



Auriol school field for golden years?

Auriol School sports field in Cuddington is earmarked by Surrey County Council for 50 elderly care housing units. According to SCC: "The Cuddington site is ideally situated for Extra Care Housing and has been selected specifically for its location. The site will provide new homes in the form of 1-bedroom self-contained apartments. All of the homes will be accessible, with features designed for wheelchair users.

The accommodation has been designed around the constraints of the site and its neighbours but is still able to offer residents ready access to safe external space including landscaped gardens designed expressly to address the needs of older people; encouraging activity and promoting exercise, healthy living and wellbeing.

The design focuses on ensuring residents have sufficient space, both private and communal, and key to this have been considerations around accessibility. The development has been designed to ensure residents can remain in their homes as they grow older and/or as their needs change."

SCC have plans for three other sites in the County. **Mark Nuti**, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, said: "Our ambition is to bring affordable extra care housing to locations around Surrey and these four sets of proposals bring us a step closer. Not only would the schemes help older people live life to the full, they would also breathe new life into four community sites."

SCC is holding a consultation exercise and if you want more information and to participate go to:

Cuddington Extra Care Housing (communityuk.site)

MP's housing solution for Epsom and Ewell

Epsom and Ewell and indeed the whole country has a real shortage of homes. We cannot go on with a generation of young people who aspire to home ownership but have little hope of achieving this. And we must have more affordable homes locally.

As a country we are already now building more homes than at any time for decades, but there is still more to do. Locally precious little has happened in recent years. Four years ago, just before the local elections, the Borough Council was due to publish its plan for housing and for the area for the future. It was postponed then, and only now is the Council in the process of publishing and developing its local plan for the area for the next 10-15 years.

Every local authority is obliged to do this, and to explain how it will meet housing need, look after its local economy and protect its local environment.

Each council has also prepared an assessment of local housing need, based on national guidance of how to do this. The housing assessment for Epsom and Ewell is though impossibly high – as it is in some other places. It would mean building more than 10,000 homes locally, and inevitably would mean much of our green belt disappearing.

That is why on a national level I have been saying to Ministers that there has to be more flexibility for Councils based on the reality in their areas.

But here we do need to do all we can to meet the housing need and not nearly enough has been done on this locally in recent years. That's why I have proposed a comprehensive redevelopment of the **Kiln Lane** and **Longmead** areas to achieve this without building all over our green belt.

