



£225,000 to plan the unplanned

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.

26th 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.

Borough celebrates being a Twin for 25 years

Over the Platinum Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend, Epsom and Ewell entertained a large group of visitors from its French twin town, Chantilly. Guests included Chantilly's Deputy Mayor and members of the Chantilly Comité de Jumelage (Twinning Committee). The occasion celebrated 25 years of the official signing of a Twinning Charter in 1995, the visit having been postponed for two years due to the pandemic.

Chantilly is a commune in Northern France. Surrounded by Chantilly Forest, the town of 10,863 inhabitants (2017) lies about 24



miles northeast of Paris and with six neighbouring communes forms an urban area of 37,209 inhabitants (2017 census).

The Château de Chantilly was home to the Princes of Condé, cousins of the Kings of France, from the 17th to the 19th centuries. It now houses the Musée Condé. Chantilly is also known for its horse racing track, Chantilly Racecourse, where prestigious races are held for the Prix du Jockey Club and Prix de Diane. Chantilly and the surrounding communities are home to the largest racehorse-training community in France. Chantilly is also home to the Living Museum of the Horse, with stables built by the Princes of Condé.

Over the years, many such visits have taken place, links between schools, clubs, choirs and individuals have been established, and friendships made. This weekend some of the original contacts from the Chantilly and the Epsom Model Railway Clubs were reunited. There were also new introductions, with two members of Chantilly's Karate Shotokan club joining the Chief Coach and members of Mo-Ichido Martial Arts Club for an impressive training session, and high school teachers meeting to discuss involvement in an international project in Chantilly. Meanwhile, the rest of the party were taken on a guided tour to Ermyn Lodge breeder and trainer's yard, and the historic stables at the Durdans. There were some more official, commemorative moments, when The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, Councillor Clive Woodbridge, and the Mayoress, Mrs Mary Woodbridge, joined for the planting of a European Oak tree in Rosebery Park, and a visit to Epsom marketplace to show off the recently placed Derby Hall of Fame roundels which feature notable Derby winners, including 1965 winner Sea Bird from Chantilly. Time out was allowed, of course, for lunch at a local pub and essential shopping in the Ashley Centre.





No celebration would be complete without speeches, delivered in English and French by both parties, and the exchange of gifts, with Epsom and Ewell presenting Chantilly with a display case of limited edition Jubilee coins, and an individual commemorative £5 coin for each visitor. The Mayor of Epsom and Ewell was delighted to receive a very handsome model of a horse's head, mounted and engraved on interlinked horseshoes. This will be on display in the Town Hall in due course.

The Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association

The Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association is always delighted to hear from organisations looking for their equivalent in Chantilly, as well as individuals offering language skills or seeking a way to improve their French. The Association has a regular programme of local events in the Borough, both social and educational, allowing the chance to practise speaking French. There is a very popular annual French Public Speaking Competition for Schools, run jointly with Epsom Rotary, and regular Soirées Françaises for members. Of course there are also fundraisers like quizzes and the appreciation of French food and wine from time to time. Advice on visiting Chantilly, where to stay and what to see, is available too.

Established in 1994, Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association is a non-profit association, funded by members' subscriptions and fundraising, and run by a group of volunteers to fulfil the obligations of the formal twinning agreement signed by the Mayors of Chantilly and Epsom and Ewell the following year. It is not supported financially by the Borough.

For more information on The Epsom and Ewell Town Twinning Association:

Or to register interest in joining, please see our website www.epsomtwinning.com or email contact@epsomtwinning.com .

Wells Centre's Appeal

Epsom and Ewell Times reported 25th April 2022 on the new lease of life promised for the Wells Estate, Epsom community centre. The charity Epsom Wells Community Association hope to fund repairs from grants but to cover legal and other initial costs they need to raise money from the public.

EWCA and are working hard to re-open the centre after being awarded a 125-year lease by the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to operate it. The centre, and its wooden predecessor, have welcomed all ages - from toddlers and pre-school children to pensioners - for over 70 years.

There is a shortage of social centres in Epsom. The Longmead Sefton Road centre is frequently over-subscribed so, the Wells centre has been sorely missed.



The Wells Centre and top Wells Estate c. Alan Becken

Vanessa Merchant of EWCA said to our reporter: "Leaflets are being delivered to homes asking for donations - no matter how big or small. After fighting doggedly for five years EWCA wrote an extensive business plan to convince the Council to back us. Just like buying a house, there are legal hoops we have to jump through before we get the keys. We need financial help to deal with the legal, accounting and insurance costs for the purchase."

In addition, volunteers who have specific skills to donate, or who want to be part of the "big plans" to re-open, should contact: contactewca@gmail.com

For more details and to join the mailing list visit epsomwellscommunityassociation.org

Epsom aid hero returns from Ukraine

In an exclusive for Epsom and Ewell Times, we report on Paul Matthews' (of Lewins Road Epsom) recent experience taking aid provided by Epsom based Surrey Stands With Ukraine [SSWU] to the bombed and neglected Ukrainian Black Sea city of Odessa.

What is it really like to be take humanitarian aid to Ukraine?

Many people have responded to the terrible situation of the war following the invasion by Russia, but what really happens to all that money and donations that are made in the UK?

Paul Matthews returned last week after travelling in a borrowed van packed with generators and medical supplies destined for Odessa on the Black Sea coast.



Paul in blue shirt with Ukrainian volunteers

Most aid is handed over at the western border between Poland and Ukraine, but for the 21st supported vehicle to travel for SSWU the plan was to try to take the aid to where it was most needed.

Paul left with co-driver Alan Avis of The Greenway Epsom and volunteer coordinator of Surrey Stands With Ukraine, for the two days to Krakow and stopping off at a major hub for refugees from Ukraine. This was aid on an industrial scale with a large number of women and children quietly waiting their turn to collect a carrier bag of food and an opportunity to find a pair of shoes for a child or jacket. A phone call with the hosts in Odessa leads to urgent additional supplies filling the van and then the roof rack. The site is open each day, and each family can visit only once a week. Another completely different group will be here tomorrow. What we also learn is that what are the needs in Poland are different to those in the south and east of the country close to the war, and that transport is a key problem, but only one of many.

Poland was the last place to get fuel. Russia destroyed the only refinery in Ukraine, and then targeted the storage facilities, so if you go into Ukraine you need to take all your fuel needs. That meant next stop was finding fuel cans to buy and fill, so with a mixture of 10, 7 and 5 litres cans the day ends with a full tank of 90 litres, and another 192 litres in the back. Time to say goodbye to Alan who flies back from Krakow, and on to the border for Paul.

The plan was for a Ukrainian national to meet and co-drive at the border, and immediately that plan went wrong as he couldn't get to the border control. With helpful Polish and Ukrainian officials, and a Red Cross sign stuck on the windscreen to enable Paul to drive past miles of waiting traffic he was through in a couple of hours. Then eight hours of driving to Uman before the nighttime curfew started. Uman was the base for two nights with a daytime 3-hour dash to Odessa to drop the aid and leave, but that was just another plan that was not to happen.



On arrival the Odessa lawyers Bar Association gave a warm greeting mixed with a need to get down to the business of offloading and learning about the situation, along with the background wail of an air raid siren...something Paul would soon get used to. And that is when everything changed again. Fuel in Ukraine is difficult to find, and the further away from Poland the situation worsens. Now the group of volunteers who before the war spend their days in court were now feeding and caring for IDPs (Internally Displaced People), who had been forced from their homes or were damaged and now uninhabitable.

Without a working vehicle or fuel to put in it the aid would not be very helpful. So plans changed and Paul was to spend the next week in Odessa and towns to the east. His accommodation was a hotel, but not the one he was booked into on the seaside since missiles had recently destroyed one nearby. So with a change of accommodation, and the trying on of a bullet proof vest and a, "sorry, you can't keep that it's needed for someone else", it was off to find out more of the situation in Odessa.

Over the next week Paul spent time either making aid drops to towns and villages or meeting with other humanitarian aid groups and local volunteers. But there was a troubling question. Where is the international and European aid? Well, not much really. Once past Lviv in the west the presence of organisations from outside Ukraine seem to disappear. In Paul's time since going south and east he never found another UK or even west European number plate. Only one organisation he met had any external funding, from a charity in Germany.

Local NGO's (Non-Government Organisations) have sprung up in response to the war in Ukraine. Paul met only Ukrainians who in their previous life were teachers, builders, shop workers or IT engineers, who now were splitting litre bottles of vegetable oil between three families who had arrived from the east. I did eventually bump into an Australian who had arrived last week and was busy helping, and one German TV crew filming a well known shopping centre that had recently been destroyed (and no sign of any military there). For 500 metres all the blocks of flats had shattered windows and frames and were now also deserted and uninhabitable. Two missiles destroyed a shopping centre and made a couple of hundred people homeless. The destruction was in the centre of Odessa, but also in the east and west. Some looked targeted with cruise missiles, and others random. Paul visited a block of flats near the sea hit by a shell from the Russian navy. Just one shell, but as the husband went out to buy food his wife, her mother, and their 3 year old child stayed in, and three generations of a family killed together. Now the block stands empty as the shock wave also badly damaged the block, and even killed a man who was sitting in his van 50 metres in front of the block. Random, and deadly. The situation was best described when asking "if it's safe?" by the answer "No where is 100% safe."



Everywhere Paul went he was met with gratitude and appreciation and often someone wanting to offer a coffee or share whatever little they had. He found himself realising that everyone he met was deeply affected by the war. Either people were also receiving aid, or volunteering to help give aid, and often both. People who helped were scrupulous beyond his expectations at managing the aid received, and this usually was given by other Ukrainians. Whilst some dealt with IDPs others prepared and cooked food and gave it free from soup kitchens sometimes on the street or gave it to volunteers working all hours to help others. Nothing was wasted, and every piece of aid was recorded, listed, and only given after registration and proof that you were a refugee in your own country. No one got angry. No one took more than they could be given. Everything was in short supply and people also had to be turned away. Some NGO's will only help families with three or more children such is the scale of problem. Others try to help pensioners who can no longer get their medication and try to find donors and pharmacies locally who will donate the drugs.

People have lost jobs. Businesses have closed. Odessa is a vibrant lively summer beach resort. Odessans love their Black Sea and promenade and still go to the beach (especially as it costs nothing). Taking the kids to play in the sand is one of the few possibilities to help the kids forget the war for a few hours, but even that has issues. The main beaches where a sea borne invasion is possible are off limits now with minefields. Even where there are no mines (if the beach is too small), then no one is allowed in the water as it's heavily mined by both Ukraine and Russia. Mines just under the water regularly end up on the beach. In the meantime a few beach bars open behind the red and white tape to mark the minefield, and children play in the sand in the few feet left before the tape. That is life in Odessa, and then there is the air raid sirens, and occasionally the missiles.

If it is difficult in Odessa it's worse outside in the smaller towns and villages.



Arriving in Mykoliv, to more air raid sirens, but this time with the almost mechanical sound of thunder. It's incoming artillery. Landing far enough away that no one runs for the shelters. Those that can wear their body armour. There is an App for everything, and now one that tells you where is being hit, it's called Liveuamap. A must have for every smart phone here. However, phone and internet signal is not everywhere and in the area you need it most such as the "Grey" zone. Appropriately coloured on the Apps map is not clearly under Russian or Ukrainian control. The next stop for the van was to mothers with babies and the elderly in villages that had not seen any aid and with all the men under 60 having left to fight as we were close to the front line. On arrival the village mayor had organised the waiting mothers and elderly, or it required a visit to take the aid to them.

Another place to get too was through a Grey zone corridor to Bashtanka where an Odessa NGO was supporting a church turned into a forward IDP hub. All known as "hubs", this one was known as the bunker. Paul was shown why. The basement had a large room with bare walls, and here, for three weeks, 120 women, children, babies, and elderly lived. Water was usually carried in buckets. Sanitary situation was bad, and there was not enough room for most people to lie down.

Above them the Russians arrived, and fighting did take place with locals with rifles and burning tyres to try to stop their "liberation". The area stretching from Donbas and the border with Russia to Odessa is all Russian speaking. Many who can now try to remember to speak only Ukrainian in this dual language country.

The people remained in the bunker of the church praying not to be discovered as the Russians used a tank to hit the village's main shops in a tiny central area. Where its not burnt out machine gun holes and shrapnel pepper the buildings around and again, glass is everywhere from broken windows and shattered homes, houses, and businesses. Paul was told most people left before the Russians arrived, and then Basktanka had many come from other attacked villages further east. The charity and church run high risk trips in minibuses to collect those wanting to leave from behind Russian lines passing through Ukrainian and Russian checkpoints (though the latter usually require a "present"). The church building is quiet now as vehicles had just taken the last group to Odessa and now the kitchen starts preparing food again. Mattresses on floors are packed close together, are tidied and clean sheets put on ready for the next group. In a side room there is a pop-up pharmacy, the only one in the area after the Russians looted and destroyed the local hospital as they retreated a few weeks ago.

Paul and his Ukrainian guide/minder/bodyguard are offered some vegetable soup and coffee before leaving to return to Odessa with an empty van and leave these many locals to their fate. Not long after Paul sees on the App that Basktenka was shelled. The journey back passes lovely countryside, and they stop briefly in Mykolaiv as Andre (name changed) wants to show the city centre and where he used to enjoy summer days and evenings on the Parisian styled boulevards with cobbled streets and boarded up businesses. Around the corner they are stopped from entering and put away phones...this is where a Russian missile hit the high-rise municipal town hall killing 34 office workers and punching a huge hole through the centre of the building. Paul recognises it from the TV pictures back home. At checkpoints they are usually met with a friendly chat, mainly due to being the only UK registered number plate vehicle they have seen.

Paul started his return to Epsom after a week in Odessa and areas east. A near empty van is added to with donations given by his hosts keen for me to bring gifts for SSWU and a jar of Arcasia honey. It is a long way from home now and Paul is alone. The checkpoints thin out between Odessa and Kiev, but you need to be alert. One time Paul saw a small rise in the road and slowed, and found it was the edge of a crater caused by an airstrike on a fortified structure...a bus stop.

Paul's most memorable meeting was not planned. It happened in a tiny village outside Odessa on one of the aid drops. A young woman wanted to talk and she spoke English. Aged 20 and studying culture at university in Kherson was under attack. She left with student friends and fled to Odessa terrified before it fell to the Russians. Her parents were further east and caught behind the Russian lines and unable to leave. Why was she in this tiny village? Odessa was then attacked from the sea and an invasion expected and her friend asked her to come to stay with her family. Her life is disrupted and twice she has become homeless in two months. It is quiet, cut off, but it feels safe. Throughout she struggles to talk between tears, but wants her story told. She fears for her parents most of all. Every few days a phone call or internet works long enough to talk to them. They ask if she remembers a neighbour who is an elderly man with a small field next the family home. Yes, of course she answers. He was shot tending his vegetables by a Russian sniper. And another woman was walking on the street they live on with her shopping. Shot as well. Others are mentioned. She can not talk anymore.

On the way back from Mykolaiv, Odesa, Kiev, Urpin and everywhere else Paul is thanked for coming and for the aid brought from Surrey. Somehow it doesn't seem enough.

The aid to Odessa was made possible by donations to [Surrey Stands With Ukraine](#)

Donations of money are needed most, to be directed to give immediate humanitarian aid to the oblast (region) of Odessa and its villages. Support for this can be made to Surrey Stands With Ukraine



Long term support, in partnership with the UN and others using helicopters is planned, and this can be supported with donations to humanitaid.com

Paul is taking an ambulance to deliver further aid to be used in the Odessa Oblast. Donations for this can be made to Just Giving, Medical Life Lines Ukraine with the reference "Odesa".

Epsom to Ukraine and back in a black-cab

Richard Gough, 60, an Epsom taxi-rank licence holder, organiser of Black Taxis for Ukraine and owner of Epsom taxi rental service Eclipse Rent-A-Taxi, is driving his magnificent black taxi from Epsom to Ukraine filled with humanitarian supplies provided by Epsom based Surrey Stands With Ukraine and our generous local citizens. The journey starting 14th May will cross several countries and take two days solid driving to complete. Richard will return to England with Ukrainian refugees in his taxi.



This hero taxi-driver has already driven a refugee family of four Ukrainians after holding out for 13 days at Dunkirk to get their visas, aided by the intervention of Epsom and Ewell M.P. Chris Grayling, battling with a slow and bureaucratic system.

Photo features Richard and a team of volunteers from Epsom based Surrey Stands With Ukraine.