

Esher Matters

The Esher Residents Association Newsletter

Esher
Residents

No.98



Benetton and Santander closures shock



Harry Fletcher House to be demolished



Vote Richard Williams on May 2nd

SANDOWN PARK PLANS 305 FLATS ON GREEN BELT LAND

JOCKEY CLUB WANTS FLATS TO FUND 'IMPROVED FACILITIES'

In meetings over the last two or three months the Jockey Club has been explaining and promoting its proposals for a Sandown Master Plan for which it will be seeking outline planning approval. If successful, the development would be phased in over several years.

Currently there appear to be three major developments that they would like to carry out to improve the experience of their patrons, together with providing other general public facilities:

- The provision of Grade 1 stabling and racing staff accommodation. It is proposed that this be built in the southwest corner of Sandown in the area behind Tellisford.
- Provision of a 150-bed hotel, sited to the east of the West Stand.
- A major refurbishment and upgrade of the Grandstand facilities, bars, cafés, halls and general racing and entertainment facilities.

Further improvements to the central car park and racetrack are planned and a pedestrian track is envisaged running between Esher Station through the park to the town centre. Next to the go-kart circuit, there exists the potential for a family zone with café, indoor and outdoor play areas, and a cycle track.

Jockey Club Racecourses Ltd is also proposing that 305+ flats and a nursery be built on five sites within the Park to fund these developments.

Sandown Park plans

The Elmbridge Local Plan

The whole of Sandown Park is an area of “Green Belt” the fundamental aim of which is to prevent urban sprawl and to keep land within its designation permanently open. Built development ancillary to outdoor sport or recreation (which is permitted in the Green Belt) will need to demonstrate that the building’s function is genuinely ancillary and appropriate to the sporting or recreational use. **“...Inappropriate development will not be approved unless the applicant can demonstrate very special circumstances that will clearly outweigh the harm.”**



Sandown Park plans

The Esher Residents Association view

Sandown Park appears to be a very successful venue. Some 120,000 racegoers visit annually. In addition there are some 300 non-racing events attracting a similar number of people throughout the year. There are also many other successful sporting facilities which include a golf course, golf-range and centre, ski slope, squash courts, gym, go-karting and several other activities. There is also a well-used car park.

It is very difficult to see that any special circumstances exist to justify the harm caused by the building of blocks of flats on the Green Belt.

Building dwellings on Sandown would clearly be an inappropriate development of the Green Belt, reducing its openness and its ability to prevent urban sprawl. If allowed the most dangerous precedent would be set and this would drive a coach and horses through the Local Plan.

We very much hope that Jockey Club Racecourses Ltd. will not submit this outline planning application. Should they do so we will have no option but to vigorously oppose it.



Views from Portsmouth Road and Lower Green Road that will be lost should The Jockey Club build its proposed developments

High Street struggles

Benetton and Santander closures shock

Benetton closed on January 31st having been in business for twelve years. Owner Emma Smith blamed crippling rents and business rates, online shopping, traffic and the decline in footfall which resulted in her business losing money. "I appealed to my landlord and Elmbridge for a temporary reduction in my rent and business rates but both refused, so I was left with no other option."

If the loss of Benetton upset people, Santander's impending closure made them angry. Barclays will be the only bank left in Esher, apart from the Post Office. Santander's closure is a remote corporate decision, but an easy one for the company to make when Esher High Street is so uninviting.



Martin Newman, member of KPMG/IPSOS Retail ThinkTank, describes a mix of problems across the country, all of which are relevant to Esher:

"Consumers are looking for experiential retail. They want to be entertained and engaged. Landlords need to be more flexible with their leases, enabling artisan and independent retailers and pop-ups to fill the empty spaces on the high street. It also requires local authorities to re-think parking charges and consider providing free parking - at least for key shopping periods".



In the light of this, Elmbridge BC's raised parking charges across the borough seem ill advised.

We asked residents, what kind of shops they'd like in Esher. Unsurprisingly, they want a good butcher, a bakery, a bookshop and a deli.

Esher Residents Association would:

- **Work with landlords to get flexibility on rents to help start ups.**
- **Lobby SurreyCC for more traffic calming, including a 20mph limit.**
- **Push, over the long term, to change Hook Junction, allowing access to the A3, cutting Esher traffic significantly.**
- **Reverse rises in parking charges and deliver free weekend parking.**
- **Bring back a Farmer's Market.**

Harry Fletcher House

A missed opportunity

Harry Fletcher House is situated behind the High Street next to King George's Hall and the Civic Centre. This Council owned building houses the Citizens Advice Bureau and Relate.

Notification to the public (2018/3369) has been given by Elmbridge Borough Council of their intention to demolish this building to provide 26 parking places which are, apparently, required for more Council staff free parking, public service employees and some public use.

Quite apart from the difficulties that will be faced by the Citizens Advice Bureau and Relate having to relocate their services, the costs involved in excess of £200,000 for demolition etc. appear excessive.

Much has been made by government of the need to fully develop these valuable brownfield sites, particularly in the context of the need for affordable housing. This site, close to bus services and within half a mile of Esher station, would appear ideal for the provision of at least some affordable housing while the provision of parking spaces appears to be an extravagant underuse of the site.



