EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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# Epsom and Ewell Council response to Local Plan criticism

8 January 2025

Dear Editor,

**Government's English Devolution White Paper**

We are working through what the Government's English Devolution White Paper means for Epsom & Ewell. Our commitment is to do what's right for our residents, local businesses, and visitors; and to ensure that the high-quality public services that our residents need and deserve continue to be delivered.

**Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19)**

The Proposed Submission Local Plan seeks to address the balance between meeting development needs and protecting the borough's environment. Consultation on the proposed submission local plan commenced on the 20 December and will close on the 5 February 2025.

This consultation provides the opportunity for those with an interest in the borough to comment on whether the local plan is legally compliant or sound. Guidance on legal compliance, soundness and how to respond to the consultation can be found on the council's website and on the consultation website(link is external).

The Council has considered the responses received during the consultation in the Draft local Plan undertaken in early 2023 in developing the Proposed Submission Local Plan. Information on the changes made is detailed in the Consultation Statement published alongside the Proposed Submission Local Plan.

The borough has a high level of need for affordable housing for a range of property types and sizes, including family homes, with over 1,350 households being on the council's housing needs register.  The greatest need is for affordable rented homes (which includes social rented housing) and the affordable housing policy in the Local Plan reflects this, whilst having regard to the national policy and viability evidence.

Consultation over the Christmas and New Year period has been necessary in order to meet the new deadline imposed by the National Planning Policy Framework for submission of Local Plans under the 'old' system.  Our previous intention was to wait until January 2025 but that could cause us to miss the deadline.

The Local Plan will be submitted before the 12 March 2025 and examined against the December 2023 version of the NPPF which makes it clear that it is at the discretion of local authorities as to whether Green Belt boundaries should be amended. This flexibility is to reflect that Green Belt authorities (such as Epsom and Ewell) have their own unique characteristics, challenges and requirements, and that local plans must address competing and conflicting demands for land.

In terms of changes to green belt land, the Local plan proposes that:

- 52.6 ha of greenfield green belt land is removed from the green belt (site allocations SA33-SA35), this equates to 3.36 % of the boroughs Green Belt.
- 85 ha of previously developed green belt land, including the hospital clusters and part of the NESCOT estate is removed from the green belt, this equates to 5.44% ha of the boroughs Green Belt.
- Less than 0.4ha of land is removed from the green belt following minor boundary amendments.

Following the consultation, we will submit the Local Plan, supporting evidence and all responses received to the consultation to the Secretary of Statewho will then appoint a Planning Inspector to undertake an independent examination.  As part of the submission the council can propose changes to the local plan, however it is at the discretion of the planning inspector as to how these are dealt with.

Yours faithfully,

Councillor Peter O'Donovan, Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee.

*Read the full Epsom Green Belt Group letter here.*

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# The Christmas present nobody wanted

8 January 2025

Dear Editor,

With the threat of the dissolution of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council hanging in the air (under Angela Rayner's proposals for unitary authorities), residents might expect the RA-led council to demonstrate the value of local government by strongly championing local interests and defending the highly valued Green Belt. Instead, they are putting forward a plan that pleases no-one and will have repercussions for generations to come.

Tomorrow the council is due to issue its Regulation 19 consultation on the proposed Local Plan.

Here's what the Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration, Vicki Potts, and RA Cllr Woodbridge said about the

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Regulation 19 consultation process in the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee meeting held on 22 Nov 2023:

**Vicki Potts:** 'Your Reg 19 document… you can't make any major changes to it following [the Reg 19] consultation. If you want to make major changes at that stage, you can do, but you got to go back and do another consultation on your Regulation 19.'

**Cllr Woodbridge:** 'From our residents' perspective, when they're being asked to be consulted on the Reg 19, they don't really have much chance then to actually affect it. That is it then, really… I don't want to say we're going through the motions, but that consultation [Reg 19] is a less meaningful consultation than the one we've been through now [Reg 18].'

So the consultation is not an opportunity to amend the plan that so many residents reject, rather it is part of a statutory process that must be completed, however unpopular the plan's content may be.

**The Regulation 19 documentation for consultation**

Just in time for Christmas, the council is planning to distribute a lump of coal to each residents' Christmas stocking in the form of a consultation on a highly unpopular Local Plan.

In a rebuff to local democracy, following residents' responses to the Reg 18 consultation in early 2023, the council have failed to make changes to the local plan either to provide the truly affordable housing needed to resolve the borough's homelessness issues, or to protect the Green Belt. These are two strategic issues, and both of them featured heavily in responses from the borough residents and statutory consultees to the Regulation 18 consultation.

The council is proposing to redesignate or release over 175 hectares, or c.12% of the borough's Green Belt (see analysis below).

