

THE PLANNING GROUP

Report on the letters the group has written to Guildford Borough Council about submitted planning applications which we considered during the period 1 January to 30 June 2017

During this period the Planning Group consisted of John Baylis, Gordon Bridger, Amanda Mullarkey, David Ogilvie, Martin Taplin, Anthony Umney and John Wood. In addition 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 this time there were a potential 1,335 planning applications we could have looked at. We sifted through these applications and considered in detail 73 of them. The Group wrote 22 letters to the Head of Planning Services on a wide range of individual planning applications.

The most applications in a single category we wrote about was about signs, mainly hanging or projecting, in and around the High Street Conservation Area. We wrote 5 such letters mainly because we considered they were either too large or because the proposal was that they should be internally illuminated. In the period under review one application was approved as submitted, one was approved after amended drawings were received to satisfy our concerns and three were refused.

Of the remaining 17 applications to which we made comment 2 were letters in support, 2 of the applications were withdrawn, 7 were refused and 6 were approved. Five appeals were submitted against these refused applications. Two appeals have been dismissed and we are following the remaining three which 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. Sometimes some of the withdrawn applications are subsequently resubmitted after amendments have been made.

Any reader who wishes to see how this 6 month period compares with previous periods should look at the “Summary of Outcomes” which follows the appropriate report on the Society’s website at <http://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/planning.html> .

The case officers at GBC do take our letters into consideration but naturally they do not always take the same view as us. However, we are pleased to report that in the majority of cases where we made an objection to an application, those applications are either refused or, alternatively, are only approved following subsequent amendments to the original application either to take account of our objections or have conditions 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 at the bottom of the page that opens, 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.

We would draw the reader's attention to a few particularly significant planning applications which we have considered and the details of these applications follow. On page 5 application **17/P/00509** was for a redevelopment of land at Guildford College Campus on Stoke Road to provide student accommodation with 553 bed spaces and ancillary works. Our reasons for objecting are shown. This application was refused and it is now the subject of an appeal.

I would then refer you to application **17/P/00920** on pages 7/8 which sought to provide assisted living accommodation for older people with 100 apartments plus other facilities. This application caused considerable concern within the local community. We considered that the high rise buildings fronting the Portsmouth Road would seriously affect the townscape but the application was approved after amended plans were submitted. Recently, the applicants, Pegasus, have now decided they do not wish to build out the development and have placed the cleared site back on the market for sale.

Applications **17/P/01389** and **17/P/01391** on pages 10/11 are interesting applications. Here the applicants, GBC, sought to provide a new and enlarged crematorium. We welcomed the first application but made a number of suggestions for improvements, which were not planning matters, and we were very pleased with the responses received to our suggestions. We did not, however, agree with the second application which was for building a temporary crematorium before the existing one was demolished. We considered, for the reasons given on page 10, that it would be a waste of money and time. We do not believe the Council's planning officers and Councillors should have given so little consideration to our suggestions.

There were several applications held over from previous reporting periods that had not been finally decided and these are shown at the end of this report. However, several of the more contentious of those applications have now been decided. The first one is **15/P/00012** on pages 12/13 for the development of a new settlement of up to 2,068 dwellings at Wisley Airfield, Hatch Lane, Ockham. The full details are shown but in summary GBC refused the application which was then appealed. The Inspector recommended it should be refused but it went to the Secretary of State for the final decision. He backed the recommendations and the appeal has been dismissed. Quite where that leaves GBC we do not yet know because in the local plan they have proposed this land is removed from the Green Belt designation. This is going through enquiry at the moment so the Inspector will comment on that aspect of the local plan in the next month or so.

Application **16/P/00027** on page 14 proposing a new settlement on Dunsfold aerodrome actually falls under Waverley BC, not GBC. However, its size and the potential effect on Guildford could be enormous. Earlier this year the Secretary of State approved this application. No consideration has been given to improving the existing infrastructure/roads and we believe that the already very congested gyratory system in central Guildford will become gridlocked as a result of this enormous development.

