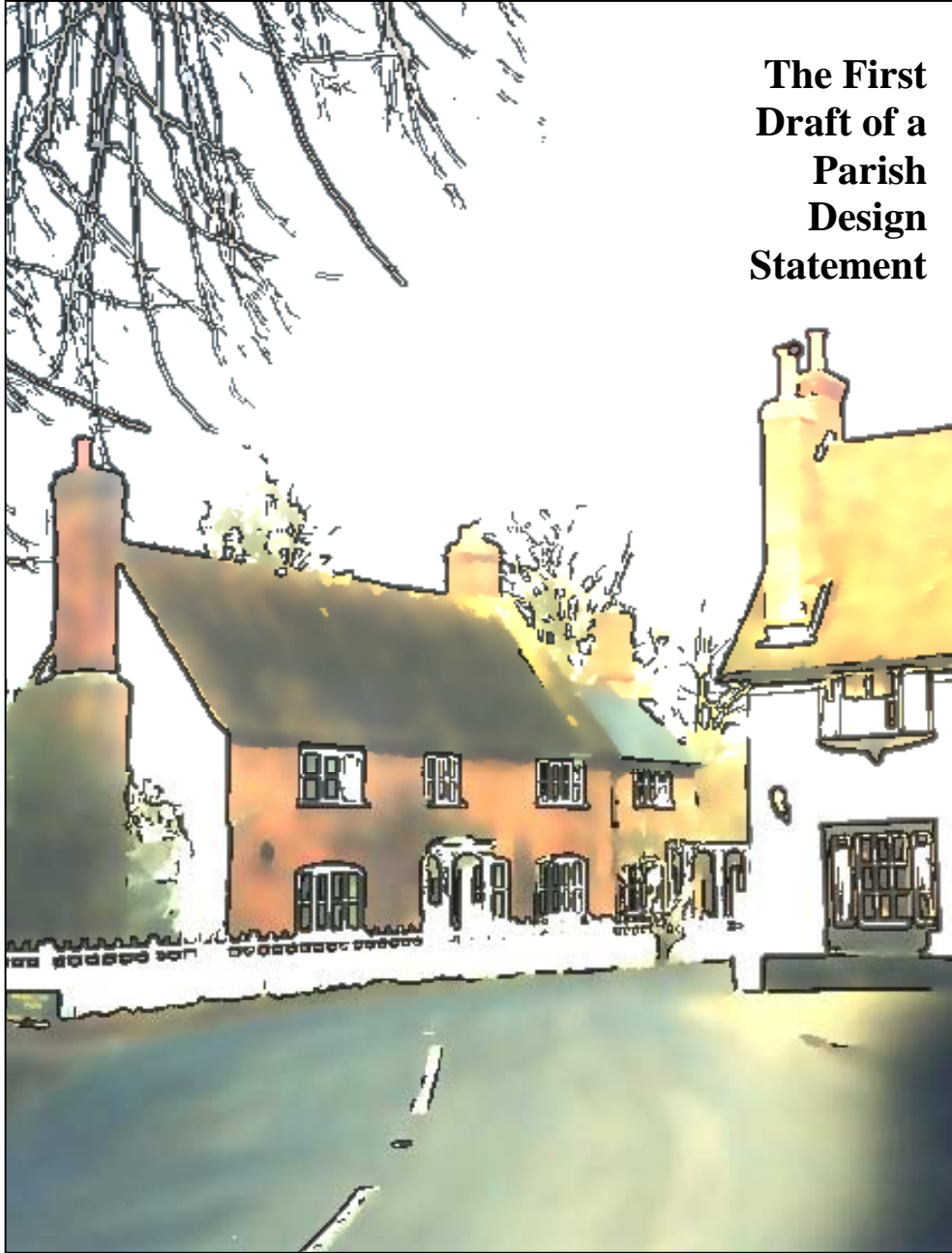


A Design for Hurst

**The First
Draft of a
Parish
Design
Statement**



**Prepared and published by St.Nicholas Hurst Parish Council
July 2001**

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST DRAFT

This draft has been produced by a Working Group set up by the Parish Council of StNicholas Hurst.

It has drawn on the views of a considerable number of residents, gathered in a consultation process between November 2000 and March 2001.

It is being given as wide a circulation as possible within the Parish so that all those who wish to see it and to have the opportunity to comment on it may do so.

It is also being circulated to a number of public bodies who may have an interest, so they may also comment if they wish.

