

# Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

John Pingstone Esq,  
Planning Inspectorate,  
Temple Quay House,  
2 The Square,  
Temple Square,  
Bristol BS1 6PN

22, Devitt Close,  
Ashted, KT21 1JS

23 November 2016

Dear Mr Pingstone,

**APP/P3610/W/15/3134650:**

**Royal Automobile Club Ltd., Woodcote Park, Epsom, Surrey KT18 7EW**

I refer to my email of 20<sup>th</sup> November, a copy of which is attached together with the email to which it refers. I hope you feel able to accept the Society's further submission, which should be read in conjunction with our letter of 11th August 2014, a copy of which is also enclosed.

The Society is very concerned about this application particularly because of the matters of principle which it raises. The justification given for the application is that the proposed two houses are 'enabling development' which would provide the funds necessary for the repairs to a listed wall, which forms part of a development plan for the Club.

The Society supports the Club and its endeavours to ensure its continued success. However, we feel that this means of raising money cannot be accepted. Firstly, it will provide a precedent to others. We have been told in other instances that this is not the case, but even if a precedent is not created, an approval in this instance would give others the encouragement to try similar applications elsewhere in the Green Belt. A refusal, on the other hand, would send a clear message that the Council is firm in its protection of the Green Belt. The Society has discussed the future of the Green Belt in general terms and we are not opposed to changes being made, but these can only be made in the light of a comprehensive review so that, whatever criteria are used in such a reassessment, they are applied in a rational and consistent manner.

The nature of the proposed houses themselves raises issues. While not being inappropriate to the location, they do nothing to assist the wider issue of housing supply. Membership of the club itself tends to be restricted to the more affluent members of society, many of whom are not residents of the Borough. In this light, wider society might quite reasonably ask why such an

application should be granted and that additional funds should be sought from the Club's members or through more usual methods of raising finance. This might impact on membership fees, but this is surely the right source, rather than through undermining the integrity of the Green Belt. In this context, it is also appropriate to mention that the Club has owned Woodcote Park for nearly a century and one might ask why this heritage asset has not been kept in a better state of repair.

However this application is considered, it is difficult to see any reasonable argument in its favour except the enjoyment - by a relatively limited number people - of improved club facilities, which surely cannot be considered as a sufficient reason to undermine the integrity of the Green Belt.

Yours sincerely,

For Epsom Civic Society  
Robert Austen

