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**Response by Compton Parish Council to Appeal ref APP/Y3615/W/24/3339851 for the planning application ref: 22/P/01999 for the Harrow, The Street, Compton Guildford**

**Date 16.05.24**

Compton Parish Council support Guildford Borough Council’s reason for refusing planning permission and therefore object to the applicant’s appeal APP/Y3615/W/24/3339851

1             The application was refused on 16th January 2024, on the following grounds:

‘The proposal, by reason of the scale of the development, would constitute inappropriate development, and there are no very special circumstances that have been demonstrated to justify the scale of the development and outweigh the harm to the Green Belt, contrary to paragraph 154 of the NPPF.’

1a The application is for change of use from a public house to five domestic dwellings, including the demolition of one section, renovation of the former public house (plots 3–4), and new development on both sides to form three additional houses via plots 1, 2, and 5.

1b The additions to both sides of what is already one of the largest properties on the street front effectively double its width; we therefore support Guildford Borough Council’s reason for refusing planning permission.

1c Compton Parish Council’s comments are largely based on the size of the property, whether it is in keeping with the character of other street-facing properties within the village, and whether local and national policies are adhered to. Given the acceptance of public harm resulting from the loss of amenity of both the pub and the carpark, along with its location within the Green Belt, conservation, and AONB, Compton Parish Council would wish to see greater sensitivity shown in terms of the overambitious proportions of the application.

**Compton Parish Council wishes to see this appeal rejected for the following reasons**:

**2             Greenbelt Policy: Limited Infill**

2a           Having considered the application, we do not believe that the property qualifies as limited infill. The extensions to the right and left of the main building double its size and impact, and further development to the rear makes this building anything but modest in size, as the application suggests. On a smaller scale, the concept of insetting the extensions (forming plots 1, 2, and 5) from the street view might work, but the main building is the largest building on the street (others, of which there are very few, are set back and screened).

2b           Limited infill should have ‘regard to the nature and size of the development itself, the location of the application site, and its relationship to other existing developments adjoining it and adjacent to it’. The extension on both sides would create a building that would be out of scale with the character of the village and its surroundings. Furthermore, plot 5 would have a negative impact on access (addressed separately).

2c           A fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open, as defined in the Framework. The openness of a Green Belt has a spatial as well as a visual aspect.

2d           Adhering to the Green Belt and conservation policy has resulted in the retention of the character of the village while simultaneously allowing development. The main street consists largely of smaller, older properties fronting the street and larger, newer properties that are set back from the main road. Almost all properties have the benefit of trees, hedges, and other forms of greenery, with countryside views in between. Plot 5 would detract from the current open view, and the creation of a block of five properties without a gap between them would harm the openness and have a detrimental effect on the visual aspect.

2e           LPSS paragraph 4.3.23 states: ‘Limited infilling is considered to be the development of a small gap in an otherwise continuous built-up frontage or the small-scale redevelopment of existing properties within such a frontage’. The frontage in Compton is not continuous but is as previously described. We therefore do not believe it to be suitable for infill on the scale proposed. The appellant notes that the conservation officer did not object to the categorization of limited infill. We would draw your attention to the conclusion in the conservation report (bottom of page 10) that concludes that new housing has been allocated in the area but does so on the basis that the report is for site A35, which is Wisley, not Compton. Wisley is approximately 12 miles from Compton.

2f            Mention of property where plot 5 is shown, some 100 years ago, should, in our view, be given little to no weight. This pre-dated motorised traffic and was demolished ahead of or around the time of the introduction of emergency vehicles. At this time, houses were built ad hoc, without planning permission, on the common and in fields. This predates the Green Belt, conservation, and AONB, and apart from being of historic interest, it does not seem relevant in terms of the current planning application.