The current National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023) gives councils the option not to revise Green Belt boundaries. Since Dec 2023:

- The Epsom Green Belt Group has highlighted this option and strongly encouraged its use.
- The council received legal advice at the start of 2024 which stated that it was legally acceptable to choose not to release Green Belt for development.
- Angela Rayner and Matthew Pennycook have repeatedly stated their expectation that it is previously developed land and 'greybelt' that should be released for development, not high performing Green Belt.

**Justin Turvey**, 'Head of Place Development' for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and central to this borough's Local Plan wrote, in response to the Sutton Borough Local Plan consultation in September 2024:

'We note that under the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) there is no requirement on local authorities to review or amend their Green Belt boundaries through the plan making process and that any amendments must demonstrate 'exceptional circumstances'.'

[Note: This response, dated 26 September 2024, was obtained through a Freedom of Information request to Sutton Council (see attached) as it was not made publicly available in Epsom & Ewell.]

Despite the clear option to remove undeveloped Green Belt from the Local Plan under the Dec 2023 NPPF, despite opposition to Green Belt development from across the political spectrum, despite government advice to protect high performing Green Belt, despite highlighting this option to a neighbouring borough, and despite overwhelming public opposition to the development of Green Belt, the council has continued to include housing development on the high performing Green Belt sites of both Horton Farm and Hook Road Arena in the Local Plan.

**Turning to the newly released NPPF (Dec 2024), it states:**

'148. Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider grey belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations.'

The local plan proposals have not prioritised previously developed land (e.g. Hollywood Lodge is not included in the plans). The council has not provided an assessment of greybelt sites in the borough and has not prioritised them for development. The council has instead included the high performing Green Belt sites.

The excuse, or rationale, provided for giving up this high performing Green Belt land for development (despite not having followed the priority order in para 148, above) has been the provision of much needed affordable housing. Whilst there is widespread support for this objective, the reality is very different.

The council has not made any commitment to the provision of truly affordable homes on either of these sites. According to the Local Plan policies, the majority of the so-called 'affordable housing' will be priced at a 20% discount to the market price of the housing in the area.

**Likely outcome of examination by planning inspector**

Perversely, because of the decisions the Epsom & Ewell borough council has made, particularly the choice to amend Green Belt boundaries, there is a high likelihood that the current plan, if taken forward, will be found unsound and that further Green Belt release will be required.

To stand the best chance of being found sound and to protect the high quality Green Belt, the Local Plan should not amend Green Belt boundaries, should instead focus solely on brownfield and previously developed land, and should be submitted by 12 March 2025 (following Regulation 19 consultation). This can still be achieved, but becomes more challenging every day.

Sticking with an unpopular and unsound local plan may be the Christmas gift the borough residents would prefer not to receive.

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Yours faithfully,

Katherine Alexander of Epsom Greenbelt Group

*Read the full Epsom & Ewell Borough Council letter here.*

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# Can the green light to Epsom's Green Belt housing turn red?

8 January 2025




**Letters to the Editor**

From Tim Murphy of the Surrey Campaign to Protect Rural England

A Dark Day for Epsom and Ewell

Dear Editor,

I write with deep disappointment and dismay at the decision by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) to approve a draft Local Plan that sacrifices Green Belt land in our borough for housing development. This decision marks a dark day for Epsom & Ewell and represents a significant betrayal of the community's trust and values.

On December 10, EEBC councillors voted by 16 to 8, with 7 abstentions, to approve the latest draft Local Plan, which proposes releasing large areas of our much-valued Green Belt. Planning officers claim councillors had no choice due to Government housing targets. However, this argument does not excuse the council's willingness to surrender cherished green spaces. The community clearly recognizes the value of protecting our countryside, even if the council does not.

Public opposition to the loss of Green Belt land has been overwhelming. During last year's consultation, more than 1,500 residents responded, with 87% opposing any Green Belt development. A petition against the loss of Green Belt land attracted an astonishing 11,000 signatures, and a subsequent petition was so strongly supported that councillors were forced to debate it at the December meeting. The message from residents is clear: we do not want our Green Belt sacrificed for development.

It is worth emphasizing that the council's own Green Belt study concluded that the vast majority of the borough's Green Belt is performing its intended function. This includes Horton Farm and Hook Road Arena—two areas now designated for housing—which were identified as "highly performing" under the Government's own criteria. Why, then, is the council choosing to give up such valuable land?

Protecting our Green Belt is about more than preserving open spaces. It is essential for public health, biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and preventing urban sprawl. Epsom & Ewell has largely resisted London's sprawl, maintaining its identity as Surrey's smallest district. Its open spaces are limited to either municipal parks or the Green Belt, yet these are now at risk. Over the past 25 years, the borough has already absorbed significant population growth through large housing developments on former hospital sites.

