

# A Design for Hurst

Incorporating The  
Parish Design Statement



Prepared and published by St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council  
March 2005

## **A Design for Hurst – Notification of Amendments (August 2009)**

This note serves as an amendment to those planning policies within the 'Design for Hurst' document that have been updated or replaced since its adoption. Subsequent notes will be issued as Wokingham Borough Council continues to progress with its Local Development Framework. New Regional or National Guidance will also be included within these amendment notes.

### **Local Plan policies which are still valid:**

- WBE5 - Trees and New Development
- WBE4 - Landscape and Planting
- WCC3 - Berkshire Central Forest
- WNC3 - New Nature Reserves
- WNC5 - Protection and Management of Wildlife heritage Sites
- WNC7 - The Protection, Enhancement or Creation of Wildlife Corridors
- WNC8 - Creating New Habitats through Development
- WLL4 - Landscape and New Development

### **Local Plan policies and SPGs which are no longer valid:**

- WBE1 - Design and New Development (Superseded by PPS1)
- WHE2 - Development in adjoining conservation areas (Repeats PPG15)
- WH11 - Design Guidance – Residential Development (Repeats PPS3)
- WIC12 - Assessment of proposals for telecommunications development (Repeats PPG8)
- WNC1 - Special Protection Areas and Sites of Scientific Interest (superseded by PPS9, SEP policy NRM4 & WCBV9, Birds and Habitats Directive)
- WNC2 - Local Nature Reserves (superseded by PPS9)
- WNC4 - Protected Species Conservation (Superseded by PPS9)
- WCC7 - Extensions to Dwellings in the Countryside (outside the Greenbelt) (Superseded by PPS7)

- WCC4 - New Non-residential buildings outside settlement boundaries (and outside the metropolitan greenbelt) (Superseded by PPS7).
- WCC5 - Re-use and adaptation of buildings for residential purposes outside settlement boundaries (superseded by PPS7 para 17 & 18).
- WOS10 - The Historic Environment (Repeats RSS policies INF4, INF5, INF8 and INF9 and SEP policies EN1 – 6)
- WRE2 - Re-use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings for Commercial Use (superseded by PPS7)
- WRE1 - Farm Diversification involving use of land for non-agricultural or forestry production purposes
- Residential Design Guide SPG B1 (Replaced by the Borough Design Guide SPD)

**Local Plan policies that have been replaced by Core Strategy Policies:**

- WIC11- Public Utilities - *replaced by Core Strategy Policy CP2 Inclusive Communities*
- WNC6 - Nature Conservation in wider countryside - *replaced by Core Strategy Policy CP7 Biodiversity*
- WR25 - Allotments - *replaced by Core Strategy Policy CP11 Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)*
- WOS2 – Housing Development Principles – *replaced by Core Strategy Policy CP9 Scale and Location of Development Proposals*
- WOS3 - Development Control Principles - *replaced by Core Strategy Policy CP3 General Principles for development*
- WCC1- Development in the Countryside - *replaced by Core Strategy Policy CP11 Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)*
- WT5 - Environmental Aspects of Traffic - *replaced by Core Strategy Policy CP6 Managing Travel Demand*

**Policies that have revised numbering in the Core Strategy:**

None

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## Acknowledgments

A Design for Hurst has been prepared with the help of many individual residents of the Parish who are far too numerous to list. Nevertheless the St. Nicholas Hurst Parish Council acknowledges their debt to these people and thanks them for their help.

In addition the Parish Council thanks the Members and Officers of Wokingham District Council and The Hurst Village Society for the help and guidance given in the development of the document.

# **ST. NICHOLAS HURST - A DESIGN FOR HURST**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This document provides a context for new development in the Parish. It is based on an identification and analysis of local character and Chapters 11&12 particularly have been adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by Wokingham District Council. If applied consistently in the development control process, it can encourage improved developmental design in the Parish.

It has been a means for local people to contribute to the planning process and manage change within their own environment.

The Design for St. Nicholas Hurst has been produced by the people of the Parish and is a statement of our aspirations for the Parish. At each stage, all households throughout the Parish have been invited to contribute their views and many have accepted those invitations. A great deal of work and thought by many people has gone into it, and it reflects the views of the whole Parish.

Some development is inevitable in the Parish. The people of Hurst value their environment and strongly wish to retain what is good about it and ensure that its special character will be protected and enhanced when new development takes place.

The Design for Hurst sets out to define that which gives the village and its surrounding countryside its distinctive character. From that is drawn a series of Objectives, leading to specific Guidelines for the design of any future development within the Parish which will maintain and enhance that character.

This document provides guidance to all people contemplating any development in the Parish, from individuals planning a small extension to their house to a developer proposing a major planning application. It will also be used by the local planning authorities and the Parish Council to assess the impact on the Parish of any proposed developments.

