

# Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

2 Leighton Way  
EPSOM Surrey  
KT18 7QZ

23 April 2014

Mr Mark Berry BA(Hons) MRTPI DMS  
Head of Planning and Building Control  
Town Hall  
EPSOM  
KT18 5BY

Dear Mr Berry

PLANNING APPLICATION 13/01613/FUL  
HERON COURT, ALEXANDRA ROAD, EPSOM  
ERECTION OF TEN RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Heron Court is a large and imposing locally listed late Victorian/Edwardian building set in a large garden running almost the whole length of the back gardens of the adjoining Longdown Road. It is owned by Epsom College and divided into nine flats for staff accommodation. In 2007, a previous application proposed the demolition of Heron Court and the erection of 7 flats, 8 town houses and a pair of semi-detached houses. This was refused and dismissed on appeal on grounds of damage to the character of the area.

The present application by the College is for the erection of a block of eight 2 bed flats, one 4 bed house and one 3 bed house. These would be in the grounds, the house being retained, all being used for staff accommodation. A new access road would be provided south of Heron Court, with one parking space for each of the new units. The new buildings would have brick elevations to the ground floor, timber cladding for the upper floors with green flat roofs over aluminium flashing. The height of the three storey buildings is not clear from the drawings but is stated to be lower than the ridge height of Heron Court and lower than 12m. It is nevertheless higher than the houses in the adjoining roads.

Our immediate reaction is that this would be an unfortunate destruction of the attractive garden setting of Heron Court which would seriously affect the amenities of the adjoining houses in Longdown Road and Kilcorral Close. The Design and Access Statement helpfully quotes the pre-application report and this forms a useful way to test the application against the requirements of the report by reference to the policies quoted.

Policy CS5 requires the settings of heritage assets to be protected and enhanced. We believe the visual character and appearance of the area would be seriously affected by the new development even though it is partly shielded by Heron Court itself.

The existing garden provides a substantial green lung with many trees and this is of great value to adjoining properties. Policy CS3 aims to preserve such biodiversity and we believe that the proposals do not protect this position sufficiently.

Policy DM9 requires a positive contribution to the Borough's visual character and appearance and specifies particular aspects. In our view the proposal is not compatible with the existing townscape, the surrounding environment or the setting of the site and certainly does not use appropriate materials.

In relation to Policy DM5 the proposal by its nature involves the loss of trees and shrubs; whilst some attempt is made to resolve the situation, the loss of greenery, especially at the boundaries, is unfortunate.

Policies DM10-13 cover design requirements. The existing housing types are Heron Court itself and substantial traditional detached houses and gardens in the adjoining roads. The proposal is of modern flat roof design and modern materials, is close to the boundaries, is higher than adjoining houses and is out of place in the local context. Any building in this location should in our opinion be no more than two storeys in height. Density is difficult to compare but a modern block of this nature is not appropriate to this site.

Policy DM16 is important in relation to this backland development. We consider the proposal fails to satisfy these requirements in that it has a seriously adverse impact on the amenities of adjoining residents both by loss of green infrastructure and in terms of visual impact. It is not "more intimate in scale" and has an overbearing impact on existing dwellings and their associated gardens. It also fails to retain or adequately re-provide trees and shrubs important to character, appearance and wildlife.

In looking at the Development Management policies I have access only to the pre-submission draft, but the policy numbers seem to relate correctly to the pre-app report. The comments in the Design and Access Statement, however, are about quite different subjects and I fail to understand what document they are referring to.

In addition to these points we consider that the road access, taking at least double the present traffic, would cause a dangerous situation where it joins Alexandra Road at the junction of College Road. The increase in the number of residents and their increased traffic is also likely to cause disturbance to adjoining properties.

In conclusion, we welcome the retention of Heron Court itself but believe that the proposed development is unsatisfactory for the reasons mentioned, and we strongly consider that planning permission should be refused.

Yours sincerely,

ALAN BAKER FRICS  
Vice Chairman

cc ward councillors