

THE HASLEMERE SOCIETY



11 June, 2016

Planning Department,
Waverley Borough Council,
Godalming.

BY EMAIL

Dear Sirs,

5-21 WEY Hill, Haslemere.
2016/0879

The Haslemere Society wishes to see an attractive development of this site which is located in a prominent position on a very busy access route through the town used daily by large numbers of townsfolk and commuters to the nearby station.

A planning application is essentially a precursor to a detailed design and will thus need adjustment to be a good fit within a location and community. The Haslemere Society wishes to identify the following issues with a request that WBC Planning Department take these up with the developer to ensure that what is built is appropriate for many decades on this prominent site.

1) The applicant correctly refers to the previous application 2010/1568 being allowed following appeal. However the applicant (presumably to try to justify his proposed four storey scheme) misleadingly submits drawings of an earlier larger four storey scheme 2008/2217 which was refused specifically because it was too large and too dominating.



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The 2010/1568 scheme granted planning permission was only three storeys high for 39 flats (and some office space) with its frontage only two storeys high in parts stepping up to three at the rear making it less dominating than the current proposal which rises a full four storeys on its front elevation and stepping down to the side and rear. Would the developer consider a similar adjustment to bring it into line with the low rise Haslemere vernacular? It is appreciated that Clay Hill House does not fit the typical low rise of Haslemere but this is located opposite the wider junction at St. Christophers Green. It is considered undesirable to continue the four storeys through in front of the houses opposite without some stepping back.

2) The application states that 56 or 63 parking spaces are provided but we can only identify 28 in the basement and at ground level. This suggests a two level deep basement involving significant secant or sheet piling and excavation. Removal of excavated material and piling operations (perhaps precluding driven piling) will need conditions being stipulated. Permission for deep excavation close to the railway tracks will need to be agreed with Network Rail.

Although this is a town centre location most families require a car in this country town as public transport services are infrequent and limited and residents have to travel to other towns for services. A car is necessary for destinations not on the London – Portsmouth railway line. Public parking locally is in high demand by commuters from outside Haslemere.

3) This proposed scheme probably represents the largest construction in Haslemere for many years and is located in a prominent and very busy area which is receiving consideration for enhancement alongside other projected schemes close by. It is regrettable that the applicant has not conducted a public exhibition or consultation.

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The general public, including many of those notified of this application will not be able or prepared to wade through the large number of documents submitted with this application and thus comment.

To conclude, as the application does, that the level of public opposition was low is wrong and very misleading.

4) The need for an attractive development is paramount in this busy and prominent location especially considering other pending local developments and enhancement requirements for Wey Hill. The devil, as always, is in the detail and the drawings give little indication of detail or materials of construction; only the application form refers to:- timber fencing and railings, wooden doors, wooden window frames, red brick white render and tiles to the walls, roof tiles. To ensure a development with lasting quality and attraction, as opposed to a minimum cost development that the developer can sell on at maximum profit and no future maintenance responsibilities, the following must be carefully considered and agreements reached :-

Bricks – These are an expensive element in any building but a good quality frost resistant low moisture absorbent brick to resist spalling should be chosen which will not be the cheapest.

Tiling to roof and walls – The type is not confirmed in the application and these could be clay or cheaper concrete tiles. The Haslemere vernacular is clay tiling including patterned tiling (ie specials) to avoid plainness and add interest.

Fencing and railings to site boundary - It is unclear where the fencing is – perhaps the railway frontage which will have to be approved by Network Rail. Timber has a limited life. Railings with a powder coated finish for longevity and durability as opposed painted steel requiring more maintenance are preferable to the frontage. The design must be attractive and not bland in this prominent location at the edge of the footpath. (see further comments in notes 7 & 8)



Balustrading - There is a considerable amount of prominent balustrading to balconies and it is important that the design and materials are of a high quality. These will be an important part of the character of the building and should not require regular maintenance. Stainless steel and glass are the currently chosen materials for this application.

