

NEWSLETTER No - 174 – SUMMER 2023 www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

Dear Members,

Summer's arrival brings a host of local events to enjoy and I often think how fortunate we are to have so much going on locally at key venues including Epsom Playhouse, The Horton, Bourne Hall and for its first summer season, at Lavender Theatre with 'Annie Get Your Gun' (17 July – 5 August - <u>http://lavendertheatre.com/</u>)

Thanks to these venues – and others including churches, local clubs, pubs and restaurants - there is a huge amount of music, theatre, art, and other events to entertain and delight us





thanks both to local individuals and organisations and to those visiting us from further afield.

The 4th Satisfied Eye International Film Festival (SEIFF) was held in May at Bourne Hall, following hard on the heels of the Festival of Ewell (19 - 20 May).

Epsom Jazz Club's summer season has gigs on 13 June and 11 July: <u>https://linktr.ee/EpsomJazzClub</u> while Epsom Choral Society's next performance will be on 24 June at St Andrew's Church, Cheam: <u>https://epsomchoral.org.uk/</u>

Local celebrations for King Charles III's coronation (arguably Spring's most significant event after the local elections) were relatively low key. We recorded some of Epsom's coronation shopfronts in a Twitter thread (@EpsomCivicSoc) and reproduce one of the displays here (pictured right).



As we closed for press, momentum was building around the Epsom Derby, albeit marred this year by train strikes and the significant shift in



timing of the race. We hope this won't deter the enjoyment of Epsom's most important event of the year.

The Society's next event will be a walk on 9 July, full details on page 9. Please do let our Events Secretary know what kind of events you would like us to arrange, more on this from Eleanor on pp.9-10.

LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Members will recall that the first (Regulation 18) **public consultation for the draft Local Plan** ran from 1 February to 19 March. I was pleased to accept an invitation to join Councillors Alex Coley and Steven McCormick, Tim Murphy from CPRE on the panel at a public meeting on 13 March to discuss the plan. Epsom and Ewell Times published a report of the meeting <u>here</u>.

The Society submitted its 33-page response to the draft Local Plan consultation on 18 March. I am very grateful to my fellow members of the Society's planning sub-committee for their time, expertise, and extensive input. We held several meetings to agree our response, spoke to Council Officers at their 13 February drop-in session at Bourne Hall, and went on a site visit. The Society's own display in the Ashley Centre on 18 February provided an opportunity for us to explain to local people visiting the Centre what the draft plan means and to listen to local concerns about it. Ensuring infrastructure, such as doctors' surgeries, schools and public transport keeps pace with proposed development were some of the issues people raised with us. Thanks must go to our display sub-committee who put the display together and to those of our members who volunteered as staffers on the day. Our consultation response is available on our website <u>here.</u>

Briefly, our response to the consultation highlighted what we consider to be three key questions for EEBC to address in developing its Local Plan:

1) Should the Local Plan challenge the Government's standard method for assessing housing need?

2) If the answer to the first question is yes, then what should the housing requirement be? and

3) Where this total is determined, where should these homes be built within EEBC?

We set out our thoughts on these three overarching questions before addressing the 50 individual policy and site allocation questions set out in the council's consultation questionnaire document.

Delivery of housing that is truly affordable is absolutely vital. Our view is that the draft plan made a commendable attempt to maximise **affordable housing**, but we lack confidence in the policy's capacity to deliver. Significantly, it does not address the real need which is for **social housing**. Social housing provision needs attention from HMG, who have been responsible for the conspicuous absence of new social housing development since the 1980s. Councils need the means and the will to resume council house building.

Local concerns about the draft Local Plan allocating sites in the Green Belt for new homes resulted in a petition with over 10,000 signatures calling for the removal of those sites from the draft Plan. The Green Belt is important to preserve, and we should not be proposing developments within that for future housing needs, save in exceptional circumstances. The Society has traditionally resisted development in the Green Belt, however we recognise that there may be certain Green Belt sites that could benefit from sensitive and contextually appropriate (re)development. We also recognise the implications for the townscape, particularly in terms of unacceptable increases in building heights and unacceptable densities detracting from the character and heritage of the town if Green Belt development is always off-limits. Good design and robust design codes are essential in avoiding the planning mistakes of the past. It's encouraging to read in the draft Plan's Vision Statement that, "New development will have helped to redress past mistakes by replacing poorly designed buildings and spaces with higher quality development." We certainly hope so.

