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Mr Mark Berry
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Dear Mr Berry

Proposals for Development at Epsom Station

On Monday, 30th November, I chaired a public meeting, attended by approximately 50 residents, at the Phoenix Club in Depot Road, Epsom, to discuss the proposals of Solum Regeneration for development at Epsom Station. It was agreed at the meeting that comments made would be noted and passed on to the Epsom and Ewell Planning Department given that it is our understanding that a planning application for this development has now been submitted. I advised those attending the meeting that they should inspect the planning application themselves once this is in the public domain and that they should then submit their own comments on the proposals during the consultation period.

There was a very considerable degree of agreement among those attending the meeting on the three principal areas of concern - the size of the proposed new building, the various uses to which the building would be put, and the proposals for traffic and parking management that it is understood are included in the proposals. I deal with each of these topics below.

Size

There was, broadly, acceptance that, in order to pay for £4.5 million of station improvements, some development on at least part of the Epsom Station site was probably inevitable. There was, however, more or less total opposition to an up to seven storey building at this location - this was perceived as out of scale with most of the rest of the Town Centre. Adverse comments were made about the height and visual impact of the relatively new Hudson House residential complex opposite the proposed development. Concerns were expressed that the facade of the station proposals might look like Hudson House, rather than being finished in "traditional" red brick.

There were also concerns that Station Approach would be turned into a "wind tunnel" and that the overall effect would be "claustrophobic". In addition, residents living to the north

of the railway embankment - in Horsley Close, Hazon Way, Maidenshaw Road, and Gosfield Road - were concerned that the new development would be visible from their properties. There was a consensus that any new development should be no taller than the existing canopies over the station platforms.

Uses

There was broad agreement that, whatever the size of the new development, the proposals should only incorporate housing, together with associated integral parking. Proposals to include a 64 bedroom hotel and three retail/restaurant units in the development had little support. There was scepticism as to whether Epsom needs another hotel, given that two relatively new hotels have opened in the area - the Holiday Inn Express near the Grandstand and the Travel Inn in Dorking Road - and a third has been proposed for the West Park area. There were also concerns that the hotel would have no dedicated parking spaces for either guests or employees. It was thought that this would result simply in more on-street parking along residential roads near the Town Centre. Details were requested about "the discussions that are taking place with local car park owners" who might offer a "guest rate for visitors to the hotel." It was anticipated that there could be noise and light pollution generated by a hotel in this location and that deliveries to the hotel, and to the retail/restaurant units, together with waste collection, could cause traffic congestion.

Questions were raised as to why retail/restaurant units were needed at this location, given the station's proximity to Epsom Town Centre and the location of a food store in the new development immediately opposite the entrance to Epsom Station. There would be some support for retaining a retail outlet associated with the station, such as a newsagent/confectioners.

Traffic Movement and Parking

These issues probably generated most comments during the meeting. All agreed that arrangements for dropping off passengers and picking them up at the station should be a priority and that, at the least, future facilities should be no worse than those provided at present. There was a particular issue as to how taxis would operate from Epsom Station in the future. In addition there were some concerns about the very low ratio of parking to homes proposed for the new development (35 spaces for 124 homes) and whether plans for a "car club scheme" were viable - where, for example, would the vehicles for this be parked?

There was a general feeling that the current, informal arrangements for dropping passengers off and picking them up do work. There were concerns that the proposals to remove both the ground level parking area adjacent to the station and the approach to the taxi lay-by immediately outside the station would result in private cars parking along much of the length of Station Approach as they drop off, and, in particular, wait for station users. There were fears that this, in turn, would cause significant traffic congestion extending into Epsom Town Centre at certain times of the day, notably during the

evening rush hour and at the end of the school day. The implications for emergency vehicles attempting to pass through this area at times of congestion were raised. There was scepticism about the validity of a survey that had shown a high proportion of those using Epsom Station travel there by foot.

There was considerable support for the retention of a taxi rank immediately outside Epsom Station. Concerns were expressed that disabled and infirm travellers, and those with heavy luggage, would be seriously inconvenienced unless the taxi rank is kept. The suggestion was made that the new building could be cantilevered out above the area where the taxi rank is currently located.

Concerns were expressed that, in order to accommodate more parked vehicles, part of the railway embankment north of the station might be removed. This would be resisted by residents of Horsley Close.

I would be grateful if you would ensure that this letter is circulated to all members of the Planning Committee before this matter is considered by them.

Yours faithfully

Timothy Murphy