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No to home plan despite local support

by Alan Golden

THE latest attempt to replace a derelict chalet bungalow on the site of an 18th century mansion between Hascombe and Dunsfold has failed.

Even though there was unanimous local support for the proposed new house at Park Hatch, the majority of Waverley Borough Council's Eastern area planning committee voted against it.

The decision, which supported planning officers' recommendations on the basis that the size of the new home made it contrary to policy, given its green belt location, has dismayed people in Hascombe who were hoping to see the current eyesore replaced.

They had been united in opposition to an earlier ambitious, but ultimately unsuccessful, plan to build the first zero-carbon country seat in Britain on the site, but agreed the new scheme by new applicants for a much more modest house was the ideal solution.

When it was first discussed by the planning committee a majority of its members appeared to be in favour of the scheme.

However, a decision could not be taken because information about the possible

presence of wildlife on the site was not available, as a result of which the issue was deferred.

By the time the matter was debated at the latest meeting the make-up of the committee had changed slightly, some members were absent and the majority was with those opposed on policy grounds.

In the event, the report for which the issue was originally deferred raised no objection to the proposal on biodiversity issues, the committee heard.

Cllr Maurice Byham, one of the ward representatives, told the meeting: "I think localism should come in here. The parish council is very keen to see this application approved as the right way forward and as an improvement, and the neighbours themselves, having been strongly opposed to the previous application, are also extremely keen that this should be approved."

He also later pointed out, following comments made by other members of the committee, that the planning inspector who ruled out the modern country house did state that the site "deserved a building of distinction".

His fellow ward member, Cllr Richard Gates was, however, opposed.

He acknowledged that the proposal was "locally popular",

but said: "It is popular because of two previous applications on this site for very much larger buildings and I suppose it can therefore be seen to be popular because it eliminates any risk in future for an even larger building to be produced."

He said the council's officers were right and that the scheme should be rejected because the proposed building is "materially larger than the house it replaces".

Cllr Mike Band agreed, saying: "It is something of an improvement on what we saw in the previous application, and I can understand the local enthusiasm for it, but our policy is our policy and unless we can find exceptional circumstances we should stick with it."

"It is moving in the right direction, but it has to go a bit further before it would be really acceptable to me," he added.

Cllr Patricia Ellis declared that "policy has to be applied with common sense" and backed Hascombe Parish Council's view that 'the site deserves a house of distinction', adding: "The chalet bungalow is not a property of distinction. It is ugly on this rather lovely site."

When it came to the vote, though, there was a majority of six to three in favour of rejecting the application.

Council gets complaints about 'knee-high' grass

ROADSIDE verges across Waverley have been left uncut, sparking complaints from people facing knee-high grass outside their homes.

The problem is being blamed on the failure of Surrey County Council to provide all the relevant information to Waverley Borough Council, which took over the service in April.

This week, following complaints from people in various parts of the borough, Waverley was promising improvements.

"The first cuts have taken place across the borough to the schedule supplied by Surrey County Council, with a follow up due to start shortly," said a spokeswoman.

"However, Waverley is now

aware that a number of verges have not been cut.

"This was due to omissions in the information Waverley received from the county on which verges should be cut," she said.

The borough council has now had discussions with the county to address the issue and obtain a full list of verges.