

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No - 159 - SPRING 2019

CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

Alan Baker and Malcolm Boyd – A Celebration and Vote of Thanks

Two of our most distinguished and long-serving committee members, Alan Baker and Malcolm Boyd, will be stepping down from their respective roles at the Society's Annual General Meeting on 25th April. I am delighted to have this opportunity to celebrate their contribution to the Society and to thank them on behalf of all members for their dedication which has done so much to ensure both the continuity of the Society's reputation and well-being, and the development of a robust direction for the Society's future.

Alan joined the committee in 1991 when invited to work on planning applications, serving an initial 'apprenticeship' with then fellow committee member, architect Ken Brundle. Alan examined applications with Ken who wrote the letters in his own inimitable style. In 1993, Alan took on the role of Secretary, replacing Tom Dethridge who had become Chairman. Alan continued to work with Ken on planning, taking full charge of that portfolio and becoming the Society's Vice Chairman in 2001 when Ken left. We have Alan to thank for the many superbly crafted letters submitted to the Council and to the Planning Inspectorate on the Society's behalf since then in connection with a wide range of planning applications and appeals, and also for his generosity in working with firstly, Rob Austen, and latterly with Bob Hollis on conservation and heritage matters. Alan has encouraged early engagement and constructive discussion with developers over their proposals, provided support to residents on local planning issues, and has also been instrumental in advising and formulating the Society's policies on planning matters.

Malcolm joined the committee and became Honorary Secretary in 2002, a role both extensive and varied, embracing over time the editing and publication of the Society's quarterly newsletter, organising twice-yearly public displays about the Society (perhaps your first encounter with us in the Ashley Centre where you signed up as a member), and networking and liaison via a wide-ranging communication programme of letters, emails, meetings and talks to further the Society's objectives, activities and projects. His interest in local history prompted, amongst other things, research into aspects of treatment at Horton Hospital and a submission for listing to English Heritage. He has been heavily involved in formulating the Society's policies and commenting on Local Council consultations such as the Local Development Framework for the Town Centre that eventually became Plan E. Malcolm's customary quiet efficiency, gentle authoritativeness and attention to detail have been evident throughout, the commissioning of aerial photographs of Epsom and environs, and the production, in 2006/7 of two illustrated walking trails, being particularly worthy of note. He has also led the committee on general planning matters, is the contact for the schools gardening project, and has, in addition to ensuring the smooth running of the Society, overseen the revision and modernisation of the Society's constitution, and most recently, reminded us of our need to be GDPR compliant (as the Society now is).

Both Alan and Malcolm will be hugely missed for their insight, strategic thinking, expertise, local knowledge, and of course, for their company. Their joint contribution is immense and individual

achievements too numerous to set out in detail here. On a personal note, I recall their warm welcome to me when I joined the Society's committee in 2011. I have since then forever benefited from their wise counsel, (missteps on my part being entirely my own responsibility).

Congratulations and heartfelt thanks to them both for their commitment and inspirational volunteering: 28 and 17 years respectively will be hard to beat. It's my privilege as Chair to send to Alan and Malcolm every good wish for the future from us all.

Julian West

Julian has been our Minutes Secretary for the past two years and has proved invaluable in that role, in addition to supporting the Society's activities more generally. He will be stepping down from the committee at April's AGM. On behalf of all members, I would like to thank him for his contribution and wish him well for the future.

Local Plan, Land Supply and Housing Delivery

It is rare for this Chair's commentary not to mention EEBC's **Local Plan Review**, and this newsletter is no exception. The current timetable for production of the relevant documents is set out in the Council's Local Plan Programme (June 2018), which I outlined in the Autumn 2018 newsletter. The Masterplan for Epsom and Ewell (which will form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan) is expected by June/July this year, as are a position statement on the Duty to Co-operate, and a Strategic Viability Assessment.

In order to provide the new homes that the country needs, local authorities are required by national planning policy to have a demonstrable 5-year **land supply** of deliverable housing sites (National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)). The Borough of Epsom and Ewell is not alone among local authorities in facing acute challenges in this respect, not least due to 42% of land currently designated as Green Belt, and large development sites already built out. There is approximately one year of housing land supply in the Borough (Report to Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, 24 January 2019), the broad implication of which is that it will be both very difficult to deliver a sufficient supply of homes, and at the same time more difficult to refuse planning applications for housing. National policy stipulates that housing applications should be favourably determined where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year land supply, applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development (some exceptions apply).

