

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

29 October 2018

Ruth Ormella MRTPI
Head of Planning
Town Hall
EPSOM
KT18 5BY

Dear Ruth

PLANNING APPLICATION 18/00940/OUT
24-28 WEST STREET, EPSOM
DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION OF 5-STOREY BUILDING
WITH COMMERCE/SHOPPING AND 14 FLATS

This outline application is said to be limited to access and layout but our main concern at this stage is the demolition of the existing building. It is within Area 2 of the extension to the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area, and this part of the extension was specifically intended for its protection.

The building is not listed either nationally or locally, although we understand that action is being taken by interested parties to apply to Historic England for its urgent national listing and we fully support this proposal. Until then we believe it falls within the provisions of Part 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012, and Part 16 of the 2018 revision, relating to non-designated heritage assets.

Jeremy Harte, curator of the Bourne Hall Museum, draws attention to mention of the building in the John Furniss memoirs, *Talk of the Town*, a valuable reservoir of local history and personalities. In it (pp1-2 and 31-2) he describes the building, from which it appears that his grandfather, Thomas William Furniss, built it shortly after his return to Epsom from the US in 1871. This and another building at 21 Temple Road were built by him in reinforced concrete, a technology pioneered in France and America (where William discovered it). William E Ward House in New York, dated to the 1870, is the earliest existing American building. This suggests that the two Epsom properties may be the earliest existing English domestic buildings in reinforced concrete.

The appearance of the significant east facing elevation, described in the Conservation Area appraisal as fanciful architectural detail, is well known and well-liked by Epsom residents and forms an important feature of this section of the Town Centre as seen whether turning towards the station or leaving or coming into Epsom in this direction.

Para 197 of the NPPF 2018 states that a balanced judgement will be required when assessing applications affecting heritage assets, and the applicant's agent claims that no substantial harm would be caused by the present proposal compared with the considerable benefits of the new development. We totally disagree. This building is an important asset from an historical, architectural and constructional point of view. Demolition would deprive this area of the sort of feature that gives Epsom its individuality, whereas the current proposal would destroy this important piece of Epsom history and produce a modern structure of less than appropriate architectural quality. It would be contrary to Policies CS1, CS5, DM8, BM9 and DM10.

This Society was formed some 60 years ago to be vigilant about threats to local heritage. This application is such a case and our Executive Committee unanimously feel that permission for the demolition and redevelopment of this corner of Epsom should be refused.

Yours sincerely

ALAN BAKER FRICS
Vice Chairman

cc Ward Councillors