Comments should be returned to the Working Group by 1st September.

All comments will be considered by the Working Group in producing the Second Draft, which should go out to a further round of public consultation later this year.

Please send your comments to any member of the Working Group.

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ST.NICHOLAS HURST PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT

First Draft

1. INTRODUCTION

Parish Design Statements are a means for local people to manage change within their own environment.

The objective of the Design Statement for St Nicholas Hurst is to set parameters for development within the Parish and thus encourage good design that is in keeping with the existing environment. This in turn will help to maintain the essential character of the Parish that is so dear to all of its people.

The Parish Design Statement is meant to help all people contemplating any sort of development, from individuals planning a small extension to their house to a housing developer putting forward a major planning application.

It has been produced by the people of the Parish and is a statement of their aspirations for the Parish. A lot of work by a lot of people has gone into it and it of necessity reflects the views of the whole Parish.

2. PLANNING CONTEXT

Development is managed in the context of a hierarchy of planning documents. The local plan for the area is the Loddon Area Local Plan (LALP), which is issued by Wokingham District Council who are the Local Planning Authority. This local plan is the present statutory plan. It is soon to be replaced by the Wokingham District Local Plan 1996-2006 (WDLP). The WDLP varies only in emphasis and some minor detail from the LALP as far as Hurst is concerned. The strategic plan for the area is the Berkshire Structure Plan 1996-2006. Over all these sit the Planning Policy Guidelines (PPG) issued by central government.

A Parish Design Statement must comply with the policies in the local plan in order for it to be approved by the Local Planning Authority.

This Parish Design Statement has been adopted by Wokingham District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance and development should therefore comply with its policies.

3. LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHY

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

The main village is located along the A321 Twyford to Wokingham road with more development on the roads leading off this main road, principally School Road, Tape Lane and Hinton Road. There are a number of other smaller developed areas of which the main ones are along Davis Street on the B3030 Twyford to Winnersh road and along the Forest Road, the B3034 Bill Hill to Bracknell 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, on the other side of which are the town of Wokingham and other urban development along the A329 Reading to Wokingham road.

The main London to Bristol railway line runs along the northern boundary and passes through Twyford.

4. POPULATION

The present population of the parish is approximately 1900 people with an electoral roll of 1500. The population historically would have been largely occupied in agricultural and agriculture related jobs. However, despite the very rural nature of the parish, the amount of local employment is nowadays very limited and most of the working population find employment outside the confines of the parish.

5. 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 9th 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 in Sonning.

For some 700 years, Hurst was in Wiltshire, although surrounded by Berkshire, as the local Hundred of Ashridge was owned by the Earl of Salisbury; references to Wiltshire can be seen on the Almshouses and in the Churchyard.

Much of the Forest was cleared from the 13th Century onwards, both to create arable land and for the timber.

As well as forestry – 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 going on at the turn of the 19th Century.

With the dissolution of the Monasteries, the new owners of the land began building appropriate houses for themselves, and by the early 17th Century there was a small building boom as many smaller cottages were built to house their servants and farm-workers. These set the scene for the present-day pattern of settlement. The largely agricultural nature

of the Parish continued until the second half of the 20th Century. Although some of those estates have disappeared, and the remaining estates and farms employ far fewer people now, the links with the past continue in many names of streets and places – Davis Street, Wards Cross, Braybrooke Drive, Barker Court and Almshouses, Dalby Close, Broad Common, Hog Moor, Ashridge, etc. These links are valued

From the latter part of the 20th Century, Hurst, in common with many other villages in the South-East, became home for people moving in from elsewhere and working outside the immediate area – many commuting to London – although there remain a number of long-term residents with connections going back several generations.

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, while the northern area has largely been reinstated through landfill. Future use of the latter is of great concern locally.

The pressure for development on the Parish is enormous. On the one hand, it forms a rural green gap between greater Wokingham and Twyford, and a barrier (with the River Loddon) to the eastward expansion of Reading; these are desirable if East Berkshire is not to become a single conurbation. On the other, it is part of England’s “Silicon Valley”, within easy reach of London, the countryside and the Motorway system, and still retains several village shops, so is much sought after. It therefore commands a house price premium and inevitably attracts developers. Those conflicts must be resolved if Hurst is to retain its rural identity into the 21st Century.