Local authorities are also required to deliver a specific number of new homes each year. In terms of **housing delivery** over the past three years, Government figures released in February (confirming the Council's own calculations in its Urban Housing Capacity Study (December 2018)) show a rate of 57% (ie homes delivered as against homes required), significantly below the 85% benchmark. The consequence of under-delivery is that the current requirement to deliver 579 new homes p.a. is subject to an additional 20% buffer applied to the Objectively Assessed Housing Need, resulting in a new OAHN figure of 695. The Council anticipates preparing a Housing Delivery Action Plan to assess the cause(s) of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years. Failure to meet benchmarks and targets may result in central government intervention, and that is, in the Society's view, something to be avoided.

It's all very technical and readers may be less than inclined to delve more deeply, while at the same time wondering, 'What does it all mean in practical terms for Epsom?' Our town is facing the prospect of

massive transformational change. The big questions in terms of housing are undoubtedly: where will new homes go, at what heights and density, will they be well-designed and built with high quality materials, will they be energy-efficient, will they be affordable, and will they help to make places that people actually want to live in? I am delighted that Ruth Ormella, Head of Planning, has accepted the Society's invitation to speak at our AGM on her vision for Epsom. I have no doubt that I speak for all members in welcoming this early opportunity to hear the views of Epsom's Chief Planner.

Members can get involved directly with progress on the Local Plan by emailing their details to: LDF@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Future 40 Stage 2

The Council is seeking your views on the emerging themes and ideas from the initial survey. Log in to Survey 2, 'Next Steps' here: <https://www.future40.org/>

The Society and Civic Voice

Last month, together with fellow trustees from Civic Voice, I attended the government's **design quality conference**, 'Better Design for Better Places', at the University of Birmingham. There was an interesting range of speakers, discussion panels and workshops, alongside displays of recent innovative and award-winning developments. It was encouraging to hear Lord Nick Bourne, from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government speak about the role of communities in shaping the places we call home. Lord Bourne opened the conference by saying, "In 50 years' time we will be judged on how beautiful new housing is" and not just the numbers. While it's good to hear this, we also know that buildings 'don't have to be beautiful to be loved', a point well-made and widely appreciated during the session on 'Taking responsibility for better design' where an emerging view was that the conversation needs to be more about quality than beauty. I have no doubt that conversations in the same vein will be taking place locally, and as always, I, and everyone on the committee will be interested in hearing members' thoughts on this.

High Streets

Last week I attended the meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Civic Societies in Westminster Hall. The Minister for High Streets, Jake Berry, was there to talk about the report, 'High streets and town centres in 2030' (21 February 2019) from the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee. The report concludes: "...high streets and town centres will survive, and thrive, in 2030 if they adapt, becoming activity-based community gathering places where retail is a smaller part of a wider range of uses and activities...Fundamentally, community must be at the heart of all high street and town centres by 2030." The report considers how we get there, and there were insightful and constructive presentations on a range of local initiatives from across the country. The Society would like to hear members' views and suggestions for Epsom's High Street, so please do get in touch. This event also saw Civic Voice's formal launch of this year's national **Civic Day, 22nd June**. The Society is currently planning to celebrate its own **60th Anniversary** on that date, further details from Sheila Wadsworth in this newsletter. If you would like to volunteer for the day, please let us know.

Margaret Hollins

Call for New Committee Members

To ensure that the Society continues to thrive, we need more committee members. Bob Hollis, who joined the committee over a year ago, has been brilliant in leading on the heritage brief, and working closely with Alan on general planning applications. Bob has also been busy working closely and successfully with local residents on a variety of local planning and related matters. He cannot, however, take on Alan's portfolio single-handedly when Alan steps down in April, so if you, or anyone you know, would be interested in joining the committee, we'd love to hear from you.

We also need a new committee member for Malcolm's portfolio, and a Minutes Secretary. Please don't hold back from volunteering! If you would like to know more about what we do, please email me at: chairman@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk. You can also check out our website: epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

Thank you.

Margaret Hollins

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Something very unexpected to start with. A new cinema for Epsom!

5 Derby Square, High Street: At the time of writing we are looking at an application by Picturehouse Cinemas Ltd for the refurbishment, extension and change of use of the unit in what is now called Epsom Square adjoining the Library and occupied by El Patio Restaurant. A wide range of material would be shown including independent, art house and foreign language films as well as the usual live broadcasts of opera and theatre. We welcome this as enlivening Epsom Square, increasing



attraction to its restaurants and revitalising the area generally but have some reservations about the significant addition to the height of the building to house two of the screens.

Lidl 40-52 Upper High Street: You may have been wondering when Lidl are going start building their store. Planning permission was granted in November 2017 and Aldi's appeal against refusal of permission on the Dairy site in Alexandra Road was dismissed the following December. Lidl have now applied for permission to make a number of relatively minor changes to their detailed drawings. We see no reason to comment on any of these but they are worth reporting as it demonstrates that preparations are reaching an advanced stage and building may start before too long.

