

Ruxley Lane development on casting vote

9 January 2024



Properties on Ruxley Lane in Ewell with sizeable gardens will be demolished and replaced by 14 dwellings in two blocks. A tied vote of Councillors, at the Epsom and Ewell Planning Committee meeting of 14th December, on granting permission was resolved by the casting vote in favour of acting Chair Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Woodcote and Langley).

The committee approved the application, contingent upon the execution of a Section 106 Legal Agreement. This agreement includes a viability review mechanism to be activated if the development fails to reach the first-floor slab level on both buildings within 20 months of the decision date.

A critical provision in the decision is the requirement for the Section 106 Agreement to be completed by March 18, 2024. Failure to meet this deadline empowers the Head of Place Development to refuse the application based on non-compliance with Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy 2007.

Several conditions were imposed, including a three-year time limit for the commencement of development to comply with the Town and Country Planning Act. The approved plans, covering aspects such as site location, construction details, and landscaping, must be strictly adhered to throughout the development process.

Pre-commencement conditions were also established, such as the submission and approval of a Construction Transport Management Plan, ensuring responsible construction practices and adherence to highway safety regulations.

Post-demolition and pre-above-ground conditions mandate the submission and approval of details related to external materials, access provisions, tracking details, sustainable drainage schemes, and more. These conditions aim to safeguard visual amenities, highway safety, and sustainable development principles.

Pre-occupation conditions cover various aspects, including access closure and remediation, parking and turning layouts, visibility splays, and the installation of electric vehicle charging points. These conditions align with the National Planning Policy Framework's sustainable transport objectives and local development policies.

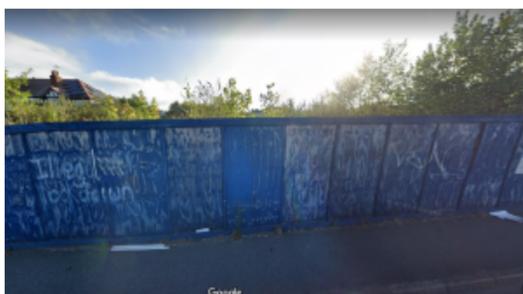
The committee emphasized sustainability measures, requiring the provision of solar panels, drainage verification reports, and adherence to ecological and sustainable design measures.

During and post-development conditions focus on groundwater remediation strategies, tree protection, ecological considerations, and sustainable design measures. The approved development must comply with strict regulations to control significant harm from land contamination and ensure the preservation of biodiversity.

The decision also outlines specific conditions regarding construction hours, limitations on additional windows or openings, and the installation of facilities such as refuse/recycling stores and cycle storage.

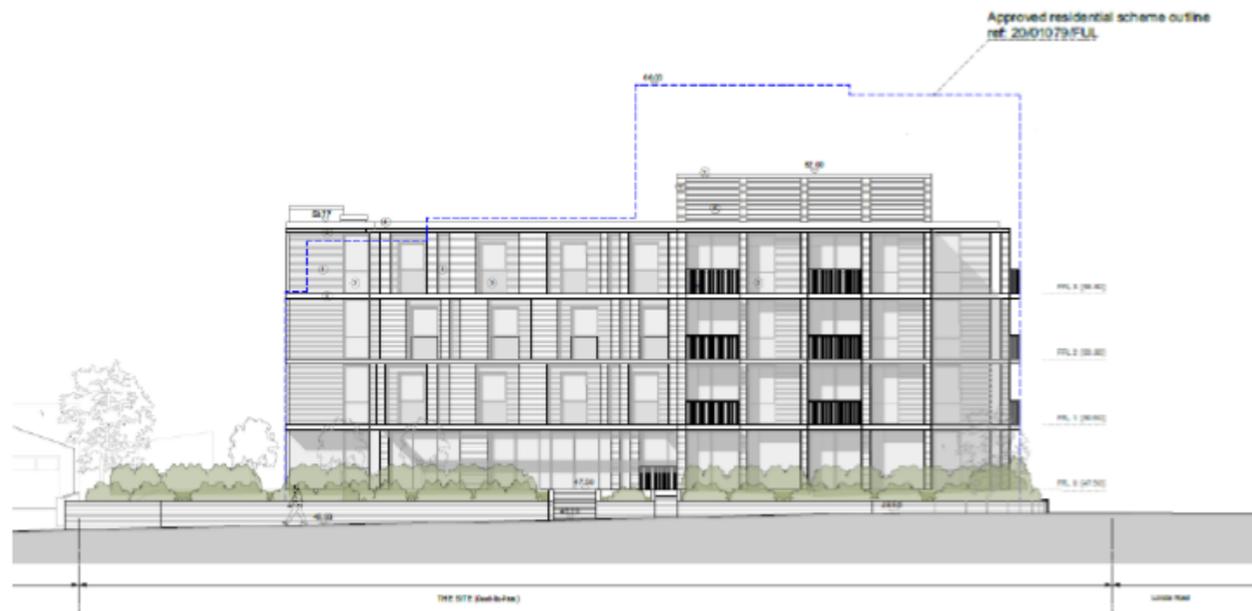
Ewell derelict site gets development go-ahead

9 January 2024



14th December 2023 Epsom and Ewell planning committee granted planning permission for a proposed development on the Ewell-By-Pass / London Road site. The application has come before the committee several times before and now has the go ahead. The plan involves construction of a three to five-storey building plus basement for use as a care home with up to 81 bedrooms and associated communal spaces and services, together with associated car and cycle parking, refuse storage and ancillary works.

Permission was granted subject to an extensive Section 106 Agreement. An agreement where the developer gives money to the Council for related development in the area. The agreement includes various Heads of Terms aimed at enhancing local infrastructure and ensuring compliance with planning policies.



The agreement involve provisions for bus stop infrastructure improvements, push-button controlled pedestrian crossing facilities, and the establishment of a 3-meter wide footway along specified frontages. Additionally, a Travel Plan Auditing fee of £6,150 has been stipulated.

The agreement specifies that if the Section 106 Agreement is not completed by June 14, 2024, the Council can refuse the application, citing non-compliance with key planning policies.

Several conditions have been imposed to regulate the development, including a stipulation that construction must commence within three years of the permission date. Details of external materials, a Construction Transport Management Plan, and a Car Park Management Plan must be submitted and approved before the initiation of construction.

Other conditions address aspects such as the provision of EV charging, pedestrian visibility zones, cycle parking facilities, and a Surface Water Drainage Scheme complying with national standards.

Furthermore, the development must adhere to specific noise control measures, internal noise criteria, and contamination risk management schemes. The planning committee has also mandated the closure of existing accesses, the laying out of parking and turning spaces within the site, and the implementation of measures to safeguard against unexpected contamination during development.

The approved plan emphasizes sustainable development objectives, highway safety, and adherence to national planning policies. The local planning authority has taken a comprehensive approach to ensure the proposed development aligns with visual amenities, character, and safety standards outlined in the Core Strategy (2007) and Development Management Policies (2015).

