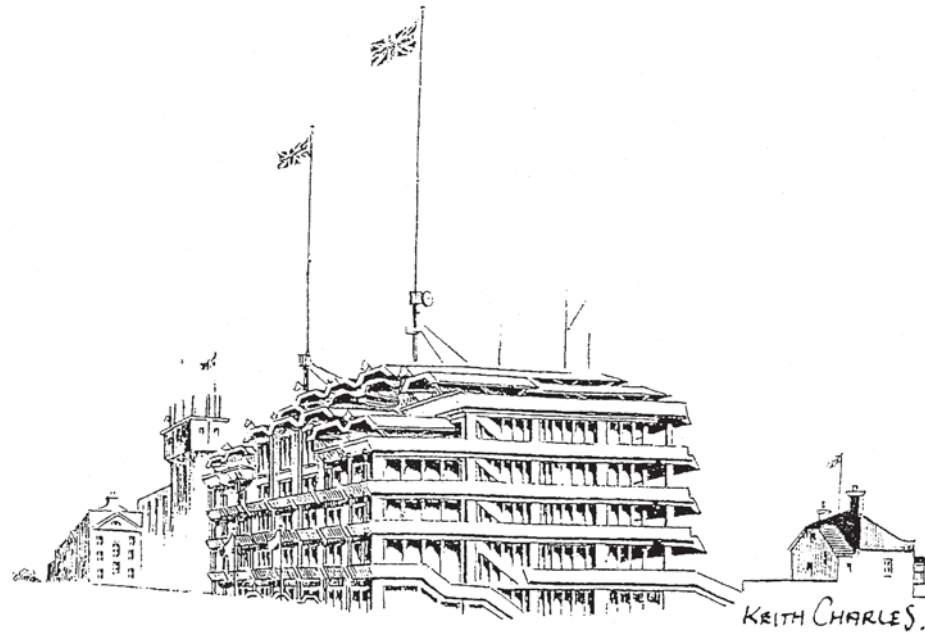


WOODCOTE (EPSOM) RESIDENTS' SOCIETY
Proud to represent the whole of Woodcote Ward

AUTUMN 2007 NEWSLETTER



Visit our website on:
www.epsom-ewell.co.uk/wood.php



Committee for 2007/08

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Our Woodcote Ward RA Borough Councillors			
Teresa Cass	1 Headley Parade, Langley Vale Rd, KT18 6AW	tbc	tcass@epsom-ewell.gov.uk
Mike Richardson	23 Hambledon Hill, KT18 7BZ	745784	mrichardson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk
Our RA Surrey County Councillor			
Chris Frost	Oak View, 8 Warren Hill, KT18 7BX	720430	c.frost@surreycc.gov.uk



Teresa Cass
RA Borough Councillor



Mike Richardson
RA Borough Councillor



Chris Frost
RA Surrey County Councillor

Membership and Subscriptions

Please note that your 2007 subs are now due.

Your local Road Rep or a committee member should be coming round to collect any outstanding subs but if you haven't yet paid, why not knock on your Road Rep's door to save them having to come to you!

The annual subs are a modest £2 per household and they help towards the cost of running the Society.

If you are new to the ward and you are interested in finding out more about this area and about your local Residents' Society, please do contact any one of the committee listed on the page 2 contact list.

Chairman's Introduction

The summer is now behind us and we must again face those issues that have not gone away, the down grading of Epsom Hospital being the most urgent. We must also be prepared to deal with other issues as they arise. To continue with the good work of the Woodcote Residents Society, we need to have a strong committee who are prepared to give a couple of hours of their time once a month.

We have been very lucky in the past to have people who have been dedicated in their work for the community, however several members now feel the time is right for them to step down and allow other people with fresh ideas to come forward. I would like to thank these committee members for their work and dedication to the society over the many years they have been involved.

We are always grateful for any support that the residents of Woodcote ward feel they can

offer, so apart from new committee members we also need road reps.

We know how busy everyone is nowadays, but we really do need people to come forward and help. It involves a couple of hours a month for committee members, which is very little time really to give up, or if you would like to become a road rep, this again is a very small amount of time over the year.

Alternatively this would mean not having a full committee to support our Woodcote RA Councillors for the rest of this 4 year term of office which we are obviously determined to avoid.

If you feel you can help or if you have any questions, comments, or queries please feel free to contact anyone of us.

Rob Blackwell
Chairman

News from the Borough Council

Key Priorities 2007 – 2011

Now that we are starting a new Council term an updated Corporate Plan is being prepared. As part of this, Key Priorities have been developed using evidence from resident's surveys, specific topic consultations, satisfaction surveys and issues arising during the election.

The Council, of course, provides a wide range of services that are important both to residents and the council but the Key priorities outlined below are the areas where resources will be focussed to achieve change. The agreed priorities for 2007 / 2011 are:-

- Increasing the rate of recycling in a cost-effective way
- Enhancing the visual appearance of the local environment
- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Promoting sustainability and tackling issues of climate change
- Championing local health issues
- Enhancing services for young people

Recycling – Update

Recycling is going from strength to strength with a recycling rate of 30%, an increase of 12% on this time last year. Much of this is due to the garden waste collection service introduced at the end

of November 2006. This has proved to be more popular than predicted with the number of subscribers now around 7,500 and still growing at a steady rate. For those who prefer to compost their own garden waste there have now been over 14,500 compost bins sold.

At the Kiln Lane (Sainsbury's) recycling centre the number of bins for plastic bottles has been increased to 16 with 4 more expected shortly. These are yielding over two tonnes of plastic per month. At the same site Tetrapak / drinks carton bins have been installed and the very poor quality paper / cardboard banks are due to be replaced within the next couple of months with brand new front loading ones from an alternative supplier.

For future plans on recycling see the article else where in this newsletter.

Epsom Common

Lavandou Stables – Chalk Lane

Many of you may already be aware that there has been an increase in activity surrounding this site over the last few months in fact you may have already signed one of the two petitions that are currently circulating. Although at the time of going to press there is still no planning application submitted we are expecting one shortly.

Mike (Richardson) and I are very aware that there is a great deal of concern surrounding this potential development and you may be wondering why we have not been very vocal with regards to this site.

There are lots of rules and regulations as to

Following the announcement of Foot and Mouth Disease in Surrey, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council have enhanced its bio-security measures for the cattle on Epsom Common in accordance with Government advice to farmers outside the surveillance zone. The measures include closing some of the access points to the grazing area on the Common, placing straw and disinfectant at the remaining access points and cancelling the Woodland and Craft Day.

The cattle are an integral part of the biodiversity and landscape improvement plan for the Common and are checked regularly. When the movement restrictions are lifted, the cattle will return as planned to their usual winter grazing farm.

***Cllr. Mike Richardson
RA Woodcote Ward***

what a councillor can and can't do in respect of publicly speaking about a planning application. Mike and I were elected by you to be your representatives on the council. We must be careful not to jeopardise our ability to properly represent your views within the formal planning process. Please see the article elsewhere in this issue entitled "Planning Decisions" written by a fellow councillor. This will explain the situation in more detail. Please be assured that behind the scenes Mike and I have worked, since the election, to gather as much information as possible about this and other issues. In this case we have visited the site, spoken to the planning

officers at great length, read through pages of Planning Guides and been regular observers at the Epsom Equestrian Preservation Group meetings. We are doing everything possible to be prepared for an application.

We also need your help. In order for us to truly represent your views, we have to know what they are. Please do write to the council expressing your views once the planning

application has been submitted. (Planning applications are updated onto the EEBC website every Friday.)

If you have any questions regarding the above, please do not hesitate to contact Mike or me either by email, post or telephone.

***Cllr. Teresa Cass
RA Woodcote Ward***

Come to a Committee Meeting

As a member of the Society you are very welcome to attend the open session of our committee meetings, between 8 and 9pm – we want to hear about queries or issues that you may have.

Our meetings are usually held in the Epsom Sports Club (in Woodcote Road) but we are planning to have them elsewhere in the ward too.

Please call our Secretary (Kathy Belcher) to confirm the next meeting date and venue if you plan to come along.

Recycling – Future Plans

It has already been said elsewhere in this newsletter that one of the Council's key priorities is to increase the rate of recycling in the borough in a cost effective way. Currently the recycling costs are one of the lowest nationally but equally important is that the recycling service should meet with the approval of residents. According to independent statistics produced by the Audit Commission, the council achieves one of the highest levels of satisfaction for its recycling service in Surrey and we aim to keep it that way.

The fact that cans, glass bottles, paper, textiles ("dry" recyclables) and garden waste are already collected separately leaves food waste, cardboard and dense plastic remaining in the bin which are potentially recyclable. These comprise approximately 28%, 9% and 2% by weight respectively of all the residual materials.

The council has to renew its transport fleet

(which includes refuse vehicles) in October 2008 and it is therefore looking ahead to what it could be doing regarding recycling in order to prepare for bids and a new contract. New vehicles are becoming available to collect a number of recyclables in one lorry which will enable the council to offer an enhanced collection service.

Therefore, it is proposed to update and further develop the recycling service by:-

- collecting kitchen (food) waste weekly
- starting to collect both cardboard and plastic
- continuing the separate collection of dry recyclables
- further expanding the garden waste service

The aim is to provide a recycling service that ranks amongst the highest nationally on all three indicators – a high recycling rate, cost effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

Epsom Hospital - Update

Surrey Primary Care Trust (PCT) have announced that they will not consider service changes at Epsom General Hospital until after taking account of the London health consultation due to start in November. At its latest board meeting, they agreed to join London PCTs in consulting on a proposed new model of healthcare for the capital to ensure Surrey residents had a voice in any new arrangements. The London consultation stems from Professor Sir Ara Darzi's Framework for Action and will include the Epsom area.

Although for the time being Surrey PCT will not be formally consulting on Epsom hospital changes, it has agreed with Epsom & St Helier Trust and the Sutton and Merton PCT to further work on the options for changes to maternity and paediatric care at both Epsom and St Helier. This will be in parallel with Framework for Action.

RA Councillor Chris Long, Chairman of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Social Committee, has said she will be seeking an early meeting with local health bosses. "We must have some clear answers over what exactly the future holds for our local general hospital."

Meanwhile the Epsom & St. Helier Trust are considering a revised proposal from Adrian White, founder of the Denbies Trust, to purchase the Epsom hospital site and dedicate it to the community with the NHS occupying accommodation rent free. We understand that Mr White has recently had a meeting with the Minister of State for Health at which he presented his proposals in some detail. The Minister made it clear any decisions would rest with Surrey PCT. Mr White is therefore keen to advise residents who support his proposal to write to the Surrey PCT and to encourage their GPs to do the same.

We really need your help...

One of the most important aspects for Mike and me as councillors is that we have regular contact with as many people as possible across the ward; however you will appreciate that it is almost impossible to visit each of the 2,000+ households on a regular basis. Although we already have a dedicated group of road reps, there are several areas of the ward that have no cover at the moment.

That's why we really need your help:

- Do you want to be part of a group of residents helping to maintain and improve Woodcote Ward and Epsom and Ewell?
- Are you someone who already talks to your neighbours about issues affecting your neighbourhood and Epsom generally?
- Do you care enough about your local area to give us a couple of hours a year?
- Would you like to get to know your neighbours and local community better?

We need more people to be our eyes and ears. We need to complete our network of people who can feed very local issues, concerns or problems to us quickly and whom we can also contact should we need any feedback regarding council matters. To be effective councillors, it is vital that we represent the views of the residents within our ward. We can do a better job of this with your participation.

This is your chance to give something back to your local community!

We cannot do this on our own – We need your help and involvement too.

Please email me at tcass@epsom-ewell.gov.uk or write to me at the address at the front of this Newsletter if you would like to help.

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Cllr. Teresa Cass
RA Woodcote Ward*

News from Surrey County Council

Benefit checks for the over 60's

The county council has made an arrangement with the Local Pension Service that will enable residents to check to see if they are entitled to any welfare benefits. There is a simple form to complete and send to the county council's office in Woking. The Pension Service will then assist with the completion of any forms necessary to claim benefits.

Longer opening hours for libraries

The libraries service is gradually rolling out a programme of self-service for the issue and return of borrowed items. This is releasing staff from counter duties, and will allow the service to extend opening hours on average throughout the county.

At the same time, the opportunity is being taken to standardise hours of opening across the county. Libraries will be placed in one of three groups. For the ones in town centres, opening time will be 9.00 a.m. from Monday to Saturday. Where they are currently open until 8.00 p.m., they will close at 7.00 p.m. This reflects the fact that very few people use libraries after 7.00 p.m.

South East Plan Inspectors' Report on Housing Numbers

This report was released at the end of August. It recommends an increase of 10% across the South East region from 28,900 to 32,000 dwellings per annum. For Surrey, the inspectors recommended that the total number of new dwellings between 2006 and 2026 be increased

from 47,200 (at the current Surrey Structure Plan rate of 2,360 a year) to 56,660. This equates to an extra 9,460 dwellings over 20 years. The areas that are being identified for the main volume of housing numbers within Surrey are the London and Western fringes, the former being identified as an 'area of growth'.

Given that to date, Surrey has built consistently above the Structure Plan rate, the inspectors' proposed housing volume increase is not viewed as unrealistic. It does, however, suggest that some greenbelt sites will come under review. All County Councillors, with their Borough Council colleagues, will be watching this developing situation very carefully, ready to defend any Green Belt that is under pressure for development.

Waste minimization campaign

Surrey County Council will be running a countywide campaign on waste minimisation awareness from September. In preparation for that, a market research agency has been commissioned to conduct a survey (online and offline) to gauge the attitudes and behaviour of Surrey residents towards the disposal of their household waste. The survey is available at www.surreycc.gov.uk/notimetowaste and takes about 10 minutes to complete. Respondents will also go in the draw to win one of five £100 John Lewis vouchers.

Surrey Community Transport Directory

The Council has published a Directory that gives details of community transport schemes available across Surrey. It includes those organised by voluntary bodies.

Campaign to Reduce Speeding Traffic

A new campaign has started across Surrey, aimed at warning drivers about the potential fatal consequences of speeding. It is called 'How would you tell Amy?'. The associated poster shows a young girl crying, as drivers are asked 'How would you tell Amy that you've killed her parents?'. There were 4,684 recorded collisions on Surrey's roads last year. 749 (16%) were recorded as being caused by motorists either exceeding the speed limit or driving too fast for the conditions.

Foot & Mouth

The County's Trading Standards and Emergency Planning Unit are heavily involved in dealing with the consequences of the Foot & Mouth outbreak. There is up to date information about the current protection and surveillance zones on the Surrey County Council website.

Adult Learning

The East Surrey College at Redhill has successfully bid for the contract to run adult education courses in Epsom & Ewell. Classes will be held at Bourne Hall and Ewell Court, and not the old centre in Epsom.

*Cllr Chris Frost
RA Surrey
Epsom & Ewell South East*

Treasurer Required "Out with the Old in with the New"

The powers that be thought that I should add my pleas to theirs of a Treasurer. I therefore thought that I would set out in plain terms what is involved.

Firstly you do not have to be an accountant, being able to keep your own bank account is sufficient expertise. In fact, because we have a Treasurers Account at a Building Society, it is all very straight forward. Whenever you need to draw money, you simply request a cheque from the Building Society and that withdrawal is entered into the Account book and if you have money to pay in, it is just like paying in to your own bank account.

What you do need is some knowledge of "MS Excel" as our records are spreadsheet based. The Accounts analysis is automatic.

I am sure that there are lots of people who are familiar with Excel or databases and could in fact improve on the system for recording membership which we have. This is a very simple record of the Road Representatives returns to us recorded by name, address and subscription year.

That is really all there is to it! Is it fun –yes (mainly!) and I did it while travelling all over Europe, North America and Southern Africa so it is not that time intensive.

If you might be interested and would like to have a chat about it in more detail, then please do give me a call.

*Ian Allely
Treasurer*

Tennis for Free



Tennis For Free is an initiative that aims to increase participation in tennis nationwide for all ages regardless of ability, background, race and financial circumstance.

The overriding aim of Tennis For Free (TFF) is to provide FREE access to community tennis courts in local recreation parks for as wide a range of the UK population as possible.

TFF is working in partnership with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to achieve the goal of providing free professional coaching sessions and equipment within the Borough. Following the very successful launch of the Tennis scheme, regular sessions now take

place every Saturday from 1.00 – 5.00pm and are open to all ages from 4 years old and upwards.

Sessions are as follows:

- 1 - 2 pm 4 - 8 yrs
- 2 - 3 pm 8 - 16 yrs
- 3 - 4 pm 4 - 8 yrs
- 4 - 5 pm Adults

Parents are encouraged to stay at the courts to learn how they can play tennis with their children and perhaps have a game themselves. The Tennis For Free Coach and Assistant will be there to help you ... we hope to see you there!

Contact Epsom & Ewell Council for more information (01372 732000).

Noticeboard

Desperately Seeking... New Treasurer

Our Treasurer, Ian Allely, is planning to retire from the committee so we are looking for someone to replace him as soon as possible. Ian assures us that the role of Treasurer is really straightforward and that anyone with a good head for figures or basic bookkeeping skills could take this role on. Please see his article elsewhere in this newsletter.

