West Horsley Parish Council

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19 November 2019

Dear Ms Coleman,

West Horsley Parish Council (WHPC) are writing to express our concern and disappointment that Planning Application 19/P/01210 20 The Street, West Horsley, was approved at the Planning Committee on Wednesday 6th November, 2019.

Significant evidence was provided through the detailed objections submitted by the Parish Council, the key points emphasised by the two speakers who spoke to object, and the considerable number of objections submitted by our residents. This clearly and emphatically demonstrated that this application was NOT compliant with West Horsley's Neighbourhood Plan.

The strength of our policies WH1: West Horsley Conservation Area and WH2: Design Management in the Village Settlement were more than supported on balance by the NPPF at Chapter 16, Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. This states at paragraph 193 'when considering the impact of any proposed development…great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of the proposed level of harm that may result', and at paragraph 194 is clear that 'harm to the setting of Grade II Listed Buildings (of which there are three adjacent to the site) requires exceptional justification for development'. This was not provided by the applicant.

WHPC is of the firm opinion that this application should have been refused, a fact reflected in the closeness of the vote, only carried by the Chairman of the Planning Committee's casting vote.
A number of the Planning Committee expressed their support of our Neighbourhood Plan and its policies, however a number did not, and it is very clear during the webcast that the Neighbourhood Plan was simply disregarded by several members of the Committee. As a reminder, West Horsley's Neighbourhood Plan carries full weight as part of the Development Plan for Guildford and must be adhered to.

It is quite apparent that since the adoption of the new Local Plan in April this year, the majority of planning applications brought to the Planning Committee appear to be extremely contentious. We were all reliably informed by the previous administration that whilst many sites allocated in the Local Plan would be acceptable and would therefore be approved, each site would be considered on its own merits and that some sites would not necessarily be suitable, hence the excessive so called 'buffer' of increased housing number.

In the case of 20 The Street, West Horsley, it is the Parish Council's firm view that this was one of those sites that should not have been approved. Located in the heart of our Conservation Area, at the edge of our village settlement in a distinctly rural location, this site will not prove sustainable, and will change the appearance of this part of our village forever.

We would appreciate your urgent attention in relation to this matter and ask that you provide the Parish Council with a response that explains why this planning application was approved despite not complying with West Horsley's Neighbourhood Plan as it is required to do.

We would also like a specific response from you as to why this planning application was approved despite no exceptional circumstances being provided by the application, as required, in relation to paragraph 194 of the NPPF, harm to Grade II listed buildings.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Young
Lead for Planning, West Horsley Parish Council

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