The final application to which I would draw the reader's attention is the redevelopment of part of Guildford's main railway station (**14/P/02168** on pages 15/16). This proposal does little to improve the actual railway infrastructure and it is principally an application to provide an additional 438 dwellings, very few of which will be classified as affordable homes much needed in Guildford. As is stated, the day the decision to approve was a bad day for Guildford and there is now likely to be many applications being submitted for high rise buildings which will scar Guildford forever.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS submitted from 1 January to 30 June 2017

16/P/02467: Guildford Boat House, Millbrook, Guildford, GU1 3XJ

Proposal: Proposed two storey building for mixed used comprising 'Halow' charity headquarters, boat hire, café and office space (use class B1) following demolition of existing Leroy's boat hire premises, offices, workshops and flat (Revised Plans).

The Society objected to this application as originally submitted and we saw no reason to change our position in the light of these revised plans. We remained of the view that this development was too big. We did not agree with the claim that the scale of this proposed development had been significantly reduced. Indeed, in certain respects, the building is somewhat larger with the main ridge line extended in length. We felt that the changes which have been made are minimal and do nothing to overcome the objections and concerns expressed in our previous letter. The applicant's covering letter also stated, under a list of 'Changes', that the 'Building (has been) moved back from the canalized river'. We questioned that statement. The building appeared to us to be closer to the River Wey compared with the original submission.

(Approved. Despite our concerns, coupled with those from the Holy Trinity Amenity Group and also the National Trust, the case officer felt that the downsides were outweighed by the much needed tourism and leisure uses in the form of the rowing boat hire which would provide employment and training opportunities, which are lacking in Guildford, for teenagers and young adults. The development of the site will allow the charity Halow to re-locate and assist in their expansion both of staff and volunteers. In addition, "the proposal will redevelop a redundant site which visually detracts from the River Wey Corridor with a high quality landmark building".)

17/P/00111: The Rose Valley Restaurant, 50-52 Chertsey Street, Guildford

Proposal: Conversion of restaurant, kitchen and staff bedrooms on first and second floors to form 4 flats (2 x bedsit, 2 x 1 bed), three bedroom staff accommodation and changes to fenestration.

We have noticed an increasing number of planning applications for very tight and cramped accommodation and this application is one of the most cramped we have seen and should be refused. We are concerned that we should not be creating future slums in Guildford.

(Refused)

17/P/00196: Gascoigne Pees, 193 High Street, Guildford GU1 3AW.

The proposed hanging sign measures 900 x 750mm this is larger than normally accepted in the High Street. It should be reduced in size to an acceptable 600 x 600mm.

(Refused)

17/P/00198: 90 The Mount, Guildford, GU2 4JB

Proposal: Erection of a detached two storey building and creation of 4 flats (2 x two bed and 2 x 1 bed) following the demolition of the existing bungalow.

We noted that the footprint and the elevations of the building proposed were almost identical to those of 16/P/01693, which was approved despite our objections. We have further objections to the current application. 16/P/01693 was for a single dwelling, the current application is for four flats. We considered that a block of flats, albeit a small one, would be out of character with the other housing on The Mount. Furthermore we were aware that The Mount is a narrow and steep road with limited parking bays. The four flats would increase demand for parking and we considered that to be acceptable there would need to be an enforceable condition that no resident's parking permits would be issued.

(Refused and appeal dismissed)

17/P/00243: Unit 5 Guildford Business Park, Guildford Business Park Road, Guildford GU2 8XG

Proposal: Proposed development for office purposes, car parking and ancillary areas.