The developer must comply with these conditions to ensure the project aligns with national planning policies and local community interests.

The councillors voted 5 in favour and 3 against.

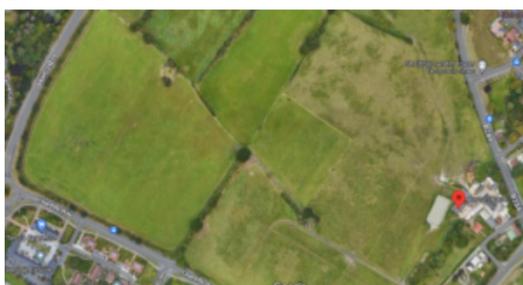
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Care home plan lacked the “wow” factor

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Green Belt off or relaxed a notch?

9 January 2024



Excitement has been stirred by **Michael Gove**'s announcement 19th December that housing targets are advisory not mandatory. This change *may* mean a shift in **Epsom and Ewell**'s Draft Local Plan away from earmarking any Green Belt for housing developments.

The local campaign group **Epsom and Ewell Green Belt** has reacted to the news. In a press release issued today they urge **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**: “Together with the Surrey Branch of the **Campaign to Protect Rural**

England (CPRE), is calling on the Council and its Councillors to instruct the planning officers to republish its Local Plan within the next few weeks, removing all greenbelt sites, reducing the housing target to a rational approximately 3,500 homes for the Plan period, and focusing on developing all available brownfield sites. We have produced a list of the changes that would need to be made to the draft Plan so that it complies with the Government's revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)."

However, accompanying the publication of the revised NPPF Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities Michael Gove said "The new NPPF was not a route to the evasion of responsibilities. Local authorities must provide rigorous evidence justifying their departure from assessed housing needs. They must do everything to identify other lands suitable for development." He added "While the planning inspectorate will respect well-made cases, it will not accept undershooting that is not firmly rooted in environmental or other safeguards. This is about sensitive adjustment in housing targets, not their abandonment."

Related reports:

Green Belt development objections excluded

Public meeting on Local Plan dominated by greenbelters.

Green-belters belted up and beltless

Green-belters seeing red on Local Plan?

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Local Plan costs eat into Council reserves

9 January 2024



An officers' report to the Council advised a further £629,000 is required to progress the Local Plan 2022-2040. The matter was considered by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Strategy and Resources Committee Tuesday 13th December.

The report provided an update on the financial position on advancing the Local Plan toward submission and subsequent adoption, aligning with the timelines outlined in the recently published Local Development Scheme (November 2023). Following a public consultation on the draft plan earlier this year, an extraordinary Council meeting in March 2023 decided to temporarily halt the Local Plan. It was subsequently resumed in October 2023, accompanied by an updated timetable.

The financial crunch, estimated at £629,000, revolves around progressing the plan to Regulation 19 and concluding the Local Plan Examination. To address this, the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee recommended allocating £629,000 from the Corporate Projects Reserve. However, this move comes with significant financial implications, as it would reduce the reserve balance from £2.98 million to £2.35 million. If an additional request to use this reserve, hinted at in reference to a matter concerning the Council's commercial property - which was excluded from public and press scrutiny, is approved, the balance would further decrease to £1.85 million.

The item from which the press and public was excluded concerned drawing half-million pounds of taxpayers' money from the Council's reserves - we quote from the Local Plan item in public view: "Should the separate request to use this reserve at Agenda item 4 also be approved, the reserve balance will further decrease (from £2.35m) to £1.85m." The ground of exclusion was to protect financial information of third parties. Do you think such interests should out-weigh taxpayers' interests in what might justify £1/2 million being taken from reserves? Write to Epsom and Ewell Times.

The Council is facing a projected revenue budget deficit of £1.1m from 2024/25 (as reported to Strategy & Resources Committee in July 2023) and reserves are likely to come under substantial pressure in future years and may fall below the recommended level of £1 million.

The officers' report underscored the importance of maintaining staffing levels and securing external technical support to ensure a robust and timely Local Plan. Any deviation from the Local Development Scheme could amplify costs and resource implications. Despite the financial challenges, the Council was urged to use existing in-house resources wherever possible, given the projected revenue budget deficit.

Cllr **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) queried whether it was necessary to extend officers' contracts to 2026 when the Local Plan is to be submitted in 2025. The Council was advised that the opportunities for legal challenges and so forth

would extend to 2026 and therefore they needed to budget for extending officer employment contracts by two years.

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) vented his frustration thus: “I probably have to support this recommendation, but I should do so with gritted teeth. This local plan just seems to be a bottomless pit. I understand that it has cost one and a half million pounds already, and that’s probably only half the amount that we will waste. In my opinion, it is a waste of £3 million when the whole project of coming up with a local plan and planning applications could be done more simply. This filled me with horror.

In a recent RA meeting, I pointed out that this worked out at £50 for every household in the country. I asked the people there to put their hands up if they were happy for £50, which is, in effect, their money, to be spent on producing this rather than having £50 to spend on food and energy bills. The number of hands that went up, in round numbers, was a round number. The residents, I think, share my view that we are just wasting money.

I realize that we have to meet a legal obligation, and I would certainly never advocate that the council breaks the law. But I think we should point out that this is being imposed on us by central government. They provide us with no grant at all, apart from perhaps a few specific pet projects of their own. While we have to carry on with the local plan, we should make it clear that we do so reluctantly, only because the law forces us to do so, and that we should make clear to our residents that central government is the villain in this pantomime.

The present government is about to announce a new planning policy. If we have a general election next year with a Labour government, they have said that they will just ride roughshod over local authorities. I shall support the motion, and I shall do so with great reluctance.”

Following these two contributions from the Chamber the committee proceeded to unanimously accept the recommendation to draw £629,000 from reserves to fund the ongoing Local Plan process.

The contribution to the prolongation and additional cost of the Local Plan process arising from the unpopularity of the original draft’s proposals to develop Green Belt was not mentioned by any Councillor.

Related reports:

[Local Plan to move forward after passionate debate](#)

[Local Plan \(2022-2040\) Un-Pause Recommended](#)

[Cllr Persand intervenes ahead of Local Plan debate](#)

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Anchored in reason on local housing need?

9 January 2024



The Draft Local Plan lacks a proper negotiating position on future house building numbers in the Borough of Epsom and Ewell. So said an unnamed member of the public who addressed last week’s Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee.

Let Epsom and Ewell Times know your view. Is he right or wrong? Here is his speech in full:

“Good evening, everyone. The first thing they teach you about negotiations at business school is the power of anchoring. Government has deployed this tactic very successfully. Government’s standard method results in a target of 10,368 new dwellings over the Local Plan period. Let’s be clear: this target is government’s negotiation anchor. It is not our borough’s actual housing need; it is simply designed to pressure you into setting a high housing target.

