

THE PLANNING GROUP

Report on the letters the group has written to Guildford Borough Council about planning applications which we considered during the period 1 January to 30 June 2020

During this period the Planning Group consisted of Alistair Smith, John Baylis, Amanda Mullarkey, John Harrison, David Ogilvie, Peter Coleman and John Wood. In addition Ian Macpherson has been invaluable as a corresponding member.

Abbreviations:

AONB:	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AGLV:	Area of Great Landscape Value
GBC:	Guildford Borough Council
HTAG:	Holy Trinity Amenity Group
LBC:	Listed Building Consent
NPPF:	National Planning Policy Framework
SANG:	Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace
SPG:	Supplementary Planning Guidance

In view of the Covid 19 pandemic the Planning Group has not been able to meet every three weeks at the GBC offices. We have, therefore, been conducting meetings on Zoom which means the time taken to consider each of the applications we have looked at has increased. In addition, this six month period under review has been the busiest for the group for four years and thus the workload has inevitably increased significantly.

During the period there were a potential 993 planning applications we could have looked at. We sifted through these applications and considered in detail 89 of them. The Group wrote 41 letters to the Head of Planning Services on a wide range of individual planning applications. Of those applications 13 were approved as submitted; 8 were approved after amending plans were received and those plans usually took our concerns into account; 5 were withdrawn; 10 were refused; and, at the time of writing, 5 applications had not been decided. Only one of the refused applications was appealed and that appeal was dismissed.

Any reader who wishes to see how this six 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> .

Whilst the planning case officers at GBC do generally take our letters into consideration naturally they do not always take the same view as us. It was, however, disappointing to find that three of our letters had been ignored. Nevertheless, despite this, we are pleased to report that, whilst we objected to 40 applications, 23 of those applications were refused, withdrawn or only approved following subsequent amendments to the original

application to take account of our objections. Possibly more will fall into one of these categories when the 5 undecided applications have been determined. We consider, therefore, that the society has generally helped GBC with the applications, thus preventing many unsuitable proposals coming to fruition.

The details of our letters follow below and if a 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.

During this six month period under review there were a few applications to which attention should be drawn to the reader. The first was 19/P/02223 (see below on pages 6 and 7) which sought detailed planning permission for 220 residential dwellings together with outline consent for another 300 residential dwellings at Garlick's Arch, Send Marsh/Burnt Common, Send. We considered this application had many faults with it and we wrote a long and strong letter of objection. Since then the scheme has been reconsidered and over 200 new drawings and documents have been submitted. The revised proposals have not yet been presented to the planning committee.

The reader could also look at application 20/P/00481 on page 11. This application seeks permission to build a block of 360 student units in the middle of a business park. It is inappropriate in that location but the application has yet to be taken to the planning committee for a decision. An earlier application (19/P/00407) on the same site at Plot 5, Guildford Business Park is reported on page 16. Our last report recorded that the proposal was refused. Since that report it was appealed but the appeal was dismissed.

The final application to which attention should be drawn is 19/P/01974 on pages 15 and 16. This application was reported as refused in our previous report. Since then the applicant has appealed against that decision. At the time of writing the appeal is still running. The application is also related to application 18/P/01668 which is considered on pages 16 and 17.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS we considered from 1 January to 30 June 2020

19/P/01849: Cavender Estate Agents, 17 and 19 Epsom Road, Guildford

We objected to proposed fascia signs in the same way we had objected to the shopfronts in which they sit (19/P/01825). The signs are anodyne acrylic material and detract from the street scene aesthetic. They should step down the slope whereas they form a uniform horizontal strip.

(Approved. Our letter was dated 15 December and the officer's report recommending approval was dated 19 December. No mention was made of our letter in the report.)

19/P/01944 and 1945: 13 Friary Street, Guildford

This building, previously Jamie Oliver, is highly distinctive and situated opposite the renowned and listed Rodborough Building, the Electric Theatre and appears in the foreground to motorists approaching St Nicholas Church on the one-way system. It was designed by Trevor Dannatt, one of the most important figures in British Modernism. We urged the Conservation Officer to make a thorough appraisal of the merits and historical significance of the building, the opportunities for its conservation and increased contribution to the sense of history derived from the variety of interesting buildings and original uses nearby. We therefore questioned the McDonald's wisdom of trying to superficially modernise the external appearance, and we made a number of detailed criticisms.

(Approved. The officer's report stated that the Council's conservation officer had raised no objection to the advertisement design and it was considered that the materials, appearance and illumination would not harm the visual amenity of the surrounding conservation areas.)

