

# Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No -148 - SUMMER 2016

## CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

I would like to thank members for supporting my taking on the role of Chair of Epsom Civic Society. I would especially like to thank Harry Corben, my predecessor, for his encouragement. Thanks are due also to my fellow committee members, whose expertise, enthusiasm and dedication have made working with them a pleasure over the past six years. Their membership on the committee is particularly reassuring for me as a new Chair. A woman of the North, attending Manchester High School for Girls where Sylvia and Christabel Pankhurst were educated, I have for the past 34 years lived in Epsom, a town with strong, if tragic, links to another suffragette, Emily Davison. In terms of my own family history, my grandfather was coachman to Lord Derby. I first came to Epsom through teaching at NESCOL, before moving to London South Bank University.

As Epsom Civic Society members, we all recognise that there is much to celebrate and enjoy in Epsom and its environs. This year's Derby Festival week will be followed for the first time by the MGSO4 Epsom and Ewell Arts Festival on 24-26th June, when the Society will be sponsoring the poetry competition. The Society endorses Horton Chapel Trust in its exciting initiative to restore this Grade II listed building for future use as Community Arts Centre. We are nonetheless aware of current and potential future pressures on our town, in terms of retaining and cherishing our green and open spaces while at the same time ensuring an appropriate supply of land for new housing. Revitalising the town centre remains a work in progress. Further afield, but with potential local impacts, is the issue of airport expansion at Heathrow or Gatwick.

The Society continues to engage with all members via our social events, the newsletter, website and Facebook pages. Key to the Society's robustness are our road representatives, vital participants in the Society's communication network. For those of you on Twitter, the Society will be setting up its own account in the near future. Twitter provides opportunities to extend our reach locally and engage more immediately with national organisations such as Civic Voice.

I look forward to meeting you at the Society's events throughout the year.

**Margaret Hollins**

## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Most of my comments this time are catching up on items already reported to you.

*Dairy Site, Alexandra Road:* As expected, this application to build an Aldi supermarket with six flats on the old Dairy site was refused by the April Planning Committee. In simple terms the main reason was that this is the wrong site for retail use and that the design is not appropriate. Many additional reasons were given, the most interesting being the adverse effect on the nearby five-way traffic junction. This was included after much discussion, notwithstanding the County highways engineers, who were present, refusing to make a formal objection because they did not think the effect would be sufficiently severe. Let's hope that the reasons for refusal will be sufficient to oppose any appeal that might be made.

*Comrades Club, The Parade:* A Planning application has now been made for a Premier Inn hotel to be built on this site, including accommodation for the Club. It is very similar to the earlier Travelodge scheme but has only 57 bedrooms – 20 less than the Travelodge – and does not suggest vehicular access to the Town Hall car park from The Parade. These are both substantial improvements. It is important to remember that the appeal against the refusal of the earlier scheme was dismissed only because necessary documents had not been completed by the applicant, the Inspector otherwise not accepting the view that the development would be unduly harmful to the character or appearance of the surrounding area, which had been the Planning Committee’s main reason for refusal. We therefore felt unable to seek refusal on those grounds although we made it clear that they remained our own opinion. Although we did not raise any major objection we certainly did not support the application, as was misquoted by both The Guardian and the Council’s website.

*33 Heathcote Road:* The application to replace the 1960s house – now demolished – with three terrace houses was withdrawn for reconsideration in the light of comments by the Conservation Officer. An amended design taking account of these comments has now been permitted.



*Berridale, 15 College Road:* This application for contemporary design apartments was made last December and we were unable to support this type of design in the proposed location. Discussions between the planning department and the applicant about design amendments and trees are continuing and a decision is still awaited.

*Wilsons Automobiles, 101B East Street:* We had objected in particular to a third floor being added to the new showroom at the corner of East Street and Kiln Lane but permission has been granted under delegated authority.

*6,8 Chuters Grove:* Permission has also been granted under delegated authority for this development of two more houses in Chuters Grove in the face of objections from neighbours and ourselves. We had objected to this extension to the scheme at 168 East Street on the grounds of impact on the privacy and amenities of adjoining houses.



*145 Grosvenor Road:* There are only two new cases the first of which is this bungalow at the far end of Grosvenor Road Langley Vale adjoining the Epsom and Walton Downs. The proposal is to extend the building to create two semi-detached houses, one of three bedrooms and the other of four. We have objected as this is quite unsuitable for the location for its effect on the street scene, on neighbouring buildings, on traffic and on the view from the Downs. A decision is awaited but we are pleased to see that the County Highways Authority have on this occasion recommended refusal

5 *Alexandra Road*: The last item is an interesting exercise in design. This Edwardian house, the last one here, adjoins what was a similar one where permission has been granted for a block of four apartments to a contemporary design. We thought at the time that such a design, whilst very good, was out of place. Permission was however given and is now a fact to be taken into consideration. The site is also opposite the dairy site, which is provisionally allocated for housing development and where Aldi's application has just been refused. The proposed design for new flats at No 5 is very uninspiring traditional modern, as can already be seen up and down Alexandra Road. The interesting question is what sort of design is suitable here and whether our opinion is good enough reason for recommending whether permission should be given or refused. I have drafted a comment for our Committee's consideration suggesting refusal on a number of grounds including the unsuitability of the design, so we shall see what happens next.



