

# £225,000 to plan the unplanned

13 June 2022



Council to spend £225,000 on consultants for Epsom Town Centre “Masterplan”.

**Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) has secured a total of £225,000 from The Department for Levelling Up and the regional Local Enterprise Partnership. The money is earmarked to pay consultants to develop an “Epsom Town Centre Master Plan”, including digital community engagement plans. A public consultation about it later this year is indicated.**

26<sup>th</sup> May 2022 Council officers reported to Councillors: “The Council is faced with some difficult decisions about how it can plan to accommodate growth to meet central government policy. There are several potential development opportunities within Epsom Town Centre *that could come forward* (emphasis supplied) promoted by each respective landowner.”

“..... presently, there is not an up-to-date document to guide development in the Town Centre. The Town Centre Masterplan provides the opportunity to plan comprehensively for development to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to address the following:

- The parameters for development of the sites that have been submitted through the Local Plan Call for Sites for development (Utilities, Ashley Centre, University for the Creative Arts (UCA))
- The facilities and infrastructure that would be needed to support the development of key sites (parking, retail, social, community, transport).
- Environmental Improvements to the town centre that could be facilitated through development proposals. Whether through development itself, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (chargeable on substantial developments) and section 106 Town and Country Planning Act funds (money transferred to the Council by developers, usually on the larger scale developments that require structural support).
- Key principles for retention, enhancement or development of areas that would not be subject to major development proposals.

EEBC’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee agreed to delegate the spending of this £225,000 to the Council Officer entitled Head of Place Development.

The digital engagement element of the £225,000 is £125,000 and was sought by EEBC to support the following Governmental objects and within the development of the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan.

- “Incentivise communities to positively engage in planning conversations.”
- “Engage a more representative range of citizens in decision-making.”
- “Inform the community on trade-offs and outcomes through development.”
- “Establish meaningful baseline data and, where possible, integrate digital and traditional engagement best practice.”

Lessons learned from this Town Centre Masterplan “digital engagement” might be applied to planning matters generally in the future.

Only time will tell whether landowners and land developers will ever submit plans that need to be judged by the policies of the “Epsom Town Centre Masterplan” that is to be developed at a cost of £225,000.