

Epsom Civic Society

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16 July 2014

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

Dear Mr Berry

PLANNING APPLICATION 14/00368/FUL
ROSEBERY HOUSE, 55 EAST STREET, EPSOM
CONVERSION AND EXTENSION OF OFFICE BUILDING FOR HOUSING AND RETAIL USE

This application relates to a three storey 1980s office building in East Street, at the corner of Victoria Place, which has been empty since 2009. As there has been no demand for the offices before or after a limited refurbishment, new owners wish to convert and extend for 434sqm ground floor retail on the East Street frontage and 32 residential units on the upper floors. To achieve this they propose a new fourth floor said to be similar to the one opposite but less prominent.

A number of issues arise. The housing use; affordable housing; the retail use; the fourth floor; overdevelopment; parking and deliveries; traffic; and the effect on the adjoining Lintons Lane Conservation Area.

The site falls within the Town Centre and the Vision for East Street in Plan E sees it as the main business district. The market does not seem to follow this intention at the present and this creates the anomaly illustrated by this application. We would prefer continued office use, possibly by redevelopment with a modern building, but if housing were acceptable we have other serious objections.

The applicants claim to be unable to afford any contribution to affordable housing, but Savill's report does not seem to be available online. Even with your consultant valuer's advice I am very cynical about viability studies as each element is estimated and can change over the course of the development. We are not prepared to accept total avoidance of these responsibilities.

Limited retail use is appropriate in East Street, but the size proposed in this location is unacceptable. It implies a large operation which would need to attract a large custom, much by car. The car parking and delivery facilities would be quite inadequate. Even without the retail use, parking at one space per unit, including 2 and 3 bedroom units, is unduly limited, especially in view of the congested condition of Victoria Place and adjoining roads, which give no prospect of extra parking spaces. We also believe that the traffic from residential use would be greater than offices and would overload Victoria Place and the junction with East Street.

The site lies within the 12m height zone of Plan E but, although a number of buildings in East Street have four storeys we think that this would be unacceptable on the present site. There are none nearby on this side of the road and the additional floor would be detrimental to the street scene. The existence of higher buildings on the opposite side of East Street does not alter this opinion.

The buildings relationship with the adjoining Lintons Lane Conservation Area is an important factor. In terms of height, number of units, traffic and general disturbance we consider the proposal would be unacceptable. The existing building is reasonably discrete but the additional floor and balconies would have an unfortunate impact.

Overall, the proposal tries to include too much for the size of the site, to the extent of being overdevelopment.

In conclusion, we consider that by reason of use, height, size, parking provision, conflict with the adjoining Lintons Lane Conservation Area and lack of affordable housing, this application is unsatisfactory and should be refused.

Yours sincerely

ALAN BAKER FRICS
Vice Chairman

Cc ward councillors

