

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

NEWSLETTER No -141- AUTUMN 2014

THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY

THE EPSOM WORKHOUSE

The poor are always with us and attempts to alleviate suffering are constantly on the minds of governments. In the sixteenth century the population expanded from 2.4 million in England in the 1520's to 4.1 million at the end of the century and no provision had been made for the extra people. The famine of 1594-7 had made things worse and as an example one group of 20 beggars included 12 boys under the age of 15 and three under the age of five. Their parents had probably starved to death. In 1572 parliament passed 'an Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds' which stated that 'a vagabond over the age of fourteen shall be grievously whipped and burned through the right ear with a hot iron..... unless some credible person shall take him into service for one year. A youth



of eighteen could be hanged as a felon. It could be an offence to shelter or harbour poor people. After much consideration finally in 1597 Elizabeth's government passed an Act for the Relief of the Poor. This Act established the means by which poor people in England are looked after for the next 237 years. Parishioners are to be taxed to provide for the poor.

There was a workhouse of sorts in Epsom in the 18th Century but the date is unknown and the Act of 1834 replaced the Act of 1597 and brought everything more up to date for that time.

A Vestry Panel report in 1779 had found conditions in the old workhouse very bad and 'we found the house very offensive above stairs that we could not go to inspect the rooms and bedding'. The consequence for Epsom and the surrounding area was the new workhouse built on the site of what is now Epsom General Hospital.

One can only wonder if the wealthy families living in what we now call The Haywain and the Clock House would understand or care what was going on the other side of New Inn Lane/Dorking Road when the new building started to appear. Perhaps the high walls made it invisible. So the decision to build a new workhouse for 250 people was not too soon and the existing buildings would be destroyed. An advert in The Times on 2nd July 1836 was addressed to 'Architects and Builders and invited plans and specifications for the Erection of a Central Workhouse for 250 paupers of all ages'. Seventeen sets were received and the designs of Mr William Mason of Ipswich were accepted. They were said to be on the design of a double cross with an extra yard. It is recorded that while it was plain it did not look too much like a prison and The Imperial Gazetteer said 'the work house is a structure of appearance



better than many of its kind, and in the Tudor style'. Land in Dorking Road at the rear of the old Epsom poor house was bought for about £900 and it was said that 'there is little freehold land to be acquired in the parish and it all bears a heavy price'. Building work was carried out by T. Butcher of Guildford whose tender was for £4,742 and it started in March 1838. A reduced price was negotiated and the process of equipping out the building started in September. The initial furniture and equipment for 300 residents came to only £150. In the absence of a commercial loan the chairmen loaned the Board £2,500 each at 4½% to pay for the new building.

To be concluded.

I acknowledge much help from Ian Mortimer's *The Time Travellers Guide to Elizabethan England* and to *The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer*.

Harry Corben (Chairman)

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Nescot: The proposal for a care home on the agricultural land having been refused in April, a revised application for 91 houses on the remainder of this site came before the June Planning Committee. We had said the density was too great, the layout unimaginative and we were concerned about traffic; we were also unimpressed by the later amendments, consisting mainly of a landscaped "bund" along the by-pass frontage, increased landscaping and a larger "park" in Reigate Road. At Committee the gallery was packed with supporters from Nescot – who wanted the resulting funds for college redevelopment – and opposers from the village, each group greeting their respective speakers with noisy applause. A vigorous one and a half hours debate, including support for our argument that benefit to Nescot by selling the land was not a material consideration and the decision must be made on planning merits, resulted in approval on a vote of 8-4. We have just heard that the care home refusal has been appealed.

Cedar Lodge, Headley Road: We had objected to a second application to use these modern stables in the Green Belt for small commercial premises, and it has been duly refused as inappropriate in the Green Belt, and as resulting in the unjustified loss of equestrian stables.

Priam Lodge, Burgh Heath Road: We had also objected to this second Green Belt proposal to replace historic stables with four substantial detached houses. It also has been refused on the grounds of inappropriate development in the Green Belt, lack of need on housing supply grounds, and not in keeping with adjoining residential development, which consists of Victorian terraces and closely spaced bungalows. These two decisions are welcome as supporting our own policy of preserving the Green Belt.

Oak Glade: This good proposal to refurbish former NHS cottages near Christ Church Road had been refused, as I previously described, on grounds of an inadequate financial contribution in place of affordable housing. A revised application has been made with the same design but an increased contribution for affordable housing based on the saving of time and cost by not appealing. We have said we hope this will be the basis of a satisfactory solution.