On 22 March an extraordinary meeting of the full Council voted to pause the Local Plan process due in part to Green Belt concerns but also pending clarification from central government of planning policy, in particular relating to required housing numbers, calculation of housing need, and anticipated legislative reform of the planning process. The 'pause' being currently open-ended, slippage in the timetable for adoption of a new Local Plan is inevitable, with the consequence that the Borough remains vulnerable to speculative development.

The Local Plan is not however, just about housing. It also deals with employment, business, transport, heritage, the natural environment, sport and recreation, and the delivery of supporting infrastructure. In addition, the Society welcomes the inclusion in the draft Plan of a policy (S5) on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Given the climate emergency we are facing, and for the avoidance of doubt, we suggested in our consultation response that the plan should state that Policy S5 has priority over other policies in the draft plan.

The Society remains in touch with Chris Grayling MP, with EEBC's Head of Place Development and with local councillors. Now that local elections are over, we look forward to enjoying a constructive relationship with all newly elected and re-elected councillors in getting a new local Plan adopted.

IN OTHER PLANNING NEWS

The Society submitted its response (2 March) to the government's consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), available on our website <u>here</u>. The Housing Minister reported that 26,000 responses had been received. The government's response is likely to be delayed beyond a (previously indicated) date in May, leading to more uncertainty about what changes will be brought forward, and when.

On 12 April, Secretary of State Michael Gove wrote to the Chief Executive of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to warn of the risk of the authority's designation, ie being placed in special measures, due to its

failure to decide over 70% of planning applications on time. EEBC is one of ten authorities (3 in Surrey) that have until June to demonstrate improved performance. If designation goes ahead, applicants for planning permission could submit their applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate. The Society is concerned at this intervention, and we are enquiring into the Council's response. CEO Jackie King's response, reported in Epsom and Ewell Times (15 May) is upbeat: "Once reviewed we are hopeful that the minister will acknowledge and recognise that the issues the council faced were historic and temporary in nature and this council has taken significant proactive steps to address and improve."

MEMBERS: CAN YOU HELP?

The Society's committee urgently needs to fill the post of Hon. Secretary. We operate very much as a team, supportive of each other and with individual members contributing a range of expertise. Over the past three years we have responded to five central government consultations on planning reform, various local consultations, the latest being on the draft Local Plan, and been involved with a range of planning applications and appeals. All this takes an enormous amount of time. At the same time, we also need to arrange meetings, organise our display and other events, ensure that our leaflets and heritage trails are up-to-date, respond to enquiries from members and non-members alike, which is where the Hon Secretary comes in. Please do get in touch with us for a chat if you are interested in joining us.

Epsom Wells Community Centre needs your help and involvement to restore and re-open the Centre. There is information <u>here</u> where you can also sign up to their monthly newsletter:

The excellent **Epsom and Ewell Times** is now one year old and a great resource for local news reporting. This online news service is free for users; do check it out. Their <u>website</u> is pop-up free and they would like to keep it that way. They are seeking donations. Please support them if you can.

Trees: the Society is happy to receive donations to our tree fund. If you would like to donate, please mark your payment 'Tree Fund'. When we have a reasonable sum, we transfer the funds to the Tree Advisory Board (TAB) in support of their planting programme.

AND FINALLY

Thanks to our members who braved a very rainy evening to attend our AGM on 27 April at Christ Church Hall, we truly appreciate your support. The AGM is an opportunity for me to formally thank our committee members for their hard work and commitment over the past year. This year we enjoyed a most interesting and thought-provoking talk from our guest speaker, Lionel Blackman, on 'Civic Society, Home and Abroad', and I am delighted to record my thanks to Lionel here, on behalf of us all.

