

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No - 154 - Winter 2017

CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

Buffet Supper

It was a pleasure to welcome members and our guests, The Worshipful the Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor Liz Frost, and her Consort, Chris Frost, to the Society's annual buffet supper on 13th October in Unity Church Hall. John Field, from the Inner Magic Circle, delivered an entertaining and engaging talk. I, and my fellow committee members, greatly appreciated the Mayor's kind words about the work of the Society, and I very much enjoyed the opportunity to chat to members throughout the evening.



Special thanks must go to Sheila Wadsworth, our Events Secretary, for organising the supper, to Angela Clifford, for devising the quiz (despite being a long-time local resident, there remains much for me to learn about Epsom), and to Mark Bristow, not only for his sterling work organising the bar, but also for keeping me on track with the technicalities of the speaker system, and for making a superb easel to display the big Green Belt map. Thanks also to Rob Austen for creating his housing density indicator, a most enlightening, and sobering, map accessory. The event is first and foremost a social one, but nonetheless there was considerable interest among members present about the potential impact on the Green Belt of the Council's planning policy review and the pressures from central government to increase local housing delivery.

Local Plan Review: the Society's response to the Issues and Options Consultation

The Borough Council's public consultation on 'Issues and Options' for the Local Plan ran from 25th September to 6th November. The Society responded by completing the online survey, and submitted further comments to the Planning Department via email. Committee members also attended a useful 'planning surgery' meeting in the Town Hall on 19 October ahead of our public display in the Ashley Centre.

Many of you will be familiar with the four options presented by the Council in this consultation, and will have responded personally. Nonetheless, feedback to the Society from members and from the general public prompted us to query, at the planning surgery meeting, the extent of effective publicity for the consultation across the Borough, given a perceived lack of awareness on the part of residents.

The Society's position is to support balanced, well-designed and sustainable development in the Borough and in consequence **we support Option 4 – Finding the balance**. It is the only option with the prospect of protecting the Borough's character and distinctiveness while enabling Epsom both to improve and grow as a place to live, work and enjoy. We support a reasonable target for new homes but question central government's current target of 579 homes a year over the life of the new plan (around 15 years). In the Society's view, this target is unachievable and undesirable and must be rejected.

The Society **does not support Option 1** (reliance on urban intensification using high densities) because this option necessitates building high and reallocating a variety of open spaces away from the urban area to accommodate development. It has always been the Society's policy to maintain the character of the town and to oppose high buildings. If proposed policy amendments go too far we would feel bound to oppose them. We support protection of the town's conservation areas from inappropriate development and seek to encourage the continued improvement of public spaces, green spaces, parks and gardens in the town. It has always been the Society's policy to preserve the Green Belt. Consequently the Society **does not support Options 2 and 3** (lesser and greater Green Belt release, respectively). The Society's letter is now available on our website.

The next public consultation, this time on detailed planning policies, is currently scheduled for March 2018. The Society intends to hold another open meeting, once the draft Local Plan is available. We'll keep members updated via this newsletter. Please also check for updates on our website, Facebook page and Twitter account.

www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk/

Facebook: EpsomCivicSociety

Twitter: @EpsomCivicSoc

Epsom's Highway Works

Full details of Epsom's highway works and weekly updates are available on Surrey County Council's website, at the following link, where you can also sign up for email updates:

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/roads-and-transport-policies-plans-and-consultations/major-transport-projects/epsom-and-ewell-major-transport-schemes>

Season's Greetings

I wish all members a Happy Christmas and New Year. With a new Local Plan emerging, 2018 promises to be a very significant year for the future of Epsom and Ewell. With your continuing support, our voice remains strong, thank you.

Margaret Hollins

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Prominent at the moment is what we might call the battle of the discounters.