BP Service Station, 1-3 Dorking Road: Last time I reported the intention of BP to use an old planning permission to build a larger shop at this service station in face of current objections, applying only for a very slight addition. We thought it unreasonable but there were no legal grounds for opposing it and permission has been granted, but BP will be required to complete and maintain landscaping also left over from the earlier permission, which will soften the effect.

Wilson's Automobiles, 101B East Street: This is the small car showroom and forecourt display at the corner of Kiln Lane. Wilson's proposed to replace it with a two storey showroom over most of the site with a small paved forecourt on the corner. Whilst any improvement would be welcome, we objected on the grounds that such a use was undesirable in this location where the movement of vehicles is hazardous, and a two story building would be too bulky. Overall we thought the site unsuitable for this use, but we might be faced with an established use. A decision is awaited.

Rosebery House, 55 East Street: Another of the empty offices in East Street. This one has been empty since 2009 and remains unlettable after limited refurbishment. The proposal is to convert the ground floor frontage to retail with 32 residential units at the rear and on the upper floors. It is in the Town Centre business area, and we would prefer continued office use, possibly after rebuilding to a modern standard. Otherwise we challenge the applicant's claim that affordable housing would be unviable; we do not think this size retail use with very limited car parking is viable or acceptable; even without retail the parking is inadequate; and a proposed additional floor would be detrimental to the street scene. The site adjoins the Lintons Lane Conservation Area and would lead to disturbance, especially if retail were included. We await a decision.

Haddad House, 81 East Street: The previous (third) application to redevelop this small office building near Kiln Lane was refused last December. An appeal was dismissed but only on the grounds of impact on the houses in Middle Close. The proposal was for two blocks of flats, one on the East Street frontage and the other at the back of the site, and a new (fourth) application now modifies only the rear block by setting it back from Middle Close, to satisfy the Inspector's criticism. We still dislike the way this development is being done and will say so, but it would not be practicable to base a refusal on matters the Inspector has approved.

86, Pine Hill: The Woodcote Estate was designed to achieve consistent street scenes with suitable gaps between the houses. This has in places been damaged by past extensions, but the part of Pine Hill here in question is very close to the original. An application to extend 86 comprised two storeys very close to the neighbouring house and filling the gap between them with unfortunate impact on the neighbour and to the detriment of the street scene and we objected for these reasons. Negotiated amendments modified this to a limited extent which we thought inadequate, strongly supported by the ward councillor who took the application to the Planning Committee. Members did not, however, agree and permission was regrettably granted.

Alan Baker

CONSERVATION

There have been 49 applications so far this year affecting listed buildings or conservation areas. I have written to the Council about four of these, about which more later. I have also written two letters at the request of the Committee about planning matters not yet the subject of planning applications.

The first of these was in response to a public consultation regarding the disposal of some of the playing fields at Epsom High School. Our feeling was that this is undesirable. Firstly, as the amount of housing and other development takes place in our very small Borough, so the need for, and value of, open space increases. Open space does not necessarily have to be accessible to all - simply introducing space between areas of housing relieves the oppression that endless acres of development can cause. In the case of school playing fields, of course, they can be used by others outside school hours. Secondly, in this case, I also mentioned that the remaining area, which was sufficient for only three pitches, which seems rather limited for a school of 780 students. The invitation to submit comments gave no indication of the financial justification of the proposal, which is being promoted, rather oddly, as the means of providing the wherewithal for sporting facilities.

The second letter was in response to an exhibition by Atkins who wish to build a new office block to replace their current rather awful 1960s somewhat Soviet style building. It says a great deal for the company that it should go to the length of putting in a very well presented show in advance of submitting an application. The proposed new building is a great deal better than the existing one



and improves the setting of the grade 2* listed mansion, albeit a view that is rarely seen by members of the public. However, it exceeds local height limits and being closer to the houses in the adjoining conservation area, will be more visually intrusive. Our letter outlined these issues and strongly recommended that the company should investigate alternative policy compliant designs.

A satisfactory outcome occurred in June. Back in April, we wrote strongly objecting to a proposal to build three 3 and 4 bed roomed houses on a site in Rosebery Avenue, currently occupied by a single bungalow, on the basis of over-development which would dominate the street scene to the detriment of the conservation area. The Council was of the same view and the application was refused.

