



## How did Aldi arrive at this Epsom junction?

19 April 2025



Plans for an Aldi store near an Epsom junction described as being "fraught with danger" have been green-lit after an appeal—but with conditions attached. For years, the budget supermarket has been trying to get planning permission on the Former Dairy Crest Site on Alexandra Road in Epsom. The planning inspector recognised the road is "far from easy to navigate and potentially dangerous" but said mitigations to encourage people to walk to the store would help.

Members of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council had thrown out the German company's second application in July 2024 due to fears that increased traffic would have a severe impact on road safety. A previous application was rejected in 2015 over concerns about the site's location, car parking capacity, traffic levels, and the potential effect on the neighbourhood's character. The new £5 million development includes parking and some landscaping, but earlier plans for residential units have been dropped.

Residents and councillors had previously criticised the scheme for exacerbating an already 'challenging junction', often described as a "rat run" and "fraught with danger". Despite these objections, Surrey Highways raised no formal objection and concluded the development would not create unacceptable risks.

Although the planning inspector agreed that the Aldi store would "undoubtedly increase the potential for conflict between vehicles and pedestrians", they concluded that "additional measures to encourage drivers to slow down and take extra care would help to mitigate these increased risks." The decision statement noted: "At the end of the day, nearly all collisions are the result of human error. In this case, the lack of an obvious pattern of collisions suggests that there are not significant problems with the layout which could easily be addressed by engineering interventions."

The conditions imposed on Aldi's approved scheme include improving pedestrian access to the site, implementing slow-down measures, installing new junction signage, and laying anti-skid surfacing—all subject to full agreement by the Surrey Highways Authority. The inspector highlighted the Former Dairy Crest Site as a location with "good opportunities to encourage more customers to choose to walk to the store".

Improved pedestrian access was seen as an acceptable compromise, rather than simply accepting that peak times would bring queues and delays due to limited parking. Based on average data, the risk of excessive pressure on the Five Ways junction was considered small, though the inspector acknowledged that at exceptional times—such as Christmas—some delays would be inevitable. However, they concluded that seasonal stress is not sufficient justification for additional parking, "when the priority should be to promote increased numbers of visits to the store on foot."

Aldi now has three years to begin construction of their new bargain grocery store on Alexandra Road before planning permission expires.

Image: CGI visualisation of Aldi store on the Former Dairy Crest Site, on Alexandra Road, Epsom. (Credit: Aldi/ Epsom and Ewell Borough Council)

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## Global fast-food giant targets Surrey village

19 April 2025



A global fast food giant could be coming to a Surrey village as a new McDonald's restaurant and takeaway might get the go ahead. Despite being famed for its 'Happy Meal', some residents fear the American icon will be 'detrimental to the health of Cobham'.

The popular burger and nugget chain is hoping to find a new home in the former Loch Fyne Restaurant on Portsmouth Road, Cobham. The fate of the application will be decided by Elmbridge Borough Council members at a planning meeting on April 24.

Planning officers have recommended McDonald's gets the green light to transform the disused fish restaurant. Residents have railed against the scheme, with nearly 500 letters of objection sent to the council.

The village of Cobham was named as one of the most affluent communities in the county but the Northfield Estate, where the restaurant is proposed, is among Surrey's poorest socio-economic areas.

Significant concern has been raised about the proposed distance (or lack of) to local schools and playgrounds nearby. Opponents have claimed the new branch will "encourage children to form unhealthy habits", "exploit young people" who will eat at McDonald's and add to the country's obesity crisis.

People have said the new outlet will be "detrimental to the health of Cobham" and the impact "cannot be underestimated". Lots of residents pointed out there is already an outlet at the M25 services, so they do not need another one closer to the village.

Wyndham Avenue park and Hamilton Ave play area, both managed by PA Housing, are just a four-minute walk away (321m) from the potential McDonald's site. Felton Fleet Prep School, Cobham Free School and Cobham recreation ground are only a seven minute walk (482m) away from the fast food chain.

