

# BBC misreports Epsom and Ewell planning?

5 September 2022



On Friday 2nd September **Mark Easton**, the **BBC's** top home affairs reporter, swooped down on **Epsom and Ewell**. Our Borough suffers from nimbyism and we could easily meet our housing targets, was his report's message. The **Epsom and Ewell Times** takes his two minute report to task.

First - he opens his report while standing on **Epsom Common** off **Woodcote Side**. The implication being that this area could in part be developed for housing. Did he not check it was a **Local Nature Reserve** and **Site of Special Scientific Interest**?



Secondly, he travelled to **Station Approach Stoneleigh** and suggests the rejection of a plan to build a four storey block of flats was mistaken. The plan was rejected in February 2022. The developer **Woolbro Homes** ( a part of **St James Group Ltd** which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the multi-million **Berkeley Group Holdings Plc**) did not exercise its right of appeal to a Planning Inspector.



Image of original 6 storey block

Perhaps they accepted the grounds for refusal which included overdevelopment, overbearing and incongruity. Moreover, the applicants had failed to sign a commitment to affordable housing.



Thirdly, the report of the BBC showed **Cllr Liz Frost** objecting to a 22 room residence for students near Epsom's **University for the Creative Arts** in Ashley Road, Epsom. The reportage gave the impression that housing needed to meet ordinary housing targets was being denied. UCA indicated in connection with the case that it is attracting mainly foreign students to its new business courses. See Epsom and Ewell Times report on the meeting [HERE](#)

Lastly, Mr Easton claimed no Councillor was available for comment. The **Epsom and Ewell Times** know of at least two

Councillors who attended the Planning Committee meeting who were NOT asked. Mark Easton is not available for comment as his direct contacts cannot be found. **Grace Manning-Marsh** of **LandTech**, was interviewed by Mr Easton, she was critical of Epsom and Ewell’s failure to authorise developments on **Green Belt**. She did not ring back when asked to talk to us.

## Councillors agonise over student accommodation plan.

5 September 2022



Council postpone a controversial planning application for their own site visit. **Mr Colin Preston**’s plan to knock down a neglected house called **Green Gables** in Ashley Road, Epsom was deferred. A **22 student bedroom** development is proposed to take the place of the neglected Green Gables house. The development provides no more than 8 square metres per bedroom with two shared kitchens and two shared living spaces. **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September, Epsom and Ewell** Borough Council’s **Planning Committee** discussed a number of objections matching the number of bedrooms. 22 in all, concerning loss of privacy, overdevelopment, impact on the nearby Worple Road conservation area and many other grounds.



Proposed linked two building student accommodation above and current scene below.

The **Woodcote (Epsom) Residents’ Society** submitted “...excessive scale would be visually obtrusive, over-shadow the rear gardens and result in significant light spillage from the glazed stairwell and lobby area at night. The amenity area would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance and the narrow footpath between the proposed buildings and the boundary with Ladbrooke Road properties being a potential area for antisocial behaviour and security concerns...”

The **Strategic Housing Market Assessment** (SHMA) of Epsom and Ewell BC dated September 2019 concludes that “there does not seem to be a great demand for additional Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) at the moment”. Mr Preston, the developer, contacted the **University of the Creative Arts** (UCA) situated just yards away in Ashley Road. UCA responded with the following: “We can confirm that UCA is broadly supportive of an increase in provision of student accommodation in and around Epsom and Farnham, both in Surrey. We have opened a dialogue with the local authorities in both towns, with a view to enlisting their support in addressing what is an increasing need for suitable accommodation for our students.



For the current year 2021/2022, UCA has approximately 1,800 students enrolled on our Epsom campus, of which 321 first years were housed in university provided accommodation. The others rely on the local private rental sector, or commute further away. Recently UCA also commenced a February intake into our Business School for the Creative Industries which is proving quite attractive to students, especially those from abroad.”

Following a 90 minute debate the application was not decided on pending a site visit voted for by a majority of the Councillors.

Epsom and Ewell Times understands that UCA is heavily oversubscribed for the coming academic year. More student accommodation appears to be required by the Borough for its growing University population.

At the meeting **Cllr Liz Frost**, not a member of the Planning Committee, (Residents Association - Woodcote Ward) spoke against the proposal. She described the proposal as “Overdevelopment, far too close to neighbouring properties and overbearing. Rear of properties will be flooded by lighting from the development. Inevitably there will be disturbing noise effecting enjoyment of neighbouring gardens. Conditions suggested to deal with noise are unenforceable without a warden on site. The 32 square feet of outside amenity space wholly inadequate.”

Local Ladbroke Road resident **Paul Ring** described the development as “a cramped student house in multiple occupation (HMO) and there would be disturbance from the movement of students in a narrow space”.

**Spencer Copping**, the agent for the applicant, defended the application and asked the Committee to support the recommendation of the Council officers to approve the plan.

The **Council Officer** argued that there would be a requirement for a “management strategy” to deal with anti-social behaviour and that would mitigate risk of disturbance of neighbours.

**Cllr Steve McCormick** (RA Woodcote) expressed concern about the lack of amenity space for the students. The Officer explained that as a student accommodation the development was not subject to amenity space requirements and the nearby Rosebery Park mitigated this. The Councillor proposed refusal of the application. **Cllr Previn Jagutpal** (RA Stamford) also spoke against on grounds of the density and lack of amenity space.

**Cllr Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) asked for the matter to be put off to allow a Councillors’ inspection and despite the Chairman **Cllr Humphrey Reynolds** describing site inspections as a “waste of time”, a majority voted to inspect. If a decision had been reached approval would have been voted for by **Cllr Kate Chinn** (Labour Court Ward) who recognised the need for more student accommodation in the Borough. **Cllr David Gulland** (LibDem College Ward) reluctantly accepted there were no legal grounds to refuse that would withstand an appeal to an inspector and would vote in favour.

**Cllr Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley Ward) could not accept that 22 students should live together without a responsible supervisor living there. They would play hip-hop music and make noise. She thought the rear of the development looks “like a prison”. She asked “Why white brick? That would not fit the area.”



Green Gables next to white rendered houses in Ashley Road



Houses opposite Green Gables

**Green Gables'** registered proprietor is one **Bernard Wells** who has owned it since at latest 1994 and the property is subject to a **Swindon County Court** charge in 2008 in favour of **Thames Water Utilities Ltd.** The **Land Registry** entries can be out of date due to months' long backlogs in data entry.

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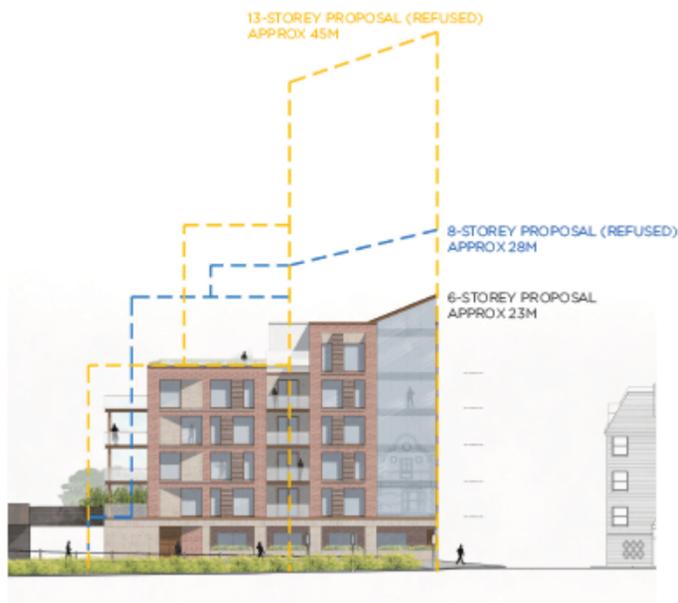
## West Street developers climbing down enough?

5 September 2022



Having a third bite at the planning cherry **Quanta Homes 3 Ltd** is applying to **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** for permission to demolish the old and ornately faced building situated at **24-28 West Street Epsom**. In its place a new 5 / 6 storey modern residential block of 20 units. Including just 10% in the "affordable" category.

Quanta Homes 3 Ltd is one of about 10 similarly named private limited property companies, active or dissolved under the sole directorship of **Mr Robert Du Toit**.



Rejected planning applications for first a 13 storey and then an 8 storey building are now followed by a part 5 and part 6 storey building application.

