

## THE PLANNING GROUP

### Report on the letters the group has written to Guildford Borough Council about planning applications which were submitted during the period 1 January to 30 June 2018

*During this period the Planning Group consisted of John Baylis, Gordon Bridger, Amanda Mullarkey, John Harrison, David Ogilvie, Martin Taplin, Anthony Umney and John Wood. In addition Ian Macpherson has been invaluable as a corresponding member.*

Abbreviations:

AONB: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
AGLV: Area of Great Landscape Value  
NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework

The Planning Group meets every three weeks at the Guildford Borough Council ("GBC") offices.

During the period under review there were a potential 1,132 planning applications we could have looked at. We sifted through these applications and considered in detail 61 of them. The Group wrote 26 letters to the Head of Planning Services on a wide range of individual planning applications.

As usual the most applications in a single category we wrote about was about signs, mainly hanging or projecting, in and around the High Street Conservation Area. GBC have published design guidelines for adverts and signs in this conservation area but many applications do not fit the criteria laid down. We wrote six such letters mainly because we considered the signs were either too large or because the proposal was that they should be internally illuminated. For this category in the period under review only one application was approved as submitted, two were approved after amended drawings were received to satisfy our concerns and three were refused. Surprisingly, and most unusually, all three refused applications were appealed. The Inspector upheld one application, dismissed another and the third has not yet been decided.

With three of our letters we did not object to the applications. We either wrote in support or we made suggestions. Of the remaining seventeen applications to which we did object one, we believe, was withdrawn, five were refused, six were approved, three were only approved after amending drawings were submitted and two have yet to be decided.

Any reader who wishes to see how this six month period compares with previous periods should look at the "Summary of Outcomes" which follows the appropriate report on the Society's website at <http://www.guildfordsociety.org.uk/planning.html> .

The case officers at GBC do take our letters into consideration but naturally they do not always take the same view as us. However, we are pleased to report that in the majority of cases where we made an objection to an application, those applications are either refused or, alternatively, are only approved following subsequent amendments to the original application either to take account of our objections or have conditions attached to the planning consent.

The details of our letters follow below and if any reader wishes to look at any of the applications, the plans, the design and access statements, the officer's report to the planning committee and the decision notices they can find all the information required at <http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/publicaccess> . Type in the application number at the bottom of the page that opens, click "Search" and click on "Documents" when the Summary page has been loaded. You will then be able to click on the information you are seeking and it usually downloads a pdf document.

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS submitted from 1 January to 30 June 2018**

### **18/P/00026: Cavender, 17 & 19 Epsom Road, Guildford**

The location of this application is within a Conservation Area. Under the Council's Guidance for Advertisements and Signs, certain kinds of illumination may be acceptable in Conservation Areas, but our understanding is that internal illumination is not. Such is proposed here and we objected to the application on these grounds.

*(Refused and an appeal has been commenced. This was a case where the applicant had fully implemented and erected the signs whilst the application was in progress.)*

### **18/P/00038: Clarks, 106-110 High Street, Guildford**

We have noticed a recent trend in applications for painting shop fronts black. We have objected to this treatment of shop fronts in the past particularly where the shop front is constructed with mouldings and reliefs. The use of black paint and very dark colours results in the loss of shadows and as a result the loss of definition of reliefs and moulding. For this reason we objected to this application.

*(Approved. Whilst our letter was recorded [in the name of Holy Trinity Amenity Group] and referred to in the case officer's report he made no comment on our suggestions.)*

### **18/P/00043: Stoughton Social Club, 172 Worplesdon Road, Guildford**

We were concerned that the development of a block of fourteen flats to the rear of this site would result in the total change in appearance and design. The design is an ugly, characterless rectangular block that has none of the character and three dimensional modelling of the previously approved scheme 17/P/00614. The amenity space is inadequate and less than provided in the previously approved scheme. There are insufficient parking spaces and no provision for parking for the disabled.

*(Approved. Whilst our comments were considered the case officer did not agree with them and recommended approval making the point that there would be "a net gain of fourteen dwellings which would make a positive contribution towards meeting the Borough's under provision of housing.")*

### **18/P/00072: Meat the Greek restaurant, 15 Chapel Street, Guildford**

We were concerned that the proposed additional tables and chairs outside the Greek restaurant would create an unacceptable obstruction to the footpath.

*(Approved after revised layout plans were submitted following our letter. It was felt that there was sufficient room for the additional seating and tables, as the stone horse trough has been removed and there are no plans for its reinstatement.)*

### **18/P/00140: Tunsgate Square Shopping Centre, 98-110, High Street, Guildford**

**Proposal: Advertisement Consent for the erection of 3 internally illuminated fascia signs, 1 non-illuminated fascia sign, 2 vinyl signs, 2 directory signs and 3 external car parking signs.**

We considered most of the proposed signs to be acceptable. However, in line with Council policy, we objected to the illumination of sign ESG 12 at the entrance facing the cobbled High Street, where 'illuminated signs of any description area are not normally appropriate'.

*(Approved, following amended plans being received removing the internal illumination.)*

### **18/P/00144: 8 Flower Walk, Guildford**

We objected to the proposed development of a block of four flats to the rear of the site because the site is within a conservation area and the block would be completely out of keeping with the character of the dwellings in Flower Walk. The block is incompatible with the two proposed detached dwellings closer to the Flower Walk frontage. The block creates the visual impression of a later unsatisfactory scheme of back land development and garden grabbing. The block will also detract from the setting of Hitherbury House where great care is being taken to retain the character of this arts and crafts building.

*(Refused and an Appeal has commenced.)*

**18/P/00429: 8 Flower Walk, Guildford**

This application was very similar to the application 18/P/00144 above and only very minor amendments were evidenced. We therefore repeated our objections to the proposed block of four flats to the rear of the site.

*(Refused and an Appeal has commenced.)*

**18/P/00158: DFS, 8 North Street, Guildford**

We objected to the internal illumination of the proposed DFS sign and consider that halo lighting will be preferable.

*(Approved because the sign is replacing an existing sign which is currently internally illuminated.)*

**18/P/00289: Garages opposite Portland Terrace, Harvey Road, Guildford**

We considered this application, for a 1 bedroomed house over 1½ storeys to replace the existing garages, would be detrimental to the Christchurch Conservation Area. It would be small and cramped with no parking provision and with insufficient amenity space. Existing trees and the parking space for the existing dwelling will be lost.

*(Approved)*

**18/P/00376: Welland House, Albury Road, Guildford**

We objected to this application for demolition of an existing building and erection of a block of fourteen apartments. At 140 dph this is an overdevelopment of this small 0.1 hectare site and in consequence there is insufficient amenity space. It is out of character and involves the removal of all the existing trees. Some of the top floor bedrooms will only have roof lights and therefore no windows with eye level views.

*(Approved. Our objections were not considered to be worthy and the case officer's report concluded: "The proposed development represents a sustainable development which would provide additional residential dwellings which would contribute to meeting the Council's housing need. The proposed flatted development would be in scale and character with the area." All trees on site had been felled prior to the application being considered.)*

**18/P/00410: Neville Johnson, 242 High Street, Guildford**

We objected to this listed building application for a new shop front and fascia because there has been an increasing recent tendency for High Street shop fronts to be painted black or dark grey. We objected to this tendency to make the High Street look dark and dismal particularly due to the loss of definition of mouldings and architraves, in this case the fine mouldings around the entrance door and delicate tracery over the door.

*(Approved. Our objections were not shared with the officers.)*

**18/P/00553: The Legion, Millbrook, Guildford, GU1 3XJ**

We objected to this proposal for the conversion of an existing bar/ nightclub building to create twelve residential units for reasons of overdevelopment and poor design likely to result in inferior living conditions for future occupants. We were concerned that the way the ground floor flats are accessed directly from the pavement undesirable for reasons including those identified by the police. The fact that these doors are fully glazed increases our concern.

The large areas of ground floor glazing on the Millbrook elevation may lead to a sense of being "in a goldfish bowl" or being more vulnerable notwithstanding that the glazing may be opaque: movement or eg a TV/computer screen would still be discernible from outside, especially at night. The developer promises there will be satisfactory sound attenuation on this busy road, but we question whether this will be achieved in practice on a busy urban road with a bus stop opposite. The property is close to a Pelican crossing which will give rise to frequent "bleeping" and the additional noise of accelerating vehicles. We believed these units are more like hotel rooms and too small to provide long-term good quality living conditions.

*(Awaiting a decision)*

**18/P/00609: Guildford Harbour Hotel, 3 Alexandra Terrace, Guildford**

We had objected to this application for an additional apartment on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floor and this time we considered proposed revisions. These revisions were considered to provide a minimal reduction and we repeated our original objections.