## **2. PLANNING CONTEXT**

Development is managed in the context of a hierarchy of planning documents.

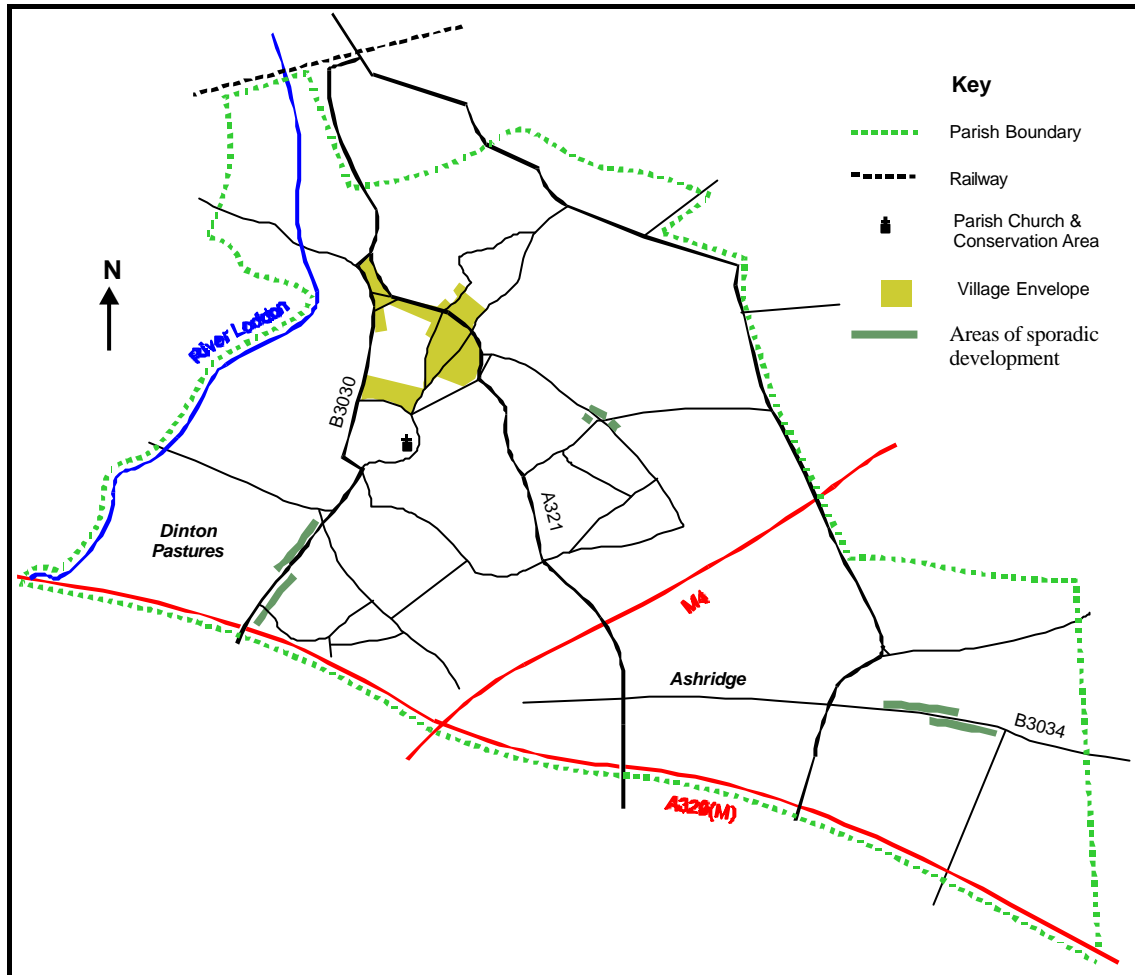
When a document has been published and approved as a Supplementary Planning Document, it becomes part of the planning system, enabling it to influence decisions on planning applications and to be considered by an Inspector when determining planning appeals.

This document complements the Wokingham District Local Plan of February 2004 (WDLP) and the Landscape Character Assessment for Wokingham.

Hurst is defined in the WDLP as a Category B settlement within which only limited infilling and rounding off of sustainable development is permitted.

The Parish Design Statement, chapters 11&12 of this document, was formally adopted by Wokingham District Council as a Supplementary Planning Document on 17th March 2005. Alongside each guidance in these chapters is a list of WDLP Policies that are particularly relevant to the guidance. Those considering development are advised to take note not only of these policies but also of all the other policies relevant to development in Hurst.

### 3. LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHY



The Parish of St. Nicholas Hurst is situated four miles north of Wokingham and two miles south of Twyford in the county of Berkshire. It covers some 650 hectares and as such is the largest Parish in the administrative area of Wokingham District.

