

THE PLANNING GROUP

Report on the letters the group has written to Guildford Borough Council about planning applications submitted during the period 1 July to 31 December 2015

During 2015 the Planning Group has consisted of John Baylis, Gordon Bridger, Amanda Mullarkey, David Ogilvie, Martin Taplin, Anthony Umney and John Wood. Ian Macpherson has been invaluable as a corresponding member.

The Planning Group has continued to meet every three weeks at the Guildford Borough Council (“GBC”) offices.

During the last six months of 2015 there were 1,351 planning applications recorded at GBC, which was 152 applications more than the preceding six months. We sifted through these applications and looked in detail at 75 of them over this period. The Group wrote 30 letters to the Head of Planning Services on a wide range of individual planning applications. We looked at 12 less applications than we did during the first half of 2015, yet we wrote one more letter than we did in the previous six months.

As usual, the most in a single category was about signs, mainly hanging or projecting, in and around the High Street Conservation Area. Even so, only 5 such letters were written which compared with 11 in the previous six months, either because we considered they were too large (there is a general presumption that the maximum size should be no larger than 600mm x 600mm) or because the proposal was that they should be internally illuminated (GBC policy precludes such illumination in this area). The officers in GBC almost universally agreed with us and thus, of those 5 applications, 3 were refused, 1 was approved only after amendments were made to the proposed illumination to accord with our concerns and only 1 was approved.

Of the remaining 25 applications to which we made comment 10 were refused, 7 were approved, 5 were approved only after amendments were received to satisfy our objections and 3 have not yet been decided. Only three appeals were submitted against these 10 refused applications and, of these, so far 1 appeal has been dismissed and the other two have not yet been decided. This shows a good record of decision making by GBC on the applications where we wrote objecting to the proposals – few of those refusals have been challenged.

It can be seen that 8 of our 30 letters of objection were approved without satisfying our concerns. Of those 8 applications our letter was not recorded as having been received on one of them. The reasons why the remaining applications were approved without amendments being called for were varied and they can be mostly read in the detailed comments that follow.

In all instances, other than the 1 application where our letter was not recorded, the planning officer referred to our objections in his/her report to the Councillors. Most of the time the reports showed that due consideration to our concerns was given but, for those applications which were approved, the officer did not agree with us. The officer therefore recommended those applications should be approved and either the local Councillors or the full planning committee agreed.

During the period under review there have been a number of significant planning applications made. The first one to be received was **15/P/01262: University of Surrey**. This application was for three new buildings containing 953 rooms of student accommodation. We welcome the addition of student rooms on campus but we thought the architecture was unimaginative and could have been improved. This application has been approved without any changes to the designs being made.

This application was followed by **15/P/01317: University of Surrey – removal of condition 13 of planning consent 02/P/02505, approved 17/05/2004, preventing the university from providing or funding parking space provision for persons attending, visiting or working at the university, other than within the Stag Hill campus and the application site. Variation of condition 12 of planning application 02/P/02505 approved 17/04/04 to allow an increase in car parking spaces up to 2418 from 2138**. When the university was granted outline approval for its Manor Park site we understood that it entered into firm commitments regarding parking to be entirely within its own site in full knowledge of its planned expansion of faculty buildings and accommodation up to and beyond what has and is taking place. At the very least, we would expect the university to meet all its parking requirements on its own sites and never to request permission to use land outside these sites for parking. Presumably the Council is also concerned because despite the application being received in July 2015 it has still not been decided.

15/P/01518: 77-83 Walnut Tree Close: erection of new office scheme consisting of four blocks following demolition of existing buildings. We considered the four blocks to be uninspiring and they would present an unattractive monolithic presence to the riverside. The Council went even further and stated that the extensive footprint, height, scale and bulk would be harmful to the setting of the riverside. They also found fault in other areas and the application was refused.

Probably the biggest planning application ever to be considered by GBC has been **14/P/02168: Guildford railway station** and this saga continues. New plans were submitted and we spent much time and effort looking at the revisions. We submitted a long letter of objection which can be found at <http://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/railway-station-redevelopment.html>. There is much information specifically about this application on the society's website and the reader can see more on http://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/solum_rejected.html. The application has been refused but the story will not end there.

