

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past
epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No -153 - Autumn 2017

CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

Road Representatives' Social

Long-established and always enjoyable, this year's road representatives' social in early June at Christchurch Hall was no exception, despite the change of date to avoid the general election and the hall's transformation into a polling station. I very much welcome the opportunity to thank personally those of you who, as the Society's road representatives, provide such vital networking in support of our activities. The evening's success is down to my fellow Committee members' organisation of venue and refreshments, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to record my thanks to them here.

Local Plan Review

The Borough Council's Local Plan review continues to be a major focus for the Society, and we had a useful updating meeting with Planning Department in June. The 2017 Local Plan Programme sets out the following modified timetable for consultation, examination, and adoption of the revised Local Plan:

September-November 2017: Issues and Options Consultation (public consultation)

December 2017: Consideration of Consultation Responses

March 2018: Pre-Submission Consultation

May 2018: Submission of Draft Local Plan to Secretary of State

September 2018: Pre-Examination Meeting

Late 2018: Public Hearing

December 2019: Estimated Date for Adoption.

Most of the key documents and studies that form the evidence base for the Local Plan review are now available on the Council's website, with the Stage 2 Green Belt Study expected November 2017. From the Council's home page - <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk> - click on 'Planning' - 'Planning Policy' and then either 'Epsom and Ewell Local Plan' or 'Evidence Base' to access them in full.

As I indicated in the Society's last newsletter, and in anticipation of the upcoming consultation, which you may have read about in 'Borough Insight' issue 69 or via the Society's Twitter account, we intend to hold another open meeting about this process, and the key issues for our Borough. The date is to be agreed. We will be inviting a member of the Planning Department to come along.

Horton Chapel

The Society has long supported Horton Chapel Arts and Heritage Society, and I am delighted to report that they have been awarded £300,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund SE to plan the rescue and transformation of Horton Chapel as an arts centre. You can find more information, and sign up to the HCAHS newsletter here: <http://hortonchapelproject.org/news/weve-secured-a-major-grant-from-the-heritage-lottery-fund/>



Street Trees

The Society is supporting the Tree Advisory Board in its efforts to ensure the continuation of street tree planting in the Borough, now that Surrey County Council has resumed responsibility with effect from last April. Members will be updated on progress via the usual channels. (See later article from the Tree Advisory Board)

Chalk Lane Hotel

For those members who are not already aware, there is a proposal to convert the Chalk Lane Hotel into flats and houses. As yet, no formal planning application has been submitted. Several members of the Society's committee attended an exhibition at the hotel about the proposals in July. There will be an opportunity to make your views known via the Council's website, once an application is made.



Conservation Areas

Fifty years ago, the Civic Amenities Act came into force, enabling local authorities to designate conservation areas. There are 21 conservation areas in Epsom and Ewell, and you can read about them here:

<http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/residents/planning/historic-environment/conservation-areas>

Margaret Hollins

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

There are not many planning applications at this time of the year but the first one is important and controversial.

Nescot Housing Phase 2: Following the withdrawal of the proposed dementia care home on the corner of Reigate Road, an application has been made for a second phase of the housing development, now under construction and known as Sycamore Gardens. This is the logical response and provides a valuable contribution to the housing target but it is receiving strong local objection, mainly on the grounds of density and the belief that the infrastructure, both physical and social, would be unable to cope. Our support in principle depends on these concerns being shown to be unfounded. The first phase was designed to be self contained, so the unexpected later phase unfortunately seems rather disconnected. It is proposed to include 2.5 and 3.5 storey flats which gives a high density on this phase although the overall density is within policy limits. We have written drawing attention to these issues and to the unsatisfactory level of affordable housing.

Cedar Lodge, Headley Road: This land was formerly in the Council's ownership and is in the Green Belt. It was sold in the 1980s to an established racehorse trainer being displaced from Treadwell Road for use as racing stables and planning permission was granted for this use. There were a covenant and planning conditions restricting the use and preventing an associated dwelling being occupied other than by someone connected with the yard. Over the years the success of the yard has diminished and it has been placed in the market. Many unsuccessful attempts have been made to remove the restrictions. More recently an application to build a separate house was refused.