19/P/01959 and 19/P/01960 (LBC): Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Millbrook, Guildford

We found there was insufficient information within the application to permit a proper assessment of the proposed telecommunications upgrades. We would expect any new or replacement equipment to be sympathetic to the character of this landmark building and asked the conservation officer to make a proper assessment of the proposals.

(Approved. An additional drawing of the proposed front elevation was received during the application process which covered our concerns.)

19/P/02019 and 19/P/02029 (LBC): Moulton Brown, 42 High Street, Guildford

We objected to the size of this proposed hanging sign (650 x 650 mms) which should respect that of the established dimensions of 600x600 millimetres.

(Approved. The conservation officer considered there were other precedents in the area which justified the size of this sign.)

19/W/00109: Liongate House, Ladymead, Guildford

This was a prior notification for a proposed change of use from offices to dwelling houses creating 9 x 1 bed flats and 9 x 2bed flats on the top floor of Liongate House. We appreciated that a GDPO application for prior approval cannot be controlled by normal planning criteria, however if such planning criteria were to be allowed we would object for the following reasons:

- There will be a loss of employment space that appears to be an increasing problem in Guildford.
- The location is unsuitable for dwellings due to its proximity to a busy traffic interchange and to the A3 with resultant noise and air pollution.
- The location is in flood zone 3 thus a change to a use more vulnerable to flooding is unacceptable.

- There is no provision for car parking, for affordable housing or for amenity space.

(Refused. It was considered the development failed to comply with the requirements of Class O.2 (c) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Order) 2015 (as amended). Prior approval is required and it was refused on the grounds of flood risk and increased vulnerability.)

19/W/00110: Liongate House, Ladymead, Guildford

This was similar to 19/W/00109 and we wrote a similar letter. The proposal was to create 56 x 1 bed flats and 20 x 2 bed flats using more of the building.

(Refused. As above it was considered the development failed to comply with the requirements of Class O.2 (c) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Order) 2015 (as amended). Prior approval is required and it was refused on the grounds of flood risk and increased vulnerability.)

19/P/01992 and 19/P/01993 (LBC): Fullers Farm, Hatchlands, East Clandon

This application was to convert vacant agricultural buildings into seven houses. We were concerned that the quality of the architectural treatment of the barns was not up to the standard that should be expected from the National Trust in this Green Belt location close to Hatchlands, a significant listed building. The use of aluminium framed windows and Georgian glazing bars detract from the rustic design and location of these buildings. The horizontal division of the glazing to the double height barn door opening to Building 4 is regrettable, full height glazing preserving this element of the original building should be preferred.

(Approved. Whilst our letter was acknowledged no reference to our concerns were made.)

19/P/02088: Santander, 43 High Street, Guildford

We objected to this application for a new fascia and signs. The High Street is one of Guildford's most precious assets and it should be protected from excessive advertising. We found the new signage proposal too large and the internal illumination of the lettering not acceptable in the High Street. The major enlargement of the bright red surround to the cash point is out of keeping.

(Approved, after amending plans were received which satisfied our concerns.)

19/P/02149: Land to the rear of 5 Send Barns Lane, Send

We recommended this prior notification for demolition and replacement by 28 dwellings be refused because provision of 20% affordable falls below the 40% affordable required by the Local Plan; the sight lines for access and egress onto Send Barns Lane are inadequate; and electric car charging points should be provided for isolated parking spaces.

(Not yet decided. Many amending documents have been received since we wrote.)

19/P/02151: 25-27 Slyfield Industrial Estate, Moorfield Road, Guildford

This proposed was to subdivide the existing showroom for Hyundai to create a display space for a second brand (MG) with extensions, internal alterations and partial replacement of external cladding. We did not like the replacement of the existing cladding with very bright red cladding. We were concerned that this use of bright colour would detract from the improving image of Slyfield Industrial Estate that the Council has worked so hard to achieve.

(Approved. Whilst our letter was considered the case officer thought the proposed use of the cladding was not excessive and it gave the new brand a visible identity along Moorfield Road. It was also noted that a nearby car showroom, Kia, also has bright red cladding as part of its corporate identity.)

19/P/02160: Fairfield, 17 Grove Road, Guildford

We objected to this application for a single house because there was no indication of how parking will be provided for the existing four flats in 17 Grove Road, or of how the rear garden amenity space for the four flats can be accessed externally.

(Approved, following receipt of amended plans which satisfied our concerns.)