The council's reliance on private developers to address local housing needs is deeply flawed. Private housebuilders often fail to deliver affordable homes, using "viability assessments" to argue that profits would be insufficient if they included the required number of affordable units. For example, a recently approved development on Green Belt land in this borough includes no affordable housing at all.

If EEBC were serious about tackling local housing needs, it would prioritise socially rented housing by working with central government and housing associations to develop urban brownfield sites and town-centre locations. Instead, the council appears intimidated by unrealistic housing targets set by Whitehall and has chosen to offer up our Green Belt as an easy sacrifice. This raises serious questions about local democracy and accountability.

The council's decision disregards the wishes of the community it is supposed to serve. It is vital that we continue to challenge this plan and advocate for a future where Epsom & Ewell's Green Belt is valued and protected for generations to come.

Yours faithfully,

Tim Murphy, Trustee Surrey Campaign to Protect Rural England

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From Katherine Alexander of The Epsom Green Belt Group

Dear Editor,

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**The ink is barely dry on Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's signing off on the draft Local Plan when it has been rendered obsolete.**

The Epsom Green Belt Group warned the council that failing to accelerate the Local Plan process would result in disaster for the borough, and that disaster has now arrived.

The Local Plan will now be caught by the revised National Planning Policy Framework issued today by the government.

Prior to today, the council had the option not to review Green Belt boundaries and not to argue for exceptional circumstances to build on the Green Belt. It chose not to do either, but instead to revise Green Belt boundaries to permit development. Seven and a half years of delays have led us to this point.

The government has focussed its headlines on building on the 'greybelt' to make their plans sound palatable. However, the 'greybelt' definition is a smokescreen for much broader development that they want to portray. This is for two reasons:

**1. All Green Belt qualifies as 'greybelt' except:**

- Strips of land at the edge of a borough that separate it from built-up sections of neighbouring boroughs.
- Land that 'strongly contributes' to 'checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.'

In Epsom & Ewell, 22 of the 53 parcels of Green Belt land in the council's analysis fail to meet either of these criteria and would therefore be classed as greybelt under the new definition. No disused petrol stations to be seen anywhere.

One of the parcels that would remain Green Belt, not greybelt, under this definition is Horton Farm. However, the council has voluntarily included it in the plan.

**2. The NPPF states that where there is insufficient greybelt land to meet the new housing target, councils must find enough Green Belt land to make up the difference (para 148).**
The only hint of protection is if that Green Belt land need not be released if it 'would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt when considered across the area of the plan.' There is no guidance available as to what that means in practice, but as Epsom Common and Horton Country Park will remain, this exception is unlikely to help either.

**What then is the new housing target for Epsom?**
889 dwellings per year. That is almost five times the historical house building rate in the borough (c.189 per year) and more than three times the rate in the proposed Local Plan (c.273 per year).

Every scrap of available land will need to be included in the plan, and even then it won't be enough to get close to the target.

The council only has itself to blame. It has failed to protect the borough, and the government has made it so the price for that failure is astronomically high.

After over 7.5 years of delays, the council's task now is to work quickly—hitherto anathema to them—to review the NPPF in detail and work out whether any of the Green Belt can be saved under the new rules. This may mean taking out land that it had already included, because there is an argument to protect it (such as Horton Farm) in order to mitigate and minimize the disastrous impacts for the borough.

The previous excuse for progressing with an unpopular plan was to protect the borough from speculative development. Because of their delays, there will be no land left for speculative development. Perhaps they've got their wish.

Yours faithfully,

Katherine Alexander

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From Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

**Epsom & Ewell Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) Consultation to go ahead as soon as possible**

10th December Councillors voted to approve the Epsom & Ewell Proposed Submission Local Plan (2022-2040) and that the Regulation 19 Consultation should take place at the earliest opportunity. The Regulation 19 Consultation is the final opportunity for residents to feedback on the plan before it is submitted for independent examination next summer.

At the meeting of Full Council, Councillors heard from a petitioner who requested that all green belt land should be removed from the Proposed Submission Local Plan except for previously developed land. This was debated by Councillors during the meeting, before the vote.

Commenting after the meeting, Councillor Peter O'Donovan, Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy, said "The Proposed Submission Local Plan provides a vision for our borough that strikes a balance between providing much needed homes including affordable housing, infrastructure, and support for local businesses whilst ensuring enhanced protection for biodiversity and our borough's green spaces, and protecting the valuable local heritage and character of our borough's towns and villages.

"It is challenging to find a path that meets the many different needs of all our communities, and not everyone may agree with every aspect of this plan. However, having listened to all the feedback, and examined the comprehensive evidence base, we feel strongly that this plan ensures that everyone in our borough, both now and in the future, is given the chance to thrive in Epsom & Ewell.

