

# Planning or pantomime? Councillors press pause on Plan.

23 March 2023



Epsom and Ewell council voted to “pause” its controversial Local Plan last night, with one Residents’ Association (RA) councillor leaving the meeting after suggesting it was about “forthcoming elections rather than planning policy”. The length of the “pause” has not been specified.

Local elections are due to take place on 4 May.

Councillor **Alex Coley** (Residents’ Association, Ruxley Ward) told the council: “Considering this motion on its merits, I feel that a more appropriate location might be the Playhouse around Christmas time.” “We seem to be debating the forthcoming elections rather than planning policy”, he added, suggesting that the pause “ultimately changes very little”. Cllr Coley then told the council: “I will leave you now to your debate.”

The motion to pause the Local Plan was put forward by councillor **Eber Kington** (Residents’ Association, Ewell Court Ward) and six other RA councillors. Cllr Kington said that a pause would acknowledge “the strength of public feeling” on the Plan, enable a reassessment of brownfield sites, and provide the opportunity to look at options that do not use Greenbelt land at all. He added: “We have to take notice of what residents are telling us, through whatever means they choose.”

The public consultation on the Draft Local Plan ended on Sunday (19 March) with around 1,500 responses. A petition calling to “Keep Epsom and Ewell Greenbelt” has also reached 10,000 signatures, which is thought to be the greatest response to a petition in the borough’s history.

Campaign group Epsom Greenbelt held a protest to “Welcome Councillors” outside of last night’s meeting, and were calling for “Green not greed”.

Councillor **Bernie Muir** (Conservative, Stamford Ward) said she had “no option” but to vote for the pause, despite believing that “nothing in this motion will actually stop this plan from going ahead in the end”.

The pause was discussed in light of expected changes to government planning legislation, including updated guidance on Greenbelt development and how to calculate housing need.

One part of the motion states: “Under the existing legislation Local Planning Authorities are being required to draft Local Plans on the basis of out of date, 2014, data that does not reflect Epsom and Ewell’s housing need, as shown in more recently available 2018 data.”

Councillor **Peter O’Donovan** (Residents’ Association, Ewell Court Ward) said that pausing was not an option because the government had not given at timeframe for its legislative changes. He added that without an up-to-date Local Plan, there was a danger of inappropriate development, and said: “we need to continue on our current strategy, to protect the borough, to produce a plan that protects our Greenbelt.”

Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Labour, Court Ward) said that there was a huge need for housing in the borough, particularly social and affordable housing, but that there should be no development on the Greenbelt until every other option had been exhausted. She said that Labour councillors would be voting to pause the Plan.

Councillor **Julie Morris** (Liberal Democrats, College Ward) said: “There’s really quite a divide, isn’t there, amongst the ruling group?” She said: “We should have been much more clear about the direction that this document was going in, and that’s the problem you’ve got now - you are now having to do a U-turn because it was all kept secret for quite a long time and the public are not happy, understandably.”

Cllr Morris said that it was difficult to know whether to vote for the motion, especially when it did not include any endpoint for the pause, but said that it was the right thing to do on balance.

Councillor **Steven McCormick** (Residents’ Association, Woodcote Ward) had five minutes to respond to the points raised because, as chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee, he had led the development of the Local Plan. He said that the proposed pause was reliant on the idea that the government would publish changes to planning policy in May, but that some legislation change may not come until 2024.

Cllr McCormick added that the motion to pause the Plan would create “huge uncertainty” and said: “the best thing for protecting the Greenbelt is to progress”. Cllr McCormick voted against the pause.

The council voted to pause the Local Plan by a clear majority, with four councillors ( RA Cllrs Dallen, O'Donovan, McCormick and Nash) voting against the pause and Cllr Williamson abstaining.

The text of the motion is [HERE](#).

See editorial.

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## Ruse within a ruse?

23 March 2023



Yesterday the full Council of Epsom and Ewell voted to pause the process of the Local Plan. Cllr **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court) proposed an emergency motion to delay the next stage for the Government's latest position on housing targets to be clarified. Expected some time after the local elections on 4th May.



Cllr Eber Kington

His arguments for the motion included the protection of the Green character of the Borough. He observed that the draft Local Plan conceded the need for using Green Belt to accommodate a proportion of the 5400 houses planned for. Yet, the Government's target is over 10,000. Therefore, Green Belt encroachment for the lower figure is a Green Light for Green Belt development for the higher figure.

He said that more work needed to be done on how brownfield sites could be used to provide the housing requirements.

In an unusual intervention Cllr **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) described the proceedings of the Council meeting as a pantomime. He argued that the timetabling of the Local Plan process is one for managerial direction and that Councillors were playing politics. Fitting his description of the proceedings he then made a somewhat dramatic exit stage left in a bit of a huff.

Cllr **Peter O'Donovan** (RA Ewell Court) opposed his ward colleague. He stressed the need for a new Local Plan. Delay would mean the Borough's resistance to inappropriate planning applications would be weakened.

All opposition Councillors (Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour) spoke for the motion. After Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Stamford) called for the ruling Residents Association to be "kicked out", she and her Party were targetted in responses by RA Councillors. Firstly, Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) suggested Cllr Muir had not long lived in the borough "just five years". On a dubious "point of order" Cllr Muir corrected this: "12 years actually".