You might not realize that you are in a negotiation, but you are. Although the draft Local Plan recognizes that government’s target is unachievable, it has still succeeded in anchoring council’s thinking throughout the Local Plan. First, you note that your 3,700 from brownfield sites only meet 36% of government’s anchor. Then you use that fact to declare exceptional circumstances. Afterward, you set your own housing target at just over half of government’s anchor. That is the classic response of an inexperienced negotiator.

What the draft Local Plan did not discuss was our actual need for new dwellings. Strategic plans should always be based on the best available information, and yet the draft Local Plan did not even mention our actual need for new housing. It is very important for the council to prominently and clearly explain within the Local Plan why government’s anchor of 10,368 is flawed and why our actual housing need is for just 2,664 new dwellings. By doing this, you will demolish government’s anchor and replace it with the council’s own anchor. It is absolutely critical to anchor everyone’s thinking to the real needs of our borough.

The figure of 2,664 new dwellings is obtained by making just two changes to the standard method: firstly, replacing the outdated 2014 household projections with the more up-to-date 2018 data, and secondly, removing the flawed 40% affordability uplift. The theory behind this uplift is that by flooding the market with new homes, you will drive prices down. This theory is flawed for two reasons: firstly, house builders engage in land banking; they hold back most of their consented land and drip-feed new houses onto the market at a rate that matches demand and maintains prices. Secondly, the affordability uplift assumes that Epsom is a separate market for housing—it is not. If the Competition and Markets Authority were to look at this, the first thing they would do would be to define the relevant markets. They would note the existence of an unbroken chain of substitution across the whole Greater London Commuter Zone and conclude that Epsom just forms a very small part of a very large market. Flooding with new homes will not reduce house prices in the borough due to any supply-demand imbalance. Any reduction in local house prices will be as a result of the borough becoming a less serene and less attractive place to live.

According to paragraph 1.61 of the draft Local Plan, the balance between protecting our environment and enabling development is at the centre of our spatial strategy. At present, the Local Plan is unbalanced. You are planning to build more than twice the number of new dwellings that we actually need by sacrificing some of our best-performing Greenfield Green Belt sites.”

Related reports:

Epsom Town Centre Masterplan Unveiled

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More affordable housing now. Cllr Kate Chinn

MP's housing solution for Epsom and Ewell

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Epsom Town Centre Masterplan Unveiled

9 January 2024



Wednesday 22nd November the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council approved a new iteration of a draft master plan for Epsom's town centre to go out for public consultation. The consultation will open tomorrow and end on 22nd December.

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) wanted to know what questions would be posed in the online consultation. This was not answered. Nevertheless, the decision of the committee to approve a consultation was unanimous. As County Cllr **Eber Kington** told Epsom and Ewell Times, local government crafted online questionnaires may themselves benefit from a degree of prior consultation. See his opinion piece on the Surrey budget [HERE](#)

The Chair of the LPPC Cllr. **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) clarified that committee members will be sent the questions for comment before the consultation goes live.

A fuller report on the meeting will be published in the coming days.

A public consultation on the draft Epsom Town Centre Masterplan is a significant move toward shaping the future of Epsom. The document will be evidence that informs the development of the Borough wide Epsom and Ewell Local Plan.

Background

Commissioned in May 2022, the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan, written by David Lock Associates (DLA), serves a dual purpose: contributing to the local plan and guiding the assessment of pertinent planning applications. A hybrid public consultation in Summer 2022 garnered nearly 2,000 responses.

Addressing Inconsistencies

Responses highlighted both the interests and inconsistencies in residents' views on the town centre. The Masterplan seeks to address these disparities to create an ambitious yet practical framework for managing change in the Local Plan period.

Informing Local Plan

The Masterplan's early work influenced the town centre draft site allocations in the Draft Epsom and Ewell Local Plan (2022-2040), which underwent consultation in early 2023. Further engagement with councillors, landowners, and leaseholders occurred in Summer 2023, providing additional insights.

Key Objectives and Principles

The Draft Town Centre Masterplan lays out comprehensive guiding principles, focusing on key sites like the Ashley Centre/Global House and others including Hook Road car park and Dullshot House. It addresses placemaking objectives, environmental enhancements, travel improvements, and principles for the retention, enhancement, or repair of non-development areas.

Masterplan Sections

The document is divided into six sections, covering the Introduction and Vision, Masterplan Evolution, Character Areas Frameworks, Public Realm and Sustainable Transport, Opportunity Sites, and Appendices. Each section provides a detailed view of the town's envisioned evolution.

Public Input Crucial

The public is urged to review the options for each opportunity site and the wider Masterplan document, expressing their thoughts before the finalization. The Masterplan, while not a statutory planning document, will be a key consideration in decision-making processes for the Local Plan and the Epsom and Ewell Local Cycling Walking Investment Plan.

Respondents can view the draft Masterplan and give their views via an online questionnaire at <https://epsom-ewell.inconsult.uk/ETCMP/>. Paper copies of the draft Masterplan are also available on request by emailing localplan@epsom-ewell.gov.uk, or viewable in the borough's libraries for the duration of the consultation. Feedback can also be sent in by email to localplan@epsom-ewell.gov.uk, or by post to Epsom Town Centre Masterplan, Planning Policy, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, KT18 5BY.

Future Steps

Following public consultation, feedback will be considered by DLA and council officers, contributing to the finalization of the Masterplan. Once adopted, the document will form an integral part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, carrying substantial weight in decision-making for Epsom Town Centre planning applications.

Related reports:

Mind the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan!

The cost of planning

£225,000 to plan the unplanned

The Plot in the thick of planning options

9 January 2024



At a meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Strategy and Resources Committee held on 13th July it was decided that various Council owned "brownfield" sites would not be offered up for development for housing in the long-awaited Local Plan. This followed a note from the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee of 15th June that "Officers have written to the Council in its capacity as landowner to check the availability of additional sites for promotion through the call for sites process". I.e., promotion in the Local Plan for housing development.

Most of the Council portfolio on the Kiln Lane and Longmead industrial, retail and commercial areas are held on long-leases. Plot 8, in the far north-east corner of Kiln Lane was held by Wilsons, the car sale emporium, on a 10 year lease that expired in 2019. This was one plot, bordered by housing to the east, that could potentially ease pressure on other land, including green-belt, to deliver on new housing targets. Presently, it is an open area used for storing motor vehicles.

It is understood that with the lease having expired the Council could regain possession upon a redevelopment being planned. However, at the meeting of the same committee held on 21st September it was decided to authorise the grant of a new lease. Details of the new lease were excluded from public and press view at the meeting to protect the privacy of financial and commercial information of a third party, presumably Wilsons.

The length of the lease has not been disclosed but will in due course be available to public view at HM Land Registry.

