

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

Place Development Service
Town Hall
Epsom
KT18 5BY

26th August 2020

Dear Sirs

Ref Woodcote Grove Planning Applications 19/00999/FUL AND 19/00998/LBA Inc 5th August 2020 Amendments - OBJECTION

The Epsom Civic Society have reviewed the Developers revised Planning Statement and amended details now included in their submission. We however continue to object to this application as there are still several matters of major concern. These relevant issues are listed under the following headings.

Planning History

The proposal was always to remove the former Atkins office block following the construction of their new adjacent main offices in order to enhance the setting of Mansion House (Grade 11* Listed). The other listed building, the Stable Block would also be improved following the demolition of Atkins print shop and canteen. This proposal is severely compromised by the erection of an even higher residential building (Block F) on the site.

Conservation Area

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 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 safety issues.

The revised car parking arrangements to the west area of the site ie Chalk Lane frontage does not improve the situation. At present there is no vehicle access from the site onto Chalk Lane. When the Pub re-opens a congested setting can only get worse.

Heritage

The revised design for Block F, albeit reduced in height but still is 3m higher than the previous Atkins building and 5m above Mansion House. This therefore would be prominent in views from Chalk Lane and affect the landscape garden areas.

The forward positioning of Block F towards Chalk lane will detract The Mansion House from being a focal point.

Highways & Road Safety

We have reviewed the proposal for a traffic calming installation at the junction of Worple Road and Chalk Lane. Unfortunately, as none of the perimeter property walls can be moved the dimensions of the road layout can only remain as existing. Therefore, there is no point in slowing down a long axle lorry which cannot manoeuvre round the junction.

It is also essential that the road barrier across Chalk Lane to the south of the site remains in position. It would be unthinkable for site traffic to use the southern part of Chalk Lane up to the Downs.

Density and Housing Mix

The Planning Statement refers to making efficient use of the land in line with optimising housing delivery 2018. This refers to providing higher buildings and greater densities in town centres closeby to railways and transport corridors. This NPPF proposal published in Feb 2019 certainly did not intend to apply to sensitive Conservation Areas and works including Grade 11* Listed Buildings.

The proposed housing mix only provides for 7% of the new units to be 3 Bedrooms plus. The current Policy DM22 in this situation requires that 25% of the units should be 3 beds or larger.

Amenities

The local policies regarding amenity space are included in DM12. The proposed houses in Blocks C&D, classed as family units, fall short on private amenity space and there are minimal areas for the recreational needs of young families. The proposed communal space is at the site boundary, under the trees and generally not considered safe. The play areas should be located next to the family houses.

Construction Access

This still is of major concern. There is no safe way for heavy construction traffic to enter from Chalk Lane. All access must be from Ashley Road. This planning requirement may necessitate that the works be sequenced to suit ie works on the west site be sufficiently advanced ahead of the Block F site.

A detailed Site Construction Management Plan needs to be provided by the Developer's builder, then agreed with the Council and Surrey Highways and then entered as a Contract Condition.

Therefore, the Society still objects to this application and believes 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 delightful area. The proposed works for the 98 dwellings in such a constrained parcel of land means that this high density development is 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,

The Epsom Civic Society
(Mr Robert Hollis)