

## Public meeting on Local Plan dominated by greenbelters.



Monday 13th March 243 members of the public attended a packed meeting to debate the draft Local Plan issued by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. 85 more logged in online. Cllr. **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley Ward) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee opened proceedings with an explanation of the housing needs in the Borough. He was followed by Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote Ward), Chair of the Licensing Planning and Policy Committee (LPP) of the Council that passed the draft Local Plan to go to public consultation. (The consultation at this stage closes on 19th March.) He stated why the Council is bound by housing targets set by The Government. He urged residents to have their say by responding to the consultation. See HOW TO RESPOND on our pages.

Photo: Cllr McCormick addresses public meeting convened by Epsom and Ewell Times. Credit Ellie Ames.

**Tim Murphy**, a retired chartered town planner and chair of the South-East Council for the Protection of Rural England was on the speaker panel. He lambasted the central Government’s creation of the housing targets but did not demur from their binding effect on local authorities. Chair of Epsom Civic Society and environmental and planning law expert **Margaret Hollins** reminded the audience that the Local Plan is not just about housing. Employment, business and transport are also its concerns. She disagreed with Mr Murphy on the wisdom of a pause to the Local Plan process to see what changes may be made on housing targets and their binding effect. She referred to the Planning Inspectors grant of a housing developer’s appeal to build on Langley Vale Farm in part due to the absence of a Local Plan for Epsom and Ewell. Delay in adoption of one will give developers further opportunities.

The debate was open to the floor for comments and questions. The majority of which were clearly resistant to any use of green belt land for housing development. Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court Ward) appealed for a commitment for more social housing. Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative – Stamford Ward) extolled the virtues of local MP **Chris Grayling’s** ideas for housing and other development of the “brown field” sites at Kiln Lane and Longmead.

One upset member of the public asked why there were no proposals for green belt development in Cllr McCormick’s own Woodcote Ward. Another pointed out that there was no Councillor present on the occasion of the LPP’s vote on the draft Local Plan from the wards of green belt effected areas.


**Paul Bartlett** from Elmbridge and the London Green Belt Council stated that his Borough Council had removed all green belt housing development from its draft Local Plan after resistance was shown. He also suggested that Epsom’s draft’s statement that the requirement to build 5400 houses was an exceptional reason to use green belt ran a serious risk of opening the flood-gates of green belt development where the central government’s target for the Borough is over 10,000.

Cllr McCormick fielded the majority of the questions and you can read in the next article on Epsom and Ewell Times his personal and considered responses to many of the frequently asked questions.

The meeting was chaired by local solicitor **Lionel Blackman**.


An Extraordinary full Council meeting has now been fixed for March 22 to debate a motion to pause the Plan until new government planning guidelines are confirmed in May, following an intervention by Cllr **Eber Kington** and other councillors.

Meanwhile, green belt protectors have mustered over 10,000 signatures to an online petition at change.org. Epsom and Ewell Times cannot verify the residency of the signatories. Below is a screenshot confirming the numbers at the time of going to press. If all petitioners are different Epsom and Ewell electors the numbers reached by the Epsom Green Belt Group compares well to an estimated turnout of about 20,000 electors at the 2019 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council election.

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### Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt!



**10,095 have signed. Let's get to 15,000!**

**At 15,000 signatures, this petition becomes one of the top signed on Change.org!**


 **Ankush Arora** signed 56 minutes ago

 **Sanjay Chhabra** signed 60 minutes ago

#### Sign this petition

First name

Last name

 **Epsom & Ewell Green Belt Group** started this petition to EEBC

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## Dementia Hub serving Epsom and Ewell



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have renamed their Dementia Daycare Service the Dementia Hub – and are using the opportunity to remind those living locally about the fantastic service the Hub offers for the community.

The Dementia Hub, situated in Sefton Road in Epsom, offers specialist respite daycare for people living with memory loss and dementia. It offers a safe, friendly environment where clients can enjoy activities, social interaction and develop skills to improve their quality of life. The Dementia Hub is part of the Community & Wellbeing Centre, a support hub which offers social and recreational activities for over 55s. The Community & Wellbeing Centre also provides services including assisted bathing, a community alarm service, foot clinic, meals at home, a shopping service and transport from home.

The Dementia Hub’s new name and logo will make it easier for people to find information about the facility online, as well as helping create a stronger identity for the service. Councillor Alex Coley, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said: “We’re incredibly proud of the work that the Dementia Hub does to help enrich the lives of people living with memory loss and dementia, and the lives of their carers too.



Cllr Coley RA Ruxley Ward Chair Community and Wellbeing Committee

“The specialist team at the Dementia Hub provide a home-from-home environment where people can take part in memory therapies, gentle exercise, art therapy and more – whilst also making friends. “Caring for a loved one with dementia or memory loss can be challenging at times. The Dementia Hub also enables carers to take precious time to rest and recharge – or simply catch up with essential tasks.”



People who are interested in finding out more about the Dementia Hub or who’d like to book a free assessment can call 01372 727583 or visit: [www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/dementia-hub](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/dementia-hub)

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The Dementia Hub is a service offered by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council at the Community & Wellbeing Centre, on Sefton Road in Epsom.  
Full and half day sessions are available for people aged 50+ living with memory loss, dementia, confusion due to medical conditions such as a stroke, conditions such as Parkinson’s Disease, and more.  
For more information on services offered by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, visit: <https://epsom-ewell.gov.uk/residents/communities-health-and-wellbeing>

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## From custody to caring – new plans for Epsom’s old nick.



Epsom Police Station has been closed since 2012 along with its several cells for detainees. The Surrey Police are situated in offices in The Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, where there are no custody facilities for arrested suspects. LDRS reports on the latest plans for the old building.

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A former Surrey police station and the neighbouring ambulance station could be turned into a 96-bed care home. Plans for the Church Street site, in Epsom, include a basement car park, croquet lawns and specialist care for people with dementia.

But the The Epsom Civic Society has raised concerns about “the proliferation of specialist elderly accommodation within the borough” while there is an



“outstanding need” for housing, especially affordable homes. A letter to the council regarding the application also highlighted the “importance of supporting the vitality and viability of Epsom town centre”.

Image. Left: Old station – Google street view. Right: Plans for former Epsom Police Station in Church Street. Credit: Hunters

The society also raised concerns about protecting trees on the site, necessary measures being put in place for demolition works which may involve asbestos removal, and a possible flooding risk associated with the basement car park.

The police station part of the site was granted planning permission in 2020 for a residential development with 29 apartments located in two blocks, but this excluded the ambulance station. While a since withdrawn application was also made in 2019 for a 60 apartment extra care scheme, which saw some local opposition but no objections from the statutory or council consultees, according to documents submitted by the applicant.

The 1960s police station building has been empty since 2012, and could now be replaced with the three to five-storey blocks of a CQC registered residential care home which would offer 24-hour care.

According to planning documents, the 96 bedrooms would provide nursing, residential and dedicated dementia care, and would have an ensuite wet room.

The applicant said: “The care home will be capable of caring for residents of all dependency levels, including those who require dementia care within a specialist unit.”

The Church Street Conservation Area, which contains contains 20 listed buildings including the grade II St Martin’s Church, The Cedars and Ebbisham House, wraps around the south and west ends of the site.

Plans show the home would include gardens with trees planted and “activity lawns” for residents to include bowling, croquet, gardening.

## Breaking the mould for Ukrainian refugees



Families fleeing war-torn countries such as Ukraine should not be placed in “derelict” and “mouldy” homes run by a Surrey council’s housing association partner, a councillor has claimed.

Mole Valley District Council’s scrutiny committee met to discuss the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities £500million funding for local authorities to provide homes to Ukrainian and Afghan families via the resettlement and relocation schemes.

Councillor Paul Potter. Image credit: Surrey Live – Grahame Larter

If fully progressed, the council would receive about £1.5m to help deliver up to nine properties for families seeking refuge. These would then become part of the area’s long-term affordable housing stock – available on a rental basis of 80 per cent market value.

The move was widely supported by members at the March 7 meeting but the council’s main social housing provider, **Clarion** was criticised by councillors.

The housing association said it was investing £5m and “hiring 100 new staff” to tackle the problem.

Councillor **Paul Potter** (LD, Brockham, Betchworth and Buckland) said: “Great that we are helping people less fortunate than ourselves but I did have a couple of concerns, the first was that affordable rent was not actually affordable. My bigger concern is Clarion, if you are going to pick someone to do houses we should be doing it ourselves because my dealings with Clarion over the last God knows how many years has been a nightmare. It has got better, the chap they got now he’s done more in seven days than they have in 10 years – so something is happening there. But to put someone in the houses I’ve seen, in the state they’re in.

“I had a family actually move into Tanners Meadow from a house that was quite frankly derelict, mouldy, the kids area all on inhalers. These people have come from a war zone. They really don’t want to be going into a damp house, like that young kid last year. So I do have a big concern that Clarion is taking over.”

Cllr Potter was referencing the decision reached at Rochdale Coroner’s Court which said two-year-old boy Awaab Ishak died following prolonged exposure to mould – three years after his parents first complained about damp in their one-bed Rochdale Boroughwide Housing association flat.

It also follows a statement issued in December 2022 when district leader, Cllr **Stephen Cooksey**, said he would write to Clarion Housing to address “widespread issues of mould and damp problems” and urged the association to give the problem “higher priority”.

He said he was “fully supportive” of the **Housing Ombudsman’s** report – where Clarion Housing was one of the six housing associations highlighted for multiple failings of damp and mould, complaint handling and record-keeping.

Cllr **Caroline Salmon** who presented the local authority housing fund report to the committee agreed that there has been an issue with damp and that efforts were underway to remedy the situation in Mole Valley.

The Lib Dem member for Beare Green said: “Clarion have been trying to improve damp, and we’ve been working with them too. There have been some really good changes.”

The meeting was wound up with the select committee chairperson, Cllr **Joanna Slater**, recommending that cabinet moves forward with the proposals with a preference for freehold housing and a discussion over the choice of partners.

A Clarion Housing spokesperson said: “Members of our senior management team recently met with cabinet members of Mole Valley District Council to outline Clarion’s strategy to address the conditions of a small number of our properties in the region, including issues with leaks, damp, condensation, and mould. Housing for refugees was part of the discussion and we look forward to working closely with the council to provide essential housing for those in need. We at Clarion are determined to resolve condensation, damp and mould in our homes promptly and effectively.

“As part of this effort, we have increased the ways residents can get in touch with us to report it and are investing an additional £5 million annually to tackle the issue, including hiring 100 new staff – which will include specialist surveyors and new Resident Liaison Officers to deal specifically with leaks, condensation, damp and mould cases.”

## Final Call to public meeting on Draft Local Plan



Monday 13th March at 7pm at Wallace Fields Junior School Dorling Drive, Ewell, Epsom KT17 3BH, Epsom and Ewell Times will chair a public meeting on the Draft Local Plan. The meeting will feature a panel of experts. Tim Murphy CPRE, Margaret Hollings Epsom Civic Society and Chair Licensing Planning and Policy Committee Cllr Steven McCormick (Council officers invited). Questions and view points from the public attending will be allowed. We will confirm if the meeting can be followed online in the next few days.

Registration to attend is not required but it would be helpful to us if you did inform us of your intention to attend. This will help some planning. Also it would help the chair of the meeting if you submitted questions in advance.

You can tell us if you are attending the Epsom and Ewell Times Local Plan Public Meeting and suggest a question by filling in:

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## Why planning matters at Hobbledown



A parent fought back tears as he told a Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s planning committee he thought someone was going “to be injured or killed” as councillors approved a series of applications for a family attraction. Hobbledown Farm in Epsom made five planning applications to its local council, some for works that had already been carried out.

Councillors called the attraction “a great asset” to the borough but also voiced frustrations that applications were coming to them for things that had already been done.

When the applications were last brought to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s planning committee in October, councillors deferred their decision and asked Hobbledown representatives to come back with a flood assessment for the site.

The meeting heard council officers were “content” with answers that had come back on the flooding risk after two rounds of consultation with the Environment Agency and with the lead local flood flood authority. But as well as concerns around an increased risk of flooding for neighbours, the vice chair of Clarendon Park Residents’ Association spoke at the meeting on behalf of residents in the estate next to the farm.

**Alex Duval** had been told he could not speak on all five applications at once, and was not able to stay for the whole meeting because he needed to get his nine-year-old child home for bed. But speaking as part of the consideration on a new overflow car park, and before an item on lorry deliveries on McKenzie Way, which he said residents were “most worried about”, Mr Duval set out the issues.

He claimed his car had been nearly hit by a reversing lorry there recently and that a two metre high fence that had just been approved by councillors retrospectively meant lorries coming out could not see as they exited. Clearly emotional, he said: “I’ll just say it as it is: completely unacceptable. My son has had to go out into the road, I’m going to try not to be really upset about it, to go round lorries coming out from that site into oncoming traffic and it’s not acceptable. It is not acceptable for anyone living on Clarendon Park.”

He paused, saying he could not even read his prepared notes any more. Again having to cut short his speech and close to tears, the father said: “Some resident, or a resident’s child, is going to be injured or killed, when [deliveries] could have been controlled on the other side [of the site].”

Cllr **Jan Mason** (Residents’ Association, Ruxley) said she had been talking to residents who had raised concerns about lorries using the McKenzie way entrance. She had also previously said an application for a gas tank holder on the site was “an accident waiting to happen” though councillors were reminded that this would be a matter for the Health and Safety Executive and not for planning.

The planning applications put in for the site, which is in the green belt and next to Horton Country Park, were:

- A retrospective application for timber and netting outdoor play structures, three bounce pillows and a lorikeet enclosure.
- Putting in a new “shepherd’s hut” toilet block.
- A retrospective application for timber fencing around the farm, the relocation of entrance gates and the installation of a gas tank holder.
- A variation of a condition on previously granted planning permission to allow part of the site to be used for over-flow car parking at the busiest times.
- A variation of a condition to let deliveries to the farm shop and cafe enter the site via McKenzie Way.

All the applications were approved, with the chair using a casting vote on a second attempt to approve the gas tank holder.

Councillors were told by officers that the fact applications were retrospective was not material consideration, despite many expressing their frustrations on them.

A representative for Hobbledown said management changes at the attraction had been made and they were working to “resolve any planning breaches at the site”. **Bob Neville** said meetings had been held between the applicant and senior planning officers at the council to try and respond to concerns.

He told the meeting: “We hold our hands up. There have been planning breaches that have occurred on the site. What we’re doing now is working pro-actively to resolve those issues going forward.”

After the overflow car park was approved, Cllr Mason was heard to say: “They’ve won again.”

Speaking on that item she had previously said: “We’re not Chessington World of Adventures. This is on a local nature reserve and I think we should remember that.”

## Surrey Youth Games getting starting pistol



The Specsavers Surrey Youth Games is kicking off next month, with a wide range of activities available in Epsom & Ewell. The Games are the largest multi-sport youth programme of their kind in the South East, offering FREE local training for 7-16 year olds across Surrey, leading to a final celebratory event for the whole family.

The Games are for beginners who may not get the opportunity to attend clubs, or are put off by the thought of initially competing against others. Supportive coaches will help participants join in, have fun, learn new skills and boost their confidence.

Registration is now open for the free training sessions across a range of activities, which start after Easter and are aimed at those who live or go to school in the borough. All teams then unite for a family-friendly event at the Surrey Sports Park in Guildford on Saturday 17 June.

Councillor **Alex Coley**, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said “This is a wonderful initiative that provides a great opportunity for young people who are still building their confidence in sport to access training free of charge, as well as gain a feeling of belonging in their local setting. I encourage all those who might benefit from the training to take a look at what’s on offer”

You can find out what’s on offer in the Epsom & Ewell borough and register for a place by visiting [www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/syg](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/syg)

## Your Council Needs You - to bin your litter



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has launched an anti-littering campaign, aimed at reducing litter throughout the borough. The campaign will focus on hotspots including Epsom train station, Epsom and Ewell town centres, and the borough’s parks.

The Council’s team of Environmental Enforcement Officers, who work in partnership with Surrey Police, will patrol the borough on foot or in a marked council vehicle and may warn people at risk of being fined or issue a Fixed Penalty Notice of £100.

The latest virtual recruit to the Council’s Environmental Enforcement team is the famous image of Lord Kitchener, created by British graphic artist Alfred Leete. Posters will be displayed around the borough and used on social media, instructing potential litterlouts to bin their litter or take it home – or risk a penalty fine.

Littering is a criminal offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 sections 87/88.

A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to any person who is witnessed littering, including:

- Throwing away food wrappers or uneaten food
- Dropping chewing gum
- Discarding cigarette butts

Councillor John Beckett, Chair of the Environment and Safe Communities Committee, said: “Dropping litter is an issue for several reasons. It can take years to degrade, causing harm to wildlife and habitats. Food which is discarded by people attracts vermin such as rats and feral pigeons.

“Research has also shown that people can feel less safe in areas that are littered. Poor levels of cleanliness have been found to be associated with an increase in social disorder and crime.

“Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is committed to reducing incidents of littering within the borough, to ensure that Epsom & Ewell is a pleasant place to live and to visit, that feels safe.”

## Possible pause to Plan pondered .....





**Epsom and Ewell’s** Local Plan is at risk of even further delay after councillors from the ruling Residents’ Association (RA) proposed pausing the process in the face of fierce opposition to proposed Green Belt development.

Seven RA councillors are proposing that development of the Local Plan is paused and have triggered an **extraordinary council meeting**, which is due to take place on 22 March. The meeting was arranged a few days after a protest against Green Belt development in Epsom town centre, which organisers have said involved over 200 demonstrators.

The Plan is currently subject to public consultation, which is set to run until 19 March.

Local elections will take place on 4 May.

Councillor **Eber Kingston** (Residents’ Association, Ewell Court Ward), who will propose the motion, said: “My view is that a pause will enable the Borough Council to assess the responses from residents to the public consultation and review any new information on brownfield sites.”

However, it is not clear what impact the “pause” would have. Assessing responses to a consultation is part of the normal process for developing a Local Plan and the motion expressly states that this should continue.

Cllr Kingston added that a pause would also allow the council to re-examine brownfield sites previously designated as non-viable.

The council did not include the Longmead Industrial Estate or the Kiln Lane area brownfield sites that **Chris Grayling** (MP) has suggested could be used to meet housing need, in its list of sites for potential development.

*You can find out more about the opposing positions and viewpoints, ask your own questions at a Public Meeting on the Draft Local Plan to be chaired by Epsom and Ewell Times on Monday 13th March at 7pm at Wallace Fields Junior School, Dorling Drive, Ewell, Epsom. Registration and advance questions optional Click [HERE](#) for details.*

Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Leader of the Labour Group, Court Ward) said: “It is unbelievable that this RA council has spent years formulating a Local Plan; bringing in consultants to give advice and briefings; tasking officers to spend hours to formulate the plan; spending thousands of pounds and now there are several of their own members deciding it isn’t what they wanted. It would be expected they would have agreed more of a consensus before reaching this late stage.”

Councillor **Julie Morris** (Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group, College Ward) accused the RA of overturning “its own decisions very quickly but particularly when there’s an election looming”. She also said that last December, she had asked Cllr **Steven McCormick** (Residents Association, Woodcote Ward), chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, to put a “short delay” to the public consultation on a meeting agenda, but the suggestion was not taken up. “They plodded on”, she said, “and tried to keep the whole thing secret”.

In January, the council voted unanimously to launch the public consultation on the Plan. Cllr Morris said: “The reason that I voted for public consultation was that it [the Local Plan] needed to be out there. The RA has gone to such lengths to keep everything quiet.”

The Draft Local Plan sets out nine sites for potential development in the borough; five are on Green Belt land. Green Belt land includes areas of countryside that are protected from development in order to prevent urban sprawl and encourage development within existing built-up areas.

Cllr Kingston also said: “Crucially we need to understand the Government’s new legislative proposals, which are due to be published in May, so that we can factor the new Government’s new approach into our own plans.”

The proposals set to be published in May are undergoing consultation, including on a revision that states that “Green Belt boundaries are not required to be reviewed and altered if this would be the only means of meeting the objectively assessed need for housing over the plan period”.

After **Mole Valley District Council** wrote to the planning inspectorate asking to remove all Green Belt sites from its own Local Plan, the inspector agreed to delay hearings until May.

Cllr Kingston added: “Finally, we have to continue to campaign against the Government’s continuing requirement for councils to use 2014 data to develop a 2023 Local Plan. If 2018 data were used, the number of required homes could be met by the use of brown field sites alone.”

Currently, the Local Plan is due to be adopted in Spring 2025. This would see it miss the government target of all local authorities having an up-to-date Plan by the end of 2023 – and make it the last local council in Surrey to adopt a new Plan.

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The Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is holding an extraordinary meeting on 22nd March at 7.30pm at The Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom to discuss a motion about the Draft Local Plan. Only 11 councillors approved the Draft Local Plan going forward at a meeting of the Licensing Planning and Policy Committee of 30th January. The Full Council meeting of the 22nd March will be the first public opportunity for all Councillors to speak on the Local Plan.

You can tell us if you are attending the Epsom and Ewell Times Local Plan Public Meeting and suggest a question by filling in:

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