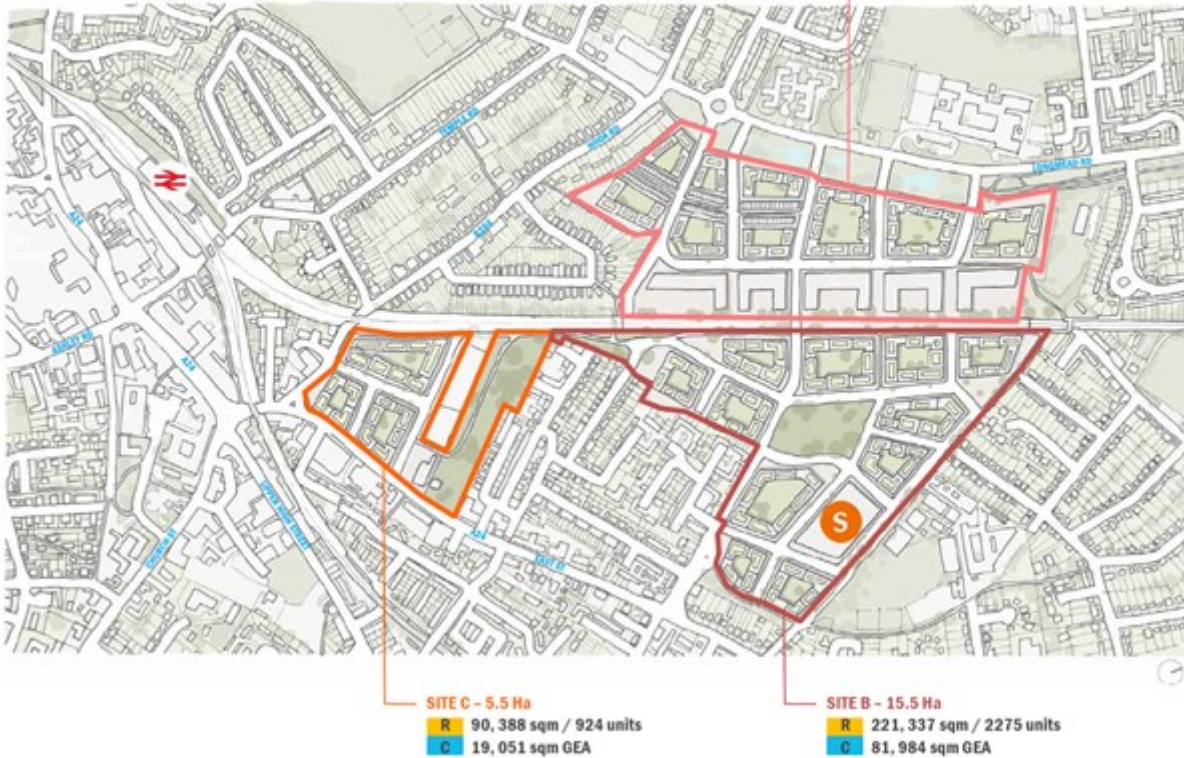


MASTERPLAN – INITIAL SCHEME

TOTAL HOMES: 4961

TOTAL COMMERCIAL: 141,100 sqm GEA

AVERAGE DENSITY: 142 homes/Ha



My plan, which has been developed together with a leading firm of architects, involves the construction of a mixed use area of well-designed developments, with businesses on the lower floors and flats above, with some terraced housing on the site as well. This kind of mix is typical of what is being done elsewhere. The buildings would be no higher than those already in and around the town centre.

The scheme provides a similar amount of commercial space to the present plus nearly 5,000 homes. The plan would be to have car showrooms and parking areas built upwards rather than at ground level across large areas of land. But over time I would expect the commercial space to attract more creative businesses, given the presence in Epsom of the **University of the Creative Arts** which is now one of the country's leading institutions of its kind. It would also aim to provide more homes for younger people, meaning more could afford to stay locally and work here, rather than simply building more executive homes for commuters on open land.

And being close to the town centre, I hope it would provide a much needed boost to the businesses there.

I hope that as the local plan develops the Council will adopt this plan. I think it's the best way forward for our area.

Epsom and Ewell last in Local Planning

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) has approved a delayed timeframe for the development of its new **Local Plan**, putting it behind both government targets and other Surrey councils, amid debate over greenbelt development.

On 21st November, EEBC's Planning Policy and Licensing Committee unanimously approved a **Local Development Scheme (LDS)**, which sets out a timeframe for the development of its new Local Plan that would see the planning authority miss a government target by more than a year. The Local Plan will set out planning policies and sites that may be developed in the borough up until 2040.

The LDS supersedes the version approved by the council in April, and delays the first stage in the development of the Local Plan



by three months. It forecasts that the Local Plan will be adopted in Spring 2025. In an agenda paper, the council's interim Chief Executive **Jackie King** pointed out that "the government will want to see progression against their target date of all Local Planning authorities having an up-to-date Local Plan by the end of 2023."

In 2017, the Government made it a legal requirement for Local Plans to be updated, and if necessary updated, every five years. Epsom's current planning framework consists of four documents dated between 2007 and 2015. The council has said that the national period of mourning following the death of Queen Elizabeth II caused delays because councillor briefings were rescheduled. Ms King also said that there were delays "to allow further member briefing sessions to be undertaken to enable members to fully engage with and help shape the Local Plan."

At the committee meeting, Councillor **Julie Morris** (Liberal Democrats, College Ward) said: "The period of mourning was three weeks, and yet we have a three-month delay." She added that it was "regrettable" that the committee's chair, Councillor **Steven McCormick** (Residents Association, Woodcote Ward), had "put a lot of effort in trying to get councillors to attend briefing sessions" but that "at least one has had to be re-run because of lack of attendance." She continued: "There is a communication failure. Councillors outside the committee do not realise the importance of the document, give it the deference it deserves, or give their views."

The new LDS means that EEBC will be the last local council in Surrey to adopt a new Local Plan, with the exception of Woking Borough Council and Banstead and Reigate Borough Council, who said their plans did not need updating.

