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For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

19th November 2026

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16th January 2025

16 January 2025

Council Transport

Will Surrey potholes outwit AI?



15 January 2025

Surrey County Council will now use AI to detect potholes to help speed up road repairs across the county. Computer vision cameras fitted to dashboards inside highways vehicles will spot … Read More

Council Letters Planning



Will planners say “Sori, mun moka”? *

15 January 2025

Dear Editor, The report in the Epsom & Ewell Times (9th January) about Historic England placing the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area on its ‘at risk register’ is extremely timely, … Read More

Education Health News

Surrey University leading on alternative ADHD treatment



14 January 2025

A multisite clinical trial has launched in the United States to investigate whether non-pharmaceutical methods can be used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in children ages 7-12. This … Read More

Health News

New SWLP Laboratory Enhances Diagnostic Services for Epsom Hospital and Beyond



14 January 2025

South West London Pathology (SWLP) has launched one of the most advanced diagnostic facilities in the UK, with new cutting-edge laboratories set to transform healthcare delivery for patients across its … Read More

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Council Education Transport

Surrey school children road safety faces funding challenges



14 January 2025

Children at a special needs school could be left waiting years for a much needed crossing. Clifton Hill School, on Chaldon Road in Caterham, is a secondary school for 11-19 … Read More

News Transport

Check your Epsom and Ewell train journeys January weekends.

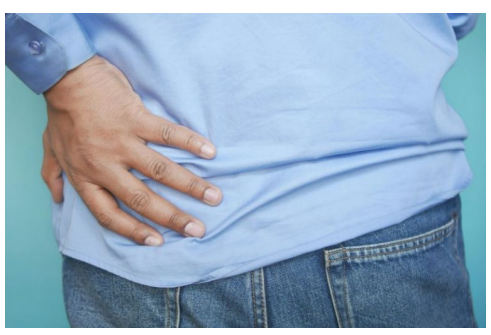


14 January 2025

Residents of Epsom and Ewell are advised to prepare for disruptions to South Western Railway (SWR) services due to essential engineering works in the Wimbledon area. Bus replacement services will … Read More

Community Health

Hip pain explained



14 January 2025

Hip pain is a common complaint, particularly among middle-aged and older adults. Two frequent causes are Hip Osteoarthritis (OA) and Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome (GTPS). While these conditions share some … Read More

Arts Council



Surrey’s D’Oyly Carte Island concerts cancelled.

12 January 2025

Plans for a summer concert on a private island as part of Weybridge Festival have been cancelled over health and safety concerns. D’Oyly Carte Island hosted three days of music … Read More

Housing News Planning

Blot on Epsom Down’s west horizon to grow?

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11 January 2025

The “Croydonisation” of Woking will continue after a 26-storey town centre tower block on the former BHS site was approved. The plans for the 272-home 85-metre-tall building are nearly identical … Read More

Council Elections News

Surrey County elections must go ahead clamour



10 January 2025

The May 2025 Surrey county elections must not be postponed, the 11 boroughs and district councils have said. That call has been amplified with the Surrey Liberal Democrat MPs writing … Read More

Council Housing

Surrey’s affordable homes left unclaimed



10 January 2025

Millions of pounds worth of affordable Surrey homes remain unbuilt because nobody is willing to take on the project. It has left Spelthorne Borough Council scrambling around trying to find … Read More

Environment News

MP spies pollution in Mole



10 January 2025

Raw sewage has spewed out of a broken manhole cover and into the River Mole. Video taken by the Dorking and Horley MP, Chris Coghlan, shows the waste pumping out … Read More

Council Council constitution Editorial

Are Epsom and Ewell’s Interests Served by Postponing Democracy?

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9 January 2025

The Conservative-led Surrey County Council's recent decision to seek a postponement of the May 2025 elections raises serious questions about the motivations behind this move. This decision, spearheaded by Councillor … Read More

Council Council constitution News

Local government reorganisation: What will it mean for Epsom and Ewell?



9 January 2025

The leader of "doomed" Surrey County Council will write to the Government asking for the May 2025 elections to be postponed and Woking's debt cancelled as part of devolution measures … Read More

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Will planners say "Sori, mun moka"? *

16 January 2025



Dear Editor,

The report in the Epsom & Ewell Times (9th January) about Historic England placing the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area on its 'at risk register' is extremely timely, given the current application to demolish **Cafe Moka**, Unit 60 of the Ashley Centre and the damaging impact this would have on the setting of what is undoubtedly one of Epsom's most important listed buildings.

So far two formal objections have been lodged against the proposed demolition of the current turreted Café Moka – both highlighting the architectural reasons why its removal and replacement with a modern, glass and steel unit would not only spoil the visual harmony of the square but also negatively affect the setting of Waterloo House.

The objections focus on several key issues:

1. **Architectural Incompatibility**: The proposal's replacement of the turreted Café Moka with a stark, utilitarian design would disrupt the character of Ashley Square, a blend of brick facades and tiled roofs. The original design, which still stands the test of time, complements the adjacent Market Place and reflects the history of the area. The turreted Moka unit, along with the similarly turreted (but now sadly spoiled) High Street entrance, are carefully considered features that referenced the sadly lost King's Head Hotel coaching inn, which once stood on the site of Boots.
2. **Impact on Views**: The turreted structure helps screen the expansive service area behind the café, shielding views of the unattractive back facades of buildings on South Street. Its demolition would expose these eyesores and diminish the square's architectural integrity.

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3. **Negative Impact on Waterloo House**: Most importantly, the removal of the turreted Café Moka would harm the setting of Waterloo House's historic carriage entrance. The building is a rare surving example of a 17th-century spa town assembly rooms and has been sensitively restored (and appropriately renamed) by Wetherspoons. An ill-suited modern development next door would undermine this significant restoration.

Only a couple of years ago a highly questionable decision was made by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to approve the recladding of the Ashley Centre's main entrance in blatantly fake stone – a move that already detracts from the original architectural concept of the 1980s shopping centre and the local history it subtly references.

Losing the turreted Café Moka would be another regrettable step backward, diminishing the area's historical and aesthetic value – and it's therefore vital that the Council doesn't inadvertently support another proposal that would further compound Historic England's current concerns.

I encourage all those who care about preserving Epsom's heritage to voice their opposition to this unnecessary and damaging proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Simon Alford

Epsom

Related reports:

Heritage at Risk: Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Faces Challenges

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council response to Historic England's Report on local heritage

*"Sori, mun moka" is a colloquial term meaning "Sorry, my bad". "Moka" is also a coffee pot.

New SWLP Laboratory Enhances Diagnostic Services for Epsom Hospital and Beyond

16 January 2025



South West London Pathology (SWLP) has launched one of the most advanced diagnostic facilities in the UK, with new cutting-edge laboratories set to transform healthcare delivery for patients across its network, including **Epsom Hospital**. The upgraded laboratory at Croydon Hospital marks the first phase of a significant technological overhaul aimed at improving diagnostic speed and accuracy.