**Alan Baker**

## CONSERVATION

Things have been very quiet over the past few months as far as conservation related applications are concerned. I have written one letter in connection with an application to add an extension to a house in a conservation area. I have mentioned in the past that I do not like to give details of applications from individuals, so I will simply say that I thought the design was very unfortunate and would detract greatly from the quality of its surroundings.

Last time I mentioned having written about the conversion of a group of terraced Victorian cottages which the applicant wanted to convert into flats. I was concerned in particular about the lack of parking. The application was refused but on the grounds that 'By reason of the height and bulk of development in close proximity to the boundary the proposal would be unduly overbearing and obtrusive and cause an unacceptable loss of outlook and amenity to the adjacent dwelling.....' This is fine, but it is a matter of concern that the parking issue was not mentioned.

This raises the question of how we should consider applications. I approach it from the stance of what the ECS is about, which is very much related to the environment of the town and its townscape. I will therefore tend generally to leave issues of the impact on neighbours to the experts unless the situation is particularly egregious. Overlooking and matters about light include some very careful analysis about the physical relationship between buildings which we are simply unable to deal with, and I feel it would be incorrect for the Society to involve itself with matters of such detail. So very often it is simply about that rather vexed matter of taste and trying to hang on to the things which make Epsom what it is while recognising the very real issues we face and the changes which will take place whether we like them or not.

Talking of hanging on to things, I came across a press release from the Government which reported that the Community Rights movement has resulted in over 3,000 'much loved assets' being listed including 1,200 pubs and over 150 local sporting assets such as football stadiums, bowling greens and cricket pavilions, 'right through to Blencathra, one of the Lake District's best-known peaks'. Some of the individual listings are fascinating:

- White Bull pub in the Ribble Valley, dating from the 1700s, is now listed as a community asset.
- Plymouth Argyle Football Club's home ground has been listed by its fans.
- Beverley War Memorial Hall in the East Riding was opened in 1959 and is in great demand locally.
- Portishead Town Council in North Somerset has listed the local golf course which acts as a green

centre for the community  
- Winscombe Community Association has listed their community orchard.

Any ideas, anyone?

I was heartened recently to read of two cases where the Secretary of State had stepped in to block housing schemes. The first was for 18 houses on a site at St Just in Roseland in the Cornish Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The second one was a little less contentious and involved a ‘village extension’ in West Sussex. Apart from being in conflict with both the local plan and the adopted neighbourhood plan, the proposal would also have harmed a Grade II listed building. One wonders how anyone could believe that these applications could ever be successful, but the fact that they went to the top makes you realise how just how vigilant we must be.

On a final note, the Government has confirmed that the value of land should reflect planning requirements. This sounds pretty obvious, but developers appear to have been happy to pay over the odds for land as this may help with subsequent arguments about the non-viability of including the full number of affordable dwellings.

**Rob Austen**

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

This meeting took place on the evening of 28th April, when the following members of the committee were elected. I have also added the particular responsibilities of each member.

**Chair:** Margaret Hollins  
**Vice-Chairman & Planning:** Alan Baker FRICS.  
**Hon Secretary:** Malcolm Boyd.  
**Hon Treasurer:** Nick Lock  
**Planning & Conservation:** Robert Austen,  
**Information Technology and Webmaster:** Mark Bristow  
**Downs:** Angela Clifford.  
**Minutes Secretary:** Pauline Devereux  
**Planning Support:** Peter Follett.  
**Membership Secretary:** Ishbel Kenward.  
**Events:** Sheila Wadsworth  
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**Hon Auditor:** Harry Wilkinson OBE  
**Newsletter Editor:** Malcolm Boyd  
**Archivist:** Philip Clifford  
**Photographic Archivist:** David Rowe

This was the final AGM of our Chairman, Harry Corben, and the members passed a vote of thanks with acclamation for all that he has done for the Society. In his turn, Harry commended Margaret Hollins as our new Chair and said the future of the Society would be in good hands.

