

To: Inspector: C Masters MA (Hons) FRTPI

Via: Ms Charlotte Glancy

Deadline: 20th May 2024

Subject matter: Elmbridge Borough Council - Local Plan 2019 – Stage 2

Comments from: Ms Sophie Roger

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I understand that I am commenting on problems and issues in the LP within the scope of Land Allocation only.

My comments will address only Hersham. I have been a resident for 22 years.

With respect for your time, I will try to be concise, much more than I would wish to be.

1. **Problem 1: Lack of access to genuine, usable information:** I sent a detailed response to the Plan at the time of the Consultation and have read hundreds of pages of material, including comments from fellow residents. This is one of the problems: the mass of paperwork (thousands of pages), the needless repetition and the jargon used are hermetic to a non-specialist. I apologise for inevitable mistakes.
2. **Problem 2: Lack of consultation:** In the last three years that we have been aware of the huge problem that the LP represents for Hersham, I have found that EBC has responded without kindness and with the constant objective to browbeat residents, despite the growing unease and the anger raised by their deafness to genuine concerns.

There were virtually no changes to the LP despite hundreds of replies, more in Hersham than in all the other areas of the LP combined. For Hersham Library alone 600+ individual objections were sent to EBC without any response.

We find today that leaders and decision makers were not informed of the number of objections.

The current objection campaign to fight against the New Berry Lane Park included in site US379 Hersham Shopping Centre redevelopment has raised 4000 replies, 40% of the total adult population of Hersham (approx. 9500 residents).

There are 1743 individual objections to the Hersham Centre redevelopment itself, 18% of the total adult population.

EBC Planning Comment website 20th May 2024

Public Comment - Object 1743 documents found

Despite these enormous numbers, no further consultations occurred, no changes were made to the LP.

- 3. Problem 3: Ignoring Community Use – Library:** The LP aims to be a positive document. With regard to Hersham, it was a very negative one. As the national guidelines for housing were still in place a wave of panic to meet them meant that unsuitable sites in Hersham were selected, as if they were immediately available and without consultation, including sites for which the owners had not even been contacted.

In the case of Hersham Library, site H15, a covenant is in place and the space cannot be used for anything but a library.

On the 21st July 1961 according to Title Number SY271312 from the Land Registry Department a conveyance was made between the Urban District Council of Walton and Weybridge (known as the Vendors and later becoming Elmbridge Borough Council) and the County Council of the Administrative County of Surrey which contained the following covenant:

For the benefit of the Vendor's adjoining land the Purchasers hereby covenant that the land hereby conveyed shall be used for the purpose of erecting a Public Library and for no other purpose without first obtaining the consent of the Vendors such consent not to be unreasonably withheld.

EBC does not even guarantee a library, only unspecified community use:

LP Page 100: H15 US374 Hersham Library, Molesey Road, Hersham, KT12 4RF
11-15 13 residential units and re-provision of community use.

Furthermore, Libraries are especially important for the UK. They are protected under a special Act.

Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 - 1964 CHAPTER 75

An Act to place the public library service provided by local authorities in England and Wales under the superintendence of the Secretary of State, to make new provision for regulating and improving that service... etc.

From the commencement of this Act it shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in England and Wales, and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred on them as library authorities by or under this Act.

The Library has been targeted for closure 6 times in total since its opening in 1964. In 2006 a Friends of Hersham Library group (FHL) was created specifically to protect it. Surrey County Council has given an award to the FHL for its dedication in preserving the Library, it was refurbished in 2012 while at the same time they made plans to close it. It makes no sense. Leave our library alone!

