

# A Design for Hurst



Parish  
Planning  
Guidance

Prepared and published by StNicholas Hurst Parish  
Council  
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Second Draft

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### ***Introduction to the Second Draft***

*The First Draft of this document was published in the Summer of 2001, and many individuals and organisations were kind enough to send us their comments. This Second Draft has been prepared after taking all those comments into consideration.*

*Since then, however, our environment has changed. Unlike the earlier ones on which we had based our approach, Design Statements are now expected to be very narrowly focussed documents, dealing only with the design of the built environment. We know from our work that other issues, such as highways and the rural setting of the Parish, are very important to Parishioners, so we do not intend to follow that path.*

*Other documents of a more general nature have since been introduced, such as Community Plans, but they deal with additional issues that we do not think relevant to our aims in this document. So, after further consultations with Wokingham District Council, we propose to publish the document as in this Second Draft; it may not have the Supplementary Planning Guidelines status of a Design Statement, but it is intended that it will be adopted as guidance which WDC will "have regard to" when considering Planning Applications in this Parish.*

# ST.NICHOLAS HURST PARISH PLANNING GUIDANCE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### ***What is it?***

This document provides a context for new development, based on an identification and analysis of local character and is to serve as a planning tool. It can help improve design of developments by being applied consistently in the development control process.

It is a means for local people to manage change within their own environment.

Our Planning Guidance for St Nicholas Hurst has been produced by the people of the Parish and is a statement of their 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 lot of work and thought by a lot of people has gone into it, and it therefore reflects the views of the whole Parish.

### ***Why have we done it?***

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 can be protected and enhanced.

### ***How does it work?***

Our Planning Guidance sets out to define what 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

### ***Who is it for?***

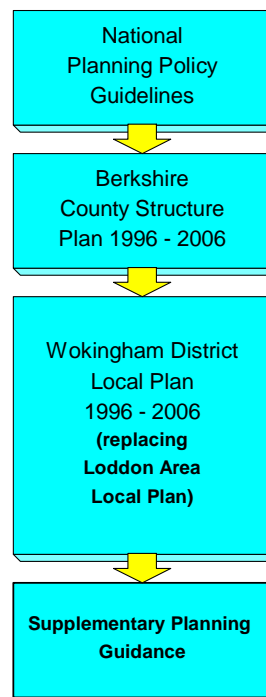
This document provides guidance to all people contemplating any development in the Parish, from individuals planning a small extension to their house to a housing developer putting forward a major planning application. It will also be used by the local planning authorities and the Parish Council to assess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