GUIDELINES

1. Historical links should be continued through the naming of streets, etc
2. Future use of reinstated landfill areas should be determined through wide consultation with local residents

6. 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 Parish Church, surrounded by a small group of mature woodland.

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 features prominently in views North from Wokingham and South from Hurst.

There are many wooded areas, mostly mixed woods of sycamore, birch, hazel and chestnut with many ancient and sizeable oak trees. Most of these woods are linked by hedges and with a lack of management (e.g. coppicing and felling) have become a haven for wildlife. They form an important contribution to the landscape.

Many of the country lanes and field boundaries in the Parish are tree lined or have hedges, enhancing pleasant views.

Much of the land, being flat and low-lying, is still drained by natural and man-made water-courses. The many ponds give a high landscape value to the areas by which they are enclosed and every effort should be made to ensure they are appropriately conserved.

Hurst enjoys several wide-open vistas across substantial stretches of cultivated farmland, with small developments of individual farm complexes and private residential properties. These enclaves of buildings within the rural areas of the district reflect both the somewhat fragmented nature of the village's early development within small clearings of the Windsor Great Forest and the latter day provision of small labourers' cottages on the farms.

The main through-traffic routes, Forest Road, the B3030 Winnersh to Twyford and the A321 Wokingham to Henley roads have had a considerable influence on the past development pattern with ribbon development, usually on one side of the road only - a typical local feature e.g. along Davis Street and the A321 as it approaches the village.

The village, seen from the south, south-east and south west is well hidden, adding to the rural nature of the area. Roads generally and the single track lanes in particular, have few hard edges and although the verges are often damaged by vehicles this is preferred as it retains the rural nature of the roads. The Parish has resisted the introduction of street lighting and footways.

Dinton Pastures, the 350 acre country park opened in 1979 using the worked out gravel pits which were used for the building of the M4 motorway, fits unobtrusively and naturally within this setting. It provides a welcome and wide range of leisure pursuits, including golf, sailing, diving, bird-watching, fishing, walking and cycling, for a large number of local residents.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Open view of lakes and golf course
General view across farmland with trees, hedges and more isolated trees.
Some of the many ponds in the area, including now-and-then photos of the Townsend's Pond
Small hillock & Parish Church

OBJECTIVES

Hurst Parish forms an important part of a green wedge between developed areas to the north, south and west, which converge on Reading and expand from Twyford. The essential characteristic of Hurst is of a small, recognised, but scattered, village set within an open agricultural landscape. The preservation of an open, undeveloped, agricultural landscape is vital to the maintenance of Hurst as a village and to saving it from becoming a satellite suburb of a greater Thames Valley conurbation. It is important that the rural nature of the area is preserved to prevent Twyford, Winnersh, Woodley and Binfield merging into one suburban townscape.

Further development within the rural areas surrounding the village should be actively discouraged, especially of further extensions of existing ribbon development along both Davis Street and the A321 Wokingham road. Infill of gaps between existing developments would add to the urban intrusion. Such developments reduce the gap between the village and the urban reaches of Winnersh and Woodley, 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.

The open spaces are also very important to people outside the parish who believe that the feeling of space within Hurst is important to them; it relieves the feeling of urban enclosure. Hurst is important as a leisure and "green space" area for the local, predominately urban, population. It offers, with Dinton Pastures, a centre for active sports and, both at Dinton and through the Parish generally, country walks for more leisurely recreation. Maintenance of the rural and "green" aspects of Hurst are essential both for the inhabitants and for the local population in general.

Of particular note and importance are the views of the Church, particularly from Davis Street. That of the brick built tower, surrounded by the elm and oak trees of the copse, standing on the small hillock and surrounded by the rural landscape, would be destroyed if unsympathetic development were allowed nearby.

GUIDELINES

1. 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.
2. Given the high water table and the extensive flood plains it is necessary that watercourses are properly maintained.
3. Permission should be required to grub up any hedges and trees and a system of replacement encouraged.
4. New development should include the planting of native trees and hedgerows to aid the constant renewal of the landscape.
5. The open views and vistas should be retained. Most building within the village is set back from the roads and new housing has been mostly unobtrusive. These aspects should be maintained in future developments.
6. The views across open countryside towards the Conservation Area should be preserved, and the skyline around the Conservation area should not be broken..
7. The introduction of street lighting is not appropriate to the rural village setting

7. OPEN SPACES

BACKGROUND

Although Hurst Parish is predominantly rural there are areas designated as public spaces – two recreation grounds and a village green.