Window Frames – Wooden frames are referred to in the application form which are the cheapest type. For a modern quality development this is not acceptable and powder coated aluminium is the modern durable material to choose.

Doors – Again timber doors are specified in the application form and these will need regular painting for appearance and their durability is inferior. Materials matching the windows should be chosen.

Raised Quoin/Corner Detail – This is a distinctive feature framing the front elevations of each building significantly influencing the appearance of the development. The detail of this and its materials of construction need to be approved for quality, appearance and longevity.

5) A condition of the 2010 successful appeal was to provide a pedestrian crossing. This should be provided with this scheme for pedestrian safety especially due to the discontinuance of the footpath on the south side of Wey Hill.

The main entrance to the development is located close to the blind corner at the railway bridge where there is also a significant difference between the levels of the site and the road. The feasibility and safety aspects of this need to be carefully considered and agreed with the highway authority.

6) There is concern at the congestion which will be caused by parked vehicles at this development on this busy route through the town. Heavy congestion currently occurs not only at peak rush hour times but often through the day.



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Congestion increases year on year and will continue to do so due to the continuing increases in population locally and in Haslemere's hinterland. In (5) queries are raised re the main entrance located between block C and the railway bridge and the accessibility of this for large vehicles (eg refuse trucks) needs to be carefully considered.

Also we are concerned that drivers will stop on the road in front of blocks B and A because the main entrance is too far away and will even be missed by drivers coming from under the bridge. Clearing refuse from block A for example is too far from the main entrance resulting in street parking/stopping by that block.

Consequently consideration needs to be given to relocating the main entrance to a more central position or creating a roadside parking lay- by centrally to stop parking on the roadway . Yellow lines are ineffective in stopping delivery vehicles parking. Deliveries cannot always be carried out quickly (eg refuse collection for large numbers of flats and household removals).

Queuing behind a vehicle parked in the road will present a distinct danger to vehicles emerging from the bend at the railway bridge. In one, two and more decades from now the traffic using this route will have increased massively and we should not approve developments which exacerbate this problem. It would be irresponsible to do so.

7) The quality of the landscaping around the buildings is important to the occupants of the flats and the large numbers of the public, including commuters, passing by. A comprehensive landscaping scheme and provision for its maintenance should be agreed. The submitted street scene drawing shows larger trees as well as shrubs, which will provide an attractive feature in front of the four storeys of bricks and mortar but the feasibility of this with a large basement structure needs to be considered.



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7) Cont'd) We have received directly from the applicant an artist's impression of the development. It is unclear whether this is to be included in the planning application but it is considered that this gives a distorted impression designed to lessen the impact of the development on the street scene.

- the road appears wider than actual, there isn't a grass verge opposite or tables outside Majestic Wine, street lighting columns and vehicular access are not shown.

8) The artist's impression indicates the developer's intentions for fencing along the frontage which The Society regards as inappropriate and unacceptable.

This is not a London location but a country town.

Slender brick piers or timber posts with steel railing infill panels 2metres high are shown. The brick piers are too slender to be structurally adequate and timber posts will have a short life and the height and 'security enclosure' effect exacerbate the dominating effect of the development. The high fence is close to the buildings (only approximately 4metres in places). Vision splays and vehicular access shown on the plans are not included in the impression.

To reduce the impact of this development an open landscaped frontage with a green edge to compliment the nearby St. Christophers Green would be preferable without any railings.

These comments are made on the basis that WBC might be minded to grant planning permission but we would stress that The Haslemere Society would have preferred a lower and less dominant development of three storeys in this busy location.

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Also it is noted that the applicant has not sought pre application advice. NPPF clause 189 points out that the Local Authority has a key role to take advantage of pre application advice and also where they think it would be beneficial to encourage applicants who are not required by law to engage with the local community before submitting their application. Regrettably there has not been any effective public consultation by this applicant for a very major scheme in the town and this omission should be rectified.

Yours Faithfully,

John Greer (Vice Chairman, The Haslemere Society)