Margaret Hollins

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Following on from the last (No.173) newsletter there are a number of updates.

31-37 *East Street (22/01518/FUL):* Demolition of the former Office World/Majestic Wine Warehouse with self-storage at ground floor and flexible office space above. This remains outstanding and we suspect that there is a difficulty with the juxtaposition of this site and close location of the large area opportunity site SA1 of the paused local plan.

107-111 East Street (21/01708/FUL): A new application for 16 flats was recently lodged. Whilst this is a reduction from the previously refused (twice) application there remains concern about the bulk and mass proposed for this corner site. Separately, approval was given for the bungalow of No.111 to be redeveloped as a stand-alone site comprising 6 flats. At the time of going to press the application was due to be considered by the planning committee on 8 June with an Officers' recommendation to approve the proposal to build 16 flats.

Kingswood House School Site (22/01653/FUL): It is good news that there has been a refusal of the application for redevelopment on this site and that the freeholder is now willing to enter into a new lease so that the school may continue, as now, well into the future.

The Chalk Pit has been a very long saga about the activities here. Notification has been received that Surrey County Council has formally approved the planning application for change of use on part of the site from a waste transfer station to materials recycling facility with associated buildings and infrastructure. This will no doubt be closely watched and the site featured in the recent local elections campaigning.

39 Manor Green Road (22/00695/FUL): This ongoing application for the change of use of the rear garden building from a gym/yoga studio to a separate dwelling fronting Hamilton Close was refused and an appeal was then lodged. This remains at appeal stage with the Inspector's decision awaited.

Hollycroft Epsom Road Ewell (21/01254/FLH and 21/01167/FUL): Two appeals remain awaiting decision - one for building a house in the back garden and the other for major conversion works to the Grade 2 listed building.

1 Burgh Heath Road (22/00431/FUL): The most recent of several applications has again been refused. This one was for the conversion of the former care home into a house with multiple use units.

Marsden/Ashtead Park Nursery (*MO*/2022/0474): A decision is still awaited by Mole Valley regarding the application for closure and demolition of the Garden Centre and the building of 26 houses on the site. The Mole Valley decision to pause its Local Plan to exclude any new housing development in the Green Belt may well be a factor.

24-28 West Street (22/01294/FUL): This planning application was on the agenda for the 20thApril Planning Committee meeting, with a recommendation to approve the proposed demolition of the existing building and redevelop the site. That meeting was subsequently cancelled. Prior to the meeting's cancellation, we had raised concerns with the Planning Team that the agenda papers made no reference to the existing property's candidature for local listing, which the Society submitted to Surrey County Council on 16 November 2021 in connection with the Local Heritage List Project. We therefore suggested that it would assist Planning Committee members in their decision-making if SCC's recommendation for the building were brought to their attention. We hoped that cancellation of the meeting would enable the local listing issue to be properly considered before the Planning Committee on 8th June. However, at the time of going to press the Officers' report recommended approval with the comment: "The existing buildings on the site have been nominated for Local Listing under Surrey County's Local Heritage list projects. However, as



work on this has not been progressed to date the potential for the local listing is given no weight in the assessment of this application." This is of great disappointment to the Committee that the local Listing will carry no weight in the determination of the application. We strongly supported the local listing of this building. We note the recent Ewell decision regarding the demolition and rebuilding of Glyn Hall application (23/00013/FUL) not to grant approval because of an impending local listing.

The former Police Station and Ambulance Station Site (22/00923/FUL): This is another planning application that was scheduled for determination at the 20thApril Planning Committee meeting. Following the meeting's cancellation, the next available opportunity to decide the application will be on 8th June. The recommendation to committee is for refusal. The Society submitted a neutral/supportive letter for this application for a new residential, nursing and dementia care home (4/5 block with 96 dementia beds).

157 High Street (22/01335/FUL): This application for the conversion of the 1st floor above Epsom Hardware into a flat still awaits a decision.

79/81 *East Street* (22/01953): This proposal for the demolition of the existing pub and offices at 79-81 East Street and the erection of a 5/6 storey residential building providing for 31 new flats awaits a decision.

