

PLANNING GUIDELINES

THE
HASLEMERE
SOCIETY



THE HASLEMERE SOCIETY Registered Charity in England and Wales No 255287

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**The Haslemere Society – Planning Guidance
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Introduction & Disclaimer

The purpose of this document is to provide an outline description of:

1. How Waverley Borough Council (WBC) and Haslemere Town Council (HTC) deal with planning applications
2. How and when The Haslemere Society (the Society) may respond to applications for planning permission and listed building consent
3. How to access planning documentation, physically and online
4. How to comment upon or object to a planning application/listed building consent application
5. How the planning appeal and planning enquiry process works

Disclaimer

The information in this document has been prepared in good faith by the Society and recipients are at liberty to use this information on condition that the Society does not accept any responsibility whatsoever for the correctness or applicability of this information.

THE PLANNING APPROVAL – REFUSAL PROCESS.

GENERAL POINTS:

- Each planning application is given a number by the local planning authority (Waverley Borough Council) which must be quoted in all communications
e.g. WA/2022/123456;
- At the location to which an application refers, a standard yellow notice must be displayed, which will show the application number and date by which all comments and objections must be made. In or immediately adjacent to conservation areas the notice is white;
- Comments may be made to either or HTC / WBC but the actual planning decision will typically be made by WBC. We recommend addressing any comments or objections to WBC and if you feel particularly strongly send a copy of the objection to either your own Councillor or the Chair of the Planning and Highways Committee at HTC. Information can be found on the HTC website. Please note that information sent to HTC will not be passed to WBC but may inform or shape the decision made by HTC.
- All planning documents and information related to the application can be viewed online at www.waverley.gov.uk/planning and follow the relevant links using the correct planning application reference numbers. Alternatively, physical copies of the planning documents can be viewed at WBC Locality Office at Lion Green.
- WBC should notify immediate neighbours of any planning application made but anyone can make comments or object to the application if they have relevant concerns.
- If the Society considers that a planning application has an adverse effect on the heritage and character of the town and that it is appropriate for the Society to comment it will make independent comments to both HTC and the WBC Western Planning Committees and relevant Councillors as necessary.
- On major applications the Society may also seek to gauge public opinion and will liaise and may work with other appropriate local organisations.



COMMENTS AND OBJECTIONS:

- All comments or objections must be made to the planning department at WBC and/or HTC before the quoted date and be directly related to the relevant application reference number. All comments and objections must be in writing by letter, email or by utilising the online comment tool on the WBC planning portal.
- You must include your name and full address for your comment to be considered. Your comment will be posted on the WBC website page for that application so will be open for anyone to read. You can ask for your address or signature to be obscured.
- WBC planning officers will make an assessment of each planning/LBC application taking into account all of the relevant planning legislation, national and local planning policy and guidance together with any other relevant requirements as shown on the WBC planning portals. They then issue their report with recommendations to either approve or refuse the application to the appropriate Area Planning Committee – the Western Committee (Committee) deals with applications for the Haslemere and the surrounding villages area. There are certain small applications (small alterations, minor works etc) which may be determined by the planning officer without reference to the Committee under delegated powers.
- If objections are made to any planning application the planning officer will not necessarily be influenced by the simple number of objections. It is the quality and relevance of the objections which is most important. To be properly considered, the objection must rely upon substantial planning grounds e.g. loss of privacy and/or amenity, overlooking, in contravention of national planning policies – although the planning officer will be very aware of such policies and frameworks.
- Under normal circumstances, if planning applications are referred by a planning officer they will be decided by the Committee. However, where any application is adjudged by the WBC Chief Executive, Chief Planning Officer and Chairs of the Western & Eastern Planning Committees to be a major site or schemes they will be decided by a Joint Planning Committee (JPC) comprised of representatives from the two Committees. Neither the Committee or JPC are bound by the recommendation of the planning officer and there have been many examples where the decision has not followed the recommendation.
- A summary of the key grounds for objection plus the number of comments made for an application will be within the planning officer's report to the Committee or JPC together with views expressed by HTC. The text of each comment is not usually provided to the Committee or JPC but Councillors can view the detail on the WBC planning portal in the same way as everyone else. B As with all planning officer recommendations, the Committee or JPC is not bound to follow them. However, a large number of valid comments or objections, especially if they have been copied into individual members of the Committee, may carry some weight and thus influence the Committee members. WBC Committee Members can be found at <https://modgov.waverley.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=390>. The Society has, on a number of occasions, been able to persuade the committee members to go against the recommendation of a planning officer.
- It is generally agreed that petitions for or against planning applications are rarely worthwhile as they lack credibility in the eyes of the planners for a number of reasons. Any such actions are probably better conducted through the local paper or relevant societies or organisations if broadscale support or objections are considered important.