Aldi at the Dairy Site, Alexandra Road: As long ago as April last year Aldi's application to build a supermarket on the Dairy Site was refused. We strongly supported this as the design was unsatisfactory and site is outside the Town Centre, where an allocation for a retail store was specified in the Depot Road and Upper High Street development brief, and is clearly more suitable for housing. This is specially so now that there is so much pressure on housing provision. In January the expected appeal was announced and this was heard at a Public Inquiry in October, with five days of evidence being given before the Inspector. We await the result with interest and feel sure that the Council's case should be strong enough for the dismissal of the appeal. Hopefully Aldi will accept this decision so that development for housing can take place.

Lidl at Upper High Street: Meanwhile Lidl had produced their application for a supermarket and 30 apartments in Upper High Street and permission has just been granted by the November planning committee. It complied with the relevant planning policies and with the development brief and was supported by ourselves and the Residents Associations. The supermarket will be modest in size and only a third of the size of the excessive proposal by Tesco a few years ago. There will be under-croft car parking and a traveller will lead to the food store at first floor level. The apartments on the second and third floor will be arranged around a landscaped courtyard. Negotiated amendments deal with some of our comments and also with affordable housing. Although it had been claimed that the provision of the 12 affordable units that planning policy required threatened the viability of the scheme, the Council's independent consultant's critical report resulted in the production of 6 units. This start, at last, on one of the developments in the planning brief, and the use of the empty site in Upper High Street, is excellent news.

Bar XLR, 79, East Street: The proposal to demolish this solid looking building and build a block of 6 flats has been granted planning permission but we understand an unexpected cost of piling has made this financially impossible. A new proposal for a smaller scheme is likely which might well deal with some of our own criticisms of the earlier design.

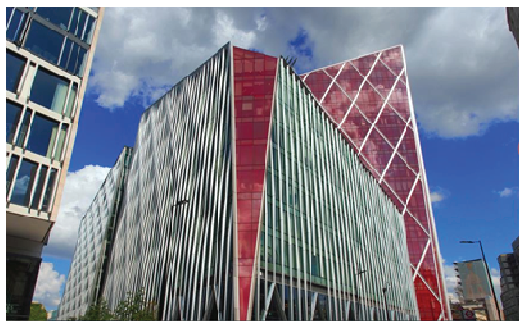
Nescot Housing Phase 2: The proposal to build a further 88 dwellings on the second phase on the Nescot agricultural land has been granted planning permission. Amendments after submission of the application reduced the scale of the apartment blocks and provided enhanced boundary landscaping. Affordable housing at 33% against a policy requirement of 40% was agreed after the Council's consultant confirmed that viability limited it to this amount. Overall density is within policy limits.

2, Pine Hill: This house is in a prominent position at the entrance to the Woodcote estate on the corner of the lane leading behind the Millenium Green to Woodcote House. It is a little larger than many houses on the estate but has been allowed to deteriorate to a serious extent and is now in multiple occupation. An outline planning application proposes alteration to provide a block of 10 flats. This would entail a 25% increase in footprint and the addition of a third storey. We, and many local residents, have objected strongly as the result would be entirely inconsistent with the character of the estate. The application has since been withdrawn and no doubt a revised proposal can be expected.

Alan Baker

HERITAGE

Firstly, the winner of this years' Carbuncle Cup, (pictured left) is 'Nova Victoria'. One of the judges said *'It makes me cringe physically. It's a crass assault on all your senses from the moment you leave the tube station.'* Perhaps of more interest to us in the context of our more residential setting is the second photo of one of the runners up, on the



right and described by a judge as a 'Lego brick. Most people now assume this family home to be a medical centre.' Let's hope Epsom never hosts a candidate.



We are very lucky: in our small authority area; we have no less than 21 conservation areas. The concept of conservation areas was introduced by the Civic Amenities Act 1967. At that time, there was widespread concern over the pace of redevelopment in our historic towns and cities. The idea was widely popular and today there are over 10,000 conservation areas in the UK.

Local Authority powers are contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 69 says (a) 'Every local planning authority shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' and (b) 'shall designate those areas as conservation areas'. (Note the use of 'shall' i.e. it is a duty, not an option). I think our council has served us well in this respect. There is also a duty to review from time to time. This section of the act also gives power to the Secretary of State to designate conservation areas, if the Local Authority has failed to do so. Section 71 confers a duty on Local Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas, and to submit them for consideration at a public meeting. There are 17 such management plans on the Council's website. They make very interesting reading.