19/P/02103: 13 Epsom Road, Guildford

This proposal to extend the existing building to provide extra flats included 'Heritage' Velux windows on the street elevation. The GBC Residential Design Guide says roof lights should generally be restricted to the rear elevations and be used sparingly. Furthermore the building is in a conservation area and the Veluxes would be out of character with the rest of the façade of which it forms part. Whilst we pointed out these inconsistencies we did say we would submit to a ruling by the Borough's Conservation Officer.

(Refused and appeal dismissed. In addition to our points the council found that the proposal, by reason of its overall height, scale and bulk would represent overdevelopment detrimental to the scale and character of the existing building and the surrounding area and it would be harmful to the residential amenities of the neighbouring property 15 Epsom Road due to loss of light and overbearing impact.)

19/P/02197: Land south of, Guildford Road, Ash

This proposed approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline approval of 16/P/01679 for 154 units, including appearance, landscaping, layout, scale and the details of accesses within the site. We noted that this application occupied the northernmost part of site A31 in the Local Plan and that sites A29 - A31 are included within the draft Strategic Development Framework SPD, which was then out for consultation. We asked that the application be assessed for conformity with the Design Principles set out in Part 1, Chapter 3 of the SPD, and with all the site-specific guidance given in Part 3, Section 7.4, and that action be taken to ensure that any non-conformity is rectified.

(Approved. Through the process of the application, a significant number of amended plans were received. In particular these plans addressed issues that were raised in relation to layout and design, parking, accessibility, sustainability and public art.)

19/P/02230: Guildford Railway Station, Station View

We objected to the inelegant design of the proposed communications mast. It would be seen by the many users of the Farnham Road Bridge over the railway and we pointed out there were several alternatives to the lattice structure proposed., and we ask that the applicant assesses them and revises the application accordingly. A simple pole would be less unattractive. We noted that the mast occupies part of site A3 in the Local Plan, allocated for homes. The potential visual impact of the mast on any future development of the site increases the need for an improved design.

(Approved. Although our letter was received more than 10 days before the officer wrote her report no mention was made of our letter.)

19/P/02223: Land at Garlick's Arch, Send Marsh/Burnt Common, Send

This was a hybrid proposal seeking full planning permission for 220 residential dwellings and outline planning permission for up to 300 residential dwellings . This is the largest housing site in the Local Plan excepting the strategic sites. We strongly objected to this application for many reasons. For details see our letter of objection uploaded on 10 February 2020 halfway down the Documents page of the following GBC website address <https://www2.guildford.gov.uk/publicaccess/simpleSearchResults.do?action=firstPage> but some of the reasons were:

- We considered that the Planning Statement meets only a few of the many detailed comments and recommendations by Design South East in its Report dated 16th October 2019. Much further work remained to be done, especially as regards to increasing the sense of community and exploiting the landscape.
- This development is on the edge of the settlement area adjacent to countryside: it is not urban. We considered that density should therefore be kept down to a maximum of 40 dwellings per hectare throughout. There should be no three storey apartment blocks.
- The Village: Secondary Street is long and narrow giving it an unrelenting feel. The building line could be varied with some buildings setback. The narrow three-storey house designs look odd and out of place; if these are an attempt to reduce the oppressive feel by adding gaps they are ineffective.
- The village Community Street is simply a large car park. Nearby precedents suggest vans and small lorries are likely. These can very quickly become dominant and the design needs to respond to this sort of challenge. There is nowhere to meet and linger or play.
- We noted the considerable amount of open space and woodland shown in the application drawings and ask whether any of it could be better used to achieve improved layout of buildings. The contour maps in the Design & Access Statement show housing on the summit of Zone 3. It would be better if the

summit was green space rather than space below the summit, thus views from outside the site would see trees on the summit rather than housing.

