

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

### Worple Road (part two)

Reginald White writing in 'Ancient Epsom' says that 'there must have been some means of communication in ancient days between the village of Epsom, however obscure it may then have been, and Ashted and Leatherhead'. He writes 'the ancient roads - for horse traffic - went from the village of Epsom near the church by Worple Road to Woodcote Green, and in later times from the Spread Eagle Corner by Madan's Walk and by what is now the front garden of Woodcote House - probably on the line of the old avenue'.

Three members have written to me about Worple Road. Christine Haddon lives in a house built by members of her family in the 1860's. The house was lived in for a time by George Gissing (1857-1903) the writer who was born in Yorkshire and won a scholarship to Owens College now Manchester University. He won many prizes including The Shakespeare prize in 1875 but after many misdemeanours he was expelled and served a short period in prison. After a spell in America he returned, married twice had two children and wrote a number of novels including 'The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft' which was his most autobiographical work. He is a character in Peter Ackroyd's book Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem. He died aged 46. He was said to be one of the most accomplished realists of the late Victorian Era.

I was invited to the formal opening of Kavanagh Court which has replaced Peter's Court in St Martin's Avenue. A fine building for Epsom and Ewell Housing Association resembling a first class hotel according to The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell and I agree. Providing 21 Warden Assisted sheltered housing flats and named after Sidney Kavanagh the grandfather of Miss Elphick, who provided much of the funding, it forms part of the Association's 91 residences.

The back of Kavanagh Court overlooks the Epsom Bowling Club in Worple Road which started in Depot Road in 1909 and moved to its present site in 1921. Most of its land was leased and eventually purchased from the Furniss family and in 1936 a parcel of Glebe Land was purchased to complete the site as it is now. Glebe was an area of land which was assigned to support a priest. An incumbent was entitled to retain the land for his own use or he could let it and any income formed part of his stipend. The law changed in 1978 and Glebe Land was vested in the Diocesan Board of Finance.

I have obtained details of another author who lived in Worple Road. William Hale White lived in The Flint House on the corner of Ashley Road and he wrote under the name of Mark Rutherford. He moved to the Flint House in 1865 when he was the Parliamentary Correspondent for the Morning Star. He wrote over a thousand newspaper articles, translated works by Spinoza and writers such as Andre Gide, D.H.Lawrence and Arnold Bennett praised his work. The Mark Rutherford Resource Society has been set up to publicise his works. One of his many quotes 'There is always a multitude of reasons both in favour of doing a thing and against doing it. The art of debate lies in presenting them; the art of life lies in neglecting ninety-nine hundreds of them'.

So we are back to Ashley Road and before we can continue with Worple Road we must turn left into Ashley Road for about 20 feet and then navigate a roundabout before joining the short two way

section. On the right hand side the houses are large and old and those on the left hand side are mainly fairly new. Then we reach a narrow bend and the road divides into Avenue Road which seems the natural progression while to the left is the last and single direction traffic section of Worple Road. This part of the road was shown as New Road on earlier maps and now has St Martin's Junior and Infant Schools and Woodcote Grove mainly hidden behind a high brick wall to the left and Sandown Lodge and Squirrels Way to the right. Then we reach Chalk Lane and that is another story.

A member now living in Sidmouth asked if we could send him a map to remind him of the shape of the road and I have sent him a 'Google' image. Another member asked if we could do something about the rubbish which is being deposited in one of the paths off Worple Road. We will look at this too.

At the AGM some questions were asked about the state of some of our pavements. We will pursue this with Surrey C.C. We felt that something needed to be done about Epsom Station but we are not happy with the height of the now approved plan. We do think the Lavandou Stables have been spared for their intended use and are pleased. Have a great summer and we hope to meet many of you as the year goes by.

**Harry Corben, Chairman**

## **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The main item this time is the long awaited and controversial development of the Epsom railway station.