The village is located on the A321 Twyford to Wokingham Road. There is a number of other smaller areas of sporadic development, the main ones being along Davis Street on the B3030 Twyford to Winnersh Road, along the B3034 Forest Road, from Bill Hill to Binfield and on Broadcommon Road.

The River Loddon flows north along the western side of the Parish and a substantial proportion of the Parish lies within the alluvial flood plain of this river and its tributaries. The most important exceptions to this are Church Hill just to the west of the village centre, and Ashridge to the south-east.

The M4 crosses the southern half of the Parish but does not have any direct access within the Parish. The A329(M) forms the south-west boundary, separating Hurst from Wokingham and Winnersh.

The main London to Bristol railway line runs along the northern boundary, with a station in the neighbouring Parish of Twyford.

A more detailed map of the Parish is attached as Appendix A.

## 4. HISTORY AND VILLAGE CONTEXT

Perhaps unexpectedly, Hurst (*“woody hill”*) does not seem to have been mentioned until around 1220, while Whistley (*Anglo-Saxon wisc = marshy ground; ley = a meadow*) goes back at least to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and was catalogued in the Domesday Book in 1086. Three years after Domesday, a church was built on the higher land, now known as Church Hill, and dedicated to St. Nicholas, so that the Parishioners of Whistley would not have to cross the floods to worship in the nearest church, which was then in Sonning.

The Royal Forest of Windsor extended westwards to the Loddon. Osier growing and basket making (some for catching fish) would have been an important part of the local economy then, and were still practised at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Much of the Forest was cleared from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, both to create arable land and for its timber.

With the dissolution of the monasteries, the new secular owners of the land began building appropriate houses for themselves. By the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century there was a small building boom as many smaller cottages were built to house their servants and farm-workers. This established the settlement pattern of isolated small groups of buildings. The largely agricultural nature of the Parish continued until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although some of those estates have disappeared, and the remaining estates and farms employ far fewer people, the links with the past continue in many names of

streets and places: Wards Cross, Braybrooke Drive, Barker Court and Almshouses; Dalby Close, Broadcommon, Hogmoor, Ashridge.

The present population of the Parish is approximately 1,900 with an electoral roll of 1,500. Despite the very rural nature of the Parish, the level of local employment is nowadays very limited and most of the working population finds employment outside the confines of the Parish.

The Parish forms a rural green gap between Greater Wokingham and Twyford, and also forms a barrier, with the River Loddon, to the eastward expansion of Reading. Maintenance of these geographical characteristics is essential if Hurst is to retain its individual, rural identity. On the other hand, it is part of England’s “Silicon Valley”, within easy reach of London and the motorway system.

The village has two schools for younger children, several village shops and public houses, as well as two Village Halls. The schools are popular and usually full to capacity, and the shops and public houses are well patronised. The conflicts between the need to accommodate people who want to live in this desirable village and the rural nature of the environment must be resolved if Hurst is to retain its rural identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### OBJECTIVES

Old names with historical links to the Parish to be incorporated in new developments.

### DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS

4.1 *Historical links within the village need to be reflected in the names of new roads or developments*

## 5. LANDSCAPE SETTING AND CHARACTER

### BACKGROUND

The village itself is in the north of the Parish, and is open in character; the remainder of the Parish is predominantly rural with the largest proportion of land remaining in agricultural use. The area is generally flat but with the land rising very gently from the Loddon Valley towards the village. There is a small but prominent hillock, the site of the St. Nicholas Church and the Conservation Area, surrounded by mature trees.

To the south-east, Ashridge runs from Bill Hill towards the adjoining Parish of Binfield. The ridge not only gives wide views to both north and south, but is a visual barrier that features prominently in views north from Wokingham and south from Hurst. The village, seen from the south, south-east and south west is well hidden by trees, adding to the rural nature of the area. Of particular note and importance are the views of St. Nicholas Church, particularly from Davis Street, Lines Road and Bill Hill. The brick built tower of St Nicholas Church, surrounded by the elm and oak trees of the copse, stands on the small hillock and is surrounded by rural landscape

There are many wooded areas, including Ancient Woodland, mostly mixed deciduous woods with many veteran and sizeable oak trees. Most of these woods are linked by hedges which themselves contain a number of mature specimen trees. Both woods and hedges are a haven for wildlife, and make an important contribution to the landscape.

Much of the land, being flat and low-

lying, is still drained by natural as well as man-made water-courses. The many ponds give a high landscape value to the areas by which they are enclosed.

Hurst enjoys several wide-open vistas across substantial stretches of cultivated farmland, dotted with small groups of farm buildings and private residential properties.

The main through routes, Forest Road, Davis Street and the A321 Wokingham to Henley roads, have had a considerable influence on settlement patterns outside the Village Envelope, with ribbon development, usually on one side of the road only, a typical local feature.