Since then, we have had the excitement of a major application by the RAC to enlarge their facilities at Woodcote Park, which is a Grade 2 listed building in the Green Belt. It has various elements and your committee had some difficulty in addressing the issues it raises. The first problem was the enormous amount of documentation which we simply do not have the manpower



to deal with. There were also divergent views about the rights and wrongs of the proposals. The club appears to be successful and we would certainly not wish to stand in the way of proposals intended to ensure its continued success and increase its facilities - within bounds. It is, I suppose, the question of what those bounds are that matters.

There was one issue on which we were united. The club included an outline application for two residential plots at the end of The Ridge, in the Green Belt as 'enabling development'. The application stated that the proceeds would be used solely for the renovation of the listed Walled Garden and Gardener's Cottage. Our letter said: *'The critical need for housing is putting the Green Belt under pressure and its boundaries are, quite rightly, being reviewed through various mechanisms. The Society endorses the need for such reviews but remains strongly opposed to arbitrary intrusions into the Green Belt, especially while such reviews are in progress. Thus we are, as a matter of policy, opposed to the outline application (14/00561/OUT) for two residential plots in The Ridge.'*

The letter continued: *'A legal view regarding enabling development is that, as a matter of public policy, it should not provide an easy way out for owners of listed buildings (or other heritage assets) who have failed to take reasonable care of them.'* The RAC acquired Woodcote Park in 1913, so the Club has had plenty of time to accumulate the necessary funds to carry out the conservation work which, it must be added, the owners of any listed building will be aware is their responsibility.

The application was accompanied by a detailed transport assessment, from which it was possible to estimate that the proposal amounted to an increase of around 60% in the various facilities. This is very considerable, and we were rather surprised to find that the traffic was predicted to increase by only 36%. Some of this might be explained by members increasing their use of the facilities, but this can hardly be what the Club has in mind, which is presumably an increase in membership. A further, even greater oddity was that the amount of car parking needs to be increased by only 23% and that the increase actually provided is exactly what the analysis predicted. In other words, no allowance has been made for the inevitable inaccuracy of such predictions or the practicalities of car park operation. We have suggested that the extent of the proposals and the transport assessment should be reviewed.

Finally, I would like to thank our Architecture Panel for their invaluable advice and very helpful comments on some of the more important applications. However, I would like to enlarge it a little, so please get in touch if you feel able to spare a few moments every now and then. It requires the use of a computer to have a look at documents on the Council website. This year I have only referred four cases to the panel, so it is not too onerous a task.

Rob Austen

A WALK WITH IAN WEST

Some 30 members resisted the lure of Wimbledon, Silverstone and 'The Tour de Yorkshire' on Sunday 6th July to enjoy instead a most interesting walk with Ian West. We met near The Elders in Epsom Road, Ewell where Ian described some of the houses built during the Enclosures in the first part of The Nineteenth Century. He described The Old House on the corner of Mongers Lane and said that Mr Monger was the original occupant of that house which is now one of the Abbeyfield Homes. The bricks in the front may have been made with the London ash which was sent by barge to Essex where it was mixed with clay and returned by barge to London. It is possible to see four stages of construction and cheaper bricks may have been used on the sides. We spent some time outside the house 'Hollycroft' on the corner of Shaw Close which is difficult to see because of the fence and the hedge but this again is very interesting. A hundred yards or so nearer Epsom is Mulberry Cottage which again has an interesting appearance and history but we were surprised to see the strange infill which has been allowed next to it.

A good afternoon during which Ian had to contend with the noisy traffic and we thanked him enthusiastically.

Harry Corben

EPSOM & EWELL in the GREAT WAR

Bourne Hall has an exhibition in the foyer of some 60 posters covering the history of 1914-18. These have been put together by the Epsom and Ewell Local and Family History Centre and they include maps and photographs of the area at the time. Included are many details of women who joined the Queen Alexandra I Military Nursing Service and other womens' services, the various hospitals which were adapted to war service, Zeppelins, war and other memorials, war horses and the University and Public Schools Brigade which was formed in Epsom. The Canadian Convalescent Hospital at Woodcote Park and the life and death of an English born Canadian who spent some time in France and in Epsom are a large part of the exhibition. Did you know that 'canaries' filled shells at a Tattenham Corner factory? I can strongly recommend it and if it has disappeared from the foyer you can see it at your leisure in a loose leaf binder in the E. and E. Local and Family History Centre also in Bourne Hall.