Cllr Mason struggled on to make her point. A journey into a time nearly 50 years ago when the Council bought Longrove hospital land, thus preventing a 5000 housing development from taking place. Cllr Muir would not have known that, she said. Cllr Mason relied on this 1974 purchase to prove that the RA ruled Council do care about the Green Belt.

This brief spat passed and it was Cllr Kington in his reply to the debate who said that the Conservative Government should be "kicked out". This was because the Government insist on using 2014 figures to determine housing need when much lower numbers are yielded by a 2018 analysis.

Cllr **Steve McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Chair of the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee) opposed the motion. He relied on the ability of the Council to respond to the public's views and amend the draft during the next 5 of the processes's 7 stages.

There were a significant number of empty chairs in the Council Chamber for this important meeting. Four Councillors voted against Cllr Kington's motion. It was carried by a large majority.

The motion passed is [HERE](#) in FULL.

This confusion in large part arises from Michael Gove MP and Secretary for Housing Development etc signaling an end to compulsory and centrally set housing targets. First indicated as long ago as May 2022. Then unstated when the Government confirmed its targets remained and then reinstated just a few months later. But no regulations or legislation have been introduced that lift the compulsion of the targets from local government planning obligations.

Cynical observers suggest that Gove's manoeuvres are a ruse to quell the flames of rebellion in the Tory shires and avoid defeats in upcoming local elections. Will we see actual legal change after 4th May?

In Epsom and Ewell was walk-out man Cllr Coley right to hint that the pre-election motion to delay is also for political gain?

A ruse within a ruse?

"That which we call a ruse by any other name would smell as bad."

Time will tell if words are matched by action.

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## Motion to pause Local Plan process

23 March 2023

The motion passed by an extraordinary meeting of the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on 22nd March 2023:

Proposer Cllr Eber Kington

Seconder Cllr Christine Howells

This Council notes that:

1. Extensive green areas, especially the green belt, and the absence of high-level development in our urban areas makes Epsom and Ewell a distinctive, green and an excellent place to live.
2. Under the existing legislation Local Planning Authorities are being required to draft Local Plans on the basis of out of date, 2014, data that does not reflect Epsom and Ewell's housing need, as shown in more recently available 2018 data.
3. The Government's recently proposed legislative changes to the planning process, whilst welcome in several aspects, are not yet enacted and the current legal position has not changed.

These factors suggest that a pause in progressing the Draft Local Plan in its current form would provide an opportunity to assess the Government's draft proposals as well as the 2018 data on housing need in the borough. This Council therefore agrees that:

- i. Other than for the purpose of analysing the responses of the public consultation to capture residents' views and any new information, the Local Plan process be paused to enable:
  - a) further work on brown field sites, including information arising out of the Regulation 18 consultation
  - b) further options to be considered that do not include green belt sites
  - c) an analysis of Epsom and Ewell's required future housing numbers based on 2018 data
  - d) a clearer understanding of the Government's legislative intentions in regard to protections for the green belt and the current mandatory target for housing numbers.
- ii. Write to the MP for Epsom and Ewell calling on in him to use his influence to get the Government to abandon its use of 2014 data to calculate housing need and accept that all planning and housing policies must reflect the latest data if they are to be effective as well command the respect of the people they affect.

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## Cllr McCormick's own answers on Local Plan

23 March 2023



Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Woodcote Ward) Chair of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee writes for the Epsom and Ewell Times to answer many of the questions being asked about the Draft Local Plan. The views are his own and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Council.

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Below are FAQs and items from the Epsom Green Belt group page and other sources.

The responses below are my own view and do not reflect that of EEBC or officers.

**What is the Greenbelt and why should it be protected?**

The Green Belt of land encircling London has protected by law since 1938 to keep urban sprawl in check, preventing towns from merging together and promoting the recycling of derelict land.

These purposes remain as important as they ever were, but now we know that retaining these areas is also critical in slowing and reducing the impacts of climate change, reducing flooding, reducing air pollution and providing essential habitats for wildlife.

**Reply**

Green belt exists throughout the **country** and is a barrier to prevent urban sprawl in planning terms.

**▪ Isn't it prohibited to build on Greenbelt Land?**

Other than for very limited uses, Greenbelt Land is protected by law from development. It isn't permitted to build housing on Greenbelt Land except in 'Exceptional Circumstances'.

**Reply**

It has heavy protections but very special circumstances must be shown before development can be approved. In our draft local plan we do not have enough housing supply with brownfield or urban developments and have had to consider including green belt sites.

An alternative is to build higher and denser in our brownfield/urban sites. This has a downside of likely very tall buildings and a reduction in affordable housing delivery.

**Is there any Greenbelt Land that it is OK to build on?**

Some land in the Greenbelt has buildings on already, or has sites where buildings used to be. This is called 'Previously Developed Land within the Green Belt'. Without considerable remedial work, this land doesn't support much wildlife and is suitable for development.

**▪ Are there exceptional circumstances that require building on the Greenbelt now?**

No. The Borough can continue to meet the historical trend of growth in housing need (225 homes / year) through development of Brownfield sites only.