*Epsom Railway Station:* As you will know by now, the Planning Committee on 22 April agreed to permit the mixed use development proposal by Solum Regeneration, a company created by Network Rail and Keir Properties, comprising a new railway station ticket hall, 124 apartments, a 64 bed hotel with 67 parking spaces, highway and public realm improvements and servicing arrangements.

Following their application last December, there was considerable criticism including a damning report from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) who thought the proposals were not of sufficient design quality for this important site and needed a fundamental rethink. Unfortunately they did not have any concerns about the scale and massing of the development which will be about the same height as Hudson House opposite. Amended drawings were submitted in March.

We wrote welcoming improvements in the articulation of the building and to the ticket hall but still strongly objecting in particular to the height and massing of the building and to the very poor public transport interchange, which places the buses, taxis and drop-offs on the public highway, virtually closing the inner lane and likely to cause greatly increased congestion.

The Committee meeting took the whole evening with presentations by the developer, the officers and Surrey officers. I was among the public speakers and drew attention to the height which I considered was contrary to the policies of Plan E. I said it was unacceptable for these policies to be treated "flexibly" almost before the ink was dry. The officers explained this away, apparently to members' satisfaction.

After a two hour debate there was great confusion over the vote. No-one proposed refusal but only 3 members voted to permit. After much discussion one member did propose refusal but the reasons were inadequate and Mark Berry, Head of Planning, advised that they would be quite insufficient on appeal. The officers recommendation to permit was then approved on a vote of 6:3 to shouts of "Disgraceful" and "Bullying" from the public gallery. So members decided they liked it – that's democracy – but it was not a good performance. It is also left a doubt about the effectiveness of the Plan E policies.

Briefly looking at other results:

*The Bungalow, Pitt Road:* Yet a third attempt was made to achieve this development. We have objected again and it has been refused again. The appeals are outstanding.

*United Reformed Church, Church Street:* This church lies between the Epsom Club and the listed building The Hermitage. They wish to provide new premises for a smaller congregation and to include community facilities. An earlier scheme including student accommodation was unsatisfactory and was refused. The present proposal is for a smaller contemporary symmetrical design with large areas of glass. This naturally causes differences of opinion but we wrote to object that the design was inappropriate and too far forward on the site. It was recommended for approval at the March Planning Committee and agreed unanimously with very little discussion.

**Alan Baker**

## CONSERVATION

Most of the applications seen since the last Newsletter have been of a relatively minor nature. Some letters have been written to express concerns regarding possible negative effects on conservation areas. A particular concern is to make sure that precedents do not get established which might lead to a gradual erosion of the qualities of the many conservation areas within the Borough. The Council is developing Management Plans for each area which it is hoped will not only help to avoid this happening, but will provide the means to effect improvements.

A developer has submitted an application to build two houses within a very large garden in Woodcote End off Chalk Lane. The application includes two new accesses, each of which requires the demolition of part of a listed wall. We have written to object both to the openings and to the nature of the proposed gates. We have suggested that a shared access would be adequate, limiting the effect on the wall. The design of proposed gates tends further to break down the ambience of privacy created by the wall. Our view is that they should be designed to offset as far as possible the visual break in the wall caused by the new openings.

An application has been received from a development consortium for West Park Hospital. The development retains an outer arc of the old ward buildings, converted to flats. Within the main site, there is a series of greens around which houses of various designs are grouped into neighbourhoods. There will no doubt be many changes of detail through discussions with the planning department and other interested groups before the scheme is submitted for full planning approval, but it is felt to be a very well thought out proposal and a sound basis for such a large scheme.

Of particular interest is the old water tower, a Grade II listed building, which the scheme retains. In addition to its function as a water tower, it also contains a boiler flue. This is in one corner of the tower, and its considerable weight is causing structural problems so the application includes for its removal. The only externally visible evidence of the flue is the chimney at the top of the tower. This is rather ungainly and spoils the appearance of the tower roof, which has some echoes of a French chateau about it, so its removal is felt to have some advantages.