Autumn Health Walks

Did you know that Epsom & Ewell offer FREE health walks throughout autumn? There is a programme of walks to suit all ages and levels of fitness on Mondays, Wednesdays and Sundays. There are walks round Epsom Common, Banstead Woods, Oxshott Heath and Nonsuch Park to name but a few places. Contact the 'Let's Get Active' Project Coordinator, Paul Crane, on 01372 732185 (or email him at pcrane@epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

Dark Evenings

Now that that evenings are drawing in, it is much more obvious which street lights are not working! If you notice a street light out of action, please do report it to Surrey County Council who are responsible for repairs. All street lights should have a number indicator on them and it really helps if you can get that number when you are reporting it. Call the Surrey County Council Contact Centre on 08456 009009 or report it via their website (www.surreycc.gov.uk).

Warren Wall, Langley Vale

As part of preserving this historic listed structure some shrub and tree clearance was carried out earlier this year. More clearance work is scheduled for March next year and residents willing to help will be very welcome and should contact the chairman Rob Blackwell (Tel. No. 274995).

Planning Issues

Woodcote Ward is at present dominated by a number of large planning applications with huge implications for our area. The Society has always endeavored to inform our residents of the progress of applications and advise dates by which residents, themselves, may comment. Hereunder is the current situation on applications giving concern:

ROSEBERY SCHOOL – APPEAL P3610/A/07/2043456 (against Epsom & Ewell Council) sought approval of details of the siting, design, external appearance of the housing development and the landscaping. Epsom Council refused detailed approval implying the design looked like barrack blocks and the provision of car-parking beneath the oak tree on the north-west corner would adversely affect the health of the nearest oak and threaten the retention of other trees along this boundary.

The Society wrote to the Council objecting to the developers detailed plans and also wrote to the Planning Inspectorate supporting the Council's decision.

Appeal Verdict by the Planning Inspectorate after site visit 13 August 2007: Dismissed

18 forceful reasons were supplied including:

“2. I consider that the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

6. The submitted details indicate Block C angled across towards the footpath to a position that would be very close to the site

boundary at its southern end. Because of its height, width and orientation the building would have a substantial presence in the view when walking along the footpath. Although there is some set back at second floor level at each end and some articulation of the footprint, the central part of the building would incorporate a series of fully expressed three storey flat roofed blocks which, in my view, would appear plain, bulky and unattractive.

8. Therefore, while recognizing that any development pursuant to the previous permission on this site would completely change the view from the public footpath, I consider that the combination of the proximity and unattractive appearance of the east elevation of Block C and the restricted view of the turkey oak tree would significantly detract both from public enjoyment of using the footpath and more generally from the character and appearance of the area.”

AMENDED PLANS – DETAIL OF DWELLINGS (ROSEBERY SCHOOL) REF: 07/00535

Submitted to Council after Appeal dismissed.

In order to overcome the objections to the previous flat roofed scheme, the main changes drawn-up by Ruskin Homes were:

- i) The amended plans submitted were based on a pitched roof design.
- ii) The previous block C alongside the footpath was split into 2 separate blocks to improve the setting of the Turkey Oak and the relationship to the footpath.

Planning Issues Continued

- iii) The parking under the canopy of the oak tree by the railway was relocated.

The Society queried the felling of 12 trees at the Rosebank footpath entrance. The Society asked that consideration be given to a two part barrier prohibiting unauthorised motorcycle or other vehicle access at the Rosebank footpath entrance.

At the Council Planning Committee meeting on 11th October, Ruskin Homes' amended plans were approved (with some conditions).

ROSEBERY SCHOOL HOCKEY PITCH – Residents have seen conduit cable being installed at the site. The Society has approached the Council for clarification and the Senior Planner has advised that the development that was granted permission by the inspector on appeal in October 2006 was for a sports hall, a swimming pool, an all weather pitch, 4 tennis courts and 72 residential units. Whilst no flood lighting was proposed for the all weather pitch, there was floodlighting to 2 of the tennis courts. If the school wanted to install any more floodlights it would need to apply for further planning permission.

PUBLIC HEARING APPEAL – PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT 8-12 DORKING ROAD & ELM GROVE

Block A 30 sheltered apartments for the elderly, ancillary lodge, managers accommodation and community facilities; Block B 5 self-contained apartments for the elderly.

Epsom Borough Council has TWICE refused this planning application. The Appeal was heard in the Council Chambers 25/26 September 2007.

The Society has supported the Council's views on both occasions, considering the over-development of gardens and the only entrance to such a large site via Elm Grove impractical with White Horse Drive and Elm Grove already congested with parking.

The Appellant – Churchill Homes - introduced a new set of drawings 31 August acknowledging the Council's point that the Dorking Road development was too imposing on the Clock House. The new drawings also introduced a wider entrance to the site.