New Applications

Dairy Crest site (23/00402/FUL): An application for new Aldi store on the former Dairy Crest site has recently been submitted. We have lodged an objection letter for this proposal. Although we welcome a competitively priced food store, the location is wrong and would create difficult and unsafe vehicle access conditions. The site is adjacent to the 5-way junction in Alexandra Road (pictured here). We suggested that the site is better suited for residential dwellings. The site works necessitate the reduction of ground level which could affect the rear of the houses in Wyeth's Road. Unlike the new Lidl store, the Aldi shop is away from the High Street retail units and would encourage people to drive to the new store.



2 *Pine Hill* (23/00290/*RES*): Although three new large houses are being marketed for sale there remain conditions attached to the original approval which are outstanding and require specific approval. There has been development outside the site boundary of planting hedging on the open grass verge fronting the



road. This treatment is not in accordance with the submitted drawings and there are other departures/omissions from the original plans. The planting is at variance with the openness of the verges to Pine Hill and the Woodcote Estate generally. Furthermore, when mature, this could pose sightline and road safety issues which are particularly important close to the road junctions of the spur to Woodcote House and Woodcote Green Road itself. The Society has written to the planning officer drawing attention and seeking compliance with the approved development intentions.

Brackenlee Woodcote Side (23/00457/FLH): The Society has written objecting to an application to build a 'granny' annexe on three floors with one floor now at lower ground level in the rear garden. This application is a modification to one submitted last year which was refused and then dismissed on appeal. The application remains unsatisfactory on numerous counts due to the large size and the proposed development being out of keeping with the locality and at variance with plan policies. A backland development such as this would negatively affect nearby properties.

1 Talbot Row Chalk Lane 23/00615/CAT: Application to fell a conifer in the rear garden close to the brick wall within the Chalk Lane CA. This application has arisen, surprisingly, very soon after completion of the Atkins (now Woodcote Grove) redevelopment site. The Society has written to Jeremy Young, Tree & Planning Officer, to assess the application's viability. Within the submission documents for the Atkins scheme as a whole (19/00999/FUL) the applicant D&A statement stated: "The well tree-lined frontage along Chalk Lane is a vitally important aspect for the site and wider conservation area and is acknowledged in Planning Guidance and the TPOs present". The scheme was granted approval upon the basis of the submitted application documents. Much emphasis about the design of the scheme was the retention of as many of the trees as possible behind the wall to retain the landscape of the character of the Chalk Lane CA. The Society does not feel that it is right to be seeking to change this so soon after completion. We trust that the trees in this location are not disturbed and remain as a positive feature of the pleasant Chalk Lane conservation area with the current application not being acceded to.

Michael Arthur, John Mumford and Bob Hollis

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

15-minute neighbourhoods: de-mystifying the concept and highlighting its potential applications to our Borough



Route finder showing areas accessible within a 20 minute walk

The concept of 15-minute neighbourhoods has been in the news and on social media recently. It has sparked debate and strong opinions, perhaps for all the wrong reasons. There would be benefits to adopting some of the concepts to urban areas like Epsom and Ewell.

The 15-minute city/neighbourhood concept was initially developed by Professor Carlos Moreno of La Sorbonne university in Paris, France. It is a relatively simple idea where everything we need workplaces, parks, schools, shops and leisure activities and public transport options should be a 15-minute walk or cycle from our homes. The aim is to see the urban areas decentralised which would result in less of a need for cars and result in the re-imagining of public spaces to include less roads and more green spaces, bike lanes and space for sport, leisure and cultural activities. Contrary to

what has been shared in social media, it is by no means a restriction of anyone's freedom of movement or entirely banning cars. The idea is in essence about making life easier and more pleasant for residents of an area. Schools, doctors' surgeries, public transport and basic necessity shops including pharmacies, playing fields or community halls and libraries are all within easy walking or cycling distance. It does not prohibit roads, but the fact that what you need on a day-to-day basis is located within close proximity, means they are easily accessible by foot, or pedal thereby encouraging these modes of transport. It creates the opportunity of greater freedom to those who do not drive (teenagers walking to their football games, grandparents picking up children from school,) those who do not have cars or those who wish to take in fresh air during their daily activities whilst freeing road space for those who still need it.

