

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No -151 – SPRING 2017

CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

Peter Follett

I am very sad to inform members that our committee member, Peter Follett, died in December. Those of you on email will already have received the news. A chartered surveyor by profession, Peter joined the committee in 2012. His presence extended the committee's existing expertise in planning matters, and in addition, he sought to develop the Society's local links. Peter's contributions at our committee meetings were always thoughtful and constructive, frequently enriched by his gentle sense of humour. Local planning issues aside, Peter and I shared a keen interest in planning generally. He was kind enough to give me his copies of the County of London Plan (1943) and its First Review Report (1960), fascinating publications, and valuable teaching resources for students of London's planning history. We on the committee miss him and remember him fondly and extend our sincere sympathy and deepest condolences to his wife Jackie, and to his children Claire and Simon.

In the Society's last newsletter, I flagged up Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's **Local Plan Review** programme and its importance for our town. The review is on schedule, and details are readily accessible via the Council's newly designed website: <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/> The Society will be hosting an open meeting about the Local Plan Review in Christ Church Hall on 23rd March at 7.30pm: <http://www.christchurchepsom.org.uk/> All members of the Society are invited to attend. We anticipate that a number of documents, essentially technical studies that go to inform the review, will be available by that date: a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (prepared in partnership with Royal Borough of Kingston, Elmbridge and Mole Valley Borough Councils and already on the Council's website), a Green Belt Study, a Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, a Traveller Accommodation Assessment, and a Constraints Study. We will also have the opportunity at the meeting to discuss potential local impacts of the Government's Housing White Paper, published on 7th February. Those of you on Twitter may have picked up the Society's tweets on the White Paper, there has certainly been plenty of comment and analysis to date. Delivering new housing locally is a key issue: how much do we need, what type, and where should it go?

An interesting question is whether the **Neighbourhood Planning** process will deliver the homes the country needs, and on 31st January, I attended on the Society's behalf, an event hosted jointly by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Civic Societies and the APPG on Local Democracy at Portcullis House, SW1. The consensus was that while Neighbourhood Plans cannot, in themselves deliver the housing required, they are an important vehicle to enable communities to have a say on what is being developed locally. Max Farrell, Partner at Farrells, delivered a very interesting presentation about the 10 principles that Farrells have identified for growing communities, including proactively engaging with communities from the

outset, and ensuring quality architecture right through to detailed design. There are currently no formally designated neighbourhood forums engaged in Neighbourhood Planning in Epsom. The Society continues to engage actively with the Council's Local Plan process.

The Communities and Local Government Committee published its **report on public parks** on 11th February. One of the report's recommendations is that councils should publish strategic plans which recognise the value of parks beyond leisure and recreation and take into account their contribution towards promoting healthy lifestyles, tackling social exclusion and managing flood risk. The full report is accessible via the UK Parliament website: <http://www.parliament.uk/> and there is also a handy summary. We sent the report link from the Society's Twitter account on the morning of its publication.

Finally, to matters historical. Those of you on Twitter may have already read Elizabeth Crawford's interesting article on **Emily Davison's funeral**. Elizabeth tweets via @womanandsphere. You can also access her article and photos at <http://womanandhersphere.com> clicking on the 'Suffrage Stories' tab. Her post, 'Who did The Flowers? Material Culture and Emily Wilding Davison's Funeral' was first published on 30th January this year. It seems there is always more to discover about our past even as we engage with our future.

Margaret Hollins

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Starting this time with two cases where we wrote in November but too late for the Winter Newsletter:

55, Christchurch Mount: This is another case of an interesting contemporary design - but is it in the wrong place? The design here is a timber structure built off-site by the established German firm of Baufritz and then transported to the site and assembled in a few days. Like the Planning Committee, we consider each case on its merits, and like them there are interesting discussions on the way. In our case we decided that Christchurch Mount had mainly kept its consistent form of architecture and this design would not fit and we wrote accordingly. It is interesting that one of the Council's Development Management Policies says that "development proposals will be required to incorporate principles of good design. The most essential elements identified as contributing to the character and local distinctiveness of a street or area should be respected, maintained or enhanced." We quoted this in support of our objection. A decision does not seem to have been made yet

41a, Alexandra Road: The applicant proposed to add a second floor to this bungalow at the corner of Alexandra Road and Kingsdown Road, which we understood to be used by carers employed by Aim. Two previous applications for extensions had been refused because of potential damage to an adjoining listed copper beech tree. We could not support grant of permission pending investigation of damage to the tree, car parking and the bulk and height of the building. Permission has been refused.

