

# Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -157 – AUTUMN 2018

## CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

### Tony Smith

It is with sadness that I report to members the death of Tony Smith, who was for many years the Society's treasurer. Tony gave unstinting support to the Society during his long tenure on the committee, and after he stepped down from that role, he remained an active supporter. On a personal note, I recall his kind welcome to me when I first joined the committee. On behalf of all members, I extend sincere sympathy and condolences to Tony's wife, Grety, his family and friends.

### MGSO4 - Epsom and Ewell Arts Festival 2nd - 8th July



Competition judges

photo:Tamaryn Pitout

As one of its sponsors the Society takes a keen interest in the festival, and this year, I joined Nick Lock, our treasurer, on the festival's team of volunteers. The summer heatwave provided an excellent backdrop for the street and open air events, and my experience as a volunteer was that wearing the T-shirt was a great ice-breaker: people were happy to chat and get involved with and enjoy a range of activities.



Competition winners

Photo by Kobbie Boafo-Narty

Other activities and performances were hosted by NESCOL, the Playhouse, Waterstones, and Bourne Hall. In the previous newsletter, I mentioned the festival's programme launch in May, at Ewell Castle school and the 'Lost Words of Epsom' poetry and art project for schools. I was delighted to accept the invitation from Maria Reeves, the Festival Director, to join the panel of judges, and subsequently to meet the competition winners at Bourne Hall (see above photo by Kobbie Boafo-Narty). Photographs of these two events are reproduced in this newsletter by kind permission of Maria Reeves, MGSO4 and Kobbie Boafo-Narty. The festival's complete photo gallery is accessible at: [mgso4festival.org](http://mgso4festival.org)

## **Planning Matters**

Local Plan update: the latest Local Plan Programme (June 2018) from the Council estimates June 2020 as the date for the formal adoption of Epsom and Ewell's new plan, with public consultation in October / November 2019. The revised timetable (p7) is as follows:

Preparation and Production of the Masterplan for Epsom & Ewell: June 2018 – June 2019

Preparation of the Epsom & Ewell Duty to Co-operate Engagement Plan: September – October 2018

Pre-Submission Public Consultation: October – November 2019

Date of Submission to Secretary of State: December 2019

Pre-Examination Meeting: January/ February 2020

Public Hearing: March/ April 2020

Estimated Date for Adoption: June 2020

Evidence-gathering and technical studies are continuing in support of the Local Plan process, including the Stage 2 Green Belt Study, published in July, and downloadable at [www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk) Clicking on 'Planning', then on 'Planning Policy' takes you to the full suite of local documents.

We will keep members updated on Local Plan progress through our usual communication channels. We are not intending to hold a meeting about the plan until the process is further along.

## **Revised National Planning Policy Framework: 'NPPF 2'**

Members may recall that I anticipated publication of this document in our last newsletter. The Government's new National Planning Policy Framework was duly published on 24 July, and those of you on Twitter may have picked up our 'tweets of the day' about it @EpsomCivicSoc. The document (rather misleadingly referred to as a 'rulebook' in the Government's press release) is important for Epsom's Local Plan, as local policies need to be in general conformity with it. The complete NPPF is available to download at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## **Epsom's International Film Festival: Satisfied Eye**

Following its launch last September, the festival's inaugural event runs from 26-28 October 2018. There's a great trailer about it, details at [seiff.shp.media/](http://seiff.shp.media/), information also on Facebook, and Twitter @Satisfied\_Eye. We love the strapline: "Like Cannes, only cooler. And with fewer yachts." and we wish them well.

**Margaret Hollins**

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Racing is the main subject this time. This Society is well known for supporting racing in Epsom and it is encouraging that there are three current applications, two of them very substantial, for work to what are now known as Racehorse Training Establishments (RTEs). However, it is not surprising that they are all in the Green Belt which we also strongly support. We are also all too aware of government pressure for allocating more land for housing development and one of the proposals includes all three of these subjects. We have therefore been careful to balance these controversial aspects of the applications.

*Clear Height Stables, Derby Stables Road:* These are Simon Dow's stables opposite the Racecourse. They are wooden structures which have become somewhat dilapidated and it is proposed to replace them with similar but improved new structures, with an additional small tack room and a horse walker. We have not objected, provided they are no higher and no more intrusive on the street scene.

