Jessica Riches
Planning Management
Guildford Borough Council
Millmead House
Guildford, GU2 4BB

Please reply to:
Guildford Society Planning Applications Team
Flat 4 Catherine's Place
Chestnut Ave
Guildford GU2 4AE

Email: chair@guildfordsociety.org.uk

11th October 2026

Dear Jessica Riches

26/P/01070| Erection of residential apartments with associated car parking and cycle parking within a basement, new vehicular access, roof-mounted solar photovoltaic panels, landscaping, and associated works |The site of the Former Robin Hood Public House and Car Park, Sydenham Road and Lower-level Bright Hill Car Park, Bright Hill, **Guildford**

The Society **Objects to the Application**

The Society consider that the scheme as presented has serious flaws which we outline in Section 1 of this letter. Although the applicant has addressed comments we made in a very late-stage pre-application consultations, see Appendix A. The Scheme in our view has fundamental shortcomings imposed by the site's proportions and topography. In our opinion the proposal represents over development that will result in substandard accommodation.

The site is a critical Town Centre Site which could be developed to be an exemplar of an attractive and innovative addition to Guildford. Section 2 of this letter outlines how we consider the site to be a missed opportunity.

1. Application 26/P/01070 -Comments on Plans

The Society has the following comments on the plans as presented.

The Society had a meeting with the developer AHM and its architects Quarry at a very late stage in developing the plans. Appendix A provides details of changes made.

Despite the changes proposed we consider the development **should be refused due** to:

1.1. Proximity of Retaining Walls

We remain very concerned by the impact arising from the proximity of the retaining wall to the habitable rooms on the ground and first floors which face on to it - in particular those in Blocks B and C. This extends to the second floor for block C where if the current parking layout is re-instated for a large part of the day the southerly aspect of the flats will look onto parked cars and a barrier in front of these cars. One of the flats in Block C also looks east into the wall separating the site from the adjacent property.

The Guildford Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Reg.1174395.
Reg. Office 24 Bury Fields, Guildford GU2 4AZ

We would consider that the design has a very high level of compromised flats due to high surrounding walls.

	Block A	Block B	Block C
Partial View /Light Issues	1	2	
Serious View/Light Issues	1	2	2

Although the design has been modified to introduce rooflights to some of the affected flats these have compromised the internal layout of the flats above. The rooflights will also be a source of heat as well as light which may be an issue in the summer months.

The application is silent on what arrangements are to be made to provide access to the spaces between the Flat walls and Retaining Walls for maintenance, window washing, and rubbish clearance, inevitable from the car park?.

1.2. Privacy

We accept the living rooms are dual aspect, which will improve the daylight in these rooms. There remains an issue of privacy between the habitable rooms of Blocks B and C owing to the proximity of the living rooms facing each other between these blocks. From our approximate scaling of the distances between the living rooms, we note a distance of some 6.3 to 6.5 m which is considerably less than the recommended standard distance between habitable rooms of different properties which is some 20 m. We understand that in some urban circumstances this distance might be reduced to be 12m apart, but the proposals appear to be significantly less than this. We continue to have strong concerns about the compromised privacy between the habitable rooms of the blocks.

1.3. The use of land on the plot.

Page 29 states that 'The footprint is extruded to align with the height of the adjacent development, Cobbett Place (Ref. 14/P/02180) and other developments east and west along Sydenham Road' This results in large buildings being placed adjacent to the pavement. Although Sydenham Road has examples of this street scape; it also has many properties set back from the road, notably Cobbett Place to the west that has a generous set back at the corner.

This impact on the Sydenham Road streetscape has to a minor degree been ameliorated by the introduction of a wider pavement on the south side, obtained by singling the road. However, is it a clear that Sydenham Road will always operate as a one-way thoroughfare in the future?

The Guildford Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Reg.1174395.
Reg. Office 24 Bury Fields, Guildford GU2 4AZ

1.4. Views

It is clear that the views are compromised by the buildings especially as one transits down Bright Hill. The Town Views SPD describes the Bright Hill Views at 5.8.1 Page 77:

5.8.1 Viewing place, representative viewpoint and viewers

5.8.2 The viewing place is Bright Hill between Sydenham Road and Harvey Road around Bright Hill Car Park. This location was selected for its clear views over the High Street with the Holy Trinity Church, Abbots Hospital and Cathedral all discernible legacy landmarks (see marked up photo overleaf). The rising hills up to the Hog's Back (to the left of the view) also enable appreciation of the landscape setting of the town.

5.8.3 The representative viewpoint selected for this analysis is from the top of Bright Hill, near to the junction with Harvey Road. Views of the town centre are clearest from this location whilst views from Harvey Road are framed by detached properties and partly interrupted by foreground vegetation in residential gardens.

5.8.4 Viewers include residents along Harvey Road with back gardens overlooking the road, motorists using the Bright Hill Car Park as well as pedestrians accessing the town centre.

5.8.5 View description

5.8.6 The foreground of this view is characterised by the Bright Hill Car Park which is defined by metal barriers and railings, and interspersed with street lighting and semi mature trees. The elevated location enables views over the town centre with the focus of the view being Guildford Cathedral on the skyline.