2g           We believe the proposal, as it stands to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which would have a significant impact on the spatial aspect of Green Belt openness and the street scene. The proposal, by virtue of its scale, form, positioning, and visual prominence, would have a detrimental effect on the character of the original building, and its prominence would impact the setting of listed and locally listed houses nearby. As such, it is considered that it would not enhance the setting and does not accord with policies. LPSS P2 6.14; LPSS P2 5; LPSS P7 NPPF 154 (C, E, G)

**3             Conservation Area**

3a           The number of listed buildings and buildings of local or architectural interest were key factors in the approval of the two conservation areas. There are 40 listed buildings and structures in Compton; 38 are Grade II listed, and 2 are Grade I. An additional 36 are locally listed for period interest, the Harrow being one of these buildings.

3b           The Harrow is situated in the conservation area referred to as the ‘core of the village’. The 1996 report notes that ‘the area is characterised by attractive cottages, several of which are timber-framed and date back to the 16th century’. It notes the presence of grander houses, the use of local materials such as bargate stone and clay tiles, and the volume of listed houses. It also notes the importance of attractive views in between buildings into the surrounding countryside. A large block of five houses (essentially a small row of large terrace houses) would not be in keeping with the character of the village and, furthermore, would restrict open views of the countryside, which would not accord with the character of the conservation area.

3c           The Parish Council appreciates that refurbishment of the existing building (having fallen into disrepair) would improve the setting of the conservation area but would not wish to support, create, or encourage a precedent where buildings are intentionally left to decay in order to attain planning permission for expansion under the guise that anything is an improvement. The policy prioritises restoration over demolition. Likewise, the application is at odds with policy D18 5.350.

3d           The conservation report seeks to balance the harm created by losing a public amenity (which it rates as low) and the significance of the heritage asset (medium). We would argue that the loss of public amenity rates as medium (it was nominated pub of the year and has operated as a pub since at least 1841 and probably well before that). Residents did not seek to buy the pub because they were informed that it would be refurbished and reopened as a pub. At a later stage, when inquiries were made about the sale, residents were told it was too late.

3e           The impact of the loss of amenity will be greater because the local club closed (it is currently open on a trial basis for 2 nights a week and is run by volunteers). The one and only remaining public house in the village (the Withies) is currently for sale. As was previously stated, in its conclusion, the report states that the site is allocated for housing under A35 of the Local Plan strategy and sites. A35 refers to the Wisley site. There is no specific housing allocation for Compton apart from limited infill, which is addressed above.

3f            Details of the design are acceptable and in keeping with neighbouring newly built properties, but the scale and size, we believe, would be detrimental to the street scene, the overall appearance of the village, and the conservation area and would negatively impact neighbouring properties. It should be noted that a survey to evaluate the integrity of the wall between Grade II listed Tyrone Cottage and the access route showed structural vulnerabilities. These would be further exacerbated by narrowing the access, which would in turn drive traffic closer to the wall of the neighbouring cottage, as we understand the size of the verge that acts as some protection for the flank wall of Tyrone Cottage will be reduced in width. In the event of approval being given, we would wish to see the verge retained and remedial action for harm caused and evidence of the agreed parking area for the cottage.

3g           The proposal, by virtue of its scale, form, position, and visual prominence, would have a detrimental effect on the character of the original building and the setting of the conservation area. As such, it is considered that it does not accord with conservation policies. D1 (1) D1 (4) D1 (17) Local Policy D (23.3)

**4: Very Special Circumstances**

4a           The very special circumstances argued by the appellant via a viability appraisal report are based around financial benefits for the developer. We do not believe that a development that contravenes local and national policy should be permitted on this basis. There is ample room at the rear for the additional property(s), and their omission would not impact Guildford’s housing needs where the five-year housing land supply is met and windfall sites exceed those expected. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated. NPPF 13 (152) states *Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*

4b           The application for five new properties would effectively result in four over and above the existing property (owner accommodation). Any need for affordable homes will not be met by this development and would not outweigh the harm to the greenbelt and conservation area.

