

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -139- SPRING 2014

THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

The Clock House and New Inn Lane

In my articles about the Convent School I referred to the Clock House in Dorking Road where Sisters, refugees and others sheltered from the bombs during the war. Now a Medical Centre, the site has a much earlier history and I am grateful to Brian Bouchard for his article in the Epsom and Ewell Explorer series.

Dorking Road, the A24, was previously known as New Inn Lane and there were thoughts that this name was taken from what was, until recently, known as Waterloo House but shown in the Court rolls as 'le New Tavern'. Maurice Exwood, writing in the 1989 'Epsom Wells' published by the E.& E. Borough Planning Dept. states that the name came from what is now known as the 'White Horse' pub in Dorking Road.



In 1715 Richard Rooth, son of Capt. and later Sir Richard Rooth of Kilkenny, purchased a house on a site across the road from the White Horse pub and nearer to Epsom. He had been married to Jane, the widow of Lord Donegal, but when she died in 1712 he quickly married Mary, daughter of Earl Berkeley and now aged 58, who had been married to the notorious Lord Grey of Warke. Rooth arranged for a new residence to be built on the New Inn Lane site to a Neo-Palladian design by Colen Campbell and described in The British Architect as 'but of small extent, it is most conveniently laid out and well finished'.



Mary died in 1719 and Richard in 1726 and he was buried in St Martins despite a wish that he be buried in his garden. Elizabeth his daughter by Jane, Countess of Donegal, inherited, and her son by Henry Cliffe, sea captain and lord of the manor of Sutton, sold the house in 1736. The buyer was Baron Anthonio Lopes Suasso. He was a Jewish merchant in The Hague and a large shareholder of the Dutch West India Company and at sometime was the owner of The Cedars in Epsom. He had underwritten William of Orange's invasion of 1688. There is a reference to a row of Elms and this is the name shown on later maps of the area.

The Baron's son, Don Francisco acquired the house in 1755 and his wife, Esther Suasso Teixeira, sold it in 1757 and by September of that year the owner was Samuel Sharp, citizen and surgeon of London.

There are two buildings which comprise the Clock House Healthcare and two are shown as The Elms on early maps. On the second one, the entrance to Healthcare, there is a plaque which reads 'The greater part of this house was rebuilt in the early 19th C. by Sir James Alexander on the site of an earlier mansion house pre-dating the 18th C. one which formed part of the Elms Estate.

I will give a second part of this story in the next Newsletter and we hope to see many of you at the AGM on April 10th at Myers Hall. **Harry Corben (Chairman).**

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Here is my usual brief description of some of the more interesting cases we have dealt with since the last Newsletter.

Haddad House, 91 East Street: The saga continues. The appeal against the second refusal has now been dismissed and the third application described in the last Newsletter has been refused and appealed and we are awaiting the result.



Haddad House

Oak Glade: Following our preliminary discussion with the people proposing to refurbish these blocks for housing use an application was received. We wrote welcoming the proposal to bring these buildings back into use and supporting the application. It was recommended for approval at the February Planning Committee but was in fact refused for the failure to make appropriate provision for affordable housing. Planning policy requires 40% which would be 6 units out of the 15 but the applicants' viability study showed they could not afford to do this. The Council's

valuers' assessment showed they should provide one unit, which they then did but their offer of a contribution in lieu of the remainder fell far short and the Committee did not accept this. The Committee are very sensitive on the subject and seem convinced that a vast profit is being made at their expense and are not very happy with any claw back system based on an analysis of actual returns. It is a good scheme and I hope a solution can be found.

r/o 39 Manor Green Road: Many attempts have been made to build in the gardens of 39-41 Manor Green Road, with a frontage to Hamilton Close. All have been refused and an appeal has been dismissed. Following a change of ownership a further application was made last year to build a small chalet bungalow in the garden of No 39 only. We again objected because it was cramped, out of character with adjoining houses and parking was unsatisfactory. It was refused and an appeal has been made. We have written as usual to the Inspectorate confirming our objections and if the appeal is dismissed we believe that this is the end of the line and development is not feasible, which has of course been our view all along.

BP Service Station, 1-3 Dorking Road: An application referred to the Service Station at the corner of Dorking Road and Woodcote Road. The proposal was to demolish the small building housing the cash desks and shop and to build a much larger structure in its place, with a larger footprint and nearly twice the height. Along with many local residents we objected strongly to the height and bulk, its effect on the environment and the undesirable increase in trade so close to the Town Centre. We hear that the application has been withdrawn.

168 East Street: A new face in the various applications in East Street. This is the former saddle makers next to the Kwik-Fit depot and almost opposite Kiln Lane. The same developers as for Haddad House propose to demolish the present disused brick built single story buildings and erect 8 flats and 2 houses. It is another example of overdevelopment and we have written to object.



168 East Street

Nescot: Three applications have been made pursuing the College's redevelopment proposals. The first related to alterations and extensions to the existing campus and was approved by a special meeting of the Planning Committee in January. The other two are about the development of the animal husbandry land between the railway and the Ewell bypass. This is more controversial and we have written expressing our views. A consultation paper in 2011 suggested this as a possible housing site and there is a strong case for this use. It is green land but not in

the Green Belt and it would make a major contribution to the Council's obligation to provide housing units. The current proposals include 91 housing units on part of the site, the remainder having a 150 bed care home. They have provoked major opposition from village residents who feel that this number of new homes would destroy the character of the village, overwhelm local services and create traffic chaos. We have considerable sympathy with their point of view and the Planning Committee will have a seriously difficult decision to make. Looking at the proposals themselves, we think the housing is at too high a density compared with adjoining areas, the design and layout lack imagination and the landscaping proposals could be improved. It is a case of cramming in too many small plots. A more spacious scheme might go some way to being acceptable to the village. The effect on traffic and safety is also important. The care home is a more imaginative and successful design. Assuming there is an established need we see no objection to the use.

It is known that the development of this land – with provision for animal husbandry being provided elsewhere – is seen to provide a major contribution towards the cost of upgrading the campus. We have said that decisions on the applications must be made on purely planning grounds.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

Since the last Newsletter, I have looked at 23 applications and written 5 letters on your behalf. In fact one of the letters went to multiple recipients, which I will come to in a minute.

I have mentioned in the past that we respect the desire of individuals to wish to improve their homes, particularly in today's difficult market and when the cost of moving can be very high. So we tend to be cautious about writing letters suggesting such an application should be refused without giving some solid reasons, and in the hope that the design can be improved so that our Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings are not harmed. This happened in one such recent case and the new design is a great improvement, at least in reducing any adverse impact it may otherwise have had.

A second case was rather more interesting, affecting a site where an initial application was for four terraced houses (two with two bedrooms and two with one bedroom) behind a pair of Victorian semi-detached houses, now split into apartments. We wrote strongly objecting to the proposal, which would have resulted in over-development and the 'houses' would have been unacceptably small. This application was withdrawn, and a second one submitted for three houses (each with two bedrooms); we objected again on the same grounds and the application was refused by the Council on the same grounds of over-development. The final application is for two houses, which we (including our Architectural Panel) feel is acceptable. The gross internal floor area of the two houses is about 75 sq.m., typically the sort of minimum area for houses with two-bedrooms. Imagine how tiny the original four houses would have been.

We are seeing a tendency for the size of houses and apartments to be reduced to such an extent that your Committee has decided that we should do what we can to bring the matter to the attention of those responsible. The issue is made worse by what are called Permitted Development Rights, under which unused offices can be converted to residential use – but the Council, which is the Local Planning Authority, has no power to control or influence such changes. The idea behind this is laudable

in view of the housing shortage but, as is so often the case, it can bring with it unintended consequences. We had a case in point where a very modest office on two floors is to be converted to residential use, but we fear the resulting flats will be far too small for reasonable residential use – and nothing can be done about it.

This is the text of the letter which has recently been sent to Stephen Williams MP, the Under Secretary of State responsible:

Epsom Civic Society was founded in 1959 and has a membership of 2000. Our strap line expresses our objectives accurately and succinctly. I have been asked to write to you regarding an issue about which the ECS committee is becoming greatly concerned, namely minimum standards for the size of dwellings, expressed through the gross internal area or GIA.

The current demand for housing is clearly leading to the size of dwellings becoming increasingly small with commensurately small rooms and inadequate storage space, and being crammed together on ever smaller plots. Unfortunately, this is being exacerbated by various Government initiatives.

The desire to put back into active use, through permitted development rights, buildings which would otherwise stand empty is a sensible objective, particularly if this can be used to help to address the current housing shortage and perhaps, in so doing, to re-invigorate our town centres. However, this has been put into operation without appropriate safeguards, such as providing the means by which the local planning authority can control the adequacy of the size of the resulting dwellings. Inevitably, we are beginning to see applications for changes of use for un-let office premises which are clearly of insufficient size.

Overall, there is a clear need to be able to impose a minimum area for housing of different types. We are beginning regularly to see applications for houses and apartments which are simply inadequate to accommodate the reasonable needs of daily life. Additionally, evidence is beginning to emerge of the adverse impact on the mental and physical health of people living in such substandard properties.

Many potential standards exist, from the early Parker-Morris standards to the draft proposal of the Mayor of London, as well as various other planning authorities, such as Dublin. We urge you to take whatever steps are necessary, as a matter of urgency, to bring a degree of common sense to this issue.