But planning officers said the nearest schools are not within a 400m radius walking distance to the site. The intervening A3 would be a "man-made barrier" to the fast food chain, officers reported, and the proposed restaurant is not on the main school route to Cobham Free School so children would be walking the opposite way.

Although the neighbouring petrol station has a Greggs, the proposed restaurant will not create a 'cluster' of takeaways. The nearest other takeaways are in Cobham's centre some 700m away, according to the report.

Despite recognising local public health concern, officers found there is no evidence the multi-million fast food chain will have a detrimental impact on health in the neighbouring areas. National planning guidance says local authorities should refuse plans for takeaways near schools and where young people hang out. Surrey County Council's public health team did not object to the new McDonald's in principle.

Cobham residents launched a petition in May 2024 against the plans to open a new restaurant and takeaway. The petition, which has garnered over 34,000 signatures, calls for the site to be turned into a community hub instead. Concerns raised include increased traffic, litter, and potential impacts on the area's health and well-being.

Despite the concerns, many people flagged the multi-million dollar company would bring huge financial benefits to the village, increasing visitors and supporting local business. Others said the new 'Happy Meal' site could provide up to £60k a year in business rates for the council.





Planning details read: "Twenty minutes running around a dark room filled with obstacles and UV reactive artwork shooting each other in teams. A successful way of both entertaining [children] and wearing them out!"

Noise will be reduced by containing the games within the existing building and as well as using the constructed containers and temporary roofing, the application states.

Car parking for up to 15 vehicles is included, with additional parking directed to the open, free roadside parking a short walk away on the Downs.

Locals can comment on the proposals until April 30 on the council's website. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will decide the future of The Paddock site at a later date.

Proposed site layout. Epsom and Ewell planning documents.

## Pedestrian visions of Mole Valley

19 April 2025



Masterplans for Dorking and Bookham are set to be signed off by Mole Valley District Council's executive committee on April 16. These set out a bank of projects the council would like to "bring to life" in order to make "a lasting positive impact" on the towns. Among the works being considered are improvements to Dorking town centre, as well as connections to the three train stations. The council said it wants to improve streets and public spaces, get more people walking and cycling, and find uses for its vacant buildings.

For Dorking, the council wants to create a greater sense of arrival, improve its cultural offering, and address crash hotspots. A new "more attractive" civic hub would create an "important cluster" of cultural, leisure and civic buildings to encourage more people to spend time there - while pedestrianising access to Dorking Halls could help maximise the experience around the famous site. As a whole, the masterplan focuses on the town centre, public spaces, transport infrastructure, and HGV restrictions to protect the heritage character of the town.

The option to pedestrianise West Street was not taken forward in Dorking, but the idea of cutting cars from High Street in Bookham has been retained. The council is also looking to capture more of the visitors to Polesden Lacy and Box Hill into the historic core of Bookham village by reducing the impact of traffic and its "car dominated environment" and celebrating the town's heritage and cultural links.

At this stage though, all options are concepts and not fully realised designs or planned projects. The intention, the draft masterplan reads, is to "plant seeds of ideas for change; as such they will need to be further developed subsequent to completion of this study."

In a statement issued ahead of the meeting, Councillor Margaret Cooksey, cabinet member for community services, said she was pleased the masterplans had reached the approval stage and that the majority of feedback had been in support of the project. She said: "We listened to our communities and made necessary and appropriate changes based on the feedback received, before presenting the final plans to cabinet."

"Once the masterplans are approved, the commencement of these projects will depend on securing the necessary funding. Mole Valley District Council will explore various funding streams, including government grants, national organisations, and local contributions. We are committed to bringing these projects to life and making a lasting positive impact on Bookham and Dorking. Many of the schemes will require further discussions about their details in the future."

The council said that more than 500 people engaged in the Bookham masterplan consultation and that there were more than 1,000 responses for Dorking.

## Epsom & Ewell's Local Plan under the Green microscope

19 April 2025



### Epsom Green Belt Group Lodges Formal Complaint Against Borough Council Over Local Plan Submission

The Epsom Green Belt Group (EGBG) has submitted a formal complaint to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) regarding the council's Local Plan submission, raising concerns over procedural irregularities and transparency in the consultation process.

