

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

6 OCTOBER 2020

Item 4. Questions from Members of the Public

- i) The following question has been received from Lesley Banfield, Chair of the Haslemere Vision Neighbourhood Planning Group:

"Preamble: There has been a paradigm shift in Haslemere. We have always been aware of how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful part of the world and of the need to protect it. That used to mean resisting development, but in the midst of a housing crisis, residents have risen to the challenge of finding solutions. Few people living in a rural idyll would willingly move towards a more crowded environment and yet this is what residents have voted to do. They are willing to intensify development within the settlement boundaries as set out in the draft Neighbourhood Plan, in order to meet housing targets without encroaching further into ecologically sensitive surroundings. This is the very opposite of a NIMBY attitude – build next door rather than on greenfield please! The NPPF supports Haslemere's approach, stating that the requirement to meet housing numbers should not be a reason in and of itself to build onto AONB or AGLV and encouraging windfall development within settlements. The Haslemere Neighbourhood Planning team have previously stated that the housing allocation for the area will be met without encroaching into AONB or AGLV and are happy to demonstrate and evidence this point.

It is unsettling therefore to find this shift not reflected in the draft LPP2. The allocations for Haslemere do not follow the founding principles of the Neighbourhood Plan or of National policy.

Q: Do you believe that the Haslemere Neighbourhood Planning team have been adequately consulted on site allocations and are you comfortable for the draft LPP2 to include three sites in AONB despite this going against the strategy designed by Haslemere residents?"

Response from Cllr Andy MacLeod, Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy:

The number of homes that is required in Haslemere was set out by the government through the examination of Waverley's Local Part 1. Either Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) or the Haslemere Neighbourhood Plan could be used to make the site allocations, but the Council has no choice but to allocate enough sites for housing to meet the objectively-assessed number of homes required in the plan period. Haslemere Town Council has decided that they do not want to undertake the site allocations for Haslemere and therefore has asked Waverley to make housing allocations through LPP2.

In doing so, Waverley has engaged with the Town Council, both through the formal consultations it has carried out and also through meetings with them. Both Councils agree that Local Plan Part 2 should allocate, as far as possible, housing sites within the settlement boundary or on rural brownfield

sites (also known as previously-developed land) and the Council has been proactive in seeking to find sites in these locations.

Through this process, Waverley has been able to propose the allocation of number of sites within the settlement boundary and rural brownfield land. This includes two brownfield sites in the AONB, The Old Grove, High Pitfold, Hindhead, and the National Trust Car Park, Branksome Place, Hindhead Road. However, in both cases, housing will involve the redevelopment of existing buildings and/or existing areas of hardstanding. Their development therefore accords with the thrust of national planning policy, which is to encourage the use of this type of land effectively. Through its Development Management function, the Borough Council will ensure that any housing development on these sites will be carefully designed, and appropriate to its location.

To pass the public examination of Local Plan Part 2, the sites that Waverley allocates must have robust evidence that they can be delivered within the plan period. Despite our greatest efforts to meet all of the government's housing requirement for Haslemere on sites within settlements and/or on rural brownfield land, there are just not sufficient sites available where such evidence of deliverability exists. Waverley therefore has had to propose a greenfield allocation in this instance. The Council considers Red Court, Scotland Lane, which is not within the AONB, to be the most appropriate of the greenfield sites in Haslemere that have been promoted to us and are satisfied that the proposed allocations as set out in the draft LPP2 represent the most appropriate approach in terms of delivering a Local Plan that can be found sound at an independent Examination.

- ii) The following question has been received from Howard Brown, General Secretary of Haslemere South Residents Association:

“As the local residents group, (Haslemere South Residents Association) we are concerned about the inclusion of Red Court (now DS06) as an allocated site in the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2.

Our question: **How can this site be included in the Waverley Borough LPP2 when:**

- 1) the housing need for Haslemere can be met through other sites - including a large brown field opportunity that has come forward through WBC's own call for sites. We understand the call for sites was specifically intended to avoid building on protected areas of land which the community of Haslemere value so highly- as demonstrated via the Neighbourhood Plan public consultation and the very high level of objection to the Red Court planning application.
- 2) an application to develop on DS06 has recently been rejected by Haslemere Town Council Planning Committee
- 3) DS06 directly contradicts the Town Council approved emerging Neighbourhood Plan (noting that 89% of the public reject large

developments on greenfield, protected land outside the original settlement boundary) – DS06 lies outside the settlement boundary as drawn in that Neighbourhood Plan

- 4) the current Red Court planning application has approximately 500 public objections, including objections from a range of societies and community groups including Haslemere Vision (Neighbourhood Plan), Haslemere Society (over 550 members), Blackdown and Hindhead National Trust, CPRE, Haslemere South Residents Association (300 members) which must be considered under the Localism Act
- 5) including DS06 contravenes NPPF policies (including clauses 50, 102, 170, 172, 174, 175 and 180) and WBC's own planning policy to protect such sites that are deemed AONB and have a rich and varied biodiversity.”

Response from Cllr Andy MacLeod, Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy:

Waverley agrees that Local Plan Part 2 should allocate as far as possible sites within the settlement boundary or on rural brownfield sites (also known as previously-developed land) and Waverley has been proactive in finding sites and undertook a recent “call for sites” exercise to ask for landowners to promote potential sites in these locations. However, it is important to note that the Council’s Local Plan Part 2 will ultimately be examined on whether the sites that are allocated for housing will deliver the houses required by the government. This means that there has to be sufficient evidence that the sites are suitable, available and achievable for new housing that will stand up to external scrutiny. Currently there is not the evidence to demonstrate this on all of the sites that have been promoted to us.

One of the sites that presently does not have the evidence that it can be delivered within the plan period is the Royal School, Farnham Lane. This site lies within 400m of the Wealden Heaths Special Protection Area. Based on the information that the School gave the Council during the call for sites on what type of housing it wants to develop, Natural England, who are the government’s advisers on wildlife protection, have told us that they would object to the proposals when it comes to examination should the site be allocated for such a use . This is because of the impact housing on this site would have on protected birds habitats in the Special Protection Area.

As there are not enough sites within the settlement or on rural brownfield land to meet the housing required for Haslemere set out by the government in Local Plan Part 1, Waverley has had to allocate a greenfield site. A number of greenfield sites in Haslemere have been promoted to us as an allocation in Local Plan Part 2 that have robust evidence that they can be delivered. Out of these, Waverley is proposing Red Court, Scotland Lane, because it is not within the AONB and is considered to be the most appropriate. The current planning application for 50 homes at Red Court will be determined on its own relative planning merits in due course and is not relevant to the Executives consideration of Part 2 of the Local Plan.

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