It is intended that the tower should be retained, converted into four flats, becoming a significant feature in one of the new neighbourhoods, forming a focal point in what is described in the application as 'Tower Square'. The new houses and apartments in the square would be of varying height and design but would have roof lines similar to that of the tower, giving a rather pleasing feeling of harmony. However, there is a contentious element. The flats in the tower obviously require access (both stairs and a lift, because of the height), which cannot be accommodated within the tower – there would be no space left for the flats. It is therefore proposed that there should be a new tower built alongside to accommodate the lift and stairs. Rather than trying to ape the design of the water tower, the new tower would be modern in design, with a lot of glass and metal cladding. This is a sensible solution as the design and proportions of

the old tower will not be adversely affected, and the new tower will be visually separate and subservient to the old. Although the new access tower may be seen as detracting from the qualities of the water tower, the proposed design minimises this. Accordingly, we have supported the proposal because we are firmly of the view that it is right to find a new use for the tower, rather than see it gradually fall into disrepair and possibly become the target of vandals.

**Rob Austen**

### **LAVANDOU STABLES (Durdans Stables Ltd)**

We are pleased to report that Mr Philip Buckman is about to sign a 125 year lease, subject to planning permission, for the Lavandou Stables in Chalk lane, to be renamed Durdans Stables Ltd. Your committee was given a preview of the plans. This is the culmination of a concerted campaign in which your Society played a prominent part to keep this stable complex comprising many listed buildings in equestrian use. Mr Buckman's family intend to use the site which extends almost to Langley Vale Road, as a racehorse training establishment and a livery. The Grade II\* indoor riding school will be completely renovated with a new slate roof to take the building off the at-risk register and it will be used for wet weather exercise. The plans include sixteen new stables, two dwellings for stable lads and a new 25x60m sand school a little way along Chalk Lane with access along a horse margin. It is expected that planning permission will be applied for this month and it is likely that the proposal will have our support.

**Malcolm Boyd**

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Thank you to those members who have paid their Subs. and especially to those who have generously given donations. A reminder for those who have not yet paid - subscriptions are due by the end of June - £2 per individual, £3 per household. If you have not yet paid and you were out when he/she called, your Road Rep. should have put a note on this Newsletter giving a reminder of his/her address. Please save them an extra trip by taking your Subscription to them. If unsure whether you have paid or not please contact your Road Rep or me.

**Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary (728570)**

### **E-MAIL ADDRESSES**

Immediately after the last Newsletter went to print we had news of three items which we felt were of great interest. Accordingly we sent a message to those of our members whose e-mail addresses we had and reported the withdrawal of Tesco's planning application for Upper High Street, the refusal of the Ashted Tesco planning application and lastly the fact that consideration of the Epsom Station planning application had been postponed from the February Planning Committee Meeting. If you have an e-mail address and wish to be kept informed, between Newsletters, on the few occasions that the committee consider it useful please e-mail this fact to the EPS e-mail address shown at the bottom of the last page of this Newsletter with 'E-mail addresses' as the heading. These are not used for any purpose other than EPS communications. If you did not receive a copy of the e-mail described above then I do not have your e-mail address [or I have entered it incorrectly!]. All such communications are sent out as 'Blind Copies' so no one else would have access to your e-mail address.

**Ishbel Kenward**

### **EVENTS, TALKS AND OUTINGS**

**IAN WEST'S WALK ABOUT Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

This is the next event. Ian will take us on a guided walk in the College Road area. Please meet at the junction of College Road and Randolph Road at 2.30pm

**ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER Friday 8th October 2010, 7.30pm to 10.15pm**

The party will start a little earlier this year to give more time to enjoy the evening. It will be held in the large Hall of St Joseph's Church, St Margaret's Drive, Epsom (behind The Haywain in the Dorking Road) The programme will be the same as usual. Please collect a glass of wine (or soft drink) on arrival then find a seat and sit back and relax. The excellent buffet style food, provided by The Food Studio

Caterers will be brought to your tables. After the meal we will be entertained by the Downsmen, a well known local group of singers (who include one of our members). They have a varied range of songs and are very good. This is a chance to get together socially and we hope for a good attendance, don't forget you can bring friends even if they are not members of EPS.

