

# Campaign to save special Epsom school builds

16 November 2022



**Kingswood House School** is asking local people to join hundreds of residents in opposing the school's landlord's redevelopment plan. Around 100 local residents turned out at a community meeting on 10 th November in support of Kingswood House School. The School's current landlords, the **Aczel brothers** who own extensive property in Epsom, have for many years made no secret of the fact, that they would like to replace the School with a housing estate.

The brothers have teamed up with local developer **Steve Curwen** and have confirmed that the plan is to get planning for a small school first and then apply to build houses on the remaining part of the site. With objections on the Council's website already approaching 200, local people have made their views abundantly clear.

The application to replace Kingswood House School, a registered charity, which local residents regard as a trojan horse to facilitate the building of a housing estate, was described by MP **Chris Grayling**, in a message of support as: "an example of the worst form of business practice". Grayling continued: "In reality this application is a sham. There is no known requirement for or plan to open a more limited facility like this on the site. Surrey County Council has said clearly that it has no intention of funding the development of such a school on the site, and there are no known private sector plans to do so."



Objectors, public, parents and school governors meet 10th November

A very high percentage of Kingswood House's 245 pupils have special needs and in recognition of its valuable work, the School has been made an Asset of Community Value by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council. Local residents heard first-hand about the difference the school makes as a former parent **Helen Beckman**, described in the most moving of terms, how the School supported her son who moved to it having suffered severe depression and mental anguish brought on by living through the tragic impact of Parkinsons on his father.

Headmaster **Duncan Murphy** explained that this was but one example of many similar cases within the School. If allowed, the new school would be a privately operated "for profit" venture aimed at 60 pupils with severe special needs for whom public transport would be out of the question, requiring travel to and from school to be by private transport. In order, to allow space for the housing estate on the current School's playing field, access to the new school would be via a new road from West Hill Avenue, currently a quiet residential road.

The findings of the independent traffic experts were shown to the audience and demonstrated that given the level of traffic required, total gridlock in West Hill Avenue and surrounding roads would ensue at drop off and pick up times. Additionally, at least four trees would need to be felled to allow sufficient visibility for traffic exiting the new school. Experts explained that the gridlock effect would be exacerbated if the housing estate were to follow. The application would appear to have been made without proper ecology reports having been undertaken.

Curwen's own ecology report submitted with his application, accepts that one of the buildings on the current site that is proposed to be demolished shows a high propensity as a bat habitat. As a protected species a bat survey should have been carried out over the summer months, but has not. It is understood that it is the Council's practice to require full surveys before considering any planning application.

Given the lack of demand locally for the new school, the school would be looking to attract pupils from outside the

borough with Curwen Group themselves admitting that pupils will be travelling at least 40 minutes to get to the new school. As regards Kingswood House's pupils, none of them would qualify for the new school and all of them would need to find new homes. Given the special needs of many Kingswood House pupils and the scarcity of places locally, this is likely to pose a severe challenge.

Those wishing to object should endeavour to do so by 21 st November via the Council's website [tinyurl.com/epsomewellplanning](http://tinyurl.com/epsomewellplanning)

and entering the reference number 22/01653/FUL or by email to the case officer, Gemma Patterson at [gpatterson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:gpatterson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk) (ref 22/01653/FUL)

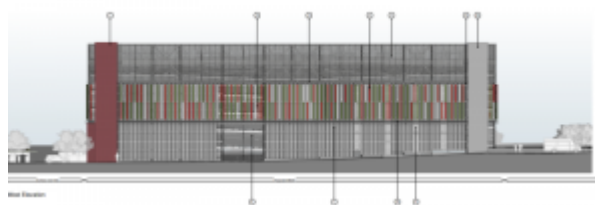
See our earlier reports:

Battle for Epsom School continues....

Community Asset to be stripped?

## Epsom Hospital car park appeal

16 November 2022



On Wednesday 2nd November, **Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** appealed **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's** (EEBC) decision to refuse planning permission for a multi-storey car park on the **Epsom General Hospital** site. The NHS Trust had proposed the construction of a car park comprising ground plus five storeys, providing 527 spaces, the redesigning of surface parking to provide additional spaces, and improvement to access from Dorking Road.

EEBC refused the plans in May 2021. It stated that, 'by reasons of its height, mass, scale and poor design', the proposed development would adversely impact the area, and fail to preserve the adjacent Woodcote Conservation Area. The plans had received 125 objections and one letter in support.

At the appeal, The NHS Trust argued that the scale of the proposed car park is necessary. **Thomas Spencer**, on behalf of the NHS Trust, said that the construction of the New Epsom and Ewell Community Hospital, due for completion in March 2023, would require an additional 50 spaces. Mr Spencer said additional parking would also be required to replace land sold to **Guild Living**. Guild Living now lease this land to the NHS, but their plans to build a retirement community will result in the loss of around 270 parking spaces currently used by the hospital.

**Mike Kiely**, on behalf of the Council, said that the proposed height of the car park would dominate the area, and 'dilute the experience' of listed buildings on Dorking Road and the adjacent Woodcote Conservation Area.

**Councillor Liz Frost** (RA Woodcote) said she had received many calls and emails from residents expressing 'grave concerns'. **John Woodley**, a Dorking Road resident, said the car park would be the first thing he saw when he opened his windows. He added: 'It's overbearing; far too big. It just seems excessively large.'

The Trust argued that the car park's height would be consistent with the existing complex of buildings at the hospital site, and that its plans bring the car park as close to existing buildings as possible.

Mr Kiely also argued that building a new multi-storey car park goes against national and local climate policies, and that alternatives, such as offsite staff parking and a shuttle bus, should be considered first. Mr Woodley added: 'For a health trust to be building more space for cars blows my mind. We need to think more sustainably.'