*South Hatch Stables, Burgh Heath Road:* This is the most controversial application we have seen for some time and is receiving a large amount of attention. Jim Boyle now owns these long-established stables. A previous proposal, some 15 years ago, to rebuild them behind the existing buildings and to support the cost by building houses fronting the road, was refused as inappropriate development in the Green Belt with no special circumstances to justify it, and an appeal was dismissed. The present application is to create a major new training establishment, which includes not only the rear land previously proposed but also the adjoining field. There would be 47 apartments on the site of the existing stables, the whole development being four times their size. The main justification offered is the revival of racehorse training in Epsom, and advantage is also being taken of the current pressure for housing. We have considered all the aspects and have objected because, in addition to many other problems, we do not believe there is sufficient reason to permit this amount of building in the Green Belt. We had in mind that a very comprehensive Green Belt Study commissioned by the Council concluded that this particular land is not suitable for release from the Green Belt, having high visual sensitivity, high overall sensitivity to development and being part of the gap between Epsom to the north and Great Burgh to the south.

*Downs House:* These old racing stables, now disused, are the subject of the third application. They include a listed building and are reported under Conservation by our very welcome new Committee member Bob Hollis.

*Kings Arms PH, 144 East Street:* The locally listed pub has been empty for some time and is virtually unmarketable. An application to build flats in the car park was refused last year, one reason being that this was an unsatisfactory piecemeal development. It is now proposed to demolish the buildings and erect a block of 16 apartments on the whole site. We saw no objection to the loss of the pub and thought the site very suitable for housing, but we had reservations about the appearance of the proposed solid looking flat roofed block, which was too much in line with the many recent buildings in East Street with little individual architectural character. The parking also was inadequate.

**Alan Baker**

## CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

This has been a very busy period for the review and study of conservation for the ECS and especially for myself after recently taking over the role from Rob.

I have recently retired from the Construction Industry, where I was the Chief Planner at Skanska and more recently the planning manager at Osborne in Reigate. I was a member of the

Chartered Industry of Building ( MCIQB) and participated in many large projects including the Gerkin, Westfield Shopping at White City and LSE new student centre. I have lived all my life in the Epsom area and now reside in Langley Vale.

*The Lower Mill, Ewell:* One of my interests has been the opportunity to meet with Clients and their design teams and then to review their proposals. This has proved beneficial on The Lower Mill scheme in Ewell where we met prior to the public exhibition at Bourne Hall.

*The Downs House Stables:* This application has been of particular interest. Downs House is located within the Downs Conservation Area at the centre of Epsom Downs. We welcomed the return of racehorse training to this unique site and supported their Planning Application albeit with the proposal for the control of traffic across the downs.

*6 The Grove:* Another recent scheme is the conversion of 6 The Grove into 5 flats. This is located within the Church Street Conservation area. The ECS committee reviewed the conversion of large houses into flats and considered this was inevitable but that the 'visual' elevations should remain. I met a neighbour on site and agreed that the gardens were of particular environment importance and should remain undisturbed in the new scheme. Letters were raised with the council supporting this planning application but with a condition regarding the protection of the environment.

One of my keen concerns over Planning Applications has been the possible effects of the construction process during the carrying out of the works. This has included the programme of the works, access routes, protection to neighbours, hours of working etc. Over recent years I have prepared many specific Construction Management Plans demonstrating how the contractor proposes to carry out their works. These have been lodged and agreed with the relevant council and everyone has access to these plans.

*45 Pine Hill:* With this in mind we have raised concerns at the Planning Application for 45 Pine Hill where we would not like to see construction access through the Chalk Lane Conservation area into Woodcote End / Worlds End. We have suggested to the council that a condition be imposed stating that construction traffic and operatives are banned from the rear roads.

*Durdans Stables:* Other recent schemes have been the building of a new manager's house within the Durdans stables site. This was a very nice 'rural' design but situated within an old woodland coppice. We raised our concerns with the council on the positioning of the new house rather than the construction design.

*2 Pine Hill:* We also objected to a scheme for the conversion of 2 Pine Hill into flats. This was based on a change of the roof elevations to accommodate the mansard flats and the extra parking that would be incurred.