Harry Corben.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 13th/14th September

The following properties in Epsom & Ewell, not normally open to the public or not normally free, will be available to visit over the weekend 13th/14th September. Many more properties are available all around the country and details can be found on <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk>

United Reformed Church Church Street, Epsom KT17 4PW

Sat. 13th 10 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Refreshments available.

Next door to Epsom Club and opposite Ambulance station.

Disabled access at back. Some parking.

Baptist Church 6, Church Street, Epsom KT17 4NY

Sat.13th 10a.m.-12p.m. NO PARKING

Fire Station Church Street, Epsom.

Sat 13th 10a.m.-1p.m. Public tours



St Martin's Church Church Street, Epsom KT17 4PX

Sun 14th 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Opposite Old Kings Head pub

Refreshments available

Bell Tower may be open with possibility of 'having a go'

Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn worshipped here; the 15th century tower survives while the nave dates from 1824. The chancel was rebuilt 1902



The Epsom Club The Hollies, 41 Church Street, Epsom KT17 4HW

Sun 14th 2p.m.-5p.m.

Built approx. 1879



Methodist Church Ashley Avenue, Epsom KT18 5AQ

Sat 13th 10.30 a.m. – 4.30 p.m.

Centenary Celebrations.



Durdans Riding School Chalk Lane, Epsom. KT18 7AX

Sat. 13th 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. NO PARKING

Access from Worple Road.

Built in 1881 for Lord Rosebery, the racing Prime Minister.



MANSION HOUSE SERVICE WING MUSEUM

Nonsuch Park, Ewell Road, Cheam, Surrey, SM3 8AL

Sat 13th 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Sun 14th 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Tudor Gothic 19th Century Mansion

ST MARY'S CHURCH The Avenue, Cuddington, Worcester Park KT4 7HL

Sat 13th 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

N.B Most, but not all, the properties will be on <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/> and details should be checked before visiting.

EPSOM COMMON ASOCIATION 40th ANNIVERSARY

The photos below show our display at this event. The photo on the left was attracting much interest until an unexpectedly strong gust of wind dismantled it and it had to be partially reassembled in the gazebo on the right. The weather did not entirely spoil our efforts as we recruited 21 new members on the day.

Can I remind members that we are also mounting displays at the Epsom Rotary Fun Day on Sunday 21st September at Hook Road Arena and also in the Ashley Centre on Saturday 11th October?

Malcolm Boyd



OUTING TO BLENHEIM PALACE

This is taking place on 15th September, so there will be a report in the winter edition

HOW TO JOIN THE SOCIETY

Title/s.....

First Name/s.....

Surname.....

Address.....

.....
Postcode.....

Telephone.....

E-mail.....

Subscriptions from 1st January-31st December: £2 Individual; £3 Household

Please send to Membership Secretary Mrs Ishbel Kenward 28a Bramble Walk, Epsom KT18 7TB

ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER PARTY

Friday, 17th October is getting closer, so please book now for the Annual Buffet Supper Party.

There is a form below and do bring along your family and friends. Cost is £20 for which there is an excellent buffet served at your table by Studio Food and the entertainment is by St. Joseph's Choir. The table decorations are always charmingly arranged by Audrey Simpson. Arrive at 7.30 p.m. to a welcome drink. There is adequate parking by St. Joseph's Church Hall, St. Margaret's Drive, off Dorking Road, Epsom. We finish at 10.15 p.m. For any questions, please contact me on 01372-273517 - **Sheila Wadsworth**.

APPLICATION FOR THE BUFFET SUPPER - Friday 17th OCTOBER .

MEMBERS NAME/S:

And FRIEND/S

ADDRESS

TEL. NO

NO. OF TICKETS

TOTAL COST (£20 EACH) £

Please return the application slip with your cheque made out to "Epsom Civic Society"and enclose a stamped, addressed envelope to Sheila Wadsworth, The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashted, KT21 1 LJ.

Epsom Civic Society
Tel Nos: (membership 01372 728570)
(other 01372 723325)

Newsletter Editor: Malcolm Boyd
10 Woodcote Green Road
Epsom KT18 7DH

Printed: Print Centre
5 West Street
Epsom KT18 7LR

Website: www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

E-mail: info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk