

THE HASLEMERE SOCIETY



30th December 2015

Waverley Borough Council,
Planning Department The Burys,
Godalming.
BY E MAIL

Dear Sirs,

5 – 12 Wey Hill, Haslemere
55 Flats, Application 2015/2256

The Haslemere Society strongly objects to the scheme submitted with this planning application and urges that it is refused. The Society still wishes to see this abandoned site redeveloped, including residential, but with a far more acceptable scheme as soon as possible. The reasons for our objecting are :-

- 1) This is a very prominent site on a busy main thoroughfare connecting Haslemere town centre with the A3 and the Wey Hill shops and supermarkets. The very busy commuting station also contributes significantly to the number of pedestrians and vehicles passing this site. This proposed development will be a landmark development – **the largest and most prominent development in the town** and its design should therefore be either in the local vernacular or an aesthetically pleasing modern design. **It is neither !**
- 2) The applicant states that they have not engaged in any pre application planning advice/discussion with WBC. If they had done so they would not have modelled their scheme on the previous four storey application 2008/2217 which was refused for being too high and dominating and they would not have made the mistake of stating that this application was allowed on appeal. It was not. The reduced height application 2010/1568 which was far more compatible with the location and Clay Hill House was the one which was allowed on appeal after being refused by WBC reflecting local views.



3) We have not been able to note any reference in the application to the Haslemere Design Statement and can only conclude that the architect was unaware of it, especially in view of the inappropriate design he has produced.

4) Some relevant Design and Architecture Design Guidelines in the Design Statement are :-

- Heights of buildings should relate to the scale of adjoining properties and the street scene and should respect existing vistas. (Owners of houses opposite are protesting).
- Contemporary designs should be of high standards and compliment their context and where possible enhance adjoining properties.
- care must be taken to ensure that any new development sits well in the street scene and the form of any new development must be appropriate.
- all new development should provide adequate off street parking appropriate to a small market town.

The design submitted does not meet these basic requirements.

5) Notwithstanding the proximity of the railway station the necessity for car ownership in Haslemere is high. The 31 car parking spaces provided for 55 flats is totally inadequate . The 2013 WBC Parking Guidelines indicate that a **minimum of 55 parking spaces** are required for a town centre location. Local experience in Haslemere indicates that one space per 1 & 2 bedroom apartments is not adequate for even a town centre location for the following reasons :-

- there is very little (and diminishing) employment in Haslemere and residents have to travel significant distances to find employment in locations which cannot be reached by the train.
- local bus services are very limited and infrequent necessitating car use.
- local service and retail facilities in the town are limited which results in residents having to travel to other towns by car.
- public car parks near this site are almost fully used by commuters using the station and this continues to increase.
- visitors are forced to come to Haslemere by car for the reasons stated above.



5) (cont.d) It is appreciated that SCC are trying to promote cycling but the provision of 55 cycle spaces for flats intended for the “over 55 s” is ridiculous especially considering that the very narrow and heavily trafficked Wey Hill and Lower Street with zero provision for cycling and the hilly terrain around Haslemere are dangerous and very unsuitable for cyclists.

6) Currently there is very serious traffic congestion and queuing through Wey Hill and past this site due not only to station commuters but also general town activity which continues to increase year on year. The proposal to construct 55 flats represents a serious overdevelopment which will generate a considerable and unacceptable addition to the traffic chaos in the area.

Furthermore there is no lay bye provision for parking of delivery, service and tradesmens’ vehicles and due to the very limited/inadequate parking provision on site this will lead to parking on this busy thoroughway and exacerbate the congestion.

7) WBC Policy TC1 states that the Council will seek to maintain and enhance the role of the town centre as a focus of shopping, commercial and social life in the Borough and will seek to retain and encourage a mix of uses which contributes to the vitality and viability of these centres.

The loss of the previous commercial and retail facilities on this site and its replacement with a purely residential development is not fulfilling this planning objective. The continuing loss of employment in Haslemere is serious!

8) The overdevelopment of the site results in totally inadequate external recreation space for in excess of 100 inhabitants of the proposed development.

9) The architect’s drawing shows horizontal height lines from Clay Hill house in an attempt to indicate that the 4 storey proposals are no higher, which is misleading because the level of Wey Hill falls approximately 5m resulting in significantly higher new buildings dominating above the level of the road.

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TO SUMMARISE :

This proposed development is bland, uninteresting, too high and too dominating over the residences on the opposite side of the road. It is an over development of a tight site and pays no respect to the attractive Edwardian architecture of Clay Hill House, the listed St Christophers Church and the adjacent St Christophers Green and detracts from instead of enhancing the street scene.

The form, density and architectural style of this proposal is not appropriate to Haslemere generally (a market town located in the countryside) nor to this site in particular. It is far more in keeping with a city location (eg. by Waterloo station) or other London suburb from where its designer hails.

The Council's objective of creating more housing to the north of this site, the need for a multi storey commuters car park and increased pedestrian access under the railway, the future redevelopment of the nearby Wey Hill car park which is being considered by Haslemere Vision/Local Plan and the development of this site coupled with the serious local congestion all indicate the urgent need for a comprehensive masterplan for the Wey Hill area. This is to achieve the enhancement of Wey Hill indicated as necessary by recent public consultation and to avoid a resultant highly overcrowded, congested and disfunctional area (a planning nightmare).

To allow piecemeal uncoordinated mish mash development is wrong and not what responsible planning authorities should allow. Other Local Authorities commission area planning exercises by professional conceptual planning consultants and WBC should do likewise.

The need for more housing is appreciated but WBC are urged to not only consider this goal but also to consider the character and amenity of this town for the benefit of the many future generations of Haslemere residents.