## 2. PLANNING CONTEXT

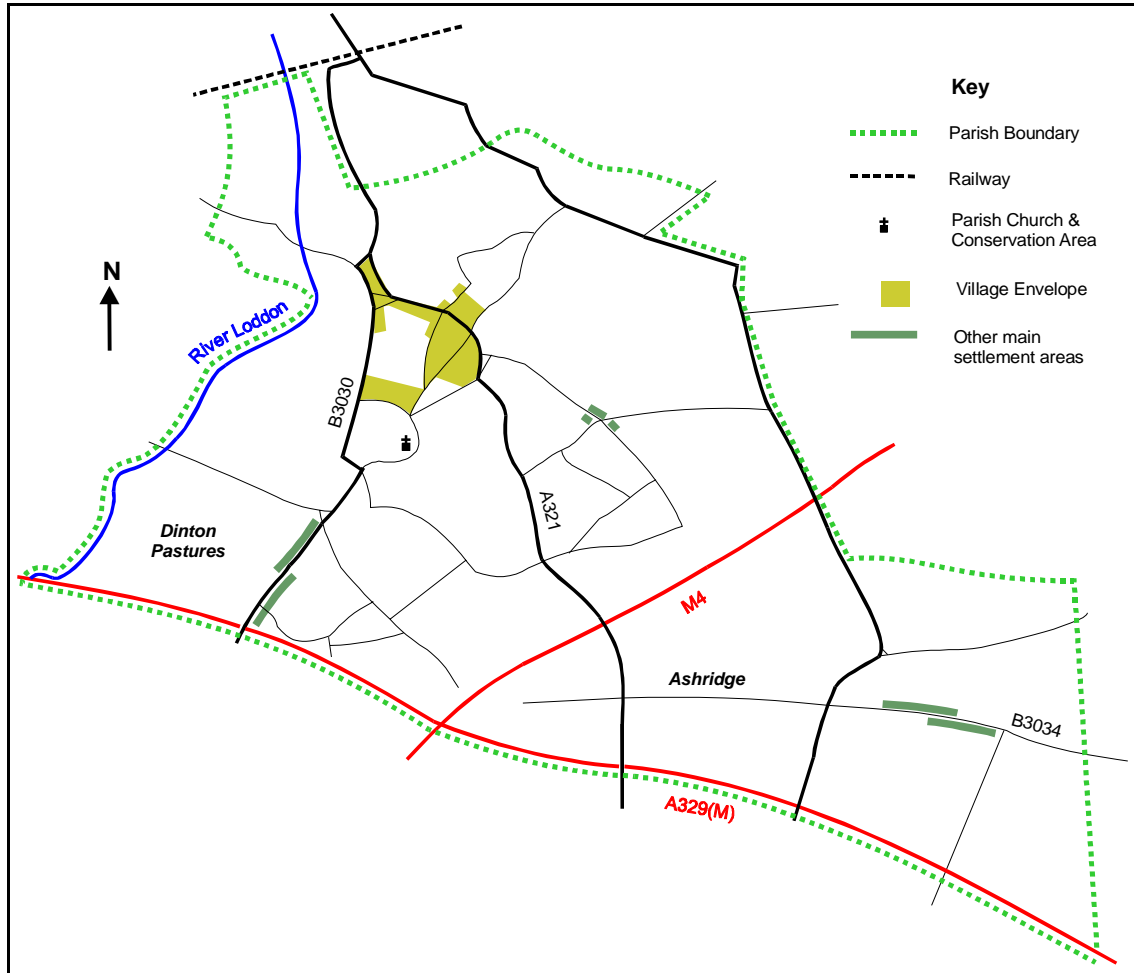
Development is managed in the context of a hierarchy of planning documents (right).

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

This document was formally adopted by Wokingham District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on [date], and development should therefore comply with its Guidelines



### 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 an area of some 650 hectares and is the largest Parish in area in the administrative area of Wokingham District.

The village is located on the A321 Twyford to Wokingham road. There are a number of other smaller settlements; the main ones are along Davis Street on the B3030 Twyford to Winnersh road and along Forest Road, the B3034, from Bill Hill to Binfield.

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 at neighbouring Twyford.

## 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 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 going on 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, and 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 now, the links with the past continue in many names of streets and places – Wards Cross, Braybrooke Drive, Barker Court and Almshouses, Dalby Close, Broad Common, Hog Moor, 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 find 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 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, and still retains several village shops, so is much sought after. These conflicts must be resolved if Hurst is to retain its rural identity into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### OBJECTIVES

Old names with a historical link to the Parish should be maintained.

### GUIDELINES

4.1 *Historical links should be continued through the naming of streets, etc.*

## 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 Parish Church, surrounded by 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. The ridge also forms a visual barrier between Wokingham and 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 the Church, particularly from Davis Street and Bill Hill. The brick built tower, surrounded by the elm and oak trees of the copse, stands on the small hillock and is surrounded by the rural landscape

There are many wooded areas, mostly mixed deciduous woods with many ancient 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 and 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, 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, 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, recognised, 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. At night, inappropriate lighting detracts from the rural nature and should be resisted. It is important that the rural aspects of the area are preserved.

Infill of gaps between existing settlements would create 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.

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

Every effort should be made to ensure that watercourses and ponds are appropriately conserved.

## GUIDELINES

- 5.1 *The open views and vistas should be retained.*
- 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 encouragement should be given to the maintenance and replanting of existing and new hedgerows.*
- 5.5 *New development should include the planting of native trees and hedges to aid the constant renewal of the landscape.*
- 5.6 *Future use of reinstated landfill areas should be determined through wide consultation with local residents*
- 5.7 *Intrusive lighting in the rural landscape should be resisted.*

## 6. RECREATION

### BACKGROUND

Hurst Parish is well served by having 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*

There are sports clubs which have their own grounds for cricket and football, and one of the two oldest bowling greens in the coun-

try.