- All traffic issues are dealt with Surrey County Council Highways (Highways). Generally, Highways will not object to planning applications unless they consider there to be material traffic safety issues. Anyone can make representations to Highways if you believe such safety issues exist or contact the Surrey County Council (SCC) Councillor who represents Haslemere – details on the SCC website <https://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex>

PREPARATION OF COMMENTS AND OBJECTIONS

- It is very important that you have a detailed understanding of the proposed planning application you plan to comment upon. If you feel there are deficiencies, omissions, inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the information submitted these should be clearly set out in your submission. Avoid raising minor issues as these may detract from the main points you wish to make.
- Comments and objections should relate solely to planning matters. Just objecting ‘in principle’ based on your personal opinion will not carry any weight. The WBC Local Plan sets out relevant planning policies which should provide helpful guidance. It is a large document which can be accessed at the WBC website <https://www.waverley.gov.uk/Services/Planning-and-building/Planning-strategies-and-policies/Local-plan/Local-Plan-Part-2> or at the WBC Locality Office.
- Since 12 November 2021, Haslemere has also had a Neighbourhood Plan, which forms part of the relevant planning policies. You can find a copy of the Plan on the HTC website at <https://www.waverley.gov.uk/Services/Planning-and-building/Planning-strategies-and-policies/Neighbourhood-planning/Haslemere-Neighbourhood-Plan>. Failure to comply with policies in the Plan would also be grounds for objection.
- Typical points to consider in any comment or objection are:
 1. Height and size of the proposed development
 2. How it compares in scale and design with nearby properties
 3. Position of the building in relation to the site boundaries
 4. Overlooking of neighbouring rooms and gardens leading to loss of privacy, light or amenity
 5. Impact on nearby listed buildings and fit with the heritage and character of the area – special provisions apply to development within Conservation areas
 6. Danger to existing trees or hedgerows or causing environmental damage
 7. Vehicular access / egress and restricted sight lines causing potential traffic hazards
 8. Unsightly additions such as restaurant kitchen vents or sources of new noise
 9. Compliance with provisions for areas designated as being of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Great Landscape Value (AGLV) or of Special Scientific Interest (SSI)
 10. Sufficient provision car parking and turning areas.

See the Appendix for further detailed information

PERSONAL REPRESENTATION

- If you feel particularly strongly about an application you may apply to present your views verbally at Committee or JPC. Details of how to make a request and the procedure can be obtained from WBC Planning. It is vital to make such a request well in advance of the meeting which will invariably be held in the evening. Generally, only one person is allowed to speak in favour of, and one person against, the application, for a maximum of 4 minutes



each. The speaker may present the views of a number of people although this must be made clear at the outset of the presentation. The time limit is strictly enforced so if a 'group' view is being presented then it is critical to have careful liaison to ensure all of the main points can be included within the time limit;

- The speaker must be fully conversant with the details of the application and be concise and clear on the main points to be made to ensure the time limit is not exceeded. The person speaking must base their comments on sound planning reasons and it is helpful to include references to precedents or planning policies to support the case. Powers of oratory will not be sufficient to win over a planning committee, nor are you allowed to distribute any papers.

