



ELSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs Elaine Felton – Clerk
The Barrows,
Seale Road,
Elstead,
Surrey GU8 6LF

Email: elsteadpc.clerk@gmail.com

Chairman: Mr P.W. Murphy
Email: pwmurphy215@supanet.com

28th October 2015

Planning department,
Waverley Borough Council,
The Bury's,
Godalming,
Surrey GU7 1HR

For the attention of: Mr Matthew Evans

Dear Mr Evans,

The Parish Council has asked me to write to you to express its concern at the failure of planning officers to take fully into account the advice of the Parish Council on planning issues, and also to ignore their own planning guidelines.

A particular case in point is the advice from planning officers on application WA/2015/1305 (River House Cottage). This was the second application for a large and intrusive extension to a modest dwelling located in a prominent position in a conservation area in the village. Both applications were opposed by the Parish Council in strong terms, and also by a large number of neighbours and other village residents. Both applications were supported by officers: the first was refused by Councillors in committee, but the second was accepted in committee.

Two aspects of this case give rise to concern. First, on both occasions, officers seem to have paid little regard to the views of the Parish Council, even though they claim in their report that they have taken the Council's views into account. If they have indeed considered the Council's views, it can only have been to disregard them entirely.

Second, the officers gave no explanation of why they chose to disregard Waverley's own planning guidance as expressed in its Supplementary Planning Document dealing with residential extensions, specifically paragraph 9.9. This contains 4 specific criteria which front extensions should meet in order to be acceptable: normally single storey; if 2 storey, roof ridge should be lower than ridge on existing roof; should not extend more than 2 metres from front wall (if 2 storey); and consideration should be given to the impact of the extension in relation to the building line. All of these specific criteria were disregarded in the officers' 2 reports which recommended approval.

In both applications, the extension proposed was 2 storey, extending 5.5 metres beyond the front wall and beyond the building line, and in both cases the roof line of the extension was higher than or as high as the roof line of the existing building. No explanation was given as to why all of the guidelines in the SPD had been disregarded and what (if any) were the exceptional reasons for disregarding them. It inevitably raises the question of why have any guidelines at all if in an individual case all of them can be ignored without explanation.

The Parish Council is seriously concerned at Waverley's failure to follow its own guidelines in this case and also to ignore the strongly expressed views of the Council and local residents, in both cases without adequate explanation. The River House case is by no means the only example. No doubt you will wish to respond on both points.

Perhaps you could also explain the Borough Council's policy in regard to Parish Council comments in general. In this regard, it would in our view be good practice for planning officers to be prepared to set out the reasons for rejecting parish council advice in cases where this was clearly at odds with the officers' eventual recommendation. If there are sound planning reasons for rejecting the advice, Parish Councils need to be aware of them. If there are not, then the Councils will at least be able to consider the timely recourse to judicial review.

Yours sincerely

E. Felton
Clerk to Elstead Parish Council

