

Epsom Civic Society

shaping the future, safeguarding the past

epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No -150 - Winter 2016

CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

October was a particularly sociable month for the Society: we were delighted to welcome 50 new members following our **display in the Ashley Centre** on 8th October, and to meet up with members old and new at our **buffet supper** on 28th October in St Joseph's Church Hall. Thanks to everyone who supported these events, and especial thanks to committee members Malcolm Boyd, Mark Bristow, Ishbel Kenward, Nick Lock, and Shelia Wadsworth whose meticulous planning contributed substantially to their success.

New members who joined in October received, among other things, a flyer from the Society about **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Local Plan review**. The review process is important for everyone who lives and works in Epsom and Ewell and encompasses, among other things, revision of the Borough's housing target, review of the green belt, identification of a deliverable housing supply strategy, review of the current affordable housing policy, a new policy approach for meeting accommodation needs of the Traveller Community and new policies for protection of heritage assets - specifically regarding identification and designation of locally listed buildings and structures. The Local Plan contains policies that will manage future development in the Borough, and forms the basis for all decisions as to whether the development proposals should be permitted. The draft Local Plan will be put out for consultation in 2017. The Society is consulted on major planning issues and encourages members to make their views known to the Council. The estimated date for adoption of a new plan is July 2018. Full details of the Local Plan Programme and the timetable for review and adoption of the revised plan are available on the Council's website: <http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/35CD4017-D5C4-4A21-9CC3-C0352E5927E0/0/LocalPlanProgrammeJuly2016.pdf> Alternatively enter 'Epsom & Ewell Local Plan Programme' into your search engine. Pending publication of the Society's next newsletter, we will be publicising updates on our website: epsomcivicsociety.org.uk and via our Twitter account: @EpsomCivicSoc

As a supporter of Horton Chapel Arts and Heritage Society (HCAHS), we are very pleased to report that in September, HCAHS was voted preferred bidder by the Council to take forward its plans for **Horton Chapel**, and in November, HCAHS was awarded a £25,000 project development grant from The Architectural Heritage Fund. You can find out more about the project on the HCAHS website: hortonchapelarts.org. Congratulations to everyone involved, this is a significant step towards making Epsom an 'arts town' we can all enjoy.

Margaret Hollins

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

5, Alexandra Road: Following our discussions with the developer and the architect some adjustments were made to the design of the flats proposed for this site but we maintained our objection that the height and bulk of the rear part were dominant and incongruous. The officers' report to the September Planning Committee was very critical of the scheme, concluding that the design was of poor quality, both in concept as well as in the details, and recommended refusal which was unanimously agreed.

25, Alexandra Road: The three applications for this locally listed house – outline applications for demolition and erection of 14 flats and for demolition and erection of 10 flats, and a full application for conversion of the house to three apartments with six new flats at the rear of the site – were considered at the October Planning Committee. You may remember that we objected to demolition but supported the third option of conversion. Unfortunately I was not able to attend the meeting, but we understand that all three were approved. We now wait to see, after all this time, which if any get built.

Former Dairy Crest Site, Alexandra Road: Aldi have appealed against the refusal of their application to build a supermarket on this site and we will as usual be writing to the Inspectorate to confirm our support for the refusal.

20-24 East Street: Permission was granted last year for the former Ford showroom to be redeveloped as a shop for ‘Pets at Home’, a chain of large pet shops. A recent application was permitted for advertisements including four “digitally printed window graphics to glazing” covering the windows fronting East Street. These were rather peculiar subjects such as “Hero woman/Cat” but we saw no reason to object. The new windows are now in place and we await the graphics with interest, remembering those at the station!

Wilsons Automobiles, 101B East Street: Last time I reported the refusal of Wilsons’ application to amend a condition in their permission to rebuild this corner showroom which prevented them from displaying cars on the new forecourt. They have now appealed against the refusal on the grounds that such a display is essential to their business and follows other examples in East Street. This condition is important in improving the amenities here and we can only hope the Inspector agrees. In this case also we will confirm to the Inspectorate our support for the refusal.

Alan Baker

HERITAGE

There is again little to report on the development front this time. However, recently your committee decided that we should write to the Council about an application outside our usual area of interest. It concerned a proposal to demolish two houses in the Ewell Village Conservation Area and to build eight houses on the combined site. Our concern lay in the potential to set an unfortunate precedent. The following is an extract from our letter:

‘Firstly, the scheme is a clear case of over-development. This is in direct contravention of one of the principal thrusts of Policy DM11, *Housing Density*, which states inter alia that: ‘Proposals for new housing must demonstrate how the density of the development would contribute towards maintaining and enhancing the visual character and appearance of the wider townscape’. (Our underlining).