Several other proposed projects are currently being considered and include :- the possible southern extension of Langley Vale onto the adjacent farmland (Green Belt), a development in West Street close to the railway embankment and within the Town Conservation Area.

**Bob Hollis**

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **National Trust Free Passes**

At the time of writing the passes have not been received. Apologies from me and Civic Voice but it's not either of our fault; the National Trust have not yet delivered them to Civic Voice. They were expected at least 2 months ago. As soon as I receive them I will distribute them to all the members who have requested them.

## General Data Protection Regulation

In the last Newsletter we said that our Members whose email addresses we hold would be emailed regarding this new regulation. My apologies that this hasn't happened as I have not yet managed to put the ECS emails into the necessary groups on my new computer. In the meantime, Mark Bristow has put the ECS Privacy Policy onto our website, [epsomcivicsociety.org.uk](http://epsomcivicsociety.org.uk)

## Epsom Civic Society Exhibition

The Committee are planning to have an Exhibition in the Ashley Centre on a Saturday towards the end of October. If you see us there do have a chat with us and a look at the Exhibition. This is an important opportunity to recruit more members to give us a stronger voice on local planning matters.

## Road Reps

Our current membership is approaching 1900 which, for a Society like ours, is very good. There are 66 members who do their part in delivering Newsletters and collecting subscriptions. As you would expect, a few are unable to do every delivery due to holidays, operations, etc. Therefore it would be appreciated if some of you were prepared to do an occasional delivery and / or assist in distributing envelopes of Newsletters to the Road Reps – this would be very helpful to Sue Doughty, our Distribution Organiser, and me. It is also an opportunity to see a part of Epsom you might not know so well. If you could do this please contact me.

**Ishbel Kenward** - Membership Secretary. Tel. 01372 728570 email [info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk)

## EVENTS

ECS had a busy few days on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June. Firstly thirtyseven members and friends visited Lambeth Palace, being shown around by two guides and having quite a whistle-stop tour of the palace and grounds. This made us realise how busy the seemingly tranquil buildings are – apparently some 100 youngsters stay there for one year of study and a celebration was about to take place in the library.



Photo by Ishbel Kenward

Then we went next door to the Museum of Garden History where the refectory provided a good, if prolonged, lunch and members explored the garden in their own time. Our auditor, Harry Wilkinson, joined us as his mother's cousin, Rosemary Nicholson, was prime mover in establishing

this, the world's first garden history museum. Recently, in an excavated crypt, a man with a red moustache has been found, possibly Captain Bligh as his grave is there in the cemetery.

On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup>, the annual walk with Ian West took place. Fourteen members met in the Cheam Road car park, Ewell, and we walked round to the rear of the buildings in the High Street where he indicated their ages, how they had been extended and altered. The final enlightenment was hidden in a pit, an ice house originally of the Grove which was demolished and the Portway development built on its site. My photograph shows members surrounding Ian West and Ishbel Kenward, our membership secretary, by the ice house.



### **ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER – Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October**

Details of the annual buffet supper were outlined in the summer newsletter and there is an application form later. We return to the Unity Hall, Epsom United Reformed Church, with a buffet supper from Studio Foods, Mark Bristow's bar service, and an entertainer, Warren Ashton, talking on the origins of everyday expressions and catch phrases. The cost is £23 per person; the timing 7.30 to 10.30p.m. (doors open at 7.15p.m.) Parking is in Depot Road car park. Do come and bring your friends and family.

### **CHRISTMAS PANTOMIME – SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER**

Seats have been reserved for Jack and the Beanstalk at Epsom Playhouse on Saturday 15th December – 3p.m. performance. Tickets cost £19 and it is hoped to have a pre-performance, Christmas meal beforehand; however currently this cannot be finalised, hardly surprising as the thought rather daunts me. However, if you would like to reserve a theatre seat please return the application form and you will be contacted in September/October with further details.

A happy piece of information is that Mrs Jan Lanigan has agreed to assist in the outings and events for which I am very grateful.

