

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -152 – SUMMER 2017

CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

New Committee Members

I am delighted to welcome Carol Reed and Julian West as our newest committee members. Those of you who were at our open meeting on Epsom's Local Plan review on 23rd March will have had the opportunity to meet them both. Carol is developing the Society's communications portfolio and Julian has taken on the role of minutes secretary. On behalf of members, I would like to thank them both for volunteering their time and expertise to support the Society.

Local Plan Review

I have written to members before about Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Local Plan review (most recently in the Society's Spring 2017 newsletter) and it was encouraging that the Society's March open meeting at Christchurch Hall was well attended, with much lively discussion and an extensive range of ideas and proposals that we will feed back to the council. We specifically sought your views about how you would like to see Epsom improved, and what you would like to encourage as well as discourage, with particular reference to housing, green belt, design, heritage and conservation, and broader quality of life issues. The presentation slides used to start the meeting are available on the website, and a summary of our discussions will be available shortly. Thanks to everyone who came along, your input enables the Society to influence the review about what should and should not happen in our town in planning terms. I anticipate that the Society will hold another meeting once further details and information on the Local Plan review are available from the Council. The revised and updated Local Plan will decide the planning and development policies to be applied to all planning applications in the Borough over the next fifteen to twenty years or more – so it really matters that members make their views known, either via the Society or directly to the council during the upcoming consultation period (yet to be announced).

Housing White Paper

Members will know that the Government has been consulting on its Housing White Paper, 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market' (February 2017). The timing of this White Paper in the midst of our Council's review of the Local Plan is interesting, to say the least. The Society submitted its response to 40 specific questions, in addition to highlighting the following general concerns and priorities, namely our desire to maintain a stable planning framework and to keep further changes to the planning system to a minimum in the interests of certainty and ease in the delivery of planning functions. Also, the allowance of sufficient 'bedding-in' time to implement and monitor changes, including our desire to support, and where appropriate enhance, existing levels of local authority autonomy and flexibility as regards working with other authorities and stakeholders. In addition, there is the need to secure appropriate levels of resourcing for local authority planning departments. The improvement in quality of life, and making places where people want to live, require equal weighting of economic, social and environmental sustainability. Also, it is critically important to promote and deliver good design and recognise the inter-connectedness of infrastructure and housing provision. The Society awaits the Government's response to the consultation with interest and will be reporting to members in a future newsletter.

Margaret Hollins

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Proposed Lidl store, 40-52, Upper High Street: This is the most important current application, and is to be welcomed as the first in the Upper High Street, Depot Road and Church Street Development Brief. It is on the site of the former Iceland store and includes a medium sized food-store (only a third of the size of Tesco's proposal) with basement parking and 30 apartments on two upper floors grouped round an attractive courtyard. The size and location are in accordance with the brief. On the Council website there are comments of support as well as objection. We have welcomed the application but have raised a number of issues about car parking, affordable housing, the massing and appearance of the building and access for cars and deliveries. The application will appear before the Planning Committee in due course. It is interesting to note that Aldi's appeal against refusal of their application to build a store on the Dairy site, is due to be heard at an Inquiry now timed for October 2017.

The Kirkgate, 19-31, Church Street: This large brick-built office building is on the corner of Church Street and Depot Road; you may remember the strange collection of pitched roofs over the entrance. It lies between two conservation areas and is opposite a Grade II listed building so the location is important. As part of a proposed refurbishment, the owners are seeking planning permission to demolish the entrance and replace it with a new two storey structure in order to improve the external appearance of the building and create an attractive entrance. We liked the intention but wrote objecting that the design submitted would be out of keeping with both the building and the surroundings in terms of size and appearance. Since then, in the course of email correspondence between the applicant, the planning officer and ourselves, a number of alternative designs have been submitted. This is a very difficult problem to solve but we have now reached number five, which may prove to be an acceptable solution.

13, Ashley Road: We are seeing a number of cases where unacceptable proposals are being followed by



amended schemes in the hope of satisfying earlier criticisms. This is a valuable procedure which can sometimes, but not always, produce satisfactory results. In the case of 13 Ashley Avenue, the proposal described last time has been superseded by a new design with 4 flats on 2 ½ floors with parking in a semi-basement and an outside staircase up to a ground floor entrance. It is still a large building occupying nearly 100% of the site area. We said that it may be possible to produce an attractive and practical

design to redevelop this difficult site, but we have not seen one yet.