‘Similarly, the scheme is also clearly in contravention of Policy DM16, *Backland Development*, which states, in brief, that there is ‘a presumption against the loss of domestic rear gardens due to the need to maintain local character.....In exceptional cases, modest redevelopment on backland sites may be considered acceptable subject to....no significant impact on...rear garden land which contributes either individually or as part of a larger swathe of green infrastructure to the amenity of residents.....The privacy of existing homes and gardens must be maintained....’

‘Only a very cursory review of the application is necessary to show that it fails to meet the objectives of either of these policies. The impact of these failures is heightened by the location of the site within a Conservation Area. Overall, the Society is very strongly of the view that this application should be refused on the grounds outlined above, not only to protect the character and quality of the Ewell Village Conservation Area, but also to underpin the Council’s position regarding conservation areas in general.’

We await the outcome with interest but it prompted me to start thinking about sustainable development.

I realised that I really did not know what on earth the expression really meant apart from being one of those rather cosy contemporary expressions which few really understand. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'sustainable' as: *able to be maintained as a certain rate or level, or, conserving an ecological balance*. Wikipedia is more helpful: *sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*. Pretty good as a summary, but how is this to be related to an individual planning application?

There is a lot of material on the internet including a Government site which opened with a statement to the effect that sustainable development can be measured by '12 headline and 23 supplementary indicators supported by 25 and 41 measures respectively'. Hmm, I thought, not very helpful. In the end I found some very interesting views expressed, perhaps surprisingly, in an essay entitled 'Sustainable Communities' in a book by Rowan Williams the former Archbishop of Canterbury. I will quote five short extracts, which I feel, give some very sound ideas from which a set of rules or criteria could be developed against which individual development applications might be judged.

'Sustainability is not a matter of how we create something that never has to change; it's to do with how we cope with change in a way that has integrity and continuity.

'If we are going to plan sustainable communities then we have to have a good nose for what depletes human capital. And I want to suggest that one major threat to human capital is the sense of living without landmarks in time and space.'

'A landscape which proclaims its sameness with countless others, in its layout, buildings materials, retail outlets and so on, is a seedbed for problems.'

'So the first challenge for the building of a sustainable community is whether a development has thought through its geography in such a way as to be somewhere in particular.'

'Outline how the communities of the next generation can be saved from the curse of living nowhere in particular.'

The particularly striking references are to the 'depletion of human capital', 'a seedbed of problems' and 'the curse of living nowhere in particular'. It doesn't take very long to recall instances of such developments and perhaps these two ideas might just be at the very heart of what sustainable development should be.

Rob Austen

BRING OUT YOUR DEAD - an article by invitation from **Harry Corben**,

An organised movement began in the 1870's to encourage and allow the cremation of bodies in England. There were health grounds and of course as time went on the allocation of space for cemeteries became a consideration. In 1873 Sir Henry Thompson, a surgeon and Physician to Queen Victoria, returned from the Vienna Exposition to become the first and chief promoter of cremation in England. His position was 'that it was becoming a necessary sanitary precaution against the propagation of disease among a population daily growing larger in relation to the area it occupied'

In 1874 a meeting was held at his house with Anthony Trollope, John Everett Millais, George du Maurier and other well known people and the Cremation Society of Great Britain was formed. Their first duty was to determine that the act of cremation was not contrary to law.

In 1878 Sir Henry purchased a piece of land in Woking. The first crematorium was duly built and the first official cremation in England took place in 1885. By the end of that year a total of 3 cremations had taken place out of a total of 597,357 deaths. By 1903 crematoria had been opened in Manchester, Glasgow, Liverpool and Birmingham.

I am not sure how much notice of these events was taken by the people of Epsom but Epsom established its Burial Board on 31st May 1869 with George White as its Clerk. In 1870 the Board

purchased five acres of land between what are now Downs Road and Ashley Road and issued invitations to tender a design for the site to be enclosed by a four foot wall and to have two chapels inside plus gateways and a lodge at a cost not to exceed £3,300.