The village school has beneficial use of a small field for team games; this is also used with adjoining 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 and a sailing club, and facilities for fishing, bird-watching, walking and cycling.

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, giving views within the residential areas.

The Parish has a number of footpaths and bridle-ways with extensive views across farmland. They do not, however, form an integrated network.

### OBJECTIVES

Existing open spaces form a valuable resource for both formal and informal recreation, especially for the young, and every effort should be made to retain and enhance them. They also form recreational spaces for residents of the surrounding areas.

The enclosure of open spaces should be discouraged, and the provision of further open spaces would be welcomed, in order to maintain and enhance the open green aspects within the built areas.

Existing footpaths should be retained, and the network extended wherever possible, linking the recreational spaces.

The facility for Parishioners to grow their own produce should be retained.

### GUIDELINES

- 6.1 *There should be no loss of public open spaces and other recreational facilities.*
- 6.2 *New development should not inhibit access to or obstruct any of the views created by these open spaces.*
- 6.3 *No intrusive activities should be allowed on any public or sports open space*
- 6.4 *Any opportunity should be taken to extend or add to existing public spaces.*
- 6.5 *Pedestrian access to Dinton Pastures and the River Loddon should be enhanced by the provision of new public footpaths linking them to the village and the rest of the network.*

## 7. SETTLEMENT

### BACKGROUND

#### 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 17<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier, and now form the Conservation Area.

The roads which cross at Townsend's Pond formed 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 be-

tween 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 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.

The Martineau 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 are a number of areas of sporadic development, which form small settlements with limited infrastructure, such as mains drainage. The most significant are the linear develop-

ments 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 are 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 increas-

ingly 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.



The Parish 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

The open aspects within the built areas – development along one side of the road, and gaps between houses - make a valuable contribution to the character of Hurst, and should be retained.

The shape and pattern of settlements within the Parish is its unique feature and should not be disturbed by intrusive development. Further expansion of sporadic development areas would erode the rural setting of the village, use open land between settlements and change the character of the area.

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.

Existing soft, green boundaries and trees should be retained, and any replacement should maintain this character. The rural tradition of cultivated front gardens should be maintained, and existing building lines should be respected.

## GUIDELINES

- 7.1 *New building should be avoided which breaks the skyline of the Conservation Area.*
- 7.2 *Trees are a vital element to the character of Hurst and future developments should ensure adequate space for the growth of trees to maturity.*
- 7.3 *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. Infilling of gaps should be avoided.*
- 7.4 *Future development should respect the character and housing density of its surroundings.*
- 7.5 *External lighting installations on private land should be non-intrusive and minimise light pollution.*
- 7.6 *Utility providers should ensure developments such as pylons are placed to minimise adverse visual impact on the Parish. Every opportunity should be taken to re-site cables underground.*
- 7.7 *New buildings should reflect the proportions of those nearby. Existing building lines should not be altered without consideration of spatial effect. The visual impact of new buildings should be unobtrusive, and careful consideration should be given to the suitability of location, density, setting, grouping, use, and the effect on the character of the area.*
- 7.8 *Boundary treatment should remain soft, with hedging fronting the road. If a more solid boundary treatment is required, it should be obscured by native planting in front.*

## 8. 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 of 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 signifi-

cant 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)*



The village today, as it enters 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
- using 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.
- under 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 now demolished original building, with limited success.



*An example of white painted and stained joinery against brick elevations. The contrasting white paintwork significantly reduces the appearance of "massing", and contributes to a greater sense of spaciousness in the street scene*



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

**It can be done!**

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



### **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.

There are however no recent, newly built, modern buildings of real merit within the Parish.

### **OBJECTIVES**

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

Alterations of existing elevations by replacing joinery, roofing, painting, rendering, cladding should not have an adverse impact on the street scene or disagree with the existing local character.