Most of the roads within the Parish have soft verges, which help to retain their rural nature. This is especially noticeable with the single-track lanes, many of which are tree lined or have hedges, enhancing pleasant views.

Since the 1970s, extensive aggregate extraction has been carried out along the western boundary of the Parish. Dinton Pastures Country Park has been created from the lakes left in the southern part, to the benefit of the entire District, and fits unobtrusively and naturally within the rural setting. The northern area has largely been reinstated through landfill. Future use of the latter is of great concern locally.

In summary, the essential characteristic of Hurst is of a small, recognisable, but scattered village set within an open agricultural landscape.



*Scattered buildings in a typical Hurst open landscape, looking north from Ashridge*



## OBJECTIVES

Maintenance of the rural and 'green' aspects of Hurst are essential both for the inhabitants and for the local population in general.

The preservation of an open, agricultural landscape is vital to the setting of Hurst as a village within a rural Parish. It is important that the rural aspects of the area are preserved. At night external lighting on buildings and street lighting detracts from this rural aspect and is often inappropriate.

The green gaps and rural vistas between buildings and settlements need to be preserved. To this end, further development within the rural areas surrounding the village, such as extensions of existing ribbon development along Davis Street, Forest Road and the A321 Wokingham Road are likely to be inappropriate.

Infill of gaps between existing settlements creates urban intrusion. Such developments would reduce the gap between the village and the surrounding urban areas, and are not within recognised areas of settlement. The protection of important open land between settlements and the boundaries, set by the Loddon and the motorways is essential to the protection of the rural character of the Parish.

Conservation and maintenance of the watercourses and ponds.

## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS

- 5.1 *The open views and vistas need to be retained as far as possible.*
- 5.2 *Landowners should be encouraged to protect and maintain the existing pattern of hedges and trees, ponds and streams in, around and between the agricultural fields.*
- 5.3 *Given the high water table and the extensive flood plains it is necessary that watercourses are properly maintained.*
- 5.4 *Every effort should be made to ensure there is wide consultation with local residents over the future use of reinstated landfill areas.*
- 5.5 *External lighting installations on private land and buildings need to be sensitive to the rural aspects of the parish and minimise levels of light pollution.*
- 5.6 *Trees are a vital element to the character of Hurst; future developments need to consider whether adequate space has been allowed for the growth of trees to maturity.*

## 6. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### BACKGROUND

The history of the landscape as well as its natural features have given the Parish a number of different habitats with a resulting diversity of both flora and fauna.

#### Agricultural Land

The majority of the land around the village is agricultural. Many fields have straight hedgerow boundaries reflecting the enclosure of common land. Other more contoured field boundaries have earlier Anglo-Saxon origins.

There is both arable and livestock farming as well as equestrian use of the fields and this mixed usage and the retention of hedgerows forms a good habitat for many of our scarcer farmland birds such as skylark, barn owl, partridge and lapwing.

#### Grasslands

There are extensive areas of wet neutral grassland within the Loddon valley such as the site near to the Old Police Cottages in Broadcommon Road. Some unimproved wildflower rich remnants are located in Middle Marsh, Dinton Pastures, and next to the Twyford Parish Council allotments, on the northern boundary of the Parish.

#### Woodland

The 'wet' woodland habitats at Sandford Mill Copse and Lodge Wood are reputed to support 10% of the UK's population of the Loddon Lily. Lodge Wood is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest for this reason.

There is a number of small Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW - wooded since 1600) and Ancient Replanted Woodland

(ARW - replanted woodland on ancient sites) in the south-east of the Parish.

The stag beetle, which is nationally rare, is relatively common in Hurst.

#### Heathland

Broad Common in the east of the Parish was historically a heathland common, although it is currently used for arable farming.

#### Rivers and Wetlands

The River Loddon flows through the Parish and the nationally rare Water Vole, Loddon Pondweed and Loddon Lily can be found along its banks.

The lakes at Dinton Pastures Country Park and at the Lavells Lake Local Nature Reserve attract a variety of wetland birds. One of the rarest visiting birds is the bittern. The lakes are also important for insect life with a considerable population of varieties of dragonfly.

Hurst has over 30 ponds in the Parish and these have a wide variety of wildlife including the rare and internationally protected Great Crested Newt.

#### Local Biodiversity Action Plans

The Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan was produced in 1998 and highlighted habitats and listing 17 species of wildlife that were threatened in the District. It also identified a number of actions to maintain, preserve and recreate habitats in the District. A number of these actions relate to habitats in Hurst.

## OBJECTIVES

Whilst almost surrounded by more built-up areas, Hurst nevertheless encompasses a wide variety of habitats supporting a broad range of plants and wildlife, some of them quite rare.

Any development has a potential to put these at risk, and the impact any proposal may have upon them needs careful assessment to ensure the continued health of the biodiversity of the local environment. Often quite small and inexpensive action, if taken early, can result in a large reduction of the detrimental environmental effect of a development.