The building contract was awarded to Thomas Nye of Ealing and the landscaping to J.T.Rawsley of Epsom Nurseries. It was estimated that some sixty thousand tons of Kentish Ragstone would have to be transported from Epsom Railway Station which was then in Station Road, now Upper High Street. Early in 1871 a Lodge Keeper was appointed at £50 per annum with free accommodation in the Lodge.

Some space was set aside for Roman Catholics and later for Muslims too and a space near the Downs Road entrance for paupers. Gypsies have long been associated with Epsom Downs and their beautifully maintained graves are a highlight of the cemetery. The first burial was that of Mrs Elizabeth Dorling wife of Henry Dorling, chairman of the Burial Board. She was also the mother of Mrs Isabella Beeton a famous household name. The War Memorial was erected in 1921 in the northwest corner.

When extra space was required in 1923, local tradition has it that Lord Rosebery would have given the land for free but charged £2000 after the council allowed games to be played in Rosebery Park. He gave the money to charity.

Members of the Northey family are buried there but my favourite is Phyllis Dixie who lived in Epsom and whom I saw perform at the Portsmouth Hippodrome in 1948 or 1949 as 'The Girl the Lord Chamberlain Banned'.

My thanks to The Epsom and Ewell History Explorer and of course to Wikipedia.

NOTES FROM THE DOWNS.

Rather a long report this time as I have missed some meetings during the year so some catching up to do.

- The Derby meeting was considered a success and the clean-up much better.
- The question of who is responsible for maintaining the Hack Sand Track at the bottom of Walton Downs has still not been resolved – it seems neither the Conservators nor the Horse Race Betting Levy Board accepts responsibility. I am totally ignorant of the requirements of the riders so do not comment except to agree that the situation is becoming monotonously repetitive. Letters continue to be exchanged. In the same area of the Downs, an area for hacking is closed at present but it is hoped action will be taken soon to make it usable. The Head Downskeeper and one of his staff are both off sick long term. Although the Borough Rangers are helping the Downskeepers with routine morning work this staff shortage will obviously make the winter work programme difficult to complete
- A new sign is planned to warn motorists of the controlled horse crossing by the Grandstand – there are still too many cars speeding. Parking outside the Rubbing House car park continues to be a problem as the verges are being affected and Derby Stables Road continues to have cars parked for long periods – making it difficult for riders to park and unload their horse-boxes.
- Many dog-walkers are meeting the request to keep dogs on leads but unfortunately, some, who appear to come from the Tadworth direction, keep destroying the notices. It is now proposed just putting up laminated ones which can be replaced fairly cheaply. Rather sad that a request on safety grounds - for riders, horses and dogs – is treated so contemptuously.
- The Committee's annual Downs Tour took place on Weds 28th September and we looked at some of the areas of contention mentioned above. This enabled the hack riders' representatives to be more precise about their concerns. Attention was also drawn to the poor state of some of the re-enforced concrete posts along the course.

- At the Conservators meeting on 5th September, the plans for pre-Derby actions were confirmed – including a public meeting in Langley Vale and that Epsom Downs Racecourse have a working group which will work with Surrey Police to consider future arrangements. The usual annual non-racing events on the Downs were approved.
- An ice cream vendor has been granted approval to trade on the Downs subject to obtaining a licence. Certain restrictions will be requested – no chimes and hours stated. This regularises the present situation.
- The slight increase in metal detectorist fees and number permitted has been well accepted.
- There was a long discussion about a new memorial policy – at present none are permitted. Benches, bird and bat boxes were considered. The prime responsibility of the Conservators is care of the Downs for race-horse training and recreational use but maintaining their natural appearance. Benches will only be allowed at certain sites and no more than 12 and no plaques. The term will be for 10 years. If the Policy is implemented details from the Town Hall or the Council Website. Memorials to pets will not be included in the Policy.
- Unsociable behaviour is still a challenge – Car racing and doing break turns on the old London Road (the one inside the racecourse round to the car park) and an attempted break in at the Downskeepers hut are recent examples. It is possible the Official vehicles will have cameras attached as evidence is needed for a successful prosecution. Closing the access gates earlier is an option being considered.

If you have any matters of concern about the Downs, please feel free to contact me. **Angela Clifford**

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to all our new members, over 110 this year, including the 50 who joined us in the Ashley Centre. Thanks to all who assisted on the day, particularly Malcolm and Mark for putting together the display with many of the photographs taken by Malcolm. We enjoyed talking to our members and the potential new members who came to look at the display.