This idea was promoted at the <u>UN Framework Convention on Climate Change</u> It has also been adopted by many mayors of large cities worldwide through the C40 alliance which is a global network of the world's leading cities that are united in action against Climate Change. Leading examples include Bogotá's Barrios Vitales, Portland's Complete Neighbourhoods and Melbourne's 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, as well as the <u>Paris 15-Minute City</u>.



Epsom Town Centre features numerous tree-lined connecting pathways and shortcut providing green bio-diverse corridors to connect our urban spaces.

Closer to home the cities of Oxford, Bristol, Canterbury and Sheffield have all put forward plans to introduce elements of the 15-minute city. Poundbury in Dorset is a new town masterplan that walkable communities, puts local spaces. community areas etc at the forefront, balancing the needs of people, homes, and businesses and sustainability. It offers a glimpse of what well designed spaces can achieve in terms of high-quality housing and public realm spaces. In Epsom and Ewell, we already have some great walking routes, little tree-lined quiet shortcuts that enable shorter pedestrian and cycling journeys between spaces. We may forget that Epsom and Ewell already has many amenities accessible within a 20 minute walking time as shown on the useful pathfinder signs in our town centre.

There were many concerns raised by our Borough residents at the Epsom Civic Society exhibition in the Ashley Centre focussing on the draft Local Plan in February.

Notwithstanding the debates around building on the Green Belt, residents expressed concern about the lack of tangible evidence in the <u>Infrastructure</u> <u>Plan - Baseline assessment</u> produced in support of the Local Plan about what would be provided for these proposed large housing developments. Whilst the Plan provided reference to all the components of required infrastructure (Schools, transport etc) it lacked any detail such as how the Local Transport

Plan (LT4) and Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan would be embedded in these housing developments. As EEBC still has not produced its LWCIP it is difficult to understand how these principles will be implemented at design and planning stages rather than a last minute add on. Adoption

of some ideas of 15-minute cities offers so much potential to create really healthy spaces for people combining good quality housing, space for local businesses and where people have access to basic services. These concepts can also be used to re-work our existing infrastructure to create necessary linkages. Adopting these principles can create places for people resilient to our changing climate whilst at the same time mitigating some of the impacts of Climate Change through reduction in car use and greener bio-diverse footpaths, cycle routes and corridors to connect our urban spaces.

Aurélie Paoli

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thank you to those members who have paid this year's subscription and especially to those who have generously given donations. If you have not yet paid [\pounds 3 per individual / \pounds 5 per household] and you were out when he/she called, your Road Rep. should have put a note on this Newsletter giving a reminder of his/her address. Please save them an extra trip by taking your subscription to them. If unsure whether you have paid or not, please contact your Road Rep or me.

Alternatively, you can now pay online by Bank Transfer or PayPal. Both options are available by going to our website <u>www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk</u> - click on 'Join Us' which is also the way to pay renewal subscriptions.

If you have any queries feel free to contact me. Membership Secretary. 01372 438361

Email: membership@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

Ishbel Kenward

RECYCLING

Many of us are happy to recycle but don't always know where to take things.

Epsom Methodist Church, Ashley Road (pictured here), is making this easier for us by having a number of bins just inside the Church entrance. Not only can you drop off, you can also find out where it goes and what is it used for. There are bins for empty pill blister packs, used stamps, used batteries, gently used bras, used spectacles [no cases], crisp packets/bread bags/biscuit packets, clean foil, used toothbrushes

and empty toothpaste tubes and used pens [all writing instruments except for wooden and chalk].