- We noted that nearly all the open space and woodland is in land allocated to Phase two, the Central Green, in the northern part of the site. This creates an imbalance and dependence on the developer following through with Phase two swiftly after Phase 1. We urged that the boundary of Phase 1 be changed to include more open space: it has very little. A clear map labelled with the three Phases and their boundaries would be very helpful. Improved connectivity to the proposed SANG should be a phase 1 obligation.
- There are a large number of houses in phases 2 & 3 and they are all served from one main access. We asked if this is sufficient for access to the Portsmouth Road and for safety, refuse collection and deliveries.
- There appear to be several inconsistencies for the new slip road to the A3. The application should not be approved before the land needed for the slip road is unequivocally established, and is expressed in a drawing as part of the application. Any redesign to move the tree screen back into the Phase One site would then need to be submitted. It is essential that the application includes a detailed design of the green buffer between the site and the A3. There should be a requirement for this to be built as part of phase 1.
- The power line which crosses the site is constructed for 275kV, a supergrid voltage, but it is not owned by the National Grid Company (NGC). Current guidance states that an approximate width of 30 metres in perpetuity above the cables is required to be kept free from development or planting in order to allow ready access for maintenance and to ensure that the cables are not disturbed. The approximate route of the cables therefore needs to be established before any planning approval, with due allowance for minimum cable bend radii etc. The corridor should be clearly marked on the plans. We were also concerned about the likely overbearing nature of the pylons and cables on some of the phase 1 dwellings as can be inferred from photographs in the Design and Access Statement, since this could persist for an indeterminate period. The applicant needs to demonstrate that this major piece of infrastructure can reasonably be deferred until it chooses to implement phase 2.
- We understand that the Primary Road through the site is intended to take some traffic away from the roundabout on the A247. We are concerned that it may attract HGV traffic which would cause considerable disturbance to those residing beside the Road. A suitable weight limit should be imposed to prevent this.
- We recommended the tree screening of the travelling showpeople's site be strengthened.

(Not yet decided. Since we wrote our letter there have been over 200 amending drawings, documents and correspondence submitted, some of which have gone a long way to clearing up some of our concerns.)

19/P/02240: Land at Tithebarns Farm, Tithebarns Lane, Send

This application was for a change of use from agricultural to provide 16 hectares of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). It will serve the housing at Garlick's

Arch proposed in 19/P/02223 which we have reported on above. We considered that the connectivity between the proposed SANG and the housing at Garlick's Arch was totally insufficient. There should be a pedestrian and cycle route between the two under the A3, preferably adjacent to the mid-point of the housing. Furthermore we recommended that the application included provision for a pedestrian and cycle route from Garlick's Arch across the SANG and connecting to paths leading south towards Clandon railway station. *(Approved following a number of amending documents being received. Whilst our letter was acknowledged in the officer's report it would appear that consideration was not given to the suggestion that there should be a pedestrian and cycle route under the A3 between the Garlicks Arch development and the SANG land. This is regrettable.)*

20/P/00047: Land between 38 and 46 Weyside Road, Guildford

We considered this application for a monolithic terrace of six houses was misconceived in that the site, being in a flood risk 3b zone, is not suitable for housing. A less vulnerable commercial use would be more appropriate. Furthermore, in forlorn efforts to meet the requirements arising from flood risk, the application, with its awkward bulk, barren garages at street level and untypical veluxes in the roof, proposes a building grossly out of character with the street scene.

(Refused)

20/P/00080: 106 Stoke Road, Guildford

We sincerely trust that the Council can find legal precedents and case law to refuse this application for the stationing of a mobile home for use as a residential annex. The mobile home proposed has two bedspaces, a bathroom and cooking facilities: there can be no doubt that it is a dwelling as found on mobile home sites. If the application is allowed it would set a precedent for very many more. Furthermore the site is in an area of high townscape value, adjacent to the war memorial and St John's Church. A mobile home would cause significant harm to the local character.

(Approved. The case officer reported that "one letter of objection has been received (our letter). Third party comments are not a material consideration for this type of application." but he did not explain why. Nevertheless, the legal aspects were considered in some detail and the conclusion was that the mobile home, in law, came within the definition of a caravan and as such it would be lawfully sited.)

20/P/00131 and 20/P/00132: Semaphore House, 39 Pewley Hill, Guildford

This proposed extensions and alterations. We agreed that the existing conservatory detracts from the architectural style of Semaphore House and its replacement with the proposed orangery will be an improvement. However this is a significant grade 2 listed historic building on the Guildford skyline and we therefore objected to the further extensions of the Orangery and to the eastern elevation. The existing staircase comprises part of the listed building and should be retained. The existing cupola should also be retained in its place.

(Approved. Amendments were received during the application process which removed the alterations to the fenestration on the west side elevation of the building. However, the case officer considered the principle of removing the contemporary conservatory and the provision of a single storey extension in its place which extends all the way across the south side of the property was acceptable as was the removal of the existing lightweight stairway into the cupola. There was also no objection to the removal of the existing awkward and contrived addition to the cupola, thereby reinstating the original shape of this later addition to the building.)

