



The Planning Officer  
Waverley Borough Council  
BY EMAIL

6 January 2025

Dear Sir

Hedgehog Lane (WA/2024/02460) - Objection

The Haslemere Society wishes to object to the above application, as set out below:

1. WA/2024/02460 is yet another iteration of an application that has already been rejected several times at various levels of the planning process. The current application is little different from WA/2021/02956, which was rejected on appeal, and WA/2022/02214, which was rejected by WBC.
2. The site is a mix of National Landscape (AONB) and AGLV. It is outside the settlement boundary. The proposal does not comply with a number of policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, including Policy H9 (trees and hedgerows), Policy H10 (dark skies) and Policy H11 (green fingers). In addition, there is an identified wildlife corridor running along the south-west boundary of the site (Policy H12).
3. The proposal does not conserve or enhance the National Landscape land on the site and does not comply with National, Local or Surrey Hills Management Plan policies.
4. The applicant introduces a rather legalistic analysis of the quality of the landscape, broken down into smaller pieces, and uses this to argue that the site has the capacity to take the proposed quantity of development with very limited visual impact. In addition, it is argued that since it is only an outline application, WBC would retain control over the landscape aspects of the development. This misses a number of significant points.
  - a. First, from late autumn into the spring, the trees and various shrubs would be bare, making the site much more visible from the public demesne. In addition, unless the proposal is that all the trees and shrubs are to be put under TPO, the Council would have no control over the later action of homeowners in reducing or removing trees and shrubs either just for personal taste or to reduce shading. And of course, trees are not immortal. As WBC are well aware, we have just lost some significant trees on the Midhurst road to disease. Should there be such loss on the boundary of this site it would take decades for any new tree to provide a similar level of screening.

- b. Second, introduction of dwellings on the site would produce both noise and light pollution, both of which would undermine the sense of transition to a rural area. The applicant refers to the need for sensitive handling of night-time lighting as part of reducing the visual impact of the site, but again, whatever is installed at the start, it is impossible for WBC to enforce sensitive lighting on homeowners later. In addition to the landscape impact, this would have a deleterious effect on biodiversity on the site;
  - c. Third, the Inspector (APP/R3650/W/22/3295573. Paragraph 10) concluded that *any* development on this site would fundamentally change it from an area of paddock to a developed site containing dwellings. He refers (paragraph 12) to the “sense of leaving behind the more built-up area of Haslemere” and, in contrast to the then-Appellant’s claim, states that there is a sense of remoteness and tranquillity at the location. The Inspector calls that proposal a “discordant addition, eroding the rural aspect that defines this location”; we agree and consider the current scheme would do the same.
5. The application does not address the impact of the proposed development on the site as a designated Green Finger nor on the Wildlife Corridor running along the boundary. The fact that ‘Green Fingers’ of rural landscape penetrate so deeply into the town is one of Haslemere’s most distinctive and attractive features, both in determining the character of the town and in terms of supporting wildlife and biodiversity. The positive impact of these Green Fingers does not depend on passers-by being able to see the whole site and cannot be protected merely by screening, however well, a newly suburban landscape.
  6. Finally, the applicant appears to argue that the additional development permitted in the grounds of Longdene House over the period since the last Inspector’s decision in June 2023 is such as to subdivide the setting to Longdene House and fundamentally alter the relationship of the property with its immediate setting. If it were true, this would suggest that these additional developments mentioned here should not have been permitted. In any case, we do not believe that the additional developments referred to have so undermined the rural character of the area that there is no point in any further attempt to protect it, which seems to be the implication here. Indeed, we would argue that to the extent that additional construction has been permitted, it makes retention of this undeveloped area all the more important to maintain the sense of transition from urban to rural landscape as you leave the town.

For all these reasons, we urge the Council to reject this application, as it has rejected all the previous attempts to build on this special site.

Yours Sincerely

S. Dullaway (by email)  
(on behalf of The Haslemere Society Planning Group)