Cllr **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) told Epsom and Ewell Times "I voted in favour of extending the lease, as the business wished to continue and it provides much needed income for the council. The details of the lease are part of a

restricted document as is normal in these cases. However it was a well thought out contract that does not stop the local plan work. It maybe several years before both the local plan is complete and a developer comes forward with an alternative plan for plot 8.”

Councillor **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) said: “Labour knows that there is a need to build homes, but also to keep people in jobs. What the council needs is a fully thought through local plan that resolves competing requirements for land. Unfortunately the hopelessly divided Residents Association administration hasn’t been able to achieve this. It is also important to maintain the council’s income when cash for vital services is stretched.”

Epsom Civic Society maintains a watchful citizen’s eye on planning matters and its Chair, **Margaret Hollins** told Epsom and Ewell Times “Epsom Civic Society supports retention and encouragement of strategic employment sites which are significant drivers of the local economy. No information is publicly available about the terms and duration of the lease so it is difficult to comment further.

“The Society considers that any attempts to cram residential dwellings along with industrial and commercial activities need to be avoided. Mixed residential and employment use could only be achieved through a carefully conceived regeneration strategy which would need to ensure proper separation between any residential areas and noise/disturbance/air pollution issues that can often occur with the type of distribution/warehousing activities prevalent on the existing industrial estates.”

A spokesperson for the Council responded: “On 13 July 2023, Strategy & Resources Committee considered the land availability of several Council owned sites including the Longmead and Kiln Lane Industrial Sites. The decision was taken not to include the industrial sites and they remain part of the Council’s commercial property portfolio. We are unable to provide any further comment at this time as this relates to confidential commercial matters.”

Do you have a view? Feel free to write to Epsom and Ewell Times.

Flooding concerns defer Church St care home plan

9 January 2024



9th November Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Planning Committee considered once more the plan to build a care home on the sites of the Church Street police and ambulance stations.

Concerns raised by neighbouring land owners about increased risks posed by the development to ground-water flooding to their properties triggered a deferral of the application.

Cllr Neil Dallen (RA Town) proposed the deferment for the applicants to provide a more detailed assessment of flood risk from a “recognized authority”.

Concerns were also expressed about the safety of refuse and re-cycling vehicles entrance and exit from the development.

There was discussion about whether the application could be approved with the imposition of conditions to address these concerns but ultimately no final decision was reached.

Related reports:

[Epsom care home plans](#)

[Two Epsom brownfield developments?](#)

Care home plan lacked the “wow” factor

9 January 2024



9th November Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Planning Committee debated the proposal for a care home on the site of the now demolished Organ and Dragon pub on the junction of London Road and the Ewell-By-Pass. A site that has been a sore-sight for many years.

Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) described the design as "bad" and the car parking provision as "ridiculous". She said "Coming into Epsom or out of Epsom, it really should be something people should go by and think "Wow that's lovely."".

The officer's report was quoted in the meeting: "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 previous) application. There is therefore very little indication of what type of care will be delivered on Site, whether the care home would 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."

Councillors stated more information was needed as to the exact type of care the applicant intended to provide. Then the committee could determine whether the car parking provision in the application was adequate. Presently, it was assumed that 25 spaces would not be sufficient given the site's proximity to one of the busiest junctions in the Borough with little to no street parking available.

After a lengthy debate and an initial refusal being voted the matter was deferred to a later meeting.

Related reports:

Epsom care home plans

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

Image - The former Organ Inn alongside the care home design.

Epsom care home plans

9 January 2024



Plans for a care home on the site of a former police station could finally be decided next week.

An application for an 86-bed care home for people with dementia in Church Street should have been decided at a cancelled planning meeting in April.

Now Epsom and Ewell's planning committee is set to make a decision on Thursday, November 9.

Councillors will also decide whether or not to approve an application for another care home, on a site where Lidl failed in their bid to build a new store.

The Church Street plans, with the Church Street Conservation Area wrapping around the south and west ends of the site, have been scaled back from the previously submitted 96-bed application.

An officers' report shows the building height has been reduced by one storey, after concerns were raised by planners about the impact it could have on the conservation area, designated heritage assets and trees on the site.

The conservation area includes contains 20 listed buildings including the grade II* St Martin's Church, The Cedars and Ebbisham House.

With 31 car parking spaces in total, the application would not meet Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's parking requirements.

But officers described the site as being in a "highly sustainable location" close to public transport and with the possibility of parking in nearby public car parks.

They have recommended councillors approve the application.

The applicant's design and access statement said the developments objective, among others, were to: "Create a facility of excellence in the care and support of local people living with residential, nursing, dementia and respite care needs."

The future of the site of the former Organ and Dragon pub, in London Road, Ewell, will also be debated at the meeting.

The now-empty site has two approved planning applications on it, one for a development of 45 flats and one, approved in October 2022 for a 70-bed care home.

Also recommended for approval, the latest application is for a larger 81-bed care home, with an additional storey having been added to the plans, making it five storeys at its highest.

Plans also include car and cycle parking, an ambulance and deliveries bay, a widened pavement and a new pedestrian crossing at the busy junction of London Road and Ewell Road.

The layout of the site is "virtually the same" as the previously approved applications, according to an officers' report.

The report said that since the previous scheme was approved, other providers had come forward expressing interest in

additional beds which removed previous limitations under plans for a single care home provider.

When the previous application was approved, councillors raised concerns that the applicant did not have experience running care homes, though this is not a requirement when considering a planning application.

Image: Plans for the former Epsom police station and ambulance station site in Church Street, from Design and Access statement. Credit: Hunters

Related Reports:

Two Epsom brownfield developments?

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

Famous 16th Century Surrey pub saved, for now?

9 January 2024



A 16th century pub in the heart of the **Surrey Hills** has been saved from developers after plans to convert one of the last remaining Abinger watering holes into houses, holiday-let pods, and a new bar area were thrown out.

Mole Valley Borough Council's planning committee met on Wednesday, November 1 to hear proposals from developers, **JPW Osprey**, to turn the Volunteer pub in Sutton Abinger, near Dorking into self-catered holiday lets.

The plans were voted down eight to six as councillors sided with resident groups, formed to save the pub, as well as **Abinger Parish Council** which had lodged formal objections.

Addressing the meeting was **Paul Clever** who was part of a community group that had raised £600,000 in a failed bid to purchase the pub and save it. He said: "The aim of this application is to close the Volunteer, replace it with an unviable alternative which gets through planning. The new entity will last as long as needed to prove that it is not viable and the developer will then sell the asset for multiples of what it cost."

He added: "The Volunteer is being closed and the new layout and proposed service will ensure the new venture in the new area will fail. The planning application and the planning report refer to the pub being unviable and that is simply not true. The Volunteer Community Group has proof of this for the year preceding the sale, during the worst trading conditions ever for publicans.

"The Volunteer is viable and very precious to its community, known far beyond the boundaries of Surrey. It should not be allowed to go the way of so many other pubs near and far, especially when there are so many people willing and able to make it work as a public house and community facility."

The pub sits on the western side of Water Lane within the hamlet of Sutton Abinger, close to the boundary with Guildford. The land is designated Metropolitan Green Belt, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Area of Great Landscape Value.

The surroundings, the officer report said, "lend the pub an engaging verdant setting and areas of the garden afford views over rolling wooded countryside to the south taking in attractive historic properties, some of which are listed."

The Volunteer had been owned and operated by the Dorset-based brewery, Hall and Woodhouse, until 2022 when it closed and sold to the applicant.

In November 2022 the pub was listed as an Asset of Community Value having been nominated by the Abinger Community Pub Group as a building that furthers the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community.

Speaking on behalf of the the application was **Simon Best** who told the meeting it was the best way of bringing the pub back in use. He said: "Change is not always a bad thing and it is clear from previous failures that diversification is needed to ensure the Volunteer can run as a viable entity. Holiday lets will support and enable the pub to continue."

Councillor **Margaret Cooksey**, who moved that the plans be rejected said: "If they kept the public house building as is and used what is going to be the extension as accommodation that would have made much more sense. They have got it the wrong way round. It would have been better a different way round and hope they take note of that and come back with a better proposal next time round."

She added: "They've got it horribly wrong".

Image: The Volunteer Pub (Mark Davison)

Local Plan to move forward after passionate debate

9 January 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors voted to “un-pause” work on a new Local Plan for the district at an extraordinary meeting held in the Town Hall chamber on Tuesday 24th October.

Introducing the motion to un-pause **Cllr Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) said “what is brought before you this evening is a recommendation from Licensing Planning Policy Committee members to unpause the local plan immediately to restart work on the spatial strategy, site selection, and policy development. If this recommendation is supported tonight, workshop sessions will be set up with all members to discuss the results from the call for sites that finished at the end of July. Updates on what sites have come forward and, more importantly, what sites did not come forward will be shared. Discussion and debate based on up-to-date data and evidence with all members, not just those on the LPPC, on which sites would or could be included in our next version of the local plan.”

Cllr **Christine Howells** (RA Nonsuch) proposed a lengthy amendment that opened with the following wording:

“The Council is asked to note the work that has been undertaken in line with the decision by the full Council on the 22nd March 2023 to pause the local plan, to note that while the current version of the national planning policy framework (NPPF) requires the council to start with the standard method housing number, the NPPF also allows for a lower number to be used if that starting point is unachievable in light of local Green Belt, flooding, or other specific constraints.

To note that the current draft local plan has already set a precedent by using a much lower target. However, this target was only achieved under proposals to build on high-scoring Green Belt land and sites subject to flooding. The available evidence base clearly demonstrates constraint-trying factors and provides strong reasons for excluding these sites from housing development.”

In summary the amendment focused on resuming the local planning process with a set of guiding principles that emphasize sustainable development, housing affordability, and the efficient use of available land resources.

Cllr Howells said “Mr. Mayor, I have brought the motion before you today as I am passionate in my belief of the need to protect and preserve this Borough’s Green Belt land for the benefit and enjoyment of our current population and to secure a heritage for future generations. But most importantly, I believe I’m speaking on behalf of so many of our residents who are equally passionate to preserve our unique Borough and who have made their voices heard in so many ways.”

“Seven months ago, councillors voted with an overwhelming majority to pause the draft local plan following the huge public outcry at the proposed use of green belt land identified for development. Nothing has changed in the interim period to make it any more acceptable now than it was then. However, we can’t afford to wait for the government to change direction. We must unpause and set our own conditions. But it remains vital that we continue to safeguard our green belt.”

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) spoke on the amendment “The housing target should be achievable solely through the use of brownfield and previously developed Green Belt land with a determined focus on the art of the possible. Brownfield sites and previously developed sites are the answer, and this includes maximizing council-owned land. I have been calling on this council for years to get advice from large-scale developers as to what can be done to address the alleged barriers put forward by the council to using brownfield sites and, in particular, council-owned land, and as yet, they have resolutely refused to do so. They must do so as a matter of urgency.”

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) called out the amendment: “ I must put on record this is not a cross-party motion, although it appears to have some merit. Labour councillors cannot support it as it’s so disingenuously drafted as to constitute a NIMBY charter. I’ve attended the same briefings as other councillors, seen the same lobbying from those behind this motion, and I know its main purpose is to minimize the number of homes built in the borough by citing excuse after excuse for not building to tie officers’ hands while purporting not to do so. It’s not a cunning plan; it’s actually very transparent. Labour is in favour of using brownfield sites, not in favor of uncontrolled and unnecessary building on the borough’s Green Belt, but we are strongly in favor of building the homes that residents need. This motion is designed to prevent that.”

“Councillor **Persand** (Con. Horton) is a strong supporter of the motion, writing in the **Epsom and Ewell Times**. He correctly pointed out that what are called housing targets are, in fact, “guidelines which provide a starting point for considering local needs.” He then wrote, “If Worthing Council can gain approval from the government’s planning inspector when they met only 25% of their target, why can’t Epsom and Ewell achieve a similar result?”

“The motion puts forward a list of so-called local constraints, exceptionalism, providing a list of reasons not to build homes for our residents. Then there’s just sloppy language dressed up as wishful thinking..”

“Finally, does anyone think that promising significant levels of proposed housing should be truly affordable to local workers has any meaning? They’re just adjectives that mean different things to different people, which will melt away at the first sign of opposition from developers.”

Cllr **Persand** spoke in favour of the motion: “This amendment is an opportunity, an opportunity for us to finally do the right thing for residents. We, as councillors, need to be strong in supporting this amendment. Point 2.1 of the officer report says officers seek confirmation for members as to what to do next. It is our role to guide policy, so let’s do that. It is important that we don’t go full circle again with this local plan and that we do learn from our mistakes. These guiding principles will ensure that we are back on the right path, delivering for residents and our community. We need a local plan that is aspirational but deliverable. This amendment lets us do that.”

Cllr **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) said “ It is clear that if we do not unpause a local plan, there are two serious consequences: developers will run with their plans on appeal, and we’ll miss the 2025 deadline and have to start from scratch, wasting money and effort. This would leave us with no control over location, density, nor social housing provision in Epsom. We are spending £1.5 million on temporary housing, and we cannot afford to let this continue. We had good feedback from residents during the consultation, and we must take their views into account, specifically with the use of the brownfield sites and the retention of the green belt.”

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) weighed in: “I think I have to start by rebutting what Labour colleagues have said. The reason that we have problems in accommodating people is because of Labour policy, not current policy. No, you may laugh; it was the Rent Act of 1977 under Harold Wilson....All over the country, lodgers were evicted. One of them was one of my uncles;... It was absolutely a dreadful piece of legislation. Perhaps our Labour friends haven’t actually listened to what was said at the Labour conference, which was only about a week or two ago, where Keir Starmer actually said, and I commend him for his honesty, that they don’t intend taking any notice of local authorities.”

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) “ I think if we adopted this amendment, I cannot see a path that gets us to a sound local plan. What was before us tonight is the decision whether we want to unpause this local plan to allow LPPC and officers to digest the results of the consultation and take the necessary measures from that.”

Cllr **Liz Frost** (RA Woodcote and Langley) also spoke against the amendment: “.. if it were to be approved, we are likely to tie the officers up in knots.”

The amendment was defeated by 14 votes to 12 with 3 abstentions.

The Council then proceeded to debate the main motion to un-pause the work on the Local Plan (as reported in Tuesday’s Epsom and Ewell Times). The motion was approved by 21 votes for the motion and eight abstentions from the motion. There were no votes against the motion.

Related reports:

Local Plan (2022-2040) Un-Pause Recommended

Cllr Persand intervenes ahead of Local Plan debate

Drafting of Epsom and Ewell Local Plan “unpausing”?

Motion to pause Local Plan process

Local Plan (2022-2040) Un-Pause Recommended

9 January 2024



Ahead of tonight’s Extraordinary Council Meeting to be held at The Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom at 7.30pm the Epsom and Ewell Times summarises the Report submitted to Councillors by the Head of the Council’s Development Department.

In an effort to ensure the future development and planning of their locality aligns with contemporary standards and requirements, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council initiated a public consultation on the Draft Local Plan (2022-2040) from

February 1, 2023, to March 19, 2023. This process aimed to gather input from the community, enabling the council to make informed decisions regarding their local development strategy.

Following the conclusion of the consultation, the council convened an extraordinary meeting on March 22, 2023. During this meeting, the council opted to halt the Local Plan temporarily to undertake specific tasks.

Fast forward to September 24, 2023, and the Licencing and Planning Policy Committee has recommended to the Full Council that it is time to revive the Local Plan. The suggestion to un-pause the Local Plan underscores the importance of keeping the plan up to date and conforming to national planning policy.

An officer's report to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council puts forward the following recommendations:

1. Un-pause the Local Plan immediately.
2. Acknowledge the work done since the pause decision in March 2023.

The rationale behind this proposal is multifaceted. The primary reason is a legal obligation to review the Local Plan every five years. The current development plan in Epsom and Ewell includes documents that date back more than five years, such as the Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy (2007) and Plan E (2011). These documents predate significant national policy changes in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance. The absence of an updated Local Plan poses risks to the council, including the potential loss of a 5-year housing land supply and implications related to the Housing Delivery Test and sustainable development.

Delays to the Local Plan timetable could also jeopardize the transitional arrangements that may be introduced through a revised National Planning Policy Framework. Furthermore, the government has reiterated the need for Local Plans prepared under the current system to be submitted for examination by June 30, 2025, and adopted by December 31, 2026. The actualization of these dates hinges on the Royal Assent of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, as well as parliamentary approval of related regulations. Thus, it is prudent to continue Local Plan development to meet these timeframes.

The existing Epsom and Ewell Development Plan consists of three documents that were locally produced. Two of these documents were adopted before the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, which have been subject to revisions since their inception. Local Plans must adhere to national planning policy, necessitating an update to bring them into conformity.

The council initiated a consultation on the Draft Epsom and Ewell Local Plan (2022-2040) between February 1 and March 19, 2023. This Draft Local Plan outlined a growth strategy for the borough, intending to provide a minimum of 5,400 homes over the plan period. The strategy had to balance housing provision with environmental and policy constraints such as land designated for special purposes, nature reserves, and the Green Belt.

During this consultation, the council received feedback from 1,736 individuals and organizations, including residents, statutory consultees, and other stakeholders. It's essential to note that all responses have been made available for public viewing, with any inappropriate comments appropriately redacted.

A Consultation Statement will be released alongside the next version of the Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) to summarize the main issues raised and how they've been considered.

The Council Motion, passed on March 22, 2023, mandated the Local Plan's pause for specific tasks, including further work on brownfield sites, consideration of alternatives that exclude green belt sites, analysis of future housing needs based on 2018 data, and a clearer understanding of the government's intentions regarding green belt protections and housing targets.

The selected workstreams under the Council Motion have been completed, including the call for sites process and the publication of responses to the Draft Local Plan. Thirteen new sites were submitted during this process. However, the decision to un-pause the Local Plan is crucial for further progress, such as revising the Local Plan timetable and site selection, taking into account the latest information.

The Council Motion imposed restrictions on what work could be undertaken in preparing the Local Plan, making it necessary to formally un-pause the plan for further progression. Un-pausing the Local Plan will lead to the production of a revised timetable and the advancement of other critical pieces of evidence. Work on site selection will also commence, considering the latest information on land availability.

"It's important to understand that un-pausing the Local Plan doesn't mean the Proposed Submission version of the plan will remain unchanged. Additional sites have been proposed through the call for sites process, and the Proposed Submission Local Plan will undergo public consultation."

However, it has also been reported to Councillors that there are limited actively promoted sites for development within the Longmead and Kiln Lane areas. The existing employment sites are well-occupied and support various businesses, indicating a need for additional land to accommodate more employment space, including uses suitable for an industrial estate. The council has already invested significant resources in exploring opportunities for industrial estate redevelopment.

Further investigation is deemed reasonable only if a substantial portion of land becomes available through the call for sites process. It is suggested that the council be formally approached to consider making its land available for redevelopment. Obtaining a formal response through the call for sites process would provide essential evidence to inform future decisions regarding the location of development in the Local Plan.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is in progress, and if implemented, it will significantly alter how Local Plans are produced. This shift may lead to more streamlined Local Plans and a focus on spatial aspects over detailed development

management policies. Transitional arrangements will apply, and the government has set a deadline of June 30, 2025, for the submission of Local Plans prepared under the current system.

In conclusion, this report recommends un-pausing the Local Plan to ensure it aligns with national planning policy and complies with legal requirements. Reviving the Local Plan is essential to the future development and planning of Epsom and Ewell Borough.

Drafting of Epsom and Ewell Local Plan “unpausing”?

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Cllr McCormick’s own answers on Local Plan

Public meeting on Local Plan dominated by greenbelters.

Housing need or desire?

Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?

Cllr Persand intervenes ahead of Local Plan debate

9 January 2024



Opinion from Councillor **Kieran Persand** (Conservative Horton Ward) on the Local Plan business.

Tonight, at 7:30pm, your Epsom & Ewell Borough Councillors will be meeting to decide on whether or not to unpause the Local Plan.

However, this meeting holds greater significance than just the unpausing. It is about the future of our community, and whether we want to protect what makes our borough unique, both for us now and for future generations.

Being born and raised in Epsom and Ewell, I have cherished memories in every corner of the borough. Whether that is playing football at Gibraltar Recreation Ground in Ewell on a cold Sunday morning; walking our dog on a sunny Wednesday afternoon on Hook Road Arena; or my parents buying me an ice cream as a treat on the Downs. Our green spaces and their protection are vital for our community.

And so, it saddens me that since the meeting to pause on 22 nd March, there has been no change, nor even a commitment to change from the Council on the direction of the Local Plan. As it stands, there is still an inclusion of over 50 hectares of greenfield, Greenbelt land.

We are probably in a worse position than we were seven months ago as fewer sites have come forward than anticipated in the call for sites process.

It is clear what residents want and need. You made your voices heard. Over 11,000 of you signed a petition demanding for the removal of Greenbelt land from the Local Plan. It is a shame that you haven’t been properly listened to. Since being elected in May, I’ve been determined to change that and build on the work of Cllr Bernie Muir and Chris Grayling MP.

You may have heard people say that it is because of the Government that the Council must build on Greenbelt land, and that there isn’t a choice. This is untrue. There is no mandatory housing target, there are only guidelines which provide a starting point for considering local needs. It’s clearly stated in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that it is not a requirement to build on Greenbelt land in order to meet specific housing levels.

It is a misguided and hopefully short-lived choice, that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have taken to propose building on Greenbelt land. If Worthing Council can gain approval from the government’s Planning Inspector when they met only 25% of their target, why can’t Epsom and Ewell achieve a similar result? We already have ample evidence to support us in planning for a realistic and achievable target of 3,800 homes, including truly affordable homes for those in greatest needs, which can be achieved solely using brownfield land. This is the direction we should take.

The current NPPF guidance gives us the ability to remove Greenbelt land. This is stated in Para. 11. We don’t have to wait for any changes to the Framework, we can be proactive now.

There is a need for housing in Epsom and Ewell but nothing in the current Local Plan addresses that need. What is needed is truly affordable housing for key workers and young people, and the possibility of housing stock for local Housing Associations to provide for those who cannot otherwise reach the first rung of the housing ladder. ‘Affordable homes’ are not £500,000 -£1m properties, as these will never be affordable for the average worker.

We need a plan that maximises our current urban brownfield space, not a plan that wants to build in fields and woodland,

in critical drainage areas, or areas in which there is insufficient infrastructure. We need a plan that is creative and forward-thinking.

At the Full Council meeting on 25th July, I submitted a motion, seconded by Cllr Muir, for the removal of Greenbelt land from the Local Plan and the protection of Greenbelt boundaries. However, this was rejected by the Council, with no adequate reasoning provided, and so didn't go in front of Councillors to debate.

After that, I quickly realised that for real change to happen with the Local Plan, we all needed to work together. And so, myself and a group of like-minded Councillors from across the political spectrum have been working collaboratively together with the intent to set the Local Plan on the right course. It's been incredible and reaffirms what local politics should be about - doing the best for residents.

We have now submitted an amendment for the meeting today, calling for the removal of Greenbelt land; protect the existing Greenbelt boundaries; and for there to be commitments to have truly affordable housing.

I want residents to remember - if Councillors do vote this amendment down. They are effectively voting against the protection of our greenbelt land; they are voting against having truly affordable homes for people who need them; they are voting against protecting the character of our unique area; and they are voting against the people they serve.

If the Local Plan is to be unpaused, there needs to be guiding principles that provide clear direction for the Local Plan over the coming months, we cannot be in a position where nothing has changed. This would be a waste of resources and taxpayer money.

So, I urge all my colleagues in the Council chamber tonight, whether Residents' Association, Liberal Democrats, or Labour, to work proactively and collaboratively together to realign the Local Plan to address the needs and concerns of residents and provide the strong direction you deserve by voting for the proposed amendment.

Noble housing intentions?

9 January 2024



Crest Nicholson and the Vistry Group have partnered for a "sustainable development" initiative near Noble Park in Epsom. They plan to submit a comprehensive planning application to **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** this Autumn. The proposal aims to construct around 90 new homes, with 40% allocated as affordable housing.

The project includes the creation of communal open spaces and green areas, featuring a community orchard and a children's play area. Noble Park allotments will remain untouched, highlighting a "commitment to preserving community assets". Additionally, plans include dedicated private parking facilities for allotment holders.

The developers have invited the local community to participate in shaping this initiative by providing input and ideas. Residents can offer feedback or seek more information through the 'Feedback and Contact' tab on the following unattributed website. <http://nobleparkconsultation.com/>

The project is located on 5.67 hectares of land to the east of the existing Noble Park development, at the intersection of West Park Road and Horton Lane, with vehicular access from West Park Road. While specific timelines depend on the planning process, construction may begin in 2025, contributing to family housing and affordable homes in the area. This initiative "aims to address housing shortages and bring positive change to the community".

Epsom and Ewell Times can confirm that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will meet at 7.30pm on 24th October, to decide whether to "un-pause" progress on the Local Plan. The Plan that will establish the planning policy framework for where and how many houses may be built in the Borough in the future.

Related reports:

Drafting of Epsom and Ewell Local Plan "unpausing"?

Motion to pause Local Plan process

The Plan to improve Planning pays off

9 January 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have received official notification from the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Rachel Maclean MP, that their planning department is no longer under review for designation.

In April 2023 the council, along with nine other local authorities, received a letter from **Michael Gove** MP, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which stated that due to the performance levels of the council on planning applications during October 2020 and September 2022, designating the council was under consideration.

See **Epsom and Ewell Times** report of 15th May 2023 Epsom and Ewell planning improving after Government threat?

The council had been fully aware of this historic issue relating to performance over that period, which was a result of Covid and capacity-related issues. Having acknowledged the issues, the council took swift decisive action to address them, securing additional staffing resourcing within the department as well as investing in IT and improved ways of working.

As a result of the council's actions, service levels and performance on planning applications improved rapidly and significantly. Since early 2022, the council has continued to determine at least 90% of planning applications within the statutory timescale target, compared to the government threshold of 70%:

- Apr-Jun 2022 - 95%
- Jul-Sep 2022 - 91%
- Oct-Dec 2022 - 95%
- Jan-Mar 2023 - 96%
- Apr-Jun 2023 - 95%.
- Jul-Sept 2023 - 90%

Jackie King, Chief Executive of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said:

“We are very pleased that the Secretary of State has recognised the issues the council faced were historic and temporary in nature, and that the council has worked very hard to take significant proactive steps to address and improve them, resulting in our Planning Department far exceeding national targets over the past five consecutive quarters. We have a strong and stable team and systems in place and are very confident that we will continue to provide a high level of service, over and above what is expected, into the future.”

Drafting of Epsom and Ewell Local Plan “unpausing”?

9 January 2024



Tuesday 26th September Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Licensing and Planning Policy Committee met to decide whether to recommend to the Full Council to restart work on the submission of a new Local Plan for the Borough. The motion to do so was carried after a lengthy debate.