The Act also confers all sorts of powers on Local Authorities including the ability to make grants for repair and maintenance (unlikely in the present economic climate) and powers it can use when historic buildings or land in conservation areas have fallen into a poor state of repair or are deliberately neglected.

I have written a number of letters since the last Newsletter. Mostly they have been in connection with applications relating to private houses. One or two have involved the conversion to flats of upper floors of commercial buildings. In two cases I wrote to object because the flats were very small, falling well short of the national space standards. So far, one of these applications has been refused on grounds which include this issue.

A rather more important application related to the demolition of a house in a conservation area and the construction of a block of flats in the Church Street conservation area. We felt this was of particular concern and it is worth quoting in full the substantive part of the letter: 'At first sight this application might seem to be acceptable in being located in a plot of generous size lying adjacent to two existing blocks of flats and in contributing to the very onerous housing targets now being set by Government. However, it must be seen in the context of the conservation area in which it is located.

'Although not immediately adjacent to Grove House, which is listed Grade II, it contributes to its setting. The Council approved the addition of Grove Road to the Conservation Area following the recommendation contained in the appraisal of December 2010 which stated '...although the setting of Grove House has largely been lost, due to Inter-War development, the building retains a pleasant setting to the front and rear gardens. It is also located next to a number of well detailed and carefully scaled two storey family houses which appear to date to the 1920s or 1930s and which sit in spacious plots with mature planting.'

‘Core Strategy Policy CS5 is explicit and unconditional: ‘The Council will protect and seek to enhance the Borough’s heritage assets.....The setting of these assets will be protected and enhanced.’ (My underlining – not in the original letter.)

‘Given the Council’s unqualified statement of intent, it would seem that this application must be rejected. It should also be resisted on the wider ground that such a whittling away of the extent and quality of this Conservation Area could provide the excuse or precedent to accept inroads on other such areas. Particularly in view of the pressures arising from Government housing policy it is essential that the Council is seen to uphold its own policies by a clear and unqualified statement of its intention to preserve the quality of the Borough’s built environment and accordingly should refuse this application.’ We await the outcome with interest.

An Apology

Sadly, I learnt recently that I had upset one of our members because I had written to object to the design of their proposed house extension, though not to the extension per se. I never check to see if the people submitting an application are members. To do so might be seen to affect our impartiality which would seriously undermine the value of what we try to do. At the recent buffet supper, the mayor was very complimentary in what the Society does in our efforts to safeguard the qualities of the town, which she said were appreciated by the Council. Nonetheless, I apologise for any distress I may have caused.

Rob Austen

DISASTER AVERTED FOR STREET TREES (From Mike Ford, by invitation)

The very real threat of a complete cessation of street tree planting in Epsom and Ewell has been averted thanks to a landmark agreement on an alternative way forward 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 the 2017 planting the last ever - the Tree Advisory Board has been working hard with sympathetic councillors in a bid to address what would have been a devastating long-term threat to our cherished leafy local environment.

Innovative proposals - under which the Tree Advisory Board will fund a continued planting programme using voluntary donations solicited from a variety of sources, with administrative support being provided by EEBC – were unanimously approved by October’s Environment Committee. The new system is now set to be up and running just in time for this autumn/winter planting season – but the number of trees that will be planted depends entirely on how much money can be raised.

This positive turn of events means that it is 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. In our first planting season we hope to plant 50 trees at a cost of £250 per tree, giving a projected sum of £12,500. This will be our starting point and we hope to gradually increase each year until we can plant in excess of the 100 trees per year which we need to sustain our leafy environment.

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. 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. In a very real sense it’s now down to the public at large to decide how much they value the leafy environment that contributes towards making Epsom & Ewell such a desirable place to live.