*The rare Loddon  
Lily to be found in  
Lodge Wood  
SSSI*

## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS

- 6.1 *Consideration should be given to existing wildlife corridors, and where appropriate create new ones.*

## 7. RECREATION

### BACKGROUND

Hurst Parish has two recreation grounds, in Wards Cross and Davis Street, and a village green on Martineau Lane. There are also statutory allotments in Tape Lane.



*Wards Cross Recreation Ground contributes to the feeling of space in the village centre*

Sports clubs have their own grounds for cricket and football,. One of the two oldest bowling greens in the country is located next to the Castle Inn.

St. Nicholas School, the village primary school, uses an adjoining field for team games. This is also used with other fields for the historic annual village Horse Show and Country Fayre.

The large Country Park at Dinton Pastures is in the west of the Parish, where there is a golf club, a sailing club, and facilities for fishing, walking and cycling.

Nearby Lavells Lake is an excellent site for bird-watching with several hides.

While the feeling of space that is apparent when driving or walking around the whole Parish comes mainly from the large areas of farm land, the public spaces and sports grounds complement this, creating open aspects within the residential areas.

The Parish has a 32 footpaths and bridleways with extensive views across farmland. They do not, however, form an integrated network.

### OBJECTIVES

Retain and enhance existing open spaces that form a valuable resource for both formal and informal recreation, especially for young people to play in and local residents to enjoy.

Provide further open spaces for informal recreation especially those within the built areas of the village.

Resist the enclosure of existing open spaces anywhere in the Parish.

Retain and extend the existing footpaths wherever possible, linking the recreational spaces, and opening up the River Loddon to walkers.

Retain the facility for Parishioners to grow their own produce.

### DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS

- 7.1 *Access to open spaces and views of and from them to be retained*
- 7.2 *Public and sports open spaces to be used for activities that do not cause disturbance to residents or nuisance through excessive noise*
- 7.3 *Consider all opportunities to extend or add to existing public spaces.*
- 7.4 *Enhance pedestrian access to Dinton Pastures and the River Loddon by the provision of new public footpaths linking them to the village and the rest of the network.*

## 8. LOCAL ECONOMY

### BACKGROUND

Although the majority of household incomes are derived from employment outside the Parish, and will probably continue to be so, there is nevertheless a wide range of businesses and services operating here. Most of these are appropriate in type and scale to a rural environment, serving needs both within and outside Hurst.

#### **Agriculture**

Because of modern agricultural methods, regulations and EU agricultural policies, employment in this sector is limited.

#### **Shops**

Hurst has three shops in the centre of the village: a butcher, a baker and gift shop, and a general store and newsagents with the Post Office.

Supermarkets outside the village claim much of the main household expenditure. The village shops are within walking and cycling distance for many people, and are popular as well as a vital necessity for the many with limited or no access to private transport.

#### **Local Businesses**

Local businesses range from medium to small-sized enterprises which have sprung up in redundant farm buildings, to sole traders working from home. They encompass a wide range of professions and trades. From a design point of view, the majority fit comfortably into the rural environment, and have minimal impact on traffic.

#### **Public Houses**

There are five public houses. Some years back these were traditional drinking pubs but they have now been altered to give more space and better eating facilities. As Hurst is considered to be "in the country" they attract much of their clientele from outside the village and have garden areas for eating and drinking.

### OBJECTIVES

In seeking to conserve this rich economic mixture, the scale and style of any future business and commercial developments need to be appropriate and if possible not increase pressure on the local infrastructure, particularly the roads.

### DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS

- 8.1 *New businesses should be appropriate to the rural environment and residential areas, and whenever possible be small in scale.*

## 9. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

### BACKGROUND

The existing vehicular 'through routes' cope with the current volumes of traffic but are congested at peak times. This creates some local resentment and high degrees of dissatisfaction among those living near or along the routes, and among the pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists who also use the roads. High speeds, the volume of traffic and the effect on the environment are all cited by residents as particular problems within the Parish, along with the number of road signs in the countryside landscape.

At Wards Cross, the centre of the village, the carriageway of the A321 road is at its narrowest and the buildings are very close to the road. Because of the location of the shops pedestrians need to cross the road from one side to the other to use the single footway.

Many local people consider that parking on the A321 in the village centre helps to diminish the hazards for pedestrians by forcing the traffic to reduce its speed through that part of the village.

Another concern to residents is safe pedestrian routes to the school, village halls,

the shops and other amenities.

In peak hours "rat-run" traffic through Lines Road, Sandford Lane, and Church Hill to Orchard Road and along Tape Lane increases the use of these small lanes.

The narrow lanes and secondary routes that criss-cross the Parish are considered by many to be one of the most important local features in Hurst. Whilst these lanes provide much needed routes for people to reach their homes or places of work, they are also important to those drawn to the area for leisure.

