To: Waverley Borough Council Planning Committee

Undershaw, Hindhead

I write as Surrey County Councillor for Haslemere in connection with planning application WA/2014/1655 for Undershaw at Hindhead.

As you are aware, the county is responsible for the provision and assurance of education. In this context, the county not only runs the state schools within its local authority role, but also contributes by way of subsidies and grants to the education of certain qualifying pupils in privately run schools. The Stepping Stones School in Hindhead is one such school.

Stepping Stones is a unique school for identified children in need of specific educational services. All pupils at Stepping Stones are in receipt of full Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) statements funded by local authorities under national legislation (currently 50% of pupils are fully funded by SCC). Furthermore the Children and Families Bill, September 2014 requires that local authorities develop EHC (Education, Health and Care plans) for all SEND children, and extend their education and training provision up to the age of 25.

The opportunity for Stepping Stones to expand its campus to include Undershaw is critically important. The current premises are not fully adapted or capable of improvement to meet the needs of the children and demands on the school. Stepping Stones was founded ten years ago in a church hall with three pupils, now has thirty-eight pupils, with a waiting list reflecting the outstanding quality of education that the school offers

The applied-for modifications to Undershaw will ensure the long-term provision of these much needed educational services. Moreover, the transfer of Stepping Stones to Undershaw will liberate the current school buildings for conversion to a purpose built vocational training centre for 19-25 year olds with special needs.

I urge the Planning Committee to find in favour of the application on the basis, or alternatively in the context, of these pressing social and educational needs.

Please do contact me if you require any further information.

Best regards

Cllr Nikki Barton