Surrey district/borough council	Pre-Publication Stage - Consultation. (Regulation 18)	Publication of Submission Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19)	Submission and Examination of Local Plan (Regulation 22)	Adoption
Elmbridge		Ran from June-July 2022	Scheduled for Winter 2022	Scheduled for Summer 2023
Epsom	Scheduled for Feb-March 2023	Scheduled for Feb-March 2024	Scheduled for June 2024	Scheduled for Spring 2025
Guildford			Part 2 submitted June 2022	Part 1 adopted April 2019. Part 2 scheduled for March 2023.
Mole Valley			Submitted February 2022	Scheduled for Spring 2023.
Runnymede				Adopted July 2020
Spelthorne		Ran from June-Sep 2022	Scheduled for Nov 2022	Scheduled for Sep 2023
Surrey Heath	Ran from March-May 2022	Scheduled for Jan-Feb 2023	Scheduled for June 2023	Scheduled for Dec 2023
Tandridge			Submitted January 2019	Scheduled for Oct-Dec 2023
Waverley				Part 1 adopted February 2018. Part 2 was scheduled for Sep-Oct 2022.

*Woking Borough Council declared that its plan was up to date in October 2018. Reigate and Banstead Borough Council declared its plan up to date in June 2019.

There has also been debate about developing on greenbelt land in the borough. Greenbelt land includes areas of countryside that are protected from development in order to prevent urban sprawl and encourage development within existing built-up areas. A member of the public attending the committee asked what the council was doing to preserve greenbelt land, and if it would "pause greenbelt development and research brownfield development" as an alternative. Brownfield sites are areas of land that have previously been used for development but are not currently in use.



Councillor **Steven McCormick** said that the council “should follow government policy in its approach to greenbelt”. Government policy is that greenbelt land should not be altered except in exceptional circumstances. Councillor McCormick said: “If alternative options are considered, it is sufficient to release greenbelt land to meet housing needs”.

Councillor Morris said she wished to clarify that the council had “sympathy” with what the member of the public asked. She added: “But it’s too early. There is every intention of not overdeveloping the borough. It may be that we don’t go for these plans, but the evidence is needed. It’s too early to say what we’ll arrive at.”

No draft of a Local Plan has yet been made public. In a recent email to constituents, Epsom and Ewell MP **Chris Grayling** said that he expects “the Borough Council to publish its initial thinking about the plan shortly”. He wrote: “We clearly have a need for new homes locally. There are too many young people who grow up or are educated here but cannot afford to remain in the area. And we have a serious shortage of social housing.” He added: “My worry is that developing the green belt is an easy option for the Council. It is always more complicated to reorganise what has already been developed than to build on a green field, but in our area it is much better to take the more difficult approach.”

Gina Miller, leader of the True and Fair Party, who has announced that she will run against Grayling in the next general election, criticised his comments on Twitter. She wrote: “Not surprising but disappointing that Chris Grayling backed abolishing housing targets, making it nigh on impossible to help young people onto the property ladder nationally, whilst calling for new homes in Epsom & Ewell”.

The first stage in the development of the Local Plan, which includes consultation with residents, is now scheduled for February-March 2023.

See earlier reports on The Local Plan:

Local Planning Matters

The Local Plan to plan The Local Plan

BBC misreports Epsom and Ewell planning?

Another £1/4 m to plan planning

Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes..?*

Battle for school gets classical with fears of a Trojan Horse. **Kingswood House School** in **Epsom** is asking local people to join hundreds of residents in opposing plans to evict the School from its site and replace it with a small school and housing estate. With objections numbering over 400, local people have risen up in opposition to developer **Steve Curwen’s** plans to evict the 102 year old, 245 pupil school from its site in West Hill, Epsom. **Curwen Group** are working with the landowners, the **Aczel brothers**, with the scheme involving the construction of a small school of only 60 pupils with acute special needs.

It is anticipated that the school would be privately operated on a “for-profit” basis. In what has been described by MP **Chris Grayling** as: “an example of the worst form of business practice”, the Aczel brothers have confirmed that the planning application for the new school will be followed by a second application to build a housing estate on the current school’s playing field.

Amongst its 245 pupils, Kingswood House School is home to 172 local children with special needs and has the highest concentration of special needs pupils at any school in Surrey. The School has been made an Asset of Community Value by Epsom and Ewell BC in recognition of its contribution to the local community.