There are sports clubs which have their own grounds for cricket, football and bowls in the Parish; when games are being played they add to public space. There is a golf club at each end of the village.

The village school has beneficial use of a small field for team games; this is also

used with adjoining fields for the annual village horse show.

The large public recreational area at Dinton Pastures is in the West of the Parish.

The feeling of space that is apparent when driving or walking around the whole parish comes mainly from the large areas of farm land, but the public spaces and sports grounds contribute to this, giving views within in the residential areas.

The parish is well served with footpaths and bridle-ways with extensive views across farmland to distant buildings.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Wards Cross play area showing equipment but also tree surround
Cricket ground with tree background
Dinton Pastures with boats and island or golf course

OBJECTIVES

Existing open spaces form a valuable resource for both formal and informal recreation, especially for the young. Because of their location, many have a history of use for village events, which contribute greatly to the character and sense of place of the Parish. Every effort should be made to retain them.

The open spaces in Hurst should be retained not only for the use of the village residents but also as a recreational space for residents of the surrounding urban areas.

The rural aspect should remain and public spaces contribute an attractive feature of the parish
Hurst should be an area where it is easy to walk in the countryside.

GUIDELINES

1. There should be no loss of public open spaces as the parish develops.
2. New development should not obstruct any of the views made possible by public spaces.
3. No development of intrusive activities should be allowed on any public or sports open space.
4. Any opportunity should be taken to extend or add to existing public spaces

8. SETTLEMENT

BACKGROUND

[INCLUDE MAP of areas of settlement within Parish]

The principal area of settlement is around Wards Cross; there are smaller but significant centres along Forest Road in the East, and Davis Street to the South-West and in many smaller scattered areas across the rural parts.

The Village Centre

The settled areas of the village centre have developed slowly over the years. The Church and its immediate surrounds, including the Almshouses, the Castle Inn and church cottages date from the 17th Century or earlier, and form the Conservation Area

The pattern of roads which cross at the village pond has given the grid on which the settlement has formed. Although there are houses dating back to the 17th century on some of the roads, others are also found in isolated positions. Most of the houses are from the 19th or early 20th century, which have been built along the same roads but still close to the present shops. Previous shops, pubs, blacksmiths etc. were also found on these roads.

The shape of the parish with close housing in the centre and with large house groups at a distance on Davis Street and Forest Road, produce a number of ways across the parish off the main roads. There are also remote lanes such as Landsend Lane with the River Loddon bridge and ford, Broadcommon and Dunt Lane isolated by the M4 motorway and the unused part of Forest Road. These present views of the true rural countryside.

The Rural Surroundings

Developments are typical of an agricultural inheritance and sporadic in nature. Newer houses have generally been replacements for older dwellings.

There are a small number of developed areas, which often form small domestic communities albeit with very few facilities, e.g. mains drainage. The most significant are the linear developments along Forest Road, Davis Street and the Wokingham Road. They are characterised by development along one side of the road only, giving a pleasing sense of openness. Further development of these three areas will erode the rural

setting of the village, close important, open land between settlements and change the character of the area.

In addition, there are many small groups of buildings, particularly farms, and individual residential properties, and some important listed buildings. None are within recognised areas of settlement.

Most of these isolated domestic properties are now owner occupied, converting from tied cottages and houses to rent with the decline of the large estates and farms. Demand for housing in and around Hurst remains high and there is a high reliance on car usage. The major roadside ribbon developments unfortunately include some of the characteristics of urban development: footpaths, restrained (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, now 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.

Landmark buildings

There are a number of buildings of historic and architectural interest, many of which are listed. They are often very prominent in the flat, open vistas in the South of the Parish.

These older buildings are built of many different materials and form, depending on their size, function and importance when built. The smaller former farm cottages are often timber framed, now with painted brick or rendered finish and these are often very prominent. Some, although very few, are thatched; most are plain clay tiled. High Chimneys, Hatch Gate Farm, St Nicholas' Farm and Hurst Grove are more substantial, brick built, although Hurst Grove is now rendered and painted. These buildings benefit from pleasing proportions, particularly of window shapes and sizes and of local materials.

Few modern buildings (20th cent) have been built with any regard to the detail, proportion and materials used in these old cottages and houses and as a

consequence have little or no relevance to their setting.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Examples of buildings in the rural area clusters (e.g. farm conversions and others) landmark buildings.

