

# Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

2 Beaconsfield Rd  
Epsom, Surrey  
KT18 6HD

10th March 2020

Ruth Ormella MRTPI  
Head Of Planning  
Town Hall  
Epsom  
KT18 5BY

Dear Ruth,

Ref Woodcote Grove Planning Applications 19/00999/FUL AND 19/00998/LBA Amended  
Objection letter

We have taken the opportunity to review and update our original objection letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> September 2019. This is as requested in your letter of the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

Whilst we still object to these amended applications, we note that several of our original concerns have been addressed and are now incorporated within the Developer's revised drawings and correspondence.

The Epsom Civic Society still objects to these Planning Applications for the demolition of the existing Atkins offices and the erection of 98 apartments including the conversion of the listed Woodcote Grove and Stable Block buildings

The proposed works divide into separate schemes i.e.:-

- The new 4 storey stand alone building Block F (reduced from 6 storey)– Ashley Road Site
- The Listed Building conversions and new link buildings, Blocks A,B,C,D & E – Chalk Lane Site

The main objection is in regard to the present planning permission 14/01150/FUL for the ongoing Atkins new headquarters project. This planning decision required that the existing office blocks shall be demolished and the resultant material removed from site within 6 months of first occupation of the new building and the grass bank and soft landscaping shall be reinstated in accordance with the Landscape Masterplan Drawing. This condition was imposed to ensure that there would be minimal impact on the adjacent listed buildings. The condition to the 14/01150/FUL application should be adhered to and the cleared office site landscaped to suit the south east part of the estate, and also to provide a view of the listed Mansion House building within Woodcote Grove. This would still allow the Listed Buildings conversion scheme to be constructed as a separate project.

The proposed elevation designs of Block F are of a generic style with material specifications that are lacking in any local distinctiveness. The façade designs do not take any account of the adjacent listed buildings nor the Green Belt woodland to the south. The designs are insensitive and the block's intrusion will lead to a diminished pre-eminence of this delightful Designated Heritage Asset.

We have reviewed the Chalk Lane area of the scheme as a separate site. This is because it is separated for the proposed Block F which is dependant on the Ashley Road access. Blocks A-E need to 'work together' as they depend on access arrangements from a very limited existing entry onto Chalk Lane. The latest drawings and revised operational arrangements have addressed several of the problems relating to this very confined area of the site.

We have reviewed this area under the following considerations based on the applicant's latest Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal.

- 1) Designs
- 2) Landscaping & Environment
- 3) Car Parking
- 4) User Access & Emergency Services
- 5) Effect on Chalk Lane and the Conservation Area

- 1) The proposed designs for the new blocks A,C & D need to be developed to suit the interfacing existing facades of The Stables (Block B) and The Mansion (Block E). We note that refuse collections are now from Ashley Road.

We welcome the change of use for The Mansion House (i.e. being converted back from Atkins offices into residential). However the change from a single house unit into separate flats is fraught with problems. These include fire protection, acoustics, services routes which all could affect the fabric of this old dwelling. There is minimal design information available in this application for us to accept that the design concept actually works.

The opening up of the through passage to Block B (Stable Block) needs to be carefully considered and carried out. Reviewing the SCC highways information it is obvious that they are concerned with the safety of The Walpole Road / Chalk Lane junction and also the proximity of the proposed pedestrian access. We now pleased to see that the Developer has included traffic calming measures for this junction, but unfortunately the raised roadway specification does not suit the ambience of this Conservation Area.

We do not feel that the proposed designs of the new blocks A,C & D complement the existing listed buildings and should be more sympathetic with the facades and key features. Also the new material specifications should reflect the adjacent buildings (e.g. face bricks, stone, metalwork, roofs and features).

- 2) The proposed pedestrian gateway cut through the listed high brick wall onto Chalk Lane is not acceptable. This would completely interrupt the visual curve of this wall and severely cuts the uninterrupted face brickwork. Alternative pedestrian access arrangements could be planned within the site demise.

We are very concerned at the loss of trees and greenery on the Chalk Lane site area. We note that the Council has recently prepared a Climate Change Action Plan. This has been approved by the Environment Committee and supported by the full council on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Part of this Climate Plan highlights the need to improve biodiversity in the Borough's green spaces. ECS does not believe that this new application meets with these new guidelines.

The proposed development has a severe effect on Chalk Lane and The Conservation Area. It must be considered in parallel to the Chalk Lane Hotel residential development, Grumpy Mole (Amato) pub operations, horse riders, cyclists and ramblers use. The new road access abuts the new hotel works. The increase in traffic to this part of the site will lead to safety issues whilst the new pedestrian foot fall from the whole development will create footpath issues.

- 3) Car Parking has been reduced on Blocks A-E (i.e. Chalk Lane access). We note that not all of the Block F units have a parking space. This proposal does not comply with current Council parking requirements and needs to be increased by approximately 24 spaces.
- 4) User access and emergency arrangements have certainly been reviewed within the developer's amended designs. More emphasis has been made on the Ashley Road entrance for vehicle access but still requires the tricky entry from Chalk Lane for fire fighting appliances and ambulances.
- 5) The proposed site is in one of the most attractive parts of Epsom, located in The Chalk Lane Conservation Area. Within the introduction summary of the Character Appraisal & Management Proposals it states that "The Chalk Lane Conservation Areas is one of the Borough's most important conservation areas ..." This appraisal states that the Local Planning Authority has a duty to ensure its future protection and enhancement. We request that the Council standby this duty when considering this application.

We have reviewed the proposed scheme in relationship to the NPPF (Series 3 February 2019) and suggest that the potential impact on the heritage asset (Mansion House and The Stables) has not been adequately achieved. It clearly states that 'great weight should be given to the asset's conservation'. Due to the density and proximity of the proposed Block F, this policy has not been adhered to.

We understand that a Public Consultation has been held by the applicant and that views were sought from a select invited audience. Unfortunately this session was not open to all interested parties and we suggest that it should be repeated at a bigger venue so that all can participate. Similar proposals have been exhibited at Bourne Hall (e.g. Lower Mill Project). We suggest that if the Developer had listened to people's ideas in the first place then there would not have been the need to undertake costly design amendments.

Due consideration must also be given to the carrying out of the construction works. Although it is stated that the main access is via Ashley Road following the excavation of the new Block F basement then all following construction access is cut off to Blocks A-E. At this time all works to these areas would be from Chalk Lane. We are concerned at this situation as it has been proved that this road is not suitable for any large construction traffic. This is due to the narrow junctions, parked cars, horses and pedestrians. We suggest that a construction management plan (CMP) is compiled and discussed with all residents, school reps, Atkins, Amato pub owner, Council and highways. Recently a wall in Worple Road has been demolished by a construction vehicle, hopefully next time it will not be a child! It may be a good idea to complete the new junction safety works (Walpole Road / Chalk Lane) prior to the start of all site operations.

Therefore, the Society still objects to this application and that it should be refused. The impact on the character of this outstanding part of the Borough would be immense, affecting the Conservation Area and the everyday enjoyment of this very constricted area. The proposed works for the 98 dwellings in such a constrained parcel of land means that this is a high density development out of keeping with the surrounding area.

Notwithstanding the need to maximise use of all available development as it becomes available, we are forced to conclude that, quite apart from the infringement of the condition attached to permission of application 14/01150/FUL, these proposals constitute an attempt at significant overdevelopment affecting heritage assets in one of Epsom's most important Conservation Areas.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Hollis  
Michael Arthur

(On behalf of The Epsom Civic Society)

cc All Ward Councillors  
And Members of The Planning Committee