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

THE SOCIETY'S TREE FUND

Following Mike Ford's appeal in the autumn newsletter to support the Tree Advisory Board and its tree planting initiative, our members have generously donated £735.00 towards the Tree Fund. This sum has now been passed to the Tree Advisory Board and tree planting is already underway. My thanks to our members for their contributions. The Tree Fund remains open and we hope to be able to send further funds as they accumulate. As before, cheques should be sent to our treasurer, Nick Lock at Lower Bridle, 30 Downs Avenue, Epsom KT18 5HG, and marked 'Tree Fund' on the reverse.

Malcolm Boyd

DOWNS REPORT

As usual at the Consultative Committee, most matters related to hack riding concerns – raised by the British Horse Society representative. The dispute about the responsibility for maintaining the sand track has not been resolved, so this is still not open for hacking. The marking of some hack rides need improving and this will be addressed. I drew attention to the poor condition of several of the boundary posts along the racecourse – the tops of some had been badly damaged by weathering.

The Conservators meeting accepted a proposed 2% increase in the precept. Many applications are submitted for events on the Downs. The responsibility of the Conservators is maintaining the Downs but also controlling the use of them by groups. The Alzheimer's Society wished to run a Memory walk with the number of participants (some may need accompanying all the way round) estimated at up to 4000. It was felt this is too large a number so will be restricted to 2000 participants. It is impossible to assess the amount of damage which so many feet may cause to the turf. They also thought of writing to local riding stables about the sand track but decided to postpone writing until there is further news about the condition and maintenance.

There is ongoing consultation regarding parking on both the area in front of The Derby Arms and the grassland bounded by Langley Vale Road, Tattenham Corner Road and the Racecourse railings - another area which used to be closed by a barrier unless an event was scheduled.

It is hoped Surrey County Council will not take too long improving the crossing by the Queen's Stand. Cars are not slowing sufficiently when race-horses are waiting to cross which can spook the highly-strung racehorses.

The Jockey Club solicitors have objected to the planning application at Cedar Point stables complex in Headley Road, as has this Society. The solicitors sent a 15 page letter listing likely adverse effects on, and importance of, local race-horse training industry. Non-compliance with Policies DM3, DM24, DM26, incorrect boundary line, need for licensing of racing stables and scathing comments about the Estate Agent who marketed the property – not a specialist in marketing racing establishments were some of the points made.

Now some good news! 7 more winners trained in Epsom than this time last year and racehorses using training grounds up by 8% from last year.

Angela Clifford

FRANCIS FRITH and EPSOM (From Harry Corben, by invitation)

Francis Frith, founder of the world famous photographic archive, was a devout Quaker and a successful business man. Having established and sold a wholesale grocery business in Liverpool he became a millionaire and then made photographic journeys to the Nile and astounded viewers with his pictures. Born in 1822 he established a business in Reigate as a specialist publisher of topographical photographs to cater partly for the boom in tourism which was encouraged by the increase in railway transport in the 1860s. Over some thirty years

as Frith and Co. he travelled the country by train or pony and trap with the aim of photographing every town and village in Britain so that tourists would enjoy souvenirs of their days out. He moved to France and died there in 1898.

His two sons carried on the business and their legacy today provides a unique record of change in 7,000 cities, towns and villages throughout Britain over a century and more. Hundreds of thousands of their photographs are now available world wide on the internet and many are available at the Family History Centre in Bourne Hall. In 'Epsom, a Photographic History of Your Town', pictures show the town up until the 1850s, the late Victorian Period, from the 1920s to the 1960s, Suburbs and Hamlets: 1890s to 1950s, Epsom and the Derby, Epsom College, Woodcote and Ewell and Nonsuch. Pictures show the Market end of the High Street as it was in 1928 with Wheeler Bros in occupation of Waterloo House and in 1955 with two way traffic and the roundabout at the South Street approach. There is a picture of the High Street, from Ashley Road, as it was in 1924 with E.G. Pullingers on the corner where Lloyds Bank now stands. Later pictures show the North side after the road has been widened. This side has been rebuilt in a Neo-Georgian suburban shopping parade style.

