

Ashley Centre and Global House plan

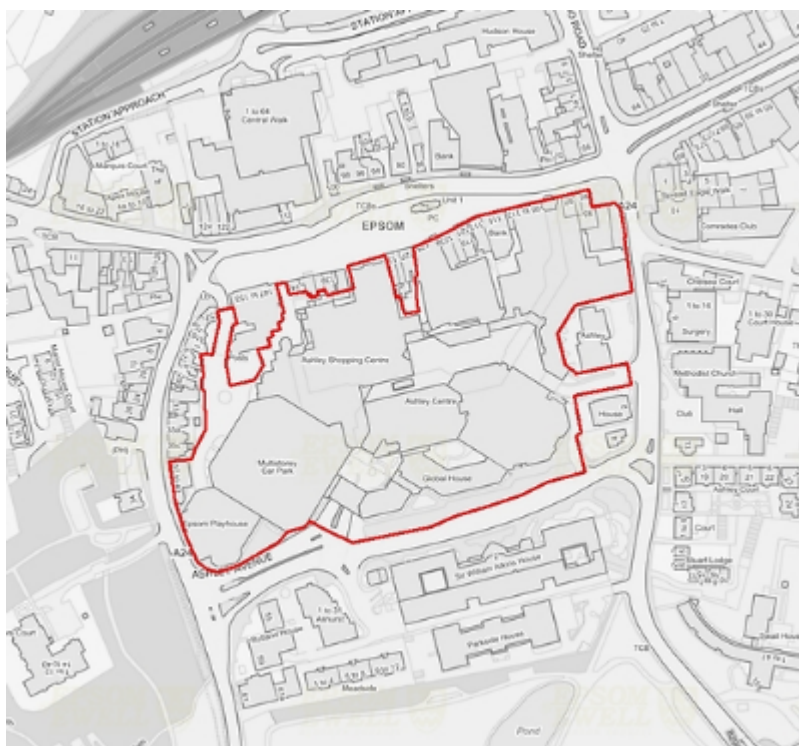
22 February 2023



This is the fourth of eight reports on the BIG PLANS for Epsom and Ewell proposed in the **DRAFT LOCAL PLAN** that is out for public consultation till 17th March. We do not intend to state any support or opposition but may ask some questions.

The plan for this 3.19 hectare site (nearly 8 acres) that presently consists of a shopping mall, a multi-storey car park and offices to the rear is for a mixed use development, comprising:

- The retention and refurbishment of the Ashley Centre
- The redevelopment of Global House to provide at least 70 homes
- Building heights between 5-8 storeys
- Retention of the Playhouse
- Maintaining existing planting and green verge along Ashley Avenue
- Retention of the Multi Storey Public Car Park



Reasons given for the plans include:

There is the opportunity for the comprehensive refurbishment of the Ashley Centre, the shopping centre in Epsom Town Centre. The redevelopment of Global House to the south of the site alongside the refurbishment of the Ashley Centre offers the potential for an upgraded retail environment, improved facilities, and a better utilised site, with the provision of housing.

The site provides an opportunity to make more efficient use of land in a highly sustainable location. The Ashley Centre makes a valuable contribution towards the town centres retail offer and the council wishes to encourage the refurbishment of the centre to attract new tenants and maintain its vitality and viability. The redevelopment of Global House to provide additional housing will make a valuable contribution towards meeting housing needs. The successful regeneration of this site will attract new residents and businesses to the town centre.

When will the site be developed?

The council expects that a planning application will be submitted in the early part of the plan period. The development of new housing is expected to start in 2027.

The Draft Local Plan document notes:

- The site adjoins the Town Centre Conservation Area and several Listed buildings. Therefore, sympathetic design is required.
- The site is within Area of High Archaeological potential, therefore this need to be investigated.
- The site includes a well used multistorey car park that serves the town centre and may be required to be re-provided. This will need to be investigated.
- The site will likely need to continue operating throughout any construction stage(s), development will need to be carefully phased, and retail use, parking, servicing issues carefully coordinated.
- Potential ground contamination to be investigated and adequately mitigated for residential development
- Potential to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity including from the site to the town centre

Related reports:

The BIG plans for Epsom and Ewell – reports on Hook Road Car Park and SGN site plan.

A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Draft Local Plan. Details how to submit your views.

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Depot Road plans

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan

Surrey emotional and mental health crisis children's home receives 'Good' Ofsted grading

22 February 2023



Extended Hope, a respite home for children in Surrey who are having an emotional and mental health crisis has been graded as 'Good' in all areas by Ofsted following an inspection in November 2022.

Ofsted noted that "children have positive experiences in this home", "staff support children to make progress in all areas of their lives" and "are skilled and knowledgeable in the care they provide children". Inspectors found that, "despite the short-term nature of the home, staff help children to prepare for their future" and "safeguarding arrangements are in place to protect children".

The home is operated by Surrey County Council in partnership with a wider Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust service providing care for young people facing emotional and mental health crisis. It offers children a respite or crisis bed for up to seven days and is staffed by residential workers and community psychiatric nurses who can provide mental health assessments and support for young people out of hours as well as supporting families, carers and professionals.

Sinead Mooney, Cabinet Member for Children and Families at Surrey County Council said: *"I am delighted that Ofsted recognises the positive experiences children have in this home. Extended Hope provides a safe and supportive environment for children to give them some respite, and also supports families with creating a plan of care. It is a crucial service because it offers children and young people support close to home and reduces the likelihood of them becoming an inpatient in hospital. Being close to home makes it easier for children to stay connected to their families, friends and their local communities, which is so important for their wellbeing, and ultimately their outcomes. This is why we are absolutely determined to ensure we have sufficient provision, in Surrey, and we will continue to provide the best possible support for the vulnerable children and young people we care for. I would like to congratulate and thank our staff and health partners for their determination and passion in ensuring these positive outcomes for our children and young people."*

Read the full report on Ofsted's website here.