Two current "simultaneous" applications propose the building of four new loose boxes on the main part of the site, and seek to use this to justify the demolition of 16 existing boxes and building a new independent bungalow. There are differences of opinion about the demand for racing stables here, but one trainer has objected strongly to the present proposals and believes there is a growing need for equestrian facilities. There is clearly no justification for a separate dwelling in the Green Belt, and we have written urging the refusal of both applications.

Bar XLR, 79, East Street: Yes, another redevelopment in East Street. It is the two-storey building on the corner of the narrow pedestrian extension to Lintons Lane. The proposal is to demolish the present building and erect a four-storey building with 6 2-bed flats, a small shop/office and 6 parking places. We think this is a good proposal; the design is acceptable and the height will bridge the 2 storeys on the corner of Victoria Place and the higher blocks further down East Street. We would prefer it to be set back further from the pavement and we think there would be little demand for the shop/office and have written to make these points.



Land behind 23A-33, Links Road: A decision has been made on the Appeal against the refusal of the application to build four substantial houses, with a contemporary feel, to the rear of Links Road. As always I found the Inspector's report to be a careful independent analysis of the facts and arguments. He found that the policy against backland development did not apply as no back garden land was affected; the development would not be prominent from the street; the overall design of the house type would not be materially different to the character of the area or harmful to its appearance; the existing houses would not be materially overlooked. On the other hand the setting of two of them would be cramped and would be substantial overdevelopment; the position and size of the houses and the driveway would be likely to threaten the future wellbeing of the mature listed trees. He found that whilst there were advantages in the proposal and it would support the need for more houses, the adverse effects would be significant and conflict with the "environmental dimension of sustainable development" and he dismissed the appeal. It does seem possible that an amended scheme for fewer houses might be more successful.

The Kirkgate, 19-31, Church Street: The fifth design to rebuild the entrance, described last time, has now been given planning permission and will certainly be an improvement on the present situation.

Alan Baker

HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION

I've added 'conservation' to the title of this piece because the two go very much hand in hand. I spent a little time researching what Barratts, who claim to be the UK's largest house building company, do about this and I was impressed – reluctantly, I must admit!

Barratts produce an annual sustainability report. I picked up the following from the 2015 version: 16,447 homes were completed, 57% of which were on previously developed land. 95% of construction waste was recycled and 100% of group procured timber was from certified sustainable sources. 1,600 homes were connected to low carbon district heating schemes. There was a 26.5% increase in affordable homes (interestingly, the actual figure was not given). They plant (or retain) 20 trees or shrubs for every home.

Most figures are susceptible to manipulation to present the best picture and no doubt some of these statistics should be regarded with a little caution. Nonetheless, it is encouraging that the company (of whom I am not a fan) go to the trouble of producing a detailed and lengthy annual analysis. It is no doubt good PR but I was rather more encouraged by the news of Barratt's partnership with the RSPB at

Kingsbrook in Aylesbury Vale. Here there will be 2,450 new homes with new schools and community facilities, but most importantly, 250 acres (that's 100 football pitches) of 'wildlife rich' open space.

The mention of affordable houses reminded me of a recent case where the Planning Inspectorate upheld Islington Council's case against a developer who had included no affordable housing (later increased to 10%) in its application to build 96 homes on a former Territorial Army Centre. The Council's target is 50%. The inspector said "a land owner is required to have regard to the requirements of planning policy and obligations in their expectations of land value" and said that the market value calculations, which relied on transactional evidence not comparable to the development site, were "inappropriate". It is not clear to what extent such cases create a precedent, but it is hopeful. Much of the current shortfall in housing, if not the very great majority, is in the lower end of the market – but, of course, this is the least profitable part.