After the business of the evening, the recently appointed Town Centres Manager, Alanna Coombes, gave an interesting talk entitled “Epsom Past, Present and Future”. Some of what Alanna told us is summarized below

- talks with many Epsom business leaders have supported exploring the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID). A small steering group of business leaders including Alanna will meet regularly over the coming months and will carry out surveys. A BID cannot proceed until a majority of leaders agree following a ballot.

- BID's are business led and business funded bodies that pool funding for things that they think important to grow business. They are therefore likely to be of great benefit to Epsom as a whole. BID's are in place in Kingston, Sutton, Guildford and Croydon.
- Many of the projected improvements are related to making Epsom more attractive to visitors and shoppers including transport improvements, Christmas lights, branding and marketing the town centre, safety measures and improving the town's identity in relation to the Derby.
- An interesting recent statistic produced by Ipsos Retail Performance following a countrywide poll, showed that Epsom was a top performer in increasing town centre footfall in the first quarter of 2016

Risking potential duplication with Alan's report above, Alanna went on to mention several planning applications, still to be determined.

- "The empty units at **5 and 7 High Street** (that used to be the Sony Centre and Pizza Hut) could be turned into a large Prezzo (Italian restaurant) if plans are approved. This will help lift the very important entrance to the town centre from the north, under the railway bridge on East Street.
- **Derby Square** (in front of the Ebbisham Centre) could be transformed with new planting, seating, kiosks and other improvements to bring life and footfall to this part of the town centre if plans of the new owners are approved
- An application has also been received by the borough council to create apartments within **Ashley House** the Grade II\* listed building on Ashley Road. It will need to be looked at very carefully to ensure the historic fabric is protected and remains an asset to the town."



**Our new Chair, Margaret Hollins with Alanna Coombes**

## 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 - £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.

**Mrs. Ishbel Kenward - Membership Secretary. Tel. 728570**

## EMAILS

If you think that we have your email address but you didn't receive the recent email sent out to members about the MGSO4 Epsom & Ewell Arts Festival at the end of June could you please email to let us know at [info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk) .

Maybe you haven't previously given us your email address and now would like to receive the occasional email with items we think would be of interest between Newsletters or you have changed email address then let us know with the subject 'email address'.

## GARDEN IN THE SKY

I can highly recommend entry to the 'Garden in the Sky' at 20 Fenchurch Street, known as the Walkie Talkie and it's free. If you remember from a recent Newsletter, the building was awarded 'Carbuncle of the Year' 2015 and the entry in Wikipedia states that one of the best things about the Garden is that you can't see the Walkie Talkie !! Opening the garden to the public was one of the Planning stipulations when permission to build was given. The garden is not as high as the viewing platform on the Shard but still has fantastic views over London, including down onto the Tower of London, as well as the garden and a café. It has to be booked online [just google 'Sky Garden'] and is well worth a visit. Alternatively you can book a meal in the restaurant which is also up there. There is lots more information on their website. **Ishbel Kenward.**

## SCHOOLS GARDEN PROJECT

Our support of local schools in encouraging their students to have an interest in gardening is continuing. We have recently added three new schools to the project – Appletree Day Nursery, St Joseph's Primary School and St Martin's Infant School. We hope to receive regular updates.



Photos show initial work at St Joseph's.

**Malcolm Boyd**



## **CIVIC VOICE HERITAGE AWARDS**

Our entry of The Durdans Stables for this award under the 'restoration' category was unfortunately not among the winners. Although we thought our entry had merit, we were not surprised by the decision. As this is an annual competition, any suggestions for a future entry will be welcome.

**Malcolm Boyd**

## **EVENTS**

The outing to Smallhythe Place and Great Dixter is sold out, but we always run a waiting list so, if you wish to come, there are often last-minute cancellations.

### **ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER PARTY – Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October**

We welcome members, their friends and families to the 2016 Annual Buffet Supper on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> October. This is always a much-enjoyed occasion starting at 7.30p.m. and ending at 10.15p.m. The cost is £22 with a welcome drink and delicious food delivered to your table by Studio Food. The entertainment has yet to be finalized but I can assure you that the standard will be up to previous years. The information will appear on the website and in the next newsletter.

St Joseph's Church Hall, St Margaret's Drive, off Dorking Road, is the venue of the party and there is adequate free parking. Any transport problems can be raised with the organizer.

The booking form is on page 7..

**Sheila Wadsworth (01372 273517)**

## **IAN WEST WALK**

Ian has informed me that, due to an unavoidable and unforeseen circumstance when he agreed the date, he will not be able to undertake the walk this year. He apologises sincerely to all those members who expected to join him for the walk.

**Editor**

**APPLICATION FOR THE ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER \_ Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October**

Name/s.....

Address.....

Tel No .....

No, of tickets @ £22pp.....Total Cost.....

Any dietary or allergy requirements? Yes/No. Please list.....  
.....

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

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