This home is one of ten county council-run children's homes across Surrey. In 2020 and 2021, the Council agreed to invest £34m on improving sufficiency for Looked After Children and £2.4m in increasing management capacity and upskilling our workforce, so young people in care get the best environment to thrive, within Surrey. We are building up to three new purpose-built children's homes in Surrey, the first of which is due to be completed in Spring 2023 and will provide a more accessible and homely setting to support children with the highest and most complex mental health needs. The design is at the forefront of green technology with modern building efficiency and its location will mean children and young people can stay better connected to the local community.

About Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Providers of mental health, learning disability and drug and alcohol services for people of all ages. They provide a broad range of community and hospital services, mostly in Surrey and North East Hampshire but also extending across Hampshire, Croydon and Sussex. Their high-quality care focuses on enabling people and their carers to live well.

You can read about their New Hospitals Program on the website.

www.sabp.nhs.uk

From Surrey County Council news service.

Related reports:

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County children home challenges

Surrey County failed SEND boy

Interview with Epsom and Ewell BC's new CEO

22 February 2023



The post of Chief Executive Officer of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, previously known as "Town Clerk", has been occupied by Douglas Grimes for 11 years (1973 - 1984), David Smith for 23 years (1986 - 2009), Frances Rutter for 8 years (2009 - 2017) and Kathryn Beldon for 5 years (2017 - 6th June 2022). Then Jackie King took the reins as interim CEO until her appointment as permanent CEO was confirmed by the Full Council on 14th February. In an exclusive interview with the Epsom and Ewell Times we introduce Jackie King to the wider public.

E&ET: Where were you born?

JK: I was born in Battersea and moved to Croydon at the age of five, when it was still part of Surrey, and have lived in the County since then.

E&ET: What secondary school and if applicable university did you go to?

JK: Archbishop Lanfranc in Croydon, then I obtained my professional qualification at the London South Bank university.

E&ET: Do you have ties to Epsom and Ewell?

JK: I have lived in Epsom for nearly 30 years and my mother is a resident in a care home here.

E&ET: Which other councils have you worked for?

JK: Tandridge District Council and before that Surrey Police - so a long career in the public sector.

E&ET: What has been your specialism in local government?

JK: Value for Money, Governance and Workforce transformation.

E&ET: What are the biggest challenges facing EEBC in the next 2 years?

JK: In common with other councils the financial challenges are significant, the cost of living crisis continues to impact on our residents and businesses, reduction and prevention in our homeless, plus we have our local plan out to consultation currently which, for one thing, is critical to us addressing the need for affordable housing across the borough.

E&ET: How many hours do you find your self working on average per week since you became acting CEO and now permanent CEO of EEBC?

JK: I have a 36 hour per week contract but my working pattern and number of hours worked tends to be dictated by the needs of the business.

E&ET: How do you relax? What are your hobbies?

JK: I am very fortunate to live in a borough with so many beautiful open spaces and I have always loved to walk my dogs around them when I have had them. In the Summer I love my garden and I also have a craft room at home which allows me to be creative and switch off completely.

E&ET: Thank you very much. We hope you enjoy your role and work in the years to come.

JK: My pleasure.

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Council raises tax 2.99%

Continuity in a time of change

Would you want to live in Woking?

22 February 2023



A Surrey Borough Council steeped in debt: In 2022 the Liberal Democrats seized control of Woking, inheriting a debt mountain after 14 years of Conservative Party control. At the annual budget meeting of the Full Council of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 14th February the debts of Croydon Council were cited when Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley Ward) asked “Who wants to live in Croydon?” In Croydon in 2022 the Conservatives won the Mayoral election and the Council is now evenly split between Labour and Conservative representation, after years of Labour majority rule when Croydon’s £1.3 billion debt grew. In contrast the Residents Association Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has been consistently “balancing the books”.

The woes of Woking are reported by our BBC LDRS reporter.

Annual servicing of Woking Borough Council’s massive £2billion debt is set to hit an unsustainable £62million a year, according to its own budget forecasts. The figures were published ahead of its full meeting on Thursday, February 24, where members are expected to sign off a council tax increase of 2.99 per cent.

The financial crisis at the local authority is such that the borough’s leader said the council needed government support following years of failed borrowing plans under the previous administration.

According to budget papers the council borrowed about £1.8bn for investment purposes but is only bringing in £38.5m – rising to £43.3m next year, far below the £62m in annual interest payments – leaving the council in a financial black hole and under investigation by the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

DLUHC has confirmed that no immediate decision is pending, while borough leader Councillor Will Forster thinks the government is unlikely to put the council in special measures, given the recent changes both in its senior officers and political make up.

DLUHC’s report into the council’s finances, investments and related governance will be made available on the government’s website. Councils can not go bankrupt. Instead, they enter what is known as being under section 114 notice and means they cannot make new spending commitments. They can also lose control of their day to day running,

That does not mean Cllr Forster thinks the council can get out of its mess without help. He said: “We are still waiting for a report from the government inspection team which we will check for accuracy and information and it’s too early to predict what it will find. However, Woking needs government support, there’s not a problem with decision making and we have full faith in the officers. But the council can’t afford to pay off its debt, not even even service the debt. The papers are quite stark. £60 million a year just to service the debt -repaying the debt is even more. We need help.”

Cllr Forster said the council would be in section 114 by the 2024/25 financial year, “at this point I can not see how it can make a sustainable budget, which is terrifying,” he said.

As a comparison, Surrey County Council’s capital borrowing requirement is about £2.4billion. By 2026/27 Woking Borough Council is expected to reach the same level. The difference is that Surrey has an annual budget of about £2 billion, while Woking Council’s is closer to £55 million.