The Regulation 19 Consultation will take place at the earliest opportunity. We will announce the dates on our website and

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on social media as soon as they are confirmed."

An up-to-date Local Plan protects the borough from ad hoc and inappropriate development and ensures responsibility for future planning decisions remains with the borough and its communities. It provides a framework for where in the borough new development should go and where should be protected.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council consulted on the Draft Local Plan in February and March 2023. The comments received on the Draft Local Plan, along with the local evidence base, informed the Proposed Submission Local Plan. The Regulation 18 consultation feedback summary report, which shows how the council has taken account of the feedback received, can be found here: Consultation response statement

During the Regulation 19 Consultation residents, visitors and local businesses can comment on whether the plan is legally compliant and sound, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. Guidance on how to respond will be published on the council's website.

Responses collected as part of the consultation will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate with the Proposed Submission Local Plan and the evidence base documents.

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Dear Editor

As someone involved in the Save Epsom Green Belt campaign I just cannot contain my disbelief and anger at the local Council.

Last week the majority of them went ahead with a policy to build on our wonderful and well used recreational green spaces doubtless under some 'exceptional circumstances' clause.

Obviously, as already said many times and with recent letters to you, it is nevertheless worth reminding all your readers of the true devastating significance of this decision.

It is a Residents' Association Majority Council. They are supposed to represent the local residents: the clue is in the name! They have not and should be ashamed at letting us down despite the many efforts to stop this. I understand that Epsom is the smallest Surrey Borough yet the most populated for its size. As many of us know, the present infrastructure is overloaded: schools, the hospital, GP surgeries, roads viz. Ruxley Lane in rush hours!

This building programme will further exacerbate the problem and severely restrict the country wide environment and its diverse wildlife. No doubt developers are already rubbing their hands with due opportunism as, thanks to the Residents' Association Group, the local Green Belt vanishes FOR EVER! YES, WITH NO COMING BACK.

Yours Faithfully,

Dr Ted Bailey

West Ewell

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From Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire

**Dear Editor,**

**Housing in Epsom and Ewell: A Call for Community-Led Solutions**

I write to express my deep concern over the Government's recently announced planning framework, which enables developers to bypass locally elected councillors and pressures councils to review precious green belt land for development. For communities like ours in Epsom and Ewell, this approach represents yet another example of Whitehall ignoring the voices of local people who are best placed to decide what their area needs.

Housing is a pressing issue, but the solutions must be community-led. The homes we build here must be genuinely affordable and accompanied by the services that people rely on—GP surgeries, schools, and reliable public transport. It is equally important that we protect the green spaces that define our borough.

Vulnerable families in Epsom and Ewell need safe and warm homes, but this cannot be achieved by sidelining the community. When residents are engaged and empowered, we can deliver the homes required to support those living in temporary accommodation, help older residents access housing solutions tailored to their needs, and ensure the next generation has somewhere to call home.

Unfortunately, the Government's announcement fails to address the root causes of Britain's housing crisis. The biggest issue is a desperate lack of social housing. Too often, developers use legal loopholes to shirk their obligations to build affordable homes. Meanwhile, the very term "affordable" has become meaningless to many local families who are priced out of the market. We need clearer definitions and upfront solutions to ensure that affordability is not just a slogan but a reality.

The recent decision by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to move forward with the Local Plan, including controversial Green Belt sites, highlights the challenge we face. While I welcome the council's efforts to prepare a plan, I share the concerns of many local residents and Liberal Democrat councillors who feel that housing targets and the development of virgin Green Belt land, such as Horton Farm, are not the right path forward.

The ruling Residents Association has been slow to update the borough's planning policies, leaving us vulnerable to inappropriate and opportunistic applications. It is time for all parties to work together to prioritise robust, community-supported plans that deliver for Epsom and Ewell.

Epsom and Ewell deserve housing solutions that respect our unique character, address the needs of vulnerable residents,

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and safeguard our green spaces for future generations. I will continue to stand with our community in advocating for planning policies that reflect these priorities.

Yours faithfully,

**Helen Maguire MP**
Member of Parliament for Epsom and Ewell

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# Planning buses not missing them says Epsom’s MP

8 January 2025

Dear Editor,

Thank you to Stuart Gosling for his contribution and for highlighting the important issue of transport links in relation to the new hospital development.

Has Epsom’s new MP missed the bus to a new hospital?

I completely agree that good transport connectivity is essential for the success of this project, and I want to reassure residents that we have already considered this as part of the planning process.