Woodcote Green is shown as it was in 1890. York House is in the centre of one picture and the gabled end later incorporated in Rowan House which became part of Epsom General Hospital. All of the houses shown in 1903 have now gone. There are, of course, many pictures of the Downs and the importance to Epsom of the Race Course is clear to see and the increase in Derby spectators due to the railway is noted.

In a larger book on Surrey's towns and villages the wholesale sweeping away of the past in favour of a future of concrete and glass is something with which most of us would disagree.

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our new members including 38 who joined at our Display in the Ashley Centre on 28th October – this brought our new members for 2017 to over 130. Many thanks to all who assisted on the day, particularly those who prepared the Display stands. Those 'manning' the Stand enjoyed talking to our members and the potential new members who came to look at the Exhibition and learn about the Local Plan Consultation. **Ishbel Kenward, Membership Secretary**



NATIONAL TRUST FREE PASSES

I have recently discovered that the single use National Trust Free Passes are available to **all** our members including National Trust members. If you are a NT member you can give the free Pass to anyone you please, family, friend or neighbour. So, if you wish to have one of these Passes, please let me know – they are valid until 31st May 2018. These passes are available because Epsom Civic Society is a member of Civic Voice. Our Society is a founder member of this national charity for the civic movement in England which works to make the places where everyone lives more attractive, enjoyable and distinctive and to promote civic pride.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary. Tel. 01372 728570

email info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

THE MILLENNIUM GREEN POND

The Society Committee recently invited Mark Swan, Chairman of the Woodcote Millennium Green Trust, to tell us about the condition of the pond and what steps are needed to restore it to a good condition and to maintain it in that condition. As local residents will know, the pond, which is a key feature of Woodcote Millennium Green, has become choked with a variety of undesirable plants that are threatening to invade what little water remains. If this is allowed to continue the pond will die and whatever wildlife in it will also die. One of the main culprits is the dreaded New Zealand Pygmy weed which is causing huge problems in ponds and lakes across the country. The Committee of the Millennium Green Trust has produced an ambitious plan to clear the pond of weeds and remove much of the encroaching trees and saplings along the border. The projected cost of the plan is £15,000 and over £5,000 has already been donated. Various activities are taking place to raise additional funds and local residents are being asked to be generous. Epsom Civic Society has pledged to give £5,000 once the fund has reached the figure of £10,000.

Those who would like to donate should send a cheque made out to 'Woodcote Millennium Green Trust' to Mr Mark Swan, Chairman, 6 Sunnybank, Epsom, Surrey KT18 7DX. **Malcolm Boyd**

EVENTS

2017 Buffet Supper

The 2017 Buffet Supper took place at the Unity Church Hall in Church Street, Epsom on Friday, 13th October. Unfortunately five guests could not attend, but the 73 members and friends there created a relaxed and jolly atmosphere, particularly after Mark Bristow's bar opened and everyone attempted to answer Angela Clifford's quiz on Epsom. We were delighted to welcome Epsom's Mayor, Liz Frost, and her consort, Councillor Chris Frost, to the event, both longstanding ECS members.

The entertainer was John Field, a magician who gave us a history of magic with informative and light humour plus a demonstration of some intriguing tricks.

Although there was not a lot of kitchen space, Studio Food served the tables very efficiently and speedily. For some members it was an easier venue to reach and to park near and for the committee the sound system and staging were excellent so therefore we shall probably return there next year.

As this Newsletter is circulated, the Mill at Sonning trip will take place and we look forward to meeting members on the fully-booked trip. **Sheila Wadsworth – 01372-273517**

Epsom Civic Society
Tel Nos: (membership 01372 728570)
(other 01372 723325)

Newsletter Editor: Malcolm Boyd
10 Woodcote Green Road
Epsom KT18 7DH

Printed: Print Centre
Unit 6,
Epsom Downs Metro Centre
Waterfield Tadworth
KT20 6LR

Website: www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

E-mail: info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk