

## **5 Alexandra Road Epsom Surrey KT17 4BH**

Demolition of existing property and redevelopment of the site to provide 9 two bedroom flats and 1 three bedroom flat in a three-storey block with accommodation in the roof space, formation of a new access onto Alexandra Road and the provision of ancillary car parking. (Description amended 17.08.2016 and amended drawings received 25.08.2016)

<b>Ward:</b>	<b>College</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>John Robinson</b>

### **1 Plans and Representations**

- 1.1 The Council now holds this information electronically. Please click on the following link to access the plans and representations relating to this application via the Council's website, which is provided by way of background information to the report. Please note that the link is current at the time of publication, and will not be updated.

Link: <http://eplanning.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=O3Q00XGYKN400>

### **2 Summary**

- 2.1 The application property comprises an inter-war period, two-storey building accommodating a chiropractic clinic on the ground floor, with the remainder in residential use. The building is located on the south side of Alexandra Road. This application seeks permission for the demolition of the building and the erection of a three-storey block of 9 two-bedroom and 1 three bedroom apartments with accommodation in the roof space, formation of a new access onto Alexandra Road and the provision of ancillary car parking.
- 2.2 The application is recommended for REFUSAL.

### **3 Site description**

- 3.1 The property currently on the site is a substantial detached two storey building, part of the ground floor of which has been used as a sole-practitioner chiropractic clinic with the remainder used for residential purposes.
- 3.2 The building stands in a deep plot with a substantial rear garden. There is a Tree Preservation Order on two Horse Chestnuts located in the north east corner of the rear garden.

- 3.3 Alexandra Road forms a portion of the A2022 which at the junction of Mill Road becomes Upper High Street. The street is comprised of a variety of domestic/commercial and mixed use developments and as such the character of the street is varied.
- 3.4 1 Alexandra Road (Wadcroft Court) comprises 6 flats over three storeys. Adjacent to No.1 sits 1A, a large detached house. No 3 is a three storey block of five flats, of contemporary design, which is under construction.No.7 is a 3 storey block of 6 flats. Opposite the site are a variety of low lying, single storey pitched roof industrial units which were last used as a Dairy Crest depot. The variety of usage and occupation means that the street lacks any real sense of vernacular with no set typology dominant.
- 3.5 The site rises steeply from west to east along Alexandra Road with some 2m rise in ground floor level between the property at No. 1A to that of the application site. Existing buildings are located comfortably within spacious plots such that spaces between the buildings are significant, with views through to the rear and which form part of the overall character of the area.

#### **4 Proposal**

- 4.1 This application seeks permission for the demolition of the building and the erection of a three-storey block (with accommodation in the roof space) comprising 9 two-bedroom and 1 three bedroom units.
- 4.2 The flats would meet national space standards, with access to both private patios/balconies and communal landscaped amenity space for the flats.
- 4.3 The building would have an eaves height of 9m, and an overall height of 12.19m. No part of the new building would project forward of the established building line within the site. The building's footprint would be approximately 10m wide along the frontage, and progressively widens out to around 16m within the site, some 22m from the front boundary.
- 4.4 The building would have brick elevations under a series of hipped tiled roofs, incorporating dormers in the flank and rear roofslopes. It would have brick detailing above the white uPVC windows, with stone cills. The elevations would be further articulated by deep projecting front balconies with metal balustrades.
- 4.5 Parking for 11 vehicles would be provided to the rear of the building, accessed via a driveway running along the western flank boundary of the site. A secure cycle store and a refuse store would be located adjacent to the drive, abutting the flank boundary with No 7 Alexandra Road.
- 4.6 Indicative landscaping plans, including an Arboricultural Survey have been submitted with the application. These plans show additional planting is proposed to the flank boundaries to act as a green buffer between the proposed development and the adjacent properties.

## 5 Comments from third parties

5.1 The application was advertised by means of letters of notification to 41 neighbouring properties, a site and press notice. To date (10.08.2016) 16 letters of objection have been received regarding:

- Visual impact
- Out of keeping
- Highway safety
- Loss of privacy
- Loss of light and impact on privacy to No 7 Alexandra Road
- Impact on ecology

Epsom Civic Society: The height and bulk of the rear part of the building is of concern. The top floor would appear as a dominant and incongruous element. Recommend refusal as contrary to Policies DM9 and DM10

## 6 Consultations

6.1 Highways Officer: No objection. The increase in vehicular traffic from this proposed development would be minimal, especially in the peak hour, and would not lead to a severe impact on the highway network as required under NPPF for a refusal. There have been 2 accidents in this section of Alexandra Road registered by the police, both in 2010, of slight severity and caused by driver error. None have been registered since then. Conditions to be imposed on any permission granted.

6.2 Tree Officer: No objection

## 7 Relevant planning history

Application number	Decision date	Application detail	Decision
00/00848/FUL	31.01.2001	Extension of existing surgery at ground floor level and removal of condition 7 of application 86/0136/0072 to allow more than one consultant to operate at any one time.	GRANTED

## 8 Planning Policy

### National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) 2012

Paragraph 17	Core Planning Principles
Chapter 6	Delivering a Wide Choice of Quality Homes
Chapter 7	Requiring Good Design

Core Strategy 2007

Policy CS1	Sustainable Development
Policy CS3	Biodiversity
Policy CS5	Built environment
Policy CS6	Sustainability in new developments
Policy CS7	Housing Provision
Policy CS8	Broad location of housing development
Policy CS12	Developer contributions to community infrastructure
Policy CS16	Managing transport and travel

Development Management Policies Document 2015

Policy DM4	Biodiversity and new development
Policy DM5	Trees and landscape
Policy DM9	Townscape character and local distinctiveness
Policy DM10	Design requirements for new developments
Policy DM11	Housing design
Policy DM12	Housing standards
Policy DM13	Building heights
Policy DM20	Environmentally sustainable development
Policy DM21	Meeting Local Housing Need
Policy DM22	Housing mix
Policy DM35	Transport and new development
Policy DM36	Sustainable Transport for new development
Policy DM37	Parking standards

## **9 Planning considerations**

Principle of Development

9.1 The application site is located in the built-up area of Epsom. It is previously developed land and in a sustainable location close to Epsom Town Centre. It is not within a conservation area and the existing building is not listed. In principle, it therefore accords with the policies contained within national and local planning policy regarding the intensification of previously developed sites.

Layout, Design and Scale

9.2 The surrounding area is architecturally diverse and whilst pitched roofs are widely used, their shape and form vary considerable and a number of nearby buildings have flat roofs, including the neighbouring building (No 3) currently under construction.

9.3 The Design and Access Statement sets out the applicant's "traditional" design approach to the proposed building. The building has been designed as a three storey block with a series of pitched roofs with accommodation incorporated into the roof space.

- 9.4 However, the roof design, informed by the buildings staggered footprint, would appear as an uncomfortable mix of disparate elements. The flank elevations would be particularly awkward, with the (over scaled) dormers appearing as incongruous and discordant elements in the roof scape. This would be exacerbated by the size and location of the projecting balconies and the use of generic window design and window head/cill detailing.
- 9.5 The proposed apartment block, by resorting to a design approach which would be neither “traditional” nor “contemporary”, would fail to establish its own distinctive design character. The borough’s recently adopted Policies DM9 and DM10 encourage high quality development and indeed planning permission will be granted for proposals which make a positive contribution to the borough’s visual character and appearance. The current scheme fails to meet the requirements of these policies.
- 9.6 The new building’s footprint would be approximately 10m wide along the frontage, and would progressively widen out to around 16m, some 22m from the front boundary.
- 9.7 The applicants submit that at the nearest point to the front boundary the proposed building would be set back approximately 7.5 metres. The building would be approximately 10.4 metres wide and the site width is approximately 18.4 metres, virtually the same as Number 3. The building at this point would therefore occupy approximately 55% of the site width. In the applicant’s view this would provide a greater amount of space around the proposed building and would allow it to fit into the existing street scene without being over dominant.
- 9.8 They further submit that the application site “quickly” broadens out and the proposed building would broaden out accordingly. Two further changes in width would occur towards the middle of the proposed building. At the point where the width of the building increases to 16.2 metres (which is set back some 22 metres from the front boundary), it becomes wider than Number 3 and “then by only a few centimetres”. They conclude that the visual impact of the building on the street scene when viewed from Alexandra Road would therefore be much less than the approved scheme at Number 3.
- 9.9 However, Officers have serious concerns regarding the bulk of the overall development, particularly the proposed building’s height, width and depth when considered as a whole. Whilst the eaves height of the building would not be higher than the proposed building at No 3, and the existing block of flats to the east, the overall height of the “frontage” element would be some 2m higher than the new building at No 3, and the rear element some 3.3m higher.

- 9.10 The applicants have failed to take into account that whilst the application site widens to the rear (and the proposed building accordingly), in direct views of the site, the bulk and massing would be significantly greater than the current building on the site. As a result the building would dominate its immediate neighbours and give an undesirable impression of overdevelopment to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area.
- 9.11 Parking is proposed to the rear of the site, accessed via a driveway along the eastern flank boundary. Whilst the applicants submit that the ratio of built area to site area on both the application site and the new scheme at No 3 is virtually the same, this does not take into account the intrusion to the rear of the site and to the eastern flank by the substantial access drive and parking area. It is considered that the diminution of the previous turfed area to the rear would have an adverse impact on ecology/biodiversity, contrary to Policy DM4 which requires that every opportunity should be taken to secure net benefit to the Borough's biodiversity.
- 9.12 It is concluded that the proposed scheme would not accord with Policy DM4.

#### Neighbour Amenity

- 9.13 The new building has been designed, and detailed, such that the impact on neighbouring properties would be minimised.
- 9.14 Concerns have been raised regarding loss of privacy, as well as loss of light to the occupants of No 7 Alexandra Road. There are three windows in the flank elevation to number 7, which serve non-habitable rooms
- 9.15 On the flank elevation of the proposed development that would face onto No 7, there are windows to the en-suite bathrooms to flats 4 and 7, there are two windows to the staircase at both first and second floor levels and the kitchen windows to flats 6 and 12. A condition requiring all of these windows to be glazed with obscure glass with no-opening lights in these windows below a level of 1.7 metres above the respective finished floor could be imposed. This would ensure no loss of privacy for Number 7 from these windows.
- 9.16 The proposed windows to the bedrooms in flats 4, 6, 7, and 9 could have an impact on the adjoining windows in Number 7. Amended drawings indicate the formation of "angled bays" to these rooms to ensure that there would be no overlooking as a result of the proposed development. The bays would be constructed as shown on the first floor plan above at both first and second floor levels. The two flank dormers would not impinge on the privacy of the affected property.
- 9.17 At its nearest point, the flank wall of the new building would face the flank elevation of No 7 at a distance of around 7m and loss of daylight, to the affected south orientated property would not be significant at this distance.
- 9.18 The new building would not conflict with a 45 degree outlook angle taken from the inner reveal of the nearest rear window of the affected properties at No 3 and No 7 respectively.

- 9.19 It is therefore concluded that subject to restrictive conditions, the proposed scheme would not have a materially harmful impact on neighbour amenity in terms of overlooking, loss of privacy, daylight or being overbearing in their outlook.

#### Parking and Access

- 9.20 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are “severe”.
- 9.21 The submitted entrance details indicate that a carriageway width of 4.5 metres narrowing to 4.1 metres with radii to the kerbs of 4.5 metres would be retained to ensure safe entrance and exiting from the site. The access drive would reduce to a width of 3.0 metres for much of the length of the road along the side of the proposed building. A passing space would be provided immediately upon exiting the car parking area and the width of the access at the entrance to the site would allow cars to safely pass each other safely and without delay.
- 9.22 11 parking spaces are proposed (one per dwelling) which would comply with the Council’s adopted parking standards which require 1 and 2 bedroom flats outside of the Town Centre to have 1 space per unit, and 3 bedroom flats to have 1.5 spaces.
- 9.23 The County Highways Authority has no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of highway conditions regarding the provision of the parking spaces. Cycle spaces are provided within a purpose-built storage area which accords with the requirements of local guidance.

#### Refuse

- 9.24 A bin store would be provided for the flatted scheme in the frontage area. The store would have the requisite capacity for bins in compliance with the council’s guidance on refuse storage. An amended layout has been submitted which indicates the bin store to be located adjacent to the flank boundary with No 7 Alexandra Road and set back some 10m from the highway boundary. This location is acceptable and would not result in a detrimental visual impact on the street-scene.

#### Landscaping

- 9.25 Indicative landscaping plans, including an Arboricultural Survey have been submitted with the application. These plans show additional planting is proposed to the flank boundaries to act as a green buffer between the proposed development and the adjacent properties.
- 9.26 However, notwithstanding the additional planting, there would still be an unacceptable loss of green infrastructure as a result of the building extending deep into the site, in addition to the proposed hardstanding to accommodate the parking area and associated access drive, contrary to Policy DM4

- 9.27 Hard landscaping materials such as brick paviours are proposed to create pathways and areas of hardstanding within the site.
- 9.28 A detailed landscaping scheme, including details of the foundation design and construction methods will be secured via appropriate planning conditions if permission is granted.

#### Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS)

- 9.29 SuDS became a material planning consideration on 6th April 2015 whereby details of proposed SuDS must be considered as part of the planning process and it must be demonstrated that the development would have no adverse impact on flood risk. This approach is supported by Policy CS6 which states that new development should avoid increasing the risk of flooding and Policy DM19 which requires development to reduce the volume and rate of surface water run off through the incorporation of appropriately designed SuDS.
- 9.30 The applicant has submitted information with regard to the provision of SuDS as part of their application. The Lead Local Flood Authority at Surrey County are satisfied that the proposed drainage scheme would meet the requirements set out in paragraphs 051, 079 and 080 of the revised NPPF Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for Flood Risk and Coastal Change. They recommend that should planning permission be granted, that suitably worded conditions are applied to ensure that the SuDS Scheme is properly implemented and maintained throughout the lifetime of the development.

#### Sustainability

- 9.31 Policy CS6 requires development to reduce or have a neutral impact on pollution and climate change. It also requires proposals to demonstrate how sustainable design and construction can be incorporated to improve energy efficiency. The applicants submit that the proposed development would be built to the "highest specifications" with enhanced insulation levels and sustainable construction technologies and eco-friendly systems incorporated into the building design. If approved a condition is recommended to secure compliance with the Council's sustainability policy.

#### Ecology/Biodiversity

- 9.32 Parking is proposed to the rear of the site, accessed via a driveway along the eastern flank boundary. Whilst the applicants submit that that the ratio of built area to site area on both the application site and the new scheme at No 3 is virtually the same, this does not take into account the intrusion to the rear of the site, and to the eastern flank by the access drive and parking area. It is considered that the diminution of the previous turfed area to the rear would have an adverse impact on ecology/biodiversity, contrary to Policy DM4 which requires that every opportunity should be taken to secure net benefit to the Borough's biodiversity.



### Affordable Housing

- 9.33 Policy CS9 seeks 20% affordable housing to be provided on developments of between 5 - 15 dwellings. The proposal for 10 dwellings therefore generates a requirement for two dwellings to be provided on-site as affordable housing units.
- 9.34 Policy DM21 requires that 25% of proposals for four or more units, be comprised of three bedroom or more units. The applicant, due to viability constraints, proposes to provide one three-bedroom flat, which would not be policy compliant.
- 9.35 Due to the significant Existing Use Value of the application site, the applicant instructed its affordable housing viability consultant to undertake an affordable housing viability appraisal to establish if the scheme could afford to make a contribution to affordable housing.
- 9.36 The affordable housing viability appraisal submitted alongside this planning application demonstrates that the scheme cannot afford to make either on-site provision or an off-site financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision.
- 9.37 The Council's consultant has assessed the Viability Report and does not agree with the applicant that the scheme is unable to support a fully policy compliant affordable housing scheme. He concludes that the scheme would be able to support S106/CIL contributions and affordable housing at a policy compliant level, based on the contribution of increase in sales, ground rent revenue, reduction in build cost and the adjustment to benchmark land value (BLV).
- 9.38 The proposed scheme is therefore contrary to Policy CS9. Members are advised that should the applicant provide a rebuttal to our consultant's assessment, this will be reported verbally at the committee meeting.

### Community Infrastructure Levy

- 9.39 The scheme is CIL liable.

## **10 Conclusion**

- 10.1 The proposed building would not sit well in its context. The design of the scheme is of poor quality, both in the concept as well as in the details, and therefore would not make a positive contribution to the Borough's visual character and appearance. The proposed height, scale and massing is excessive and would appear as a dominant and overbearing element in the street scene. The scheme would have a detrimental impact on biodiversity due to the material loss of garden area to the rear of the site. The scheme is therefore recommended for REFUSAL.

## **11 Recommendation**

- 11.1 Planning permission is **REFUSED** on the following grounds:

- (1) The proposed building due to its generic design, detailing, and lack of coherence fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the local area, and does not make a positive contribution to the Borough's visual character and appearance, contrary to Policy DM9 and DM10 of the Development Management Policies Document 2015**
- (2) The proposed building due to its design, scale, height and massing would appear as a dominant and overbearing element in the streetscene, contrary to Policy DM9 and DM10 of the Development Management Policies Document 2015**
- (3) The proposed scheme would lead to a material diminution of rear garden land which contributes individually to the amenity of the wider area in terms of biodiversity and therefore fails to provide net benefit to the Borough's biodiversity contrary to Policy DM4 of the Development Management Policies Document 2015**
- (4) Without an appropriate agreement to secure the provision of two affordable housing units the proposal is contrary to the provisions of Policy CS9, and CS12 of the Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy (2007)**
- (5) The proposed scheme would not provide at least 25% of the housing units as three bedroom units and therefore would fail to meet the requirement of Policy DM22 of the Development Management Policies Document 2015.**