*(Awaiting a decision)*

**18/P/00634: Land to the rear of, 12 Sydney Road, Guildford, GU1 3LJ**

The proposal was for the subdivision of land and for the erection of a pair of semi-detached two storey properties, together with associated works including alterations to the boundary wall. We agreed with the Officers findings in the pre-application response of 11/12/2017, and in particular with the statement that “the principle of development here is not appropriate or acceptable, in terms of the Conservation Area Appraisal which identifies the wall and the coach house on Warren Road as features of significance that should be protected”.

*(Refused)*

**18/P/00643: Land adjacent to 26 Waterden Road, Guildford**

We had no objection to this application as originally submitted and we considered the proposed revisions. We were not clear of the intentions. However, we restated our view of the importance of retaining the frontage trees and of having a brick and stone wall along the frontage.

*(Approved. There is no mention in the case officer’s report that our suggestions were considered.)*

**18/P/00685: 64 High Street, Guildford**

We strongly objected to this application for the installation of roll-up security shutters to be fixed to the frontage to the building. The roll-up shutters are to be housed in box type containers. Both the boxes containing the shutters and (at night) the shutters themselves will have a seriously adverse impact on the character of the historic High Street.

*(Refused)*

**18/P/00763: Land fronting Pho restaurant, 21 Tunsgate, Guildford, GU1 3QS**

**Proposal:** Change of use of highway land outside Unit 21, Tunsgate Quarter for an outdoor seating area comprising of 6 tables and 24 chairs.

The Society welcomed the proposal to create an outdoor seating area associated with this restaurant as part of a strategic plan to introduce such use to the newly paved Tunsgate in a coordinated and carefully controlled manner.

*(Approved)*

**18/P/00842: Pizza Express, 237 High Street, Guildford, GU1 3BJ**

The Society objected to this proposal to increase the impact of the signage. In our opinion the existing signage is ample. It exceeds in a number of instances the preferred dimensions by a material extent. It very clearly indicates the nature of the business being undertaken at the property and by virtue of its size and colour the principal signage constitutes a significant advertisement of the brand. In the Society’s opinion it is already dominant in the street scene. The proposal to materially increase the surface area given over to advertising by, for example, increasing the depth of the fascia, as well as the size of lettering, is unnecessary and detrimental to the street scene. There is also a real risk that if permitted the precedent would be seized on by other occupiers with the overall effect of substantially increasing the visual clutter to the detriment of the street scene and for no net gain on the part of any individual occupier.

*(Refused and Appeal dismissed.)*

**18/P/00857: 6 Lower Edgeborough Road, Guildford, GU1 2DT**

The Society objected to this proposed residential development of 11 one and two bedroom flats which it considered an overdevelopment of the plot. Extending development to the full width of the plot is overbearing on the street scene and the proposal is reliant on the neighbouring properties for appropriate landscaping whereas this should be provided within the development plot. The proposed building would be too close to the boundary contrary to the residential design guide. The narrow tunnel to the rear car parking is likely to result in conflict between vehicles wishing to pass in opposite directions; the limited setback means that any vehicles seeking to access the car park would, whilst giving way to potentially egressing vehicles, project backwards onto the highway, close to a junction and on a bend, thus creating a traffic hazard.

We considered the bulk of the front elevation to be excessive vertically as well as horizontally because the proposal not only adds a second-floor, but also adds substantial dormer constructions to the roof. The fact that the height of the ridge is similar to the existing building in no way reduces the overbearing nature of the proposal.

There is no amenity space on a scheme, which might house two or three dozen persons, save for a small area which is reserved to one specific unit.

*(Refused)*

**18/P/00870: The Reve Pavilion Surgery, 2A Guildford Park Road, Guildford**

The Society considered this scheme for 3 two bedroom two-storey dwellings to be overdevelopment of a small plot with awkward narrow access situated in a particularly congested area. This part of Guildford Park Road often experiences queuing traffic with vehicles setting down outside the station entrance, parked taxis and a pair of bus stops where multiple buses can wait for significant periods. We believe that the proposed design and small plots are not in keeping with their surroundings. The small-scale and back land location of the proposal means that any merits the design may have will be overwhelmed by the neighbouring properties; there is inadequate critical mass in the proposal, which is likely to continue to jar against its established traditional neighbours. We do not believe the triangular amenity space proposed can really function as such given its small size and position. The relocation of the cycle storage facilities now occupies much of the limited private amenity spaces and appears to us to offer a poor aesthetic, and does not overcome previous objections.

