

Planning Committee Annual Report (2025-2026) for Annual General Meeting of The Farnham Society

1. Executive Summary

During the **2025-2026 period**, the Planning Committee actively monitored, reviewed, and responded to development proposals across Farnham. Our overriding objective remains the protection of the historic character of the **Farnham Conservation Area**, defending the integrity of the **Farnham Neighbourhood Plan (FNP)**, and ensuring sustainable local growth.

This year has been defined by considerable developer pressure on our central retail spaces, edge-of-town schemes, and battles against inappropriate, short-lived materials like uPVC in historic settings. Most significantly, the committee has dedicated time to combating overbearing residential proposals that threaten to permanently disrupt our historic townscape.

2. Strategic Policy Framework & Design Trends

- **The Campaign Against uPVC & Inappropriate Materials:** A core theme this year has been resisting the creeping erosion of heritage properties. The committee has consistently objected to replacing original timber or historic metal frames with out-of-scale uPVC alternatives, which lack sympathetic frame proportions.
- **Enforcing Architectural Validation:** To prevent substandard applications from slipping through, we successfully lobbied Waverley Borough Council (WBC) to enforce strict validation rules. Developers can no longer rely on vague elevation drawings; they are now routinely required to submit precise 1:10/1:20 scale elevations and 1:1/1:2 full-size joinery cross-sections.
- **Protecting the Town Centre Economy:** We fought against the loss of primary shopping areas to substandard housing conversions, ensuring central commercial spaces remain viable for independent retail ventures.

3. Key Planning Interventions & Application Progress

The Major Frontline

- Centrum Business Park (WA/2024/01557 / Appeal Ref: 6009713)
 - **Current Status:** Refused by WBC / Applicant then appealed to the Planning Inspectorate. *DATE OF APPEAL 15th & 16th December 2026*
 - **The Society's Intervention:** This massive redevelopment scheme at 35-42 East Street—involving the demolition of existing buildings to construct up to 159 dwellings—presents an unprecedented threat to the scale of the town centre by including blocks of 6 storeys which is contrary to the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan (max 4 storeys). The Society strongly protested the developer's initial attempt to limit public re-consultation to a brief 14-day window, formally demanding proper face-to-face community consultation.
 - **Crucial Discoveries at Appeal:** In July 2026, the Ward Councillor, Cllr George Hesse, submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, identifying a critical scale

discrepancy in the appellant's technical evidence. When cross-referencing physical plan dimensions against the stated 1:100 scale block, the actual layout revealed that separation distances were exactly half of what was claimed. As a result, the proposed 5-to-6 storey "Block C" would sit less than 21 metres from the historic East Street Cottages (Nos. 41-53), stripping residents of privacy, daylight, and sunlight. We have urged the Inspector to uphold WBC's refusal and enforce Policies FNP1, FNP2, and TD1.

Town Centre Heritage & Retail

- **Old Lalys Chemist, 4A Downing Street - HMO Conversion (WA/2025/02366): *REFUSED*.**

The Society objected to transforming this prominent Grade II Listed retail unit (the former pharmacy) into a 4-person House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). We demonstrated that the applicant had failed to properly market the shop and highlighted that the total living area fell significantly below National Described Space Standards. WBC upheld our concerns and refused permission.

- **4A Downing Street - Window & Door Replacements (WA/2026/00338 & WA/2026/00339): *REFUSED*.**

Following the HMO refusal, the applicant sought to replace the building's original Crittall-style metal frames, gothic arch timber bow windows, and shopfront door with uPVC and composite materials. The committee conducted research to locate a specialist metal window restoration firm in Dorset to prove the original heritage features were entirely repairable. WBC agreed with our findings and refused the application, preserving a vital visual gateway to Downing Street.

- **50 West Street (WA/2026/01077): *GRANTED*.**

Following our initial successful intervention to halt standard determinations due to missing double glazing data and large-scale joinery drawings, this application has now been permitted. This case highlights our ongoing pressure on developers to ensure local design compliance before final permissions are issued.

- **Land at rear of 38 the Borough, Farnham WA/2026/00523: *APPLICATION WITHDRAWN***

Erection of 3 dwellings with amenity space refuse and cycle stores; erection of entrance gates and associated works.

- **39-40 Downing Street (WA/2026/00833): *GRANTED*.**

The Society successfully intervened to halt the application because the developer failed to provide large-scale joinery metrics or information regarding proposed double glazing. The application remains frozen until full architectural cross-sections are submitted.

