



The Planning Officer
Waverley Borough Council
Western Planning Committee
BY EMAIL

23 September 2022

Dear Sir

Land west of Hedgehog Lane (WA/2022/02214) - Objection

This application is a reprise of WA/2021/02956, to which The Haslemere Society also objected and which appears to be still pending. The application appears identical in almost all respects, to the extent that some of the documentation has not been amended and is now clearly out of date. The key grounds for the Society's objection are:

1. **Damage to the AONB/AGLV site.** An earlier application to build on this site, WA/2016/1226, was initially rejected by WBC and subsequently the subject of an exhaustive series of appeals by the applicant. An application to appeal to the Supreme Court having been refused in February 2022, the decision of the Court of Appeal finding against Monkshill is now the final decision on this issue. It clearly finds that developments that do not conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty in an AONB can be refused planning permission on those grounds, even where the local authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. While application WA/2016/1226 was for up to 29 dwellings, rather than the 16 proposed here, the new application would still clearly urbanise this AONB/AGLV site and so do significant harm to the AONB. The application should be rejected on this grounds alone.
2. **The application does not comply with a number of policies in the Neighbourhood Plan,** which has been in force for nearly a year i.e. it is still very much a current document and a current expression of the wishes of the local community. In particular, the proposal does not comply with the following policies:
 - a. Policy H1 – the site lies outside the designated being settlement boundary;
 - b. Policy H9 - regarding trees and hedgerows. We note that there are additional requirements in respect of developments of more than 10 dwellings;
 - c. Policy H10, regarding Dark Skies - the area in question is classified as E1, the darkest level; and
 - d. Policy H11, regarding Green Fingers – the site forms part of designated Green Finger Site 24. These areas are key to the character of the town and its generally rural and sylvan setting. They provide green screens between residential areas and link the town to the countryside. The extent of already-approved development around the site, at Sturt Farm and Longdene House, make this

Green Finger even more important than it would otherwise have been. The loss of this benefit cannot be made good by the provision of green space elsewhere and would make urbanisation of this site more damaging than would otherwise be the case.

3. **Damage to the mature trees on the site.** In his review of WA/2016/1226, the Inspector expressed concern about the impact of that development on the avenue of trees and the trees around the boundary of the site. Despite the smaller number of dwellings proposed here, these concerns remain valid. In particular, the line of trees along the southern boundary of the site would throw considerable shade over at least two of the five proposed self-build sites (and possibly all of them, given the slope of the land), making future pressure to fell or reduce these trees more likely.
4. **Balancing affordable housing and protection of the land.** The applicant makes an emotive call for affordable housing for key workers. THS strongly supports the provision of affordable housing across all significant developments and we have been regularly disappointed to see developers withdraw their offer of such provision late in the planning process. However, this is not the right site for *any* development and the provision of affordable housing does not overcome that. The protections afforded this land in the AONB, AGLV and Green Finger designations are not arbitrary pieces of bureaucratic red tape but a reflection of the real and lasting value of the land both to local residents and the wider community. Once built upon, the natural beauty of this area would be lost forever, to this and all future generations.

Yours Sincerely

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