New transport links will be introduced once the hospital is built, and discussions around the best way to serve the site with appropriate public transport will take place as we progress along the development timeline. It’s important to note that transport infrastructure often needs to be developed alongside the new services and demands that arise from it.

I’ll be at the forefront of ensuring that the new hospital is well-served by transport, and I’m committed to ensuring that Epsom and Ewell’s needs are fully met. The process may take time, but I’m confident the results will be worth the wait.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Maguire MP

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# Has Epsom’s new MP missed the bus to a new hospital?

8 January 2025

Dear Editor,

Our new MP Helen Maguire has supported the construction of a new hospital, complete with an accident and emergency (A&E) department, near the Royal Marsden Hospital in the southern area of Sutton. [See Epsom and Ewell Times 12th October 2024 “Public meeting about Epsom Hospital future“].

While well-intentioned, her recommendation seems to miss a significant concern shared by residents in Epsom, Ewell, and much of Sutton: accessibility.

The current sites—Epsom Hospital and St Helier Hospital—are better served by public transport than the proposed location near the Royal Marsden, which lacks convenient train and bus links. Moving our local A&E services to this

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"public transport desert" would place a greater burden on people relying on public transport, particularly those without access to a car.

Epsom Hospital, for example, is within walking distance of Epsom Station (though it's still a 20-minute walk). It is served by several bus routes, including:

- **E5** (Langley Vale – Epsom – Watersedge): every 30 minutes from Epsom Clock Tower, though it only passes the hospital every two hours.
- **166** (Epsom Hospital – Epsom – Banstead – West Croydon): an hourly service from Monday to Saturday, no service on Sunday.
- **293** (Epsom Hospital – Epsom – North Cheam – Morden): every 20 minutes during peak times.
- **408** (Epsom – Ashtead – Leatherhead – Cobham): runs approximately every hour on weekdays.
- **479** (Epsom – Ashtead – Leatherhead – Guildford): every 30 minutes at peak times.

St Helier Hospital, also in Sutton, has additional connections:

- **151** (Wallington – Sutton – Worcester Park): every 10 minutes peak.
- **157** (Morden – Croydon – Crystal Palace): every 12 minutes peak.
- **S1** (Mitcham – Sutton – Banstead via Wrythe Lane): every 20 minutes peak.
- **S4** (Roundshaw – Wallington – Sutton – St Helier): every 30 minutes peak.
- Other services such as the **154**, **164**, and **280** serve nearby areas, with buses stopping outside or near the hospital.

In contrast, public transportation from Epsom Clock Tower to the Royal Marsden site involves multiple transfers. A trip requires at least two or three buses, such as the S2, S4, 293, SL7, and S4, taking anywhere from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes depending on timings. For many, this could be inconvenient, time-consuming, and impractical—especially in emergencies.

For residents reliant on public transportation, moving A&E services to a poorly connected area would be disruptive. We should seek solutions that keep healthcare accessible and ensure that those who need urgent care can get there quickly. I urge our MP and local authorities to consider this reality as they deliberate on the future of our local healthcare services.

Yours faithfully,

Stuart Gosling

Epsom Resident

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# There is another way to save Epsom's Green Belt

8 January 2025



Dear Editor,

My 12 year old son spoke at the last local council planning meeting, about the importance of not building on the green belt, and I am writing to you, as an Epsom and Ewell Stamford ward resident, to echo my agreement. I've gone through the Land Assessment and the Draft Local Plan regulation 18, and am very concerned about the future of our green spaces in Epsom and Ewell.

While I realise there are many ways to work out how many houses to build in Epsom and Ewell, I believe it should be based on how much brownfield space we have, rather than what is possible if we build on the green belt. We obviously need to build social houses (my understanding is that there are about 1,300 families on the waiting list in Epsom and Ewell), and we must do our part with helping to build a proportion of the houses likely to be needed nationally (which the office of national statistics estimates at about a 10% increase over 15 years). The local plan suggests an increase of about 14.5% (on top of 1,300 needed for social houses), so arguably more than we need to build.

I believe an alternative local plan has been sent to the council showing that it is possible to build all the houses we need on brownfield sites identified in the Land Assessment, plus there will be more spaces that become available over the next 15 years. This means that there are no exceptional circumstances in order to justify changing green belt boundaries.

A Reigate and Banstead Green Party councillor, who is also a town planner, gave a talk earlier in the year explaining that

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if you build on many small brownfield sites (instead of thousands of houses on one green site), you get small, local firms tendering for the work, instead of big developers, so increasing local employment.

I am also concerned that the council is not listening to residents, with their own consultation showing that 87% of respondents are opposed to building on the green belt. And a 12,000 signature petition has been ignored. While I realise there was a concern that not all the people who signed it definitely live in Epsom and Ewell, I think it is very likely that a huge proportion of them do.