*(Approved)*

**18/P/00874: 64 Haydon Place, Guildford, GU1 4LR**

**Proposal:** The change of use of the premises from Use Class A1 to a two bedroom flat.

The Society's concern over this proposal was primarily in regard to the basement element. We feared that the proposal would result in substandard accommodation to the detriment of future occupiers. The apparent current lack of any daylighting to the basement suggests that the present and recent use of this area is minimal. We doubt that the area has ever been considered habitable. In that sense we saw this proposal to be a very significant change and considered it could be overdevelopment. The proposed basement bedroom accommodation appears dependent on the creation of two front light wells occupying part of the narrow pavement for natural light and ventilation. The society was concerned that these might represent a hazard to pedestrians whilst also being inadequate for their intended function. There is evidence of previous small openings within the pavement, but not necessarily of open light wells. It is possible the applicant has no right to reinstate or enlarge these. There is a grating outside nearby number 82. If this is the intended solution here the Society questions whether living conditions will be acceptable. If daylighting and ventilation is considered acceptable, litter is prone to fall between the gratings and the design would need to ensure that this could be removed periodically, whilst providing for maintenance access to repaint the window frames as necessary. The design comprising basement bedroom and first-floor shower and toilet facilities is, in our opinion, unsatisfactory in the context of a wholesale refurbishment. We believe the applicant should seek a better design solution.

*(Approved after amending plans were received omitting the basement and thus the light wells were not needed. Approval has been given for only a one bedroom flat.)*

**18/P/00915: The Clockhouse, 140 London Road and 72 Boxgrove Road, Guildford, GU1 1FF**

**Proposal:** Retrospective advertisement consent for 2 x free standing boards, 2 x hanging estate agents signs, 3 x flags, 3 x hanging signs and 3 x banners.

We strongly objected to the extent of the proposed advertising on this gateway site as we felt that the advertising should be limited to that necessary to alert passers-by to the existence of vacant units. We were concerned that the majority of the proposed advertising is intended to promote the developer's nationwide brand, rather than the accommodation available within Guildford. We believe this to be inappropriate and request the authority to refuse consent for these elements. We believe that three signs of modest size it would be adequate.

We also believe that the duration of the consent should be explicitly limited to several months only.

*Approved, after two large signboards were removed. Also approval was given for a limited time and the signs must all be removed by 22 February 2019.)*

**18/P/00975: 14 Tunsgate Quarter, Guildford, GU1 3QY**

We objected to the internally illuminated sign facing the cobbled High Street where "illuminated signs of any description are not normally appropriate" and to the high-level "signage zone" fronting the High Street. This signage is far too large and if an uncontrolled approval is given there is scope for an ever-changing round of increasingly garish signage. Allowing a single tenant to feature in such a prominent advertisement is misleading to the general public. It is also likely to encourage other tenants of the scheme to seek prominent advertisements. Consequently we believe approval would be a particularly bad precedent for the High Street.

*(Refused despite officer recommendation to approve. Appeal upheld)*

**18/P/00982: Wanborough Business Centre, West Flexford Lane**

We objected to the earlier application for development at this site (application No. 17/P/00347). In essence, our objections were based on the fact that this site is within the Green Belt where there is a clear presumption against "inappropriate development" such as new housing. We expressed concern that the proposed development of additional houses covers much more than that covered by the present employment related buildings.

We restated these objections.

*(Assumed withdrawn as there is no record on GBC website)*

**18/P/01014: Land North of Keens Lane and, Tangle Lane, Guildford**

We objected to this application for 148 dwellings and a care home. As determined by the Planning Inspector in the appeal decision in respect of the proposed development at Wisley Airfield, the consideration of this application is premature pending consideration of this site through the review of the Local Plan. We reserved the right to comment on the detail of this application as and when the status of the land is changed in consequence of the Local Plan review.

*(Approved. Since our original letter detailing the above there have been many meetings with the applicant and their advisers. As a result, amending plans have been submitted twice with the result that approval has been given. However, as the officer's report has not been uploaded we cannot explain why consent was given. We were not given the opportunity to reconsider the amending plans)*

**18/P/01020: Land at 94-100 Woodbridge Road and 5-10, Leapale Road, Guildford**

This was a prior notification of proposed demolition and we had no objection. However, in view of the considerable uncertainty over the timing of any future redevelopment of North Street we were mindful that for some time this land may remain as a cleared site. For that reason we suggest that: (a) in the

interests of securing some improvement in the quality of the environment of this part of the town centre, care needs to be taken over the quality and design of the perimeter fencing, and (b) consideration should also be given to some positive interim use of the vacant site – e.g. temporary car parking with some planting.