Former Police Station, Church Street: An application for the redevelopment of this site as two residential blocks was made in January last year with amendments in April. We welcomed this as the first major proposal within the Development Brief for this part of Epsom but thought the flat roofed

design was somewhat bleak and unfriendly. We also commented on the inadequate car parking. The amendments added some local distinctiveness including slated mansard roofs. No decision has been taken and application has now been made for further amendments. We like some new features in the design of the front elevation but very much regret the removal of the mansards and reversion to plain flat roofs. We have also urged the advantages of underground car parking, as provided elsewhere in Epsom and recently proposed at Lower Mill in Ewell. This would give extra parking space and create welcome landscaping at ground level. It does of course involve considerably increased cost but this is not unreasonable for this important central site.

2 Pine Hill: I am pleased to report that the appeal against the refusal of permission to extend this house into flats has been dismissed, as has a claim for costs. The Inspector concluded that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the local area and that the Council acted in a reasonable and professional manner. He described the area as typified by well proportioned and detailed detached houses, and we welcome his support in protecting it from the effect of inappropriate development.

Land at Mill Road: I reported last time that we had always thought that the development of this strip of land by the railway would be unfortunate and that we had objected to the inadequate quality of the recent proposal for 31 units in 6 buildings. However, the December Planning Committee agreed to grant permission. At the time of writing permission does not seem to have been issued pending completion of a legal agreement, and as the deadline for this is 13 March all may not yet be lost.

1 Whitmores Close: We had objected to this proposal to replace the house on the corner of Dorking Road with a block containing six flats as being unsuitable for this location. Planning permission has however been granted on the basis that the block was considered to be “contextually appropriate”.

8 Andrews Close: We objected last year to an outline application to demolish this large house and build a block of eight one-bedroom flats but permission was granted. A revised scheme has now been submitted for 9 flats with the extra unit in a new gabled second floor. This would improve its appearance but at the expense of removing a side access to rear parking. The result is very inadequate parking space and we have said this would be unacceptable.

The two important outstanding cases of South Hatch and 24-28 West Street are still awaiting decision.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION and HERITAGE

Since the start of the new year we have been involved in a mixed bag of projects concerning conservation and heritage.

Over this period there have been several ongoing schemes where the builder has not followed the plans approved within the Planning Permission. Often this is because the builder has tried to simplify the works or make cost savings. In some cases, a retrospective Planning Permission can be obtained, whilst others have continued with an infringement. We have objected where appropriate and have also been in contact with the council’s enforcement officer.

We have also been involved in projects located within our splendid Conservation Areas. We have objected to new frontage extension works within the Downs Road Area. There are set guidelines on any new works affecting the view of the front of a house. Also we have supported residents when trees and

bushes have been removed without any local permissions. As usual, if one does it, there is not a major problem, but if all adjacent properties follow suit then the beauty of the Conservation Areas is compromised.



We have also supported residents in the Woodcote Road Conservation Area where premises have been left vacant for many years. This has resulted in a 'jungle' of a garden, evidence of squatters, unsafe roofs and an eyesore affecting the neighbours. The Council have an excellent enforcement officer, whose team have inspected the property and stated that they will follow up with the owners. An example in this affluent area is shown on the left.

The Society has taken great pleasure in visiting the former Albion Pub and asking why the old name was not being retained? The newly refurbished facade looks splendid at the western end of the High Street. Unfortunately the pub has, over recent years, got itself a bad reputation and the new owners want to make a clean start. It is now called McCafferty's Irish pub.

Also since the start of the new year, Planning Permission has been approved for the refurbishment and new extensions to the Derby training stables at the centre of the race course. It will be excellent to see this training facility in operation again and hopefully providing a much awaited fillip for the industry.

The market place alteration works have now started and we look forward to the restoration of The Clock Tower. This is a Grade 11 listed structure which must be the most well liked building in Epsom.



Bob Hollis

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you didn't pay the 2019 Subscription [Individual £2 / Household £3] when your Road Rep delivered this Newsletter 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 recognize your Rep's name but if not, do contact me.

Alternatively, if you prefer, our IT sub-committee have recently updated the Society's website to allow members to pay subscriptions online - go to 'Join us' on our website www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk/membership, and select the PayPal option at the bottom of the page. You can choose between individual (£2) and household (£3) membership, or pay a different amount if you wish to make a donation. Please include your surname, post code and house number so we can identify you as having paid. When you select the yellow 'Pay Now' button, you will be taken to the PayPal website. If you have a PayPal account, you can sign in; if not, you can make the payment by credit or debit card without signing in.