Mr Spencer said that high vehicle use is a reality on a hospital site, since patients often rely on private transport. He added that some staff travel significant distances, and staff also work night shifts, so offsite parking would not be the Trust's preference. He added that the proposals have 'green credentials', including 67 electric charging spaces, with the possibility for adding more in the future.

The Trust also said that there had been 'numerous changes' to the landscaping to improve the building's design, including green walls on the building and a potential mural. Mr Kiely, however, said that the changes would make a 'marginal difference', and that 'there had not been a landscape-led approach; landscaping had been squeezed in'.

Woodcote councillors Liz Frost and **Steven McCormick** also said that the car park could create a safeguarding issue, since it would overlook several sports clubs. However, the Trust said that the sports ground is already overlooked from various vantage points within the hospital, and the same people would be using the car park. It added that there would be 24-hour CCTV, and that any parking above the first floor would be used by staff only.

The Trust said that there would be other benefits of the proposed car park, including reduced congestion, improved access for emergency vehicles, and improved pedestrian and wheelchair access from Dorking Road. Mr Spencer also said that parking pressure on surrounding residential streets, which caused the NHS to be 'plagued with complaints', would be reduced. Mr Kiely, however, said that many of these benefits were not reliant on building a multi-storey car park, and that access could be reconfigured without it.



The appeal was heard by **planning inspector David Spencer**, who said his decision is likely to be made in early December.

## Local Planning Matters

16 November 2022



Tim Murphy's opinion piece on Epsom and Ewell's Local Plan. An up-to-date Local Plan is a necessity. It indicates to those proposing new developments or conversions to properties just what they are allowed or not allowed to do. It is also the yardstick by which locally elected councillors assess whether a particular planning application should be permitted.

The current Epsom and Ewell Local Plan was approved as long ago as 2007. It does not meet the requirements of the most recent planning legislation. In particular, it is failing to deliver the type of housing that is needed locally – affordable and in close proximity to a range of retail and social facilities and public transport. By contrast, the current Plan has been very largely successful in protecting the Borough's much valued Green Belt from inappropriate development. Two reports commissioned by the Council have confirmed that our Green Belt is performing as it should against the five criteria set out in planning legislation.

A new draft Local Plan is very likely to be discussed by the Council's Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 21 st November. The preparation of the Plan has been overshadowed by a quite unrealistic housing target of nearly seven hundred new homes to be provided every year in the Borough.

Where does this target come from? It is set by central government and is based on outdated projections about how fast our number of households will grow in the future. Astonishingly, the number is so high because it incorporates what is known as an 'affordability' uplift – because house prices locally are so high, it is assumed these will fall markedly as more houses are built. There is no evidence that this is how our housing market operates.

Our councillors have a choice to make. They can try to meet most, and maybe all, of the centrally-determined housing target. The Borough has only limited built-up areas that would lend themselves to redevelopment for housing so, inevitably, extensive areas of our Green Belt would be sacrificed. Judging by the type of housing that has been approved over the past few years in the Borough on what are called greenfield sites, it is unlikely that the homes that are provided will meet local needs.

What guarantees will be in place to ensure that such significant increases in population will be matched by more educational and medical facilities and better transport provision? Alternatively, as in neighbouring Elmbridge, our councillors could decide not to meet the housing target but rather prioritise the provision of those types and sizes of housing most needed locally, including affordable homes, on existing built-up areas so that no valuable Green Belt need be lost.

The comprehensive redevelopment of existing commercial estates to incorporate a significant element of new housing should be a component of this way forward. Excellent design standards will be essential. Recent statements by our new Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Communities, Michael Gove, support this approach.

What will our councillors decide?

Tim Murphy

Tim Murphy has worked as a Chartered Town Planner in local government in London, and as an environmental specialist both with WS Atkins and Partners, the Epsom-based engineering consultants, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) where he was responsible for examining the environmental and social impacts of the EBRD's investments in Eastern Europe. Since retiring, Tim chaired the Surrey Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) for several years, and he is currently Chair of CPRE's South East Region and heads up CPRE's Epsom and Ewell local group, campaigning to protect the local Green Belt and other open areas.

If you have views and opinions on "Local Plan Matters" – do write to us [admin@epsomandewelltimes.com](mailto:admin@epsomandewelltimes.com)

# Battle for Epsom School continues....

16 November 2022



A new planning application has been submitted by land owners the **Aczel brothers** to **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** to redevelop the **Kingswood House School** site. "Demolition of an existing building, relocation and reprovision of MUGA Sports pitch, and construction of new access and parking facilities for a SEND school".

The plan is to replace the 100 years old school for many with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) in West Hill, Epsom, with a new 60 place school for children with "extreme special needs ". Supporters of the existing school suspect the application is a ploy to develop all the land in the owners' possession into a housing estate. The new application relates to the built area and a further application is expected for a housing estate on the current adjacent playing fields. If the owners were granted both permissions but failed to proceed with the new school development the suspicion of The Kingswood school support group is that an application will be pursued in the future for housing throughout the whole land.

Kingswood House School is asking local people to object to the new school application by 21st November 2022. The application can be seen on the Epsom and Ewell BC website under reference 22/01653/FUL.

Kingswood House School is a thriving and vital part of the community that provides a first class education to over 240 local children and which is the only school in Epsom to be listed as an Asset of Community Value.

According to a report commissioned by the land owners "There are (SEND) places available across all year groups in the.... independent ....and.... public sector within Surrey.... and Epsom and Ewell and .....should any pupil from Kingswood House School require a place within (either sector) ... there will be a place available". **Alfredson York Associates Ltd.** The author of this report **Jonathan Powell** goes on to conclude in his report: "Given that Kingswood House School is not a special school and has no particular specialism that is not provided within the same catchment from which Kingswood House currently draws, the proposed development would not significantly alter the choice and availability of places."

**Dr Kugathasan Senduran** disagrees and commented: "Education provides us with the fundamental tools we require to live. Switching schools is more likely to demonstrate a wide array of negative behavioural and educational outcomes. If education collapses, everything does. You do not need an atomic bomb or a long-range missile only the collapse of education in a country to ruin it forever. I simply cannot believe the council is even considering their proposal of demolition of an existing building and interrupting children's education. I strenuously object their proposal." He is one of 30 objectors to date who have gone public on the Council portal.

Kingswood House School is holding a public meeting on the plans at the Main Hall, Stamford Green Primary School, KT19 8LU on Thursday 10th November at 7.00pm (doors open 6.40pm).

Although Kingswood House is a private school, it is a charity and any profit is reinvested into the school. By contrast, the proposed school, which is not backed by the Local Education Authority, would be run by a private operator (with profits going to shareholders) and "would not be aimed at local children", Kingswood School supporters say.

**Richard Laudy**, a Governor of Kingswood School, adds "There will be problems with access via West Hill Avenue, currently a tranquil street. At least two protected trees would need to be removed. The plans do not include enough space for drop-off, causing queues, overspill parking, and nuisance on local roads. The proposed new school only has 22 parking spaces. This will be insufficient for the specialist nature of the school."

**Richard Evans**, Chair of Governors at Kingswood House School, confirmed that the School had not been consulted over the plans and that: "...the School vehemently opposes the unacceptable plans and is working with local residents to defeat them. Kingswood House has been serving the local community for over 100 years and provides the unique offering of special needs and mainstream children developing alongside each other. Our school is a listed Asset of Community Value, which would be lost along with our playing fields if the landowners' plans went ahead. The proposal would also damage the tranquil character of Stamford Green Conservation Area, creating a chaotic new access on West Hill Avenue. We need local people to make their voices heard and object to this speculative and harmful proposal."

**Cllr. Steve Bridger**, Councillor for Stamford Ward, is aware of the application and has 'called it in' so it will be heard in front of the Planning Committee rather than decided by Council officers.

Public comments can be submitted via the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council planning applications website using the reference **22/01653/FUL**, then clicking on 'Make a Comment'.

See Epsom and Ewell Times earlier reports:

*Community Asset to be stripped?*

Grayling stood up by developers....

## Claygate not to suffer children's home

16 November 2022



Plans for a children's home in a **Claygate** cul-de-sac have been refused despite support from **Surrey County Council** which needs more beds for Surrey's vulnerable children. The application for a home for up to five children had received 25 letters of objection, ahead of a meeting of **Elmbridge Borough Council's** east area planning sub-committee on Monday (October 10).

But officers also told the meeting a petition signed by 124 people had been submitted with a late objection letter. The borough council's officers had recommended approval of the application for the home in Chadworth Way, but a motion to refuse the plans, put forward by Councillor **Mike Rollings** (Liberal Democrats, Claygate) was voted through by members.

While the meeting heard that the company putting forward the application, **HFM Care**, did not have experience running children's homes, officers said this was not something that would come under a planning consideration, and nor was the impact it may have on neighbouring property prices.

Surrey County Council supported the application because it would help with its aims to house more Surrey children within the county. In July 2022 just under 40 per cent of the children looked after by the county council were in homes in Surrey, with the authority aiming to increase that number to 80 per cent.

Councillor **Gill Coates** (Thames Ditton & Weston Green Residents' Association, Hinchley Wood and Weston Green) questioned the county council's support, but said she could see where the applicant was coming from wanting to house children in the currently residential property. She said: "You'd have to have a heart of stone not to want children from troubled backgrounds to be looked after in domestic properties of this type, in this sort of location."

But with flooding risks in the area, and in the house in particular, having been raised in the meeting and the potential for disruption highlighted by an objector to the plans, Cllr Coates said she still had questions on if it was the right property. She said: "That's effectively saying, I could put a shed at the end of my garden and employ somebody with 30 years experience in childcare and say, I want to run a children's home from it. "And Surrey will say: 'Well, we need the space. So, yes.' I think it's not good enough."

The home would cater for children who had been victims of child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. **Yasemin Dervis**, from HFM Care, said the children would mostly be from the first group and would be "quieter and more introverted". She added: "If anything it will actually be a much quieter home than most children's homes that [the objector had] been a part of. The home will operate like a normal family home, children will go to school during the week, do their homework, go to bed at a reasonable hour. During the weekends, they will go and off and see their family and do other activities."

The meeting heard the residential house was on a three-year lease to the company, and that both Surrey County Council and **Ofsted** had been supportive of the home.

The home was refused because of flooding risks and the impact of the proposed home on the neighbouring residents.

## "Blot on the landscape" - Ewell care home inked in

16 November 2022



A derelict site in Ewell is to become a 70-bed care home. The Organ Inn was known to any one of Epsom and Ewell driving to London. Situated prominently on the Ewell-By-Pass at the London Road junction. It last functioned as Jim Thompsons with Thai Cuisine and was also known as The Organ and Dragon. The building was demolished and the ground left derelict for years. Thursday 6th October Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's **Planning Committee** granted full permission for the construction of a 70-room retirement care home of four storeys and a basement. Councillor **Nigel Colin** (RA College Ward) described the site at present as "a blot on the landscape."





The Organ Inn before demolition. Image courtesy Peter Reed Epsom and Ewell History Explorer. Top Image: The site viewed from Ewell Bypass.

There were two objections registered that were dismissed by the Councillors in the face of a strong application supported by planning officers. The construction of the home will contribute 38 units to the housing targets of the Borough of @ 579 per annum.

A Planning Need Assessment submitted by the applicant from **Carterwood**, a specialist in health and social care, indicated that there is a net need for 1279 en-suite wetroom bedrooms in the market catchment area (4 miles from the Application Site) and 540 in Epsom and Ewell. In terms of 'specialist dementia' care, the Assessment sets out that there is a net need for 529 en-suite wetroom beds in the market catchment area and a net need for 226 en-suite wetroom beds in Epsom and Ewell.



London Road care home plans. From design and access statement, credit: Simon Brown Architects

The Council officers reported that the developer applicant does not have experience in care-home provision. **Surrey County Council Adult Social Care** commented on the application: " While the Applicant is an organisation with no history of operating care homes itself, there is no reference to a care provider working in partnership with the organisation in the application. There is therefore very little indication of what type of care will be delivered on Site, whether the care home will operate with or without nursing care provision, and no description of exactly how the particular development would benefit local residents or the joint health and social care system. The application therefore suffers by comparison with others, which provide details of future operational plans. Having said this, regrettably, I cannot find anything in the local planning policies which requires clarity on who will operate any future care development, nor any requirement for an operator statement alongside other statements in the application."

Cllr **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley Ward) questioned this inexperience and was advised by officers that the developer will contract with a specialist service provider.

Various conditions must be met by the developer, **65 London Road Limited**, a private company under the sole directorship of **Kirpal Singh**. A company that has declared over £3 million in net assets in its last and only accounts ending 31st March 2021 - in which it declared a trading loss of £2400.

The Council require the company to enter an agreement (known as a section 106) to contribute money to the improvement of bus infrastructure at both the A24 northside bus stop and A24 southside, including shelters and real time passenger information; a Push button controlled pedestrian crossing facilities on London Road and a 3-metre-wide footpath on both the London Road and Ewell Bypass frontages of the Application Site, to be dedicated as public highway.

## HOBBLEDOWN NOBBLEDOWN?



This popular leisure destination for a family day out on Horton Lane Epsom had asked the Planning Committee for various permits. Installation of new restroom facilities, new boundary fencing and relocation of entrance gates, new play structures etc.

Tempers were tested somewhat when **Cllr Coley** stated a flood risk assessment was necessary before proceeding further. Planning officers disagreed. Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Lab Court Ward) suggested that if the contention had been raised before the meeting the public row could have been avoided. Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote) brought deliberations to an inconclusive end by proposing a deferment of all of Hobbledown's requests. A motion passed by all Councillors bar three.

## 14 against 59 = 70? Dilemma for Headley

16 November 2022



Councillors have been warned to "be under no illusions" that a plan for 70 homes at Headley Court could be progressed as they rejected an application for 59 homes on the same site. A long history of applications on the green belt site is set to continue, with various parts of it currently under appeal and the district council's local plan currently under examination.

**Mole Valley District Council's** development management committee meeting on Wednesday (October 6) refused the application by **14 votes to zero**, with four abstentions, in line with the officers' recommendations. After outline permission was granted in December 2020 for up to 70 homes on the site, it could now see a previous application for 70 homes approved, after an appeal was lodged with government inspectors.

The site, former Ministry of Defence land, is located over the road from the NHS Seacole Centre, used as a temporary hospital during the coronavirus pandemic and as a temporary mortuary.

Developers warned during the meeting that if councillors rejected the scheme for 59 homes then the 70 home plan would go ahead if granted on appeal, despite having previously offered to take the larger plans off the table.

**Tony Williamson**, representing **Angle Property**, said: "Be under no illusion, if this application is refused tonight, and approval is granted by the planning inspectorate then the 70 unit scheme will be implemented and progressed. The concessions offered in this application will be lost. In that scenario, I'm sure the local residents will not be thanking this committee."

The previous application, deferred from a November 2021 meeting had been appealed by the developer for non-determination. Subsequently, a June meeting of the development management committee concluded it would have refused the application, had it not been sent to central government for a decision.

The latest refused plans included three two-bedroom, 28 three-bedroom, 17 four-bedroom and 11 five-bedroom homes, with eight of them being affordable. Officers described the housing mix as "unacceptable" because a three-bed home sold under shared ownership "would not prove attractive due to affordability issues". The district council's local plan, currently undergoing inspection at government level, identifies the Headley Court site as a whole for 120 homes.

There is still an appeal on the east part of the site for 14 senior living homes in the listed building there and redevelopment of the rest of the site for 100 new-build senior living homes. Headley Parish Councillor **Jane Pickard** said she said the village was at risk of doubling in size, and that the new plans had seen a shift away from smaller homes. She added: "We are prepared for a major increase in the size of our community, but want it to be done in a way which enhances rather than damages the semi rural character in the green belt."

Cllr **Tim Hall** said he knew of at least three planning applications around Headley Court and Headley road, "all of which have serious transport implications". He said: "This needs to be linked together. Because Headley Road, as has been said previously by the residents, is not a great highway. It's a rural Surrey lane, in the nicest possible way."

## Housing plan flying in the face of opposition

16 November 2022





Wisley Airfield town plan: We report on a Surrey housing application that illuminates issues all local boroughs face today [Ed.] : To paraphrase from a popular TV show: “Wrong location, wrong location, wrong location.” That’s the message from campaigners against plans for 1,700 homes on the former Wisley Airfield. They say traffic concerns, an abundance of wildlife and trying to fit an urban development in a rural area are all reasons for the plans not to go ahead.

The former airfield is located alongside the A3 and is just over a mile from junction 10 with the M25, where another set of controversial works started this month. It was allocated as a new settlement in **Guildford Borough Council’s** local plan for around 2,000 homes, shops and offices. An outline planning application was submitted to the borough council by **Taylor Wimpey** for the first 1,700 in the summer, and residents have until Monday (October 3) to comment on the plans.

There are so far 168 objections to the outline plans on the borough council’s planning portal and comments received after the deadline will ordinarily also be considered. On a walk around the current site, which was used as an airfield from 1942 until 1972 and still has a tarmac landing strip in the middle, campaigner **Chris Campbell**, from Villages against Wisley New Town, told the LDRS he did not believe a new town should be built there. “Wrong location, wrong location, wrong location,” he said. “Location is everything and as you can see, this is not the location for a town.”

Around the old runway, the site is used as farmland, with two tractors out on the fields on the day of our visit. We also see several kites in the air, and pass “Snakes Field”, so-called, the campaigners tell me, because there are grass snakes, slow worms and amphibians living there. They’ve also seen badgers and owls on and around the site, and Mr Campbell raises concerns particularly about the impact of an increase in the number of dogs walking through woodland, a special protection area, between the site and the A3.

He said the “last thing” that’s needed for the ground nesting birds on the site, including the Dartford warbler, night jar and woodlark, would be the additional 400 dogs that could come with the new homes.

A suitable alternative natural green space (**SANG**) will be allocated on the site to “avoid adverse effects on the integrity” of the special protection area according to the borough council’s local plan. Taylor Wimpey documents state that the SANG provision is a “bespoke provision agreed with **Natural England**” and that more than half of the site will be accessible open space, as well as a 20 per cent biodiversity net gain on the site.

**Frances Porter**, chair of Ockham and Hatchford Residents’ Association, walks across the former airfield every day with her dogs. She claimed she was told at a meeting with Taylor Wimpey representatives that traffic calming measures around the new town were designed to “frustrate” motorists out of their cars. But she doesn’t think that people living in the town will be pushed out of their cars. “People haven’t got anywhere else to go,” she said. “You’re going to need a car; you can’t get the bus.”

The borough council’s local plan identifies requirements for the site including a “significant bus network” going to Effingham Junction and/or Horsley stations, as well as Guildford and Cobham. It would also require a cycle network to key destinations including stations, Ripley and Byfleet “to a level that would be attractive and safe for the average cyclist”.



Frances Porter, Imogen Jamieson And Chris Campbell of Villages Against Wisley New Town. Credit Emily Coady-Stemp



**Imogen Jamieson**, vice chair of Ockham Parish Council, does not think the narrow roads surrounding the site can support the additional traffic, and isn't convinced cycle lanes would be used anyway. She said: "You're not going to pack your three children onto the back of bikes and cycle them to Horsley to get to school in the pouring rain." The parish councillor also said she believes it's a "myth" that so many new homes are needed, though she does acknowledge that there is a need for places for people to live. She said the environmental impacts of building new homes are far greater than re-purposing and retrofitting existing buildings, which can be done in towns and urban areas.

On top of the plans for the airfield, a further 1,500 new homes are planned in a three-mile radius of the site, but Mrs Jamieson said homes would be better built in areas where there are already transport links, employment opportunities and facilities such as doctors and schools. She said: "Here you're entirely reliant on a car. It's positioned right by the strategic road network. So it's going to mean that people are constantly in their cars trying to access everything." She claimed there was an over-allocation of homes in the local plan, which came to light when the census released in June showed the figures used to draw up the plan were too high. "I'm still trying to understand the way housing is delivered in the country," she said. "I think it's a bit of a myth that we need homes in the way that we're constantly told we do."

A Taylor Wimpey spokesperson said: "The former Wisley Airfield is allocated for development in the Guildford Borough Council local plan and our proposals have been carefully considered following close engagement with key stakeholders and the local community. We understand the concerns of local residents regarding traffic and our proposals include a number of measures to encourage the use of sustainable transport options, including new bus services and cycle routes. The design and layout of the development has been considered with the surrounding area in mind and we will continue to consult with residents on this as our plans progress."

Guildford Borough Council was contacted for comment.

Local plan documents: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/2015-2034>

Wisley Airfield development page: <https://www.wisleyairfield.com/>

Image: Wisley Airfield plans. Credit Taylor Wimpey and Vivid

## Containing the Problem. A lesson in enforcement.

16 November 2022

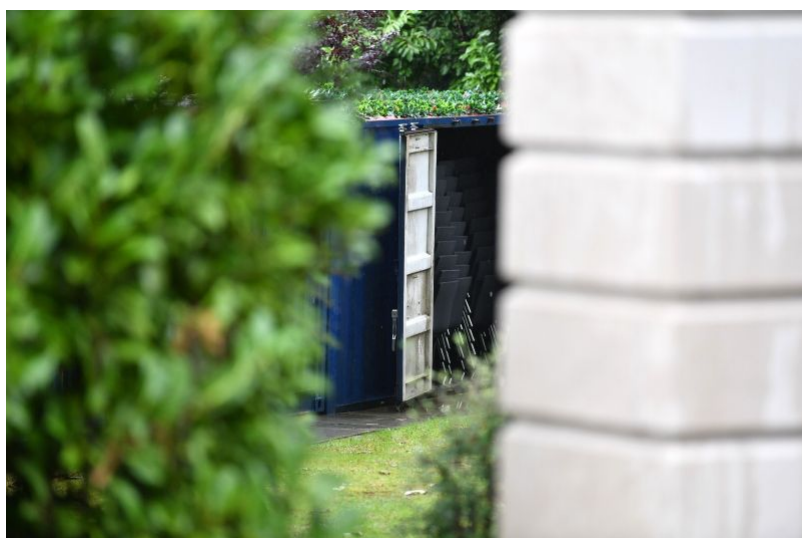


Keeping with our current focus on planning matters. Woking Borough Council contain the container problem of a posh hotel. Read Local Democracy Reporter Emily Coady-Stemp's report [here](#).

A Surrey mansion hotel has been given three months to remove from its land two shipping containers being used for storage. Gorse Hill Hotel, near Woking, applied for a lawful development certificate for the containers in January but the application was refused.

Image: Gorse Hill Hotel. Credit: Darren Pepe

The containers, which according to council documents are being used to store tables, chairs and other hotel equipment, have been in place for more than three years.



The shipping containers Gorse Hill Hotel faces enforcement action over not removing. Credit: LDRS

A meeting of Woking Borough Council's planning committee on Tuesday (September 6) voted to issue an enforcement notice saying the containers must be removed.

The hotel and conference centre, in Hook Heath Road, is described on its website as "an elegant mansion house hotel [in

a] peaceful location, surrounded by expansive manicured gardens". The Grade II listed building, which was once private house, was built in 1910 and has since been extended. Bed and breakfast at the hotel starts at £124 per night.