**Sheila Wadsworth**

## **THE DOWNS**

Although not a racegoer, I love the Downs and am well aware that, although privately owned, it is the racing industry which keeps them open and available to us all. After a dreadful, wet Sunday, on August Bank Holiday Monday the weather was better and I visited some of the yards which were open for the morning Epsom Trainers Day – starting with watching training on the gallops at 08.30 ( I missed this!) then 9.30 – 12 noon touring the yards. Racing and afternoon activities took place later at the Racecourse.

The morning was very well organised, for £7.50 each (and £2.50 for a programme), the public could drive to the individual yards or park and take a coach from the ticket stand. Several coaches were doing a round trip on a hop on, hop off basis which worked very well. It was a most informative trip and I hope race horse training and racing will continue here for many years.

I do urge you to consider this as a family day out for the future – most horses loved being stroked, but we were warned a few were inclined to bite! No feeding of horses is allowed, but humans can buy food at the racecourse later and then face painting, bouncy castle and the like together with a few horse races for the adults to watch will make a really entertaining day.

**Angela Clifford**

## **THE ASHLEY CENTRE and WHAT'S in a NAME?**

The retail trade is so much in the news these days I thought perhaps the story of the Ashley Centre might interest our members and readers. In the 1970's Epsom had become a third rate shopping centre and was falling behind other towns in the area. With a population of some 170,000 in the catchment area and 75% of them earning more than the national average wage it was thought that Epsom had much going for it.

In June 1975 Epsom residents were presented with an outline of the Ashley Avenue Redevelopment Scheme. At this time The Kings Shades Walk, a 1960s development was the only post-war retail building in Epsom. Now of course this has been incorporated into Boots. The plan was to preserve the High Street and its historic buildings by building behind the High Street and keeping offices and car parking at the back and by hiding the service area in the centre it should be possible to retain the character of the old town. *Continued on back page.*

Before Christmas 1979 a four day enquiry was held into the ten million pound plan. Some 21 freehold ownerships and 39 different lease interests had to be taken into account. A new road round the back had been built to take the traffic away from the Market Place. A similar arrangement had been suggested in Victorian times but this had been prevented by Lord Rosebery when he bought up land and gave it to the council for Rosebery Park. This was to stop a proposed road change which would have caused disturbance to his daughter's house on Dorking Road.

In 1980 the 'Town Centre Scheme' was approved though you will not be surprised to know that the cost was now twenty million pounds. Most people felt that the crucial player in whether the scheme would be successful was the possibility that Marks and Spencer would take a site in the development. Now known as the Town Centre Development Site and now costing twentyfive million pounds work went ahead and in 1982 it was called The Ashley Centre, named after Ashley House built in 1769 and still standing almost facing The Parade. The house took its name from Mary Ashley, a great benefactor to the poor who lived there until her death in 1849. Much of the Centre was built on what had been her garden. After a change of ownership in 2007 the name was changed to The Mall but this was not popular and it changed back to The Ashley Centre in 2009.

I think I understand why the Ashley Road entrance through W.H.Smith has been closed for some years but I do find it disappointing that the only windows in Ashley Road are permanently empty. Could, perhaps, The University for Creative Arts which is based so close to the Centre, be invited to display some of their 'Creative Ideas' there? They could incorporate some of W.H.Smith's products too.

Whatever happens, we do need The Ashley Centre as a meeting place, a social centre as well as a shopping centre and we do hope the loss of The House of Fraser in 2019 can be overcome. After all it did, in the end, cost thirty seven million pounds. On the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1984 Her Majesty the Queen, smiling as ever on a very wet day and to a large reception, declared The Ashley Centre open.

I am once again grateful to The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer for much of the information contained in this article. **Harry Corben** (by invitation)

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#### APPLICATION FOR THE ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER – FRIDAY 19<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

Name.....  
Address.....  
No of tickets @ £23p..... Total Cost £.....  
Any dietary requirements? Yes/No Please list.....

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#### RESERVATION FOR JACK AND THE BEANSTALK – SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER

Name.....  
Address.....  
Tel. No.....  
Tickets will cost £19. Please indicate if you will like to join the pre-Christmas meal. Yes/No

Please return your application forms to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ. Cheques can be made out to "Epsom Civic Society" and please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Any queries, telephone 01372 273517. **Sheila Wadsworth**