This year it has been necessary, due to increased costs, to raise the price of the ticket to £18. Please apply on the application form at the end of the newsletter

TALK Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at 8pm in Myers Studio, Epsom Playhouse

One of our members Bill Eacott has agreed to give a talk entitled "A History of Racehorse Training at Epsom" This will differ from the talk given by Simon Dow a few years ago which dealt with the horses and will concentrate on the history of the stables. It will cover the Eclipse and 0 Kellys Stud on Clay Hill (now called West Hill) the early stables attached to large houses and the development of the racing stables and much more. Bill has written a book on the subject

The cost is £3 per ticket. The application form will be in the next newsletter.

## OUTINGS

SUMMER OUTING to Danson House and Hall Place on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2010 is fully booked and the tickets have been sent out.

NOTE This is the last outing that I will be arranging and my successor Sheila Wadsworth has already organised the next outing; details are given below.

**Joy Furness 01372 722186**

OUTING TO THE MILL AT SONNING ON WEDNESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2010

Bookings for The Mill at Sonning, Berks., include a meal and play within the ticket price. The Dinner Theatre has been converted from an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Flour Mill. I have reserved 52 places to see the Ray Cooney farce, Two into One, which concerns the intrigues of Members of Parliament, their assistants, families, other MPs and, as ever, hotel rooms. Further details and an application form will be in the next newsletter.

**Sheila Wadsworth 01372 173517**

## Annual General Meeting

The following were elected at the AGM on 15<sup>th</sup> April.

Harry Corben, Chairman; Alan Baker, Vice Chairman and Planning; Malcolm Boyd, Hon Secretary; Tony Smith, Hon Treasurer; Angela Clifford, Minutes Secretary; Ishbel Kenward, Membership Secretary; Robert Austen, Conservation Planning; Piers Nicholson, Information Technology; Joy Furness, Events; Nick Lock, Publicity; Geoffrey Stone, Past Chairman; Harry Wilkinson, Hon Auditor.

Following the business of the meeting a presentation describing

### **PLAN E - a new plan for Epsom Town Centre**

was presented by Geoffrey Stone, Malcolm Boyd, Robert Austen and Alan Baker.

The Town and Country planning system has changed radically since the last District Wide Local Plan for the Borough was formulated and adopted in 2002 for the period until 2006. What is significant about the new style plans is that they go beyond traditional land use plans by bringing together and integrating policies for the development and use of land with other policies for example:- social, economic and environmental, which can influence the nature of places and how they function. Many of you will be aware of the consultations which the Council has carried out aimed at an updated plan for the Borough called PLAN E.

### *What is PLAN E and what is it not?*

It is a Strategic Policy Document - an Area Action Plan - which provides a detailed vision for the future of Epsom Town Centre. It maps out a way forward for the Town Centre over the next 15 to 20 years. It establishes a framework to show how change will take place, how it will be managed and delivered. It looks at the way the town centre functions as a whole, not only considering how sites may be developed, but also how the Town Centre is managed.

Epsom is a successful town centre but like all towns it faces a variety of challenges and pressures. It has seen significant change over the past few years and this will continue. Not least is our desire to make it better - we can all think of ways to improve today's Epsom. The Council, in close association with a wide circle of local bodies, including this Society, produced PLAN E which brings together the objectives of many bodies, organizations and individuals with an interest in the town centre. In the process of consultation and evidence gathering it became clear that Epsom town centre does not require significant change or regeneration and the focus is on improving and effectively managing what already exists whilst making the best of opportunity sites.

PLAN E does not deal with the Borough as a whole. It is only one of a suite of related and interlocking documents which will set out the development plan for the Borough called the Local Development Framework-the LDF. I should at this point explain that the Council has already, in July 2007, adopted a CORE STRATEGY which provides a strategic vision for the Borough including the Town Centre. This a key document within the LDF and its adoption followed Public examination and I believe was one of the first in the country to be approved by the Secretary of State.