Serving over 3.5 million people through five hospital sites, including **Epsom Hospital**, and 450 GP practices, SWLP is integral to the region's healthcare infrastructure. When fully operational, the SWLP network of laboratories will process over 30,000 tests daily, ensuring faster turnaround times and better outcomes for patients in Epsom and the surrounding areas.

The state-of-the-art facility will streamline clinical blood science services, including clinical chemistry, haematology, coagulation, and serology, using cutting-edge pre-analytical automation technology developed in partnership with Beckman Coulter, a global leader in diagnostics.

Simon Brewer, Managing Director of SWLP, said:
"The introduction of Beckman Coulter's advanced analysers at Croydon Hospital marks a transformative step for our diagnostic services. With these technologies soon to be implemented across the entire network, including Epsom Hospital, we are setting new standards in diagnostic efficiency and patient care."

Rob Young, UK General Manager at Beckman Coulter, added:
"By equipping SWLP laboratories with the latest diagnostic technologies, we're enabling healthcare teams to deliver faster, higher-quality results. This advancement will significantly enhance the care provided to patients across the SWLP network, including those relying on Epsom Hospital for vital healthcare services."

The upgraded laboratories will unify diagnostic services across all SWLP sites, enhancing efficiency and ensuring a consistent standard of care. For patients at **Epsom Hospital**, this means improved access to accurate and timely test results, contributing to better overall health outcomes in the local community.

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About South West London Pathology (SWLP)

South West London Pathology (SWLP) is an NHS pathology partnership providing integrated diagnostic services to hospitals, GPs, and healthcare organizations across South West London and beyond. Serving over 3.5 million people, including those at Epsom Hospital, SWLP delivers a comprehensive range of tests using state-of-the-art technology to improve patient care.

Image: Rob Young, UK General Manager for Beckman Coulter Diagnostics;

Matthew Kershaw, Chief Executive of Croydon Health Services NHS Trust;

Simon Brewer, SWLP Managing Director

Celebrating 50 Years of Epsom and Ewell Talking Newspaper

16 January 2025

Dear Editor,

I am writing on behalf of Epsom and Ewell Talking Newspaper (EETN) to share some wonderful news following our 50th Anniversary celebration this past November.

Helen Maguire, our local Liberal Democrat MP for Epsom and Ewell, has kindly recognised EETN's invaluable contribution to the community in her recent newsletter. She congratulated us on this significant milestone and commended the tireless efforts of our volunteers who ensure visually impaired residents in Epsom and Ewell remain connected through vital access to news and local information.

Moreover, we are proud to announce that Helen Maguire has submitted an Early Day Motion (EDM) in Parliament in honour of our 50 years of service. This EDM reads as follows:

"That this House congratulates Epsom and Ewell Talking Newspaper on its remarkable achievement of 50 years of service; recognises the charity's outstanding commitment to supporting visually impaired residents in Epsom and Ewell by providing vital access to news and local information; commends the volunteers whose dedication, effort, and time have made this invaluable service possible; acknowledges the critical role such services play in fostering inclusion and community connection; and wishes the charity continued success in its future endeavours supporting those in need."

For those unfamiliar, Early Day Motions are a way for MPs to bring attention to specific causes or achievements. While few are debated, they often attract public interest and media coverage.

We are deeply grateful to Helen Maguire for her continued support and advocacy for EETN, and we look forward to many more years of serving our local community.

Yours faithfully,

Judy Sarssam

Chairman

Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper

Are Epsom and Ewell's Interests Served by Postponing Democracy?

16 January 2025

The Conservative-led Surrey County Council's recent decision to seek a postponement of the May 2025 elections raises serious questions about the motivations behind this move. This decision, spearheaded by Councillor Tim Oliver, comes after the Conservative Party's near-total defeat in the July 2024 General Election and appears to be as much about retaining control as it is about facilitating local government reorganisation.

The argument put forward by the council's leadership—that elections would create a "zombie" authority that wastes

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public funds—is unconvincing. Elections are a cornerstone of democracy, not a bureaucratic inconvenience. By delaying them, the current leadership retains power at a time when its mandate to govern Surrey is at best questionable. Surrey's residents, many of whom voiced their dissatisfaction with Conservative governance at the ballot box just months ago, now face the prospect of being governed by a council that is effectively prolonging its tenure without public consent.

One cannot ignore the context of this decision. Central government's push for local government reform and devolution is not an altruistic initiative aimed at better serving communities. It is a cost-cutting exercise disguised as modernisation. The Government's stipulation that new councils must serve a minimum of 500,000 residents almost guarantees the dissolution of smaller, locally focused boroughs like Epsom and Ewell.

For Epsom and Ewell, the smallest of Surrey's 11 boroughs, this means the likely loss of a council that has served its residents with proximity and understanding for decades. What replaces it may be a sprawling mega-authority or a fractured, less accountable unitary structure. Either way, Epsom and Ewell risks losing its unique voice, with decisions about its future made by those unfamiliar with its needs and aspirations.

Equally troubling is the inclusion of Woking Borough Council's extraordinary debt—reportedly the largest in UK local government history—in the negotiations surrounding devolution. This financial calamity, created under Conservative rule, should be a cautionary tale about the dangers of poor governance, not an issue swept under the rug in the rush to reform. Why should other Surrey residents shoulder the burden of Woking's mismanagement? And why has Surrey's Conservative leadership not been more transparent about its plans to address this issue?

The proposal to postpone elections also conveniently consolidates power for a party facing an uncertain future. By delaying the democratic process, Surrey's Conservative leadership ensures it remains at the table during pivotal discussions about the future shape of local government, even as the electorate has made its dissatisfaction clear.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, like others across the county, is being swept into a centralised reorganisation process with little clarity about what it will mean for its residents. The likely outcome is the erosion of local democracy, with decisions affecting communities being made further away and by people with less understanding of local needs.

Surrey's leadership has yet to explain convincingly why postponing the elections is necessary. If their proposals for reorganisation are sound, why not put them to the test of public approval? Democracy is not an obstacle to progress; it is the means by which progress is legitimised.

Epsom and Ewell's residents deserve to have their voices heard in shaping the future of their local government. They deserve transparency about what reorganisation will mean for their services, their representation, and their community identity. Most importantly, they deserve the chance to vote on who should lead that process. Anything less is an affront to democracy and a betrayal of public trust.

The May 2025 elections must go ahead. It is time for Surrey's leaders to trust the people they serve and stop hiding behind bureaucratic excuses.

Epsom and Ewell Times

Related reports:

Local government reorganisation: What will it mean for Epsom and Ewell?

All change! Epsom and Ewell Borough Council approaching its final stop?