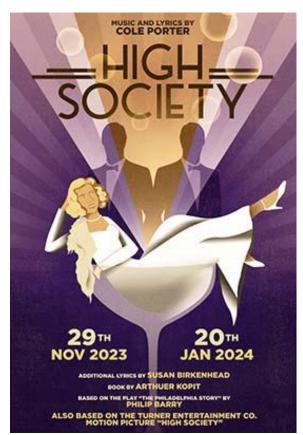
EVENTS

A date for your diary is **Sunday 9th July** when Ian West will lead a walk up to The Durdans in Chalk Lane (pictured). Please assemble at 2pm at the junction between Chalk Lane/Madan's Walk and Woodcote Road. The walk will probably last about an hour. As a historian he will delight you with local facts you never



knew. Everyone is welcome. Please let me know if you would like to come on the walk as soon as you receive this Newsletter and how many members of your family will be attending. Ideally please do ring me on 01372 722558 or email: <u>social@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk</u>.

DINNER THEATRE AT THE MILL AT SONNING



We have booked The Mill Sonning at (https://millatsonning.com/) as our Christmas celebration. Members will remember it is always a highlight for the We have booked 50 seats for **Sunday 10th** Society. December. The cost includes a performance of Cole Porter's "High Society" following a delicious two-course Christmas lunch, including coffee, coach and driver tip plus the programme.

Initially a £50.00 fee is charged per person to reserve a place. The overall likely cost is £94.00 per person. We cannot know how full the coach may be, which may mean some members will need to drive there – though we trust this won't be necessary. You will be informed of all charges later in the year. Please complete and forward your booking slip to me in the attached form at the end of this Newsletter.

Members will be aware that the trip to Newmarket was cancelled due to few wishing to attend. Please do contact us (<u>social@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk</u>) with any suggestions for events you would like to attend.

Eleanor Bland

LETTERS

ASHLEY ROAD DEEP LEVEL AIR RAID SHELTER

Our item on this subject in our last Newsletter has prompted a memory from David Bexley, one of our members:

"On reading the article in the Newsletter No 173, I was taken back to being about 5 or 6 years old. I spent just one night in the shelter early in WW 2. My mother took me and my brother, who was 8 or 9, to this dark, cold and gloomy tunnel where there were camp beds. It was crowded with strangers. After that night my mother



Photo by Angela Lawes

came to the conclusion that the chance on contracting some awful disease was greater than being bombed at home.[She had a dread of diphtheria]. At this time I was having my early schooling at St. Martin's Church House, the Infants School in East Street having been bombed soon after the end of the school day. [Hawkins garage workshop was just opposite, making parts for RAF war planes so was the daylight raid other than coincidental?]

I can only hope that my memories of this time are accurate, forced into my consciousness by the article. All part of Epsom's rich history."

David Bexley

Form to: Eleanor Bland, 15 Sheraton Drive, Epsom KT19 8JL

DINNER THEATRE AT THE MILL AT SONNING – SUNDAY 10TH DECEMBER

NAME/S
ADDRESS
PHONE NUMBER
EPSOM CIVIC SOCIETY MEMBER/S : YES/NO
EMERGENCY CONTACT NO:
NO. OF TICKETS TOTAL COST £94 each (£50 deposit)
Paid by Cheque Yes / No
Paid into bank a/c on time and date (Reference: Sonning)
Any dietary/food requirements? Yes/No
Please list

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

The following members agreed to stand for the positions described:

Chair: Margaret Hollins

Vice Chairman: Bob Hollis

Hon Secretary: Vacancy

Hon Treasurer: Nick Lock

Other Committee members:

- Michael Arthur (Planning)
- Eleanor Bland (Minutes, Events)
- Linda Bristow (Events)
- Mark Bristow (Webmaster)
- Ishbel Kenward (Membership)
- Jan Lanigan (Events)
- John Mumford (Planning)
- Aurélie Paoli (Yahiaoui) (Climate change)
- Carol Reed (Newsletter / Publicity)

Hon Archivist: Philip Clifford

Hon Photographic Archivist: David Rowe

Newsletter Editor: Carol Reed

Hon Auditor: Brian Atkinson

Please send any letters or comments for consideration to: Newsletter Editor: <u>publicity@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk</u> All of our newsletters are available in colour on our website: <u>www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk</u>

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