13, Ashley Road: This is the two-storey traditional house, divided into two flats, opposite the beginning of Ashley Avenue. It lies between the Methodist Church and Ashley Court. You may remember that three years ago an application was made proposing the replacement of the house by a contemporary design 3-storey block of nine flats. This was refused for reasons of design, scale and massing, and an appeal was dismissed.

A new application suggests a more traditional 3-storey block of five flats. It still has unsatisfactory features and we have objected to its height, parking and other features. Half the building is reduced in height to avoid

blocking the light to Ashley Court but this results in an unbalanced building and an ugly cat-slide roof. We wrote to say that we didn't think permission should be granted for the building in its present form.

40-52, Upper High Street – Lidl: The first indication of development on the Upper High Street/Depot Road area was the recent exhibition at the Methodist Church, when Lidl showed their proposals for a foodstore with 30 apartments above. Several of us went and discussed the proposals with Lidl's representatives. It is not possible to draw conclusions until we see fuller details when a planning application is made, but we have in mind to consider the location and size of the shop, height and bulk of the building, car parking, access and effect on traffic – in fact all the usual suspects. Comparison with the original Tesco scheme will also be in mind and, of course, the terms of the development brief.

Alan Baker

HERITAGE

We have looked at 17 applications affecting listed houses or conservation areas and four letters have been written on your behalf. Three of these were in connection with quite recent householder applications and our concerns related to design matters. The fourth application was for the construction of a three-storey block of flats in the Burgh Heath Conservation Area located in the garden of a large house which had previously been converted into flats. The site was close to a previous application which had been turned down on appeal and we were able to quote from the inspector's findings. Our objection was one of many, and the Council refused the application principally on grounds of its impact on the conservation area, that it would have resulted in an alien development pattern and would have caused harm, both physically and visually, to the conservation area.

The great issues affecting us now relate to the urgent need for more housing and we are deluged with a blizzard of reports. I expect you have all read about the proposed garden villages. The Government is supporting the building of 14 of these throughout the country delivering 48,000 new homes. There are also various garden towns proposed and together all these developments will provide almost 200,000 homes. That information came from a Government press release on 10th January. Six days later the 'Guardian' reported 'English green belt set to get 360,000 new homes', and gave all sorts of additional data and quotes from all sorts of worthies. At the end of it I wondered quite what was going on and who to believe. The truth is always hidden somewhere in the middle and, following the release of the Government's Housing White Paper, I was greatly relieved to read a press release from CPRE (yes, really) saying 'We're hugely heartened that the paper promises the continued protection of the Green Belt, support for more brownfield development, and to address the failures of the housing market as opposed to the further meddling with the planning system.....'.

The White Paper is out for consultation between 7th February and 2nd May. It has a useful, and lengthy, annex which contains some very clear statements about the Green Belt. Paragraph A16 states: 'Therefore we propose to amend policy to make clear that authorities should amend Green Belt boundaries only (my underlining) when they can demonstrate that they have examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting their identified requirements.' This is supported by paragraph A62 which states: 'Where land is removed from the Green Belt, local policies should (I would have preferred 'must' - 'should' leaves room for future obfuscation and evasion) require the impact to be offset by compensatory improvements to the environmental quality or accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.'

I believe we must accept the pressing need for a great deal of new housing, the greatest burden of which will inevitably fall on the south-east. There is a wider argument about encouraging greater growth in other regions but I fear this is likely only to have a very limited effect and then in the longer term. The ECS's efforts may best be directed towards trying to influence matters which can help to absorb new development into the existing urban fabric and the community and to encourage good design. The Council is developing a Supplementary Planning Document dealing with design which we hope will help here. We need to resist the imposition of repetitious standard designs, which are the great love of the larger developers.

