



26 April 2024

## **WEY HILL FAIRGROUND SITE PROPOSALS**

Members may have seen the recent article in The Herald about proposals for development of the Fairground Site on Wey Hill. [You can see the article here.](#)

The site is currently a free car-park, divided into two areas: the larger part is mainly used by commuters from the nearby railway station, and the smaller section is used by local shoppers going to Weyhill. The Haslemere Youth Hub is also on the site, and it is proposed to relocate this to a new centre on part of the Weydown Road car park to make space for the proposed development. Consideration of options for development of the site has been underway for several years: it was listed as ‘Opportunity 1’ in the 2021 Neighbourhood Plan, when it was described as a ‘unique opportunity’ to gain a mixed commercial, residential and community-use development in the heart of the town and is included in the Local Plan. Haslemere Town Council (HTC) formed a working party to investigate the various options for the site and are working closely with Waverley Borough Council (WBC).

### **Proposals for a supermarket and flats**

WBC have now formally agreed to press ahead with investigating proposals for a shopping precinct with 32 affordable council flats above it on the site. ([You can see the report that went to WBC’s Executive Committee on 9 April here.](#))

Apparently two supermarkets have expressed an interest in the development. They have not been named but local rumour suggests Aldi and Lidl. These proposals are at an early stage and are exploratory so they may change, but the outline, of shopping facilities and affordable housing, is clear. This reflects an acceptance of the need for more affordable housing in the area together with the wish to repay the borrowing needed to develop the site, an estimated £20m, as quickly as possible. Under this plan, Waverley expect that the debt would be repaid in 26 years.

### **Potential concerns about the development**

While there are as yet no detailed proposals, any proposed development on this site, other than keeping it as a car park, raises potential concerns, particularly about the loss of parking space both at Weydown Road and on the Fairground site itself, and about potential for

additional congestion on Wey Hill and Lower Street. These are significant issues. Parking is already at a premium locally and there is a reasonable concern that commuters will simply take to parking further on local residential roads if nothing is done to prevent this. As to congestion, tailbacks from the lights outside Tesco already frequently run back past the railway bridge at busy times so any worsening of this would be a real concern on the grounds of both inconvenience and pollution. We, like other local organisations and no doubt the Town Council, will be pressing Waverley for solutions to these concerns.

### **The importance of consultation and the Society's role**

In principle, the Society supports development of the site, and we are keeping an open mind about the current proposals. The Society's Planning Group will form a view once there is sufficient information to do so and may at that point object to or raise concerns about specific planning applications. However, we recognise that members are unlikely to all have the same view about whatever detailed final proposals are made. Our key concern is therefore to ensure that there is meaningful consultation with the community. We will be pressing WBC to provide full information in accessible ways and to offer appropriate channels for people to give their views and raise concerns well ahead of any planning application. We know that our local town councillors are also keen to ensure the local community is properly consulted so we will be working with them where appropriate to try to deliver this.

### **What to do if you have concerns or questions**

The proposals are still at an early stage and as yet WBC have not set out how they propose to consult with local residents. However, if you have concerns you want to raise now, you can:

- Raise them with your local Town Councillor: ([e mail addresses here](#)) , or you can write to them care of the Town Hall at Haslemere Town Hall, High Street, Haslemere, GU27 2HG.
- Raise them with your borough Councillor - use [this link](#) to find your councillor and contact information:
- Email The Haslemere Society at [info@haslemeresociety.org.uk](mailto:info@haslemeresociety.org.uk). We will ensure that concerns raised with us reach the relevant councillors or are fed into the consultation process once that is announced, and the Planning Group will, of course, take such concerns into consideration when deciding its own response.

Paper prepared by:

**The Haslemere Society Planning Group**