145, Grosvenor Road: This is a similar case where a third attempt has still not hit the mark. The previous proposal for a pair of semi-detached houses to replace the existing bungalow was grossly excessive, was refused and an appeal dismissed. The latest version raises the whole of the rear part of the T-shaped bungalow to provide more bedrooms, but this would have an unacceptable effect in this sensitive location at the very end of Grosvenor Road, adjoining the common, and we have again objected.

Land at Mill Road: If you have been following this case, you may like an update. Student accommodation was to be provided for students of the University for the Creative Arts, but the University no longer wished to be committed to managing the lettings and the developer sought permission for the same buildings to be used as Houses in Multiple Occupation, not limited to students. We had objected because the use of the accommodation would no longer be under the management of the University and nuisance might be caused to the neighbourhood. The application was refused in April. We understand that an Appeal is being made, but details are not yet available. We shall confirm our objections to the Planning Inspectorate in due course as usual. **Alan Baker**

HERITAGE

I have looked at 22 applications affecting listed buildings and/or buildings within conservation areas since the last Newsletter, 12 of these since the AGM. The great majority have related to private houses and, as I've mentioned in the past, I don't like to go into too much detail about these. It is very natural for people to want to improve their homes, just to add a little space, or add a bedroom as the family grows or simply to add the sort of convenience which we take for granted today but which might not have been the case in past times. This particularly affects listed buildings, most of which are many years old.

Some architects and owners have an innate sense of what is acceptable and some don't. I wrote recently to object to a proposed annex to a listed building which seemed to make no acknowledgement of the style or proportions of the host building. Even though the site of the proposed building was fairly well concealed it would be wrong to compromise the character of the listed building. Another recent application affected a house in a conservation area where a proposed extension would be alien in both design and the choice of materials. The outcome of these two is awaited.

Earlier I wrote on your behalf concerning two other cases. The first was in connection with a prominent house in a conservation area, which had been considered for local listing. The first application was turned down following which a slightly modified application was submitted and again turned down. An appeal to the Planning Inspectorate was dismissed, the Inspector's reasons pretty much upholding the Borough's reasons for refusal which, in summary, were that the proposed extension would entirely unbalance the principal elevation with a material loss of privacy to the neighbour.

Regarding the final letter I think I can reveal more detail because it concerned the Barclay's Bank building on the High Street. I'm not sure when it was built, perhaps in the 30's, but it is a balanced and elegant building with some nice but restrained details. It contributes a lot to the quality of the street scene. But, of course, as is the case with so many aging office buildings, the upper floors are no longer being used efficiently and conversion to flats is an obvious answer and one to which few would object. However, developers can be a greedy bunch and want to squeeze more in than they should. The existing top floor has a flat roof but it is set back from the floors below by a sloping tiled roof. The application proposed that the sloping roof should be replaced by a more nearly vertical element, with raised seam metal cladding, topped off with a glass balustrade surrounding a roof garden. The result was decidedly odd. With admirable restraint, the Borough in its refusal said all this would unbalance the host building and would be harmful to the street scene and the wider Conservation Area.

I visited a friend recently whose house I had not seen before. The house itself, while very pleasant, is not the point of the story – it is the location. It happens to be just over the border in Ashted and I remember the site from years ago as an open field. It was completely developed to quite a high density some years ago. However, the layout entirely removes any sense of being surrounded by a myriad of houses. This has been achieved by the road layout which is very sinuous with several short cul-de-sacs, which, coupled with a lot of planting and trees, has the effect of breaking the place up into a number of small communities. Here the houses dominate and the roads and footpaths are merely subordinate, albeit essential, elements. There is nothing new in this – Span was developing high density estates on these principles over 50 years ago. (I could not help, yet again, feeling what an opportunity has been lost in the layout of the new housing near Nescot,

where the roads are very much the dominant feature and there is little sense of community. Instead, all you see is just a bunch of new houses strung along the new streets.)

Incidentally, this estate has ample parking for residents and visitors. I was looking at another development, fortunately not in our Borough, which has completely inadequate parking. It is well placed for both buses and trains which may be fine for commuting but may not be as helpful for schools and the weekly shop. The application is accompanied by a traffic survey of parking in nearby streets, including the service roads for nearby convenience shopping and café's. It concludes that there is plenty of space on these streets for the parking needs of the future residents of this development. I found this quite stunning in its unabashed selfishness, given that the developer gives no thought to the effect on the residents of those streets. And quite where does this end? The answer again is that the developer is trying to cram too much onto the site. Basing the proposal on the use of on-street parking is seeking a form of hidden subsidy from the public. I will be very interested to know where this one ends.