OBJECTIVES

The open aspect which characterises the existing built environment should be retained.

The shape of the parish is a unique feature and should not be disturbed by thoughtless development. The open aspect of the built areas makes a valuable contribution to the character of Hurst, and should be preserved.

New development, including all agricultural buildings should be appropriate to the physical, social and visual character and structure of the settlement area, and be confined to an actual quantifiable need and conform to and with all the other policies within the plan.

GUIDELINES

1. New building should be avoided which breaks the skyline of the Conservation Area.
2. Design of new buildings, including extensions to existing buildings should be sympathetic to their surroundings, with regard to scale, massing, style, materials and detailing. New buildings should make a positive contribution to the character of the area.
3. Trees are a vital element to the character of Hurst and future developments should ensure adequate space for the growth of trees above roof height without damage to buildings or utility services.
4. Where existing development is substantially along one side of the road only, new building on the opposite side should be resisted, in order to preserve the essential character of the area.
5. Future development should be small in scale and reflect the housing density of its surroundings.
6. External lighting installations on private land should be controlled and minimised. The lighting design chosen should be sympathetic to a semi rural village containing a substantial number of period homes, and minimise light pollution of the night sky.
7. Electricity and telecoms providers should ensure development such as pylons is placed to minimise adverse visual impact on the village. Every opportunity should be taken to re-site electricity cables underground.

9. BUILDINGS

BACKGROUND

The immediate and most striking observation to be made in looking at the Parish is that there is no predominant age or architectural style to the buildings. Indeed, there is a considerable variety of types and a range of sizes. In the main settlements there is a predominance of detached and semi-detached houses with a few terraced dwellings, bungalows and flats, whilst elsewhere dwellings are almost exclusively detached. A considerable proportion of the dwellings is very old and of architectural and historic interest, within both the village centre and the rural areas. These lend an historic character to the Parish, mixing with the newer dwellings.

The oldest surviving building in Hurst is the Church of St. Nicholas, which dates back to the 12th century. The church, together with the Castle Inn, the Almshouses and Church Cottages form the nucleus of the Conservation Area.

Within the village and surrounding rural area the numerous Listed Buildings include some large secular buildings set in their own grounds and several cottages dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. Many of the larger buildings such as Hurst House were built incorporating red brick walls, large chimney stacks, stone

mullioned and transomed windows, plain clay tiled roofs and many architectural features of their particular period. The cottages are mostly timber framed with colour washed brick, roughcast or rendered infilling and clay tiled roofs. A few cottages remain with thatched roofs. All these buildings benefit from pleasing proportions, particularly of window shapes and sizes and are of local materials.

In the village street a number of 19th century terraced cottages are worth mentioning for their decorative and detailed brickwork used extensively at that time.

Those buildings, both domestic and agricultural, erected in the latter half of the 20th century are generally of a standard national pattern.

A distinctive feature of the Parish is the strong feeling of open space, even within the village envelope. With the exception of a few terrace 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, and on many streets only one side is built on with open vistas to farmland on the other.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Church
Details of existing buildings

OBJECTIVES

The aim of the guidelines is to ensure that new building is in keeping with the character of the existing buildings and does not compromise the open nature of the present layout both inside the village and in the rural area.

GUIDELINES

1. New building should be sympathetic to its surroundings and should not dominate the existing buildings by virtue of its height and mass nor clash by the use of inappropriate materials.
2. Development that detracts from the open nature of the street scene is to be discouraged.
3. A range of building types and sizes is welcomed provided careful consideration is given to the suitability of the location, detail, proportion and materials used.
4. Bricks should be matched to one of the local shades. The most used local brick, Berkshire Reds, are still made, albeit now in Hampshire. Roof pitches should be varied and steeper (above 35 degrees) for plain tiling.
5. New buildings should be properly proportioned in areas of solid to window, in the shape and pattern of windows and materials.
6. New building in the rural area should require detailed design proposals that complement the existing characteristics of the older buildings in the area.
7. New buildings should reflect the historical local vernacular designs and materials.

10. LOCAL ECONOMY

BACKGROUND

For most of its existence, the local economy of Hurst has relied on agriculture, initially a number of large units, followed by reduced farming as some of the large units were split up, and latterly on a small amount of true farming with working from home and commuting to many locations of work.

As a small rural village it has been fortunate not to have been submerged by the huge population growth around it and it has not been dependent on its surroundings to survive.

The local economy has changed with the village.