Wokingham Unitary Authority has introduced schemes to try to increase the use of public transport, but for the majority of local residents and visitors to the area this option does not offer a viable alternative to car ownership.

There is a number of Public Footpaths and Rights of Way whose routes reflect their historical usage. These have been supplemented in recent times by some new paths for leisure use, such as the path along the bank of the River Loddon from Sandford Mill to Whistley Mill. They do not form an integrated network.



*Broadcommon Road, a typical country lane, with its large drainage ditch*



*A quiet morning at Wards Cross!*

## OBJECTIVES

Recent measures to reduce the speed of traffic are welcomed. The new speed limits now require monitoring and enforcement. Although traffic through the village centre is slowed by parked vehicles, more appropriate additional means should be sought, compatible with the rural setting, particularly to benefit pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

The rural appearance of roads needs to be retained. The system of lanes, footpaths and bridle ways, and the character of the old country lanes, need to be preserved and enhanced by discouraging through traffic, thus enabling their safe use by pedestrians and non-motorised transport.

Short local journeys by car would be decreased if safer pedestrian routes were implemented.

Improvements and additions to the existing network of footpaths would make their leisure use more attractive.

## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS

- 9.1 *Improved and new footpaths and bridle-ways in keeping with the rural nature of the Parish, in particular, extending the footpaths to enable safe pedestrian access between the village centre and the Church, and between Dinton Pastures and the River Loddon, are viewed as highly desirable subject for suitable funding.*
- 9.2 *The effects of the 30 mph limit on the A321 needs to be monitored, and additional traffic calming measures considered if necessary.*
- 9.3 *It is desirable that more local lanes are designated as "access only".*
- 9.4 *Safe pedestrian access to the village shops and St. Nicholas School should be considered when proposing any new developments within Hurst.*



## 10. STREET FURNITURE

### BACKGROUND

Street furniture such as the various road signs and litter bins show a considerable mixture of styles and materials. Often the siting of such items seems haphazard so that they appear visually intrusive.

There is very little street lighting in the village, and any increase in lighting is viewed by the majority as an urban intrusion, not in keeping with the rural character of the village.



*Parking barriers and litter bin are of restrained design in front of the Village Hall extension*

### OBJECTIVES

Street furniture needs to be unobtrusive and wherever possible to reflect the rural nature of the Parish; and further street lighting needs to be minimised to avoid increasing light pollution.

### DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS

- 10.1 *A single pattern of street furniture needs to be established for use throughout the Parish. Following this, all new signage would use this standard, and in time existing signage would be replaced by it.*
- 10.2 *Street lighting should only be installed where necessary and plans to do so should bear in mind the rural nature of the area and the need to avoid increasing light pollution.*



# A Design for Hurst

Parish Design Statement  
Adopted by  
Wokingham District Council



## 11. SETTLEMENT

### BACKGROUND

#### The Village Centre

The settled area of the village centre has developed slowly over the years and is now defined by the Village Envelope shown in the WDLP.

St. Nicholas Church and its immediate surrounds, including the Almshouses, the Castle Inn and church cottages date from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, and now form the Conservation Area.

The roads which cross at Townsend's Pond form the framework upon which the Wards Cross and Whistley settlements grew. It was in this area that the trades and shops were established, together with the other elements of a village, such as schools, public houses and village halls. Although there are still houses dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, most of the buildings are from the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Development along a number of streets in the village is often on one side of the road only, enhancing the sense of openness and drawing the rural landscape into the village

centre. On many roads, there are gaps between houses that also perform this function by forming distant views. Highway boundaries are generally soft, with mature trees, hedges and grass verges.

With the exception of a few terraced cottages in the village centre and Davis Street, most dwellings are set in large plots and back from the road frontages with generous front gardens. These are mostly fronted with hedgerows or low walls, again giving a feeling of open space and softening to the edges of the roads. Few dwellings are overlooked.

The Martineau Lane development was built round a new 'village green', which is otherwise unenclosed, so contributing to the open aspect of the settlement.

The built edges of the village are sharply defined, with the buildings stopping and open fields starting, particularly to the north, east, and west.



*Martineau Green*

#### The Rural Surroundings

Newer houses have generally been replacements for older dwellings, rather than new additions.

Outside the defined village centre, there is a number of areas of sporadic development, which form small settlements with limited infrastructure, such as mains drainage. The most significant are the linear

developments along Forest Road, Broadcommon Road and Davis Street. Again, they are characterised by development along one side of the road only, often with significant gaps between groups, letting the rural landscape be the dominant feature. In addition, there are many small groups of buildings, particularly farms, and

individual residential properties, and some important listed buildings. None is within recognised areas of settlement.

