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A towering decision by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

26 April 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has approved plans for hundreds of new homes. The former SGN Gasworks site on East Street in Epsom will see all of its buildings and infrastructure demolished to make way for new homes. The town's "biggest planning application in years" has been approved. Members of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council planning committee agreed to the outline scheme for 456 homes by a majority vote on April 24. The development will see five high rise blocks, ranging from eight to twelve storeys tall. A performing arts centre, educational buildings and an open public garden are also included in the plans. Of the proposed 456 homes, according to planning documents, 210 will be one-bedroom, 180 will be two-bedroom, and 66 will be three-bedroom units. A further 46 of the 456 homes will be social rent units and 21 wheelchair accessible, according to planning documents.

"You cannot build a nine-storey building behind someone's back door," said Richard Coles, an Epsom resident speaking against the scheme. He explained it would be "60 metres from my back door to someone's balcony, for some hundred or so properties". Mr Coles argued the new builds will make life significantly worse for those living immediately around the blocks. "We're not delivering for Epsom if we're not delivering for all our residents," Cllr Kim Spickett said. "We're not talking about overlooking buildings, we're talking about human beings." Responding to concerns, council planners said fears of overlooking is not such an issue in practice because neither resident can really make out the features or activities of a person that far away. Officers accepted sunlight would be reduced for six neighbouring homes and 23 student rooms but said the benefits of the scheme would outweigh the impact.

Wrestling with the application, Cllr Julian Freeman appreciated the residents' concerns but said "fear is often much worse than the reality". He added the borough is in a "housing crisis" and "for the greater good" the development will provide new homes for 600 or more people. Cllr Kate Chinn slammed the council for not building enough homes or social housing over the last five years. "We're now asking residents to pay the price for the failures of the past," she said. With only 68 car parking spaces for 456 homes, councillors urged for something to be done. Members worried about tradesmen needing to use cars for work or families driving to school. Around 21 spaces would be designated for wheelchair users which Cllr Freeman challenged as "excessive". Cllr Jan Mason said: "People living there actually will be defranchised." She claimed future residents might not be able to have people visiting the house or getting the work men round.

Officers said fewer parking bays would help "champion a change in attitude" to using cars and support the council's "ambitious target" of becoming carbon neutral by 2035. But some councillors said it was "unrealistic" to demand people to change their motor habits by restricting parking spaces. Just a 10 minute walk from Epsom train station, the applicants argued the development would be an immensely sustainable location. People can get to London Waterloo station in around 35 minutes. Members agreed conditions to the car management plan so it could come back to committee for further approval if needed.

Also included in the scheme, Laine Theatre Arts College will be replaced by a modern building. The development will be further detailed in separate planning applications, the report said. The site has been used as gas works for more than 150 years, according to documents, while a separate application for the same site has stated the storage facility for natural gas "has been permanently decommissioned and purged".

Image: Site Masterplan (Aerial) Formation Architects

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