Employment.

When Hurst was a farming community, employment was on the farms, in support services to them, and in service to the few big houses. This has changed dramatically with reduced farming and new methods and mechanisation. One farm estate which employed 36 people now employs 6.

With reduced farming and redundant farm buildings taken over by small industry a different type of employment has come to the village.

Shops.

Hurst is well served by three quality shops in the centre of the village which can meet many of the day to day household requirements: a butcher, a baker and a general store with post office, each giving a wider service than the name implies. The distant spread of houses away from the village centre means that at the extremities it may be more convenient to shop in the next village.

With high car ownership, supermarkets outside the village claim much of the main household requirements but residents do use the village shops to ensure their survival, which has been in doubt in the past. A lot of trade comes from passing motorists.

There are two garden centres, the larger of which has now grown to include a range of specialist shops and a restaurant but not competing with the village centre shops.

Local Businesses.

In addition to one large franchised garage, the range of business carried out in the village splits into two groups:

Services: these are generally one-person undertakings operating from home and encompass a wide range of professions and trades. In addition there are a number of riding establishments.

Production and added value: automotive engine and body repair were the first businesses to start up in the old farm buildings. Others associated such as sheet metal work, shot blasting, and spray painting have followed. Wood working, furniture making and repair and general metalwork are also there.

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. One former pub has been repositioned as a superior restaurant.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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OBJECTIVES

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 them are appropriate in type and scale to a rural environment, serving needs both within and outside Hurst.

In seeking to conserve this rich mixture, care should be taken to ensure that the scale and style of any future business and commercial developments are appropriate and do not increase pressure on the local infrastructure, particularly the roads.

GUIDELINES

1. New sources of employment should respect the rural environment and residential areas, and should be small in scale.
2. Retail outlets are sufficient to meet the needs of residents.
3. Any new sales outlet which brings more traffic to the village should be discouraged.
4. The present recreational areas must be retained and increased should the opportunity arise.
5. Appropriate re-use of redundant agricultural buildings is acceptable, provided that attention is paid to their cumulative effect. Office or business use may be encouraged, but further change of use to industrial use is inappropriate.

11. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

BACKGROUND

[MAP of the Parish, identifying roads by name and road number, and all footpaths, bridleways, and secondary lanes]

The existing vehicular “through routes” cope with the current volumes of traffic but are congested at peak traffic usage times and create some local resentment and high degrees of dissatisfaction by those living near or along the routes, and by the pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists who also use the roads. Inappropriate high speeds, too much traffic and the adverse effects on the environment are all cited as particular traffic problems within the Parish. Road maintenance is perceived to be poor with worn out and pot-holed road surfaces, a lack of road markings and far too many scattered road signs that spoil the countryside landscape.

At Wards Cross, the centre of the village, one particular and long-term problem concerns the hazards created by the A321 where the carriageway is at its narrowest and where the buildings are very close to the road. Because of the location of the shops pedestrians need to cross and re-cross the road, thus creating an additional hazard on this section of road. The 40mph speed limit in these areas, in particular, is considered to be too high for the safety of other road users.

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

Considered by many to be one of the most important features of the local area are the many lanes and secondary routes that criss-cross the district. Whilst these provide much needed routes to most parts of the parish for people to access their homes or places of work they also provide an important role to those drawn to the area for their leisure. Combined with the obvious attractions of the Country Park these lanes are pleasant routes for cycling, horse riding and walking except they are used by “through route traffic” and some have become unpleasant as “rat-run” routes and are dangerous for other users.

Of particular concern to the village is safe pedestrian access to the school and village halls, and in the centre of the village near the shops. The 40mph speed limit in all these areas generally is considered to be too high, and the “rat-runs” traffic through Lines Road, Sandford Lane, and Church Hill to Orchard Lane or through Tape Lane in particular are an inappropriate use of these small lanes.

While the District Council has brought forward schemes to try to widen the use of public transport we accept that for the vast majority of local residents, visitors to the area and through traffic this option does not match the convenience of car ownership or offer a viable alternative. However we do see the need to restrict the dominance of the car on our local roads and create, in particular for the lanes and by-ways, an environment more suited to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.

