

Epsom Civic Society

formerly Epsom Protection Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

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Victoria Potts BA(Hons) DIPTP, MRTPI
Head Of Place Development
Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
The Town Hall
Epsom
KT18 5BY

Robert Hollis

26th September 2022

Dear Vicki,

Ref Planning Application 22/01371/FUL Linden Cottage, 44 Christchurch Mount
OBJECTION

The Epsom Civic Society are very concerned at this proposal to erect residential units in the rear gardens of 44-42 Christchurch Mount. This is one of the Borough's most quiet, tranquil and sylvan locations.

The application is for 2No x 2 bed apartments and 3 Family houses. We recently corresponded stating that the flats were wrongly identified and were clearly 2 semi-detached houses and that this application should be withdrawn pending a re-assessment of the dwelling classifications.

The existing Linden Cottage (44 Christchurch Mount) is a fine example of the existing architecture of the dwellings in this road and surrounding streetscape. The general view is of brick facades, vertical clay tiling, timber features, clay roof tiles and sloping roofs. The gardens (front and rear) are well established with a range of trees and flora and fauna.



The proposal, based on land used as rear gardens, would result in an inappropriate form of backland development which would be out of keeping with the area. The location is strongly characterised by neat front gardens and houses with long rear gardens which contribute to the overall area appearance. The demolition of Linden Cottage and the siting of the 2 flats (Semi-detached houses) exacerbate this situation. We note that these dwellings would be highly visible from Christchurch Mount and consequently their elevations should be seen as part of the context of the road's existing frontages. The application is therefore contrary to the requirements of Policies CS1, CS5(The Built Environment) of the Core Strategy (2007) and Policies DM9, DM10(Design Requirements) and DM16 of the Development Management Policies (2015)

Policy DM16 (Backland Development) of the Council's LDF Development Management Policies Document (2015) states that there will be a presumption against the loss of rear domestic gardens due to the need to maintain local character, amenity space, green infrastructure and biodiversity. It is only in exceptional cases that modest development is acceptable. This is not the case as 1) green infrastructure is not retained 2) Privacy is not maintained nor light spillage 3) visual impact of access road 4) excessive mass and scale of development 5) trees, shrubs and wildlife habitat not retained.

The design, vast bulk and scale of the new dwellings do not reinforce local distinctiveness and would have a materially harmful impact on the wider area's character and appearance. The proposed elevation materials are predominantly vertical metal cladding and roofing with brown wall rendering. The material selection is completely alien to all dwellings in the area. The cramped positioning of the houses result in their rear and side walls dominating and overbearing the gardens of Nos 42, 40 and 38 Christchurch Mount. Some elevations are approximately 6m height and 1m away from the boundary fences. The privacy of all the adjacent gardens would be severely compromised by the new layouts. The dwellings would overlook the rear gardens of 42, 40 and 38 Christchurch Mount as well as the rear gardens of Lower Hill Road.

The new access road would serve 5 dwellings and would abut the site boundary of 42 Christchurch Mount. Vehicle traffic and pedestrians using this access would introduce noise disturbance into an area which is currently quiet and secluded. This would significantly affect the peace and enjoyment of the occupants of the neighbouring residences. We are not convinced that there is sufficient turning space on the site for



vehicles to be able to drive forward into Christchurch Mount. The application fails to comply with the requirements of Policy CS5 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2007) and Policies DM10 and DC of the Development Management Policies (2015)

The proposed development will threaten the sylvan character of the setting. The close proximity of the proposed buildings to the many established trees is likely to have an adverse impact on the living conditions of the new occupants, resulting in future pressures to further prune the trees, to the detriment of the visual amenity of the locality. This rear garden location is also a haven for the local wildlife eg badgers, bats, foxes and birdlife. Its' replacement with overbuild will destroy this habitat.

The Epsom Civic Society are concerned that Pre-Application advice was given in 2020 suggesting that the proposed scheme was 'in principle' appropriate. This advice was given during the early Covid lockdown period and a site visit would not have been possible. Such a site visit would have demonstrated the prevailing character, tranquillity and design features of this special area. Nevertheless, the detailed reservations that were set out in this pre-app advice relating to meeting the backland development criteria, principles of good design, preventing over-looking and ensuring the development responds to its immediate surroundings have clearly not been satisfied by this proposal.

In conclusion, the Epsom Civic Society strongly objects to this proposal, as it is at odds with the ethos to incorporate principles of good design and respecting local character and local distinctiveness. The dwellings are out of keeping with prevailing development typology. The severely limited amenity space is in conflict with DM12 and CS5 and very poor for family housing. This back garden scheme is completely inappropriate and with these tight infill houses would erode the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding area. We strongly request that this application is refused.

Yours Sincerely,

Bob Hollis (Vice Chair of The Epsom Civic Society)