PLAN E is not a standalone document it has to be read with related policy documents and establishes a baseline position for Epsom, identifying what currently exists and the challenges faced by the Town centre. This is then translated into a series of objectives and area specific visions that address these issues and deliver the CORE STRATEGY vision for the town centre. Importantly it also provides a way of judging individual development proposals as they arise in the future against the planned intent.

*What is the status of PLAN E?*

The Council published the PLAN E document in February to permit final representations in the period from 1 Feb to 15 March - prior to formal submission to the Secretary of State and the document has been dispatched without amendment with any final comments attached. It will now be subjected to an independent Public Examination to assess whether the Council can formally adopt it as part of the Borough's Local Development Framework. If desired, Plan E can be viewed on the Council's website.

After nearly two years extensive consultation and evidence gathering from a wide range of sources, on which PLAN E is based, it now represents what the Council wants. The Society has made a major contribution over the period of its development and we consider it a significant piece of work and have expressed our support.

PLAN E looks at the current situation of the Town Centre and where we would like to be by 2026 and develops a series of objectives for : Land use; Movement and Accessibility; Public Realm and Public Spaces; Identity, Character and Management.

It then defines distinctive key Character Areas of the town and sets out visions for each and develops policies to achieve those visions. It also defines Opportunity Sites for development. Last of all and importantly, the Council will monitor implementation of the Plan and they provide a timeframe for monitoring progress and delivery. In other words this is not just a wish list but a plan to achieve objectives and implement policies.

The PLAN is long and detailed and this of necessity is a brief resume which I hope will provide a background to the Examination in Public which will now follow.

One of the important provisions of Plan E will be the appointment of a Town Manager who will be independent of the Council and will have a key role in helping to coordinate the delivery of Plan E on the ground. The Manager will provide a link between the local traders and business and the local strategic partnership partners responsible for improvements to the transport networks and the public realm. The management will be involved in improving the visual attractiveness of buildings in the town, particularly those in the Conservation Area. A further objective will be to work with property owners to maintain and improve the appearance of buildings. There will also be a 'shop front' strategy to specify the standards for shop front design across the town centre. Through these and other measures the overall management of the public realm will be improved and will result in an overall higher standard.

It is also intended to strengthen Epsom's identity by using its historic and current associations; by improving the role and quality of the market as a central feature of the town centre; by enhancing the existing character and thereby improving its sense of 'place' and by promoting the town as a high quality, safe destination.

Building height has often been a contentious issue in the town. Some clarification has been achieved by quoting height in metres rather than in storeys. There are six areas within the town centre

where higher buildings will be allowed. In these areas the allowed height from ground level to gutter will be 16metres with an allowance of a further 4metres to the ridge of a pitched roof. These figures roughly equate to a four storey commercial building or a five to six storey residential building. The six areas are Station Approach, Ashley Avenue, Derby/Oaks Square, Capitol Building, Depot Road area and the Utilities site in East Street. In other areas building height can be no more than 12metres from ground to gutter – roughly equating to a four storey residential building or a three storey commercial building. In both of these cases certain important restrictions will also apply.

Highway matters are the preserve of the County Council, so the Borough cannot in fact do much more than try to influence matters. The Borough's main area of influence is through 106 agreements through which the developers contribute towards highway improvements.

None would argue that there is too much traffic in the town but this is the town's life blood. Leatherhead is an example of what can happen if this is forgotten. Today's financial circumstances and other problems suggest that Epsom is highly unlikely ever to have a by-pass. A major new route anywhere in the area would create huge problems of community severance, noise, visual impact, ecological disturbance and so on. Furthermore, many motorists want to come to Epsom or places nearby so a by-pass would be unlikely significantly to reduce traffic in the town centre.

The Plan places considerable emphasis on improved pedestrian and cycle routes emphasising the Council's commitment to the needs of both pedestrians and cyclists. This is a particularly important given the town's role as a shopping centre.