ISHBEL KENWARD - Membership Secretary



The display in the Ashley Centre

NATIONAL TRUST FREE PASSES

A number of members have received the single use free passes. If anyone else thinks that they would enjoy a free visit to a National Trust property just let me know – they are valid until 31st May 2017. The furthest away property that I've been told the free pass was used for was the Farne Islands – maybe someone has been further afield.

Ishbel Kenward Tel. 01372 728570

NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL

Don't forget that you can receive your Newsletter by email if you prefer. This saves the Society money and saves you having even more paper round the house. You also get to see our pictures in colour. If you think that you'd like to give it a try, let us know on info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

MINUTE SECRETARY

Pauline Devereux, who has done a sterling job as our Committee Minute Secretary for nearly 4 years, has let us know that she will not be able to continue after the end of this year. We meet once a month and are considerate of the Minute Secretary's requirement for clarity. Very few people now use shorthand and this is not a requirement but computer skills would be essential. If you think that this would suit you please contact our Secretary, Malcolm, via our email address info@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk with the heading 'Minute Sec'. Pauline will happily give further information if required.

NATIONAL TRUST (from the secretary of the local National Trust Supporters Group, Alan Harding)

The Epsom, Ewell and District Centre raises funds to support National Trust properties and projects through a varied programme of lectures at Bourne Hall, guided London walks, coach outings, and other special events (coffee mornings, holidays, Christmas lunch). Details and further information can be found at www.epsom-ewell-district-nt.org.uk or by telephoning Doug Neale (Membership Secretary) on 0208 542 2747.

EVENTS

ANNUAL BUFFET SUPPER at St JOSEPH'S CHURCH

The Downsmen, with their barbershop harmony, provided a tuneful ending to the Society supper held on Friday 28th October. Sixty-one members and friends attended and enjoyed a delicious and generous buffet served discreetly by Studio Food, helped down with drinks from the bar run by Mark Bristow. Our Chair, Margaret Hollins, welcomed everybody and, although the numbers were down this year, the volume of chat was as high. Thanks to members for coming and supporting the event.



The Downsmen

OUTING TO LEWES – THURSDAY 11th MAY 2017

A visit is being planned to Lewes, East Sussex, on Thursday 11th May 2017 next year. It will start with coffee, probably at Shelleys Hotel, and then it will be primarily a walking tour of two groups, one visiting Lewes Castle and Museum in the morning and Anne of Cleves House in the afternoon and the second group, the reverse. Lewes is the county town of East Sussex and hilly with some Clovelly-like streets, so we advise members to wear stout shoes and bring a stick if you use one for walking. Overall, the walks will amount to approximately 4 miles.

There is a wide choice of restaurants and cafes for lunch both near the castle, at Anne of Cleves House and down by the river Ouse near a fun Arts and Craft Centre and Harveys Brewery. Also, there are delightful spots for picnics especially in Southover Grange Gardens and Priory Park.

Currently we plan to pick up members on Epsom Downs, the Methodist Church and Ashtead village as usual, but this may have to be amended if proposed work in South Street should overrun.

Cost is £33 per person and after Monday 6th March we shall welcome non-members to book spare places. Please put your mobile number on your application as on the day people may spread around the town.

Sheila Wadsworth

OUR SCHOOLS GARDENING PROJECT

Despite the onset of winter, our schools' liaison, Liz Plumtree, has been contacting the schools currently taking part in the project. All seven schools have received an initial £300 to encourage their children to take a hands-on interest in gardening. So far this term, three schools, The Vale, St Joseph's and Stamford Green have received an additional £100 and others are likely to follow. If anyone knows of a school not currently in the project, please get in touch.

Malcolm Boyd



Anne of Cleves House (with acknowledgement to Lewes Town and District Councils)

APPLICATION for LEWES – Thursday 11th MAY - £33 per person

Member’s name/s.....

And Friend/s after 6th March.....

Address.....

Tel, No.....Mobile.....

No. of tickets..... Total cost.....

Coach collection – please circle

(A) 8.45a.m. Epsom Downs, Tattenham Corner tea hut

(B) 8.55a.m. The Methodist Church, Epsom

(C) 9.05a.m. The Street, Ashtead

Please return this form to Sheila Wadsworth , The Chestnuts, Farm Lane, Ashtead KT21 1LJ.

Cheques to be made payable to “Epsom Civic Society” and please enclose a stamped addressed envelope

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