Citizens Advice is urgently seeking appropriate new premises

We believe Harry Fletcher House should remain with the Citizens Advice Bureau and Relate until the Council has plans to make full and proper use of the site.

Lower Green Community Centre

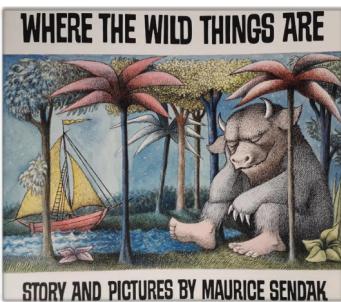
Update from Joanna Sansom

The centre now hosts a varied programme of weekly activities. This includes children's cookery, Explorer Scouts, an over 60s coffee morning, a parent and child drop-in and boxing for teens.

We also launched our community café, which runs every Monday and Thursday lunchtime, serving sandwiches and snacks at affordable prices.

There's been a great response, from the community to the Scouts wanting to set up new groups to run from the centre and we hope that we can repeat this success with a new Brownies group.

Our very keen group of potential new trustees has completed their training and are looking forward to getting started.



We had a great day at our event for National Storytelling Week in January. Claire helped us out with some story telling and crafts based on "Where the Wild Things Are". We also had a book swap of childrens' and adults' books.

We have had a great February so far, including a sing-along for Valentine's Day at our over 60s coffee morning, led by the RC Sherriff Trust, and mini tennis and bird boxing making for young people in half term.

The community centre is available for hire for parties, meetings and other events. For more information please contact Joanna Sansom on: Joannas@surreyca.org.uk.

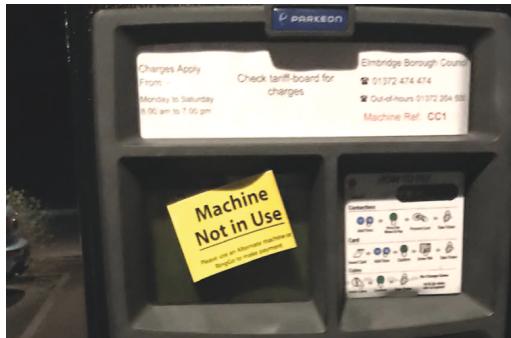


In other news...

Parking charges rise

Parking charges across Elmbridge rose on January 7th. These rises were passed with a slim majority against fierce opposition from Elmbridge Residents Group councillors. The upshot is that, while the High Street is

struggling and ElmbridgeBC employees enjoy free parking at work, the rest of us are paying more to park. Lower paid workers, who park all day are paying significantly higher charges and are now reduced to looking elsewhere for places to park.



Not everyone was prepared for the changes...

Planning

Our website's planning section is updated every month. Here are some highlights - the bracketed numbers relate to Elmbridge's planning portal elmburidge.gov.uk/planning.

The Jolly Boatman site, opposite Hampton Court Palace (2018/3810) abuts the Esher Ward and should be of major interest to anyone locally.

45 More Lane's developers (2019/0215) continue to push for permission for a large care home on the former site of one family house.

Residents of West End Lane are deeply concerned about land northwest of 40 West End Lane (2018/3831) - the construction of an oversized house on the site of a single garage with a dangerously poor road exit.

Land south of Halfpenny Cottage West End Lane, (2018/1909) adjacent to the Esher Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for a two-storey house was refused permission because of, amongst other things, its potential harmful impact on protected newts and lizards. Now that's something unique and special and one that outweighed the need for a residential unit in the Borough.



Local elections MAY 2

Richard Williams: Our candidate on May 2nd

Richard Williams will, again, be the ERA candidate in the local elections on 2nd May. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, he is now partly retired and involved with the Samaritans as a listening volunteer and a mentor.



Most recently, he has joined the team of trustees of the newly refurbished Lower Green Community Centre. A member of the Esher Conservation Area Advisory Committee, he has a strong interest in the built environment.

“This past year I’ve worked closely with the ERA and other elected independent councillors in Elmbridge on local issues that really concern people, from parking costs to relentless developers.

Now, ahead of us lie Sandown’s development plans for flats on the Green Belt and the demolition of Harry Fletcher House, forcing out Relate and the Citizens Advice Bureau without a properly planned redevelopment of this precious brownfield Council asset.

Local government has a responsibility to manage its finances, but that doesn’t mean denying people the valuable services and amenities they all need and want - and that includes a thriving High Street.

I firmly believe that local politics are better run by committed local people with no dead weight of central party dogma and that’s why I’m going to fight hard for your vote in May to become your Esher councillor”.

The brown envelope...

We have enclosed an envelope suggesting a donation of £10 to help us run the ERA. Unlike the national parties, we are run entirely by volunteers and this newsletter, our website and all other activities are paid for by donations received from people like you. If you’ve read and enjoyed this newsletter and value what we do and would like us to continue our work, please do contribute - we are suggesting £10, but if you’d prefer to give less, (or more!) that’s fine too.

helloesher@icloud.com

 @esheronline

www.esher-residents.com

 @esherresidents