PLANNING APPEAL AND INQUIRY PROCESS

- If a planning application is refused the applicant can appeal against the decision. Third parties to the application such as those who may have commented or objected do not have a right to appeal. The applicant (Appellant) also has a right to appeal if a planning application is not determined by WBC within the prescribed time limit (typically 8 weeks) or if conditions are imposed which the applicant considers to be unreasonable or unnecessary.
- In these cases, the application will be passed to the Planning Inspectorate, an independent government agency based in Bristol.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/planning-inspectorate>
- There are three types of appeal:
 - Written representations – when the Appellant and WBC make their case in writing to the Planning Inspectorate;
 - Informal Public Hearing – where an Inspector leads the discussion and both sides present their case without barristers present;
 - Formal Public Inquiry – a quasi-judicial procedure where expert witnesses are engaged by both sides and arguments are presented by barristers.
- Anyone who has submitted comments previously will be notified of all the requirements to further participate and the type of Inquiry to be held.
- All of the information, comments and objections relevant to the application are provided to the Planning Inspectorate by WBC. If a party wishes to continue with its objection to the application materially more work will be required. A meeting or contact with the WBC planning officer dealing with the planning application to get advice on how to present your case will be very helpful. There is ample advice on the WBC planning portal to help guide you.
- The appellant's grounds for the appeal and the WBC defence documents are published in advance of the Inquiry.
- The Society recommends that any party considering entering into the Inquiry process seeks the most appropriate and formal advice given the potential work and possible costs involved.



APPENDIX

Points to consider when preparing objections to planning applications and evidence for inquiries.

1. Most legitimate concerns regarding planning applications are covered in some way by the WBC Local Plan policies. These form the basis of decisions made by the planning officers advising the Councillors who are members of the Western Planning Committee or nominated members of the Joint Planning Committee. You should check your concerns against these policies as quoting the policies which the application conflicts with counts for much more than simply expressing subjective views.
2. Typical and frequent matters of concern and which are generally covered by the Local Plan policies are listed below:
 - Scale, size, mass, overlooking, loss of light, number of storeys, out of proportion dormer windows, roof lights to street elevations, loss of privacy or amenity.
 - Loss of mature, exotic species or rare trees (check if there is an existing Tree Preservation Order). Extra protection applies to trees in Conservation Areas.
 - Traffic and noise generation, parking and access road capacity, on-street parking requirements.
 - The topography of the site or area is often not depicted on the drawings and is an important consideration to be aware of. Developers may reduce the ground level to disguise the height of an unacceptably tall building the roof line of which may or may not coincide with those of adjacent buildings.
 - Many over-dominant aspects of proposed buildings do not respect the style of existing buildings and neighbourhoods. If listed buildings are nearby or it is in a conservation area then additional protective rules apply. Refer to the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Section 16 of the NPPF.
 - Of increasing importance in planning is 'sustainability'. In addition to energy conservation matters, easy access on foot to local public transport facilities, schools etc. are all factors. Sustainability can be affected by lack of footpaths, steep hills, generation of vehicular traffic etc. Professional town planners and architects often claim that a proposed development is sustainable but there may be grounds to show that this is not correct. For example, location plans do not include contours and in Haslemere, which is very hilly, apparent proximity to the station or other facilities could be illusory.⁵
 - Environmental sustainability is equally important, more so in some respects. It is vital to ensure adequate protection and accommodation for badgers, bats, toads, butterflies and other wildlife. Such issues have provided adequate grounds for sustaining an objection but any such intervention must be supported by facts and expert evidence particularly in the case of an appeal.
 - Inconsistencies and mistakes in application documentation do occur. Site boundaries are often wrong, measurements do not add up or are unachievable as are levels and ground profiles. These are difficult for lay people to pick up and careful scrutiny is required so seek expert advice if necessary.
 - Also consider related issues caused by the application site, such as matters like drainage, where, for example, introduction of hard landscaping in one area may cause inundation in another. The application may not address this adequately but this is a technical issue and expert advice may be necessary.

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