The Guildford Society is aware that the existing extensive multi level car parks at this site, being painted white, are unfortunately very visible from many of the best views in Guildford e.g. from Pewley Down, Bright Hill, the Castle and many other viewing points. An additional storey on the existing car park if also painted white will exacerbate this scar on the landscape. We suggested that a darker colour would be more appropriate. The proposed new office building is on an existing ground level car park. It is 5 floors high with a roof plant room 2.5m high. It is described as having Alucobond pure white 10 cladding. With this cladding the proposed building will stand out very brightly from the viewpoints described above. We suggested a darker colour would be more appropriate. We are concerned that the loss of ground level parking plus the addition of a large office building will cause a shortfall in car parking at this site particularly as it has poor public transport connections.

(Approved, following receipt of amended plans including landscaping arrangements, some of which partially satisfied our concerns.)

17/P/00347: Wanborough Business Centre, West Flexford Lane, Wanborough, Guildford, GU3 2JW

Proposal: Change of use and creation of eleven dwelling houses.

We noted that this application for a change of use and creation of eleven dwelling houses is for only part of the site described by the D&A Statement, namely for 4.1 ha of the total of 4.877 ha covered by the Design & Access Statement, and that it is for 11 houses out of a total of 14 houses covered by the D&A Statement. We were concerned that the proposed houses cover much more of the site than that covered by the present employment related buildings. We could not find a reference in the D&A Statement to the fact that the site lies wholly within the Green Belt. While the employment related part of the site can be described as brown field, the remainder of it is green and therefore should not be developed unless very special circumstances can be shown (NPPF para 88). The application makes no attempt to do this.

(Withdrawn)

17/P/00509: Land at Guildford College Campus, Stoke Road, Guildford, GU1 1EZ

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment to provide purpose built student accommodation with 553 bed spaces, 149 sqm D1 floor space, and 969 sqm of student amenity space including a gym and student hub and associated works.

We wrote objecting to the proposal as first submitted. Our main objection was the proposed height. At seven stories and combined with considerable bulk, the proposed development was too high and would have a detrimental 'urbanising' impact on the adjacent Stoke Park. We suggested that five storeys would be more appropriate. We examined the amended documents and noted the removal of the glazed blocks between buildings, the reduction in height of the North East block from seven to six stories and the reduction in student beds by 5% were all moves in the right direction. However we still considered that the building was too massive given its close proximity to Stoke Park. As Guildford town grows upwards with most new buildings exceeding their predecessors in height, we considered it of the utmost importance that Stoke Park maintains its character as the largest open space in the town. Large buildings on its perimeter diminish its apparent scale, and hence our judgement that the height of such buildings should be kept down to five stories.

(Refused and Appeal in progress)

17/P/00520: Lower Ground Floor Rear, Blenheim House, 1-2 Bridge Street, Guildford, GU1 4RY

Proposal: Advertisement Consent for the erection of 2 internally illuminated fascia signs.

From the details accompanying this application it was unclear exactly where the signage is proposed on the rear of this building. At 7m wide, the rear sign is very large. The Society considered this sign was probably over-large and certainly would object if the

sign was too high on the building such that it was capable of being seen from sensitive locations.

(Part approved and part refused. The fascia sign on the front was approved and the rear sign, to which we objected, was refused)

17/P/00595: 11a Clifford Manor Road, Guildford, GU4 8AG

The application site for the erection of a detached two storey dwelling is located on the very edge of Guildford. Immediately abutting the site the land is designated Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Area of Great Landscape Value. The Society agreed with the many objectors that by reason of its location and the size of what is proposed this is an insensitive and inappropriate proposal which will cause material harm to the area and the adjacent countryside.

(Withdrawn)

17/P/00634: Guildford Baptist Church Millmead Centre, Millmead, Guildford

The application, within the Conservation Area, is close to and almost opposite ‘The Court’ which is an important group of listed buildings designed by Thackeray Turner. The proposal sought consent to create seven car parking spaces on an area of grass which currently provides an attractive frontage to Buryfields. The loss of this small but pleasant area of grass and its replacement as a car park would have a detrimental impact not just on the setting of the Baptist Church but also on the character of this area of Buryfields. The application does not preserve or enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area and should be refused as being in conflict with Policy HE7 of the GBC adopted Local Plan. Whilst the argument in support of this application is based on the need to provide more car parking for the Church, local observation suggests that the existing car park is seldom full – only when there is an event.