Most of these isolated domestic properties are a residue of the tied cottages linked to the large estates and farms. The major roadside ribbon developments include many of the characteristics of urban development: footways, kerbed road edges and more fences and walls to property boundaries, all undesirable in a rural setting, but street lighting is still kept at bay.

Elsewhere there are isolated but

increasingly expanding developments, often based on farms and old agricultural workers' cottages now extended or rebuilt and with a little limited new development between. There is a good example of the reuse of redundant farm buildings at Hatch Gate Farm, which have now been sympathetically converted to residential properties.

Hurst Grove, a former residential property, has been refurbished and extended to form an office complex set within its own park-like landscaped grounds.



*View from Lines  
Road of St.  
Nicholas Church  
on its wooded hill*

*Development on  
one side only of  
Forest Road  
maintains an  
openness of  
character*



*Sympathetic  
conversion of  
redundant farm  
buildings at Hatch  
Gate Farm*

## **OBJECTIVES**

As a small, rural settlement Hurst lacks the facilities to make it sustainable for large-scale development. Therefore any new development needs to be designed to meet the sustainability and limitations of the Parish.

Retention of open landscapes within built areas, development along only one side of the road and gaps between houses can help to maintain the open aspect of the Parish.

The shape and pattern of settlements with the Parish are unique, and development on open landscape between settlements would erode this and change the character of the area.

New development, including all re-development of old agricultural buildings as well as new agricultural buildings need to be appropriate to the physical and visual character and structure of the settlement area.

Soft, green boundaries and trees are characteristic of the Parish; any new development needs to respect this characteristic. The rural tradition of cultivated front gardens also needs to be respected wherever possible by appropriate building lines on developments.

<b>GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL PLAN POLICIES</b>		<b>WDLP POLICY</b>
11.1	<i>Where existing development is substantially along one side of the road only, new development on the opposite side needs to be assessed to ensure the essential character of the area is not adversely affected.</i>	<b>WBE1</b>
11.2	<i>Existing building lines need to be considered when developing new or replacement buildings.</i>	<b>WBE1</b>
11.3	<i>Every encouragement should be given to the maintenance and replanting of existing and new hedgerows.</i>	<b>WBE4</b>
11.4	<i>It is desirable that native trees and hedges are planted in association with any new development to aid the constant renewal of the landscape, especially in the south of the parish which is now recognised as part of the Central Berkshire Forest area.</i>	<b>WBE4 WBE5 WCC3</b>
11.5	<i>The rural nature of the Parish dictates that soft boundary treatment is usually the most desirable, particularly the area fronting a road.</i>	<b>WBE5</b>
11.6	<i>The character and housing density of the surrounding area is an important factor in considering the impact of new development on its surroundings..</i>	<b>WHE2</b>
11.7	<i>New buildings need to reflect the proportions of those nearby. The visual impact of new buildings is important. Careful consideration needs to be given to the suitability of location, density, setting, grouping, use, and the effect on the character of the area.</i>	<b>WH11</b>
11.8	<i>Utility and telephone companies need to be encouraged to share masts and posts where possible, and to place them in areas that minimise the visual impact.</i>	<b>WIC11 WIC12</b>
11.9	<i>A wildlife and ecology survey with proposals for future sustainable management should support all development proposals, which involve protected species and habitats.</i>	<b>WNC1 to WNC8</b>
11.10	<i>The local Biodiversity Action Plan should be checked for the impact of proposal developments.</i>	<b>WNC6</b>
11.11	<i>Retain the existing allotments.</i>	<b>WR25</b>
11.12	<i>Public open spaces and other recreational facilities to be retained and enhanced.</i>	<b>WOS3</b>
11.13	<i>Unrestrained grass verges are viewed as being in keeping with the rural area, and every effort needs to be made to retain them wherever possible, especially away from the more built up areas within the centre of the village.</i>	<b>WOS3</b>
11.14	<i>New building within the Conservation Area need to be extremely sensitively designed, for example to reduce the potential impact on the skyline.</i>	<b>WOS3</b>

## 12. BUILDINGS

### BACKGROUND

#### The Conservation Area

The oldest surviving building of the Parish is the listed Grade I Church of St. Nicholas, sited on the prominent Church Hill. Parts of the present building dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, and it was rebuilt and extended in the following centuries in flint, with a brick tower added in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The Church forms the focus of the Conservation Area, together with The Castle Inn and its 16<sup>th</sup> Century bowling green, the William Barker Alms Houses, founded in 1664 and the Church Cottages. Together they now form one of many small, separate groups of buildings or individual properties along the rural lanes scattered around the new village centre. Of particular note are the flint and red brick walls to the Churchyard.



*The Almshouses*

#### Listed Buildings

The Parish contains a number of listed buildings, together with a number of other buildings of architectural, historic or local interest. They are built in a wide range of materials: timber framed, wattle and daub, red brick, render under roofs of thatch, slate and tile.