Additionally, I feel I cannot leave out how disappointed I am that the Local Plan does not specify energy standards to be met for residential house building. I believe the excuse /explanation for this is the 2022 Local Plan Viability Assessment, which includes some analysis of estimated additional costs to building if various environmental standards are adhered to. I believe that this data is incomplete as it isn't clear whether it considers the lower cost of running an energy efficient house and the resulting potential impact in the sale price of the property. It also doesn't compare these figures to the cost of retro-fitting houses, and doesn't mention the financial cost to the country if we fail to protect ourselves against the worse effects of climate change.

With not acting to remove green belt following the consultation, and dragging the process out, we are now at a point where if we delay any longer, new government rules will mean drastically higher number of houses required to be built in Epsom and Ewell, and could almost wipe out all the green spaces (except The Common) over the next 15 years. Please act quickly to avoid this!

And I cannot stress enough to please remember the importance of increasing green and re-wilded spaces across the UK in order to help mitigate the worst effects of the climate crisis. Green spaces are needed for free and natural carbon sequestration, reducing air pollution, natural flood management, and for our declining wildlife. They are also used as important community spaces, and children's' sports, as my son and his friend pointed out in the last planning meeting.

Yours faithfully,

Yvonne Grunwald – Stamford Ward Epsom.

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# Epsom and Ewell Council answers parking complaint immediately

8 January 2025



Charles Moseley of Hurstpierpoint complained in a letter dated 8th October to the Epsom and Ewell Times about the running out of Epsom Playhouse beer and the Ashley Centre Car Park during his visit to the Counterfeit Stones performance. Just five hours later (by coincidence) Epsom and Ewell Borough Council wrote to us with a new plan to improve the parking experience. They could not be expected to fix an unexpected peak in the demand for beer at the Borough's showpiece theatre venue. Here are the communications in full.

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8th October 2024 10:28 hrs

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to say how much we enjoyed a gig by The Counterfeit Stones, who were really good. However we arrived fairly early and decided to have a drink in the theatre bar and were served by a very nice bar lady who proceeded to pour two pints of London Pride. But she only managed one and a half before running out! She was very apologetic in saying that she had no more bitter of any description, only lager, cider and spirits. Apparently this was due to the audience of the previous night's show supping all the bitter. What are about 400 mainly middle or above aged Rolling Stones fans supposed to do with no beer? We had to plunge the depths of Epsom's society pubs and eventually found, at the third attempt, something resembling beer in Wetherspoons. As for the car park, well that was something else with two queues out and at least one in each line that had not paid or lost their little yellow disc! It was chaos! And £5.00 for the privilege! So it's full marks for the band and bar lady, as for Epsom Council? Give me strength!

Charles Moseley

Hurstpierpoint

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Epsom & Ewell Borough Council are installing a new Auto Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) parking system at the Ashley Centre car park in Epsom town centre this month. Work will begin from 14 October and is expected to take three

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weeks to complete.

The ANPR system will mean that car users can drive up to the barrier and enter the car park with their registration being used for identification and payment upon exit.

The new system will remove the need for tokens and the associated charges that are incurred when they are lost. Cash and card payment options will be available on all floors, as well as the ability to pay remotely.

Councillor Liz Frost, Chair of the Environment Committee, said:

“The works taking place at the Ashley Centre car park are a welcome upgrade to a more modern and convenient system. We know the tokens have been a cause of frustration to many drivers as they are small, difficult to find and easily lost (leading to penalties being issued).

“We appreciate that the necessary work may cause some inconvenience for drivers during the installation of the new ANPR System, and we apologise for this. However, we feel the upgrades will be a great improvement and make it easier and quicker for people visiting Epsom Town Centre to park.

“With Christmas just around the corner, we believe the upgrades to the car park support the ongoing work we are undertaking to boost the local economy by making Epsom Town centre a more hassle-free and therefore more attractive place to visit.”

Epsom and Ewell Brough Council 8th October 2024 16:00hrs

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# Bikes that blight the blind

8 January 2025



Dear Editor,

I would like to bring a serious problem to the attention of Epsom residents, that is if they are not already aware of it but do not want to do anything about it.  For at least the last year I have been battling and campaigning against motorbike delivery riders who insist on illegally parking in Epsom Square (formerly Derby Square) off Epsom High Street and all along that stretch of the High Street.

Continually all through the day these motorbike riders park their motorbikes and I do mean the whole of the motorbike, on the pavement.  They ride their motorbikes on to the pavement and park up. At times their has been as many as 21 motorbikes parked on the pavement outside shops like McDonalds. It is a serious safety issue as well as being an illegal parking matter.