In a detailed letter dated 14 March 2025, EGBG congratulated the council for submitting the Local Plan before the 12 March deadline, ensuring it falls under the provisions of the December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, the group identified what it describes as significant flaws in the submission, particularly concerning documents that were not made available for public scrutiny before submission.

### Concerns Over Topic Papers

A key contention in the complaint is the inclusion of seven Topic Papers—covering areas such as the Green Belt, economy, housing, spatial strategy, heritage, and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation—without prior consultation or approval by councillors. EGBG argues that these documents were neither included in the consultation evidence base nor subjected to review by the Local Plan Policy Committee (LPPC) or Full Council before submission. This, they claim, violates the requirements of the *Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012*.

The group asserts that these documents were not made available to the public in accordance with regulatory requirements, including being published on the council's website and made accessible at the Town Hall or local libraries during the consultation period. Furthermore, some Topic Papers were dated after the consultation closed, raising concerns about their legitimacy as submission documents.

EGBG has called on EEBC to take one of three actions: withdraw the Topic Papers from the submission, conduct a retrospective consultation, or submit an explanatory statement to the examiner clarifying the lack of prior consultation.



## Criticism of the Consultation Statement

EGBG's complaint also highlights alleged shortcomings in the Consultation Statement submitted by EEBC. The group argues that:

- The statement underrepresents the weight of objections by counting consolidated group responses as single representations, despite EEBC's guidance encouraging collective submissions.
- The narrative summary is not impartial, as it includes the council's views rather than an objective summary of objections.
- Several key issues raised by EGBG in its formal response were omitted or misrepresented, particularly concerning specific development sites such as Hook Road Arena and Horton Farm.
- The Sustainability Appraisal was described as 'robust' despite extensive criticisms submitted by EGBG, including claims that certain rankings were 'misaligned' and descriptions 'bore little or no relation to supporting evidence.'

EGBG has requested that EEBC revise and republish the Consultation Statement to accurately reflect public concerns.

## Council's Response

When Epsom and Ewell Times approached for comment, EEBC provided a brief response, stating:

*"Any complaint made to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will be dealt with according to our Complaints Policy, published on our website: Complaint Policy V1.pdf."*

Related reports:

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## Where the thousands of new homes will be built in Surrey's smallest borough - Epsom and Ewell

19 April 2025



"Critical" details on nearly 5,000 homes across 35 sites in Epsom and Ewell have been laid out after the borough council submitted its planning masterplan.

The local plan will shape the future of the borough's jobs, environmental protections, and leisure development - as well as allocating land for new homes and much-needed infrastructure improvements, the council said.

The single largest development will be in Horton Farm, between Horton Lane and Hook Road, where more than 1,250 homes are earmarked to be built alongside business spaces, a community building and park.

The plan will go before public examination by an independent inspector later this year for sign off.

Councillor Peter O'Donovan, chair of the licensing and planning policy committee, at Epsom and Ewell Council said "I am very grateful to officers who have worked diligently to reach this milestone, ensuring that the local plan is assessed against the framework to which it was developed.

"Overall, it has been a huge undertaking."

The council has been set housing targets of about 4,700 homes with the local plan identifying a supply of 4,914.

He added: "I know that the plan will not please everyone.

"However, I believe it is a huge step forward for our borough and our communities, and if adopted it will help ensure that all Epsom and Ewell residents can enjoy the benefits that this strategic plan aims to deliver - whether their focus is on access to affordable homes, leisure facilities and green space, to jobs and economic growth."

Included in the target are 456 homes that have already been built. Green belt land will be used to provide 1,580 homes.

The council says its planning bible will create "new vibrant communities" centred on currently underdeveloped transport hubs or development of larger sites.

It hopes these new developments will "form new communities and grow to be distinct places with their own identities."

To support this, they will need to be "supported by appropriate investments in community and transport infrastructure to ensure existing and new residents are supported in terms of movement, health, education and other services."