The last major application to be considered in this period was **15/P/02284: Land at The Cathedral Church of the Holy Spirit, Stag Hill, Guildford. Proposed erection of 134 dwellings (including affordable)**. We suggest the reader looks at the comments that follow in the main body of the report to see how we considered the application. Since then there have been further developments. There was a further meeting on 8th December 2016 between the society, the Dean and developer's representatives to discuss Linden Homes amended application. No firm objections were raised. No doubt we will be looking at these revised plans formally early in the New Year.

We believe the case officers at GBC do take our letters into consideration but they do not always take the same view as us. Nevertheless, overall we believe we do make a difference because in the majority of cases the applications are not approved without subsequent amendments to the original application being made or conditions are attached to the planning consent.

The details of our letters follow below and if any reader wishes to look at any of the applications, the plans, the design and access statements, the officer's report to the planning committee and the decision notices they can find all the information required at <http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/publicaccess>. Type in the application number, click "Search" and click on "Documents" when the Summary page has been loaded. You will then be able to click on the information you are seeking and it usually downloads a pdf document.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS between 1 July to 31 December 2015

15/P/01126: Land at Eashing Farm, Eashing Lane

We felt this planning application for a solar farm including up to 30,000 ground mounted solar panels was inappropriate in the Green Belt; there will be significant harm and loss of openness to the Green Belt and to the AGLV and AONB; there were no very special circumstances that would allow this proposal to be considered; and finally this application gave rise to the same objections as those set out by the Planning Inspector in relation to the previous appeal against the refusal of solar panels on this site.

(Refused)

15/P/01238: 24 Friary Street: change of use of area of pavement for outside dining comprising 7 tables and 14 Chairs

We did not object to this application because we believe that street dining adds to the colour and character of an otherwise street of rather bleak and flat glass facades. We did have concerns regarding the risk of excessive use of the width of the street for dining. We considered that Nandos for example takes up too much of the street width and has an "A" board in the centre of the street. Should restaurants open opposite each other with street dining to this extent there could be serious reduction in public and emergency access. We see no need for barriers corralling the street dining and limiting access. Any planning

approval should limit the area for tables and chairs with specific dimensions appropriate to the street width. All tables, chairs, barriers etc. should be removed from the street when the restaurant is not open.

(Approved with conditions to satisfy our concerns)

15/P/01262: University of Surrey, Manor Park: construction of three new buildings containing 953 rooms of student accommodation.

We commented that the architecture of the proposed new buildings was unimaginative and monotonous. The design was uninspiring and we were aware that the architects, MJP, were capable of much better. In contrast to many others, these will not be new buildings of which the university can be proud.

(Approved)

15/P/01271: Wagamama, 25-29 High Street: increase in the outside seating.

We objected simply on the grounds that it was impractical as the distance between the permitted barriers and the café frontage in Friary Street was insufficient to allow waiter access to a double row of tables as proposed.

(Approved despite the Council's Conservation Officer recommending refusal on similar grounds to ours. The case officer considered the proposals were acceptable)

15/P/01317: University of Surrey, Manor Park: Removal of condition 13 of planning consent 02/P/02505, approved 17/05/2004, preventing the university from providing or funding parking space provision for persons attending, visiting or working at the university, other than within the Stag Hill campus and the application site. Variation of condition 12 of planning application 02/P/02505 approved 17/04/04 to allow an increase in car parking spaces up to 2418 from 2138.

We objected because when the university was granted outline approval for its Manor Park site we understood that it entered into firm commitments regarding parking to be entirely within its own site in full knowledge of its planned expansion of faculty buildings and accommodation up to and beyond what has and is taking place. At the very least, we would expect the university to meet all its parking requirements on its own sites and never to request permission to use land outside these sites for parking. In the area of the RSCH there is an extreme shortage of parking for hospital staff and visitors. We would, for example, consider it entirely wrong for the university to be allowed to use any part of the land assigned to the Manor Park P&R, the one planning gain to the town from the Manor Park approval.

(Despite this application being received in July 2015 it has still not been decided)

15/P/01381: Mandolay Hotel, 36-40 London Road: extensions

We objected to the proposed extension to the Coach House. This part of the application will result in the loss of valued car parking spaces on an already over-loaded site. Furthermore, this extension will involve the loss of two trees (a Walnut and a Sycamore)

and result in a further loss of open land which contributes to the green and open character of the area.