On the first day of the Hearing (25 Sept), Churchill Homes also introduced the fact that they would offer the 5 self-contained apartments as “sheltered affordable accommodation”. They also offered at the Hearing to compensate for their loss of supply of affordable housing by offering monetary compensation but disputed the percentage which should be allocated to this site.

The Council's Barrister did not accept that sheltered affordable accommodation was a first-requirement by Epsom Council. The Council's need was to provide “affordable housing” to meet the needs of nurses/police and less well-off members of society.

The Inspectorate will make his recommendation November/December. It appeared that his focus would be to what extent the “affordable housing” percentage should be applied and whether the development could accommodate a mix of straightforward “affordable accommodation” requiring more parking and diverse noise levels to that of a sheltered development.

Planning Decisions

We would like to thank Cllr Robert Leach, RA Councillor for Auriol Ward, for allowing us to publish this article in our newsletter.

Councillors are not allowed to discuss the merits of a planning application before it is determined by the council. This can sometimes lead to frustration by residents or Residents Associations who wonder why the councillors they elected cannot promise to support their views. This article explains why and shows that Residents Associations can still play a significant role in planning matters.

There are two main types of council committee: policy and regulatory. Our policy committees are strategy and resources, leisure, environment and social. They deal with such issues as refuse collection, council tax and maintaining the parks. On these issues, councillors may discuss policies quite freely with residents and RAs.

The regulatory committees are planning, licensing, standards and scrutiny. These committees, particularly planning and licensing, are “quasi-judicial”. This means that they function similarly to a court of law. Councillors are required to judge a matter on the evidence presented to it.

If you had a court case coming up, you would not expect to be able to speak to the judge in advance to get him on your side before the case started. You would not want the other side to do so either.

Similarly, a councillor may not express an opinion before the hearing to determine an application. The councillor must listen to what officers recommend and to what any public speakers and their colleagues say before coming to a final conclusion.

A councillor who expresses an opinion on an application is disqualified from taking part in hearing that application. If the councillor does still take part, the councillor has breached provisions under the Local Government Act 2000. Some councillors in other authorities have been disqualified for doing just that.

In enforcing this provision, the Standards Board of England makes a distinction between **predisposition** and **predetermination**. Only the latter disqualifies a councillor.

Predisposition are the provisional opinions a councillor forms. When looking at plans or the agenda for the planning committee, a councillor may think that a development looks very attractive but seems to have little parking. Or he may think that the building looks too tall but has a well-designed access. Forming these provisional opinions is not a problem, provided that the councillor’s mind is not closed on the matter.

Predetermination is when the councillor’s mind is fixed before the hearing, and this disqualifies that councillor from participating in the

hearing. This may arise because the councillor has expressed a general view which predetermines an application such as saying “I will never vote for a back land development” or “I will support any proposal to provide more shops in my ward”. Alternatively, predetermination arises from a comment relevant to a particular application, such as “I will be voting against this development”.

Despite this restriction, councillors and Residents Associations can still play a full part in the planning process. It may be helpful to explain how.

- Residents and RAs are still completely free to discuss planning applications and to express their views. The rules on pre-determination only apply to councillors, not to other RA officers or members.
- Councillors can discuss planning policies in general, such as whether we could allow taller buildings or need more shops, provided that the councillor says nothing which could predetermine any future application.
- Councillors can simply *listen* to what residents and RAs say, without making any comment themselves.
- Councillors can explain planning procedures, such as saying when an application is likely to be heard, and explaining about the right to address the planning committee. All residents can look at applications on

the council’s website, and can send in their comments which are always considered in making the decision.

- Councillors can arrange to call in a planning application so that it is heard by the committee and not decided by officers. This is often advisable if an application causes local controversy. It can then be heard in a public forum where everyone can have their say, and everyone can hear the arguments used and the reasons for the decision. Calling in an application does not necessarily mean that the councillor will vote against it.
- Councillors can discuss specific planning applications *after* they have been decided to explain how they voted and why, provided this does not amount to predetermining any future application.

The council is finalising a policy document which will explain this in more detail.

Unfortunately our political opponents have sometimes campaigned on planning issues in a way that RA councillors do not. Experience has shown that residents and RAs do understand why their councillors are restricted on what they may say about live planning applications. The rules are designed to maintain integrity in the system and to be fair to both applicants and objectors. Residents may rest assured that their RA councillors stick to these rules.