Epsom town centre will also be redeveloped to create improved retail space.

"It is important that the town centre continues to diversify and attract uses other than retail to the town centre to reflect the social and economic changes that have affected demand for retail and office space and investment.

"Developing the night-time economy is a key opportunity, with recent investment in a new cinema and the Playhouse Theatre", the submitted plan read.

So far 35 sites have been allocated for redevelopment. Some, such as the 455 homes and a bespoke performing arts centre for the Laine Theatre Arts at the Southern Gas Network Site have already begun working through the planning system.

### The 35 site allocations the council hopes will deliver a significant proportion of the Local Plan's housing requirement.

- Southern Gas Network Site Allocated for: Approximately 455 dwellings and a bespoke performing arts centre for the Laine Theatre Arts
- Hook Road Car Park Allocated for: Approximately 150 dwellings



- Solis House, 20 Hook Road Allocated for: Approximately 20 dwellings
- Bunzl, Hook Road Allocated for: Approximately 20 dwellings
- Epsom Town Hall Allocated for: Approximately 90 dwellings
- Hope Lodge Car Park Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Former Police and Ambulance Station Sites Allocated for: Erection of a new 85 bedroom residential, nursing and dementia care home for the frail elderly
- Epsom Clinic Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Depot Road and Upper High Street Car Park Allocated for: Approximately 100 dwellings and a decked public car park
- 79-85 East Street Allocated for: Approximately 35 dwellings
- Finachem House, 2 - 4 Ashley Road Allocated for: Approximately 20 dwellings
- Global House Allocated for: Approximately 75 dwellings
- Swail House Allocated for: Refurbishment of Swail House for residential use and the provision of replacement purpose-built specialist accommodation for the RNIB consisting of approximately 45 dwellings (net) located to the rear of Swail House
- 60 East Street Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Corner of Kiln Lane and East Street (101b East Street) Allocated for: Approximately 5 dwellings
- Land at Kiln Lane Allocated for: Approximately 40 dwellings
- Hatch Furlong Nursery Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Land to the Rear of Rowe Hall Allocated for: Extra Care Accommodation comprising 96 self-contained apartments, staff and communal facilities
- 7 Station Approach Allocated for: Approximately 5 dwellings
- Esso Express, 26 Reigate Road Allocated for: Approximately 10 dwellings
- Richards Field Car Park Allocated for: Approximately 7 dwellings
- Etwelle House, Station Road Allocated for: Approximately 20 dwellings
- 140-142 Ruxley Lane Allocated for: Approximately 12 dwellings
- Garages at Somerset Close & Westmorland Close Allocated for: Approximately 6 dwellings
- 64 South Street Epsom Allocated for: Approximately 6 dwellings
- 35 Alexandra Road Allocated for: Approximately 8 dwellings
- 22-24 Dorking Road Allocated for: Approximately 18 dwellings
- 63 Dorking Road Allocated for: Specialist Care Home with ancillary nurses accommodation (equivalent to 6 dwellings)
- 65 London Road Allocated for: Care home up to 81 bedrooms
- Epsom General Hospital Allocated for: Approximately 305 units older people's accommodation (Use Class C2), 24 key worker dwellings and a children's nursery
- Land at West Park Hospital (South) Allocated for: Approximately 50 dwellings
- Land at West Park Hospital (North) Allocated for: Approximately 150 dwellings
- Land at Chantilly Way Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Hook Road Arena Allocated for: New Sports Hub for the borough to include playing pitches (grass and artificial), a new pavilion and changing facilities. The provision of approximately 100 dwellings on the eastern part of the site
- Land at Horton Farm Allocated for: Approximately 1,250 dwellings including some specialist housing and self-build plots, 10 gypsy and traveller pitches, business incubation space, community building and a public park of approximately 7ha in addition to other green and blue infrastructure.

Related reports:

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## Epsom and Ewell Local Plan Submitted for Examination

19 April 2025



### Residents Encouraged to Stay Engaged and Make Representations

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has officially submitted the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan (2022-2040) to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination. This significant step, taken on 10 March 2025, means that an Inspector will now be appointed by the Government to assess whether the Plan meets legal compliance and soundness criteria under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023.