(Approved. The case officer considered the extension to the coach house was modest and acceptable. In addition the Council's Tree Consultant did not object to the two trees being felled.)

15/P/01388: Tunsgate Shopping Centre: detailed alterations

We objected firstly to the loss of the decorative features at the top of the columns either side of the High Street entrance. As approved, these decorative features continued the line of the fascias of the two adjoining shops occupied by Clarks and T M Lewin.

Secondly, throughout the proposed development we noted an intention to replace previously approved railings to balconies, etc (including the enclosure of the open air seating area for the upper floor restaurant overlooking the Castle) with what appears to be mesh. Aesthetically we also considered this change to be retrograde in terms of the quality of detailing.

Approved but the case officer noted our comments in his report. He did confirm our concerns were covered by condition and were subsequently approved by way of discharge of the condition)

15/P/01394: The Weyside, Millbrook: alterations to the existing rear garden including provision of seating booths.

We did not like the proposal to erect a 2.0+m high wall along the length of the frontage to Shalford Road. It will, together with the PH, result in an over-dominant enclosure along this section of the highway and, if approved and constructed, it would lead to the urbanisation of this approach into Guildford. Furthermore this high wall will disconnect the public from the views which they currently enjoy through from the road towards the River Wey.

(Refused, despite case officer's recommendation to approve)

15/P/01450: 66 High Street: installation of two new internal digital flanks containing flat LCD TV screens for promotions.

We considered the display of coloured LCD TV Screens showing moving promotional images should be resisted in the same way as we object to illuminated fascias and other illuminated signage in the heart of the High Street Conservation Area.

(Approved, but conditioned that they may only be used during opening hours)

14/P/02254: The Clockhouse, 140 London Road: amended plans received revising the red line application site and car parking layout.

We noted that the site area had decreased following amendment of the red line defining the site boundary and were concerned that the submitted drawings showed development outside the boundary. The result of the reduced site is that 3 parking spaces and 16 trees shown on the original application are no longer shown. The three lost parking spaces

have been replaced elsewhere however two of them appear substandard. The loss of 16 trees on the site is unacceptable and therefore in view of the reduced site area a reduction in development should be considered so that sufficient parking can be provided and a satisfactory landscaping plan can be prepared.

(Approved. Our concerns were noted but it was felt that the revised plans were acceptable)

15/P/01518: 77-83 Walnut Tree Close: erection of new office scheme consisting of four blocks etc. following demolition of existing buildings.

We considered this application to be premature pending the incorporation of the Allies & Morrison Draft Town Centre Masterplan, recently endorsed by the Scrutiny Committee for public consultation, into the pending Local Plan. The application site lies for the most part within flood zone 3a and wholly within the proposed landscaped parkland illustrated in the Allies and Morrison Draft Town Centre Masterplan. We also objected to the uninspired uniform block forms of the office buildings proposed, which will present an unattractive monolithic presence to the riverside.

(Refused. However, the officer report commented that “the saved Local Plan is the current development plan and the application will be assessed against this and the NPPF or any other material considerations until a new Local Plan is adopted. The draft Local Plan and the draft town centre masterplan carry very limited weight.”)

15/P/01586: 274 High Street, Guildford GU13JL: use of area within recess of pavement outside Cau restaurant for outside dining comprising 8 tables.

We wrote because the submitted drawing was inaccurate: it was drawn with the recess scaling at 1.7m whereas it measures on site at 1.1m. The tables and chairs will therefore project further into the footpath reducing its width to an unacceptable level at a point where pedestrian traffic from London Road and Epsom Road converges. The drawings illustrate barriers between the tables and the footpath these will project even further into the footpath.

(Approved following amended plans being received)

15/P/01654: 23 Swan Lane, Guildford, GU1 4EQ: Demolition and replacement of shopfront

We objected to the removal of the stall risers. The Council’s advice on Shop Design says that historic architectural details should be retained and it deprecates large undivided areas of glass. The site lies well within the town centre conservation area, and hence is particularly sensitive.