I have reported this issue to Surrey County Council Parking Enforcement Team dozens of times and all that happens is that they send an Enforcement Officer out, who simply moves the motorbike riders on and what always happens is the riders return later on.  The Parking Enforcement Team should be fining them and then they might start to listen.

I have contacted my local new MP a couple of times about this issue but I have yet to receive an acknowledgement about the matter.  I am sure my local MP is very busy as she is newly elected but
this is a local issue and that should be the focus of any MP, to deal with their local issues.  I am a blind person living in Epsom and their are a higher than average of blind people in Epson as there is a residential housing building in Epsom for blind people.

Surrey Parking Enforcement Team need to get a grip of this situation before there are some serious accidents.

Regards

Russell Bailey

Swail House Association for the Visually Impaired

Image: Delivery moped on pavement in Epsom – Google

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# Non-political and all-political

8 January 2025

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EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

26th November 2026

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Dear Editor,

It is good to see that, despite stepping down as a Borough Councillor, Vince Romagnuolo has lost none of his enthusiasm for historically partisan approach to local politics. Labelling Resident Association councillors closet Conservatives is nothing new. Vince and the Labour Party have never understood the concept of local volunteers whose national voting patterns are often diverse, but who come together in a non-ideological commitment to promote a shared view of localism, civic duty and what is right for all residents in Epsom and Ewell.

If only Vince knew the real national preferences of RA councillors, he might be surprised. Although I never discussed national political allegiances with my RA colleagues, it is sometimes not difficult to know them. There were and are councillors who nationally support the Labour Party, and at least one RA Councillor who was a Labour Party Councillor in another local authority.

So come on Vince, by all means criticise Residents Association councillors if you disapprove of their policies, but please don't use labels and unfounded accusations of national party-political bias to explain the clear voting preferences of residents, the long absence of Conservative councillors, and the actions of Epsom and Ewell MPs over the last 87 years.

With all good wishes

County Councillor Eber Kington

Residents Association Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington

[Ed: A right of reply was warranted but we now draw this particular debate to a close on our pages.]

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# Up to 2003 MPs happy no Conservatives on Epsom and Ewell Council

8 January 2025

Dear Editor,

I note with interest the letter from Mr Kington *"Epsom and Ewell was the first Conservative free Council"* outlining the dire electoral fortunes of the Conservative Party in Epsom & Ewell. But he doesn't tell the full story.

With the odd exception, despite sporadic efforts by eccentric Tory candidates, it is true that it is only since 2003 that the Tories have made a concerted effort to gain seats on the council. The truth is that successive Tory MPs for the area seemed quite happy with the composition of the council due to the fact that, on the whole, the ruling group was made up of small 'C' conservatives and in some cases, card carrying Conservative and UKIP members.

It was during the Labour government, with local government being property funded, that they embarked on a spending spree with taxpayers money. But they gleefully reverted to type when the austerity obsessed Tory/Lib Dem coalition government came to power in 2010 that budgets were slashed following Tory edicts.

Yours faithfully,

**Vince Romagnuolo**

Former Epsom & Ewell Borough Councillor, 1999-2007, 2015-2019

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# Green view of Mole Valley elections

8 January 2025

Dear Editor,

In Mole Valley national issues probably mostly impacted the main parties who lost support. However these local election results will be of little significance in the forthcoming General Election in Epsom and Ewell constituency for several reasons.

Firstly only a small area of Mole Valley falls within the parliamentary constituency of Epsom and Ewell, namely Ashtead and Leatherhead. While these two areas will be very important to our campaign in the General Election there did appear to be some tactical or protest voting in the local elections in
Mole Valley as there was no great change in turnout. In Leatherhead Liberal Democrats were elected with a similar vote compared with 2023 despite their record of supporting development in the Green Belt.

The Green Party targeted resources in the Dorking area of Mole Valley in order to maintain a previous strong showing there. Secondly, as local elections did not take place for the Epsom Borough Council
area the bulk of voters in the Epsom and Ewell constituency were not able to express their choices at the ballot box.

Nevertheless the threat to the Green Belt will be one of the key issues in the General Election in Epsom and Ewell as a whole so voters will have a genuine opportunity to test candidates about this particular matter, which is of great priority for the Green Party, including in Ashtead and Leatherhead where we
will be actively campaigning to galvanise our support there.

Finally, whilst votes were quite well dispersed across different parties in the local elections in Mole Valley there will be even more parties standing in the General Election in Epsom and Ewell including the Green Party. The share of the vote will also probably be quite dispersed as a result in the General Election and in this scenario tactical voting will be of limited benefit. In such circumstances voters will be well advised to vote for policies they believe in, as a surprise result is quite likely.