The School has now filed a detailed objection to the proposed development including reports by independent experts. These documents which are publicly available on the Council’s website include a report by educational expert **Neil Roskilly**, a former member of the General Teaching Council for England and adviser to the Department for Education. Roskilly notes that “...none of the pupils at Kingswood House School would qualify for a place at the proposed new school because their special needs would not be considered sufficiently severe: and the need in Surrey is for schools catering for milder special needs (such as Kingswood House) not acute special needs and therefore the new school would be marketed by its owners towards pupils from outside Epsom.”

Roskilly says that **Department of Education** design guidelines for schools accommodating pupils with acute special needs have been ignored, resulting in classrooms and common areas being too small and that: “... as designed the proposed school would have to operate with a limited curriculum”. As such, Roskilly believes that: “...it is highly doubtful that the proposed school would



receive permission to open from **Ofsted** at a post-registration inspection. This is because it would be potentially discriminatory and in breach of the: "Special Education Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25Years (2015)", which states that all SEND pupils should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum".

Access for the proposed new school would be via West Hill Avenue, currently a quiet residential road to the rear of the Kingswood House School. Transport consultants **Markides** note that the proposed access and parking arrangements are inadequate given the width of West Hill Avenue, its use for residential parking and the presence of trees restricting visibility. When combined with the intended housing estate and inadequate staff and visitor parking for the proposed new school, Markides conclude that: "...the proposed access and internal layout are regarded as seriously deficient and unsupportable."The problems identified don't stop with those spotted by Markides and Roskilly.

Officers employed by **Surrey County Council** and **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** have identified problems relating to both flood risk and ecology. The Surrey County Council Flood Risk, Planning and Consenting Team have reported that they are: "...not satisfied that the proposed drainage scheme meets the requirements..." of the relevant planning legislation and that development should not commence: "...until details of a surface water drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority".

Curwen's own ecology reports recommended further reports, not yet done, to establish the presence or otherwise of protected species, Great Crested Newts and Bats. Surrey's Ecology Officer notes that these reports are still not done and that: "These surveys are required and cannot now be done until spring/summer next year" .

A common concern amongst the hundreds of objections filed so far is that Curwen's scheme is in reality a sham and a "**Trojan horse**" for the construction of a housing estate. This concern is only likely to have been intensified given the fundamental flaws in the scheme's design exposed by experts for Kingswood House School's and the shortcomings noted by Surrey County Council's Flood Risk team and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Ecology Officer.

A **Spokesperson** for The Curwen Group said to **Epsom and Ewell Times**:

"We are committed to providing a specialist SEND school at the Kingswood House site, and are currently working through technical responses to our application in consultation with the surrounding community. "

Those wishing to support or object should do so via the Council's website 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 (ref 22/01653/FUL)

*The Trojan priest Laocoön guessed the plot and warns the Trojans "I fear Greeks, even those bearing gifts".

Neighbouring crematorium plan goes up in smoke.

Reigate and Banstead borough council has shelved its plans for the area's first crematorium despite having spent £350,000 on the project so far. The facility could have brought in more than £1.5million for the authority, but was rejected by councillors at a planning meeting in September 2021, despite the officer recommendation to approve it.

A decision then had to be taken whether to submit another application, proceed with a third party partner or appeal the decision, though it was then discovered the council could not appeal its own planning decision.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council's commercial ventures executive sub-committee considered a report into "project baseball" on Thursday (November 17) which detailed the closure.

The project, first brought to committee in December 2019, would have provided the borough's first crematorium, and has been funded by the council through its reserves, or savings. Plans were refused at planning stage because of its location in the greenbelt, with more than 500 public objections to the application.

Council documents show the aim of the project was to provide a much needed and greatly improved level of service to the residents, while also bringing in income for the authority. More than 80 per cent of dead people were cremated in the UK as at 2021, and facilities in neighbouring boroughs were found to be operating beyond their capacity.

Documents said: "[They] were not considered to serve customers, and particularly local people, well at a difficult time of life, either in terms of service, cost, environment and location/accessibility." They went on to say the crematorium would aim to deliver "a higher quality facility and service" than the nearest competitors, closer to residents and those near the borough, and also bringing money in for the council.



Operating at full capacity, it was estimated the crematorium could have brought in more than £1.5m per year.

Campaign to save special Epsom school builds

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 and entering the reference number 22/01653/FUL or by email to the case officer, Gemma Patterson at 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

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

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

Battle for Epsom School continues....

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.... independentand.... public sector within Surrey.... and Epsom and Ewell andshould 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 Kugathan 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

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.