I suppose you can take some comfort from the thought that there is always something worse. I have been involved, in a circuitous way, with another development. This one is for two tower blocks with a total of 232 flats – there is no parking at all, apart from six bays for disabled drivers.

Rob Austen

RENOVATION OF HERITAGE ASSETS

A recent competition for the best renovated building of heritage value in Surrey was won by the barn in Woodcote Park off Wilmerhatch Lane. This barn is now used for displaying vintage cars and we congratulate the owners, the Royal Automobile Club. For comparison, we show the Grade II listed barn that is lying neglected in Woodcote Hurst.

Malcolm Boyd



THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year our AGM was held in Christ Church Hall and it was well attended, although we always hope for more. The main business of the evening was to elect a new committee and the members, together with their responsibilities are shown below. We were particularly pleased to welcome Carol Reed and Julian West who will have responsibility for communication and minutes respectively.

Chair, Margaret, Hollins

Vice-Chairman & Planning, Alan Baker FRICS.

Hon Secretary, Malcolm Boyd.

Hon Treasurer, Nick Lock

Planning & Conservation, Robert Austen,

Webmaster, Mark Bristow

Downs, Angela Clifford.

Membership Secretary, Ishbel Kenward.

Communication, Carol Reed

Events, Sheila Wadsworth

Minutes Secretary, Julian West



Hon Auditor, Harry Wilkinson
Newsletter Editor, Malcolm Boyd
Archivist, Philip Clifford
Photographic Archivist, David Rowe

During Any Other Business, Mike Ford was invited to speak about his concern that responsibility for the planting and care of street trees is being transferred from the Borough Council to Surrey County Council. Mike was on the committee for many years and is now Chair of the Tree Advisory Board. Over the years, the Civic Society has been responsible for the planting of many trees throughout the borough due, in part, to the existence of a tree fund. While Mike Ford's immediate need is not for financial support, it was subsequently agreed in committee that a tree fund would be reinstated.

The meeting concluded with a talk on The Horton Light Railway by Stewart Cocker, Countryside Manager, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

Stewart gave a history of the railway starting with the sale of the Horton Manor Estate in the 1890s to the London County Council for the building of a large complex of psychiatric hospitals. Horton, St Ebbas and Manor Hospitals were completed by 1903. However, local road infrastructure was not suitable for what was effectively the building of a small town and with the construction of Long Grove Hospital, a light railway was constructed of standard gauge and light rails – the Ewell and Long Grove Light railway. The line was built by 1905. By 1909, the LCC saw a need for a new light railway to supply the hospital cluster with coal and other supplies. The Horton Light Railway started operating in 1913 and was subsequently extended to supply West Park Hospital.



By the end of the Second World War, the track needed replacement and, with much improved road transport, it was considered too expensive to repair.

Stewart illustrated his talk with many photographs of the line as it was and as it is now, the rolling stock and eventually its dismantling. Many photographs were from the 1940s and provided by the late Nigel Davenport and a Mr Roberts who attended one of Stewart's railway walks in 1990.

Margaret Hollins thanked Stewart for his most interesting talk and presented him with a cheque for the Friends of Horton Country Park.

Malcolm Boyd and Julian West.

THE NEW EPSOM SQUARE

At long last the refurbished Derby Square has been completed with much wooden cladding and green planting to hide the ugly walls. The equestrian statue by Judy Boyt has been removed to be erected elsewhere. Derby Square and Oaks Square have been renamed Epsom Square and it is hoped that the square will become a popular focal point for Epsom residents.



MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to those members who have paid their 2017 subscription and especially to those who have generously given donations. A reminder for those who have not yet paid - £2 per individual / £3 per household is due. If you have not yet paid and you were out when he/she called, your Road Rep. should have put a note on this Newsletter giving a reminder of his/her address. Please save them an extra trip by taking your subscription to them. If unsure whether you have paid or not please contact your Road Rep or me.

Welcome to all our new members recruited this year. We had another successful Exhibition in the Ashley Centre on 1st April when we met and chatted to many members and recruited 52 members bringing our total number of new members this year to 79. However, please don't give up on any personal recruiting as we need 100 or so new members every year to maintain our numbers over 1900. The magic 2000 continues to elude us. Those who have been members for a long time will remember Margaret Rogers, my predecessor, and it was her aim to reach that number – maybe this year!