I have written five letters on your behalf since the last Newsletter. Two letters related to proposals for the construction of flats based on existing buildings, both of which included flats which were very small. Fortunately, there are now national guidelines which provided the basis for our objections. In principal, we are generally in favour of this sort of proposal but developers want to squeeze in as many flats as possible and over the years they have been getting smaller and smaller. Not surprisingly, research has shown that inadequately sized accommodation can adversely affect mental health

Probably the most significant application, which has been refused, related to a proposal by a land owner to sell a strip of surplus woodland to the adjoining properties. At first glance this would seem to be a rational thing to do. However, the woodland marks the edge of a conservation area and performs a very significant role in separating it from the adjoining area of housing. Breaking up the strip, the introduction of fencing and the possibility of the future removal of trees would have had a highly damaging impact on the conservation area and its biodiversity.

An application concerning a proposed extension to a listed house is of interest because of the variety of views expressed by your committee. It was suggested that any harmful impact on the building would be mitigated because it is not easily seen from public places. However, a letter was sent and the Council subsequently refused permission.

A further application which prompted mixed views related to a proposal to build a house in a difficult location near the town centre. The site is very narrow and we acknowledged that a conventional design would probably result in an unsatisfactory appearance. However, the adventurous design proposed resulted in a wide range of opinions. We did not object, but suggested some amendments to the principal elevation to make it more acceptable. A decision had not been made at the time of writing.

Finally, I thought it would be interesting to mention an article I read recently headed 'Admiring the scenery'. This reported a paper published two years ago in Nature which found a correlation between people's sense of well-being and the 'scenicness' of where they lived. Not much of a surprise really, but, interestingly, the correlation was found to be true whether a neighbourhood was urban, suburban or rural. Importantly, it bore no relation to respondent's social and economic status; nor did air pollution have any influence on it. The differences in respondents' responses were better explained by the 'scenicness' of where they lived than by the amount of green space around them. The question, of course, is just what is 'scenicness'? Naturally, lakes, valleys and mountains score well as do castles, churches and cottages in artificial landscapes. The most interesting finding, however, was that green spaces in and of themselves are not scenic – what makes them valuable is contours (i.e. slopes) and trees. Some of this may be blindingly obvious, but it is of value to have what seems instinctively true borne out by research.

Rob Austen

NATIONAL TRUST FREE PASSES

Through the Society's membership of Civic Voice we again have Free National Trust Single Use Passes for our members - one per member. They are valid until 31st May 2018. If you would like to make use of this offer please contact me. English Heritage Passes are still not available but Civic Voice is hoping they will become available again at some time in the future.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary.
01372 728570 email info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

CRUNCH TIME FOR STREET TREES

Hopes are rising that a cessation of street tree planting in Epsom and Ewell can be averted thanks to positive discussions between Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board and the Borough Council. Following on from the announcement at the start of the year that the Borough's street tree planting budget was effectively being scrapped in April - theoretically making this spring's planting the last ever - the Tree Advisory Board has been working hard with sympathetic councillors of all colours in a bid to address what would have been a devastating long-term threat to our cherished leafy local environment. Draft proposals on a new way forward - under which the Tree Advisory Board will fund a continued planting programme using voluntary donations solicited from a variety of sources - will be considered by September's Environment Committee, and the Tree Advisory Board is now confident that the new system will be in place for this autumn's planting season.

"This positive turn of events means that it's now essential for all those who value a green local environment to play their part in ensuring that Epsom and Ewell's new blueprint for street tree planting gets off to a flying start this autumn," stresses Tree Advisory Board chairman Mike Ford. "It's long been accepted that around 100 street trees need to be planted each year simply to replace those lost to old age and disease - and, while we're unlikely to achieve that figure in our first year of planting we are determined to get as close to it as we possibly can."

The Tree Advisory Board has already been heartened by pledges of support from a number of County and Borough Councillors, residents associations and the Epsom Civic Society - but is also seeking support from other organisations and businesses which have not yet committed, as well as donations from individual residents.