To put it another way, Woking has the equivalent of a £2m mortgage, on an annual salary of £10,000.

Related report

Epsom and Ewell Council raises tax 2.99%

Depot Road plans

22 February 2023



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Depot Road and Upper High Street

In a somewhat short description provided the plan is for residential development, comprising:

- At least 100 new homes
- The reprovision of public parking by the provision of a decked car park including 1x basement level and 4x above ground levels on Depot Road.
- New access road
- Building heights ranging between 2 and 4 storeys

And the reasons given are there is an opportunity to make more efficient use of well-located town centre land by re-providing car parking in a decked structure, releasing land for new homes.

Its successful regeneration will attract new residents and businesses to the town centre.

When will the site be developed?

It is expected that a planning application will be submitted for the comprehensive redevelopment of the main site in the early part of the plan period with development likely to start by 2027.

Possible obstacles include:

- The site lies adjacent to Church Street and Epsom Town Centre Conservation Areas. It is also in the vicinity of several listed buildings. Therefore, sympathetic design is required.
- Some of the trees within and very near site are protected by Tree Preservation Orders.
- The site is within an Area of High Archaeological potential.
- Potential to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity including from the site to the town centre.
- Any development proposal will need to incorporate mitigation relating to surface water flooding for those parts of the site that are susceptible.

Council Officers will be available to speak to you in person at the following places

- Tuesday 21 February 14:30 - 19:30, Bourne Hall, Azalea room
- Wednesday 22 February 10:30 - 15:30, Community & Wellbeing Centre, Sefton Road
- Saturday 25 February 11:00 - 16:00, Ashley Centre, Central Square
- Tuesday 28 February 10:30 - 15:30, Community & Wellbeing Centre, Sefton Road

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The BIG plans for Epsom and Ewell - reports on Hook Road Car Park and SGN site plan.

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Pays to get your Council's audit done

22 February 2023



As we reported here: Epsom and Ewell Council raises tax 2.99% Epsom and Ewell Borough Council was proud of the fact its auditors passed its last set of accounts without any qualification. Another Borough Council of Surrey is not having such a happy time over audits. Our BBC LDRS reporter reports:

Surrey Heath councillors want Michael Gove to sack the Government appointed investigating the local authority's finances. A motion has been put forward by Councillor Robin Perry, portfolio holder for finance, to let the local authority appoint a different firm of inspectors with the "capacity and capability to complete the outstanding audit of accounts".

It will be discussed at Full Council on Thursday, February 23, as part of Surrey Heath's budget meeting - where council tax is also expected to rise by 2.99 per cent. The motion comes as the council's accounts from 2019/20 to present have yet to be signed off and approved.

According to the tabled motion, the problems stem from "much publicised pressures across the whole local government audit system that are the result of staffing and capacity issues within those audit firms" and as such "many councils like Surrey Heath are experiencing significant delays in the completion of the audits on their accounts". Cllr Perry says this "falsely and unnecessarily undermines confidence in the finances of all those councils, including Surrey Heath."

Auditors were appointed in 2020 through the Public Sector Audits Appointments but the 2019/2020 accounts have still to be completed. Audit work has not even begun on any of the council's later accounts. This, the motion says, has impacted preparation of the 2021/22 accounts and has "incurred significant expenditure retaining temporary staff with the historic knowledge and experience required to respond to queries relevant to the outstanding annual accounts".

However, Councillor Rodney Bates, Labour opposition member for Old Dean, said it was just a "desperate attempt" by the Conservative-run council to blame "others for their own financial failures." He said: "The main reasons why our external auditors have taken longer than expected to complete the 2019/20 accounts is because they were left in a dreadful mess after the council's speculative property investments needed updated valuations. In addition, we have had repeated financial governance issues where the council made very large payments outside their own regulations. The external auditor is also hardly to blame for the fact that many of the Council financial files from that time were surprisingly deleted or for the poor handover records when key finance staff left. It is frankly ridiculous for the Conservative Portfolio Holder for Finance to complain about the auditors when it was his own Government that appointed them in a contract less than three years ago.

"Whilst there are customer service questions for our external auditor to answer, these are best addressed through the non-political audit committee at the council. This receives regular reports on the progress of the audits from both our officers and from our external auditor. The committee has a Conservative, Cllr Ratiram, as the vice chair and it is therefore surprising that Cllr Perry seems to have such a lack of confidence in his own colleague to address this issue."

Should the council vote in favour of the recommended tax increase, bills for average band d home in the borough would rise from £2,155.62 per year to £2,226.30, a jump of £70.68.

This figure, the papers say, includes the county council and Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner increases, but not the parish councils.

Related reports

Epsom and Ewell Council raises tax 2.99%

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan

22 February 2023



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Town Hall , Hope Lodge & Epsom Clinic

The Town Hall and Hope Lodge Car Park is owned by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council and is being promoted for development. The Epsom Clinic and parking lot to the rear is owned and being promoted for development by NHS Property Services, while the former Epsom Police Station and Ambulance Station is under private ownership

The plan is for a residential development, comprising:

- A new residential area focussed around Dulshot Green
- At least 90 new homes
- The total redevelopment of Town Hall, Hope Lodge Car Park and Epsom Clinic
- Building heights ranging between 2 and 4 storeys
- The reprovion of some public parking on the Town Hall site

The reasons given are that the sites provide the opportunity of making a more efficient use of land in a highly sustainable location that is currently underutilised. Its successful regeneration will attract new residents and businesses to the town centre.

When will the site be developed?

It expected that the redevelopment of the area will involve several planning applications based on a comprehensive scheme for the whole area. Planning applications are likely to be submitted early in the plan period with development likely to start by 2028.

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The BIG plans for Epsom and Ewell

22 February 2023



Starting today and the next EIGHT days **The Epsom and Ewell Times** will publish details of each of the NINE BIG plans for Epsom and Ewell. These plans are proposed in the **DRAFT LOCAL PLAN** that is out for public consultation till 17th March. We do not intend to state any support or opposition but may ask some questions.

Hook Road Car Park and SGN Site

This near 12 acres site comprises a public car park, retail units, an education establishment and a utilities site containing redundant gas holders.



The site is to be allocated for a comprehensive residential led mixed use development, comprising:

- At least 640 new homes
- Student Accommodation (potential for about 400 student rooms)
- Mixed use ground floor active frontages accommodating space for office, retail and creative start-ups
- Performing Arts Centre
- Café
- Building heights ranging between 2 and 7 storeys
- Two-level podium parking (i.e., parking underneath a building) with smart technology solution allowing different users to access spaces at different times of the day/evening
- Provision of a new public square adjacent to the leisure centre entrance
- A neighbourhood park in the heart of the development with direct connection to the existing Public Rights of Way network
- Relocated SGN (the gas company formerly known as Scotia Gas Networks) infrastructure
- Improved public realm and connectivity within the site and to adjoining areas

The reasons for the plans are to regenerate this brownfield site in a highly sustainable location that is currently unattractive and under-utilised. Its successful regeneration is important for the success and attractiveness of the town centre.

There is the opportunity to redevelop the site into a prominent, high-density, mixed-use development, which would result in an improved, attractive and better utilised environment to the eastern gateway of the town centre. New development would offer the opportunity for a better connected and rejuvenated area that would attract new residents and businesses to Epsom Town Centre.

When will the site be developed?

It is expected that a planning application will be submitted for the comprehensive redevelopment of the main site in the early part of the plan period with development likely to start by 2029.

Council Officers will be available to speak to you in person at the following places

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Will Me'lud halt ULEZ expansion to Epsom borders?

22 February 2023



A coalition of five councils has today (Thursday 16 February) launched a Judicial Review to challenge Transport for London (TfL) and the Mayor of London's decision to expand the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to outer London boroughs.

The London boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Harrow and Hillingdon and Surrey County Council have brought legal action following TfL's announcement in November 2022 that it would push on with proposals to expand the scheme in August 2023 despite strong opposition from across outer London and beyond including concerns over how it is being delivered.

The coalition will challenge the expansion in the High Court on five grounds:

1. Failure to comply with relevant statutory requirements
2. Unlawful failure to consider expected compliance rates in outer London
3. The proposed scrappage scheme was not consulted upon
4. Failure to carry out any cost benefit analysis
5. Inadequate consultation and/or apparent predetermination arising from the conduct of the consultation

Cllr Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: "We are committed to delivering a greener future, but it must be done in a practical and sustainable way. We are dismayed at the lack of discussion or consideration given to these proposals by the Mayor of London. The impact on many Surrey residents and businesses will be significant and we will not stand by and watch that happen with no mitigations offered from the Mayor.

"To date, our requests for due consideration to be given to these mitigations have not been acknowledged, let alone acted upon. It's disappointing that we, along with other local authorities, have to resort to legal proceedings to try and bring the Mayor of London to the table, but we have no choice but to do so."

Cllr Ian Edwards, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: "Our position has remained unchanged from when TfL's plans were first mooted – ULEZ is the wrong solution in outer London as it will have negligible or nil impact on air quality but will cause significant social and economic harm to our residents. We shared this view in our response to the TfL consultation last summer and we've said it since when the plans were confirmed in November. Now, we'll say it in the courts.

"We believe Sadiq Khan's decision to impose this scheme on outer London boroughs is unlawful – his spending nearly £260 million of public money without any cost benefit analysis. Hillingdon, and the other coalition local authorities wouldn't dream of making decisions in this fashion.

"The predominant effect of ULEZ expansion will be to financially cripple already struggling households, further isolate the elderly and harm our local economy with negligible or no improvement to air quality. Investment in improved transport links – on a par with those in areas within the existing ULEZ – is the better way to reduce car use in Hillingdon."

Cllr Baroness O'Neill of Bexley OBE, Leader of the London Borough of Bexley, said: "We have been clear from the start that we believe air quality is important but that ULEZ is the wrong solution. By wanting to expand ULEZ to outer London boroughs it appears that the Mayor's message is you can pollute as long as you can afford the £12.50.

"We believe he should give the monies that he has allocated to ULEZ to the boroughs who actually understand outer London and the transport connectivity problems our residents face to come up with innovative solutions that will deliver better, more practical results.

"We are also very concerned about the mental wellbeing of our residents who we know are already anxious about the installation of ULEZ and the very real prospect that they won't be able to use their cars to get to work, visit relatives and friends, shop or attend health appointments.

“We are standing up for our residents who have given us a clear message of what they think of his plan.”

Cllr Colin Smith, Leader of Bromley Council, said: “We have been sounding the alarm about Mayor Khan’s attempted tax raid on the outer ‘London’ suburbs for many months now. The fundamental truth as to his true intention is now increasingly plain for all to see.

“In Bromley, this socially regressive tax directly threatens jobs, the viability and availability of small businesses, and causing significant damage to vital care networks, as well as creating a completely avoidable spike in the cost of living locally, at a time when some households are already struggling to make ends meet.

“To attempt to do all of this under cover of a false health scare over air quality, when the Mayor’s own research confirms that Bromley has the second cleanest air in London, also, that extending ULEZ to the boundaries of the M25 will make no discernible difference to air quality locally, is frankly unforgivable.

“The upset, pain and anxiety this has caused locally is immense, which is why, even at this late stage, I once again call on the Mayor to withdraw this spiteful proposal.”

The five grounds and a summary of each:

1.Failure to comply with relevant statutory requirements

Schedule 23 to the Greater London Authority Act 1999 governs the making of “charging schemes.” The Mayor decided to extend ULEZ by varying the existing scheme (which applies to inner London). Although Schedule 23 does permit a charging scheme to be varied, the proposed changes are so wide ranging that they amount to a whole new charging scheme which cannot be introduced by way of a variation. In addition, Schedule 23 contains procedural safeguards in the making of a charging scheme which have not been followed by the Mayor.

2. Unlawful failure to consider expected compliance rates in outer London

The Mayor’s failure to provide any meaningful information as to how he expects an instant 91 per cent compliance rate was unfair, and specifically, the Mayor did not respond to Hillingdon’s consultation response that the compliance assumptions “were not fit for purpose.” In addition, the consultation documents were unclear and confusing and prevented consultees from making proper responses.

3. The proposed scrappage scheme was not consulted upon

In making his decision to extend ULEZ the Mayor committed to a scrappage scheme costing £110 million. Details of the scrappage scheme only become available following his decision and were not subject to prior consultation. In particular, the Mayor’s decision to only offer the scrappage scheme to those residing in London was not consulted upon, although this was highlighted in the consultation response from Surrey County Council. Given the importance of the scrappage scheme to the Mayor’s decision, a consultation on the scrappage scheme should have taken place.

4. Failure to carry out any cost benefit analysis

Treasury Guidance recommends a cost benefit analysis where a policy decision requires the use of “significant new” public money. No such analysis was undertaken by the Mayor and no explanation given as to why one was inappropriate. Given that the implementation cost is estimated at £160 million and that the Mayor has introduced a separate £110 million scrappage scheme, and that the expansion is expected to generate a net operating surplus of £200 million in the first full year of operation, his decision clearly involves “significant new” public money.

5. Inadequate consultation and/or apparent predetermination arising from the conduct of the consultation

The consultation exercise contained 15 questions with drop-down answers, only one of which sought to address the question of whether the expansion should go ahead. In addition, following disclosure by the Greater London Authority (GLA) of background consultation information to the GLA Conservatives, it appears that a number of “organised responses” were excluded by TfL particularly those which opposed the expansion. This took place during the consultation and the way in which this happened suggests that the Mayor had predetermination.

Related reports:

[A sign of no signs to come on ULEZ?](#)

[ULEZ will come to Epsom and Ewell borders](#)

[Yet more on ULEZ....](#)

[More on Epsom and Ewell and Surrey and ULEZ](#)

[Council’s last minute opposition to ULEZ extension.](#)

Surrey County failed SEND boy

22 February 2023



Surrey County Council has been ordered to apologise and pay a family £7,400 after failing a young boy with special educational needs. The local government and social care ombudsman published its finding today. It found Surrey County Council failed to provide the boy his full entitlement of education and therapy for 18 months and fined the local authority due the frustration, distress. and lost education it caused.

The boy's mother raised the complaint in June 2021. As part of his education, health, and care plan, the boy should receive 15 hours of tutoring a week, along with speech, language and occupational therapy. Between September 2020 and January 2021 "he received just four hours a week. This rose to six hours a week in February 2021."

In April 2021 a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) tribunal ordered the council to increase this to 25 hours a week, including weekly therapeutic provision, and animal therapy. Full speech and language therapy did not begin until September 2021. Animal therapy, despite the mother alerting the council that sessions had not started in May 2021, did not begin until March 2022 – as the council did not follow up her complaints, the ombudsman found.

In December 2021, the boy's relationship with his occupational therapist was said to have broken down but Surrey County Council did not put in an alternative until March 2022.

Michael King, local government and social care ombudsman, said: "Councils cannot delegate their duties to ensure provision laid out in young people's EHC Plans are delivered. After councils issue these plans we expect them to ensure all the provision included is in place – and if it is not, it should act to secure it without delay. In this case the boy missed out on a significant amount of tuition and therapies for a prolonged period, despite a previous investigation by us which found the son did not get education between 2018 and 2020. It is disappointing that the council did not learn from the issues raised in my first investigation."

Mr King said he had further concerns over the way Surrey County Council dealt with the mother's complaints, which at one stage took 11 months to handle. The council's own policy states it should have taken a maximum of 30 days.

Following the investigation Surrey County Council must now write to the mother and apologise for its faults and the injustice it caused. It must also pay £5,400 for the boy's his lost hours of education and therapy, £1,000 to the boy's mother for the prolonged frustration and distress it caused which it compounded with poor complaint handling, and a further £1,000 to the boy in recognition of the distress caused to him.

It must also carry out a review of how it arranges and monitors its provisions and complaint handling for its children and young people services.

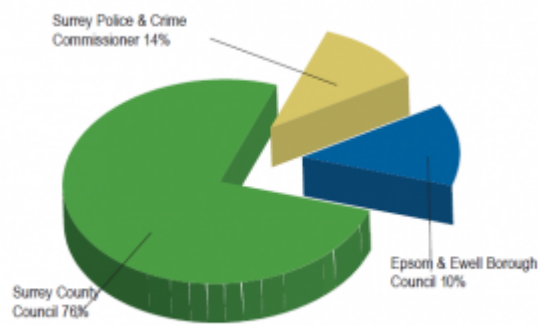
Mr King added: "The council has accepted my recommendations to improve its processes and I hope the better oversight this will bring will ensure other children and young people in Surrey do not miss out on the education and therapy they are entitled to in the same way."

Surrey County Council now has three months to consider the report and confirm its actions. A spokesperson for the county council said: "The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has issued a report following its investigation of a complaint about Surrey County Council. The complaint was about education and children's services. The Ombudsman found that there had been fault on the part of the council, and this had caused injustice to the complainant. Surrey County Council takes the findings very seriously and apologises for any distress the family experienced, and has agreed to take action which the ombudsman regards as providing a satisfactory remedy for the complaint."

The council must now consider the report and tell the ombudsman within three months (or such longer period as the ombudsman may agree) what it proposes to do.

Epsom and Ewell Council raises tax 2.99%

22 February 2023



Epsom and Ewell's Council tax is to be increased by 2.99% for 2023/2024. At a meeting of the Full Council last night the budget for 2023/2024 was approved.

Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Cllr **Neil Dallen** (RA Town Ward) proposed the budget with a wide-ranging speech. The Residents' Association led Borough Council was succeeding in balancing the budget despite many challenges. He made a number of points including:

1. The Government's "disastrous mini-budget" of September 2022 that led to increases in interest rates.
2. The increase in home-working of Council staff arising from Co-Vid.
3. The frequency of resignations of senior staff.
4. The "meddling" of Surrey County Council. The failure to consult over the abolition of Local Committees (a forum that brought County and Borough representatives together), the decisions to bring back to County parking enforcement and verge cutting etc.
5. The invasion of Ukraine and increase in energy bills.
6. Negative rate support grant – meaning Epsom and Ewell Council pays central Government not the other way around.
7. The lack of Surrey police resources to patrol Epsom and Ewell.
8. The challenge of homelessness "over which we have no control".
9. The unqualified audit acceptance of the last budget.
10. The success of the Council owned Epsom Playhouse's pantomime season.
11. The success of the Council's recycling programmes.
12. The Council's support for Epsom's Business Improvement District company.
13. The work done in bringing the draft Local Plan to its consultation stage.

He explained: "The council would be spending £29.5million in the coming year, with £7.4m of the borough's £28.8m income coming from council tax.

He said that the Council was now entering a phase of stability and he referred to the preceding item on the meeting's agenda that approved the permanent appointment of **Jackie King** as Chief Executive Officer of the Council. On that earlier item there was some controversy when Cllr **Debbie Monskfield** (Labour – Court Ward) asked how Councillors could vote to approve a new pay scale when the figures were not apparent? It was stated that senior staff, including the new CEO, were to get pay rises up to possibly 17% compared with the 3% for other staff. The new pay rates were nevertheless approved.

In reply to the budget speech Leader of the Opposition Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour – Court Ward) opposed an increase in Council Tax at this time of crisis for the many who have to "choose between heating or eating." "Residents who lie awake at night wondering how they can possibly pay their bills, their rents or mortgage and their increased council tax." She accused the ruling RA Group of "Wanting to keep their precious venues forever the same. Bourne Hall must provide the most subsidised Zumba classes in the country."

She suggested there were other ways to raise revenue and save money. Community driven litter picking with free skips reducing the expense of dealing with fly-tipping. Not to provide free pre-Christmas parking again. The amalgamation of backroom services with other Councils. Reducing homelessness.

Later Cllr **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court) fired back at Labour stating that years in a row Labour had objected to increases in Council tax and if they had had their way cumulatively the losses would be millions. **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) chipped in "Who would want to live in Croydon where isn't it Labour who have ruled it for ages and their taxes are increasing by how much?"

Cllr **David Gulland** (Lib Dem – College) said that he supported the increase in Council Tax but would vote against the budget as it failed to address two significant failures of the Residents' Association led Council. Firstly, the failure to adequately address the nuisance going on at the Chalk Pit waste site. Was Epsom to become "skip-city"? he asked. Secondly, the failure to inform Councillors of the adverse findings of both the Local Government Ombudsman and the Information Commissioner in relation to the complaints of a resident. He didn't like the overall direction of the RA.

23 Residents' Association Councillors voted in favour of the budget and increase in Epsom and Ewell's Council tax. The 3 Labour and 2 Liberal Democrat councillors voted against and there was one abstention. The single Conservative Councillor, **Bernie Muir**, (Stamford Ward) was not present.

Epsom and Ewell's Council Tax Bands are as follows:

Band	2022/2023	Increase	Amount	Annual 2023/2024
A	£1,423.45	2.99%	£42.56	£1,466.01
B	£1,660.69	2.99%	£49.65	£1,710.34
C	£1,897.93	2.99%	£56.75	£1,954.68
D	£2,135.17	2.99%	£63.84	£2,199.01
E	£2,609.65	2.99%	£78.03	£2,687.68
F	£3,084.13	2.99%	£92.22	£3,176.35
G	£3,558.62	2.99%	£106.40	£3,665.02
H	£4,270.34	2.99%	£127.68	£4,398.02

Related reports:

Surrey County Council sets 23/24 budget

Surrey County Council proposes 2023/24 budget

Senior local Councillor slams Surrey's budget consultation

Budget Report: More council tax for Epsom and Ewell re 2022/2023 budget

A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

22 February 2023



Is the Town Hall Parade over? For some 90 years the residents of Epsom and Ewell have been accustomed to visiting the local council in the Town Hall in The Parade, Epsom. The building has not been maintained sufficiently and to bring it to a proper standard, including modern energy efficiency standards, would cost many millions of pounds.

In a move that seeks to “kill two birds with one stone” the Council intend to sell the Town Hall in the Parade permitting it to be converted to housing and move into the Council owned and vacant Number 70, East Street, Epsom. Helping to meet housing targets and saving Council money and raising capital.

It was indicated that the Surrey Police office in the Town Hall would move with the Council.

A sum of £25,000 was approved at last night's Full Council meeting to study the option further. **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley Ward) spoke from her heart in objecting to the move. She said The Town Hall in The Parade was “treasured”. However, hers was a lone voice as the decision was overwhelmingly carried.

Local democracy to be energised?

22 February 2023



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has taken a significant step forward in opening up its committees to public participation. Under a new constitution the public now have the right to ask questions at committees on topics on the agenda! The previous constitution prohibited this.

Last night at a meeting of the Full Council a new constitution was adopted. After a year of weekly Friday night meetings and a Byzantine network of committees and sub-committees beaver away, the fruits of a cross-party effort were approved. Cllr **Liz Frost** (RA Woodcote Ward) was widely credited for her leadership of the initiative.

The end result is admittedly a somewhat labyrinthine set of documents: annexes within appendices within operating frameworks within a constitution. But, hey ho – the public now have clearer rights and Epsom and Ewell Times has

extracted what you really need to know:

CLICK HERE for the key rules about public questions and public statements allowed at most committees of the Council. Note that these rules do not apply to meetings of the Full Council.

Will we now see more public participation at Council meetings, as illustrated in our accompanying image from Conneticut USA? (Happens to bear a slight resemblance to our own Town Hall Chamber). In contrast there were no members of the public attending last night's Council meeting.

Image: Sage Ross CC BY-SA 3.0

Related reports:

Local Audit meet: unexpectedly interesting...

Council Committees: Everything you need to know

Your right to ask questions at Council

22 February 2023

The public may not ask questions at Full Council meetings. Only most committees.

Annex 4.5 - Protocol for Members of the Public Speaking at Committees

1. Questions and statements from the public
 - 1.1. At ordinary meetings of the council's committees and sub-committees, up to 30 minutes will be set aside for questions and statements:
 - i. On matters within the terms of reference of the body in question.
 - ii. From any member of the public who lives, works, attends an educational establishment, or who owns or leases land in the Borough.
 - 1.2. This protocol is not applicable to advisory panels, regulatory committees, Epsom Walton Downs Conservators and Epsom Walton Downs Consultative Committee.
 - 1.3. The topic of the question or statement may not relate to:
 - i. Specific planning or licensing cases,
 - ii. The personal affairs of an individual.
 - iii. A matter which is exempt from disclosure or confidential under the Local Government Act 1972.
 - 1.4. Questions and statements which in the view of the Chair are defamatory, offensive, vexatious or frivolous will not be accepted.
 - 1.5. Each question or statement will be limited to 3 minutes in length.
 - 1.6. This protocol does not cover questions and statements from the public for meetings of the Planning Committee or licensing sub-committees, which are not permitted..... For the avoidance of doubt, questions and statements from the public relating to planning or licensing committees matters can only be made at those specific committees with the consent of the Chair of that committee.
2. Procedure for Questions
 - 2.1. The chair of the committee shall indicate the item on the agenda at which questions may be put by individual members of the public. Questions are welcomed from the members of the public and must satisfy the conditions below.
 - 2.2. All questions must consist of one question only they cannot consist of multiple parts. This does not preclude a member of the public from asking another question on a separate topic, time permitting.
 - 2.3. A person who wishes to ask a question must submit their question in writing (either in hard copy or by email) to the Democratic Services Manager at democraticservices@epsom-ewell.gov.uk. The written question must arrive by noon on the third working day before the day of the meeting.
 - 2.4. The member of the public submitting a question must set out:
 - i. the wording of the question they wish to ask.
 - ii. an address, email address or telephone number at which they can be contacted before and after the meeting.
 - iii. The details of where they live, work, attend an educational establishment, own or lease land in the Borough.
 - 2.5. Following receipt of a written question, the Democratic Services Manager will ensure that the member of the public asking the question is contacted and told whether their request complies with the conditions above. If contact details are not readily identifiable or have not been supplied, the question will not be accepted even if in all other respects it is valid.
 - 2.6. At the committee meeting, questions must be addressed to the Chair of the relevant committee

/ sub-committee. The Chair will invite the questioner to put the question at the meeting.

2.7. The Chair may decline to answer a question, may give an answer orally at the meeting or may provide a written reply. If available, the questioner will be supplied with a written answer before the meeting.

2.8. Questions regarding items on the agenda for the meeting may not receive an answer, as the matter will not yet have been considered.

2.9. At the meeting the Chair will ask the questioner if the response answers their concern or if they wish to ask one supplementary question. If a supplementary question is asked, it must arise from the reply given. The Chair may decline to answer a supplementary question or invite other councillors or officers of the relevant body to contribute to a response.

2.10. If a member of the public wishes to ask more than one question, their second question shall be taken after all other individuals who wish to ask a question have been given the opportunity to do so. As an alternative to submitting a written question, a member of the public may address a meeting of a committee or sub-committee for up to three minutes.

3.1. A person wishing to make a statement at a meeting must provide written notice (via hard copy or email) including a summary of the subject matter, to the Democratic Services Manager. The written notice must arrive by noon one working day before the day of the meeting.

3.2. Speakers may not engage in further debate once their statements have been made

Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?

22 February 2023



Exclusive to the Epsom and Ewell Times we report on the housing targets of every Surrey borough council. **Epsom and Ewell** is the smallest borough in Surrey with the highest density of population. Yet aims to have the highest density of new housing, according to the draft Local Plan, out now for consultation.

The table below contains the population stated in a Local Plan, if evident in the document. Otherwise the latest population figure from Wikipedia is used.

Council	Population	KM sq	Density	Housing target (15 yr)	Target per KM sq	Plan To Year	Status
Epsom and Ewell	80938	34	2,380.53	8640	254	2040	Draft
Spelthorne	99900	51	1,958.82	9270	182	2037	Submitted Nov 2022
Runnymede	83488	78	1,070.36	7920	102	2030	Adopted July 2022
Elmbridge	138800	96	1,445.83	9705	101	2037	Drafting
Woking	92000	65	1,415.38	4380	67	2027	Adopted 2012
Reigate and Banstead	147757	129	1,145.40	6900	53	2027	Adopted Sept 2019
Surrey Heath	88874	95	935.52	4980	52	2038	Draft
Tandridge	87600	248	353.23	12900	52	2033	Submitted Jan 2019
Guildford	137183	271	506.21	10395	38	2034	Adopted 2019
Waverley	121272	345	351.51	8850	26	2032	Adopted Feb 2018
Mole Valley	87245	258	338.16	5295	21	2037	Drafting

The Local Plans vary in the period covered and some are in drafting flux. The table provides the average per annum new build over a 15 year period for each Council as far as stated or indicated.

Many plans were submitted or adopted before Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, indicated November 2022 that “Housing targets remain, but are a starting point with new flexibilities to reflect local circumstances” and “If we are to deliver the new homes this country needs, new development must have the support of local communities. That requires people to know it will be beautiful, accompanied by the right infrastructure, approved democratically, that it will enhance the environment and create proper neighbourhoods. These principles have always been key to our reforms and we are now going further by strengthening our commitment to build the right homes

in the right places and put local people at the heart of decision-making.”

The table above does not reflect many variables that may justify different housing targets. For example areas designated as areas of special scientific interest or areas of outstanding natural beauty. Also, there are many demographic variables: distribution of the ages of populations, family sizes and average incomes.

Furthermore, the mix of different housing types of the new builds envisaged in the plans vary from one Council to another. Big houses, small houses or flats etc.

However, the table does provide a broad overview.

Epsom and Ewell’s Draft Local Plan states: “The housing need for Epsom and Ewell generated by the standard method is 576 dwelling per annum, which equates to 10,368 dwellings over the Local plan period. The Councils Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (2022) confirms there is no justification to increase the housing need figure over that generated by the standard method.”

“The council considers that the scale of unmet development / housing needs in the borough that would result from pursuing a brownfield only approach provides the exceptional circumstances and justification to make changes to the Green Belt boundaries in the borough.”

You can meet planning officers of Epsom and Ewell Council at the following times and discuss the draft Local Plan.

Monday 13 February 14:30 – 19:30 Bourne Hall, Azalea Room

Thursday 16 February 12:00 – 17:00, Ashley Centre, Central Square

Tuesday 21 February 14:30 – 19:30, Bourne Hall, Azalea room

Wednesday 22 February 10:30 – 15:30, Community & Wellbeing Centre, Sefton Road

Saturday 25 February 11:00 – 16:00, Ashley Centre, Central Square

Tuesday 28 February 10:30 – 15:30, Community & Wellbeing Centre, Sefton Road

How you can express your views on the Local Plan can be seen [HERE](#).

See today’s editorial

Related reports:

Green-belters belted up and beltless

Local Plan battle heating up?

Green-belters seeing red on Local Plan?

Lessons for Epsom in Mole Valley’s “shouty” Local Plan struggle?

Crucial month for local Local Plans?

Gove gives pause for thought on Local Plans?

Local Plan Battle: early skirmishes on Downs Farm

MP’s housing solution for Epsom and Ewell

Blot on Epsom Downs horizon to grow no more?

22 February 2023



Ever wondered where are those tower-blocks on the west horizon from Epsom Downs? Our LDRS journalist reports on Woking Council’s consideration of the height of its buildings:

Plans to limit high-rise development in Woking is akin to slamming the stable door shut after the horse has bolted, Surrey County Council’s ex-head of planning has said. On Thursday February 2, Woking Borough Council’s executive committee agreed to press ahead with its goal to create a masterplan that would “provide a long-term vision” for the town centre’s skyline.

It continues work that began in 2021 that included a six-month consultation which garnered more than 850 responses from about 450 individuals and organisations. According to council documents, though, there remain several legal issues the borough must overcome before it adopts the full masterplan, including the fallout of the Planning Inspectorate decision on the Crown Place from December 3 2022 that granted planning permission three towers of 23, 25 and 28 storeys respectively.

The appeal decision has had a “clear implication” for the Masterplan, the report read, “in that it has changed the nature

of the townscape” and that “as a minimum, the design principles for this site, including what prospective heights may be appropriate, will need reconsidering.”

Furthermore, the report states, during the public consultation phase, Woking Borough Council received representations from developers regarding the possibility of legal challenges if it were to be adopted. There is also the financial risk with officers identifying “significant” cost implications and suggesting the only way to “avoid unnecessary additional expense to the taxpayers purse” is not to proceed to adopt the Town Centre Masterplan in its current draft form.

This has caused the council to seek legal advice on how to proceed. Whether the masterplan can ever have the impact the council desires – fewer high rises in the town centre is debated.

Catriona Riddell is a former head of planning at Surrey County Council and current director at Catriona Riddell & Associates. She said: “Woking is a very tiny, very constrained borough with a lot of debate about how high up the developments go. Anywhere from Surrey you can see Woking. Some love it, some hate it. It’s very much Marmite.

“The Government is trying to help local authorities restrict the number of high rises but with Woking, it is going to be difficult as it already has so many. The local plan is in place in Woking and is up to date – that’s what developers will look at. Any supplementary planning won’t have the same status. Developers are used to playing this game. It’s going to be difficult for the council to change this.”

According to council papers, the masterplan will establish an “overarching vision for the town centre to enable designed, sustainable development, such as building new homes, cultivating a thriving retail and business environment and strengthening Woking’s cultural and leisure offer”.

The report said that the “ambition and need for a clear and robust plan to guide development in the town centre, to give certainty to developers wishing to invest, and provide officers with an effective tool to assess planning applications and defend decisions on appeal remains”.

This, Ms Riddell says, may be the best way for the authority to move forward. She added: ‘It will be about how to make the area a good place to live and work and the only way is through a masterplan so they are right to go ahead with it but it will be difficult with developers looking to build highrises. It will be very difficult for the council to argue its out of character. Woking has changed massively over the years, that horse has bolted.”