20/P/00204: 7 Victoria Road, Guildford

We objected to this application for a block of five flats on grounds of over development: there will be overlooking of neighbours, only two of the flats will have access to the rear gardens and the remaining three will have no amenity space for their enjoyment.

(Withdrawn)

20/P/00253 and 20/P/00254: Units 6A to 6B Pew Corner, Old Portsmouth Road

These proposed a new portico entrance and new signage. We objected to the portico because of its excessive height, out of scale for this group of rural buildings in an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). We also objected to the two internally illuminated signs. Internally illuminated signs are completely inappropriate in this AGLV. We objected to the frosted film text to be applied above the front door due to its excessive size in this rural location.

(Approved. The case officer considered that the signs, including internal illumination, were acceptable but approval was conditional that they could only be illuminated during business opening hours. They have been reported twice for failing to observe this condition.)

20/P/00338: 21 St Omer Road, Guildford

This proposed two x two storey detached dwellings following the demolition of the existing detached bungalow. We objected because the new houses are too closely packed and hence out of character for the area. In addition the garden of the western house is very small.

(Refused in October 2020)

20/CON/00006: Land to the north and south of Goldsworth Road Woking.

This was a consultation from Woking Borough Council concerning an Environmental Impact Assessment scoping request for proposed buildings up to 41 storeys in height, the highest yet, to provide 975 residential units, up to 2500 sq. m of flexible ground floor space, and 270 parking spaces. The existing tall buildings in Woking town centre already impact on views from the North Downs AONB. The location of this site appears to separate this very high tower block from the existing cluster of tall buildings in Woking. We expressed concern at the impact this will have on views from the North Downs, including the Hogs Back and Merrow Down, particularly if it becomes the start of a

second cluster of tall buildings to the west of the existing cluster. We fully support a letter from Guildford Borough Council requested that our concerns be embodied in the EIA.

(Not yet decided)

20/P/00389 P C World, Woodbridge Road, Guildford

This was one of a set of applications proposing that PC World be converted into two units the larger of which would be a Lidl store. We doubted the findings of the Transport Assessment. We made comparisons with the Aldi store in Burpham and concluded that there is a risk of unacceptably severe congestion and increased danger at the entry to the site on the Woodbridge Road. Critical highway deficiencies are the access from the A25 being obscured by a bend and the necessity for some of the traffic entering or exiting to do a U-turn on the A25 at already overloaded points. Our most serious concern was the layout. Access to all car parking spaces is proposed to be from a single line of travel around the building, with few sight-lines ahead, so drivers have no idea when entering the site whether there is any chance of a space. Adding to that, the holdups and consequent queuing while those ahead manoeuvre into a space, one could foresee a continuous line of vehicles around the building, with some going round again in the hope that a space had been vacated. The effect of this backing up into the A25 would be totally unacceptable. We also questioned the Sequential Approach in the Planning and Retail Report.

(Approved but as the application is not now on the GBC website we cannot ascertain whether or not our concerns were considered. Nevertheless conditions were imposed such that the car parking and delivery arrangements have subsequently been approved in a later application for the discharge of conditions.)

20/P/00415: McDonalds (formally Jamie Oliver), 13 Friary Street, Guildford

This concerned signage for a new McDonalds (see 19/P/01944 and 19/P/01945 above). We objected to internal illumination of the yellow 'M'. The white McDonald's is also too large and again we objected to internal illumination. We consider the black fascia particularly inappropriate: signage comprised of individual letters mounted on the building elevation in the manner of the existing would be more respectful of the architecture.

(Approved. It is disappointing to note that although our letter dated 4 April 2020 was uploaded onto GBC's website on 7 April the case officer's report dated 4 May 2020 said that no third party comments had been received. He did report that the Council's conservation officer had raised no objection to the advertisement design and it was considered that the materials, appearance and illumination would not harm the visual amenity of the surrounding conservation areas. A condition was imposed, however, that the signs should only be illuminated during opening hours.)

20/P/00481: Plot 5, Guildford Business Park, Guildford

We wrote in April 2019 to strongly object to the previous application 19/P/00407. Our objections applied equally to this application for a block of 360 student units. Not only did we consider the scale and bulk was overpowering but there would be adverse impacts on viewpoints from both the south (e.g. locations such as Pewley Downs, Bright Hill, and Guildford Castle) and certain closer views from the north. We are also concerned that the excessive height of the proposed development will seriously intrude on the profile of the Cathedral. Crucial to the current application is an ability to demonstrate no demand for commercial office use, but the applicant's report fails to do so. We argued this in detail. In our opinion this site should be retained for future commercial use which granting planning permission for student housing will frustrate. Meanwhile, whatever the site value for offices was, it will in the current market circumstances be less, such that other non-residential uses claiming synergy with the University might now be more viable. Student housing here is particularly inappropriate, and we would suggest in fact unlikely, so we fear consent would be a poor choice and frustrate a better one, and if not implemented could simply result in long-term blight.

(Not yet decided)

20/P/00482: Land at 92 & 94 Potters Lane, Send

We did not object to the outlined proposal for 29 dwellings, but we were concerned about the removal of so many of the trees on the site and we gave specific examples.

(Refused)

20/P/00485: 115 High Street, Guildford

This application related to a new shop front. We considered the unrelieved large marble panel above the windows and the existing fascia should be broken up by some horizontal elements. We also recommended the introduction of stall risers, as included in the Application Form but not in the drawings. Furthermore the hanging sign was too large at 690mm x 750 mm. We acknowledged the need for some protection after hours, but pointed out the remedy should not be a blank roller blind which is counter to the Council's guidance on Shop Front Design and Security.

(Refused)

20/W/00034: 54 Denzil Road, Guildford

Proposal: Prior notification under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) for a proposed change of use from Offices (Class B1(a)) to Dwelling houses (Class C3) creating a single storey one bedroom house. Although this was a prior notification we felt the application proposed a totally substandard dwelling with unacceptably poor access to daylight and means of ingress and egress. It is an example of General Permitted Development being misused, a matter frequently taken up by the national press in recent months.

(Refused)

20/P/00530: The Oriel, Sydenham Road, Guildford

We objected to the proposed sign because it is too bright and overbearing: it is far too large. Halo lit individual letters affixed to the building would be more respectful of its character. The proposed large expanse of illuminated white plastic would be particularly harmful.

(Withdrawn)

20/P/00553 and 20/P/00554 (LBC): 5-6 Millmead, Guildford

This application concerned modifications to and an extension of a Grade II listed building within the Millmead and Portsmouth Road Conservation Area. We did not believe the two false gables in the dark fibre cement board on the proposed rear elevation to the extension have any architectural integrity, and when viewed from above from the street in Buryfields they will appear as architectural devices with little meaning. Extensions to listed buildings in themselves become listed and therefore any proposed extension should be designed to the highest architectural standard. We did not think that architectural devices such as these would be any more than a folly which is inappropriate for a listed building. We suggested a simpler rectangular form to the rear extension, retaining the plan articulation, would be more appropriate and have more integrity.

(Withdrawn)

20/P/00573: Barataria Park, Papercourt Lane, Ripley

This application proposed replacement of 33 mobile homes with larger units extending over part of the site which is at present open land. We objected to the unacceptable impact on the openness of the greenbelt created by placing some of the units on the present un-built area. The current development was allowed on the basis of its temporary nature although it has been in existence for many decades. It now appears to be coming to the end of its natural life. The proposal represents an unacceptable intensification of use. If the existing homes are to be renewed then they should be limited to like for like replacement. The undeveloped area is available for amenity purposes for the benefit of residents, and for natural screening for the benefit of the wider community. Accordingly it should be retained.

(Withdrawn)

20/P/00601: Jeita Express, 54 North Street, Guildford

This proposal sought consent for three non-illuminated fascia signs and two awnings.

Policy requirements in relation to awnings are set out in GBCs guidance on "Shopfront Design and Security in Historic Areas". We pointed out in detail where the application appeared not to be compliant with the guidance. There were also a number of inconsistencies with regard to a projecting sign shown on a drawing. We found the application confusing, contradictory and incomplete. It could set an important precedent. Consequently the details of the proposal need to be clear and unambiguous as do the

conditions attached to any consent. We concluded that the applicant should be asked to resubmit.

(Approved after amending plans were submitted which largely satisfied our concerns.)

20/W/00060: Burpham Court Farm, Clay Lane, Jacobs Well, Guildford

We appreciated that this was a prior notification for change of use from farm buildings to housing. Nevertheless we pointed out that because the whole site is entirely enveloped by the River Wey flood zone 3 it was wholly unsuitable for residential use.

(Refused)

20/P/00663: 106, Stoke Road, Guildford

The locally listed house on the site is a key visual historic element to the character of this section of Stoke Road and its prominent location adds importance to its local listing. We therefore objected to the excessive size of this pastiche proposal for a garage incorporating a store that would be close to the size of the existing locally listed house and it would detract from its character.