Mike concludes: "There can be no better way for environmentally-minded residents to make a lasting mark on our Borough than by donating however large or small a sum to the cause of street tree planting, from which we and future generations will benefit for years to come."

For further information contact Mike Ford at m21ford@btinternet.com or on 01372 720031

THE SOCIETY'S TREE FUND

We intend to set up the Tree Fund in the near future. In the meantime, those wishing to send a donation to this worthy cause should send a cheque made out to "Epsom Civic Society" to our treasurer, Nick Lock, Lower Bridle, 30 Downs Avenue, Epsom KT18 5HG. Please write Tree Fund on the back of your cheque.

Editor

THE DOWNS.

This has been a successful year so far for the Racecourse and the Spring and Derby meetings were well attended.

Notes from 19th April Conservators Meeting.

Mrs Kathryn Beldon, Chief Executive of EEBC, has succeeded Mrs Frances Rutter as Clerk to the Conservators.

There have been increasing numbers of groups, large and small, applying for permission to run events on the Downs – both commercial and charitable. At this meeting, the Downs Manager suggested a new policy was needed as the current event strategy does not provide guidance on the regulation of use of the Downs by such groups. Considerable discussion ensued – would there be a proliferation of such applications, how would the groups be monitored, would increasing numbers have a negative effect on the Downs? The most importance being placed on the need to keep the Downs fit for racehorse training. In the end, the Conservators decided not to permit a greater number of events at present but to keep the number permitted under review.

Amendments to the Habitat Management Plan and inclusion of an updated version of the Epsom Golf Club Plan were approved.

The first ever audit of signs on the Downs has been carried out – this should make recording maintenance easier.

At the meeting of the Conservators on 17th July 2017, Councillor (and Mayor) Liz Frost was re-elected as Chairman and Simon Durrant, General Manager of the Racecourse replaced Andrew Cooper (Director of Racing and Clerk of the Course) as Vice-Chairman. Their election was unanimous.

Still no response from the Horse Race Betting Levy Board to the recorded delivery letter from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding maintenance of the hack sand track at the foot of Walton Downs.

You may have seen the works needed to repair a leaking water main near the Downskeeper's hut – this will be done after 12 noon to avoid interfering with training.

Unfortunately £1,054 was needed to repair vandalism at the Tattenham Corner Conveniences. This happened prior to the Derby meeting.

A new Downskeeper is undergoing training although one is still on long term sickness leave, so the team is still under-staffed. Simon Dow suggested and Bob Harding agreed that communication between the Downskeepers and Trainers would be helpful – explanations of the whys and wherefores of horse handling might be useful and any problems raised.

Epsom Golf Club was given permission to erect a new sign at the first tee of the course and to extend the pathway from the 8th to the 13th tee. This will now go to the Planning Committee for approval.

The traveller's site chestnut fencing was again broken, so metal Heras fencing may be used in future.

Angela Clifford

A MESSAGE FROM IAN WEST

Following his walk earlier in the year, Ian remembered that he did not mention at the time the brick walls that surround the kitchen garden in the Horton Estate. These are probably early 19th Century and are located at the rear of the garden centre. Ian also mentions, referring to page 3 in our summer newsletter, that he remembers the demolition of the former building on the site of Barclays Bank in about 1960. This former building was Poultons, a greengrocer, who subsequently moved to where Pullingers is now.

Editor

LICENCING LAWS AND THEIR EFFECT ON SOCIETY (By Invitation)

In the late 50's and early 60's I was one of the two Excise Officers in Richmond. Our main duty was to visit and check the several hundred Purchase Tax traders in and around that area and I also visited Kew Gardens to examine imported plants. Another important duty was to visit the many licenced premises offering alcohol to their customers. We needed to be sure that no sugar or other supplements

were being added to the beer or spirits. I was instructed to visit a 'Beer On' in Wimbledon because we had been advised, in an anonymous letter, that spirits were being sold in a premises which were licenced to sell only beer. An interesting evening but we found no evidence. The 'On' signified of course that the alcohol could be consumed on the premises and 'Off' licenced premises could only sell alcohol to take away.

