

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

11 April 2019

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

Dear Ruth

PLANNING APPLICATION 18/00308/FUL
SOUTH HATCH STABLES, BURGH HEATH ROAD
REVISIONS TO LAYOUT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPEMENT

We have seen recent comments on this proposed development referring to the circulation of an amended planning application. We have not ourselves received any communication since our letter of 16 July last year and no further revisions seem to be recorded online since those described in the document of 11 December from Rural Solutions, although there has been much correspondence about enabling development and the need for a reptile survey.

The December revisions involved the resiting of residential Block C further from the trotting ring and its reduction in size by 4 apartments. The 1.5 storey sections of Blocks A and B have been raised to 2.5 storeys, to match the remainder of those Blocks, increasing their capacity by a total of 3 apartments. The commercial residential development is therefore reduced in total from 47 units to 46. This achieves the stated object of reducing disturbance to the horses using the trotting ring and to the residents of Block C but the claim that it reduces the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt cannot be accepted.

We must say at once that our objection to the application, as stated in our letter last July, is based on our firm belief that commercial housing development should not take place on Green Belt land, and this is confirmed by the opinion in Stage 2 of the Green Belt Study that this parcel of the Green Belt is not suitable for release. We also support the many objections from local residents that this is a totally unsuitable location for housing for a variety of reasons described by them. In particular we support the comprehensive and well argued objection recently submitted by 36 residents drawing attention to the many inconsistencies in the case presented by the applicant.

As previously stated we wish to support the racing industry in Epsom and have considerable sympathy with Jim Boyle, whom we have met to discuss the difficulties his proposal entails. It is unfortunate that finance could not be raised without the enabling development and we have seen the analysis in the Executive Summary Updated February 2019 produced by Rural Solutions. This includes a normal residual form of calculation which produces an estimated value which a developer could offer for the commercial housing land. This is stated to be equal to the cost of the proposed RTE which indicates that enabling development is intended pay for the whole cost, and we are surprised that the prospect of a successful future for the yard does not seem to attract any financial support at all. We understand that the freehold of the land is owned by a subsidiary of an investment company; it is said that they do not feel “incentivised!” to finance the redevelopment but would rely on the disposal value of the existing stables for commercial housing development. This could well be carried out by a further subsidiary, who would take a substantial profit from the process. The conclusion must be that although the improvement to the stables would hopefully benefit Epsom racing as a whole it would not in itself be a financially viable proposition and the investment company owning the land are not willing to finance it.

The decision to be made, therefore, is whether the enlargement of the stables should be subsidised by permitting commercial housing in an unsuitable location and at the expense of sacrificing this valuable part of the Green Belt. We do not think it should and we cannot withdraw our opinion that this application should be refused. If, contrary to our view, permission is granted we believe it should be conditioned to ensure that the stables are completed before the commencement of the building of the commercial housing.

Yours sincerely

ALAN BAKER FRICS
Vice Chairman

cc Ward Councillors