The Local Plan, which will shape the development of the borough for the next 15 years, has already undergone public consultation between 20 December 2024 and 5 February 2025 as part of the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission process. The appointed Inspector will consider the representations made during this period as



part of the examination.

## What Happens Next?

A Programme Officer, Charlotte Glancy, has been appointed to facilitate the examination process. Independent of the Council, she will manage all procedural and administrative matters, acting as the point of contact between the Inspector, Council officers, and those who submitted representations.

Anyone who requested to appear at the examination hearings will be contacted by the Programme Officer in due course regarding the issues the Inspector wishes to explore further and the relevant hearing dates.

## How to Access the Local Plan Documents

Residents who wish to review the submitted Local Plan and supporting documents can access them online at the Council's Local Plan Examination webpage: <https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/localplanexamination>.

Hard copies of key documents are available for public inspection at the following locations:

- **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Offices** (Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, KT18 5BY) - Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- **Epsom Library** (6 Epsom Square, KT19 8AG) - Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9.30am-5.30pm; Tuesday, Thursday: 9.30am-7pm; Saturday: 9.30am-5pm
- **Ewell Library** (Bourne Hall, Spring Street, KT17 1UF) - Tuesday to Saturday, 9.30am-5pm
- **Ewell Court Community Library** (Ewell Court House, Lakehurst Road, KT19 0EB) - Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 10am-5pm; Saturday: 10am-4pm
- **Stoneleigh Community Library** (1 Stoneleigh Broadway, KT17 2JA) - Monday, Tuesday, Friday: 10am-1pm, 2pm-5pm; Thursday: 10am-1pm; Saturday: 10am-4pm

Residents should check the library opening times before attending, as they may be subject to change. For enquiries about library access, contact Surrey County Council at 03456 009 009.

## Making Representations and Further Enquiries

Those with queries regarding the Local Plan examination process should direct them to Programme Officer Charlotte Glancy:

- **Email:** bankssolutionsuk@gmail.com
- **Telephone:** 01903 776601 / 07519 628064
- **Postal Address:** C/O Banks Solutions, 80 Lavinia Way, East Preston, West Sussex, BN16 1DD

For general information on the Local Plan, residents can contact the Planning Policy Team at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council:

- **Email:** localplan@epsom-ewell.gov.uk
- **Telephone:** 01372 732000

This is a crucial stage in the Local Plan's development, and residents who have previously submitted comments or have an interest in the borough's future planning policies are encouraged to stay informed and involved in the process. The examination will determine the Plan's suitability in guiding local development, housing, infrastructure, and environmental policies up to 2040.

Related reports:

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## Golf course housing tees off Green Belt preservers

19 April 2025



Over 200 homes will be built on a golf course in an "epoch making moment" for Surrey's green belt. Elmbridge Borough Council's planning committee approved developer Claudel Venture Holdings Ltd's vision for the 43 hectare site in Hersham on Wednesday, March 11.

The former 18-hole golf course off Assher Road will be transformed into a mix of 57 houses and 164 apartments with 246 parking spaces. Half of the homes will be affordable including social and affordable rent as well as shared ownership.

As well as the 221 homes, the plans feature a GP surgery, café, play areas and a natural green space in the form of a country park.

Debates around the proposal centred on whether the golf club was previously developed grey belt land or not. "It is almost an epoch-making moment," said Councillor John O'Reilly. "It is probably the first major application where the green belt will be so compromised."

Green belt land keeps countryside spaces free from development and stops the urban sprawl of towns merging together. Building on the green belt is only allowed when special circumstances can be demonstrated. But planning officers found the scheme would not undermine the openness of the green belt.

Michel Phillips, a professional adviser speaking against the scheme for the objectors, called it a "fallacy" the golf club is developed land as it was recognised as green belt land in a 2016 review. He told the committee: "There is no policy for Elmbridge to slice and dice the greenbelt to please development objectives."