- 4. Problem 4: Ignoring Community Use – Village Hall**

LP Page 100: H6 US40 Hersham Day Centre and Village Hall, Queens Road, Hersham, KT12- 5LU 6-10 15 residential units/mixed-use

The Village Hall has been targeted for redevelopment for at least a decade. It was closed under a fire safety pretext after the June 2017 Grenfell Tower devastating fire. It remained closed for years while the Hersham Day Centre, which is adjacent and shares a boiler with it, was refurbished. After a pre-COVID protest meeting which attracted 200+ local residents to protest the closure, it was refurbished and reopened but the local community was prevented from using it: it is rented for only three nights a week to a private trampoline company with no access to locals at all. This is a betrayal of the community, and a divisive tactic to run down its use and make it available in the LP to fulfil housing targets.

In December 2023 the Day Centre was closed and has only recently reopened with a limited timetable, even though it is supposed to cater for hundreds of vulnerable people. It is a scandal and completely in line with the objectives of the LP to sell off the Council's assets.

After such crucial assets are sold the Council will never be able to afford the commercial rents the new owners will demand for such sites and the services will disappear.

5. Problem 5: Shopping Centre – Flood risks

There is not enough provision in the LP with regard to Flood Risks. This is highlighted as a problem in many residents' comments. This is crucial in Hersham and particularly to US379, Hersham Shopping Centre, the car park is 150 metres from the flood defences at the back of Paul Vance Court, the sheltered accommodation building at the back of the Shopping Centre Car Park.

LP Page 100: H3 US379 Hersham Shopping Centre, Molesey Road, Hersham 1-5
200 residential units

During the last flood, the water rose to just under a foot below the current defences. To raise the number of possible dwellings in such a place is irresponsible. Even a one-story underground car park will be flooded which means that no car parking will be possible except above ground.

To put a supermarket, shops and 200 habitations and suitable parking on such a limited space is impossible except with a many multi-storey development totally out of character with the area. The street is consistently two-storey, not five or six!

Any building of this sort will break all the rules and recommendation in the LP and in the recently adopted Design Code in term of local feel, elevation, privacy, light, existing character, typologies, etc. The local infant school would be overlooked.

6. Problem 6: Shopping Centre – 'Mistakes'

LP Page 100: H3 US379 Hersham Shopping Centre, Molesey Road, Hersham 1-5
200 residential units

Originally (summer 2021) it was not clear whether the redevelopment proposed was for only the Waitrose space or Waitrose and the 300 space car park.

In some versions of the LP, the New Berry Lane Car Park is included in the site, in others it is not. It was specifically built for local residents to access the dentist, pharmacy and doctors' surgery. It is also a main access road to Burhill Infant School (700+ pupils).

Emails have been revealed that show that the Council recommended the inclusion of New Berry Lane Car Park in any upcoming plans.

This is a developing scandal in Hersham with residents in firm opposition to it being redeveloped and used privately.

Were these mistakes or attempts to confuse?

7. Problem 7: Shopping Centre – Hersham is a district centre

LP Page 100: H3 US379 Hersham Shopping Centre, Molesey Road, Hersham 1-5
200 residential units

The number of proposed dwellings is unsuitable with the Area Type of a district centre. Hersham must not be referred to as a 'hub' or a 'town'. It is a village, classified as a district centre.

The proposed number of possible dwellings on this site used to be as low as 17, then it became 50, then suddenly 200! This unjustified change in the LP was passed by a full cabinet meeting, implemented without a single shred of local consultation.

8. Problem 8: Shopping Centre – parking insufficiency

The Shopping Centre car park and the New Berry Lane car parks are fully utilised. There are 300+ places available. There is no on-street parking. There are double yellow lines everywhere and already a lot of parking stress. There are at least twenty shops and amenities, a Green, a local school, a church, a supermarket, etc., all dependent on this single Council car park. If 200 new dwellings, or even 100 dwellings, are built on the car park, where no underground car park is possible, where are these new people going to park? Where will the new charging points for electric vehicles be located?

I wanted to put a lot more, particularly on how the LP for Hersham as it is designed violates everything the Design Code is correctly defining for Hersham but I am concerned with how unprofessional my comments are and I am wary of wasting your time.

Many thanks for considering my comments.

Sophie Roger, May 2024.