Copies were also sent to another Under Secretary of State, Kris Hopkins MP, and to their boss at the Department of Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, and to Chris Grayling. We have sent similar letters to the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Town and Country Planning Association and to Civic Voice, to which we are affiliated, as well as to the Head of Planning at EEBC and to the Chairs of the Planning and Planning Policy Committee.

Can you bear to wait for the next exciting instalment of the Newsletter?

Rob Austen

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you haven't paid the 2014 Subscription [Individual £2 / Household £3] to your Rep yet please complete the slip at the bottom of the green AGM notice and take it to him/her. The list of Reps is on the 2nd page of the AGM notice and your Rep. will have marked their name. This would be much appreciated. If, for any reason, you are unsure who your Rep. is please phone me or email using the address on the end of this Newsletter.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary (728570)

USE OF EMAIL

This is addressed to all members who use email but particularly to Postal members and those who live in 'secure' accommodation with letterboxes not easily accessed. As you already know, we can now send Newsletters by email. I realise that some people prefer a hard copy to read but there is an advantage, besides saving paper and costs, of receiving your Newsletter by email which is that you see many of our pictures in colour. If you think that you would like to try having your Newsletters by email let us know via the email address on the last page of this Newsletter with 'Newsletters by email' as the heading. You can always change your mind.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary (728570)

EVENTS AND OUTINGS

For the trip to the Watts Gallery and Chapel on Tuesday 25th March there was insufficient interest to warrant hiring a coach, so the twenty members who had booked are going by car. It will still be a delightful event.

Ian West Walk

The annual Ian West walk will take place on Sunday, 6th July. Please could members meet outside the Elders, Epsom Road, Ewell at 2.30 p.m. and the exploration will be in that area. This is always a highlight of our annual programme with Ian's fund of knowledge and many members never willingly miss the occasion. Comfortable shoes are advised.

Please keep Friday, 17th October free for our Buffet Supper. Further details in the summer Newsletter.

Monday, 15th September - Blenheim Palace

There will be a visit to Blenheim Palace, an 18th Century Baroque masterpiece, on Monday 15th September. It is home to the 11th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, is a World Heritage Site and birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill. It is surrounded by 2000 acres of "Capability Brown" parkland and beautiful formal and pleasure gardens. The cost will be £29 to include coach travel and tip, coffee/tea on arrival and entry to the palace and grounds. Members can choose between six restaurants and cafes for their lunch ranging from Indian, a Champagne Bar and a Water Terrace cafe or take picnics, but lunch is not included in the cost.

Booking for friends from 1st August.



Coach collection points are (A) 9.00a.m. Epsom Downs, behind the tea hut by Tattenham Corner; (B) 9.15am Methodist Church, Ashley Road, Epsom; or (C) 9.25am The Street, Ashted. For any queries, please ring me on 01372-273517. **Sheila Wadsworth**

NEWS FROM CIVIC VOICE

- It was announced recently that there is a proposal to split English Heritage into two bodies. . There will be a new charitable arm, retaining the name English Heritage that will be responsible for managing all of the historic sites, while a new organisation called "Historic England" will be created and keep responsibilities for advising on and helping to conserve England's wider historic environment. Civic Voice believes that insufficient consideration has been given to secure the long-term viability of the charitable arm of English Heritage in its ability to sustain its properties in perpetuity.
- Civic Voice welcomes the announcement by the Local Government Association that local councils should be given the power to address the concerns of local communities caused by the clustering of betting shops in their area. Currently, betting shops can open up in the same premises as an estate agent, pub, takeaway, restaurant or bank without any planning permission.
- Civic Voice has joined a new alliance of national organisations aimed at raising awareness of community rights established under the Localism Act 2011. The Alliance includes the National Association of Local Councils, Supporters Direct, the Theatre Trust and CAMRA

Malcolm Boyd



As members will know, this building is in the final stage of renovation and will be the home of Metro Bank. It is debatable whether Epsom needs yet another bank, but it is undoubtedly welcome to see the building having a much needed facelift at this important corner, My purpose in featuring this photograph is to highlight the cherry tree on the right. This tree is subject to a tree preservation order but there is an application to have it removed. The Society has lodged a second objection after it was given a reprieve some years ago.

Malcolm Boyd

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APPLICATION FOR BLENHEIM PALACE – MONDAY 15th September

MEMBERS' NAMES.....

And FRIENDS after 1st August.....

ADDRESS.....

Tel No.....

COACH COLLECTION (Please circle) (A) (B) (C)

NUMBER of TICKETS..... TOTAL COST.....

Please return this form to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1LJ. Cheques to be made payable to “Epsom Civic Society” and enclose a **stamped addressed envelope**

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