"You have all been elected on a promise to protect the greenbelt. [The residents'] plea to you is to honour your commitment to Elmbridge citizens."

The decision was made despite over 800 objections (some from the same address) were sent against the plans, criticising the loss of countryside views for the neighbours and invasion of privacy.

Doubts were cast over whether a GP surgery would want to move into the proposed medical building. The developer acknowledged that it cannot 'force' the NHS to set up a new surgery on the site. Instead Claudel Venture Holdings said it would add another ten affordable units, in the shape of one and two-bedroom homes, and contribute £150,000 towards the NHS.

Speaking for the applicant, Mr Edwards said: "The planning inspector concluded that the need for affordable housing is acute and ever worsening and exceeds the



council's assessment that 296 affordable homes need to be built annually." He told the committee that the proposed affordable homes are "important as Elmbridge is one of the most expensive boroughs in the country".

Ward councillor for Hersham Village, Cllr Wendy Gibbs said the affordable housing on the development "doesn't go far enough" to provide much-needed three-bedroom homes. She slammed the developer for not flats not being inclusive enough with lifts and areas for prams. Some councillors raised concerns whether housing associations would take up new affordable properties.

Although Cllr Judy Sarsby said she disliked the "overbearing building", she acknowledged there are 2,500 families currently on a housing waiting list and a hundred families which are homeless. Members from either side of the political spectrum, from Conservative to Liberal Democrats agreed the proposed housing development was in a useful location near the station and would provide social and economic benefits in the area.

Currently private land, only golfers and those using the public footpath to the River Mole are allowed to access the green. But the applicant has proposed a green space of 21.8 hectares as part of the development to help mitigate the new homes on the former golf course.

Residents complained the site floods every year from rain and stressed the flood waters could be redirected to the surrounding homes. To combat the flood risk, the applicant is proposing to raise the level of the land meant for residential development to deal with the water run off.

Transport improvements include new footpaths, bus stops and a signal crossing on Molesey Road is also part of the development. Around £110k is being put towards Hersham station for rail improvements. But some councillors said the money "won't touch the sides" of what is needed and that the station is from a "bygone" era.

Artist's impression of proposed Hersham golf club development. (Credit: Claudel Venture Holdings Ltd / Elmbridge Borough Council planning documents)

## Leatherhead to get new cinema and bowling alley?

19 April 2025



A new cinema or bowling alley could "breathe new life" into Leatherhead as part of major regeneration plans aimed at "reversing the trend of brands leaving the town". Plans for the high street, Swan Centre and Bull Hill will be put on display this week with people invited to have their say on the proposals that will be among the biggest changes to the town in years. Mole Valley District Council and Kier Property are working together on the project and have said they were "excited to share" the new layouts that feature "significant updates" based on feedback from 2024.

A spokesperson for the project said: "The proposals... aim to breathe new life into the Swan Centre and Leatherhead High Street. This will be through investment in upgrades to the look and feel of the centre. We are also proposing to open up the main entrance to provide specific units to bring exciting and quality chains and independent restaurants and operators to Leatherhead." The new layout will also include what is being described as a 'cultural building' on the first floor 'to potentially include a cinema, bowling, activity centre to provide a great new entertainment offering in the town centre.'

They added: "This investment will be a catalyst to improve the quality and variety of offer in both the Swan Centre and Leatherhead High Street, reversing the trend of brands leaving the town and shop closures." To take the development further, the council and Kier Property - working together as a joint venture called The Leret Partnership, is calling on residents to give their views on the updated proposals.

Among the updates and refinements are an increase in public green space and new building layout in Bull Hill with two drop-in sessions being held this week to give people the opportunity to take a closer look. Both sessions will take place in the former Clinton Cards site within the Swan Centre. The first will run from 2pm to 8pm on Thursday, March 13, with the second taking place on Saturday, March 15 from 10am to 4pm. They are also being hosted on the Leret Partnership's website.

Image: Swan Centre Proposal from the Leret Partnership (MVDC)

Related reports:

River Mole to attract visitors to Leatherhead?

Leatherhead town on the way up?