area and in the curtilage of a Grade II Listed Heritage Asset.

0180 Other matters:

Proposed Valued Landscape Areas and Proposed Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and Areas of Special Character.

The HNPWG discussed the significant inconsistencies for Hurst in the LPU areas proposed as LVAs, BOAs and ASCs. Sometimes these overlapped and sometimes not.

No attempt has been made to connect the extensive wildlife areas in the west with those in the east: Loddon Valley Gravel Pits (BOA) including, Dinton Pastures (LWS and LNR), River Loddon (BOA), Lavell's Lake (LWS), Lea Farm (Nature Conservation site), Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill (SSSI) and other BAP priority habitats are decoupled from the Waltham to Binfield Woodlands and Parklands (BOA) including BAP Priority Habitats at Stanlake Park, Haines Hill and the Green Belt area to the east.

CONCLUSION: It was agreed that this would be mentioned in the report to the LPU team and it would be followed up during the process. This is particularly relevant as the Environment Act 2021 brings a greater urgency to the HNPWG duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the NP.

ACTION: JE to follow up with JM

0181 Local Green Spaces:

The HNPWG discussed the proposed allocation of LGS104 Dinton Pastures (Old Golf Course) and LGS089 Broad Hinton Open Space (part) as a LGS and **support** these proposed allocations.

CONCLUSION: HNPWG supports the proposed LGS but are disappointed that additional proposed LGS have not been allocated in Hurst and this will be addressed in the HNP as a number of sites were identified by the community as worthy of designation.

0182 SUMMARY All important aspects of the proposed LPU had been discussed and decisions made on our response to the LPU team.

ACTION: It was agreed that the Chairman would write a response to the LPU by the 24th January, 2022 deadline.

The meeting concluded at 2215 and any items not covered in this meeting would be carried forward to the next meeting on the 24 February, 2022.