4c The recent new builds, along with plots with existing planning permission, collectively make up the very limited number of houses needed in the village. There is no housing need at borough or local level above and beyond that which has already been allocated. Guildford has a seven year land supply and there are therefore no very special circumstances in terms of additional housing need that would warrant development of this size and visual prominence in a highly protected area. It should also be noted that the strategic site, Blackwell Farm, with an allocation of 1,800 homes (1,500 during the Plan period) is partially within Compton Parish.

**5             Character and Appearance**

5a           The vast majority of street-facing properties predate the 18th and 19th centuries, and many are from the from the 17th and 16th centuries. The Harrow is the only property without any garden frontage, its doors (unused in living memory) opening out directly onto a narrow pavement that adjoins a very busy road.

5b           Great care has been taken to ensure that Compton retains its character, where the street scene has remained much the same since the Harrow featured in old Challen and Frith postcards. Large-scale post-war housing was built 70–100 years ago around the Green, and this was set back from the street and/or screened.

5c           The development of the Harrow into five private dwellings will result in the loss of a much-needed car park as well as a public amenity. While this is not contested, the combination of the loss of the two important facilities (the pub and the car park) would be further compounded if the character of the street were changed forever too. Concerns have also been raised about setting a precedent for future requests for infill and the impact this would have on the look and feel of the village.

**6: Loss of amenity**

6a           A case was made by the appellant via the Fleuret report that, because of limited car parking, most of the clientele at the Harrow were local and that any loss of amenity could be mitigated by alternative premises.

6b           The Compton Club and Withies Inn are cited. See comments 3e. Given the considerable weight given to these venues as alternative sites, this must be considered a material change.

6c           It should also be noted that while the Harrow benefited from local patronage, the carpark was perfectly adequate for the significant number of passersby that also used the pub, as did groups attending weddings, funerals, and christenings at the church nearby. Compton Little Theatre used it for rehearsals, pre- and post-performance gatherings, and as a local meeting place. Its loss as an amenity is significant, and we believe considerable weight should be given to this when assessing any perceived benefit to the local community. As it stands, the community has lost a vital asset and gained a building that is out of keeping with the street scene and character of this historic village.

**7             Access**

7a           Senior Countryside Access Officer notes that the proposed block plan submitted extends beyond the ownership of the applicant and incorporates the unregistered land over which the Public Footpath runs, a strip of approximately 3.3 m. The appellant states that the minimum width of the shared access route is 5m. We understand that it is a little under this if the verge (that helps to protects the flank wall of Tyrone Cottage from damage from vehicles) is left intact.

7b           Any increase in traffic should not be at the detriment of pedestrians using the footpath and proposes a 'sign must be erected for motorists exiting the car park to make them aware of the public footpath and to give way to pedestrians’. There is, however, no reference to traffic entering the narrow access route from the B3000, where a car passes every few seconds. To give way to pedestrians, traffic would have to wait on the B3000 before turning into the property.

7 c Without these requirements being met, it is our opinion that the development will pose a risk to public users, which may have a detrimental effect on their right to use the path.

7d Highways notes that the number of trips will be less than previously. We would add that previous trips were outside peak hours, whereas new trips are likely to be at peak times.

7e The figures used by the applicant were based on general data for pubs in Surrey and were not specific to the Harrow Pub.

7f See comments under 3f regarding impact on the neighbouring cottage that will result if developers build up to the boundary.

**8             Conclusion**

Many of the issues raised would be solved by the removal of plot 5 (its presence affects openness, overall size, and access). At the very least, the plot should be reduced in width. Alterations to the roof line are insufficient.

Compton Parish Council supports the view that the application as it stands should be refused.

The proposal, by virtue of its scale, form, position, and visual prominence, would have a detrimental effect on the character of the original building, the setting of the conservation area, and the openness of the greenbelt. As such, it is considered that it does not accord with policies. D1 (1), D1 (4), and D1 (17) LPSS P2 6.14; LPSS P2 5; LPSS P7 NPPF 154 (C, E, G) NPPF 13 (152 & 153)