



45 Petworth Road  
Haslemere  
GU27 2HZ

The Inspector  
BY EMAIL

2 December 2024

Dear Sir

Land Centred Coordinates 489803 131978 Midhurst Road, Haslemere  
(APP/R3650/W/23/3327643) - Objection

The Haslemere Society objected to WA/2022/01887 and supported WBC's decision on that application. We also submitted an objection to, and spoke at, the inquiry which heard the appeal against WBC's refusal of permission in January of this year. We are writing now to confirm that our view has not changed and we wish, on behalf of our 500 members, to strongly object to the proposed development. We understand that the representations made in our letters of 12 October 2023 and 27 January 2024 will be carried forward to this new inquiry and we stand by all the objections stated in those letters.

We do not propose to restate all our points of objection again here. However, we would like to reiterate what we consider to be the most pressing points.

#### **Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

1. The site of the proposed development lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a genuinely beautiful landscape, characteristic of the town, with a mix of wooded hills and open grassland and long views over to the South Downs National Park. The area forms part of the gateway to Haslemere from the south, where the town is approached along a green wooded tunnel of mature trees with open grassland and small meadows on either side before the town is entered along the picturesque Shepherd's Hill. This is a deeply evocative landscape, specifically mentioned in the Haslemere Design Statement.
2. The proposed development, however tasteful, would significantly undermine the natural beauty and tranquillity of the area and completely alter its character. The Appellant makes much of the proportion of the site that would not be built on, but there is a step change from an entirely open, natural piece of countryside to one with 111 dwellings, with their gardens and a road, set within some more open land. Aside from the buildings themselves, a significant number of the trees along the Midhurst Road would be felled, destroying the characteristic enclosed feel of this approach to the town for a significant length. This cannot be argued to amount to an enhancement of the natural beauty of the area.

3. The Appellant argues that the adverse effects of the proposed development would not outweigh, let alone “significantly and demonstrably” outweigh, the benefits of the scheme. We cannot agree. This beautiful landscape will be lost forever if this scheme is permitted to go ahead.

#### **The Settlement Boundary**

4. In addition to being on AONB land, the site lies outside the settlement boundary and is not an allocated housing site. Nor is any part of the site brownfield. The Appellant quotes the LPP1’s comment that the first focus for development will be within the settlement - but the site is *not* within the settlement. Indeed, the fact that the site is immediately adjacent to the boundary arguably makes it worse, since it would be just sprawl. The current Neighbourhood Plan states that development outside the settlement boundary will be strictly controlled. This major development proposal does not conform to this and would be against the clearly expressed wishes of the community.

#### **Lack of exceptional circumstances**

5. In the context of the first inquiry, the Applicant argued that the development should be permitted despite being both within AONB and outside the settlement boundary because there were ‘exceptional circumstances’ and overall the development was ‘in the public interest’ as per NPPF Paragraph 183. Again, we strongly disagree, on grounds that we set out in our earlier letters. In particular, we strongly dispute the idea that the current limited public access to the site means that it offers no public benefit so that opening up the site to development and access by footpaths etc. will by definition improve the public benefit derived from the site. This ignores the value of the sense of the countryside crowding round the town afforded by that area of undeveloped green on the boundary, providing peace, tranquillity and real darkness at night, as well as the beautiful and characteristic views on the approach to Shepherd’s Hill. It also ignores the fact that there is already a very significant network of public paths and bridleways around the town and into the surrounding countryside. The proposed development does not offer any benefits that could compensate for what would be lost.

Yours Sincerely

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