

16th July 2017.

Planning Department,

Waverley Borough Council,

The Burys,

 GODALMING. BY EMAIL

Dear Sirs,

Planning Application 2017/0512

Sturt Farm, Haslemere.

Whilst we were not informed about it, we have noticed the late submission for this application of a Site Viability Report pertaining to an earlier application 2014/1054 by the applicant .

The submission of this document would appear to be an attempt to try to secure an approval for 2017/0512 by threatening a reduction in the affordable houses which the applicant undertook to provide under the (outline) approval of his application 2014/1054 unless he can change the location of the entrance to the estate of 135 houses and thus reduce his costs.. The Haslemere Society has previously expressed its strong objections to such a change and we reiterate those objections here. We make the following comments relative to this further submission by the applicant:-

1) The Site Viability Report is typed on plain paper with neither details nor indication of the credentials of the firm creating the Report but with a footnote annotation of FFT Management Ltd. Any reputable consultant would clearly identify itself and not, for example, quote an estimated figure with an exactitude of £1,436,564.13 ! The report contains inconsistencies, unsubstantiated assertions and inaccuracies. Consequently, we contend that it should be afforded no weight whatsoever.

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2) Estimated values of construction work are given without reference to any drawings and without any substantiation, which **should be available to the public for scrutiny**. Consequently we question the substance and validity of this Report.

If the unpublished financial calculations include reference to the value/cost of the land we would emphasise that the value/cost used should reflect the run down state of the scrub land within an AONB **before** the outline planning approval was granted. This value, in our estimation, would be negligible in comparison to the value of the site with permission.

3) The Report refers to ‘Additional and Exceptional Costs’ – since the 2014/1054 planning application. The applicant is an experienced developer with an intimate knowledge of his land on which he sought outline planning permission in 2014 to build 135 houses. The application was approved only because it contributed to reducing the current shortage of housing. The difficulties caused by the topography of the site and the drainage and access requirements were all appreciated at the time and should not be used to justify ‘additional and exceptional costs’.

4) It is reasonable to expect an experienced developer to have made a realistic and safe estimate of likely costs of the work necessary to carry out the scheme he was seeking planning permission for. If the applicant failed to do this and is now seeking to compensate this failure by reducing the affordable housing content and/or reducing his costs of creating the approved entrance by relocating it, this attempt should be strongly resisted.

5) Especially given the unacceptability of and objections to the creation of an entrance and exit for the proposed housing estate through an ancient listed settlement and AONB land, this Site Viability Report should not be submitted against the application to re site the access but should be filed with other Reserved Matters following the outline approval granted under 2014/1054.

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6) The so-called additional and exceptional costs alleged to be falling on the project and asserted to be £2.5mln is small compared to the value to the developer of transforming the existing neglected and unexploited scrub-land within an AONB into housing with a probable market value of approximately £40mln. In considering this special pleading, the authority should be mindful of the substantial profit already available to the developer within the scope of the existing outline approval.

7)Having been notified of and attending an exhibition of the scheme on the 12 July, presumably as a reserved matter, we suggested to the organisers that they announce this in The Haslemere Herald to make it an adequately wide public consultation, but regrettably this was not done.

In conclusion, the attempt by the applicant to gouge additional profit at the expense of sensible and necessary constraints imposed on the grant of outline planning permission on a site with AONB protection with the threat of a reduction in the provision of affordable housing is quite extraordinary, unjustified and should be strongly resisted.

 The Haslemere Society also registers its strong objection to the Site Viability Report being used to try to gain approval for the re siting of the access to the proposed estate of 135 housing units which we understand has now been reduced to approximately 120 .

Yours faithfully,

 John Greer (Vice Chairman, The Haslemere Society)

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