

Multi-Storey Car Park for Hospital Site Dorking Road – Planning Application 20/00249/FUL

Epsom Civic Society submit the following comments:-

1. The proposed stand-alone six storey car park (ground level plus five storeys above) is a utilitarian structure with a large bulk and mass and a bland, boxy design devoid of any quality architectural features. It is a significant intervention on this part of the hospital site, that currently provides surface-level parking only.
2. The location of the proposed MSCP is immediately adjacent to the Woodcote Conservation area, it is also near to the Chalk Lane Conservation Area and too may have adverse impacts for the southern part of Worple Road Conservation area bordering Avenue Road. The proposed MSCP will adversely affect the setting of three listed buildings on the north side of Dorking Road (East Lodge, the Bell House and Clock House Medical Centre) and the row of positive buildings on the South side of Dorking Road. The visual impact on these properties and on the neighbouring Tennis/Sports Club is horrendous. The overall detrimental effect and harm to nearby heritage assets is, the Society's view, substantial. It is difficult to see how this proposal could be justified. The Society does not agree with the submitted Planning Statement that what is proposed will result in limited harm only. It is considered that the proposals represent serious harm to the conservation areas.
3. The proposals present a large overpowering building which will have a serious impact upon and view from, the adjacent Sports Ground.
4. The applicant has submitted Accurate Visual Representation photographs of how the development would be seen from numerous fairly near locations, most from within the Conservation Areas. This shows that the effect of the development would be quite alarming. Thus the proposals would be contrary to Core Strategy (2007) Policy CS 5 (Heritage Assets and their setting); DMP Doc (2015) - Policy DM9 (Townscape Character and Local Distinctiveness) and DM10 (Design Requirements for New Developments); and DM13 (Building Heights).
5. In the current context of climate change policy and the need to reduce private car travel, a building of this bulk and mass is likely to be very harmful and cannot be sustained. It is difficult to justify in light of the Borough's Climate Change Action Plan supported by the Council at their 20th January 2020 meeting. Also it is not compliant with Core Strategy Policy CS 6 (Sustainable development etc) and CS 16 (Transport and Travel) and to NPPF (Chs 9, 12, 16).
6. In terms of health and well-being, locating a car park of this size adjacent to the well-used public right of way risks increased exposure of the public and in particular schoolchildren (often via the 'walking bus') to poor air quality from increased levels of vehicle emissions.

7. The application documents refer to a pre-application meeting in which the planning officers suggested that ground level parking plus three upper stories should be the maximum height which would approximately correspond to the existing hospital buildings. The Society supports that view. The proposed height cannot be sustained.

8. The Society recognises the need for a car park to satisfy parking requirements. But it need not be so ugly or visually intrusive. The way to resolve it is to have two floors of underground /basement parking and three storeys above which would be at approximately the same height as the hospital. This is a typical way to solve the problem in central London.

9. The Society also suggests green living walls for the external wall treatment to soften the impact, particularly adjoining Epsom Sports Club land. Ivy/shrubs on wires viz biotectural walls at Wimbledon Tennis is a good example. Also increased tree planting is required on the boundary. Tree planting as proposed is woeful.

10. The Society considers the current provision of only 7 active charging points for electric vehicles, with 6 passive charging points for further EV expansion is unambitious target, given the Borough's newly adopted Climate Action Plan. Increased vehicle emissions from petrol / diesel cars are inappropriate adjacent to a sports ground promoting healthy activities.

11. The Society cannot support this application in its present form by reason of its bulk height and massing and the requirement to incorporate amendments as outlined above.