But just as important, maybe even more important, is the layout of a development. Houses or apartments of even very simple design can form very attractive communities if they are laid out well. One of the most unhappy examples of how not to do things is the new development between Nescot and the Ewell Bypass. This is just a collection of the developer's standard house designs plonked down on an uninteresting network of roads. A wonderful opportunity of creating a clearer community of buildings, perhaps arranged around a central green, was completely lost.



And to close on a, err, high note, this is the winner of this year's Carbuncle Cup, awarded to examples of particularly poor architecture. The cup is awarded each year by Building Design Magazine for a development judged to be the UK's worst design. This year it goes to the 31-storey residential tower block called Lincoln Plaza near Canary Wharf. Critics called it 'jarring, unsettling and shambolic' and described it as a 'brain-numbing jumble of discordant shapes, patterns, materials and colours'.

Let's hope that Epsom can soon offer a candidate for a Civic Trust Design Award, rather than one for the Carbuncle Cup – we have had a near miss in the past.

Rob Austen

THE DOWNS

Last year was challenging for the Racecourse as the roof of the Duchess's Stand needed repairing once more. Most events ran successfully though there was a fracas at the Derby.

At the Conservators' meeting in January, The Racecourse requested official permission to use the grassed area in front of the Derby Arms Public House for overflow car parking from time to time. It was used whilst the roof repairs were happening and it would help if parking were allowed when large events take place. No set number of days was mentioned. The area is officially designated as a hack area, so will be discussed at the next Consultative Committee meeting. It is not thought parking will have any impact on the area as it is well drained.

Staff shortage continues to have an impact on the work of the downskeepers, but it is hoped to recruit successfully. The Spring meeting will be on 26th April and all events are listed on the website: <http://epsom.thejockeyclub.co.uk/>

Minutes of the Conservators' meeting are available via the Council website.

Angela Clifford

EPSOM AND THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS (From Harry Corben)

A friend of ours was a compulsive collector. He was a philatelist and his collections of Tristan Da Cunha stamps and others were well worth seeing and exhibiting. He died some years ago and his daughter has passed to me some of his work.

He has taken pages from the London Illustrated News which refer to Epsom since 1844 and I have extracted some of the details. It is not possible to show the pictures but many of them do have the race horses with their legs splayed out fore and aft in a way that only slow motion film could show to be impossible. Probably the most important person to demonstrate this was Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904) 'Surrey's pioneer of cinematography' who was born in Kingston. He spent much of his life in the U.S. where he made a comprehensive and detailed panorama study of San Francisco and in Europe, but retired back to Kingston and died there.

On Saturday May 25th 1844 men and women, almost all wearing hats or bonnets, are shown watching the racing from the far side of the track with the Grandstand facing them. In 1847 a picture of The Warren shows the jockeys preparing to ride.

At Newmarket only by gracious dispensation of Providence did you get a dinner and you knew no more of the existence of the animal you staked your money on than the state of the Emperor of Morocco's bile. In contrast, you went to Epsom and found 'the jockeys starting themselves'.

In 1849 a Frenchman from the National Guard, and with many cartoons, remarks that while there is nothing quite like it in France, the House of Commons only debates whether to have a day off to go to the Derby, and the French National Assembly is in a terrible state. In 1846 many top-hatted men gather outside the Spread Eagle while others arrive on the latest train at Tattenham Corner, and in 1865 the new station there is featured.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you haven't paid the 2017 Subscription [Individual £2 / Household £3] to your Rep yet please complete the slip at the bottom of the green AGM notice and take it to him/her. This would be much appreciated. The list of Reps is on the 2nd page of the green AGM notice and your Rep. should have marked their name. If, for any reason, you are unsure who your Rep. is, please phone or email me. Maybe you receive your Newsletter by email, in which case the Rep list cannot be marked – you may recognise your Rep's name but if not, do contact me.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary (01372 728570)

NATIONAL TRUST FREE PASSES

I still have some single use NT free Passes from Civic Voice which can be obtained direct from me, if you have not had one since last May. They can only be used by Epsom Civic Society members and are only available until end of this May. Hopefully the same arrangement will be available after May but I don't yet have the details. I have already issued 54 Passes for this year to 31st May and would be delighted to hear if they have been used and where. The furthest that I've heard to date was to Lindisfarne. If you would like to make use of this offer please let me know.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary (01372 728570)

A LEAFY FUTURE? (from Mike Ford – a former committee member)

For more than 22 years the Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board (TAB) has worked in close partnership with the Borough Council to maintain and enhance the rich treescape that makes our locality so special. That mission has become even more important following the recent announcement that the Borough's street tree planting budget will be effectively scrapped from April.