Every year Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, as with all other Councils nationwide, have a housebuilding target. As with many other Councils, the target has not been met each year. Whilst it would be difficult (but not impossible) to meet a 576 house target each year, this is a normal situation both in Epsom & Ewell and across the country. It is not exceptional.

The Draft Local Plan states that this **is** exceptional to justify their plans to build on the Greenbelt.

**Reply**

The historical trend is not what local plans are driven to achieve by central government. The start point is based on the standard method, which our draft local plan achieves 52% of that need.

Yes there is a consultation on various aspects of the NPPF but at this point in time our target remains based on the 2014 ONS data. As is shown by the recent response from the planning inspector to MVDC it is not current policy, it is consultation and we have to progress on what we have in front of us and that which is currently law.

Furthermore each year a council doesn't meet its housing delivery target they have to justify to central government the reasons for this and the plans to address this. The council runs a risk of being designated which means we lose our local planning control and a central government inspector takes over.

Exceptional circumstances are shown via an evidence based approach to a draft local plan. This is what we have done. The end goal is to get a new local plan adopted and to do that it has to stand up to scrutiny and challenge.

**▪ Were Clarendon Park, Livingstone Park, and Manor Park built in the Greenbelt, and if so, what's different about these proposals?**

All these estates were built on the sites of the old cluster of hospitals. These were Previously Developed sites within the Greenbelt, therefore developing these sites did not have a detrimental impact on environment and wildlife.

**Reply**

These were sites in the green belt. They had to prove the previously developed land situation to show very special circumstances existed to develop in the green belt.

Further evidence was provided to support the development in the green belt of these sites.

**▪ There's an area of Greenbelt on the Local Plan map that isn't on the Priority Development list of 9 sites, does this mean it is safe from development?**

No. All sites bordered in green on the map have been put forward for potential development. If the Council includes any Greenbelt sites on the Priority list, all other Greenbelt sites are at risk of future development.

Any site may be included in a future iteration of the current Local Plan, could be included by the Planning Inspector in the course of their review of the current Local Plan, or could be included in future Local Plans.

**Reply**

As part of the process a **call for sites** was made which is a requirement of the local plan process. All sites put forward by landowners and developers have to be evaluated for viability and whether they can deliver housing.

Some sites are more deliverable than others.

Some sites are not viable I.e the development costs would be too much.

Some sites proposals may be amended to make them viable or deliverable.

The next stage of consultation, regulation 19, March 2024 will see a more detailed draft local plan put forward for a further six week public consultation.

Additional sites may come forward between now and then.

**▪ Does the Draft Local Plan meet the need to supply affordable housing for lower paid workers and the homeless?**

No. Although the plan discusses building 40% 'affordable housing' on Greenbelt land and 30% on Brownfield land, this housing may not actually be affordable to those in need.

The definition of 'Affordable Housing' in the National Planning Policy Framework is houses sold at a 20% discount to their market value. In Epsom, the average property sold over the last 12 months was £630k, to an average property sold as 'Affordable Housing' would cost about £510k. This is well out of reach of most people in need of housing in the Borough.

**Reply**

The Housing and Economic Delivery Needs Assessment (HEDNA) describes the requirement for affordable units across the plan period. The number is circa 670 per year. To start describing cost of housing in the way above is misleading.

There are other options, First Home scheme, social rent scheme, shared ownership schemes to help residents get a home.

Over the last 2 years the borough provided 12 affordable units.

The borough spent approximately £1.5m on overnight homeless accommodation for our residents. This is not sustainable.

This needs to change.

The draft local plan is seeking to deliver 30% affordable from brownfield and 40% from green field developments.

**▪ Is it permissible to submit a Local Plan which doesn't meet the full housing need calculated under the government's 'Standard Method', and can it be approved?**

Yes. Many other boroughs have done so or are planning to do so such as Mole Valley, Elmbridge, with Worthing Council recently got its Local Plan approved by Inspector with only meeting 25% of its target.

**Reply**

MVDC have had a response from the planning inspector to make progress.

Submitting a plan with numbers significantly below the target will likely yield the plan being found unsound, thrown out, forced to re-do or the planning inspector does it for us.

Epsom has a number of 5400 of 10,368, 52% of the target.

**▪ I've been told that Mole Valley had their request to remove Greenbelt from their Local Plan rejected by the Planning Inspector, is this true, and if so how does it affect the Epsom & Ewell Local Plan?**

Mole Valley is in the difficult position of having originally submitted a Local Plan to the planning Inspector which included developing Greenbelt. A number of Councillors were voted out of office as a result and the new Councillors are trying retrospectively to amend the submission. There appear to be significant hurdles to doing this.

Despite that, the Inspector has offered to pause the examination to give time for new Government legislation to be issued (see FAQ 10, below) which may support their case for a change to the submitted plan. It looks like Mole Valley has been offered a lifeline for their challenge.

The implications for Epsom & Ewell are:

**a.** It is better to exclude Greenbelt from the initial Local Plan submission to the Planning Inspector that to try to change the submission later.

**b.** The Planning Inspector recognises the likelihood that changes to the National Planning Policy Framework will strengthen the case for excluding Greenbelt from development.

There is no reason to push ahead with a flawed plan that destroys precious Greenbelt.