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary. Tel. 01372 728570

EVENTS

Lewes Trip

Everyone seemed to enjoy the trip to Lewes town, castle, and Anne of Cleves House on Thursday, 11th May. Apart from the first rainfall in four weeks as we were about to climb the long steps up to the Keep, it was a clear, bright day so that we could appreciate the wide vista commanded by the Castle. Also, the comprehensive local map meant members could explore easily themselves and seek out good places for lunch.

We had coffee/tea in the White Hart Hotel where Thomas Paine, the Rights of Man author, met his friends prior to going to the New World. As there were only thirty two people on the visit we could go as one party in the morning to the museum and castle and the afternoon to the Anne of Cleves House, though we did divide up with two excellent guides, Joanna and Amy, to explore the castle. Both sites are managed by the Sussex Archeological Society.

Ian West's Walk

I expect Sunday 18th June is already in your diary. Explore the hospital lands meeting Ian West at the car park entrance to Horton Country park (opposite Old Moat garden Centre) at 2.00 p.m. No booking is required, just turn up. We shall be covering about three miles, so stout footwear is recommended.

Annual Buffet Supper Party

This year we have a different venue for our Annual Buffet Supper Party, Friday 13th October. It will take place in the Unity Church hall, Church Street from 7.30 p.m. to 10.15 p.m. and starts with a welcome drink, wine or soft, followed by Studio Foods delicious buffet served at your table – the menu is always varied with new additions each year. Our guest speaker is John Field, an Associate Member of The Inner Magic Circle, who will tell us about his magic and mind reading over some 40 years.

Parking is in the Depot Road car park, which can also be reached from the Upper High Street car park. The charge is £1.50 and there is an access gate to the unity Hall from the right hand corner of the parking area.

We hope you will come along and do bring non-member friends to introduce them to the Society. The cost will be £22. Do raise any transport problems you have by ringing me on 01372 273517.

The Mill at Sonning Theatre, Saturday 25th November

By popular request we have booked 52 seats at The Mill at Sonning for the two-course Christmas lunch followed by a matinee performance of the musical My Fair Lady. The cost will be £60 to cover the coach and tip, the lunch with coffee or tea, the performance and one programme

between two people. We sit together for the meal, but the seats are allocated around the small, intimate theatre. There is a stair lift to the first floor (but there is only one space for a wheelchair). Non members may book in September.

The coach will pick up at (A) 10.20 a.m. Epsom Downs, the car park behind the tea hut by Tattenham Corner, (B) 10.30 a.m. the Methodist Church, Ashley Road, Epsom and (C) 10.40 a.m. The Street, Ashted. The anticipated time of departure from The Mill will be 5.15 p.m.

We hope that this occasion will have you singing into the Christmas Season.

Sheila Wadsworth – 01372 273517

STOP PRESS

We have been requested to ask our members whether anyone knows the whereabouts of a Grade II listed lead cistern dated 1706 that has apparently gone missing. It was seen in the grounds of 9-15 Pine Hill in 2013 after allegedly having been moved from the grounds of Woodcote House. If anyone has any information, please get in touch with the Council.

Malcolm Boyd

THE SCHOOLS GARDENING PROJECT

The Society is continuing our schools gardening project with three further donations of gardening vouchers donated since last reported. The photos below illustrate the successful results from St Martins Junior School. Our schools Liaison Officer, Liz Plumtree, reports that excellent progress is also being made at St Joseph’s and Stamford Green schools and Appletree Nursery. We have been invited to the St Joseph’s summer fete and have been given excellent publicity in the St Martin’s School summer Newsletter.

Malcolm Boyd



APPLICATION FOR THE ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER - FRIDAY 13th OCTOBER

Names.....
Address.....
Te; no.....
No. of tickets @ £22 pp..... **Total cost £**.....
Any dietary or allergy requirements? Yes/No Please list.....
 Please return this application form with your cheque made out to Sheila Wadsworth,
 The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ (01372 273517).

APPLICATION FOR THE DINNER THEATRE - THE MILL AT SONNING, SATURDAY, 25th NOVEMBER

The cost covers the 2-course meal, coffee/tea, the musical, one programme for every two people, the coach travel and drivers tip. (Non members may book in September)

Members’Names.....

Address.....

Tel No.....
No. of tickets @ £60 pp..... **Total cost.£**.....

Coach collection. Please indicate
 (A) 10.20 a.m. Epsom Downs, the car park behind the tea hut at Tattenham Corner
 (B) 10.30 a.m. The Methodist Church, Ashley Road, Epsom
 (C) 10.40 a.m. The Street, Ashted

Please return this application form with your cheque made out to “Epsom Civic Society” and a stamped addressed envelope to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ (01372 273517).

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