The borough council first received a complaint about the two containers in December 2021. Both the neighbour complaining and the hotel's own subsequent application for the containers said they have been in place since May 2019. Each of the two storage containers measures 6m long x 2.4m wide x 2.5m tall.

According to council documents, in its application for the containers in January, the hotel said they did not amount to development, because they were "ancillary to the site's use", did not comprise a "building" operation or constitute a material change in use of the land.

The application was rejected by the council because the "degree of permanence" of the containers, along with their size and each being fixed to the ground through their own weight, meant they counted as buildings according to planning legislation, and therefore planning permission was required.

The council's senior planning enforcement officer visited the hotel on May 16, when the containers were still being used and had not been moved.

Gorse Hill Hotel has not responded to a request for comment at the time of publication.

Full agenda:

## The Edge of development for Elmbridge

16 November 2022



Epsom and Ewell Times has reported recently on planning dilemmas for our Borough. We are not alone in facing pressure on Green Belt land. 2 miles away from the edge of the Borough, Elmbridge Borough Council decided on a Green Belt development. Emily Coady-Stemp reports:

Studios for business start-ups and three new homes have been given the green light at the "gateway to Elmbridge" despite fears for the future of a golf club.

Image: Waffrons proposed development of studios area. From design and access statement.

One councillor claimed others "aren't concerned" about the borough's local welfare or green belt as the application was approved.

The application, submitted by the family who have lived at The Waffrons, in Chessington South, for 30 years, will see the current stables on the land demolished.

Surbiton Golf Club objected to the plans due to fears that potential additional traffic to the site, which is accessed through the course, would affect play on its first, fifth and eighth holes.

Elmbridge Borough Council's planning committee voted for the plans on Tuesday (September 6), having rejected a motion to refuse them that was put forward by Councillor Janet Turner (Hinchley Wood Residents' Association, Hinchley Wood and Weston Green). She was talked into putting forward the motion to refuse the plans by Claygate Councillor Alex Coomes (Liberal Democrats) who said she should do it "for completeness and for democratic reasons". Cllr Turner had previously said that listening to the debate she thought there was "very little point" in her putting forward reasons for refusal for a vote. She added: "It's fairly obvious to me that people aren't concerned about our local welfare or our green belt, so that disturbs me quite a lot."

Her reasons included it being inappropriate development in the green belt, as well as traffic concerns along the single track lane. Cllr Turner described the site as "very important" because it was the "gateway to Elmbridge from Greater London" and a corridor of green land from Claygate and Hinchley Wood to Long Ditton.

Officers at the meeting said the bar was very high for assessing "harm" in green belt land that was previously developed, as this had been. The three planned houses on the site would all be detached bungalows, with an applicant's representative stating one of the homes was for the daughter of the family currently living there.

The 11 studios would be from 10 to 19 square metres each, with a communal area around a courtyard. The current use of the land for horses would stop, with commercial livery being replaced by it only being used for the private enjoyment of the new homes. BabyBarn, a shop for baby equipment currently on the site, would stay, with part of the stables being redeveloped for storage.

Keith Blake, chairman of Surbiton Golf Club, spoke at the meeting to object to the plans, which he called the "biggest threat to the future of the club and course". The club, which has been in existence since 1895, has around 700 members and membership fees of £1,900. Mr Blake said the club did not object to some development of homes on the site, but saw



the commercial element as “perhaps a step too far” and that traffic needed to be reduced or limited. He added: “Otherwise, I see the members walking and joining other clubs. “If we lose 20 per cent of our membership, the club will not be in existence for the community in the future.”

An officer’s report into the application said the plans were not “considered to adversely impact upon Surbiton Golf Club to warrant a refusal reason”. Conditions had been put on traffic entering the site both during the construction phases and once in use.

Many councillors were in favour of the small business units, saying they were in demand in Elmbridge and would be even more so when 60 offices in Weybridge were lost as part of a Regus site redevelopment.

Councillor Bruce McDonald (Liberal Democrat, Claygate) said he had “great sympathy” with the golf club and concerns around traffic on the road but like others saw no information to conclude there would be more traffic than currently on the site. He added: “I would have artisan studios everywhere, I think it’s what we need. I think it’d be great for Elmbridge.”

Councillor Rachael Lake (Conservative, Walton North) asked councillors to raise their hands if they had ever heard of a golf course going out of business or bankrupt, because she had not. She added: “I sympathise because it’s all perception. “It’s the fear of going to the dentist, when you get there, it’s nowhere near as bad as you think.”

Full agenda

## BBC misreports Epsom and Ewell planning?

16 November 2022



On Friday 2nd September **Mark Easton**, the **BBC**’s top home affairs reporter, swooped down on **Epsom and Ewell**. Our Borough suffers from nimbyism and we could easily meet our housing targets, was his report’s message. The **Epsom and Ewell Times** takes his two minute report to task.

First – he opens his report while standing on **Epsom Common** off **Woodcote Side**. The implication being that this area could in part be developed for housing. Did he not check it was a **Local Nature Reserve** and **Site of Special Scientific Interest**?



Secondly, he travelled to **Station Approach Stoneleigh** and suggests the rejection of a plan to build a four storey block of flats was mistaken. The plan was rejected in February 2022. The developer **Woolbro Homes** ( a part of **St James Group Ltd** which is a wholly owned subsidiary of the multi-million **Berkeley Group Holdings Plc**) did not exercise its right of appeal to a Planning Inspector.



Image of original 6 storey block

Perhaps they accepted the grounds for refusal which included overdevelopment, overbearing and incongruity. Moreover, the applicants had failed to sign a commitment to affordable housing.



