

Epsom Civic Society

formerly Epsom Protection Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

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Ruth Ormella MRTPI
Head Of Planning
Town Hall
Epsom
KT18 5BY

26th March 2020

Dear Ruth

Ref 6 The Grove Epsom - Planning Application 20/00313/FUL OBJECTION

This is the 4th application in recent years for the proposed development of this property, situated in this quiet corner of The Church Street Conservation Area. This continued barrage of applications must be causing great anxiety to the neighbours and residents in The Grove. It is time to let things rest and for the owner to proceed with the application that has been approved.

The current proposal seeks to demolish the existing detached house and replace with a substantial block of 9 flats along with a basement car park. This proposal shows a 3 storey structure with a height of approximately 9.7m, which is 1.4m above the immediately adjacent house at 7 The Grove. The basement car park plan shows it being approximately 2-3m from the neighbouring foundations. The new building is sited closer to the road and uses up much of the existing front garden. We note that none of the proposed accommodation is 'affordable'.

This proposed block of flats affectively changes the nature of The Grove from single detached period houses to bland flats. The rhythm of the streetscape is currently double plot for multiple occupancy and single for detached/single dwellings. The positioning of all the buildings in The Grove/CA are dictated by the setting of the listed Grove House.



These conditions are described within the 1929 redevelopment plan of the Grove Estate. The new application does not comply with the original intentions.

We note that the Council is in the process of reviewing the Local Plan but understand that the maintaining and indeed the enhancement of the Conservation Areas is a key requirement. The Public Consultations held to date have stated that the CA's and our green spaces are a major feature in the well being of the Epsom residents.

There are several development management policies that are of particular interest. These are notes as follows :-

- DM 5 Trees and Landscaping - The front garden has disappeared ! The back garden is currently a mini nature reserve which is adversely affected by this proposal.
- DM 8 Heritage Asset – The significance of the heritage asset must be established. Please see our later concerns regarding the CA.
- DM 9 Townscape character and local distinctiveness - The existing house fits in well with all of the houses in The Grove based on style, roofing, façade materials and gardens. All except the existing flats, which lie outside of the CA. The proposed scheme meets none of this townscape criteria.
- DM 10 Design Requirements – This is not a good design. The NPPF states that ‘Buildings of varying heights and massing need to be carefully designed and located in relation to each other, in order that they complement and do not detract from other buildings in the street and the wider local context generally’. Grove House sets a standard for design for flats in The Grove. The elevation specifications of Grove House are excellent and relate well with the detached houses in the road. But where are the play areas, outside garden areas ? This application certainly does not achieve the DM10 requirement.
- DM 11 & 13 Housing Density and heights – The massing of this 3 storey block is too tight for this location and above the height of the adjacent neighbour.
- DM 16 Backland Development - Although the applicant suggests that this is not a backland development, we believe this not to be true as a significant part of the rear domestic garden is lost, along with several mature trees. Therefore we consider that DM16 is applicable to this case.

In conclusion, upon the review of the management policies, we recommend that the application is unacceptable based on the following – inappropriate backland development, harm to streetscene, CA detracting, significant harm to neighbouring living conditions (loss of light, noise, disturbance), non compliance with housing mix and the retention of trees.

We are also concerned at the complete lack of environmental considerations. Much of the existing flora and fauna is planned for removal whilst the remaining rear garden trees would be shaded by the height and density of the new building. Also all trees located close by to the new basement walls will have to be removed, as they lie within the angle of repose for the new retaining wall construction.

The neighbour most affected by the works will be 7 The Grove. The main construction works will cause undue noise, vibration and dust, mainly due to the nature of the scope of the works ie large basement excavation and ground retention, probable concrete frame and safety access scaffolding. The final building and occupancy will deliver noise disturbance, basement parking fumes at their boundary, increased shading of their garden. This is all completely unreasonable for this tranquil location.

The main concern of the ECS is the effect of this proposed development on the Church Street CA and its unique character. The CA management proposal provides recommendations for the future protection and enhancement. It is the duty of our Planning Authority to ensure that this special character is preserved. The proposal detracts from these values and will blight the character of the CA.

In conclusion, the Epsom Civic Society strongly objects to this poorly conceived and inappropriate development. It does little to enhance our delightful conservation area and conflicts with many of our local management policies. Please refuse this application.

Yours Sincerely,

Bob Hollis
(on behalf of The Epsom Civic Society)

Cc All Ward Councillors