(Refused)

15/P/01655: 23 Swan Lane, Guildford, GU1 4EQ: Advertisement Consent for 1 internally illuminated fascia sign and 1 non-illuminated hanging sign.

We objected on two grounds. Firstly we object to the proposed internal illumination of the fascia sign. The site is well within the town centre conservation area and close to the cobbled High Street where illuminated signs are normally not permitted. Secondly we object to the proposed size of the hanging sign. At 860 x 860 mm it considerably exceeds the norm for the cobbled High Street of 600 x 600 mm, and we think it is too large for this lane.

(Refused)

15/P/01670: North Wyke Farm, Guildford Road, Normandy, Guildford, GU3 2AN: Outline application for a residential scheme of 78 units comprising of a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom flats, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses and 405sq metres of retail space all matters reserved except access.

On 18th May 2014 we wrote objecting to the previous application 14/P/00779 because the dwellings would be in the Green Belt and there is a presumption against development in the Green Belt. In addition these dwellings will be outside the settlement boundary; there are no very special circumstances put forward for this incursion into the Green Belt, and the number of dwellings makes it a major development. It is Government policy that any loosening of settlement boundaries in the Green Belt should await the adoption of the new Local Plan so that they can be planned in the optimum locations. As the Guildford Local Plan is at present still in drafting, this proposal is, at best, premature, and should be refused on those grounds.

We noted that 14/P/00779 was dismissed on appeal. We considered that the inspector's reasons, which focused mainly on potential damage to the Green Belt, have not been overcome and we therefore continued to object.

(Refused and appeal dismissed)

15/P/01733: 61-65 High Street, Guildford, GU1 3ES

The present signage for this Marks and Spencer store is discrete and features just the letters M & S. The proposed signage features MARKS & SPENCER and is more intrusive, both in bulk and because of the proposed halo lighting. The site is on the cobbled High Street and is prominent within the Town Centre conservation area, where illumination of any kind is usually not appropriate. We therefore objected to the application.

For the same reason we strongly objected to the proposed internal illumination of the proposed projecting 'bus stop' sign. We noted that drwg. A2002 of the application shows it as 600 x 600 mm, which is the acceptable norm, but drwg. A9101 shows it as 900 x 900 mm, which is not. We objected if 900 x 900 mm is proposed.

We also deprecated the use of large vinyls in the High Street. They are a cheap substitute for well-dressed shop windows and lower the tone of our generally excellent High Street. We think M&S could do better for the town.

(Approved but no internal illumination except on North St, and that only within opening hours)

15/P/01752: Aldi, 93 London Road, Guildford, GU1 1YT: Advertising consent to display six graphic vinyls on glazing.

On 27th June 2015 we objected to the previous application 15/P/01071, and were pleased to see the Officer's report for the application summarised our objection with regard to the proposed vinyls thus: 'The vinyls along London Road would be inappropriate in the street scene and out of character of its surroundings [Officer Note: The graphic vinyls along London Road have been removed from the plans.]'

We therefore strongly objected to their re-introduction in this application, particularly because they have already been installed. Aldi seemed to have ignored the lack of planning permission.

In our previous letter we said 'The Society considers that the best treatment for this elevation is to use good quality brickwork. As an alternative, Aldi could consider establishing an imaginative and well designed 'green wall'.' We remain of this opinion. *(Approved. The previously withdrawn vinyls depicted fruit whereas the replacements show rolling green countryside. As the vinyls were already in situ the officer looked at them and decided they were not harmful.)*

15/P/01953: 142 High Street, Guildford, GU1 3HJ: Display of non illuminated hanging sign.

This application proposed a 650mm x 650mm hanging sign. Within the High Street the GBC requirement is for hanging signs to not exceed 600mm x 600mm. Whilst we acknowledge that the size of the proposed sign is only marginally larger than the size set by the Council's policy, nonetheless, the Society considers that the size of the proposed sign should be modified to accord with the policy.

(Refused, but the case officer reminded us that the 600mm x 600mm is not in the GBC policy. It is a G Soc suggestion.)

15/P/01980: Carter and Son Scrap Metal and Breakers Yard, Aldershot Road, Worplesdon, Guildford, GU3 3HF : Erection of 27 dwellings (including 13 affordable homes), accommodation for up to 5 people with autism and an 80 bed dementia care home with all associated development following demolition of all existing permanent and temporary buildings.

15/P/01987: Carter and Son Scrap Metal and Breakers Yard, Aldershot Road, Worplesdon, Guildford, GU3 3HF: Erection of 45 dwellings (including 22 affordable homes) and accommodation for up to 5 people with autism with all associated development following demolition of all existing permanent and temporary buildings.

Whilst we acknowledged that this large site has a long established use as a scrap metal and breakers yard, nonetheless, the site is located within the Green Belt where there is a clear presumption against residential development.

Aside from the Green Belt policy issues, this site has a long frontage to the A323 Aldershot Road. This road forms one of the principal roads leading into (and out of)

Guildford and, as such, special care needs to be given to protecting the character of the area – not just in the interests of protecting the rural character of the immediate locality but also in the wider interests of protecting the setting of the town of Guildford.

Both of these applications proposed a large number of dwellings and some of the development is proposed to be of three storeys in height. Furthermore, in both applications the proposals locate dwellings (and areas of car parking) quite close to the frontage of the site. We considered the size and location of what is proposed represents an unacceptable form of development of the site.

If, given the existing land use, residential development is to be considered acceptable we are of the view that any development needs to be of a form which minimises both the visual impact on the locality and the harm to the openness of the Green Belt. To that end we consider no development on this site should exceed two storeys in height. Furthermore, and importantly, given the long frontage of the site to the A323 Aldershot Road, we considered that in order to maintain the rural character of the area any new dwellings should be set further back from the frontage to the A Class road. That will provide an adequate depth of space for landscaping to allow for more trees and other planting thus helping screen any development from the A323.

(15/P/01980 was refused in June 2016. However application no 15/P/01987 has not yet been decided a year after the application was registered)

14/P/02168: Guildford Railway Station, Station View, Guildford GU1 4UT: A mixed use redevelopment comprising 438 residential dwellings (Class C3 use); station retail/financial and professional services/food and drink and leisure floor space (Class A1/A2/A3/Sui Generis and D2 uses); station and general office floor space (Sui Generis and Class B1 uses); station improvements including new station building with booking hall and concourse (Sui Generis use); replacement station and office car parking, new residential car parking, cycle parking, a Station Plaza including new public realm with hard and soft landscaping, new access and servicing arrangements, plant and associated works.

We considered the revised application with a new set of drawings. The amended scheme, submitted in November 2015, did not satisfy any of our concerns about the first application. The Group put much effort into the preparation of a 12 page letter of objection which was copied to all Councillors. This letter can be accessed on <http://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/railway-station-redevelopment.html> . The Guildford Society organized a well attended public meeting in January 2016. Whilst our reasons were many the Councillors agreed with us and our principal objections can best be summarized by the reasons given in the refusal letter as below.

(Refused. The principal reasons for the refusal were “The proposed development, by virtue of its monolithic scale, unbroken length, largely uniform height and unrelieved mass, would appear as a dominant and incongruous feature in the townscape and would be detrimental to the setting and the significance Guildford Cathedral, which is Grade II Listed, and the setting and significance of the Jellico Roof Garden, which is Grade II Listed. Furthermore, the scale, mass and height of the proposed buildings would be overly prominent and overbearing when viewed from the Bridge Street Conservation Area, would adversely impact on the setting of the heritage asset and would be*

detrimental to its significance. The public benefits arising from the development do not outweigh the harm that would be caused by the development.

The development proposed, by virtue of its monolithic scale, unbroken length, largely uniform height, and unrelieved mass, fails to respect the urban grain and varied roof patterns of the town centre and would appear as an alien feature harmful to the townscape in long range views of the site. Furthermore, the scale, height and mass of the proposed buildings would be significantly out of scale and character with the adjoining buildings such as the Billings and Ranger House and would appear overly dominant and incongruous in short range views around the application site.

The development fails to secure an appropriate provision of affordable housing and therefore fails to deliver a mixed community or the affordable housing needed in the Borough.

The application fails to deliver the transport sustainability measures required to promote sustainable travel choices such as walking and cycling.)

15/P/02156: 55-65 (odd), Farnham Road, Guildford, GU1: Erection of 14 x 2 bedroom apartments and formation of permanent access off Denzil Road together with landscaping and associated development works.

We had no objection to the modern design proposed and found the use of materials sympathetic to the area. We noted that the footprint was very similar to that of the terrace housing that used to occupy the site. However, we were concerned there was too little amenity space proposed, because so much of the site is used for car parking. We welcome the provision of one space per flat but come to the conclusion that the lack of amenity space demonstrates over-development. The proposed density of 117 dpha is indicative of this: just as an example, a development of 10 more generous dwellings would allow a reduction in parking spaces and hence more amenity space.

(Approved. The officer considered our comments about the lack of shared amenity space but felt that “this is not uncommon for a flatted development close to the town centre and other recreation centres”)

15/P/02255: 1b Sydenham Road Guildford GU1 3RT. Two storey rear extension, addition of third floor and alterations to the existing building to allow the creation of 10 one and two bedroom flats.

We considered the vertical timber infill cladding was inappropriate in this conservation area and the current vogue for timber cladding has resulted in some examples of bad staining. Furthermore, the additional 3rd floor is not sufficiently set back and the flat roof is inappropriate in this conservation area.

Approved, after amending plans were received to show render replacing the timber cladding and the third floor being set back. No comment was made about the flat roof.)

15/P/02257: 133-135 High Street Guildford GU1 3DP. Advertisement consent for one internally illuminated fascia sign and one internally illuminated hanging sign.

We always object to applications for an internally illuminated hanging sign in the High Street and this application was no exception. In addition, the internally illuminated fascia sign is inappropriate in the High Street and, despite being behind glazing, it would set a new precedent.

(Refused)

15/P/02284: Land at The Cathedral Church of the Holy Spirit, Stag Hill, The Chase, Guildford GU2 7UP. Proposed erection of 134 dwellings (including affordable) with associated vehicular/pedestrian access arrangements, engineering operations and ancillary works.

We were concerned that the majority of land for this residential development proposal is on land zoned as open space in the current Local Plan and therefore this proposal is contrary to policy R5 Protection of Open Space. It is in the public interest that designated open space is preserved and it would be unfortunate to set a precedent for this type of development on designated open space. If the Council considered that this application is a very special case of overriding public interest sufficient to set aside Policy R5 of the Local Plan then the reasons why should be clearly stated and the Council should also satisfy itself that overall provision of open space remains adequate for communities in the vicinity taking account of anticipated growth.

If the Council decided that the development of this land is acceptable in principle then we are pleased to see that our suggestion that there should be a pedestrian processional way created to link to the town centre via the university site and the Council owned site at Guildford Park car park has been included in these revised drawings. We hope that the University and Borough Council will cooperate in this endeavour with respect to their own land holdings.

We note that the 27.6% of affordable housing does not quite meet the 30% currently required in the Local Plan, falls short of the 35% mentioned in the Planning Statement and provides no social housing. The 27.6% translates to 37 affordable homes in the application's Masterplan, out of a total of 134 homes. The balance of 97 homes is 81 private homes and 16 tied homes for the cathedral. The scheme also provides a £15,000,000 endowment fund for the cathedral. Again, the Council has to decide whether these provisions are acceptable to the extent that infringing the affordable housing requirement is justified.

There was a further meeting on 8th December 2016 between the society, the Dean and developer's representatives to discuss Linden Homes amended application. No firm objections were raised. No doubt we will be looking at these revised plans formally early in the NewYear.

(Not yet decided)

15/P/02335: Land to rear of 46 Madrid Road, Guildford, GU2 7NU. Erection of two storey detached building containing 8 x 2 bedroom flats and the provision of 12 Parking spaces following demolition of existing building.

We wrote because the close proximity of windows of habitable accommodation to the side boundaries cause overlooking of neighbours and we felt this was unacceptable. The installation of blinkers to partially overcome this will create unacceptable living conditions. Any residential development of the site should be designed to overlook the site and not the neighbours. We also considered the quality of the architecture to be poor and out keeping with the neighbourhood and there was insufficient amenity space for eight, two bedroom flats.

(Approved. Glazed privacy panels on the first floor rear bedrooms up to 1.3m from floor level will be required and it was felt this would largely counter the concerns of overlooking. No consideration appears to have been given about the amenity space.)