### **GUIDELINES**

- 8.1 *Developments should reflect the local character and historical context of the buildings in the Parish, in design, proportion, mass, detail and the materials and the way they are used.*
- 8.2 *Materials used in any development should not be intrusive.*
- 8.3 *A variety of house types and details should be used.*
- 8.4 *Modern buildings, whether in design or in the imaginative use of traditional materials may be acceptable where they enhance the location and add to the quality of the environment.*
- 8.5 *Extensions should be in harmony with the original building in their design and use of materials.*
- 8.6 *The existing buildings of merit, built of local, traditional materials, style, shape and proportion should provide a stimulus for the design and construction of new buildings of originality.*

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

#### Agriculture

Because of modern agricultural methods, employment in this sector is limited.

#### Shops

Hurst has three shops in the centre of the village: a butcher, a baker and a general store with post office.

Supermarkets outside the village claim much of the main household expenditure, but the village shops are well used.

#### Local Businesses

Local businesses range from medium to small-sized enterprises which have sprung up in redundant farm buildings to one-person undertakings operating 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 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

- 9.1 *New businesses should respect the rural environment and residential areas, and should be small in scale.*
- 9.2 *Appropriate re-use of redundant agricultural buildings is acceptable, provided that attention is paid to their cumulative effect.*
- 9.3 *Office or business use may be encouraged for such buildings, but further change of use to industrial use is inappropriate.*

## 10. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

### BACKGROUND

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 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 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 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 and 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.

Considered by many to be one of the most important local features are the many narrow lanes and secondary routes that criss-cross the Parish. 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.

The District Council has brought forward schemes to try to widen 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 are 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

Sensible measures to reduce the speed of traffic are required. 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 the benefit of pedestrian safety.

The rural appearance of roads should be retained. The system of lanes, footpaths and bridle ways, and the character of the old country lanes, should be preserved and enhanced by discouraging through traffic along them, thus encouraging more non-motorised use.

Short local journeys by car should be decreased by the provision of safer pedestrian routes to the school and village shops, and other village amenities.

Where appropriate, improvements and additions to the existing network of footpaths should be encouraged, so that their leisure use is made more attractive.

## GUIDELINES

- 10.1 *Additional development should be expected to submit a traffic impact assessment.*
- 10.2 *Developers should be encouraged to fund highway or other infrastructure improvements in keeping with the rural nature of the Parish, such as the provision of improved and new footpaths and bridle-ways.*
- 10.3 *In particular, proposals should be sought to extend the footpaths to enable safe pedestrian access between the village centre and the Church, Dinton Pastures, and the River Loddon.*
- 10.4 *The effects of the new 30 m.p.h. limit on the A321 should be monitored, and additional traffic calming measures should be considered if necessary.*
- 10.5 *More local lanes should be designated as "access only".*
- 10.5 *Unrestrained grass verges should be retained wherever possible, especially away from the more built up areas within the centre of the village.*
- 10.6 *Any development within the village should be provided with safe pedestrian access to the village shops and school.*

## 11. 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 should be unobtrusive and wherever possible reflect the rural nature of the Parish.

Further street lighting should continue to be resisted.

### GUIDELINES

- 11.1 *A single traditional pattern of street furniture should be established throughout the Parish, following consultation by the Parish Council. All new signage should use this standard, and in time existing signage should be replaced by it.*
- 11.2 *There should be no further installation of street lighting.*
- 11.3 *The various authorities responsible should be encouraged to share posts where possible.*

## 12. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### BACKGROUND

The history of the landscape as well as its natural features has 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 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 near to the Old Police Cottages in Broadcommon Road.

#### **Woodland**

The 'wet' woodland habitat 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 as Site of Special Scientific Interest for this reason.

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.

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 a list of 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

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 quite rare.

Any development has the potential to put these at risk and it is vital that the impact of any proposal upon them is carefully assessed 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 Loddon Lily*

#### **GUIDELINES**

- 12.1 *Development proposals should incorporate a wildlife and ecology survey with proposals for future sustainable management.*
- 12..2 *Development proposals should be checked against the local Biodiversity Action Plan for possible impact.*

### **13. FUTURE MONITORING OF GUIDANCE**

This Design Guidance will be monitored and reviewed by the Parish Council in the light of its effect on applications for development within the Parish, and changes to the overall Planning Context.