(Refused)

**17/P/00755: Unit 5, Ladymead Retail Park, Europa Park Road, Guildford, GU1 1AJ
Proposal: Demolition of unit 5 to provide one restaurant / cafe (Use Class A3) unit and two restaurant / cafe units (Use Class A3/A5) with alterations to car parking and landscaping.**

In line with the Council’s policy of ‘greening’ the approaches to Guildford, the Society felt that as part of the consideration of this application and the cumulative effect of bulkier buildings on this site some attention should be given to enhancing the landscaping near the proposed building, and generally along the Ladymead frontage. The area between the building and Ladymead is in particular need of replanting. A more effective tree screen of larger species is maturing along the B&Q frontage.

(Approved. The case officer considered “the reduction and re-configuration of the landscaped area would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the site or the surrounding area”.)

17/P/00801: Treetops Kennels, Treetops, Old Portsmouth Road, Peasemars, Guildford GU3 1LN

The site for the development of 39 residential dwellings is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). It therefore is subject to the highest levels of protection. We objected to the previous 16/P/00141 on the grounds that the proposal conflicted with policies on Green Belt, AONB, AGLV and Conservation Area. The proposal would have had a detrimental effect on the rural character of the area. We noted that the current application extended to the south although the density was reduced from 30 to 20 dwellings per hectare. However the proposed houses were still two storeys, some with rooms in the roof. We considered that this would still conflict with the above policies, especially AONB. Surrey Hills AONB wrote objecting to 16/P/00141 and we agreed with the ‘Suggested more appropriate site future’ paragraphs at the end of their letter. They referred to the SHLAA allocation of 12 dwellings to the site and went on to recommend that they be at the northern end of the site and should be single storey.

(Appealed for non-determination and the appeal is ongoing.)

17/P/00887: Neptune, 171 High Street, Guildford, GU1 3AJ

This location is very prominent, being at the junction of the High Street and North Street in the Town Centre Conservation Area. The proposed internally illuminated fascia sign and the two internally illuminated hanging signs will be highly visible when approaching the cobbled High Street along the upper High Street. We have no objection to the size or lettering of the signs but do object to the proposed internal illumination. Internally illuminated signs are normally not appropriate in the cobbled High Street and are not usually acceptable in conservation areas (See GBC Design Guidelines for Advertisements and Signs).

(Approved. The design and conservation officer considered that “the method of lighting was compatible with the Conservation Area as the site is just beyond the most important cobbled part of the High Street”.)

17/P/00920: Guildford Plaza (former Burymead House), Portsmouth Road, Guildford, GU2 4DH.

Proposal: Proposed assisted living accommodation for older people (Sui Generis) comprising 100 apartments, communal facilities including residents lounge, guest suite, health and well-being facilities, café/restaurant, staff offices, basement car parking, etc.

When this application first came before the Planning Committee we considered Councillors acted very wisely in not accepting the Officer’s recommendation to approve. It now comes back for further consideration with just minor amendments. The Guildford Society had written at length to object to this application and we maintained our strong objections. Just because consent was given in the past on appeal for an overlarge and excessively bulky scheme for offices (namely 06/P/01430) it does not follow that this earlier approved scheme should now be used to provide a benchmark by which the

Council should judge the acceptability of the size and bulk of the new proposals. We consider the approval of the office scheme on appeal should not unduly constrain the Council in the consideration of the current proposal.

We have consistently expressed the view that these proposals, by reason of their excessive height, will result in considerable over-development of this site. The proposals will have a serious adverse impact on nearby buildings (some of which are ‘listed’) and will cause substantial harm on the character of the locality which is a sensitive part of Guildford town centre and a designated Conservation Area. If Councillors agreed and concluded that what is now proposed is too big and it would have a seriously adverse impact on the character of both the immediate area and on the wider townscape, which it undoubtedly will, then we urged them not to accept the recommendation of the Officers.

(Approved following further discussions with the developer leading to a reduction in the height of one block from seven to six storeys; a reduction in the number of units from 105 to 100; a reduction in the basement and other alterations. The applicants argued that the enforced reduction in the number of units has so affected the scheme’s viability that they were no longer able to offer any contribution to affordable housing. We believe this is completely wrong and that if the viability is so low then the land cost has been incorrectly calculated. If a developer has overpaid for the land then that is their problem – it should not be used as an argument for lowering the level of affordable housing contributions. The society is seeing this being used as an excuse far too many times in the recent past and we are concerned the Council’s hands are, to some extent, being tied and so the Council is unlikely to achieve its affordable housing targets. It is all too easy for developers to produce viabilities showing little or no profit (see note below). In addition to the lack of affordable housing provisions the Society is extremely disappointed that approval for a dominating scheme on the skyline has been approved and we were concerned that it would prove to be a precedent for other schemes coming forward. Our fears have been realized by the Inspector for the Public Enquiry in November 2017 for the Guildford Railway Station scheme (Solum) deciding in favour of approving the huge, monolithic scheme which is considered to be detrimental to Guildford’s townscape (see application 14/P/02168 on pages 14/15. Here was another example where the developers pleaded poverty and, backed up by a viability which members of the public are not allowed to see at least before a planning decision is made and an appeal hearing is in progress, have managed to gain approval without the required number of affordable units being provided.)

Note: a recently determined case of Parkhurst Road Limited v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Islington Council has established that overpaying for a site in the expectation of avoiding planning obligations cannot be a legitimate approach to the viability assessment

<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2018/991.html>

17/P/01186: Cos, 80-82 High Street, Guildford, GU1 3HE

We considered this application for two internally illuminated fascia signs and one internally illuminated projecting sign should be refused as being detrimental to the historic character of the High Street and because the illumination of the proposed signage

conflicts with the Council's adopted Design Guidance on Advertisements and Signs which states that illuminated signs of any description will not normally be appropriate in the cobbled part of Guildford High Street.

(Approved, following receipt of amended plans removing the hanging sign and the internal illumination of the fascia signs.)

17/P/01264: Giggling Squid, 8-11, Chapel Street, Guildford, GU1 3UH

We consider that pavement seating outside cafés in the town centre often provides a more lively and attractive environment. However it is important that pedestrian movement is not impeded. In this application we judged that the proposed seating was very acceptable. However we were disappointed to note that the two fine stone planters (old water troughs, one either side of Chapel Street) clearly have had no care and attention paid to them as they are just filled with weeds, and more seriously one has been seriously damaged having been dislodged off one of its foundation pads. They are a part of Guildford's historic heritage and due to the congestion in this location consideration might be given to finding an alternative location for their display. This would provide a better passage for pedestrians.

(Approved. The case officer noted our concerns about the stone planters but merely stated that they are "not in the ownership of the applicant". It was our guess that no one had given any consideration to their relocation. However, very recently it has been noted that the damaged water trough has been removed but we do not know what has happened to it!)

17/P/01315: Land north of Poyle Road, Tongham, GU10 1DY

Proposal: Outline application for up to 150 residential dwellings, including provision of up to 35% affordable housing, creation of new vehicular access off Poyle Road, and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. All matters reserved except accessibility to the site, for vehicles in terms of the positioning and treatment of the access to the site.

The Guildford Society objects to applications for development on Green Belt land except where very special circumstances pertain. In the Local Plan currently being considered it is proposed to designate land including the proposed site as Green Belt. We saw no special circumstances and therefore would support the Council if it objected to the application.

(Refused and an appeal is now running)

17/P/01363: 111 Epsom Road, Guildford, GU1 2LE

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of a two and a half storey building containing 6no 2 bed flats and associated external works.

We considered it important to the preservation of the character of the area that there should be a dense tree screen between the proposed development and the Epsom Road.

Such a screen is shown in the drawing 'Street scene p1005'. The drawing shows a screen of six substantial trees, especially a light green one in the middle. We wrote because the Design and Access statement did not include these trees, and the screen indicated on pages 20 and 22 was not sufficient: it showed one new small tree in the middle.

(Refused and appeal dismissed)

17/P/01389: Chapel, Guildford Crematorium, New Pond Road, Peasmarsh, Guildford

Proposal: Erection of a single chapel crematorium on the site of the existing crematorium, with associated services including congregation, crematory, administration and staff spaces. Development also includes a separate pavilion with memorial and WC facilities. Landscape works include car-parking, courtyards and entrance forecourt, with amendments to existing main access gate, main access road and car park.

We welcomed this proposal to provide a new Chapel Crematorium. We find many aspects of the design to be pleasing and we have no objection to the modern style, though a simple design such as this relies so much on the quality of the materials used. However, we did have reservations and views regarding the interior design of the Chapel, the most important room by a large margin. It needs to have a sense of spirituality, and this is somewhat missing. Materials should be of very high quality and construction should not be flimsy. This building needs to be designed with a view to sustained use over a good many years. More and more people want to capture memories of someone through images, sound recordings and recorded music. The sound system in the Chapel should be of the highest quality. Participants need to be able to follow the words of collective readings or songs and also see a person at the front, watch a screen and view a coffin that makes the departed a focal point. Because these internal design features are not subject to planning we also wrote to GBC's Parks and Landscape Manager, who responded with a detailed statement from Haverstock, the architects, demonstrating that they had given much thought to these matters.

(Approved)

17/P/01391: Guildford Crematorium, New Pond Road, Peasmarsh, Guildford

Proposal: Erection of a collection of single storey, temporary structures, to accommodate chapel and administration services at Guildford Crematorium. To be in place while building works on site of main building occur.

We appreciated the need for a larger chapel and new chapel facilities. We did not, however, understand the need for and cost of unsightly and less attractive temporary buildings when it appears that the new Crematorium could be built on the site of the temporary buildings and the existing Crematorium demolished after the new facility is complete. The site of the existing building could then become an extended car park. This proposal would save both time and money.

(Approved. No consideration was given to our suggestions and the case officer's report is perhaps the shortest ever seen. It merely confirmed that the application was being referred to the full planning committee because the applicant is Guildford Borough Council and that it was considered to be acceptable in principle. We do not believe applications from GBC should be rubber stamped in this way.)

17/P/01398: 18 Tunsgate Square, Guildford, GU1 3QY

Proposal: Advertisement Consent for 3 internally illuminated fascia signs and 1 internally illuminated hanging sign.

We objected to the internal illumination of these proposed signs and to the size of the hanging one: at 900mm x 2400mm it is many times larger than the 600mm x 600mm commonly found in the High Street. Our objections were in the context of the Council's plans to much improve the character and quality of Tunsgate and, as we understood it, to bring it up to the standard on a par with that of the High Street. We agree with the Council's Design Guidance on Advertisements and Signs which states that illuminated signs of any description will not normally be appropriate in the cobbled part of the High Street, and consider that this guidance should now be extended to Tunsgate.

(Refused)

17/P/01886: Alveston, Clandon Road, Guildford GU1 2DR

Proposal: Erection of 3 storey building comprising 3 x one bedroom and 11 x 2 bedroom (total 14) apartments following the demolition of the existing part three storey dwelling; the formation of a new vehicular access onto Clandon Road and closing of the existing vehicular access

The Society had written previously to object to this application and the substance of those objections still stood. The Society considered this revised planning application and, despite the reduction in size, we maintained our objections to this proposal for a number of reasons. The site is already naturally high above London Road and the houses on the opposite side of Clandon Road; this proposal at 5 storeys therefore appears exceptionally high. The existing dwelling is described as 3 storeys high but this includes the basement garage. This proposal is described as 4 storeys however it will be 5 storeys high if the proposed basement garage is included and is therefore too high for this site and out of character for Clandon Road that is predominantly of 2 storey houses.

(Approved. The case officer considered "the overall scale, massing and contemporary design will ensure that the proposal will not result in demonstrable harm to the mixed context and character of the surroundings. Furthermore, the proposal will result in a significant benefit in providing 14 residential units in a highly sustainable location, making the best use of the land without detriment to the surroundings".)

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

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

Proposal: Phased development of a new settlement of up to 2,068 dwellings incorporating up to 100 sheltered accommodation units and associated infrastructure including accesses onto the A3 (Ockham Interchange), Ockham Lane and Old Lane and revised access to Elm Corner, a primary/secondary school, community provision, nursery provision, health facility, a local centre (incorporating food & drink, retail, a visitor centre and offices), employment area, 8 travellers pitches, sports and recreational facilities (incorporating a floodlit sports pitch and pavilion).

We had written in February 2015 to object to the original proposal and amended plans had been submitted. Most of our objections still stood. These were:

1. This site is in the green belt, albeit significant parts of the site are previously used land and are laid to concrete.
2. The appropriate approach to realigning the boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt 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 considered the application is premature.
3. The Society is 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. This is a further aspect which needs to be addressed as part of the assessment to be made in the review of the local plan. 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.
4. We have several strong reservations on the proposed layout, but note that this is only an outline application. We are troubled 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 Green Belt which is not demonstrably outweighed by the benefits of consenting to the proposals.

(Refused and appealed. A public local inquiry was held from 19 September 2017 – 25 October 2017, after which the Inspectors report and recommendation for refusal was submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for a decision to be made. On 13 June 2018 the Secretary of State agreed with the Inspector's

recommendations and he decided to dismiss the appeal and refuse planning permission. The main issues the Secretary of State considered are:

- 1. He agrees that the proposal would represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. In accordance with paragraph 87 of the Framework, inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that the scheme would conflict with two of the five purposes of the Green Belt as it would neither assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment nor assist in the regeneration of urban land due to the rural location. He also agrees that the scheme would reduce the openness of this part of the Green Belt. Overall, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that the harm to the Green Belt would be very considerable and it has not been demonstrated that very special circumstances exist to justify development in the Green Belt.*
- 2. Given that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply and the current supply is about 2.36 years, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that this represents a significant shortfall against the annual requirement set out in the SHMA and the delivery of up to 2,068 homes, 40% of which will be affordable, carries significant weight in favour of the scheme.*
- 3. He carefully considered the Inspector's analysis and agrees with his conclusion that the proposed development would have a severe impact on the northbound section of the SRN between the Ockham Interchange and J10 of the M25 and this would be harmful to highway safety and contrary to advice in the Framework. He further notes that Highways England has maintained their objection. The Secretary of State, like the Inspector, gives this objection substantial weight against the proposal.*
- 4. He carefully considered the Inspector's assessment of the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and agrees that, although some of the harmful impacts on the appearance of the area could be partially mitigated by extensive landscaping, this would not disguise the basic fact that a new settlement in a rural area would, inevitably, cause substantial harm to both its character and its appearance. He agrees that this would be irreversible and contrary to Policies G1 and G5 of the GBLP; and that this harm carries significant weight against the development in the overall planning balance.*
- 5. The Secretary of State notes that SCC, as Education Authority, consider that it has not been demonstrated that there is a need for the secondary school element on this site and wish to maintain their flexibility to provide the secondary school elsewhere.*