**Reply -**

The planning inspector responded to the request stating -

*She wishes to make it clear that there has not been a change in Government policy. Rather, the Government is currently consulting on a draft NPPF. Until Government policy is changed (expected in Spring 2023), the Inspector will continue to examine the submitted Plan against current Government policy, contained in the NPPF 2021. She therefore cannot recommend MMs predicated on draft Government policy that may or may not come into effect in its draft form.*

The full document can be found here - <https://futuremolevalley.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ED57-Inspectors-Note-23-Reply-to-Councils-Note-31-on-Removing-Green-Belt-Sites-from-the-Local-Plan.pdf>

**▪ I heard that the Government is going to abolish the mandatory housing target and no longer require Local Authorities to review Green Belt for housing. Is this true?**

Yes, The National Planning Policy Framework specifically states that, with suitable justifications (such as protecting Greenbelt), the full housing target need not be met.

The government intends to implement many of its proposed policy changes by May 2023.

Policy changes include a change to emphasise that the standard method for calculating housing need is “advisory”, removal of the requirement for councils to continually demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and new lines that stress councils are not required to revise Green Belt boundaries or build at densities out of character even if they are set to miss their house building targets.

Emerging policies do carry substantial weight in planning decisions, therefore at least 20 Councils have already withdrew or paused their Local Plan process, citing the upcoming policy changes. Therefore it is entirely up to EEBC if they would want to be against Central Government policy and continue pushing for large housing development on Green Belt.

**Reply**

The government has said they are going to consult on possibly changing the housing number calculations. Until they do and change the law and related policies we have to proceed under the current requirements.

MVDC has had a response from their planning inspector saying exactly that.

Until the regulations, policy and law changes we have to use what is currently in place.

**▪ The roads into Epsom are already overcrowded, particularly at peak times. What are the plans to address the additional traffic from all the new housing?**

According to the 2011 census, there is an average of over 1.5 cars per household in Surrey. That equates to 2,300 new cars from proposed building on the Greenbelt Horton Farm alone.

There are no obvious ways to build new roads or expand existing ones.

No infrastructure plans have been put forward to show how this increased traffic will be managed. Expect long queues!

**Reply**

Infrastructure is a consideration once the high level draft local plan has been published. The council works with infrastructure delivery partners after regulation 18 to determine what new additional infrastructure may be required and needed to support the proposals.

Infrastructure Delivery Partners rarely come to the table before a draft local plan is published.

**▪ It is difficult to get my child into primary school / secondary school as there aren't enough places. If the proposed houses are built, will I still get a school place for my children?**

Local primary and secondary schools are either full or near to capacity.

No plans have been put forward for building new schools or expanding existing ones. No land has been allocated for this either. There is no guarantee of a school place and no priority for existing residents.

**Reply**

Similar to the roads section above.

**▪ I see there are plans to build new sites for Gypsies / Travellers. How many will there be and where will these be located?**

Regulations require Borough Councils to provide for the Traveller community. The Council has proposed putting 10 traveller sites on the Greenbelt Horton Farm site.

No explanation has been provided for why they are proposed to be located in a single area or on a Greenbelt site.

**Reply**

Further detail will be provided in the next stage of the draft local plan. Comments from the consultation will be considered, the next stage of how these sites maybe implemented will be further detailed.

**▪ Why is the housing target so high?**

The short answer is that it doesn't need to be.

Here's some maths to show why...

The actual population growth of the Borough over the last 10 years has been 5,798, an average of 580 people/year (Source: Draft Local Plan para 1.39).

There are 2.58 people in an average household in the Borough (Source: Draft Local Plan para 1.39).

If growth continues at this rate, there would be a need for 225 new homes to be built each year.

The target included in the Draft Local Plan is for 576 new houses per year. This is based on a 'Standard Method' (Source: [Housing and economic needs assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)) which uses a household growth projection from 2014 as a starting point.

The more up-to-date 2018 household growth projection is considerably lower than the 2014 projections, reflecting more recent real growth figures.

This is then increased by 40%, based on the current high cost of housing in the Borough, to give an even higher housebuilding target than the inflated 2014 based figure.

As a result, the quoted housing target is more than 2.5x the need based on the historic population growth in the Borough.

### Reply

The housing target is set by central government via the standard method using 2014 ONS data.

Even with with the standard method number our draft local plan is currently showing a 52% delivery of housing supply. 5400 vs target of 10,368.

- **There seem to be lots of sites within Epsom's urban area that are vacant, run down or underutilised, could these be developed for housing instead of the Greenbelt?**

Yes.

Some of these sites have already been earmarked by the Council for development, but many haven't.

The National Planning Policy Framework (which contains mandatory guidance for preparing the Local Plan) para 141 states that before concluding 'exceptional circumstances' exist for developing on Greenbelt, the strategy must:

- a) make as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land; and
- b) optimise the density of development... including... a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport.'

There are lots of sites across Epsom town / urban areas which are not being put forward for use in the Local Plan or appear to be underutilised (for instance the Council's proposals for the town hall site don't meet the minimum density requirements they set in policy S3).

### Reply

The Epsom Town Masterplan is due to complete at the end of March and will input into the next stage of the draft local plan. The site area will be reviewed, optimised with options coming forward to members for a steer/view.

- **Does the Borough have to build houses on Greenbelt Land to meet the housing target?**

No. In fact it is only permitted to build on Greenbelt in 'Exceptional Circumstances'.

The National Planning Policy Framework specifically states that housing targets need not be met if it would require building on the Greenbelt (para 11 note 7).

### Reply

Similar to an item above. If we are unable to deliver all our housing from brownfield or urban sites we have to consider green belt. Some green belt sites have been put forward during the call for sites which have been evaluated. A small number of these are considered viable at this point and could deliver housing.

- **The Ashley Centre Local Plan display states that development will be 'Located away from areas of flood risk'. How has Horton Farm been selected for development as it regularly gets flooded?**

'Horton' roughly translates from Old English to 'muddy farm'. Both the Environment Agency flood maps and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's own 2018 Flood Risk Assessment show that Horton Farm is at high risk of flooding from surface water (because there is clay just below the surface) and in practice it is often flooded. A 'Critical Drainage Area' runs through the site.

The Draft Local Plan appears to ignore the flood risk assessment and only considers flooding from rivers.

If the Greenbelt Horton Farm is built on, there is a significant risk that it will result in increased flooding into West Ewell and Ewell Court.

Source: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2018, Figure 108. Brown areas are in the highest category of flood risk.

### Reply

The Ashley Centre Local Plan, read the display boards showing key items of the draft local plan in the Ashley Centre.

Any site being put forward would still need to submit a full and thorough planning application which may include flood risk evaluation and mitigation.

The draft local plan does not get into that level of detail so the statement that it **ignores** the flood risk assessment is misleading at best.

- **I'm told the Council has spent £1m on preparing this plan. Would it be expensive to change direction**

**now?**

The money that has been spent is largely on reports that were required to be prepared whatever direction the plan went in.

The earlier changes are made to protect the Greenbelt, the cheaper it is to make those changes.

**Reply**

All funds spent on the local plan have been shown in LPPC and S&R committees.

Yes there are consultants involved to prepare reports and evidence as we don't have that skillset; this is not unusual and many other boroughs adopt the same approach.

It has to be understood that there is a large body of evidence behind the local plan. Adding or removing sites from the spatial strategy itself has a knock on of recreating that evidence.

The decision point on changes to the spatial strategy and which sites are in or out has no relevance on cost. The work still needs to be done, the evidence still needs to be created.

If the plan is paused then the evidence base may need to be re-worked depending on the length of pause.

**▪ How will developing the Greenbelt land affect wildlife?**

The Greenbelt land is a vital habitat, providing food and shelter for hundreds of species of mammals, birds, amphibians and insects as well as native trees and flowers.

As an example, Horton Farm supports roe deer, bats, greater spotted and green woodpeckers, sparrowhawks, house sparrows, stag beetles, song thrushes, hedgehogs, common toads, and other priority species.

**Reply**

Any planning application coming forward would have to consider the environmental impact. The updated policies coming forward in our draft local plan are up to date and current on once adopted would help structure applications coming forward.

What follow are questions I was asked at the Bourne Hall and Ashley Centre drop in sessions.

Q: Why aren't residents at and around the proposed sites being communicated with? In the same way as when a planning application is lodged, impacted households get informed.

A: The planning application approach typically has limited effectiveness and a broad communications approach to all borough residents was selected.

Q: Residents only just heard about this because of the Ashley Centre display boards.

A: This was the goal of the boards in the Ashley Centre factored with social media, Borough Insight, Libraries and other outlets.

Q: Is this the only chance we have to input?

A: It is stage 2 of a 7-stage process. This is the first consultation piece.

Q: Infrastructure. Where is it in the plan(s)?

A: At this stage infrastructure delivery partners rarely come to the discussion table at such an early stage. This is part of the motivation to get our draft local plan published to kick start those discussions. There are sections in the draft local plan document on infrastructure but they are high-level at this stage.

Q: Why are we putting the green belt forward?

A: Based on the brownfield and urban sites that have come forward via the call for sites we are very short of our housing number target/start point of 10,000+ We either intensify our brownfield and urban sites by building higher or we consider green belt sites that have come forward.

Q: Why are only 90 homes in the Town Hall allocation?

A: The Epsom Town Masterplan is due to complete in March and will inform the draft local plan into Regulation 19. It is expected this number would increase significantly especially given the steer from council to move to 70 East Street.

Q: Where does it stop? After this local plan do we get asked for more housing by the government?

A: A very good question, at this point based on what we know, come 2040 we may be challenged again to deliver more housing.

Q: Mole Valley has paused and removed all its green belt. Why can't we do the same?

A: In theory we can however Mole Valley are at a very different stage. Pausing at this point would be to wait and see what the outcome of the consultation, mainly on housing numbers. Our draft local plan currently proposes to deliver 52% of the housing number. Any update on housing numbers would only be beneficial to us if that number came down significantly. In the meantime we need to progress.

The planning inspector has just replied and told MVDC that they can't remove green belt via the major modifications method and that a pause is possible but they should consider not protracting the examination.

Q: As these sites are in the draft local plan is that it?

A: No, the process flows through to Stage 7 and even then a planning application is still required.

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## Public meeting on Local Plan dominated by greenbelters.

23 March 2023



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.

## Keep Epsom and Ewell Green Belt!



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

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

Related reports:

- Mole Valley Local Plan paused: official
- Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?
- Possible pause to Plan pondered .....
- Epsom and Ewell last in Local Planning
- MP's housing solution for Epsom and Ewell

## From custody to caring - new plans for Epsom's old nick.

23 March 2023



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.

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.

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## Final Call to public meeting on Draft Local Plan

23 March 2023



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:

Local Plan meeting attendance and question form.

Related reports:

[Epsom and Ewell Local Plan meeting times](#)

[Mole Valley Local Plan paused: official](#)

[Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Draft Local Plan.](#)

[Green-belters seeing red on Local Plan?](#)

[Hook Road Arena plans and links to many other related reports.](#)

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## Why planning matters at Hobbledown

23 March 2023



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 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 overflow 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.”

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

23 March 2023



**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.

Related Reports

Public meeting on Local Plan

Mole Valley Local Plan paused: official

Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?

Residents aroused by “sleeping” residents?

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## Public meeting on Local Plan

23 March 2023



On 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.

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:

Local Plan meeting attendance and question form.

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan meeting times

Mole Valley Local Plan paused: official

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Draft Local Plan.

Green-belters seeing red on Local Plan?

Hook Road Arena plans and links to many other related reports.

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## Mole Valley Local Plan paused: official

23 March 2023



Inspectors have agreed to pause the examination of Mole Valley’s 6,000 home blueprint amid attempts to remove all green belt sites for development.

Mole Valley District Council had written to the Planning Inspectorate asking to remove all green belt sites from its draft local plan in anticipation of government changes to the planning system. But these hopes have been dashed by the inspector on the grounds it could not prejudge any prospective changes. Despite the setback, the inspector said they would be happy to delay hearings until May - when any new rule changes become clearer- and that is where things stand.

Local plans are the basis for planning decisions in an area. They outline the type, location and density of development that is likely to be permitted. Without one, developers have much freer range to chance their arms.

The council also does not have a five year housing land supply, which again tips the favour towards developers and increases the urgency with which Mole Valley District Council needs to get its local plan signed off.

Mole Valley District Council's leader member for planning, Councillor Margaret Cooksey, said that, while disappointed the local plan has been delayed yet again it is a better outcome than having to start the process from scratch. She said: "I am disappointed we are having to pause and delay. The longer we are without an adopted plan the more at risk our green sites are. If we carry on we have to work on current National Planning Policy Framework rules and greenfield sites we have in the plan. That is what we are trying to prevent. But if we just abandon the current plan we would have to start from scratch and that would take a lot longer. We don't want to lose the good parts of the draft plan."

She said they have already received an application to build on one of the green belt sites they are trying to remove from the local plan.

The planning inspector agreed to delay examination of the local plan until May 25 at which time there should be greater clarity around future national planning policy and will also accommodate the implications of the council's all out local elections in May.

Related reports:

Lessons for Epsom in Mole Valley's "shouty" Local Plan struggle?

How Green is My Mole Valley?

Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?

## Hook Road Arena plans

23 March 2023



This is the last of nine 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.



Hook Road Arena is owned by the Council and has for many years been the home of car boot sales, funfairs and annual firework nights. The plan is for residential and sports and recreation development, comprising:

- A new sports hub for the borough to include playing pitches (grass and artificial) a new pavilion and changing facilities on 9.5ha of the site that will be retained within the Green Belt.
- At least 150 net zero carbon homes on the eastern part of the site that will be inset from the Green Belt

The reasons given include the site has the potential to deliver recreational sports facilities and playing pitches. The allocation of this site will mitigate any losses of playing pitches (rugby) resulting from the allocation of the adjoining Ewell East Station (see our report [HERE](#)) . It may also help to meet additional playing pitch needs for 'secure provision' (i.e. community use protected through a legal agreement) both now and in the future.

The site will contribute towards meeting the need for housing in the borough.

#### **When will the site be developed?**

It expected that a planning application will be submitted early in the plan period, with development likely to start in 2027.

Planning officers note that any development proposal will need to incorporate mitigation relating to surface water flooding for those parts of the site that are susceptible. Also, the site could deliver playing pitches and potentially other supporting infrastructure such as changing facilities and a club house.

Related reports:

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

Depot Road plans

West Park

Ashley Avenue

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan

A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

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

Local Plan battle heating up? and other related reports.

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## **Land at Chantilly Way**

23 March 2023



This is the eighth of nine reports on the nine 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.

This 0.7 hectare grazing land is earmarked for residential development. The reasons given include: The site will contribute towards meeting the need for housing in the borough and lies adjacent to the Strategic Allocation at Horton Farm (Policy SA6).

The site has well defined boundaries and lies on a transport corridor adjacent to existing residential area, creating a suitable context for residential development. The site is also in relatively close proximity to local services and facilities and to public transport connections.

Planning officers note that the development should not adversely affect any protected trees near the boundary of the site. Any development proposal will need to incorporate mitigation relating to surface water flooding for those parts of the site that are susceptible.

The council is working with key infrastructure providers, including Surrey County Council as the Highway Authority and Education Authority, Clinical Commissioning Groups and Utility providers to determine exactly what infrastructure is required to support the proposed development.

#### **When will the site be developed?**

It expected that a planning application will be submitted in the early part of the plan period with development likely to start by 2028.

Related Reports:

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

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

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan

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## Residents aroused by “sleeping” residents?

23 March 2023



Amid claims of the Residents Association Councillors being “asleep at the wheel” one of the biggest residents’ protests ever held in Epsom took place yesterday. Over 200 demonstrators waved banners, wore green or green belts, and chanted “Green not Greed” in the town centre on Saturday (February 25).

Fury was directed at not only the EEBC planners’ Draft Local Plan containing proposals to build 2,175 homes on Green Belt sites, but also the controlling Residents Association councillors group, which, it is claimed, “were asleep at the wheel” in voting Green Belt inclusion through. Over 40% of the total 5,400 Local Plan homes are destined for the Green Belt, the majority of which will be market-priced and unaffordable to those starting out on the property ladder, protestors argue.

Of nine “preferred options” for housing sites earmarked by the Council in the Local Plan, five are on Green Belt sites, which include Horton Farm (1,500 homes proposed) and Ewell East playing fields (350 homes, up to six storeys high).

Despite a “brownfield first” brief, planning officers have not proactively engaged with developers on central urban rejuvenation possibilities, near facilities, preferring instead to accept opportunistic bids from selected Green Belt landowners and developers, protestors claim.

In a display of some cross party support, the protestors were joined by representatives from political parties standing in forthcoming local elections in Epsom & Ewell, including two RA councillors who had voted against their colleagues on Green Belt inclusion. Cllr **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court Ward) and Cllr **Christine Howells** (RA Nonsuch Ward). They were joined by Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative - Stamford) and **Mark Todd** Chair of the Epsom and Ewell Labour Party.

Demonstration organiser, **Kathy Mingo**, from the *Epsom & Ewell Green Belt Group*, said “It was heartening to see everyone uniting beyond party political lines against these unjustified Green Belt destruction plans, given new emerging Government guidelines that puts the focus squarely on brownfield development to meet only advisory, not mandatory, housing targets”

**Alex Duval**, vice-chairman of Clarendon Park Residents Association, which adjoins the Horton Farm Green Belt site said “The data does not add up. The Council’s own reports show that the site contains a critical drainage area with high flood risk; their transport analysis recommends not taking the site forward; and reliance on outdated ONS 2014 population figures - rather than the lower 2018 and official 2021 Census figures - means Epsom’s housing needs are significantly overstated. The real housing need can be accommodated on brownfield alone, without any Green Belt destruction. Their own evidence is clear - the Council should save our Green Belt”

**Tim Murphy**, a vice president of CPRE Surrey and chair of Epsom’s CPRE group, said “CPRE’s experience is that, once sites are listed in a Council’s Local Plan as a “preferred option” for development, then, in 99% of cases, they eventually get developed. So EEBC has already put a number of Green Belt sites at real, permanent risk by identifying them for housing in its Draft Local Plan, which may not be justified as current Government policy on Green Belt evolves”

“Many RA councillors’ seats may now be at risk in May if they do not join the minority of their colleagues in clearly stating their policy objection to unjustified Green Belt destruction” said **Jenny Coleman**, chair, Ewell Downs Residents Association. “It is clear, not least from a residents petition signed by over 7,000, but also from this impactful, united residents protest, that many think the RA councillors have been rather asleep at the wheel. They must listen to the voice of the people”.

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

A petition is available at [epsomgreenbelt.org](http://epsomgreenbelt.org)

Related reports:

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

MP's housing solution for Epsom and Ewell

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan

A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

Land adjoining Ewell East Station

Land at West Park Hospital

The really BIG one: Horton Farm

Ashley Avenue

West Park

Local Plan battle heating up? and other related reports.

Local Planning Matters – Tim Murphy's opinion piece for Epsom and Ewell Times

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## Land adjoining Ewell East Station

23 March 2023



This is the seventh of nine 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.

This 8.3 hectare sports pitches and open space is earmarked for residential development with the following justifications:

- At least 350 net zero carbon dwellings
- Building heights up to 6 storeys
- New local retail provision at ground floor
- The re-provision of the playing pitches at Hook Road Arena

The site will contribute towards meeting the need for housing in the borough and ancillary community infrastructure.

The site has well defined boundaries and lies adjacent to existing residential areas and adjoining Ewell East railway station, creating a suitable context for residential development and lowering the risk of adverse landscape impacts. The site is also in relatively close proximity to local services and facilities and to bus and rail transport connections. Vehicular access can be achieved without detriment to the character of the local area.

### **When will the site be developed?**

It is expected that a planning application will be submitted in the middle of the plan period with development likely to start by 2031 once new sports pitches have been provided.

Planning officers note:

Development proposals must identify ways of improving pedestrian access to Ewell East Station and maximise the linkages between the site and surrounding area, and provide opportunities for walking and cycling.

The design of development would need to minimise impacts on Priest Hill Nature Reserve (Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) located on the Southern Boundary of the site.

Part of the site to the east along Cheam Road is within Flood Zone 3. Any development proposal will need to take this into account.

The development proposal will need to work with the topography of the site to ensure that visual impacts of development are minimised

Infrastructure requirements include:

Provision of new retail unit(s) to provide convenience retail to meet local needs.

The loss of playing pitches will require reprovision at the Hook Road Arena site (Policy SA9). The developer will be expected to re-provide the playing pitches off site prior to development commencing to ensure that the scheme is acceptable in planning terms.

Related reports:

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

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

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan

A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

Ashley Avenue

West Park

Local Plan battle heating up? and other related reports.

## Land at West Park Hospital

23 March 2023



This is the sixth of nine reports on the BIG PLANS for Epsom and Ewell proposed in the **DRAFT LOCAL PLAN** that is out for public consultation till 19th March. We do not intend to state any support or opposition but may ask some questions.

The plan is for residential development, comprising:

- approximately 150 dwellings
- A target of 5% of homes to be provided through the provision of serviced plots of land for self-build and/or custom-build homes
- Floorspace to support NHS services (if required)

### The reasons given include:

The site will contribute towards meeting the need for housing in the borough.

The site comprises of two parcels north and south of existing West Park Hospital residential area. The areas are currently previously developed land within the Green Belt, consisting of buildings that are currently in use as part of the original West Park Hospital operation which are no longer fit for purpose.

The site lies adjacent to existing residential creating a suitable context for residential development and lowering the risk of adverse landscape impacts.

### When will the site be developed?

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

### Site Constraints and mitigation

- Northern parcel is adjacent West Park Conservation Area and Southern parcel is within the Conservation Area therefore any proposal should ensure it is sensitively designed to reflect the parkland setting
- Maximise the linkages between the site and surrounding area; and provide opportunities for walking and cycling.
- Development should not adversely affect the Protected Trees within and on the boundaries of the of the site.
- Work with the topography of the site to ensure that visual impacts of development are minimised.
- Development proposal to focus the built form to the north of the site to preserve the undeveloped (open) land to the south.
- Any development proposal will need to incorporate mitigation relating to surface water flooding for those parts of the site that are susceptible.

The NHS may require the provision of some floorspace for healthcare needs, however there is currently no certainty as to

whether there will be a need for such floorspace.

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

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

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan

Ashley Avenue

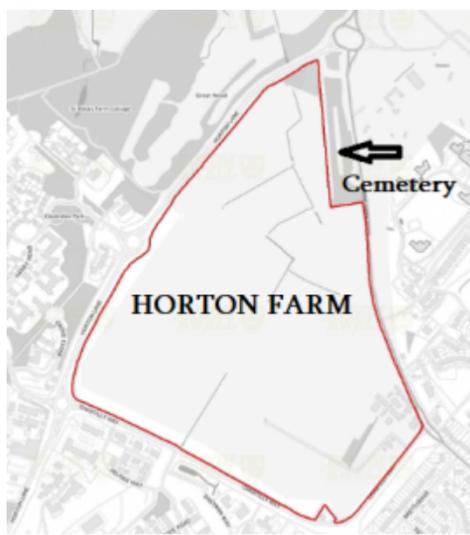
A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

Depot Road plans

Local Plan battle heating up? and other related reports.

## The really BIG one: Horton Farm

23 March 2023



This is the fifth of nine reports on the BIG PLANS for Epsom and Ewell proposed in the **DRAFT LOCAL PLAN** that is out for public consultation till 19th March. We do not intend to state any support or opposition but may ask some questions.

This near 100 acre site is a farm, a riding school and “open space” and the plan is to build 1500 + “zero carbon” dwellings on the site.

- A target of 5% of homes to be provided through the provision of serviced plots of land for self-build and/or custom-build homes
- A minimum of 10 serviced gypsy and traveller pitches
- Public open space
- Green corridor / habitat enhancements



### And the reasons given for the plan include:

The site will contribute towards meeting the need for housing in the borough, including making a significant contribution towards the delivery of affordable housing and in meeting the needs of the boroughs Gypsy and Traveller population to create a new community.

The site has well defined boundaries and lies adjacent to existing residential areas, creating a suitable context for residential development and lowering the risk of adverse landscape impacts. The site is also located close to local services and facilities and to bus and rail transport connections. Vehicular access can be achieved without detriment to the character of the local area.

[Epsom and Ewell Times notes that it is also adjacent to the 5 acre Horton Cemetery where 9000 bodies are buried. See [www.hortoncemetery.org](http://www.hortoncemetery.org) for details.]

### When will the site be developed?

The site is expected to be developed from 2028/29.

The planners note a number of issues:

- The majority of the site is bordered by existing residential areas. New access points should maximise the opportunities for improved connectivity and linkages in and around the area, in particular for walking and cycling.
- Development should not adversely affect any protected trees within and on the boundaries of the site.
- The design of development would need to minimise impacts on the Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) located to the north-west of the site.
- Any development proposal will need to incorporate mitigation relating to surface water flooding for those parts of the site that are susceptible.
- Development should work with the topography of the site to ensure that visual impacts of development are minimised.
- Horton Farm House is a listed building in the south-east of the site. Therefore, sympathetic design is required.

The development of the site will require: New highways access to the West and East and Improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.

Epsom and Ewell Times can report Horton Farm is owned by The Church Commissioners and is leased to a farmer who has farmed the area for many years. The Council state that a developer has an option on the land.

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?

Ashley Avenue

West Park

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

Local Plan battle heating up? and other related reports.

## Ashley Centre and Global House plan

23 March 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

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Depot Road plans

The Epsom and Ewell Town Hall plan