

A 'horror' story in the forest

Sir, - May I draw attention to yet another unwelcome planning application just submitted. Euphemistically labelled 'Hamlet in the Woods' by the developer, local residents have dubbed it 'Horror in the Woods'. It is to build 130 houses in Frensham Forest, an area of rolling mixed woodland and open land south of Farnham, along Frensham Vale.

Until recently, Frensham Forest was heavily wooded, but a thinning licence granted by the Forestry Commission allowed 1,300 trees to be felled. A condition of the licence was that trees should be replanted, which does not appear to have happened. Nonetheless, the land is still well-wooded, one of Farnham's vital green lungs countering the air pollution which now blights the town centre.

The proposed development will involve felling more trees and constructing houses, roads and other infrastructure. This area of countryside will inevitably be very adversely affected overall and destroyed in parts.

The new Waverley Local Plan is expected to be adopted in the near future. The Local Plan sets out where housing should be built. The locations do not include this site on Frensham Vale. The Local Plan says that the intrinsic beauty of the countryside should be recognised and safeguarded. This development will be entirely at odds with this approach.

The site is subject to flood risk, which the planning inspector in the April 2016 35 Frensham Vale appeal decision said was a reality and not a theoretical concern. The Frensham Forest applicants must evidence that no alternative location with a lower probability of flooding is available for development (the 'sequential test'). They have not done so. Sites which are appropriate and satisfy the sequential test are reflected in the Local Plan.

Thames Water has highlighted that the overloaded local sewage system does not have capacity to cope with sewage from 130 houses.

The development, given its size, will significantly worsen existing high peak traffic on Frensham Vale and surrounding lanes, especially as 43 houses have been approved for construction next door on Gardeners Hill Road. Local lanes are narrow; cars can hardly pass as it is. One access point to the development will be on an accident-prone blind spot. The developer proposes a 'magic paint' strip on the road surface to walk on instead of pavements, as there are none, which will simply not be safe for pedestrians.

All compelling reasons to object to this concreting of our countryside. Please do access the Waverley Council Planning website, application WA/2016/1266. The deadline is August 5 2016.

Jasper Evans, Frensham Vale, Farnham