PHOTOGRAPHS

parking in Wards Cross

a rat-run

rural lanes

examples of different “acceptable” road finishings

OBJECTIVES

It would be undesirable to design, at the entrances to these 'local traffic' lanes, traffic calming measures that further restrict the width of the often narrow roads because wide farm vehicles need to retain access and the recent trend for national delivery vehicles to be large, heavy goods vehicles. However other traffic calming measures, designed to reduce the volume of traffic and to slow down the speeds could be introduced. These might include any combination of: further reductions to the speed limits, better located signage, resurfacing the roads to show them to be secondary routes e.g. Rolled gravel toppings, setts as 'rumble strips' at the entrance to secondary lanes and better enforcement.

Existing routes with poor sight lines, narrow road widths, tight bends and short visibility splays at junctions all restrict views and a lack of street lighting tend to create doubt in drivers' minds and are to be regarded as a natural and acceptable means of achieving a reduction in traffic speeds in much the same way as parked cars can do in the centre of the village on the A321.

Where appropriate, improvements to the existing network of footpaths should be encouraged.

The use of alternative routes between Twyford and Wokingham, and between Woodley and the East, should be encouraged where possible. Directing traffic away from the village centre on the A321 by signposting traffic along the B3018 to access Wokingham and Bracknell from Twyford and the B3030 Winnersh to Twyford might be considered.

Measures to encourage the better use of public transport, particularly at the weekends for leisure access to the area should be supported.

Grass verges to road edges and between road edges and paths creates a more rural feeling and where edge restraint to roads has to be included this should follow the example on the A321 with the kerbs laid flat and level with the road surfacing. This allows the more natural grass verges to grow over the kerb.

GUIDELINES

1. Additional major development should be required to submit a traffic impact study
2. New development schemes should be required to be capable of being served, over the long term, by public transport.
3. Developers should be encouraged to fund transport, highway, and other infrastructure improvements
4. The system of lanes, footpaths and bridle ways, and the character of the old country lanes, should be preserved and enhanced by encouraging more non-motorised use and discouraging rat-run traffic along them.
5. Additional funding should be provided for pedestrian, cycling and horse riding links and footpaths, bridle ways and to restrict the use of vehicular traffic in the lanes. The network should be extended to enable villagers to enjoy safe pedestrian access to Dinton Pastures.
6. Additional traffic calming measures should be promoted, particularly on the B3030 Davis Street, the A321 through the village and to all the local lanes. Through the WDC Local Transport Policy 2001-2006 we would support a speed reduction to a maximum of 30mph through the village on the A321, along the B3030 Davis Street and a 20mph limit within the village on the secondary roads and local lanes. Safety for all users of our local roads is to be made of paramount importance.
7. Unrestrained grass verges should be retained, with flat kerbs laid level with the road surface where necessary, but especially away from the more built up areas within the centre the village. Where kerbs are used to restrain the road use a variety of materials e.g. stone, granite setts, cobbles and brick or any combination of these to enhance the countryside feel of these roads.
8. There is no speed limit within the Church Hill conservation area, which despite a number of sharp bends carries traffic travelling at decidedly unsafe speeds for pedestrians and horses. There should be a 30mph limit through this section of the village.
9. A greater use of low-noise surfaces on both Motorways and rural roads, where appropriate, would be welcomed.

12. 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 the ever-growing number of such items is haphazard so that they are often visually intrusive.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Examples of appropriate signage

OBJECTIVES

Street furniture should be unobtrusive and wherever possible reflect the rural nature of the Parish. In particular, street lighting is considered inappropriate and undesirable.

GUIDELINES

1. A visually less intrusive form of street furniture should be adopted with local consultation before installation
2. The various authorities responsible should be encouraged to share posts where possible.
3. The installation of street lighting is not welcome, as it would radically change the rural character of the Parish.
4. If possible, a single traditional pattern of street signage should be established throughout the Parish. All new signage should use this model, and in time existing signage should be replaced with this approved traditional signage.

13. FLORA & FAUNA

BACKGROUND

The habitats found in Hurst today reflect the history of the landscape. The old Forest of Windsor encompassed woodland, moorland, heathland and wetland habitats.

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. These hedgerows have species that reflect those ancient origins.

Agriculture in Hurst is now in decline and much former farmland is used for grazing horses. There is some arable and livestock farming and this mixed usage and the retention of hedgerows make good habitat for many of our more scarce farmland birds such as skylark, barn owl, partridge and lapwing. Buzzards, woodcock, goldcrests, redwings, fieldfares, and nightingales are also seen.