Over the next few months we plan to continue updating the website so new members can join online, and to enable different types of payment to be made. Please keep visiting the website to check for news !

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary (01372 728570) email membership@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

EPSOM REVUED (Harry Corben, by invitation)

Probus is a small town in Cornwall. The Probus Club of Epsom-PROfessional and BUSiness retired men - interpreted liberally - is one of several hundred clubs which meet monthly to chat, lunch and listen to some good speakers.

One of our keenest members until he died some years ago was John Furniss. He would regale us with his stories of the Epsom which he knew so well. He could trace his family back to 1585 and he claimed 'All my Furniss ancestors have been born and lived in Epsom ever since and my father, George, who was the district's foremost amateur theatrical personality during the first four decades of the century was born in 1885'.

In 1985 John took to the stage at the Epsom Playhouse with EPSOM REVUED. He opened with a meeting between John Furniss (1684-1754) the town's new Constable, Dr Livingstone and a lady and gentleman who congratulate Dr Livingstone for his latest achievements in the village. His Bowling Green and Coffee Houses are said to be much used and admired. It appears that the Constable might appreciate some new or repaired stocks. Dr Livingstone thinks that the dancing and shady groves attract many beauties which more than compensate for the petty rogues at the gaming tables.

The scene changes and another John Furniss speaks: 'Such is our village in 1719. I was born in 1684 and I ask myself what will Epsom be like in 1784? Will the houses extend beyond the Spread Eagle? Up Clay Hill (now of course West Hill)? As far as Woodcote?' By 1884 the Wells have vanished, the Watch House demolished and old John's stocks too. The London and S.Western Railway Company can puff us up to Waterloo in 32 minutes.

John reappears as himself 'And what of 1984? B.R. can sometimes take us to Waterloo in 35 minutes. Epsom can boast all of 27 shoe shops and we have this new theatre in Epsom at last.....and how lucky I am that you are filling it tonight'.

John talks about Pepys who drank the waters at The Wells, attended church and dined merrily. From Pepys's Diary (1667) he tells how he went up on to The Downes and there met a shepherd and his boy. The boy has been reading from the bible to his father and continues to read to Pepys. The shepherd says how lucky he is to have four shillings a week, summer and winter for to keep the sheep. Pepys leaves thinking how different our cynical age is from their idyllic times. (To be continued)

EVENTS

Sadly, the planned visit to Woburn Abbey on 22nd May had to be cancelled due to lack of support. Thank you to those who had reserved places, they will be top-of-the-list for future outings and activities.

DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY

We are planning to celebrate the Society's 60th Anniversary on Saturday, 22nd June . It also coincides with National Civic Day. There will be displays of the activities over the last sixty years from 1959, with fun items for everyone old and young. We plan to provide a book for members and visitors to record their recollections of Epsom.

Annually, Ian West, historian and archaeologist, takes members around secret corners of Epsom and Ewell and he has agreed to lead two visits, the first at 10.30 a.m. around the Church Street area and the second at 2.30 p.m. via the station and around the Clock Tower and market. These walks should last about one hour. We shall have to limit the numbers to 25 on the day for each tour. Please just turn up, tell your friends and families. Everyone is most welcome. If any ECS member is available on the 22nd, we should welcome extra help to set up the stall and gazebo, any length of time you can spare would be welcomed. Please either contact any committee member or ring 01372 273517.

And where shall we meet? EPSOM "DERBY" SQUARE -10 a.m. to 4 p.m. SATURDAY 22nd June. See you there.

Sheila Wadsworth

CENTENARY WOOD GUIDED WALK - Sunday 7th April 2019 10:30-13:00

Since 2014 a number of ECS members have been volunteering with the Woodland Trust to help develop the WW1 Centenary Wood in Langley Vale.

Now that planting is almost complete, we thought we could show members and their families and friends at least one route through the wood, which covers around 650 acres.

We shall meet at the top public car park at the far side of the racecourse from 10:15 a.m. for a prompt departure at 10.30 a.m. and the route will take around 2.5 hours to cover about 5 miles. Participants will need appropriate clothing for the prevailing weather and walking shoes or boots; the paths can get very muddy and the grass very wet! You are also recommended to bring a drink and snack since there are no catering facilities in the wood for a coffee break.

We can take a maximum of 30 people, so if you want to come please email brian.francis.atkinson@gmail.com with your name and the number of places you require. It will be strictly first come first served, but if well-supported the event could be repeated later in the year.

Mark Bristow

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