

# Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

2 Leighton Way  
EPSOM Surrey  
KT18 7QZ

3 January 2016

Mr Mark Berry BA(Hons) MRTPI DMS  
Head of Place Development  
Town Hall  
EPSOM  
KT18 5BY

Dear Mr Berry

PLANNING APPLICATION 15/01346/FUL  
FORMER DAIRY CREST SITE, ALEXANDRA ROAD, EPSOM  
PROPOSED ALDI DEVELOPMENT

This an important and controversial proposal to erect an Aldi supermarket and 6 residential units on the site of the former Dairy Crest Depot. We have considered it under a number of headings.

**Land Use.** This site is included in the emerging Housing Site Allocations Document as suitable for development to provide 26 new homes. It is ideally located for such a use and this should be pursued. The applicant proposes retail use and, in a long and elaborate analysis, argues that this would widen the retail offer in the “more central Epsom Area” in opposition to the drift of major convenience shopping to out of town locations. We are not persuaded by this argument. This site is beyond the outer edge of the Town Centre and shoppers would not be interested in walking here from the Clocktower. It would therefore be a separate destination and would rival and detract from the Centre. In our view the Centre should remain compact in order to improve its retail attraction. A retail use is already allocated to the Upper High Street and Depot Road development and other such uses in the area are unacceptable. It is also important that on this particular site the level of disturbance to neighbours would also be excessive, any comparison with the previous use being irrelevant.

**Design.** It had been emphasised throughout discussions with officers that good design is vitally important, but the appearance of the perspective drawing on the front of the Design and Access Statement shows quite the opposite. This shows the prominent corner of the new access to the development. It shows a ground floor shopping frontage with two terraces of housing units perched above at first floor level, of unequal design, and leaving an empty corner with two blank end walls. We believe this appearance to be very poor and the drawing give more impression of part of an isolated housing estate than the start of Alexandra Road on the edge of a Conservation Area. This development would dramatically damage the street scene whereas well-designed housing could enhance it greatly.

**Transport.** The traffic analysis is very lengthy. However, we were struck by the lack of focus on the specifics of this store and how well matched are parking demand and actual provision. A great deal of dependence is placed on the traffic movements generated by the Aldi store in Kingston Road, Ewell. This is no doubt a good starting point but, although the correlation between the gross retail floor area and traffic generation may be weak for stores of this size, no attempt seems to have been made to identify the potential range of demand which such an analysis might reveal. This is of particular relevance given the different demographics of the two areas. We note that there is no provision either for visitor parking for the flats or for staff. There is a great deal of data about other modes including buses and cycling. With regard to the latter we noted that the potential area from which cyclists might be drawn extends as far as Langley Vale – not a practical proposition we suggest – with a week’s shopping. However, our main reservation concerns the close proximity of the site access to the Church Road junction. The latter is particularly awkward to negotiate and would be only some 35 metres from the site access (a distance covered in about two and a half seconds at 30 miles per hour). While the traffic report assures us that there is adequate visibility at the site access, traffic tends to travel too fast along this stretch of Alexandra Road, a fact worsened by the gradient and curvature. Overall, it is clear that the proposed access arrangements are unsatisfactory, a situation which would be worsened if demand had been underestimated and traffic waits in Alexandra Road to turn into the site.

**Planning Policy.** The application claims that the proposal is fully policy compliant. We disagree. The emerging Housing Site Allocation Document includes this site for development with 26 units compared with the 6 proposed. The Epsom Town Centre Area Action Plan (Plan E) allocates a retail site of 2000sqm to include a moderate sized food store and small retail units, and there is no policy for retail outside this area. This is confirmed in the Upper High Street, Depot Road and Church Street Development Brief. Para 5.42 of the Development Management Policies Document seeks to limit the opportunities for further retail developments outside the Epsom Town Centre and Policy DM29 restricts retail outside the Town Centre. The proposed development is slightly smaller than the definition of “major” in this context but the principle of protecting the Centre still applies. Policy DM10 contains important Design Requirements for New Developments which in our opinion the present proposals significantly fail to meet.

**Conclusion.** We regard this as an important application and the Society’s Executive Committee believe that the proposals are not policy compliant and are unacceptable. We consider that the Dairy Crest site is not appropriate for retail use for the reasons stated above, such a use would create undue disturbance, the design does not meet the standard required, and the additional traffic at this difficult junction could not be tolerated. This site should continue to be allocated for housing development. We therefore strongly ask that permission for the present proposal should be refused.

ALAN BAKER FRICS  
Vice Chairman

cc Ward Councillors