(Withdrawn)

20/P/00686: Royal Surrey County Hospital, Egerton Road, Guildford

This proposed the installation of four Portacabins opposite Tesco's to be used as office space for three years. The site provides an important green open setting for the hospital and the approach to Park Barn Estate. The Portacabins would be visually intrusive in this setting and we considered green space around the hospital should be retained as far as possible and more developed space be found for temporary Portacabins. We therefore objected to this application unless there is firm evidence that they will be removed at the end of the three year period.

(Approved, but conditioned they be removed before 3 June 2023. The case officer did not think they would be visually intrusive.)

20/P/00774: Old Orleans Restaurant, Bedford Road

This application proposed a conversion of the disused restaurant to provide the Odeon with two more screens. This site fronts on the open area known as Bedford Wharf; this is an area that has great potential to become, with suitable development, a vital and busy public place in Guildford. The existing building, although vacant, presents an active glazed shop front type façade. We lamented to the potential loss of active frontage; the use of industrial type metal panels for the elevation treatment; and the general poor quality of the design. We were of the view that greater effort should be made to make this an active frontage or at least the appearance of one and provide a less industrial looking replacement for the "Kingspan" metal panels.

(Approved, following receipt of amending plans showing revised elevations satisfying our concerns.)

20/W/00068: Grass verge west of Artington Park and Ride, Old Portsmouth Road

This was for a mast to give better mobile phone reception for rail users. We objected on the grounds that the examination of alternative siting was incomplete and asked that the applicant examine siting the base station on the east side of the Artington P&R car park. The proposed position, on the outside bend of a roundabout, is about the most conspicuous place to site a mast. We also ask that a comprehensive plan be provided for all such masts prior to any approval.

(Approved. Whilst our concerns were reported in the officer's report there was no indication our views were taken into account.)

20/P/00778: 4, Trinity Gate, Guildford

We wrote to support this application by Hidden Hearing for new signage. We considered the proposals are an improvement, especially the lettering.

(Approved)

20/P/00781: Emmaus Road Church, The Founders Studio, Millbrook, Guildford

The sign proposed is at a very prominent location, adjacent to St Mary's churchyard, opposite the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, and in a Conservation Area. We considered the sign would project too far out and at 2.5 x 0.5 m is 'oversized', contrary to the GBC Guidance on Advertisements and Signs. We also considered the internal illumination was inappropriate.

(Refused)

20/P/00816: Burnt Common Nurseries, London Road, Send

This application is the first for the major employment site offered by LPSS Policy 45. However, the intensity of proposed development is some 50% greater than that proposed by Policy 45 for the site as a whole. In addition to this intensity, the application proposed building heights of up to 9.68 m. We objected to this height as excessive in this semi-rural location and believed that the proposed buildings would intrude unacceptably into the landscape. The existing depot beside them has a height of 7 m and we consider the proposed buildings should be no higher.

(Not yet decided)

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

19/P/01570: Porsche Garage, 26-29 Woodbridge Meadows, Guildford

This application proposed a reconstruction and enlargement of the Porsche show rooms and garage, by including the existing adjacent Screwfix and Argol sites. The major visual impact will be the large area of car parking separating the building from Walnut Tree

Close. The design provides a uniform building situated further back which will serve to increase not only the extent of parking but its perceived dominance. We advocated improvement of the visual linkage between the site and the river meadows opposite by adding planting and trees amongst the lines of parked cars; also possibly along the frontage.

(Approved following amended plans being received which helped to satisfy our concerns.))

19/P/01726: Land at Church Street Effingham

Twenty dwellings are proposed. We urged that measures be taken to preserve the character of the adjacent Church Street and grade 2* listed church, including an open aspect across the amenity space and the frontage of the amenity space to the apartments, retention of vegetation along Church Street, limitation of future permitted development rights relating to rear garden fences or walls and for a group TPO to be placed on the trees on the church boundary. A very powerful letter of objection has been submitted by consultants employed by the residents of Effingham place and Ambledown.

(Still not yet decided January 2021)

19/P/01974: 1-5 The Quadrant, Bridge Street and The Casino Nightclub, Onslow Street, Guildford

This application was for the demolition of all buildings and for the erection of a 10 storey building plus two basements for use as a shop (A1), financial and professional services (A2), restaurant and cafe (A3), drinking establishment (A4), office (B1a), nightclub, casino, assembly and leisure (D2) including cinema, concert hall and bingo hall, and student living accommodation. This was possibly the most controversial application in this six month period.