Whilst many of these buildings are found within the village settlement area, a

significant number are scattered throughout the Parish, often providing a fine focal point of interest to the long, ranging views across the farm land.

The Old Posting House, High Chimneys, and Hinton House are all visible from the public highway, and add an historic character and context to the Parish.

#### The Village Centre

There are good examples of many styles of buildings and materials, dating from the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. However the greatest expansion has taken place over the last fifty years during which houses of common design, details and components have been built, with low pitched, concrete interlocking tiled roofs, non-vernacular brickwork, standard softwood joinery and little or no distinguishing detail. An example of this is the use of mass-produced windows, doors, eaves and barge boarding, which have further reduced the stock of locally designed and detailed materials.



*Whistley Court Farm: doors and windows well proportioned to each other, and within their elevation,*





*Traditional blue headers at Church Cottages are echoed in modern building in nearby Martineau Lane*



*Details of Cornwall Villas (above) and Rhodesia Villas (below)*



*An example of white painted and stained joinery against brick elevations. The contrasting white paintwork significantly breaks up the front elevations and contributes to the street scene.*

The village today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, contains a multitude of differing building types and styles, but the two storey, detached private house predominates.

Most of the buildings in the village display a sense of unity and lightness of impact on the street scene with:

- sufficient buildings of similar age and style.
- materials that reflect the local vernacular, mellow soft, red bricks in lime mortar, often Flemish bond patterned brickwork sometimes with contrasting blue headers, or with banding and window reveals of white brickwork and arched brick lintels over openings.
- windows and doors are well proportioned in themselves, and within their elevation; generally, the colour of the joinery forms a contrast with that of the walls.
- steeper pitched gabled roofs (over 45°) of plain clay tiles with chimneys.

The recent estate or individual house developments, particularly of the last decade, have shown some sympathy for these elements.

The use of appropriate materials does offer some encouragement and hope for future developments within the Parish. The recent rebuilding of Dorndon House has at least attempted to echo some of the style and design of the building it replaced, with limited success.





**Sympathetic modern extensions**  
clockwise from left:  
*Picking up the detail at South View,  
Whistley Green; matching the original  
at Bill Hill ;  
and subservient to it at Laburnham  
Cottages, Lodge Road*

**It can be done!**

**New build**

*New houses pick up detailing from nearby Diamond Villas (left);  
and the corner bay windows in new Dorndon House (right)  
remind us of the building it replaced*



### Beyond the Village Envelope

Outside the village envelope, buildings tend to stand out on their own, yet generally sit comfortably in the landscape. There is little new building in these areas, although a number of extensions and replacements have been built. In addition, some redundant farm buildings have been converted to other uses.

Recent sympathetic conversions to residential use of good quality redundant farm buildings can be seen at Hatchgate Farm, St. Nicholas Farm, Church Farm and Whistley Court Farm.

### OBJECTIVES

Well-designed new development will sit comfortably in the local context, respect the landscape and enhance the street scene, wherever it is within the Parish.

Adherence to the existing local character is to be considered in alterations of existing elevations by replacing joinery, roofing, painting, rendering and cladding to produce a homogeneous result.

GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL PLAN POLICIES	WDLP POLICY
12.1 <i>The local character and historical context of the buildings in Hurst can be reflected in design and the way that materials are used to give acceptable proportion, mass and detail in them.</i>	WBE1 WBE4 WCC1 WCC7 WLL4 WOS10
12.2 <i>Stimulus for the design and construction of new buildings of originality will come from recognition of the merit of buildings of local traditional materials with vernacular style, shape and proportions.</i>	WBE1 WBE4 WCC1 WCC7 WLL4
12.3 <i>A sympathetic variety of house types and details lend interest to the street scene.</i>	WBE1 WBE4 WCC1 WCC7 WOS1
12.4 <i>Modern buildings, whether in design or in the imaginative use of traditional materials may be accepted where they enhance the location and add to the quality of the environment.</i>	WBE1 WBE4 WCC1 WCC7 WOS1 WOS3
12.5 <i>Extensions will be in harmony with the original building when similar in design and use of materials.</i>	WBE1 WBE4 WCC1 WCC7 SPG on Residential Design
12.6 <i>Office or business use for such buildings may be considered if it is appropriate to the rural environment. Change of use to industrial use needs to be appropriate to the rural environment.</i>	WCC4 WCC5
12.7 <i>New residential development, and conversion of agricultural buildings to residential or employment use, needs to consider the impact on traffic throughout the Parish.</i>	WT5
12.8 <i>Appropriate re-use of redundant agricultural buildings may be accepted, but there needs to be careful consideration of the cumulative effect, and the impact on residents from increased traffic.</i>	WCC5 WT5 WRE1 WRE2