5.8.7 A valued feature of this view is the ability to see a number of historic landmarks, including Holy Trinity Church tower rising out of the High Street and the distinctive roof of Abbots Hospital adjacent as well as the Guildford Cathedral sitting atop the wooded Stag Hill. Other valued features include the green slopes of the Hog's Back and wooded skyline which allows Guildford's relationship with the North Downs to be appreciated.

5.5.8 Detractors include bold-coloured building frontages along Sydenham Road and large scale bulky 'block-like' 20th century buildings beyond the High Street which compete with the historic buildings in terms of scale and prominence. Street signage and lighting columns around the junction with Sydenham Road also create visual clutter in the foreground.

We believe the application is not in compliance with the Town Centre Views SPD as it compromises the view which was selected for the reasons discussed in Para's 5.8.2 and 5.8.3 s. The detailed aspects of the views as described at 5.8.6, and 5.8.7 are also harmed.

Guildford is a town that due to its location has afforded Residents and Visitors views across the Bowl of the Town and views out of the town. These views create a real sense of place anchoring the town to the surrounding downs and major landmarks, notably the cathedral. Developments need to be carefully places to ensure this sense of a town in its context is not lost.

The Guildford Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Reg.1174395.
Reg. Office 24 Bury Fields, Guildford GU2 4AZ

1.5. Car Park and Adult Education Boundary Stabilisation?

The wall created by the development will retain the second middle level of the car park. Ther third upper level of the car park is currently closed due to maintenance issues, with a suggestion that the ground needs stabilisation. How is the car park is to be re-opened is unclear, is a Section 106 condition paying for the necessary works?

The wall between the site and the Adult Education Centre to the east is old and suffering from severe cracking especially at lower levels. Has remedial works for this wall been included in the project, especially as major piling will be introduced alongside the wall?

1.6. Car Parking.

The development results in the loss of approximately 58 to 59 car parking spaces, split between the former Robin Hood Car Park (23 car parking spaces), the lower deck of the Bright Hill Car Park (29 car parking spaces and motorcycle parking spaces) and approximately 6 or 7 on street car parking spaces.

The remaining area of the Bright Hill Car Park (the middle and upper levels) accommodates approximately 89 car parking spaces, which are accessed via the existing access junction onto Bright Hill to the south. Approximately 59 car parking spaces within the middle and upper levels are currently sectioned off due to safety issues relating to structural failures within the existing retaining walls, which leaves just 30 of the retained spaces currently operational. The proposals include a commitment to reconstruct and remediate the retaining walls to stabilise the Bright Hill Car Park and hence bring the 59 closed parking spaces back into operation. Restoring an asset that has been closed to the town for several years.

It is assumed that the restoration of the upper levels of the car park will be secured by a Setion106 agreement.

It should be noted that the car park is listed as a ‘temporary car park’ and that the upper levels of the car park remain allocated for future residential development.

The Lower-Level East is used extensively by the attendees at the Guildford Adult Education Centre, it needs to be recognised that access to parking will not be as good in future.

2. <u>Difficult Site but it does provide opportunities.</u>

The Society, have major concerns that overall planning issues for the site have not been considered.

The developer and architect appear to have been presented with the option of a narrow site which requires a large investment in foundations to create a area for construction.

No viability figures are available. We note the basement for the underground car park and retaining wall look substantial building works. As noted above it also includes reconstruction of walls in the Car Park Area to the South. Is this reconstruction likely to compromise future development options for the remaining car park. This apparent need to fund major groundworks leading to the need to provide an overdevelopment on the small site. Is this a sensible approach?

The Guildford Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Reg.1174395.
Reg. Office 24 Bury Fields, Guildford GU2 4AZ

It is a challenging site, but it is potentially one of the best in Guildford Town. The whole site would benefit from a proper masterplan which could be developed by one or more developers. The masterplan could consider solutions that might include:

- Understanding the balance between Car Parking and Housing.
- Housing that takes advantage of the slope that minimises use of lifts and staircases making buildings more efficient.
- In-setting car parking as a multistorey into the slope.

On a site of this importance surely options need to be considered and publicly discussed. We are in danger of not making the best use of an outstanding site.

The current scheme appears to be an ill thought through scheme to prop up the Bright Hill Car park which results in overdevelopment in a sensitive location.

Yours Sincerely

Guildford Society Planning Group

The Guildford Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Reg.1174395.
Reg. Office 24 Bury Fields, Guildford GU2 4AZ

Appendix A

The Society had a meeting with the developer AHM and its architects Quarry at a very late stage in developing the plans. The Society has the following comments on the plans as presented.

We are pleased that after our discussions that some of our some of our concerns have been addressed:

1.1. Entranceways to the flats: these are now more legible from Sydenham Road

1.2. Core Areas: means of providing natural daylight has been improved to the hallways to the stairway and lifts

1.3. Fenestration to the North Elevation has been reduced and greater variety introduced

1.4. The apparent scale of development: This will be further reduced by using two brick colours

1.5. Ground Floor Rooms outlook to Sydenham Road: privacy has been improved

1.6. Improvement to natural light has been proposed through the use of roof lidhts but see our comments in

The Guildford Society is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Reg.1174395.
Reg. Office 24 Bury Fields, Guildford GU2 4AZ