

NEWSLETTER – No.111 – SPRING 2007

THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

Since the last *Newsletter* Helical Bar (Epsom) Ltd., the owners of the Iceland site in Upper High Street who lost their planning application, have lodged an appeal and a public inquiry will follow. The Council had already started work on an appraisal of how the two car parks lying behind the street, which they own, together with adjoining land could be used. The area being considered is large and this presents the prospect and a rare opportunity to create an integrated development in the town centre. The Council is to be congratulated on initiating this appraisal and starting by seeking the views of interested bodies and arranging public meetings to explore how the whole area could be developed. You can access notes of meetings including the Society's on the Council's website. This is a very significant step which if pursued could be of real benefit to the residents of Epsom. Meanwhile we shall be represented at the Public Inquiry.

To meet the pressure for major housing growth the design of new homes and neighbourhoods has never been more important. But just how good is the new housing: for example have the developments on the hospital sites come up to expectation and can we expect better from further developments? A housing audit by CABE, the Government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space, indicates that nationally only 18% of developments are good or very good and over 50% average, that is below the benchmark established by Government and the industry. Design quality seems to be so poor in one in three cases that they should not have been given planning permission. The new planning policy statement (PPS3) issued in December puts design at the top of the future housing growth agenda and should have a positive impact provided the architectural profession and the housing industry respond and that local authorities seek to raise the quality of proposals brought to planning committees.

The lack of infrastructure seems to be the main complaint of the residents of those hospital sites already developed. We are about to see proposals for the development of the West Park and St. Ebba's hospitals which should provide retail and other infrastructure elements if lessons have been learnt. High quality architectural design, good layout achieving a sense of place and good highway design will be important objectives if future residents are to enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods. These developments are important for Epsom.

GEOFFREY STONE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The papers for our AGM are being delivered with this *Newsletter* and officers of the Society are putting forward the names of a full committee for the coming year. However it would be remiss not to record here that our Chairman for the past four years has decided to stand down. Geoffrey Stone has given of himself unstintingly to the furtherance of the objectives of the Society even when serious illness must have made it a struggle. As a result of his efforts I believe the Society is now in robust health and well prepared to face the future under new leadership. Fortunately Geoffrey has said he will remain on the committee so we shall have the continued benefit of his knowledge and experience.

MALCOLM BOYD

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

8-12 Dorking Road & 6 Elm Grove: Following refusal of permission for the proposal to build 41 sheltered apartments described in the last *Newsletter*, Churchill Retirement Living prepared a revised scheme, held a public exhibition in December and came to a meeting with us in the New Year. A formal application has now been made and we have submitted our comments. The number of units has been reduced by five, the height has been lowered, the layout changed to reduce impact on the adjoining listed building and on neighbours in Elm Grove, and the Dorking Road elevation has been varied. We think that substantial improvements have been made but are still concerned about the bulk and density, the effect on Elm Grove and the low number of parking spaces. We have recently heard that the appeal into the former refusal has been withdrawn; and we now await the decision of the Planning Committee.

Upper High Street and Depot Road: An appeal was lodged by Helical Bar at the last possible moment. The site appraisal by the Planning Department has continued and notes of the meetings are on the Council website. It is hoped that a report will be ready for the March Environment Committee.

Briavels Court, Downs Hill Road: The appeal against the refusal of permission for an extra floor has been dismissed.

11 Alexandra Road: In the previous *Newsletter* I reported that the fourth application was for four semi-detached houses and that we had raised objections. It was refused and a fifth revised scheme for two pairs of semis was submitted. This dealt with most of the problems and we had no further objections. It was the best likely to be achieved on a site ripe for development, and outline permission was granted at the February Planning Committee.

Station Development: Permission for this development, with improved station entrance and flats over, was given at the same time as the scheme opposite (now known as Centralè) but work has not yet started. You may have seen the Guardian report that David Smith explains the need for a legal agreement between the Council, the developer and Network Rail on the provision of affordable housing and this is causing the developer problems.

Heron Court, 53 Alexandra Road: Permission was previously refused for the demolition of Heron Court - the large house opposite the roundabout junction with College Road - and the redevelopment of the site. A revised proposal has been submitted dealing with some of the reasons for refusal. We believe, however, that the existing building is worth keeping and converting and we have therefore maintained our objection. We have also suggested that Heron Court should be locally listed.