Stephen McKenna

Prospective Parliamentary Candidate Green Party Epsom and Ewell

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# Epsom and Ewell was the first Conservative free Council

8 January 2025

Dear Editor,

I refer to your article on the May local elections headed "***First Surrey Borough with no Conservative Councillors***" and which includes the comment that "***The result makes it [Woking] the first council in Surrey not to have a single Conservative councillor.***"  However, that is certainly not the case.

From 1937, when the Borough of Epsom and Ewell was created, and until 2003 (66 years), the Conservative Party was only represented on the Borough Council twice (and by a very small number of councillors).  Since 2003 the Conservative Party has maintained a constant presence, but never larger than four in number and it is currently languishing at two.

Whilst I don't wish to diminish the historical importance of the Conservative Party's demise in Woking, they have had to face regular failures at the ballot box in Epsom and Ewell ever since George VI became King.

Yours faithfully,

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**Eber Kington**

Residents Association County Councillor Ewell Court, Auriol and Cuddington

*[Mr Kington is an Honorary Alderman of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell and served as Borough Councillor for many years.]*

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# Not all have well-wishes for proposed Alderman

8 January 2025



The Epsom and Ewell Times does not endorse Ian Strutt's "Letter to the Editor" below. Its subject, Eber Kington, declined to comment in response. We have covered the Wells community centre story before and the links are at the foot of the page. We encourage our readership to share their views on local issues in these pages. We will not publish gratuitous personal attacks. Mr Strutt's letter responds to a proposed personal recognition of a long-serving local councillor and thus falls within consideration of a Council proposal.

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Letter to the editor,
How can Councillor Eber Kington deserve an award from Epsom council when he wasted an estimated several hundred thousand pounds shutting down the Wells Social Centre, then putting forward a failed design for a block of flats on the site?
This highly impractical design was turned down 10 : 2 by the council's own planning committee.
Kington robbed Epsom residents of their very long-running centre vital to their social life and used by workers needing economic desk space to carry out their businesses.
Kington also caused a mass demonstration by Wells residents, but told protesters in the council chamber that his plan "would go ahead."
No council can afford the vast amount of money wasted by Kington.
Thankfully, the centre is re-opening in December despite Kington and his council cronies. So, my thanks are due to the Epsom and Ewell planning councillors who DID display their social consciences.

Ian Strutt

The Wells Estate, Epsom

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Related reports:

Local Council stalwarts up for local honour

Epsom's Wells Plan has a hole in it

Wells Centre's Appeal

All's well that ends well for the Wells Centre

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# Surrey's smokescreen over Fire Service failings

8 January 2025



Dear Editor,

Last week saw the publication of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Report of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service.

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The accompanying press release from the Conservative Leaders of SCC headlined the fact that the “Inspectors praised our fire and rescue service’s cultural improvements and the positive behaviours that were demonstrated during their visit”. Residents might therefore be forgiven if they were to think that the Inspection Report itself was something to celebrate.

However, the HMICFRS Report makes 11 judgments on the Fire Service in Surrey and, of the 11 areas inspected, just one is good and the rest judged as adequate and below.

Under the watch of the Conservatives in Surrey, key factors relating to keeping our residents safe; preventing fire and risk, public safety through fire regulation, responding to fires and emergencies and the best use of resources, all require improvement. And seven of the 11 judgments show the service as less than adequate.

Crucially, our Fire Service Officers are also being failed, with the Inspectors reporting concerns over the lack of adequate training for incidents in tall buildings, failures to identify high-risk premises and delays to the upgrade of vehicles.

Worryingly, the Inspectors also say, “We were disappointed to find that the service hadn’t made the progress we expected since our 2021 inspection”.

The lack of openness regarding the Inspection outcomes is unacceptable. However, far more serious are those judgments themselves. In a letter to the Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety I have called for a plan to turn this situation around, to be formulated as a matter of urgency. Our residents, our local businesses and our Fire Officers deserve much better than this.

Yours faithfully,

**Eber Kington**

Surrey County Councillor (Residents Association – Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington).

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Related reports:

Surrey Fire service praised

Not such a rosy report on Surrey Fire Service

Image: Councillor Eber Kington

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# I want to resist 20mph speed limits

8 January 2025

ULEZ is irritating but this speed limit is totally ridiculous and can only be designed to raise more funds for the exchequer.

Had this limit been contained near schools and for school times, it is very understandable. But 24/7 and can go on for 5 miles or more is due to cause road rage and more accidents because drivers will have to keep their eyes on the speedometer rather than the road ahead.

Personally I would like to join a protest group if you know of one. Can we get the national newspapers involved?

My wife has already been caught doing 24 in a 20 area. Before paying the £100 and attending a speed awareness course I would like to know if this scheme had the approval of Parliament

**Bernard Pendry**

Related report:

Time for us all to slow down?

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