



Ms Elizabeth Sims
Head of Planning
Waverley Borough Council
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Dear Ms Sims

Planning Applications WA/ 2016/1342

This application is for a new entrance road to the Sturt Farm Housing Estate, an alternative to that approved under application *WA /2014/1054*. The Haslemere Society objects to the proposal on account of the highly detrimental impact it would have on the setting of the existing group of Sturt Farm buildings and on the residents of those dwellings.

The existing Sturt Farm buildings are all original barns/ farm buildings connected with historic 17th Century Sturt Farm. Three of the buildings are Grade II Listed, with origins dating from 17th to 19th Century; another is locally listed as a Building of Local Merit. All four form a cohesive cluster with overlapping curtilages. The exteriors have been exceptionally well preserved / restored - converted to dwellings but retaining agricultural characteristics, the whole providing an attractive rural settlement adjoining open countryside. The properties are accessed by a short exclusive service road, which terminates at a public footpath, along which there is minimal vehicular traffic which has no adverse effect on the overall setting.

This proposal would envisage widening and considerably lengthening this service road, with associated junction alterations, to enable it to serve as the sole entrance / exit route to the planned housing estate for which outline consent has been granted for up to 135 new dwellings. It is extraordinary that appropriate access for this major development having already been established, following a comprehensive Transport Assessment and numerous infrastructure enhancements and improvements specific to the location having been negotiated with the County Highway Authority, it should be so readily superseded.

In connection with application *WA/2014/1054* the County Highway Authority agreed traffic generation assessments of two-way vehicle movements of 80 per hour in the morning peak and 78 per hour in the evening, and a total of 680 per typical day. An annual total in the region of 200,000. These additional vehicle movements would all pass within a few metres of each of the buildings.

These buildings, as irreplaceable Heritage Assets, have the protection afforded by the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 132 of which says :

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional.

The status and importance of these buildings has already been recognised by Waverley. Statements in the Officers Report for *WA/2014/1054* (pages 81-83 of which) include:

" The significance of Sturt Farm and its agricultural buildings lie in the survival of the complex and the continued opportunities to recognise, understand and appreciate the agricultural character of the collection of historic buildings and their spatial arrangement.

Despite the separation of ownership the buildings and the conversion of the agricultural buildings to domestic use the arrangement and its relationship with the land continues to be perceptible. The farm complex and its immediate setting are in contrast to the suburban arranged development to the North and West.

The significance of the farm lies in the fact that it is separate from this later residential development and acts as a reminder of the historic relationship between the town of Haslemere and the surrounding countryside. "

The proposed road and greatly expanded junction, and the traffic flows which would be generated straight through the heart of this small complex, would destroy that cohesiveness and recognisable relationship of the buildings to each other. Their rural character would be compromised by introducing the direct connection with the Sturt Farm Housing Estate, thereby losing the invaluable separation from modern suburban development. The historic significance referred to by the Waverley Officers would no longer be apparent.

In considering application *WA/2014/1054* Officers, including the Historic Buildings Officer, were of the view that the then proposed access, although significantly to the West of this settlement, would nevertheless fail to preserve the setting and cause harm to these buildings. This alternative, in which the road would pass within approximately two metres of the nearest building compared to fourteen metres previously, would consequently have a dramatically more detrimental effect.

In application *WA/2014/1054* it was concluded that the identified harm which would be caused would be “less than substantial” and could therefore be outweighed by the “significant public benefit” of the housing development. Notwithstanding the far greater impact of this alternative route, should it nevertheless be concluded that the harm to the setting of the buildings was still “less than substantial” there is now no offsetting benefit to consider - the housing development is not dependant on this access and could proceed anyway on the basis of the exiting approved route. There is no “significant public benefit” in this access over the approved previous one, or any other benefit identified in the current application.

In our view this proposal would however very substantially harm the setting of these Grade II Listed buildings. Given the already approved access as proposed by the developer, and agreed by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the County Highway Authority, there is no clear and convincing justification for this harm.

With the addition of some 200,000 traffic movements per annum using the junction with Sturt Road, it is highly probable that queues to exit would be common, especially in the morning rush hour, which would back up directly outside these houses, moving slowly with engines running. A Sturt Road pedestrian crossing may exacerbate this issue. In such very close proximity to the homes of the residents this would represent an intolerable loss of amenity which would be contrary to basic planning principles.

Yours sincerely

A.J. Bennett
The Haslemere Society

