

Epsom Civic Society

formerly Epsom Protection Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

Mr Mark Berry, BA (hons), MRTPI, DMS,
Head of Place Development,
Epsom & Ewell Borough Council,
Town Hall,
The Parade,
EPSOM KT18 5BY

9th December 2016

Our Ref: ECS/RHA/16-04

Dear Sir,

16/01197/FUL Sunninghill, Downs Avenue, Epsom, Surrey KT18 5HL. Proposed three-storey building accommodating 7 flat units and associated parking.

This application is for the construction of a three-storey block of flats to the rear of 'Sunninghill' in Downs Avenue in the Burgh Heath Road Conservation Area. It will necessitate the removal of most of the existing trees within the garden to accommodate the new building and the associated parking.

The case is very similar to the application (12/00875/FUL) to construct a five-bedroomed house in the garden of 'Sparrows' which is adjacent to the site of the proposed flats and which was refused on appeal (APP/P3610/A/13/2195642). The findings of the Inspector apply equally well to this application and the following are extracts from the Appeal Decision of 20th August 2013:

'The area is an established residential neighbourhood of distinctive character and attractive appearance stemming to a large part from the general sense of spaciousness and the predominance of mature landscape....An important part of the charm of this area is the, almost, car free atmosphere of the Bridleway, Rifflebutts (*sic*) Alley, and the way in which, certainly at the appeal site vicinity it is heavily landscaped and sylvan in character. Surfacing is informal and width fairly minimal, being almost akin to a pathway along the relevant stretch. There is almost a sense of the country side pervading here and the Council's Conservation Area Character Appraisal not surprisingly advocates the importance of care in respect of local alleyways in terms of any imposition from new development and the protection of the treed scene.'

The Inspector concluded: ‘I have carefully considered all the points raised by the appellant but these matters do not outweigh the concerns which I have in relation to the main issue identified above.’

These observations related to a single two-storey dwelling with relatively modest impacts on vehicle movement and parking needs, in contrast to the current proposal. Although the ridge height is stated to be the same as ‘Sunninghill’, it is unmistakably a three-storey block of flats. It is noteworthy that neither the Design and Access Statement nor the Planning Statement refer to the ‘Sparrows’ Appeal, or make any attempt to address the issues raised therein, which equally affect this proposal. Some aspects of this application are clearly of even greater concern.

The proposed development would result in an undesirable intensification and urbanisation of its surroundings in contrast to the current essentially individual, domestic nature of the buildings in the Conservation Area. The increase in parked vehicles would contribute further to the detrimental effect on the quality of the area. The current parking provision of ‘Sunninghill’ is inadequate, as many residents have two cars, and that proposed for the new development must be likely to be similarly inadequate. Large vehicles cannot access the site; it is understood that a fire engine was unable to reach a recent car fire at ‘Sunninghill’ due to the limited width of the access, a matter touched on by the Inspector in his Appeal Decision.

Given the foregoing comments, the Society is of the view that the application should be refused on the grounds of non-compliance with, inter alia, policies CS1, CS5, DM9, DM10 and DM16.

Yours faithfully,

For Epsom Civic Society

cc. Ward Councillors