Surrey's Conservative leader wants to postpone May's poll reckoning

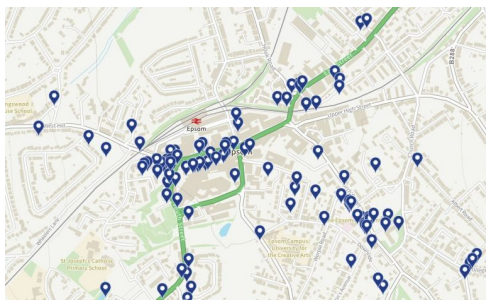
Tiers to be shed if Epsom and Ewell loses its Borough Council?

9th January 2025

16 January 2025

Community Council Local History

Heritage at Risk: Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Faces Challenges



9 January 2025

The latest Heritage at Risk Register, published by Historic England in November 2024, has cast a shadow over the state of heritage conservation in Epsom and Ewell. Two conservation areas—Epsom … Read More

Council Council constitution

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All change! Epsom and Ewell Borough Council approaching its final stop?



8 January 2025

Surrey is changing “whether we like it” or not and county council leader Tim Oliver says it’s better to be at the forefront of that change. The Government wants to … Read More

Council Housing Planning

Epsom Green Belt Debate Intensifies



8 January 2025

The ongoing debate surrounding Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s Proposed Submission Local Plan has escalated as the Epsom and Ewell Times publishes two sharply contrasting letters – one from the … Read More

Business News Sports

Walton Golf Club’s dismissal of one-in-hole unfair



7 January 2025

A greenkeeper who had worked at a Surrey golf course for almost 40 years has won a case for “unreasonable” dismissal after he was sacked when his digger fell into … Read More

Football Sports

New Year less cheerful for Epsom and Ewell football



6 January 2025

Jersey Bulls 5-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 4th January 2025. A trip to the Channel Islands for a meeting with the Jersey … Read More

Rugby Sports

New Year Cheer For Sutton and Epsom Rugby

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6 January 2025

Sutton & Epsom RFC 21 Battersea Ironsides 20. Saturday 4th January. The September fixtures had concluded with a rousing encounter at Garratt Green when these two fine sides could not … Read More



Community Health News

Prime Minister and Health Secretary Visit Epsom Hospital to Unveil NHS Recovery Blueprint

6 January 2025

Epsom Hospital played host to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Health Secretary Wes Streeting today as they unveiled a significant national plan aimed at tackling the extensive backlog of … Read More

Council Elections News

Surrey’s Conservative leader wants to postpone May’s poll reckoning



3 January 2025

The leader of Surrey County Council is set to write to the Government calling for the 2025 elections to be postponed in order to allow authorities to focus on merging … Read More

Business Community Education

Special case for VAT exemption for special education needs?



3 January 2025

Private schools are “not a lifestyle choice but a necessity” for children with special educational needs (SEN), argues the headteacher of an independent school in Reigate. Tuition fees are expected … Read More

Community Faith

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Ahmadiyya Youth Clean the Streets of Epsom to Welcome the New Year



3 January 2025

By Luqman AhmedLeader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association Epsom As the first light of the new year stretched across the horizon, a group of volunteers from the Ahmadiyya Muslim … Read More

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Epsom and Ewell Borough Council response to Historic England's Report on local heritage

16 January 2025

Councillor **Peter O'Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court Ward) Chair of the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee

Epsom & Ewell first came to prominence as a destination town in the early seventeenth century with the discovery of Epsom Salts within the borough. Visitors came from London and further afield to 'take the waters'. Epsom became known to merchants and royal visitors alike as a place of relaxation, sport and leisure, perhaps most famous even now as being the home of the Epsom Derby. The town was first granted Market Town status by Royal Charter in 1865, and Epsom market has been a defining focal point for the bustling town for hundreds of years, watched over by the historic landmark Epsom clocktower which is owned by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and restored in 2019.

Our local heritage is integral to our unique local character. Across the borough there are around 300 buildings listed on the National Heritage List including Bourne Hall in Ewell, listed for its "striking design, …space-age flair and the generous, top-lit principal interior space", Ewell Court House, a little altered Grade II late Victorian house built in the Jacobean style with wonderful period plasterwork and joinery, set in beautiful grounds with flowerbeds, walks and lake: and the Grade II* listed Assembly Rooms in Epsom which are the earliest known surviving building of this type in England.

There are 21 designated Conservation Areas in the borough. For each of these areas of special architectural or historic interest the council publishes an outline of the area's special interest and proposals for its preservation and enhancement, which can be found here: Conservation Areas | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.

Horton Conservation Area

Horton conservation area isone of a group of conservation areas put in place to protect the Victorian psychiatric asylum buildings in Epsom, which became redundant in the 1990s. Horton chapel is a grade II listed building which opened in 1901 as a place of worship for the patients and staff in the surrounding hospital buildings. It was empty and in a state of disrepair for many years, but was recently restored and reopened as the Horton Arts Centre, using funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and several other funds, including £1.46m *(s106 developers' funds)* allocated by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

This is an example of heritage that was at risk of dilapidation, but for which a vibrant new use has been found. Historic England have been asked to remove the entry from their Heritage At Risk Register as the building and area are no longer at risk.

Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area

Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area extends from South Street and West Street, along the High Street, and along part of Upper High Street at the eastern end. The architecture of the area represents the history of the town centre and its development from a spa town in the 17th century to the present day with many interesting historic buildings, some of which are listed, and all of which are protected by their conservation area status.

Historic buildings are mainly owned by private owners, so controls are set by the government and the council to ensure that they are conserved in a manner that will ensure their survival and enjoyment for present and future generations.

- To protect the conservation area, listed buildings in Epsom town centre must apply for Listed Building Consent for alterations (including internal alterations) and other buildings must apply for planning permission for external alterations.
- To help owners and businesses understand the historic character of the conservation area, the council has also produced a conservation area appraisal, which sets out the important historic features and buildings that should be looked after to protect the character of the conservation area.
- The council has recently published its Town Centre Masterplan which aims to compliment and protect the Town

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Centre conservation area. The first principle of the plan is to adopt "a context-led design approach to guide the development, regeneration and repair of the town centre. Having particular regard to the impact of building heights, building design, materials and land uses will ensure new development contributes to an improvement in the quality of the town centre."

- The council is also working to improve the appearance of the area by controlling development and seeking to improve the appearance of the buildings and shopfronts, as well as taking enforcement action where unauthorised works have taken place. Those considering making changes to their buildings are advised to seek advice from the planning service before undertaking the works. The council runs a pre-application advice scheme that can be used to find out whether changes might or might not be acceptable prior to making an application.

As these measures demonstrate, the council works in range of ways that are within its control to protect the borough's local heritage and conservation areas.