Grasslands

There are extensive areas of wet neutral grassland within the Loddon valley including some unimproved (wildflower rich) remnants such as Middle Marsh, in Dinton Pastures, and next to the Twyford PC allotments, on the northern boundary of the Parish. In addition there is one known neutral grassland site next to the Old Police Cottages in Broadcommon Road. The new Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) aims to recreate 30ha of neutral grassland by 2010, and the priority areas for this are adjacent to existing neutral grassland sites.

Woodland

The 'wet' woodland habitat at Sandford Mill Copse and Lodge Wood SSSI are reputed to support 10% of the UK's population of the Loddon Lily.

There are a number of small Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW - wooded since 1600) and Ancient Replanted Woodland (ARW - replanted woodland on ancient sites) in the east of the parish.

Mammals such as badgers, foxes, stoats, weasels, and roe, fallow or muntjac deer can be found in these woodlands. The network of ASNW in the east of the parish has potential to support the internationally protected Dormouse. The stag beetle, which is nationally rare, is relatively common in Hurst. The new Wokingham BAP identifies areas

adjacent to existing ASNW as priority sites for new woodland planting.

Heathland

Broad Common in the east of the parish was historically a heathland common, although it is currently used as pasture land. The new Wokingham BAP has identified the site as a priority heathland restoration area.

Rivers and Wetlands

The nationally rare Water vole, Loddon Pondweed and Loddon Lily can be found along the banks of the River Loddon that flows through the Parish. There have been many unconfirmed sightings of otters in Hurst, and artificial holts have been built to encourage otters to breed along the river. The new Wokingham BAP identifies that the floodplain of the river Loddon should be maintained as a fully functioning wetland corridor.

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. Less than 20 pairs breed in the UK annually. One or two birds usually visit in the winter. Reed beds are being planted to encourage the Bittern and the Reed Bunting. The park is also important for insect life. Out of a British population of 42 species of dragonfly, 18 have been spotted in the park. Grass snakes are often seen.

Hurst is fortunate in having over 30 ponds in the parish. Nationally, 75% of ponds have been lost since the 1880's. Thus, the ponds are an important asset. Many are 'old' ponds associated with farms and have a wide variety of wildlife.

The rare Great Crested Newt is found in Hurst. This species receives international protection. The UK is the European stronghold for this species and distribution within Britain is highly localised. The new Wokingham BAP identifies the need to survey ponds for Great Crested Newts, and to maintain a network of ponds linked by habitat corridors.

Local Biodiversity Action Plans

As a result of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, Wokingham DC produced local BAPs in 1998 which highlighted habitats and a list of 17 species of wildlife that were threatened in the District. The National BAP species

found in Hurst include Bats, Water Vole, Great Crested Newt, Song Thrush, Bull Finch, Skylark, Linnet, Reed Bunting, Turtle Dove, Bittern, Stag Beetle, and potentially the Otter and Dormouse. The Local BAP species found in Hurst include the Barn Owl, Harvest Mouse, Loddon Lily, Loddon Pondweed, and Ragged Robin.

Biodiversity Forum

The Countryside Service has coordinated members of local conservation and community groups to work together on

'Habitat Action Plans' 2000/01. The aim is to safeguard the future of the species and habitats in this area and restore what has been lost in the past. The plans are to be formally adopted by WDC and will promote wildlife friendly management of Woodlands, Wetlands, Heathlands and Towns and Villages. In addition, they will ensure that biodiversity is an integral part of the development control process, and taken account of at the design stage of any new development.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Great Crested Newt
Loddon Lily

OBJECTIVES

While nearly surrounded by more built-up areas, the Parish nevertheless encompasses a wide variety of habitats supporting a broad range of plants and wildlife, some of them relatively rare. Any development has the potential to put them at risk for future generations, and care needs to be taken in assessing the impact of any proposal upon them.

GUIDELINES

1. Major development proposals should incorporate a wildlife and ecology survey with proposals for future sustainable management.
2. All major development proposals should be checked against the local Biodiversity Action Plans for possible impact.
3. All major development proposals should be checked against any local Habitat Action Plans.

14. FUTURE MONITORING OF STATEMENT

The Parish Council will, by definition, be using this Design Statement regularly in evaluating Planning Applications within the Parish. After one year from adoption of this Design Statement by the local Planning Authority, the Parish Council will review the effect these guidelines have had on Applications determined in that period, and report their findings to parishioners.

The Parish Council will carry out a thorough review of the Design Statement after five years of use.