In High Street East, the movement of traffic will be assisted through control of parking and deliveries and, in the longer term, through the use of rear service areas for deliveries. It is here that many of the traffic congestion problems develop, often causing long tail backs by thoughtless parking. Your committee has suggested that this dual carriageway should be less oriented towards vehicular traffic, perhaps by removing the central reservation and fence so that the pavements could be widened and making the crossings more pedestrian friendly.

The Station area is to be an 'Improved public transport interchange.' Unfortunately, the current proposals simply do not achieve this, in fact quite the reverse, and we have objected to the proposed development on your behalf for this and other reasons

Several ideas for improving South Street have been studied intensively by the County Council at the request of EEBC. Some of the original ideas were quickly ruled out, but the preferred scheme is to change the one-way section between Ashley Avenue and the High Street back to two-way operation. Much traffic from West Hill travels south along the A24 towards Ashted and at present has to travel round the town centre, through three sets of traffic lights and one pedestrian crossing. Removing this traffic reduces the demand on High Street in particular and leads to an overall improvement in traffic flow.

This would involve changes to the junctions at West Hill and Ashley Avenue and would demand rigorous control of both parking and deliveries on South Street, but the work so far looks very interesting. The involvement we have had so far with Plan E leads us to feel happy with what the Borough is proposing, but we will be keeping a close eye on things as time goes by.

The Plan identifies 13 Opportunity Sites - those places where there is likely to be an opportunity for significant development or improvement during in the 15-20 year life of the Plan. It defines the extent of the sites and outlines positive requirements for each. It is not the Council's intention to enforce development but to plan for what should happen if these sites become available. The three classified as Strategic Sites are as follows.

*Upper High Street and Depot Road.* This includes not only the land now owned by Tesco, the car parks in Upper High Street and Depot Road, some small employment uses, and Phoenix Court, but also stretches right through to Church Street with the Clubs, the Fire Station and the United Reformed Church which was given planning permission to rebuild just recently and may now be left out.

The main proposed uses are retail, housing, and car parking and there are many detailed requirements. By far the most important is that retail is to be limited to a total of 2,000 sqm allowing for a mix of small units and a small/medium sized foodstore. Remember that Tesco wanted a net sales area of 4,400 sqm. They withdrew their planning application but have objected to Plan E. If the Plan is confirmed it would hopefully be the end of any superstore on the site.

*The Utilities Site, East Street.* This includes the Water Works and the Gas Holder Station and has been rounded out to include the Lintons Centre, the retail warehouse and adjoining business uses. The Plan is looking 15-20 years ahead and aiming to achieve a sensible comprehensive development. Bearing that in mind, we have ourselves suggested that the site should be extended to include the Hook Road car park and the whole Hook Road/East Street corner. The suggested uses here are Employment, Housing, Community Uses and Public Open Space.

*The Station.* This has been overtaken by events as the Planning Committee have agreed to grant planning permission to Solum Regeneration as reported elsewhere in the Newsletter. This site therefore seems likely to be removed from the Plan.

The remaining ten sites are Pickard House, Upper High Street; Emergency Services Site, Church Street; Town Hall Square and car park; Comrades Club, The Parade; Woolworths, High Street; Market Place; TK Maxx store; land rear of The Albion, South Street; Global House, Ashley Avenue and the Courts, Ashley Road and The Parade.

The last shows what might have happened if the whole site had been identified before the corner Chelsea Building Society had been developed. A much better comprehensive scheme might have been possible. We think the pro-active identification of these opportunity sites is an important step in achieving sensible development of some key areas.

**Conclusion.** Plan E now needs to pass the test of "soundness" by the Secretary of State, and this will involve a Public Examination in front of an Inspector. We ourselves have taken an active part in the consultations and are reasonably happy with the result. A number of objections have been recorded – mainly from developers. The decision on the Station must cast some doubt on the pursuance of the policy on heights but we must wait and see.

#### APPLICATION FORM for BUFFET SUPPER

Friday 8th October 2010 at 7.30pm in St Josephs Church Hall, Epsom

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

PHONE No .....

I would like tickets (£18 each) and enclose a cheque for £..... made payable to Epsom Protection Society and a stamped addressed envelope (A6 size)

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