Dame Annis Barn, Burgh Heath Road: This house is in a former chalk pit opposite Lynwood Road and within the Burgh Heath Road Conservation Area. It is a 16th Century Barn dismantled and brought from Ongar to Epsom in 1924. It is set in a large garden and the present owner and his immediate neighbour want to sell the garden and the adjoining house to a developer for the building of 18 substantial houses. The Barn itself would remain. These proposals have caused great consternation among our members and others. We have met the developers twice, have given their proposals lengthy consideration and have written a substantial letter objecting to their planning application. We said that the redevelopment of the site was unacceptable in principle, that their scheme would cause serious harm, that the access would be dangerous and that we supported the strong local views that the development should not be permitted. We also disagreed with the suggestion of the Planning Department that the developers' proposed density should be increased to follow Government guidelines, regardless of the nature of the site.

84-90 East Street: We had no comments to make on an application, now approved, to use these offices on the corner of Church Road as law courts. Both the County Court and the Magistrates Court will be transferred there and we await proposals for the use of the existing sites.

Land rear of 10-11 Beverley Close, Ewell: We previously objected to the development of this former chalk pit with a block of 24 apartments, and argued for its addition to the Green Belt and designation as a Nature Reserve. That application was refused and we have now objected to a revised application that reduces the number of apartments but is still unacceptable in principle.

ALAN BAKER

EPSOM HERITAGE WALKING TRAIL

Every member will have now received a copy of the Heritage Trail and I hope that you felt that it lives up to the high quality of the Society's leaflets. Our grateful thanks must go to Tom Dethridge, a past chairman of the Society, for writing the text of the leaflet based on his deep and abiding knowledge of the history of Epsom. The coloured illustrations by Denise Pattison of key buildings mentioned in the trail added significantly to its attraction. We would like to express our thanks also to the Borough Council and in particular to Anthony Evans the Borough's Design and Conservation Officer for organising the funding and printing of large numbers of the leaflet.

Much useful publicity for the Society was gained as a result of the publication of the Heritage Trail. A small party at the Town Hall hosted by Councillor David Wood Mayor of Epsom & Ewell launched the leaflet and subsequent articles in the local press, Borough Insight and Time and Leisure ensured that every household in the Borough was informed about the Society. In addition, copies have been sent to every head teacher in the

borough and to the clergy or leader of each place of worship. Further copies are now available free of charge in the Town Hall, borough libraries, the Ashley Mall, Epsom Theatre and Southern Counties Building Society.

It is now our hope that descriptive plaques will be placed on buildings identified in the Heritage Trail. It is likely that this project will be a collaboration between the Society, Epsom Rotary and the Borough Council.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The public examination of the Core Strategy of the Local Development Plan (the new Town Plan) has now taken place. I attended the first session which dealt with housing provision. The inspector had a list of eleven questions relating to the submission document and he appeared to be satisfied with the responses to nine. On the other two questions the inspector was not convinced that there was adequate explanation and detail in the Core Strategy Proposal. The two questions were 'Does the Core Strategy provide adequate explanation as to how the intended housing provision will be delivered?' and 'Does the Core Strategy provide adequate explanation of the planning context for the redevelopment of the remaining hospital sites west of Epsom and how these should be treated in subsequent Development Plan Documents?' The Borough Council has produced a Position Paper on Housing Provision and has also responded to the inspector's concerns by issuing two further submissions that could be added to the Core Strategy. The inspector has to decide whether these explanatory paragraphs can be added to the document without further public consultation. (For those interested in further detail, all the documents can be viewed on the Council's website, www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/EEBC/planning.)

THE DURDANS

The Society has in the past taken a keen interest in the preservation of the listed buildings of the Durdans estate and has sought to perpetuate its equestrian heritage. Caroline Baldock, acting Chair of the Epsom Equestrian Preservation Group writes:

"Epsom may be on the verge of losing yet another heritage site to developers. The Durdans stables and riding school was built for Lord Rosebery in 1881. The school is a wonderful example of the Arts and Crafts movement designed by George Devey and was the star in crown of this delightful equestrian establishment. The Cicero yard is all that is now left of the stable yards which once peppered the site. This remaining Victorian establishment is crumbling. Neglect has allowed the fabric of the buildings to be damaged. The beautiful Ladas gates through which once walked the Great Eclipse are also in a terrible state of repair, literally rusting on their hinges. There is history here and we are losing it."

The owners of the Grade II listed buildings have a legal obligation to keep the buildings in a good state of repair and my intention is to bring the dilapidation, disrepair and decay to the attention of the Conservation Officer in the Borough Council so that representations can be made to the owner's agents. In addition, it is imperative that members of the Society support any forthcoming initiatives to prevent unwanted development of this important conservation site.

MALCOLM BOYD

SOCIETY ARCHIVES

The archives of the Society have been now been catalogued and are available for inspection. Currently they are still in my possession but I hope that ultimately they will be housed at the Surrey History Centre.

I am still looking for material, particularly early material, e.g. newsletters prior to 1987.

If readers wish to consult the archives or possess anything which they feel may be of interest please contact me on 01372 273831 or email a&pclifford@waitrose.com.

It is planned that the catalogue will eventually appear on the Society's website.

PHILIP CLIFFORD
Hon. Archivist

MEMBERSHIP

One of our Road Reps, Peggy Dubois, has had to retire from delivering *Newsletters* and collecting subscriptions following a car accident last year. She has been our longest serving Road Rep and her name appeared on the 1981 list of Reps. Our Archivist Philip Clifford, has been unable to find any earlier lists but it shows that Peggy has been doing her share for EPS for over 25 years and probably longer. On behalf of the EPS committee and members I would like to extend a heartfelt 'thank you' to her.

Thank you also to the dozen or so people who have volunteered to do an occasional *Newsletter* round. This is much appreciated and no doubt you will be called on in the future - some of you have already agreed to do this delivery !

ISHBEL KENWARD - Membership Secretary (728570)

NEW FUTURES FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The Chairman welcomed about 40 members on a rather cold evening to the first of this year's talks on January 25th. We were treated to an excellent illustrated talk by Dr Nigel Barker Historic Areas Advisor, South East Region of English Heritage (EH).

Nigel, as enthusiastic as always, explained briefly the way EH works and that it does so largely by persuasion, having very limited powers of enforcement. He described its task as helping others to manage change. If approached, EH may not have the resources of time, money or expertise to give directly but can usually point people to others who may have. The South East Region covers a vast L shape around London from the Kent coast sweeping west and north to Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, so he and the other teams are kept very busy. It is not only buildings - gardens and landscapes count as heritage too.

By encouraging people to see the research of historic environments - such as letting the public get a close look and ask about what they see at archaeological excavations in Canterbury and Chester - it is hoped they will appreciate, admire and value them and thus wish to support their ongoing preservation. At Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, schoolchildren see the Durbar Room and practise crafts using Indian techniques - this can be linked to the National Curriculum. Elsewhere, young offenders gain experience

of budgeting and management which may help them return as useful members of society. Income generation is also important as Government Funding of 75% is decreasing; so, for example at Dover Castle and The Grange Ramsgate, some accommodation has now been adapted and made available for holiday lets without impinging too much on the surrounding Historic Environment.

We saw slides of successful adaptations whereby commercial use enabled retention of important buildings or landscapes - it took 15 years to sort out a suitable re-use of Oxford Castle where there had been a prison from Civil War years to the 20th Century - the popular TV show 'Porridge' had scenes shot there. Now people can pay for the pleasure of hotel rooms in former cells but with all mod-cons and en-suite facilities! Even relics of the Cold War at Upper Heyford are being used rather than left to go to rack and ruin - the heavily reinforced aircraft shelters would be difficult to remove but provide the ideal environment for storage of electronically backed-up records - one of several commercial lets which provide an income towards upkeep of the site. Some housing will be built and a special financial scheme set up which will also provide income. It is amazing how many ways there are to adapt without destruction at Historic Environment sites; of course there may have to be compromises for commercial viability but they are always sensitive ones. Questioned about the local Dame Annis Barn site, Nigel felt it not a planning issue to involve EH, but he indicated some advice leaflets may be of use to EPS regarding re-use of the Durdans Riding School and Stables which are EH listed. Our Chairman duly noted this! Geoffrey Stone presented Dr Barker with two bottles of wine as a slightly more lasting token of thanks than the enthusiastic applause from the audience.

ANGELA CLIFFORD

VISIT TO ROCHESTER ON 2nd DECEMBER 2006 for the DICKENS FESTIVAL

The outing was fully booked and the weather was good. We arrived in time for the morning procession along the High Street which is pedestrianised. The procession took at least 30 minutes to pass by and displayed the Dickensian Theme, everyone was dressed in Victorian costume and there were several bands all creating a very festive atmosphere. The town was crowded with visitors and the participants. The Dickensian and Victorian atmospheres were all around. Some plays were being performed in the streets. The area between the cathedral and the castle was full of stalls selling food, mulled wine and novelties. There was plenty to do and see and our group went their own ways, some people attended evensong in the cathedral in the afternoon. There was another procession in the late afternoon as splendid as the morning one, this time it was candle lit. Everyone was back in the coach on time, most of us were quite glad to have a sit down and we left at 6pm and travelled to Westerham for our supper. This was served in the George and Dragon, where we were met by the manageress. The fish and chips were cooked as soon as we arrived, giving people time to find a seat and get a drink. Several people commented afterwards that it was the best fish and chips that they had eaten. Everyone seemed to enjoy the outing for which I was very grateful and I would like to thank those who came for their punctuality.

EVENTS AND OUTINGS

FRIDAY 19th OCTOBER 2007: BUFFET SUPPER PARTY

Please put this date in your diary. This event will be held in the hall at St Joseph's Church as usual. The catering arrangements will be the same as last year, as everyone found the new format more convenient. We are lucky to have been able to book two of our own members Malcolm and Kate Bown and their group 'Sweet and Low' to provide the entertainment.

The application form for tickets will be in the next *Newsletter*.

IAN WEST'S ANNUAL WALK: Unfortunately this will not take place this year but we look forward to one in 2008.

VISIT TO MAPLEDURHAM AND HENLEY ON THURSDAY 26TH JULY 2007

Mapledurham House and Mill are situated on the river Thames just north of Reading and up river from Henley.

In the morning we shall travel to Henley on Thames to visit the River and Rowing Museum which is a short distance along the river bank from the town centre. A booking has been made for us to visit the museum as a group and have a conducted tour of the first gallery. There is a separate attraction of The Wind in the Willows which is included in the entry ticket and comes to life with an audio-guide telling the tale of Mr. Toad and his friends. The museum has a cafe for drinks, snacks and lunch. Everyone is free to make their own arrangements for lunch, some people may prefer to bring a picnic. Those not wishing to visit the museum can walk round the town or stroll along the river bank. We shall leave Henley at 1.30 p.m. sharp to drive to Caversham where we board the boat for the 40 minute journey upriver to Mapledurham. We disembark at the landing stage and will be taken by our guide to the watermill for a conducted tour. There has been a mill on this site since Saxon times; the present building dates from the 15th century making it the only surviving working watermill on the Thames. The mill will be working for our visit and the wholemeal flour ground here and other by-products can be bought at the shop. We will then walk to the house for a conducted tour. Mapledurham House, an Elizabethan Manor House, is still the home of the descendents of the original family. The house contains a collection of portraits, furniture, the great oak staircase and original plaster ceilings. The estate was the settings for a number of films including *The Eagle has Landed* and *Inspector Morse*.

The visit will end with a cream tea. The coach will bring us back to Epsom after tea.

The pickup places in Epsom will be outside the Methodist Church in Ashley Road at 8.45 a.m. sharp and 9 a.m. sharp at the car park at Tattenham Corner near the tea hut where there is ample free parking for cars. We should be back in Epsom between 6 and 7 p.m. depending on traffic.

The cost will be £35.00 including the Henley Museum and £29.50 without the Henley museum. These prices include coach, boat trip, entries, cream tea and tips. Please apply on the form at the end of this *Newsletter*. Tickets will not be issued for a while to give everyone an equal chance to apply. Please phone me if you have any queries.

FUTURE TALKS

THURSDAY 29th MARCH 2007 at 8pm in MYERS STUDIO

This talk will be given by Derek Mossman NDD, ATC, MA(Sussex),FRSA. His subject is 'The design of buildings in relation to their environment; physical, political and economic'. Thus, for example, a building of the late 18th or early 19th Century will reflect the advances in material availability caused by the Industrial Revolution.

An application form was printed in the last *Newsletter* which was circulated before Christmas. For those who may have mislaid this please use the application form printed at the end of this *Newsletter*. There are still plenty of tickets available. It should be a very interesting talk.

JOY FURNESS (01372 722186)

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APPLICATION FORM FOR OUTING TO MAPLEDURHAM AND HENLEY: THURSDAY 26th JULY 2007

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE NUMBER.....

Please tick below as appropriate:-

I will join the coach at the Methodist Church at 8.45 a.m. sharp

I will join the coach at Tattenham Corner at 9 a.m. sharp

Cost per person £35.00 (inclusive of coach, boat, entry to both properties, cream tea and tips)
Reduced rate (excluding Henley Museum) £29.50 per person

I would like full price tickets

I would like reduced price tickets

I enclose a cheque for £.....made payable to Epsom Protection Society and a Stamped Addressed Envelope. Please return to Joy Furness 37 Woodcote Hurst Epsom KT18 7DS (Tel 01372 722186)

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APPLICATION FORM FOR THIRD TALK THURSDAY 29th MARCH 2007, 8PM AT MYERS STUDIO, EPSOM

I would like tickets for this event (£3 each) and enclose a cheque (made payable to Epsom Protection Society) for £.....and SAE

NAME

ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE NUMBER.....

Please return to Joy Furness, 37 Woodcote Hurst, Epsom KT18 7DS (Tel 01372 722186)

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