So the Licencing Laws have changed extensively over the years and Epsom has been witness to many of these changes. The government makes the law and for licenced premises the local magistrates enforce it. In 1830 some rules were relaxed and 'beer houses' were allowed to function after payment of a small fee to the Excise. In 1870 the laws were tightened again and beer houses were also brought under the care of the magistrates and some were forced to close.

In East Street, Epsom, just after the railway bridge stands The Rifleman which still shows its Beer House ancestry on the outside wall and celebrates the 8th Corps of the Surrey Rifle Volunteers who trained in Rifle Butts Alley to meet the threat of invasion by the French. Several applications were made for a 'full' licence or even a wine licence in 1899 when one of the magistrates mocked the likelihood of any of its clientele ordering vin ordinaire at a shilling a bottle. The Rifleman finally gained a full licence in 1961.

Not a licensing matter but I wonder how many people realise or remember that just beyond the Rifleman on the corner of Hook Road from 1911 until 1923 there stood the 'Electric Theatre'. It reopened briefly as the Pavilion Theatre, stood empty for many years, and was demolished when the road was widened and now displays only a large advertising board.

Probably two of the best known public houses were the Kings Head at 123, High Street and the Spread Eagle. Samuel Pepys had an 'ill room' at the Kings Head and Nell Gwynne kept a merry house at lodgings next door. The ownership and the name changed many times before the Kings Head and the Shades next door closed in 1957 and were demolished. The Spread Eagle is thought to date from 1658 and became an inn in 1710 and after many changes ceased to trade and became a clothes shop in 1986.

The latest figures from the Office of National Statistics show that Surrey has lost about a quarter of its pubs since 2010. In Epsom and Ewell the number of pubs and bars went from 35 to 25 and the decline of 29% was one of the biggest drops in the whole of the UK. Within a few hundred yards of Epsom General Hospital we have lost the New Inn now offices, the Amato now a 'Grumpy Mole', the Ladas and the Queens Head now flats. The Queens Head had an interesting sign on one side of which was the head of Queen Charlotte wife of George III, with her back view on the other side. It was said to have been painted by a poor artist, George Harlow; he included the initials of Thomas Lawrence 'TL' whose work he had imitated. I do hope that these interesting signs are not being lost but are being offered to Bourne Hall or some other museum. I say we have lost pubs and inns but of course we have gained many new and interesting dining places and fashions and interests have changed.

No space for other stories but I am grateful to Pubs, Inns and Taverns of Epsom and Ewell by Richard Holmes published by Echo Library and to The Warmest Welcome by Carol Hill for much of the information and where many more interesting stories can be read.

Harry Corben

PUB REFURBISHMENT

The building on the left was the Queens Head in Dorking Road which was converted firstly into a showroom for up-market kitchen fittings, but has now been converted into flats. The Amato, in Chalk Lane is named after one of Lord Rosebery’s Derby winners and is now one of a small group of Grumpy Mole Restaurants.

Malcolm Boyd



EVENTS

Annual Buffet Supper - Friday 13th October

There are still tickets available for the fun Annual Buffet Supper on Friday, 13th October – 7.30 p.m. to 10.15 p.m. Do bring friends, family and non-members to introduce them to our Epsom Civic Society. The venue is the Unity Church Hall, Church Street and parking is in the Depot Road car park with a charge of £1.50. Our entertainment is a speaker from the Inner Magic Circle, John Field, following a welcome drink and a delicious buffet supper from Studio Foods. The cost is £22. For any problems or queries, please ring 01372 273517.

The application form is below.

Sheila Wadsworth

APPLICATION FOR THE ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER – FRIDAY 13th OCTOBER

Name.....
Address.....
Tel No.....
No of tickets @ £22pp..... Total cost £.....
Any dietary or allergy requirements? Yes/No. Please list.....

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.

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