We objected to the proposal in the strongest possible terms on multiple grounds, some of which were:

1. The proposal represented a huge overdevelopment that would be substantially overbearing; it is totally out of scale with its surroundings notably the listed Rodborough Building and associated conservation area.
2. The pedestrian crossing of Onslow Street is notoriously busy (and recently fatal) and will continue to be the principal route between the train station and town centre including the bus station. Commonsense suggests that the design and siting for development of this site should respect the opportunities at Bedford Wharf but as proposed it is an impediment to pedestrian flows.
3. A major concern, often overlooked by the public passing comment, is the real flood risk to which the site is exposed since the night club proposal includes a double basement. There are many instances around the world of high mortality tragedies at nightclubs due to the combination of high occupancy, intoxication and disorientation creating panic that overwhelms evacuation strategies in an emergency. The risks are heightened because customers may be occasional, thereby unfamiliar with the surroundings, and in a party mindset, in contrast for

example to employees in familiar surroundings where disciplined behaviour is the norm. Floodwater would overwhelm this nightclub far faster than any fire.

4. We believed student living particularly inappropriate juxtaposed with nighttime leisure, the more so given the applicant's long-standing campaign to establish a casino. Access arrangements to the student accommodation are insufficient.
5. Successful casinos typically rely on wealthy overseas visitors which are rare in Guildford. To be viable here therefore would necessitate growing the market with a strong likelihood of a focus on exploiting synergies with the nightclub and the other functions catering for young impressionable adults. To contemplate a casino here would be wickedly irresponsible.
6. The proposal is for a tall building in the historic part of the town centre, in the conservation area and opposite the Grade II listed Rodboro buildings. The development would also affect the significance and setting of several heritage assets in the surrounding area.
7. Basement bike parking on this scale is unrealistic due to dependence on a single lift and likely peaking of demand.
8. The layout of the student accommodation is poor and lacks natural light to the common areas which is important for orientation as well as making the space welcoming and human.

(Refused, but an appeal was commenced in November 2020. In addition to agreeing broadly with the objections we raised it was considered the proposed development would result in a prominent, isolated tall building of considerable mass and scale which would be visually dominant and detract from the Guildford as a historic, river valley, county town.)

19/P/00407: Plot 5, Guildford Business Park, Guildford Business Park Road, Guildford

We strongly objected to this application for a seven storey student block of 360 units which we considered to be over-large, totally out-of-scale and inappropriate to its setting. We also objected to the adverse impact which the proposals will have on viewpoints from both the south (e.g. locations such as Pewley Downs, Bright Hill, and Guildford Castle) and certain closer views from the north. From various viewpoints the excessive height of the proposed development will seriously intrude on the profile of the Cathedral. Any redevelopment of this site should be no greater than the height and bulk of the approved office scheme.

(Refused and an appeal was dismissed)

18/P/01668: 1-5 The Quadrant and The Casino Nightclub, Onslow Street, Guildford

We objected to this application for a 14 story building in the strongest possible terms. It proposed a development which was grossly excessive and completely out-of-character with Guildford both in terms of its enormous height and the way in which it overhangs the boundaries of the site. Even in comparison with the massive Solum development, this proposal is far too high and it will have a serious adverse impact on views from both

within and across the town centre and from viewpoints outside the town including the Surrey Hills AONB.

The use of extensive glazing on the elevations of parts of the upper floors would not only be incompatible with the historic character of the town but, in the hours of darkness, light from this glazing will cause light pollution and result in the structure standing out in an inappropriate way.

In addition to other uses the development proposes 10 floors of student housing. We considered these student units will be provided with inadequate communal facilities and that many of the units are substandard as they will only receive natural light from a totally inadequate light well. Given the amount of student accommodation currently being constructed or proposed in the area of Walnut Tree Close we are very much concerned that a further increase in student accommodation as proposed in this application will lead to an imbalance in the nature of housing in the area. A further deeply troubling concern is the juxtaposition of a considerable amount of student accommodation in such close proximity to a casino and nightclub. That specific concern is in addition to our view that, in principle, we consider a Casino to be an inappropriate use for Guildford Town Centre.

We also commented forcefully on inadequate bike storage in the basement and on serious risks from flooding.

(Refused and an appeal was commenced. A long way down the track the appellants withdrew the appeal and in September 2019 the council made a costs application against the appellants. It will be interesting to see the outcome. As at January 2021 a decision had not been made.)

John Wood

January 2021