No doubt this latest application will excite again the debate between modernisers of the Town and preservers of the Town. You can make your views known online to the Council on [THIS LINK](#)

Related

**Mind the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan!**

£225,000 to plan the unplanned

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## "Statement of community involvement" involves

## what about what?

5 September 2022



Following a 4-week public consultation, **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** unveiled its new draft **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** at a meeting of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> July. This describes how local residents, businesses and other organisations can be involved in the planning process in Epsom and Ewell.

It is a legal requirement for the Council to have an SCI and to review it every five years as the way in which communities and the Council interact changes.

Planning decisions affect us all so, if you are interested in your area and would like to be involved in shaping future planning policy in Epsom & Ewell, you can:

- Sign up to receive notifications about local plan consultations.
- Read the council's Local Development Scheme to find out what documents are going to be produced and when.
- Monitor the council's Planning Policy webpages for updates and latest news.

· Check if a Neighbourhood Forum has been established in your area to prepare a neighbourhood plan.

The draft SCI can be read in the Agenda Reports Pack of the committee meeting, but please be aware that it is subject to some small amendments as a result of questions and suggestions raised by councillors at the meeting.

## Did the Inspector get to the Bottom of this?

5 September 2022



**Langley Bottom Farm** in Epsom is to become a small housing estate following the decision of Planning Inspector **D Hartley** dated 14th July 2022. Overturning a refusal of the **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and against overwhelming objections of the public in the 168 recorded submissions the Inspector allowed the appeal of **Fairfax Properties**, despite the location being in **Green Belt land**.

The Inspector made the following controversial observations:

“One of the purposes of Green Belt is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The site includes a number of existing buildings and areas of hardstanding. The latter has the continued potential to be used for the parking of vehicles. Overall, and taking into account the existing use, characteristics and extent of development on the site, I am satisfied that subject to the imposition of planning conditions the proposal would not lead to countryside encroachment and hence there would be no conflict with this Green Belt purpose.”

Concerning **local facilities** for the future occupants he stated “Langley Vale is within reasonable walking and cycling distance of the appeal site. It contains a limited number of facilities and amenities such as the ‘Park and Shop’ petrol filling station convenience store, ‘The Shop on the Corner’, garage, village hall, pre-school and primary school. I acknowledge the Council’s comment that ‘The Shop on the Corner’ appears to have ceased trading. There is of course some possibility that the property could be used again as a shop but, in any event, ‘The Park and Shop’ does provide some food and drink provision albeit that I acknowledge that it would likely only be used on the basis of day to day ‘topping up’.”

On **public transport, walking and cycling** he observed with optimism: “The site is located in close proximity to bus stops within Langley Vale and includes bus service E5 every two hours to Epsom (Monday to Saturday) and school service 618 (Monday to Friday). Furthermore, three mainline railway stations are located nearby (Epsom, Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner) providing commuting services to London and access to destinations further afield. There is also bus service 408 from Epsom to Cobham and stopping at Leatherhead and which runs Monday to Friday calling at Langley Vale once a day. I acknowledge that services are not very frequent but nevertheless I find that some of the proposed residents

would use them on occasion. The evidence is that the site is served well by a number of public footpath and cycle routes where some limited opportunities would be available, primarily in the day time and when there is no inclement weather. These could be used to visit services and amenities both locally and further afield.”

The Inspector did observe that **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** had allowed arguably unauthorised uses of the land to continue unchallenged for so many years that the “developed uses” became lawful. The claims of threats to the Green Belt were thereby undermined.

40% of the houses are to be “affordable”. Time will tell how affordable they will be.

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## Gym and yoga studio to residential

5 September 2022



**Epsom Civic Society** brings to our attention:

39 Manor Green Road Epsom KT19 8RN

[Click here to see map for location of 39 Manor Green Road Epsom KT19 8RN.](#)

22/00695/FUL Change of use of gym/yoga studio to residential to create a 1 bedroom dwelling with associated garden and parking.

Following dismissal of a second Appeal for a residential development, the applicant has made an application to re-purpose a not long built existing building used as a gym/yoga studio in the garden of the plot as a new small dwelling, despite all previous residential applications having been refused and two Appeals dismissed.

Assessing this application as if it were the first at this site, the Society has had to re-iterate.....

To see more go to Epsom Civic Society on this application