In 2023, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council participated in a Local Heritage List Project with Surrey County Council, funded by the government's 'Build Back Better' initiative in association with Historic England. We are in the process of finalising the assets on our local heritage list in 2024/25 following consultation. The list will include those assets most valued by our local communities.

You can find out if a building is statutorily listed, locally listed or in a conservation area by using our online mapping system."

Further information:

https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk

https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1232459?section=official-list-entry

https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/conservation-areas (opens the Hospital Cluster Conservation Area Appraisal)

Hospital Cluster – Introduction

https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/conservation-areas

Epsom and Ewell Council response to Local Plan criticism

16 January 2025

Dear Editor,

Government's English Devolution White Paper

We are working through what the Government's English Devolution White Paper means for Epsom & Ewell. Our commitment is to do what's right for our residents, local businesses, and visitors; and to ensure that the high-quality public services that our residents need and deserve continue to be delivered.

Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19)

The Proposed Submission Local Plan seeks to address the balance between meeting development needs and protecting the borough's environment. Consultation on the proposed submission local plan commenced on the 20 December and will close on the 5 February 2025.

This consultation provides the opportunity for those with an interest in the borough to comment on whether the local plan is legally compliant or sound. Guidance on legal compliance, soundness and how to respond to the consultation can be found on the council's website and on the consultation website(link is external).

The Council has considered the responses received during the consultation in the Draft local Plan undertaken in early 2023 in developing the Proposed Submission Local Plan. Information on the changes made is detailed in the Consultation Statement published alongside the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

The borough has a high level of need for affordable housing for a range of property types and sizes, including family homes, with over 1,350 households being on the council's housing needs register. The greatest need is for affordable rented homes (which includes social rented housing) and the affordable housing policy in the Local Plan reflects this, whilst having regard to the national policy and viability evidence.

Consultation over the Christmas and New Year period has been necessary in order to meet the new deadline imposed by the National Planning Policy Framework for submission of Local Plans under the 'old' system. Our previous intention was to wait until January 2025 but that could cause us to miss the deadline.

The Local Plan will be submitted before the 12 March 2025 and examined against the December 2023 version of the NPPF which makes it clear that it is at the discretion of local authorities as to whether Green Belt boundaries should be amended. This flexibility is to reflect that Green Belt authorities (such as Epsom and Ewell) have their own unique characteristics, challenges and requirements, and that local plans must address competing and conflicting demands for land.

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In terms of changes to green belt land, the Local plan proposes that:

- 52.6 ha of greenfield green belt land is removed from the green belt (site allocations SA33-SA35), this equates to 3.36 % of the boroughs Green Belt.
- 85 ha of previously developed green belt land, including the hospital clusters and part of the NESCOT estate is removed from the green belt, this equates to 5.44% ha of the boroughs Green Belt.
- Less than 0.4ha of land is removed from the green belt following minor boundary amendments.

Following the consultation, we will submit the Local Plan, supporting evidence and all responses received to the consultation to the Secretary of Statewho will then appoint a Planning Inspector to undertake an independent examination. As part of the submission the council can propose changes to the local plan, however it is at the discretion of the planning inspector as to how these are dealt with.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Peter O'Donovan, Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee.

Read the full Epsom Green Belt Group letter here.

The Christmas present nobody wanted

16 January 2025

Dear Editor,

With the threat of the dissolution of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council hanging in the air (under Angela Rayner's proposals for unitary authorities), residents might expect the RA-led council to demonstrate the value of local government by strongly championing local interests and defending the highly valued Green Belt. Instead, they are putting forward a plan that pleases no-one and will have repercussions for generations to come.

Tomorrow the council is due to issue its Regulation 19 consultation on the proposed Local Plan.

Here's what the Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration, Vicki Potts, and RA Cllr Woodbridge said about the Regulation 19 consultation process in the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee meeting held on 22 Nov 2023:

Vicki Potts: 'Your Reg 19 document… you can't make any major changes to it following [the Reg 19] consultation. If you want to make major changes at that stage, you can do, but you got to go back and do another consultation on your Regulation 19.'

Cllr Woodbridge: 'From our residents' perspective, when they're being asked to be consulted on the Reg 19, they don't really have much chance then to actually affect it. That is it then, really… I don't want to say we're going through the motions, but that consultation [Reg 19] is a less meaningful consultation than the one we've been through now [Reg 18].'

So the consultation is not an opportunity to amend the plan that so many residents reject, rather it is part of a statutory process that must be completed, however unpopular the plan's content may be.

The Regulation 19 documentation for consultation

Just in time for Christmas, the council is planning to distribute a lump of coal to each residents' Christmas stocking in the form of a consultation on a highly unpopular Local Plan.

In a rebuff to local democracy, following residents' responses to the Reg 18 consultation in early 2023, the council have failed to make changes to the local plan either to provide the truly affordable housing needed to resolve the borough's homelessness issues, or to protect the Green Belt. These are two strategic issues, and both of them featured heavily in responses from the borough residents and statutory consultees to the Regulation 18 consultation.

The council is proposing to redesignate or release over 175 hectares, or c.12% of the borough's Green Belt (see analysis below).

The current National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023) gives councils the option not to revise Green Belt boundaries. Since Dec 2023:

- The Epsom Green Belt Group has highlighted this option and strongly encouraged its use.
- The council received legal advice at the start of 2024 which stated that it was legally acceptable to choose not to release Green Belt for development.
- Angela Rayner and Matthew Pennycook have repeatedly stated their expectation that it is previously developed land and 'greybelt' that should be released for development, not high performing Green Belt.

Justin Turvey, 'Head of Place Development' for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and central to this borough's Local Plan wrote, in response to the Sutton Borough Local Plan consultation in September 2024:

'We note that under the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) there is no requirement on local authorities to review or amend their Green Belt boundaries through the plan making process and that any amendments must demonstrate 'exceptional circumstances'.'

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[Note: This response, dated 26 September 2024, was obtained through a Freedom of Information request to Sutton Council (see attached) as it was not made publicly available in Epsom & Ewell.]

Despite the clear option to remove undeveloped Green Belt from the Local Plan under the Dec 2023 NPPF, despite opposition to Green Belt development from across the political spectrum, despite government advice to protect high performing Green Belt, despite highlighting this option to a neighbouring borough, and despite overwhelming public opposition to the development of Green Belt, the council has continued to include housing development on the high performing Green Belt sites of both Horton Farm and Hook Road Arena in the Local Plan.

Turning to the newly released NPPF (Dec 2024), it states:

'148. Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider grey belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations.'

The local plan proposals have not prioritised previously developed land (e.g. Hollywood Lodge is not included in the plans). The council has not provided an assessment of greybelt sites in the borough and has not prioritised them for development. The council has instead included the high performing Green Belt sites.

The excuse, or rationale, provided for giving up this high performing Green Belt land for development (despite not having followed the priority order in para 148, above) has been the provision of much needed affordable housing. Whilst there is widespread support for this objective, the reality is very different.

The council has not made any commitment to the provision of truly affordable homes on either of these sites. According to the Local Plan policies, the majority of the so-called 'affordable housing' will be priced at a 20% discount to the market price of the housing in the area.

Likely outcome of examination by planning inspector

Perversely, because of the decisions the Epsom & Ewell borough council has made, particularly the choice to amend Green Belt boundaries, there is a high likelihood that the current plan, if taken forward, will be found unsound and that further Green Belt release will be required.

To stand the best chance of being found sound and to protect the high quality Green Belt, the Local Plan should not amend Green Belt boundaries, should instead focus solely on brownfield and previously developed land, and should be submitted by 12 March 2025 (following Regulation 19 consultation). This can still be achieved, but becomes more challenging every day.

Sticking with an unpopular and unsound local plan may be the Christmas gift the borough residents would prefer not to receive.

Yours faithfully,

Katherine Alexander of Epsom Greenbelt Group

Read the full Epsom & Ewell Borough Council letter here.

Ahmadiyya Youth Clean the Streets of Epsom to Welcome the New Year

16 January 2025



By Luqman Ahmed
Leader of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association Epsom

As the first light of the new year stretched across the horizon, a group of volunteers from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association (AMYA) in Epsom began their day armed not with party hats or confetti, but with gloves, litter picking sticks, and determination. While others were still nestled in beds, dreaming of resolutions, this remarkable group was out in the cold, rainy and windy morning, embodying their motto: *Love for All, Hatred for None.*

The volunteers worked in harmony to breathe new life into their community. With every littered bottle picked up and every forgotten candy wrapper swept away, the streets seemed to exhale a sigh of relief. It was as if the city, shedding its New Year's Eve revelry, was donning a fresh, clean cloak to greet 2025.

The act itself was simple but profound. *"We do this every year,"* said 30-year-old volunteer Ahmad Iqbal Ch, a doctor by profession. *"It's our way of giving back and starting the year with positivity."*

For the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Organisation, the clean-up event is more than just an exercise in tidiness; it finds its roots in the teachings of Islam, where the Holy Prophet (pbuh) told his followers that half of their faith is cleanliness and

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ISSN 2753-2771

that removing even a stone out of someone's way is considered charity.

Members of the public, on their way to work in the wet and windy weather, stopped to thank the volunteers and wished them all a happy new year.

Three core principles guided the AMYA team that morning: humility, selflessness, and service. The humility to pick up after others, the selflessness to sacrifice a warm morning at home, and the service to a community they loved deeply. Their efforts painted a vivid picture of the human spirit at its best—undaunted by chill or challenge.

As the volunteers finished, one could almost hear the streets murmuring in gratitude, the trees nodding in approval, and the winds carrying their story to distant corners. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association had done more than clean up—they had planted seeds of hope, showing that even small acts of service can sweep away the remnants of the past and make way for a brighter, better future.

Indeed, as the Borough slept through its hangover, a group of quiet heroes ensured that its awakening would be one of cleanliness, care, and community—a new year, truly renewed.

26th December 2024

16 January 2025

Council Finances

Epsom & Ewell Faces Tight Constraints in 25/26 Government settlement

Surrey Borough	Core Spending Power (£M)	Dwellings As At September 2024	Core Spending Power per dwelling £	Settlement Funding Assessment (£M)	SFA per dwelling
Woking	**16.8**	44,495	378	2.5	56.08
Runnymede	**10.7**	39,372	271	2.2	55.30
Guildford	**17.6**	62,447	281	3.4	54.46
Spelthorne	**13.4**	44,594	300	2.3	50.50
Epsom And Ewell	**10.2**	**33,272**	**307**	**1.6**	**49.06**
Surrey Heath	**13.3**	38,624	343	1.8	47.17
Elmbridge	**22.0**	59,940	367	2.7	45.57
Tandridge	**12.9**	38,137	338	1.7	44.97
Reigate And Banstead	**22.2**	64,821	342	2.8	43.34
Waverley	**17.2**	57,335	300	2.3	40.83
Mole Valley	**11.4**	39,566	289	1.6	39.23

26 December 2024

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has received its provisional financial settlement for 2025/26, and while the figures align with expectations, they highlight ongoing financial pressures on local services. The settlement … Read More

Arts Culture

Epsom Choral Society carols for cardiac charity



24 December 2024

Epsom Choral Society presented its ever-popular annual Christmas Concert on Saturday 21st December at St Martin's Church in Epsom. Always a highlight of the festive season, this year's concert was … Read More

Business News

Epsom business contact with the King warranted

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19th November 2026

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23 December 2024

Epsom based since 2013 Cirrus, the leading provider of contact centre software, is proud to announce it has been granted a Royal Warrant of Appointment by His Majesty King Charles … Read More

Rugby Sports

After 12 wins in a run Sutton & Epsom fall at the thirteenth



23 December 2024

Old Reigatian 21 Sutton & Epsom RFC 15. Saturday 21st December. Midweek illnesses, at one stage, threatened to derail Sutton selection for the last league game in 2024. Ultimately the … Read More

Crime News

Surrey prison failed IPP prisoner



23 December 2024

Staff at a Surrey prison failed to get medical attention for a prisoner who was reportedly found “naked on all fours, and barking like a dog” before he took his own … Read More

Council Planning

River Mole to attract visitors to Leatherhead?



23 December 2024

Mole Valley District Council’s dream of “improving” and “enhancing” Leatherhead has taken a step forward after plans to regenerate Claire House and James House were submitted. The site is part … Read More

Council Council constitution

Tiers to be shed if Epsom and Ewell loses its Borough Council?

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23 December 2024

Surrey could be split in two as part of sweeping changes to how services are run. Downing Street is looking to reshape local government and has set out a white … Read More

Education Health News

Surrey Uni Doing the maths on virus transmission



23 December 2024

How prepared are we for another pandemic? Mathematical insights pinpoint lessons on airborne viral transmission Half a decade on from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a study by the … Read More

Arts Community Culture

Epsom celebrates a new Ukrainian Christmas Day



20 December 2024

The vibrant Ukrainian community in Epsom and Ewell and surrounding areas will celebrate Christmas Day for the second year on 25th December. This change was formalized when President Volodymyr Zelenskyy … Read More

News Transport

Going South from Epsom for Xmas? Check your trains



20 December 2024

Epsom residents are being urged to check before travelling as South Western Railway (SWR) services to Guildford face significant disruption due to emergency engineering works. The works will take place … Read More

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Epsom Choral Society carols for cardiac charity

16 January 2025

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Epsom Choral Society presented its ever-popular annual Christmas Concert on Saturday 21st December at St Martin's Church in Epsom. Always a highlight of the festive season, this year's concert was a joyful celebration filled with music, readings, and plenty of audience participation. The concert was attended by the Worshipful, the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, and the Lady Mayoress, Steve and Carol Bridger.

The choir welcomed back **Connaught Brass**, one of the UK's leading brass ensembles, known for their vibrant performances across the UK and Europe. They brought the true spirit of Christmas through their entertaining instrumental pieces and in their accompaniments to the traditional favourites.

This year's programme featured a variety of carols and Christmas songs performed by the choir, accompanied by Marion Lea on the piano and Ben Lewis-Smith on the organ as well as seasonal brass arrangements and uplifting Christmas readings. As always, the audience had the opportunity to join in singing much-loved traditional carols, and filled the church with the warmth and joy of the season.

In keeping with the Christmas spirit of giving, there was an exit collection in aid of the charity Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY) where over £650 was raised. CRY works to reduce the frequency of young sudden cardiac deaths through vital awareness, screening, and research, making this a particularly meaningful way to support those in need during the holiday season.

Epsom business contact with the King warranted

16 January 2025



Epsom based since 2013 **Cirrus**, the leading provider of contact centre software, is proud to announce it has been granted a Royal Warrant of Appointment by His Majesty **King Charles III**. The grants were made to 386 companies previously holding a Royal Warrant of Appointment from Queen Elizabeth II, as well as 7 companies with an established and ongoing trading relationship with HM Queen Camilla.

This prestigious recognition marks a reappointment for Cirrus, building on the acknowledgement previously granted by Her late Majesty The Queen for its outstanding service to the Royal Household.

Cirrus has built a strong reputation for providing innovative, cloud-based contact centre solutions that help organisations improve customer engagement and service delivery. This Royal Warrant recognises the company's continued excellence in supporting the Royal Collection Trust.

Jason Roos, Founder and CEO of Cirrus, shared: "It's an immense honour for Cirrus to receive this recognition with a Royal Warrant. This achievement reflects the hard work and dedication of our team. We've always focused on delivering solutions that make a real impact, and this recognition from His Majesty's Household validates that effort in the most meaningful way."

The Royal Warrant of Appointment is awarded to businesses that have supplied goods or services to the Royal Household for at least five years. This announcement also highlights Cirrus' ongoing commitment to supporting local communities, while maintaining the highest environmental standards. Cirrus joins the ranks of household names such as BT and Samsung.

"Looking back, it's incredible to see how far we've come. And looking ahead, we're more motivated than ever to keep pushing the boundaries of what we can achieve. This Royal Warrant is a recognition of our daily efforts, and we're excited to continue collaborating with fantastic partners and clients," Roos added.

In the past year, Cirrus has continued to thrive, securing new clients across sectors such as public services, healthcare, and retail. The company's solutions are trusted by organisations including Nisbets, Premium Credit, and Northern Ireland Water.

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Epsom Choral Society’s Christmas Concert

16 January 2025



Epsom Choral Society again presents its ever-popular annual Christmas Concert on Saturday 21st December at 7:30pm at St Martin’s Church in Epsom.

Always a highlight of the festive season, this year’s concert promises to be a joyful celebration filled with music, readings, and plenty of audience participation.

The choir is delighted to welcome back **Connaught Brass**, one of the UK’s leading brass ensembles, known for their vibrant performances across the UK and Europe. Together, they will bring the true spirit of Christmas alive through stirring instrumental pieces and traditional favourites.

This year’s programme features a variety of **carols and Christmas songs** performed by the choir, accompanied by **Marion Lea** on the piano and **Ben Lewis-Smith** on the organ, as well as seasonal brass arrangements and uplifting Christmas readings. As always, the audience will also have the opportunity to join in singing much-loved traditional carols, filling the church with the warmth and joy of the season.

In keeping with the Christmas spirit of giving, there will be an **exit collection in aid of the charity Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY)**. CRY works to reduce the frequency of young sudden cardiac deaths through vital awareness, screening, and research, making this a particularly meaningful way to support those in need during the holiday season.

Tickets:

- £20 per person
- Half price (£10) for under-25s

Tickets, which include a **free glass of wine** and a **free programme** with the words of the carols, can be bought online at:
https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/epsom-choral-society/t-ojrzldn
or at the **door**.

19th December 2024

16 January 2025

Business Community

An Epsom and Ewell education in water shortage



18 December 2024

The residents of Epsom, Ewell, Stoneleigh, and surrounding areas have been grappling with a significant water supply crisis over the past 48 hours, following a major failure in the infrastructure … Read More

Council Housing Planning

Epsom and Ewell’s new housing targets in Surrey perspective

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18 December 2024

Housing targets in Surrey are set to skyrocket, with some areas expected to deliver double the number of homes under new Government plans. On December 12, the long-awaited update to … Read More

Football Sports

Epsom and Ewell FC get marching orders from Sandhurst

18 December 2024

Epsom and Ewell FC 1-2 Sandhurst Town. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Tuesday 17th December 2024. Following our defeat at Chipstead in November I advised that we regularly … Read More

Arts Culture Education

Watching out for tomorrow’s film talent in Epsom and Ewell



17 December 2024

Creative Media students from North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) were joined by their tutors, family and friends for the premiere of their short film, ‘The Watching’ which was … Read More

Rugby Sports

Sutton & Epsom topple league leaders



17 December 2024

Sutton & Epsom RFC 20 Beckenham 19. Saturday 14th December. For the final league match at Rugby Lane in 2024 the crowd were treated to the visit of the league … Read More

Council Housing Planning

The Local Plan plot thickens after revised NPPF



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16 December 2024

The Government’s revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published on 12 December, has set ambitious new housing targets, requiring local councils to accelerate their housebuilding efforts. This move coincides with … Read More

Arts Culture

Epsom Chamber Choir Christmas concert benefits hospital



16 December 2024

Epsom Chamber Choir was delighted to welcome The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor Steve Bridger, and the Mayoress, Mrs. Carol Bridger, to their annual Christmas concert at … Read More

Education Health News

Plant-based meat alternatives might be depressing

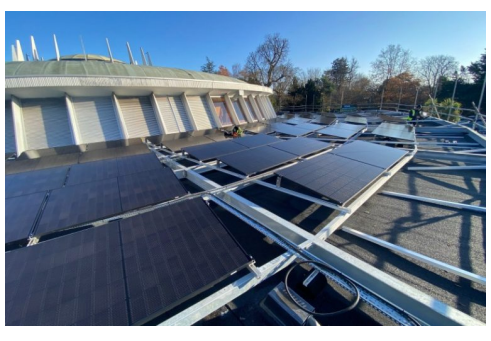


16 December 2024

There is mounting evidence suggesting that ultra-processed foods (UPF) are bad for our health, but if you stick to a vegetarian diet, is that still the case? Plant-based meat alternatives (PBMA) are … Read More

Council Environment

Epsom and Ewell’s solar powered spaceship

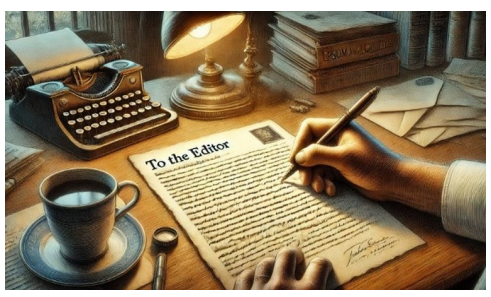


16 December 2024

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has recently installed solar panels on the roof of Bourne Hall, and secured funding from the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund to develop a … Read More

Council Housing Letters

Can the green light to Epsom’s Green Belt housing turn red?



13 December 2024

Letters to the Editor From Tim Murphy of the Surrey Campaign to Protect Rural England A Dark Day for Epsom and Ewell Dear Editor, I write with deep disappointment and … Read More

Crime News

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19th November 2026

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Epsom led crime gang banged up



13 December 2024

An organised crime group who carried out multiple burglaries, a vicious assault, and stole more than £215,000 worth of high-value cars have been jailed for a total of twenty seven … Read More

News Westminster

Epsom and Ewell’s MP leads debate on support for Explosive Ordnance Disposers



12 December 2024

Helen Maguire, Epsom and Ewell’s MP and former British Army Military Police Officer, led a Westminster Hall debate 11th December on government support for the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) community. … Read More

Crime News

Woking child murder lessons for Surrey’s agencies



12 December 2024

Authorities must face serious questions about years of missed chances to prevent Sara Sharif’s death. Sara was murdered aged 10 years old by her father Urfan Sharif and stepmother Beinash … Read More

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Epsom Chamber Choir Christmas concert benefits hospital

16 January 2025



Epsom Chamber Choir was delighted to welcome The Worshipful The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor **Steve Bridger**, and the Mayoress, Mrs. Carol Bridger, to their annual Christmas concert at St Martin’s Church on Saturday, 14th December.

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Starting at a family-friendly 6 pm and lasting just an hour, the choir's programme, devised by conductor **Jack Apperley**, packed in all the elements expected at this time of the year. Inevitably, there was some Rutter – his arrangement of the Sans Day Carol – and audience carols including *O come, all ye faithful* with the Willcocks descant. The choir also sang newer music chosen to feature women composers, including Kerensa Briggs' increasingly well-known *A tender shoot*.

Ralph Vaughan Williams, a composer closely associated with our local area, was represented by his popular *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*, based on folk tunes, with soloists from the choir.

The concert closed with a group of lighter items, including a long-time choir favourite, Peter Gritton's close-harmony version of *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* and a jazzy arrangement of *Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*.

The Epsom and St Helier Hospitals Charity supports patients, their families, and staff at our local hospitals. We were pleased to offer them the opportunity to take a retiring collection after the concert which raised £413.94

Roger Miller

Image: Jack Apperley with Molly Simpson from the hospital charity with the Mayor and Mayoress of Epsom and Ewell

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Can the green light to Epsom's Green Belt housing turn red?

16 January 2025



Letters to the Editor

From Tim Murphy of the Surrey Campaign to Protect Rural England

A Dark Day for Epsom and Ewell

Dear Editor,

I write with deep disappointment and dismay at the decision by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) to approve a draft Local Plan that sacrifices Green Belt land in our borough for housing development. This decision marks a dark day for Epsom & Ewell and represents a significant betrayal of the community's trust and values.

On December 10, EEBC councillors voted by 16 to 8, with 7 abstentions, to approve the latest draft Local Plan, which proposes releasing large areas of our much-valued Green Belt. Planning officers claim councillors had no choice due to Government housing targets. However, this argument does not excuse the council's willingness to surrender cherished green spaces. The community clearly recognizes the value of protecting our countryside, even if the council does not.

Public opposition to the loss of Green Belt land has been overwhelming. During last year's consultation, more than 1,500 residents responded, with 87% opposing any Green Belt development. A petition against the loss of Green Belt land attracted an astonishing 11,000 signatures, and a subsequent petition was so strongly supported that councillors were forced to debate it at the December meeting. The message from residents is clear: we do not want our Green Belt sacrificed for development.

It is worth emphasizing that the council's own Green Belt study concluded that the vast majority of the borough's Green Belt is performing its intended function. This includes Horton Farm and Hook Road Arena—two areas now designated for housing—which were identified as "highly performing" under the Government's own criteria. Why, then, is the council choosing to give up such valuable land?

Protecting our Green Belt is about more than preserving open spaces. It is essential for public health, biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and preventing urban sprawl. Epsom & Ewell has largely resisted London's sprawl, maintaining its identity as Surrey's smallest district. Its open spaces are limited to either municipal parks or the Green Belt, yet these are now at risk. Over the past 25 years, the borough has already absorbed significant population growth through large housing developments on former hospital sites.

The council's reliance on private developers to address local housing needs is deeply flawed. Private housebuilders often fail to deliver affordable homes, using "viability assessments" to argue that profits would be insufficient if they included the required number of affordable units. For example, a recently approved development on Green Belt land in this borough includes no affordable housing at all.

If EEBC were serious about tackling local housing needs, it would prioritise socially rented housing by working with central government and housing associations to develop urban brownfield sites and town-centre locations. Instead, the council appears intimidated by unrealistic housing targets set by Whitehall and has chosen to offer up our Green Belt as an easy sacrifice. This raises serious questions about local democracy and accountability.

The council's decision disregards the wishes of the community it is supposed to serve. It is vital that we continue to

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challenge this plan and advocate for a future where Epsom & Ewell's Green Belt is valued and protected for generations to come.

Yours faithfully,

Tim Murphy, Trustee Surrey Campaign to Protect Rural England

From Katherine Alexander of The Epsom Green Belt Group

Dear Editor,

The ink is barely dry on Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's signing off on the draft Local Plan when it has been rendered obsolete.

The Epsom Green Belt Group warned the council that failing to accelerate the Local Plan process would result in disaster for the borough, and that disaster has now arrived.

The Local Plan will now be caught by the revised National Planning Policy Framework issued today by the government.

Prior to today, the council had the option not to review Green Belt boundaries and not to argue for exceptional circumstances to build on the Green Belt. It chose not to do either, but instead to revise Green Belt boundaries to permit development. Seven and a half years of delays have led us to this point.

The government has focussed its headlines on building on the 'greybelt' to make their plans sound palatable. However, the 'greybelt' definition is a smokescreen for much broader development that they want to portray. This is for two reasons:

1. All Green Belt qualifies as 'greybelt' except:

- Strips of land at the edge of a borough that separate it from built-up sections of neighbouring boroughs.
- Land that 'strongly contributes' to 'checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.'

In Epsom & Ewell, 22 of the 53 parcels of Green Belt land in the council's analysis fail to meet either of these criteria and would therefore be classed as greybelt under the new definition. No disused petrol stations to be seen anywhere.

One of the parcels that would remain Green Belt, not greybelt, under this definition is Horton Farm. However, the council has voluntarily included it in the plan.

2. The NPPF states that where there is insufficient greybelt land to meet the new housing target, councils must find enough Green Belt land to make up the difference (para 148).
The only hint of protection is if that Green Belt land need not be released if it 'would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt when considered across the area of the plan.' There is no guidance available as to what that means in practice, but as Epsom Common and Horton Country Park will remain, this exception is unlikely to help either.

What then is the new housing target for Epsom?
889 dwellings per year. That is almost five times the historical house building rate in the borough (c.189 per year) and more than three times the rate in the proposed Local Plan (c.273 per year).

Every scrap of available land will need to be included in the plan, and even then it won't be enough to get close to the target.

The council only has itself to blame. It has failed to protect the borough, and the government has made it so the price for that failure is astronomically high.

After over 7.5 years of delays, the council's task now is to work quickly—hitherto anathema to them—to review the NPPF in detail and work out whether any of the Green Belt can be saved under the new rules. This may mean taking out land that it had already included, because there is an argument to protect it (such as Horton Farm) in order to mitigate and minimize the disastrous impacts for the borough.

The previous excuse for progressing with an unpopular plan was to protect the borough from speculative development. Because of their delays, there will be no land left for speculative development. Perhaps they've got their wish.

Yours faithfully,

Katherine Alexander

From Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Epsom & Ewell Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) Consultation to go ahead as soon as possible

10th December Councillors voted to approve the Epsom & Ewell Proposed Submission Local Plan (2022-2040) and that the Regulation 19 Consultation should take place at the earliest opportunity. The Regulation 19 Consultation is the final opportunity for residents to feedback on the plan before it is submitted for independent examination next summer.

At the meeting of Full Council, Councillors heard from a petitioner who requested that all green belt land should be removed from the Proposed Submission Local Plan except for previously developed land. This was debated by Councillors during the meeting, before the vote.

Commenting after the meeting, Councillor Peter O'Donovan, Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy, said "The

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Proposed Submission Local Plan provides a vision for our borough that strikes a balance between providing much needed homes including affordable housing, infrastructure, and support for local businesses whilst ensuring enhanced protection for biodiversity and our borough's green spaces, and protecting the valuable local heritage and character of our borough's towns and villages.

"It is challenging to find a path that meets the many different needs of all our communities, and not everyone may agree with every aspect of this plan. However, having listened to all the feedback, and examined the comprehensive evidence base, we feel strongly that this plan ensures that everyone in our borough, both now and in the future, is given the chance to thrive in Epsom & Ewell.

The Regulation 19 Consultation will take place at the earliest opportunity. We will announce the dates on our website and on social media as soon as they are confirmed."

An up-to-date Local Plan protects the borough from ad hoc and inappropriate development and ensures responsibility for future planning decisions remains with the borough and its communities. It provides a framework for where in the borough new development should go and where should be protected.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council consulted on the Draft Local Plan in February and March 2023. The comments received on the Draft Local Plan, along with the local evidence base, informed the Proposed Submission Local Plan. The Regulation 18 consultation feedback summary report, which shows how the council has taken account of the feedback received, can be found here: Consultation response statement

During the Regulation 19 Consultation residents, visitors and local businesses can comment on whether the plan is legally compliant and sound, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. Guidance on how to respond will be published on the council's website.

Responses collected as part of the consultation will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate with the Proposed Submission Local Plan and the evidence base documents.

Dear Editor

As someone involved in the Save Epsom Green Belt campaign I just cannot contain my disbelief and anger at the local Council.

Last week the majority of them went ahead with a policy to build on our wonderful and well used recreational green spaces doubtless under some 'exceptional circumstances' clause.

Obviously, as already said many times and with recent letters to you, it is nevertheless worth reminding all your readers of the true devastating significance of this decision.

It is a Residents' Association Majority Council. They are supposed to represent the local residents: the clue is in the name! They have not and should be ashamed at letting us down despite the many efforts to stop this. I understand that Epsom is the smallest Surrey Borough yet the most populated for its size. As many of us know, the present infrastructure is overloaded: schools, the hospital, GP surgeries, roads viz. Ruxley Lane in rush hours!

This building programme will further exacerbate the problem and severely restrict the country wide environment and its diverse wildlife. No doubt developers are already rubbing their hands with due opportunism as, thanks to the Residents' Association Group, the local Green Belt vanishes FOR EVER! YES, WITH NO COMING BACK.

Yours Faithfully,

Dr Ted Bailey

West Ewell

From Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire

Dear Editor,

Housing in Epsom and Ewell: A Call for Community-Led Solutions

I write to express my deep concern over the Government's recently announced planning framework, which enables developers to bypass locally elected councillors and pressures councils to review precious green belt land for development. For communities like ours in Epsom and Ewell, this approach represents yet another example of Whitehall ignoring the voices of local people who are best placed to decide what their area needs.

Housing is a pressing issue, but the solutions must be community-led. The homes we build here must be genuinely affordable and accompanied by the services that people rely on—GP surgeries, schools, and reliable public transport. It is equally important that we protect the green spaces that define our borough.

Vulnerable families in Epsom and Ewell need safe and warm homes, but this cannot be achieved by sidelining the community. When residents are engaged and empowered, we can deliver the homes required to support those living in temporary accommodation, help older residents access housing solutions tailored to their needs, and ensure the next generation has somewhere to call home.

Unfortunately, the Government's announcement fails to address the root causes of Britain's housing crisis. The biggest issue is a desperate lack of social housing. Too often, developers use legal loopholes to shirk their obligations to build affordable homes. Meanwhile, the very term "affordable" has become meaningless to many local families who are priced out of the market. We need clearer definitions and upfront solutions to ensure that affordability is not just a slogan but a

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reality.

The recent decision by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to move forward with the Local Plan, including controversial Green Belt sites, highlights the challenge we face. While I welcome the council's efforts to prepare a plan, I share the concerns of many local residents and Liberal Democrat councillors who feel that housing targets and the development of virgin Green Belt land, such as Horton Farm, are not the right path forward.

The ruling Residents Association has been slow to update the borough's planning policies, leaving us vulnerable to inappropriate and opportunistic applications. It is time for all parties to work together to prioritise robust, community-supported plans that deliver for Epsom and Ewell.

Epsom and Ewell deserve housing solutions that respect our unique character, address the needs of vulnerable residents, and safeguard our green spaces for future generations. I will continue to stand with our community in advocating for planning policies that reflect these priorities.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Maguire MP
Member of Parliament for Epsom and Ewell

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