*(Approved prior to our letter being received. In any event our letter does not affect planning decisions.)*

## **DECISIONS ON APPLICATIONS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED BUT NOT FULLY RESOLVED AT THE TIME OF THE LAST REPORT**

### **17/P/00509: Land at Guildford College Campus, Stoke Road, Guildford, GU1 1EZ**

**Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment to provide purpose built student accommodation with 553 bed spaces, 149 sqm D1 floor space, and 969 sqm of student amenity space including a gym and student hub and associated works.**

We wrote objecting to the proposal as first submitted. Our main objection was the proposed height. At seven stories and combined with considerable bulk, the proposed development was too high and would have a detrimental 'urbanising' impact on the adjacent Stoke Park. We suggested that five storeys would be more appropriate. We examined the amended documents and noted the removal of the glazed blocks between buildings, the reduction in height of the North East block from seven to six stories and the reduction in student beds by 5% were all moves in the right direction. However we still considered that the building was too massive given its close proximity to Stoke Park. As Guildford town grows upwards with most new buildings exceeding their predecessors in height, we considered it of the utmost importance that Stoke Park maintains its character as the largest open space in the town. Large buildings on its perimeter diminish its apparent scale, and hence our judgement that the height of such buildings should be kept down to five stories.

*(Refused but Appeal upheld)*

### **17/P/01315: Land north of Poyle Road, Tongham, GU10 1DY**

**Proposal: Outline application for up to 150 residential dwellings, including provision of up to 35% affordable housing, creation of new vehicular access off Poyle Road, and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. All matters reserved except accessibility to the site, for vehicles in terms of the positioning and treatment of the access to the site.**

The Guildford Society objects to applications for development on Green Belt land except where very special circumstances pertain. In the Local Plan currently being considered it is proposed to designate land including the proposed site as Green Belt. We saw no special circumstances and therefore would support the Council if it objected to the application.

*(Refused and Appeal dismissed)*

### **17/P/02088: 63 Cranley Road, Guildford**

We wrote that replacement of a single dwelling in this residential area by a block of flats needs to be done with great respect for the spacious character of the area, the scale of its buildings and its green nature. We objected to the proposed removal of the tree in the front garden. Our objection would be met if the applicant undertakes to plant and maintain another tree of eventual similar size.

*(Still not yet decided – January 2019)*

### **17/P/02193: Unit 4, 75-78 Woodbridge Road, Guildford**

This proposed a new restaurant with ancillary takeaway. We were concerned about the parking provision. People wishing to pick up a takeaway will be tempted to park in the road causing an obstruction to the bus lane. They will not find the five parking spaces round the back.

*(Refused but upheld at Appeal.)*

**17/P/02579: The Pirbright Institute, Ash Road, Pirbright**

This was a reserved matters application for the erection of a new 4 storey building, with ancillary structures. We wrote on the original outline application 15/P/00604. We did not object but commented that “rigorous investigation needs to be made of the case for approving such a major development such as to justify setting aside the prima facie conflict with Green Belt policy.” We found it disappointing that the detailed proposals of the current application are for starkly dark cuboid blocks which make no attempt to harmonise with the countryside.

*(Approved October 2018)*

**17/P/02641: National Tyre Service, Woodbridge Trade & Retail Park, Guildford**

We objected strongly to this proposal for illuminated displays. At 20' x 10' plus wide border it is not only a very large sign but, importantly, is totally out of character with the street scene of Guildford. This kind of proposal for large hoardings with intermittent displays changing every ten seconds is perhaps common on the outskirts of American towns, but is wholly alien to even the outskirts of Guildford. This animation is also a dangerous distraction to drivers. We use the word ‘intermittent’ deliberately, because we consider once every ten seconds to be so. The Council’s Guidance states that intermittent illumination should be avoided. [Intermittent means ‘not continuous or steady’ according to the OED.]

We urged Planning Officers to resist the temptations offered by modern electronics. It is now relatively easy to create what are in effect huge public TV screens based on LED technology. These are acceptable in Las Vegas, but not in our town. They usually have a colour palette and content quite at variance with the local built environment. They also introduce light pollution at night.

*(Refused and an appeal has been dismissed.)*

Summary Table of Letters Written and Responses [Link here](#)

John Wood - January 2019