Chairing the committee Councillor **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) stated that following the Full Council decision of 22nd March to pause the work on the Local Plan if “unpaused” its submission for approval by the Government could be expected in May 2025.

A member of the public, who was not identified, opened the debate with the following detailed appraisal: “I am pleased to see from the 15th of June meeting of this committee’s agenda.... that you have now calculated the actual need for new dwellings. When you replace the out-of-date 2014 household projections with the more recent 2018 projections and exclude the flawed affordability uplift, this results in a much more realistic figure of 2664 new dwellings over the plan period.

“To comply with the current version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), you still need to begin with the standard method number of 10,368. However, it can be easily demonstrated that this number is unachievable in light of local constraints. The point where that version of the Local Plan went so horribly wrong was in selecting an arbitrary target of 5,400 new dwellings and rushing into sacrificing Greenfield and Greenbelt sites to bridge the gap between the identified 3,700 Brownfield sites and the council’s arbitrary target.

“If the council were to set a new dwelling target of 3,700 plus this 150 (West Park site), then that would result in a target that is 45% above the actual need for new dwellings over the plan period.

“If the council agrees to a target of 3,850 new dwellings with no development on Greenfield or Greenbelt sites, then I am confident that it will be possible to develop a Local Plan that is acceptable to local residents. Furthermore, the council would have a compelling rationale for why a target of 10,368 is not achievable given local constraints and that its proposed target is 45% more than the actual local need.

“If the planning inspector subsequently insists on developing some Greenfield or Greenbelt sites, then he or central government will be blamed by local residents rather than Epsom and Ewell Borough Council.”

Cllr **Muir** (Conservative Horton) a non-member of the committee was given three minutes to make a statement and said: “It is critical when deciding whether or not to unpause the local plan drafting process ... that council has clarity over the objectives for the next draft and the key changes required to achieve those objectives. So, what do we need to decide before unpasing?”

“The most controversial of the recommendations put forward in ...draft local plan was the proposal to build on the borough’s protected Greenbelt Land. Using the council’s figures, 84% of those who used the questionnaire to reply to the consultation were opposed to building on our protected Green Belt. ...The large majority [of] elected councillors, stood in May’s local elections on a platform of protecting the green belt. We are morally obliged to protect this land and the environment for future generations.

“How many houses do we need to build in Epsom? Epsom is already the most densely populated borough in the county. There has been discussion about the need to meet the government target calculated using the standard method. This is not a mandatory target. The published local plan proposals do not attempt to meet the target of 10,478 dwellings over the plan period. For context, this is more than three times the target in the Epsom annual 2007 plan and more than four times the need indicated using the government’s 2018 household growth projections. The plan instead included a target of 5,875 dwellings, although no calculation was provided to support this.

“NPPF paragraph 11 states, “Following strategic policy should provide the objectively assessed needs for housing unless the application of policies in this framework that protect land designated as Greenbelt, local Green Space, and areas at risk of flooding. These provide a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type, and distribution of development.” We in Epsom have exactly those strong reasons listed and should use them to protect the borough. The plan identified Brownfield sites that could accommodate 3,800 dwellings without any use of Greenfield Greenbelt sites. Importantly, using this figure as the housing target complies with the existing NPPF paragraph 11 and exceeds the housing need derived from the latest government data.

“In conclusion, I support the unpasing of the local plan if and only if we commit to the objectives of protecting our environment and green spaces through excluding development of the Greenfield Greenbelt sites and including realistic housing targets. And that this Council commits to speaking to large-scale developers to learn what can be done to address the alleged barriers put forward by this Council to pursuing the Kiln Lane and Longmead proposal.”

Cllr **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) also spoke as a non-member of the committee and said:

“I very much do want to see houses built. We have a definitive lack of affordable housing, i.e., first-time buyer housing,, which our draft plan is not adequately addressing. Urban density on our Brownfield site should be increased with an aim for gentle urban density around six stories max. These units should be mainly single and double-bedroom apartments located within 20 minutes’ walk or cycle of existing infrastructure.

On these grounds, I would like to see the local plan unpasing with a recommendation to be enacted to increase urban density and remove the inappropriate Green Belt developments.”

Earlier **Cllr Julie Morris** (LibDem - College) suggested that if the motion was passed the next Full Council being scheduled for 12th December, she may make moves to convene an extraordinary Council to consider the proposal to “unpause” the Local Plan process on an earlier date, to avoid delay.

Six members of the eight strong committee voted in favour of the motion to recommend to the Full Council the unpasing of the drafting of the Local Plan.

The Epsom and Ewell Times can confirm that Chairman of the Committee Steve McCormick has secured support from the requisite number of Councillors to convene an Extraordinary Meeting of the Full Council. Date to be confirmed but likely to be 24th October.

Related Reports:

Motion to pause Local Plan process

Cllr McCormick's own answers on Local Plan

Public meeting on Local Plan dominated by greenbelters.

Housing need or desire?

Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?

Another Surrey Local Plan Pauses

9 January 2024



The towns, villages, and open spaces that will take the brunt of **Surrey Heath Borough Council's** 6,000 new homes will be kept under wraps a little longer after the local authority kicked its housing plan into touch.

It is the second time this year the council has paused its local plan after announcing in February it would hold off until after housing secretary **Michael Gove's** long-rumoured but never seen planning changes take effect.

Now the council is blaming the "economic climate" and the need to develop a strategy for Camberley town centre - which has been hit by the £79 million loss in value of the Camberley Square and House of Fraser sites.

It has said it will now "review the timetable for the remaining stages of the Local Plan process, known as the Local Development Scheme".

Surrey Heath Portfolio Holder for sustainable transport and planning, Councillor Alan Ashbery said: "The council is committed to delivering the best local plan for our residents, while giving maximum protection to our highly valued green belt and special protection areas.

"Given the current economic climate, more time is required to review key policies and undertake further work to support the development in Camberley town centre. Once these important pieces of work have been completed, a new local development scheme will be published. This will set out dates for the remaining stages of the process, including publication details prior to submission to the Secretary of State."

The original draft in February was to deliver 6,213 homes up to the year 2038 - with more than 1,000 lined up for green belt sites. That left 2,700 homes, once those that had already been granted planning permission but had yet to be built were discounted.

The council's draft outlined where housing could be built - this includes employment, commercial, recreation and green spaces and was drawn up following consultation with residents and businesses in 2022.

After the February delay, it was due to submit a final draft for consideration in November 2023 but this has now been delayed again, the council said, to allow further work to be carried out.

Related reports:

Gove: meddling and muddled over Surrey Local Plans?

Land, plan and a scam mess for Tandridge

Gove flexing his muscle on a Local Plan?

Spelthorne's neediest lose out on housing

Motion to pause Local Plan process (Epsom and Ewell)

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