15/P/02351: 92-94 Haydon Place, Guildford, GU1 4LR. Erection of detached building comprising student accommodation, 7 units (sui generis) together with storage space following demolition of the existing shop.

We objected to this application and agreed with all the criticisms set out by Meave Faulkner, Team Leader Design and Conservation, in her letter of 19th January 2016. Furthermore we considered the proposal to be an overdevelopment of the site with a very cramped interior layout. We did not see how seven bicycles can conveniently be stored in the very small cycle store, and we considered that some of the student rooms were definitely too small. We could not find a standard for student rooms, but 100 sq ft (9 sq m) seems to be a common minimum floor area for a single student bed sitting room. Some of the rooms proposed were smaller than this.

(Refused. Our letter is not recorded, nor was it mentioned in the officer's report. Nevertheless, our comments were replicated in the report.)

15/P/02354: Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Guildford Road, East Horsley, Leatherhead. Part full, part outline application for the substantive demolition of the hotel buildings and change of use of the retained parts from hotel use (C1) to residential use (C3) (full application) and the erection of dwellings (outline application) to provide a total of 49 new dwellings.

The Ramada Jarvis Hotel (The Thatchers) occupies a large site located in a prominent position adjacent to the A 246 which is an important approach to Guildford.

The whole of the Hotel site is located within the Green Belt with the undeveloped parts lying outside the village envelope. For areas outside the village envelope there is a clear presumption against residential development. In the consideration of this application there is a need to ensure that any development does not contravene planning policy and, in particular, that any development does not have an adverse impact on the rural character of this prominent rural location.

(Refused and an appeal is running. The principal reasons for refusal were that the application failed the Green Belt test and insufficient consideration had been given to the loss of a hotel.)

15/P/02392: Halifax, 28-30, High Street, Guildford, Surrey. Display of a keyline light strip along top of fascia below canopy, and application of vinyl graphic across six windows.

We considered the six blue panels will create a blank frontage to the High Street – a feature which we dislike. Furthermore, the intense blue colour of the six panels will be garish and totally inappropriate in the High Street.

(Refused. Ours was the only letter of objection received and the officer fully agreed with our comments)

15/P/02450: Former Guildford Fire Station, Ladymead, Guildford. Demolition of existing buildings and structures and redevelopment to provide a non-food retail warehouse (Use Class A1) with associated car parking, servicing, landscape and access.

We objected strongly to the proposed removal of the trees on the north-east, eastern and southern edges of the property. These trees contribute significantly to the ‘green gateway’ to Guildford here, and help preserve the setting of the adjacent churchyard and the church opposite. They are also environmentally important in this highly polluted location. We also judged that the proposal comes too close to its southern boundary, because the proposed building would have an overbearing impact on the adjacent residential property to the south and it entailed the removal of the trees that screen the site from these properties.

Approved. Regrettably our letter of objection was not recorded as having been received and neither was it referred to in the officer’s report. Nevertheless, a very significant number of objections were received but the Council’s full planning committee went along with the officer’s recommendations.)

DECISIONS ON APPLICATIONS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED BUT NOT FULLY RESOLVED AT THE TIME OF REPORTING

14/P/01729: Land in the rear garden of 5 Maori Road Guildford

The proposal was for the erection of a two storey x four bedroom detached dwelling with detached garage following demolition of existing garage and outbuilding. The Society would not welcome the necessary widening of Cross Lanes for a considerable distance with the resulting loss of mature trees and historic amenity of this ancient lane.

(Refused in March 2015 and an appeal was dismissed in January 2016)

14/P/02109: Howard of Effingham School, Effingham:

We objected to this proposal to build a new school and dwellings on green belt land contrary to the saved 2003 Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. No very special circumstances had been put forward to justify this development in the Green Belt. We particularly objected to the Effingham Lodge Farm site for it is also outside the Settlement Boundary. We noted that the Brown's Field site is within the conservation area and part of the site is an area of High Archaeological Potential. In our view this proposal was premature and should await the adoption of the new Local Plan.

(Refused and an appeal is pending.)

