

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

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Ruth Ormella MRTPI
Head of Planning
Town Hall
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Dear Ruth

PLANNING APPLICATION 18/00308/FUL
SOUTH HATCH STABLES, BURGH HEATH ROAD, EPSOM
DEMOLITION OF STABLES AND ERECTION OF NEW RTE AND 47 APARTMENTS

This an important and controversial application and is an extended reworking of an outline proposal by the previous owner in 2004/5 which was refused and dismissed at appeal. It seeks a balance between the Green Belt, in which stables lie, the racehorse training industry and the housing programme, all of which are supported by this Society.

There can be no doubt that the existing long-established stables are outdated and present an unattractive frontage to Burgh Heath Road or that a well-designed and well-placed replacement would be an improvement both to the industry and to the environment. The applicant, however, wishes to erect a greatly enlarged RTE on open land further back from the road than the existing stables and then build enabling housing development on the road frontage.

In the current Green Belt Study, this land is within parcel 32, bounded by Burgh Heath Road, Beech Road, Rifle Buttes Alley and Epsom Golf Course; it is described as residential with stables, grassland, pasture and paddocks, but the large majority is open land. It was marked highly in Stage 1 of the study but included in Stage 2 as promoted following the Call for Sites Exercise. The Study concludes that the parcel is not suitable for release from the Green Belt; the landscape and visual sensitivities are high, there is high overall sensitivity to development and it is an important part of the gap between the urban edge of Epsom to the north and Great Burgh to the south.

Any development on this land would be inappropriate and could not be permitted in the absence of very special circumstances; proposals would also be subject to Local Plan Policies CS2 and DM1-3. The applicant wishes to revive racehorse training in Epsom but claims that this would not be viable without being subsidised by enabling development. We are opposed in principle to

enabling development in the Green Belt and cannot agree that there are adequate special circumstances to justify the erection of commercial housing on the Burgh Heath Road frontage. He also takes advantage of the present extreme pressure to allocate housing sites as another reason to build here. In our opinion the addition of further development in Burgh Heath Road should be avoided as building up this frontage would defeat the Green Belt objectives. Neither of these claims is sufficient justification.

We believe that replacement and reasonable enlargement of the existing stables themselves might be acceptable in principle. The present proposal, however, includes not only land at the rear, taking it close to Downs Way, but also the adjoining field to the north, leaving only one small area of pasture between the development and Beech Road. The total area would be increased by more than four times contrary to the objectives of this Green Belt parcel.

We have carefully considered the benefits of the extended stables and of the proposed housing units, but accept the conclusion of the Green Belt Study that this parcel is not suitable for release. As the present proposal would take up a substantial part of the parcel and would defeat the important objectives of this part of the Green Belt, we consider that the application should be refused.

If, contrary to our view, the grant of permission were to be contemplated, conditions should be imposed restricting the occupation of the staff accommodation to people employed in the racing industry. In addition it should be required that the RTE should be erected before any housing units, to avoid them being offered in the open market if the RTE did not proceed.

Yours sincerely

ALAN BAKER FRICS
Vice Chairman

cc Ward Councillors