Thirdly, the report of the BBC showed **Cllr Liz Frost** objecting to a 22 room residence for students near Epsom's **University for the Creative Arts** in Ashley Road, Epsom. The reportage gave the impression that housing needed to meet ordinary housing targets was being denied. UCA indicated in connection with the case that it is attracting mainly foreign students to its new business courses. See Epsom and Ewell Times report on the meeting [HERE](#)

Lastly, Mr Easton claimed no Councillor was available for comment. The **Epsom and Ewell Times** know of at least two Councillors who attended the Planning Committee meeting who were NOT asked. Mark Easton is not available for comment as his direct contacts cannot be found. **Grace Manning-Marsh** of **LandTech**, was interviewed by Mr Easton, she was critical of Epsom and Ewell's failure to authorise developments on **Green Belt**. She did not ring back when asked to talk to us.

## Councillors agonise over student accommodation plan.

16 November 2022



Council postpone a controversial planning application for their own site visit. **Mr Colin Preston's** plan to knock down a neglected house called **Green Gables** in Ashley Road, Epsom was deferred. A **22 student bedroom** development is proposed to take the place of the neglected Green Gables house. The development provides no more than 8 square metres per bedroom with two shared kitchens and two shared living spaces. **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September, Epsom and Ewell** Borough Council's **Planning Committee** discussed a number of objections matching the number of bedrooms. 22 in all, concerning loss of privacy, overdevelopment, impact on the nearby Worple Road conservation area and many other grounds.





Proposed linked two building student accommodation above and current scene below.

The **Woodcote (Epsom) Residents' Society** submitted "...excessive scale would be visually obtrusive, over-shadow the rear gardens and result in significant light spillage from the glazed stairwell and lobby area at night. The amenity area would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance and the narrow footpath between the proposed buildings and the boundary with Ladbroke Road properties being a potential area for antisocial behaviour and security concerns..."

The **Strategic Housing Market Assessment** (SHMA) of Epsom and Ewell BC dated September 2019 concludes that "there does not seem to be a great demand for additional Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) at the moment". Mr Preston, the developer, contacted the **University of the Creative Arts** (UCA) situated just yards away in Ashley Road. UCA responded with the following: "We can confirm that UCA is broadly supportive of an increase in provision of student accommodation in and around Epsom and Farnham, both in Surrey. We have opened a dialogue with the local authorities in both towns, with a view to enlisting their support in addressing what is an increasing need for suitable accommodation for our students."



For the current year 2021/2022, UCA has approximately 1,800 students enrolled on our Epsom campus, of which 321 first years were housed in university provided accommodation. The others rely on the local private rental sector, or commute further away. Recently UCA also commenced a February intake into our Business School for the Creative Industries which is proving quite attractive to students, especially those from abroad."

Following a 90 minute debate the application was not decided on pending a site visit voted for by a majority of the Councillors.

Epsom and Ewell Times understands that UCA is heavily oversubscribed for the coming academic year. More student accommodation appears to be required by the Borough for its growing University population.

At the meeting **Cllr Liz Frost**, not a member of the Planning Committee, (Residents Association - Woodcote Ward) spoke against the proposal. She described the proposal as "Overdevelopment, far too close to neighbouring properties and overbearing. Rear of properties will be flooded by lighting from the development. Inevitably there will be disturbing noise effecting enjoyment of neighbouring gardens. Conditions suggested to deal with noise are unenforceable without a warden on site. The 32 square feet of outside amenity space wholly inadequate."

Local Ladbroke Road resident **Paul Ring** described the development as "a cramped student house in multiple occupation (HMO) and there would be disturbance from the movement of students in a narrow space".

**Spencer Copping**, the agent for the applicant, defended the application and asked the Committee to support the recommendation of the Council officers to approve the plan.

The **Council Officer** argued that there would be a requirement for a "management strategy" to deal with anti-social

behaviour and that would mitigate risk of disturbance of neighbours.

**Cllr Steve McCormick** (RA Woodcote) expressed concern about the lack of amenity space for the students. The Officer explained that as a student accommodation the development was not subject to amenity space requirements and the nearby Rosebery Park mitigated this. The Councillor proposed refusal of the application. Cllr **Previn Jagutpal** (RA Stamford) also spoke against on grounds of the density and lack of amenity space.

**Cllr Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) asked for the matter to be put off to allow a Councillors' inspection and despite the Chairman **Cllr Humphrey Reynolds** describing site inspections as a "waste of time", a majority voted to inspect. If a decision had been reached approval would have been voted for by **Cllr Kate Chinn** (Labour Court Ward) who recognised the need for more student accommodation in the Borough. **Cllr David Gulland** (LibDem College Ward) reluctantly accepted there were no legal grounds to refuse that would withstand an appeal to an inspector and would vote in favour.

**Cllr Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley Ward) could not accept that 22 students should live together without a responsible supervisor living there. They would play hip-hop music and make noise. She thought the rear of the development looks "like a prison". She asked "Why white brick? That would not fit the area."



Green Gables next to white rendered houses in Ashley Road



Houses opposite Green Gables

**Green Gables'** registered proprietor is one **Bernard Wells** who has owned it since at latest 1994 and the property is subject to a **Swindon County Court** charge in 2008 in favour of **Thames Water Utilities Ltd**. The **Land Registry** entries can be out of date due to months' long backlogs in data entry.

## West Street developers climbing down enough?

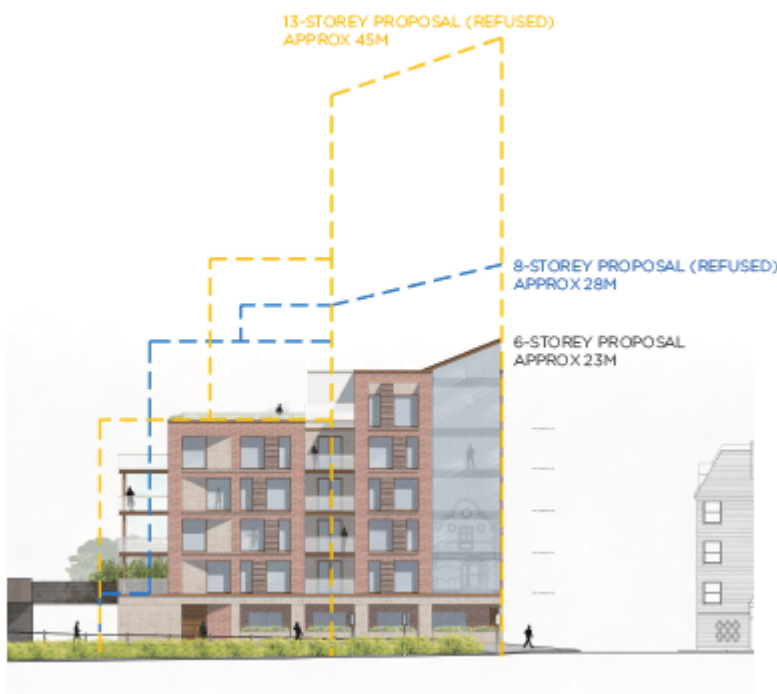
16 November 2022



Having a third bite at the planning cherry **Quanta Homes 3 Ltd** is applying to **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** for permission to demolish the old and ornately faced building situated at **24-28 West Street Epsom**. In its place a new 5 / 6 storey modern residential block of 20 units. Including just 10% in the "affordable" category.

Quanta Homes 3 Ltd is one of about 10 similarly named private limited property companies, active or dissolved under the sole directorship of **Mr Robert Du Toit**.





Rejected planning applications for first a 13 storey and then an 8 storey building are now followed by a part 5 and part 6 storey building application.

No doubt this latest application will excite again the debate between modernisers of the Town and preservers of the Town. You can make your views known online to the Council on [THIS LINK](#)

Related

**Mind the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan!**

£225,000 to plan the unplanned

## “Statement of community involvement” involves what about what?

16 November 2022



Following a 4-week public consultation, **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** unveiled its new draft **Statement of Community Involvement** (SCI) at a meeting of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> July. This describes how local residents, businesses and other organisations can be involved in the planning process in Epsom and Ewell.

It is a legal requirement for the Council to have an SCI and to review it every five years as the way in which communities and the Council interact changes.

Planning decisions affect us all so, if you are interested in your area and would like to be involved in shaping future planning policy in Epsom & Ewell, you can:

- Sign up to receive notifications about local plan consultations.
- Read the council’s Local Development Scheme to find out what documents are going to be produced and when.
- Monitor the council’s Planning Policy webpages for updates and latest news.

· Check if a Neighbourhood Forum has been established in your area to prepare a neighbourhood plan.

The draft SCI can be read in the Agenda Reports Pack of the committee meeting, but please be aware that it is subject to some small amendments as a result of questions and suggestions raised by councillors at the meeting.

## Did the Inspector get to the Bottom of this?

16 November 2022



**Langley Bottom Farm** in Epsom is to become a small housing estate following the decision of Planning Inspector **D Hartley** dated 14th July 2022. Overturning a refusal of the **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and against overwhelming objections of the public in the 168 recorded submissions the Inspector allowed the appeal of **Fairfax Properties**, despite the location being in **Green Belt land**.

The Inspector made the following controversial observations:

“One of the purposes of Green Belt is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The site includes a number of existing buildings and areas of hardstanding. The latter has the continued potential to be used for the parking of vehicles. Overall, and taking into account the existing use, characteristics and extent of development on the site, I am satisfied that subject to the imposition of planning conditions the proposal would not lead to countryside encroachment and hence there would be no conflict with this Green Belt purpose.”

Concerning **local facilities** for the future occupants he stated “Langley Vale is within reasonable walking and cycling distance of the appeal site. It contains a limited number of facilities and amenities such as the ‘Park and Shop’ petrol filling station convenience store, ‘The Shop on the Corner’, garage, village hall, pre-school and primary school. I acknowledge the Council’s comment that ‘The Shop on the Corner’ appears to have ceased trading. There is of course some possibility that the property could be used again as a shop but, in any event, ‘The Park and Shop’ does provide some food and drink provision albeit that I acknowledge that it would likely only be used on the basis of day to day ‘topping up’.”

On **public transport, walking and cycling** he observed with optimism: “The site is located in close proximity to bus stops within Langley Vale and includes bus service E5 every two hours to Epsom (Monday to Saturday) and school service 618 (Monday to Friday). Furthermore, three mainline railway stations are located nearby (Epsom, Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner) providing commuting services to London and access to destinations further afield. There is also bus service 408 from Epsom to Cobham and stopping at Leatherhead and which runs Monday to Friday calling at Langley Vale once a day. I acknowledge that services are not very frequent but nevertheless I find that some of the proposed residents would use them on occasion. The evidence is that the site is served well by a number of public footpath and cycle routes where some limited opportunities would be available, primarily in the day time and when there is no inclement weather. These could be used to visit services and amenities both locally and further afield.”

The Inspector did observe that **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** had allowed arguably unauthorised uses of the land to continue unchallenged for so many years that the “developed uses” became lawful. The claims of threats to the Green Belt were thereby undermined.

40% of the houses are to be “affordable”. Time will tell how affordable they will be.

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## Gym and yoga studio to residential

16 November 2022



**Epsom Civic Society** brings to our attention:

39 Manor Green Road Epsom KT19 8RN

[Click here to see map for location of 39 Manor Green Road Epsom KT19 8RN.](#)

22/00695/FUL Change of use of gym/yoga studio to residential to create a 1 bedroom dwelling with associated garden and parking.

Following dismissal of a second Appeal for a residential development, the applicant has made an application to re-purpose a not long built existing building used as a gym/yoga studio in the garden of the plot as a new small dwelling, despite all



previous residential applications having been refused and two Appeals dismissed.

Assessing this application as if it were the first at this site, the Society has had to re-iterate.....

To see more go to Epsom Civic Society on this application