- **8 St Georges Mews (WA/2025/01865): GRANTED.**
The Society prepared objections against replacing historic timber features with unsustainable uPVC windows within this conservation area. Though the council unfortunately permitted the change, this outcome has strengthened our resolve to hold a firmer line on materials moving forward.
- **Flat 3, Bishops Table, 27 West Street (WA/2026/01422): Pending.**
Demonstrating our commitment to balanced planning, we supported the installation of an internal platform lift within this Grade II listed asset. Because the system is low-impact and fully reversible, strict planning conditions were applied requiring full architectural recording of any historic floor timbers uncovered during construction.
- **Footpath Adj. 13 East Street - BT Street Hub (WA/2026/00609): REFUSED.**
Together with the Heritage Officer and Surrey Police the Society opposed a 3-metre-tall digital advertising hub unit, arguing it would cause visual clutter on the edge of the conservation area. WBC refused the unit because its location dangerously obstructed vital vehicle visibility splays onto East Street.

Edge-of-Town & Rural

- **Two Parcels of Land Separated by Burnt Hill Road, Wrecclesham (WA/2025/00971): REFUSED.**
Together with the Bourne Conservation Group, the Society strongly opposed this suburban-density footprint of 7 houses on a sensitive, semi-rural site. We argued that crowding houses tight to the treeline destroys the area's well-wooded character and violates Policy FNP8. Waverley Borough Council upheld local concerns, refusing the application. Our objection successfully highlighted severe traffic hazards at a narrow single-track bridge bend with poor sightlines, a complete lack of pavements and lighting under Local Plan Part 2, and potential downstream flooding risks to existing properties by encroaching on the Bourne Stream wildlife corridor.
- **Two Parcels of Land Separated by Burnt Hill Road, Wrecclesham (WA/2026/01709). NEW APPLICATION PENDING**

LLFA have objected
- **Weybourne & Badshot Lea Site (WA/2026/01125): PENDING DECISION.**
The Society formally objected to this outline planning application, which threatens a sensitive parcel designated as Countryside beyond the Green Belt. This site is not allocated in the FNP, and a previous attempt to develop the northern part was refused in June 2023. We highlighted that the scheme would cause harmful urban coalescence between Weybourne and Badshot Lea, destroy agricultural land, and violate landscape protections under Policies RE1 and FNP10. Furthermore, our representation targeted critical unresolved water management infrastructure, a complete lack of detailed traffic and cycling survey data, and the glaring failure to address housing placement directly under recently replaced high-voltage overhead power lines. The application remains frozen under a pending status while the applicant is forced to address these severe environmental and infrastructural deficiencies.

- **Waverley Lane (WA/2025/01270 & WA/2025/01277): *APPROVED***
The Society challenged this Reserved Matters application for representing cramped overdevelopment. We criticised the proposed poor-quality, machine-manufactured materials (such as synthetic white render and fake grey roof tiles). While WBC ultimately granted permission following the original Inspector's appeal decision, our robust pushback put the council and developers on notice regarding local design compliance.

Commercial & Gateway Developments

- **Beefeater Restaurant, Bourne Mill Business Park, Guildford Road (WA/2025/01495): *PENDING*.**
While supportive of Premier Inn's business need to expand room capacity, the Society strongly objected to the scale of this massive, four-storey annex configuration in Castle Ward. We challenged the developer's so-called "3-storey" description, proving that the window rhythm, visual bulk, and roofline gables completely conflict with Local Plan Part 1 Policy TD1 (Townscape and Design) and FNP1. The dominant design ignores the two-storey character of Guildford Road, provides a completely sterile, featureless north street elevation, and entirely fails to include safe pedestrian or cycle pathways connecting to the public realm.
WA/2026/01417 To Vary Condition 2 (Approved Plans) Of Wa/2025/01495 To Allow Alterations To Design And Landscaping; Discharge Of Conditions 6 (Biodiversity Net Gain) And 12 (Landscaping Scheme). *PENDING*
- **Headway House, Crosby Way (WA/2026/00205): *PENDING*.**
We submitted strong representations against a formulaic, industrial 66-bed care home design by LNT Developments overlooking the Bishop's Meadow, and was a retrograde step from a previously approved, more sensitive McCarthy & Stone scheme. We lobbied for a robust tree planting and landscape screening strategy to soften its sterile, repetitive facade.

4. Future Outlook & Goals (2026 - 2027)

- **Defending the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan:** Continuously resisting opportunistic developments that undermine local plans and policies.
- **Demanding Community Consultation:** Continuing to mandate that major developers conduct face-to-face presentations with the community prior to submitting formal outline designs.
- **Sub-Committee Recruitment:** We invite any Society members with an interest or background in surveying, planning, historic architecture, or environmental law to join our sub-committee and help protect Farnham's irreplaceable heritage.