16/P/00027: Land at Dunsfold Park, Stovolds Hill, Cranleigh

Proposal: New settlement with residential development comprising 1,800 units (Use Class C3); 7,500sqm care accommodation (Use Class C2); a local centre to comprise retail, financial and professional, cafes/restaurant/takeaway and/or public house up to a total of 2,150sqm (Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5); new business uses including offices, and research and development industry (Use Class B1a and B1b) up to a

maximum of 3,700sqm; light and general industry (Use Class B1c and B2) up to a maximum of 7,500sqm; storage and distribution (Use Class B8) up to a maximum of 11,000sqm; a further 9,966sqm of flexible commercial space (B1(b), B21(c), B2 and/or B8); non-residential institutions including health centre, relocation of existing Jigsaw School into new premises and the provision of a new community centre (Use Class D1) up to a maximum of 9,750sqm; a two-form entry Primary School; open space including water bodies, outdoor sports, recreational facilities, canal basin and nature conservation areas; public transport routes, footpaths and cycle ways and landscaping; removal of three runways; all related infrastructure including roads, car and cycle parking, energy plant and associated equipment, water supply, telecommunications, drainage systems and waste water treatment facilities; and the demolition of 8,029sqm of existing buildings and the retention of 36,692sqm of existing buildings, for their future use for a specified purpose as defined by the Use Classes as specified in the schedule of buildings and their uses.

As can be seen, this was an application which, if approved, would have far reaching consequences for the borough and the local villages. We considered the application is premature with respect to Waverley's Local Plan. In the context of the Local Plan it would be quite wrong to consider this application for 1,800 new homes when the application itself states the opportunity to increase this to 3,400. This greater total would provide 34% of Waverley's requirement and at one third of the total is surely very substantial. It is one of the key functions of the Local Plan to consider infrastructure requirements, and the fully developed Dunsfold site would be of strategic importance in the Borough and a major driver of new infrastructure. The damage which granting permission to this application would cause is that infrastructure appropriate to 1,800 dwellings (and the considerable increase in commercial space) would be out of place and inadequate were the number of dwellings to be increased to 3,400. The Local Plan will set the long term housing on the site and the infrastructure required for it.

(This application has been made to Waverley Borough Council under http://www.waverley.gov.uk/info/485/planning_applications/1811/dunsfold_park_new_proposal and we have become involved in view of the impact such a large development would have on traffic in and around Guildford. GBC have also commented and raised a number of additional concerns as this development would affect the wider Guildford area. Waverley BC has decided that, subject to referral to the Secretary of State and no receipt of a direction calling-in the application, permission be GRANTED. The public inquiry ended on 3 August 2017 and the Secretary of State has since agreed to grant planning permission.

**16/P/00222: Land at Manor Farm, The Street, Tongham, GU10 1DG
Proposal: Hybrid application for a) Outline application for the development of up to 254 residential dwellings on 13.15 ha of the site and b) Full planning permission for the change of use from agricultural land to use as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) on 17.7ha of land to the east of Tongham Road.**

The Society objected to this application because it proposes a major housing development on a large 'green field' site. The application site is designated in the adopted Local Plan as 'Countryside beyond the Green Belt' (Policy RE4) and it also forms part of the 'Blackwater Valley Strategic Gap' (Policy R11). This proposed development is clearly in direct conflict with the planning policies which relate to this land and, in consequence, the application should be refused.

The Society is mindful that GBC is in the process of reviewing its Local Plan. However, prior to the adoption of a reviewed Local Plan, we are firmly of the view that it is premature to permit any development which is in such fundamental conflict with the present adopted Plan.

(Refused in October 2016. It is interesting to note that the case officer recommended approval. Appeal allowed subject to conditions.)

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. Appeal allowed subject to conditions.)

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.”

An appeal was held by way of public enquiry over several days last November at which the Guildford Society was an active participant. The Appeal has been allowed subject to conditions. The decision was condemned by the Leader of the Council and we fully support the views given. This should be a lesson for the Council that reasons for refusal need to be well thought through so that they are defensible at Appeal. This was a bad day for Guildford.)

John Wood

June 2018