It has long been accepted by the Council itself that more than 100 street trees need to be planted each year simply to replace those lost to old age and disease – and, up to now, our Borough has had a proud record of at least meeting that target. Given the devastating cumulative impact that a permanent cessation of new planting would have on our cherished 'leafy' environment, TAB is currently striving, alongside sympathetic councillors of all colours, to avoid a repetition of the situation that has developed in neighbouring Reigate & Banstead. You only have to drive through Tattenham Corner or parts of Banstead to see the medium-to-long-term effect of a decision not to replace street trees when they are lost for whatever reason. TAB is determined to ensure a similar fate doesn't await Epsom & Ewell...but we need the public's support and urgently need to hear from anyone who agrees street trees are important.

While the situation is potentially extremely bleak, TAB believes that it could independently secure sufficient funding to allow a certain level of planting of street trees – but a problem exists, because Surrey CC will only deal with statutory organisations, not voluntary groups like TAB.

TAB has been collating responses it has received from a letter it sent to all EEBC councillors in January asking whether they support the idea of the Council at least providing the administrative interface with the County to allow for TAB-funded planting. While sympathetic responses have been received, TAB still awaits a formal response from the RA Group, which says it needs to check with officers about any cost implications.

The stakes are high and I'd appreciate feedback from anyone who doesn't want our Borough to enter irreversible environmental decline. We're not looking for money from the Council – just its support to help TAB self-fund at least a certain level of street tree planting. Is that really too much to ask?

Mike Ford, TAB Chairman Email m21ford@btinternet.com or call 01372 720031

·EVENTS

Outing to Lewes – Thursday 11th May

There are still places on the outing to Lewes in May. We shall visit Lewes Castle and Ann of Cleves House, have coffee on arrival and members will have a chance to explore the town. The cost is £33 per person and any friends or family are most welcome to book now. Further details were in the Winter Newsletter. A booking form is at the end of this spring issue or contact me on 01372 273517. **Sheila Wadsworth**



This is a print of a watercolour of the historic Amato pub in Chalk Lane which has become part of the Grumpy Mole group of country pubs. The painting is by Ken Brundle, a former committee member.

(photo by Malcolm Boyd with permission of Margaret Brundle, widow of the late Ken Brundle)

IAN WEST’S WALK

The treat this year is to explore the hospital lands at the entrance to Horton Country Park (opposite the Old Moat Garden Centre). We shall see many buildings including the 16th Century farmhouse, boiler house, the manor house and “Hollywood” so obviously stout footwear is advisable as we shall cover about three miles.

The date is Sunday 18th June at 2.00 p.m. which coincides with the National Civic Day weekend.

Ian has organised these walks over many years exploring different parts and aspects of the Epsom and Ewell area and members have valued his background knowledge and enthusiasm – it’s the date in the diary for me and many members. Thus we look forward to many supporters attending, just turn up as no booking is required.

Sheila Wadsworth

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Members’ Open Evening Thursday 23rd March, Christchurch Hall (see Chairs Commentary)

Ian West Walk, Sunday 18th June at 2.00 p.m.

Buffet Supper 2017 – Friday 13th October.

APPLICATION for LEWES – Thursday 11th MAY - £33 per person

Member’s name/s.....

And Friend/s

Address.....

Tel, No.....Mobile.....

No. of tickets..... Total cost.....

Coach collection – please circle

- (A) 8.45a.m. Epsom Downs, Tattenham Corner tea hut
- (B) 8.55a.m. The Methodist Church, Epsom
- (C) 9.05a.m. The Street, Ashtead

Please return this form to Sheila Wadsworth , The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashtead KT21 1LJ.

Cheques to be made payable to “Epsom Civic Society” and please enclose a stamped addressed envelope

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