15/P/00012: Land at Wisley Airfield, Hatch Lane, Ockham, GU23 6NU

This proposal was for outline planning permission for the phased development of a new settlement of up to 2,100 dwellings, a school, health facility, a local centre etc incorporating associated infrastructure.

This site is one of the four Strategic Sites in the draft Local Plan and it is in the green belt, albeit significant parts of the site are previously used land and are laid to concrete. The appropriate approach to realigning the boundaries of the Metropolitan Greenbelt is through the medium of the Local Plan – exposed thoroughly to public scrutiny in a way that the treatment of planning applications to the Local Authority do not begin to facilitate.

We therefore objected on the formal grounds that approval should not be considered until the revision of the draft Local Plan is published – indeed the application was premature. We were concerned that this development may be too large to be assimilated as a housing scheme and yet too small to be a viable new community. We were concerned that the linear nature of the proposed development, whilst broadly following the alignment of the runway, will not contribute to a cohesive community; will spread the visual impact from its surroundings and, therefore, will have a substantial adverse impact on the openness of the Greenbelt which is not demonstrably outweighed by the benefits of consenting to the proposals.

We also pointed out that a key part of the evaluation of whether this site is suitable for it to be included in the Local Plan will be an assessment of issues relating to access and transport. Wisley Airfield is located in a rural area relatively remote from other settlements such as Woking and Guildford. The evaluation will need to consider the extent to which bus services and cycle routes to neighbouring towns and railway stations can realistically be achieved in order to ensure that, in terms of transport, a sustainable development can take place such that the traffic generated by this major development will not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area.

(Refused in April 2016 and an appeal is running.)

15/P/00381: Guildford Methodist Church, Woodbridge Road, Guildford.

This was a resubmission of an application to erect a part three storey, part four storey building comprising of 25 (previously 27) one and two bedroom flats with a basement car park following demolition of the existing building. We had objected to the previous application. In addition to the affordable housing issue where we considered the proposed

contribution to be trifling, we objected again on other grounds, especially the proposed density of 139 dwellings per hectare which we considered to be far too high, demonstrating that the development represents an over-intensive use of the site.

If the affordable housing provision is allowed we considered that most applications for blocks of flats on brownfield sites in the Borough will make similar claims, which will significantly damage the chances of the Council meeting its needs for affordable housing and it would prevent provision of housing expressly to meet local need. We can see no special circumstances warranting departure from the usual 30% requirement (proposed to be increased to 40% in the withdrawn draft Local Plan). Finally, we considered the proposed parking (which is an issue in this area of the town) is insufficient.

Refused on the grounds of insufficient affordable homes. The developers offered to give one flat or make a payment of approximately £120,000. The inspector at appeal considered this offer was reasonable and upheld the appeal.)

15/P/00401: Founders Studio, Guildford School Of Acting, Millbrook, Guildford.

This proposed a mixed use development comprising seven residential units and two retail / commercial units following demolition of existing building. The design was modern and we made it clear that we were not at all opposed to a high quality modern design. It is the height, and the bulk and massing of the proposed building which we found objectionable. We noted that it is almost certain that the application would be refused as the case officer had written to the developer to this effect.

(Refused and appeal dismissed.)

15/P/00604: The Pirbright Institute, Ash Road, Pirbright

This was an outline application for partial demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to include up to 40,000 sq metres of floorspace for a research laboratory campus. It proposed major development in a rural area within the Metropolitan Green Belt and thus is in conflict with Green Belt policy: it would need to demonstrate “very special circumstances”. We wrote that we do not wish to express a view as to whether the application should be approved or refused. However, we considered that at the outset of the examination of this application, rigorous investigation needs to be made of the case for approving such a major development such as to justify setting aside the prima facie conflict with Green Belt policy.

(Approved. The officer’s report was very detailed and comprehensive. He recommended approval subject to referral to the Secretary of State but this latter condition was not approved.)

15/P/00997: Robin Hood pub: demolition and redevelopment with seven flats

This proposal represents a gross over-development of the site. Furthermore, we considered that if the site is to be redeveloped it should be part of an overall development with the adjoining Bright Hill car park. The car park is identified as a potential

redevelopment site for housing in the draft Local Plan July 2014 and previous Council papers.
(Refused and appeal dismissed)

John Wood
December 2016