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

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Drafting of Epsom and Ewell Local Plan “unpausing”?

28 September 2023



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 When you replace the out-of-date 2014 household projections with the more recent 2018 projections and exclude the flawed affordability uplift, this results in a much more realistic figure of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 unpausing?

“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.

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"In conclusion, I support the unpausing 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 unpaused 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 unpausing 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?

Thames Water rebate

28 September 2023



Thames Water has been ordered to pay back more than £100million to its customers by regulators.
Water watchdog Ofwat ordered the under-performing company to return the money following a string of failings, it announced today, September 26.

The rebate follows its assessment of Thames Water's performance with customers seeing the results on their bills next year. Ofwat's decision was published in its annual Water Company Performance Report, which rates companies based on pollution incidents, customer service and leakage.

Targets are set to incentivise water companies to deliver more for customers and the environment, Ofwat's report read. It added: "Where they fall short, we reduce the amount of money companies can collect from customers." On Thames Water customers receiving £100 million back next year, it said: "While that may be welcome to billpayers, it is very disappointing news for all who want to see the water sector do better."

David Black, Ofwat chief executive said: "The targets we set for companies were designed to be stretching – to drive improvements for customers and the environment. However, our latest report shows they are falling short." He added: "It is not going to be easy for companies to regain public trust, but they have to start with better service for customers and the environment. We will continue to use all our powers to ensure the sector delivers better value."

It is yet more bad news for the firm following the report in July that found Thames Water among worst in country due to standout levels of pollution and poor monitoring left if joint last among the country's "very disappointing" water and sewerage companies.

Thames Water is the largest water company in the country and serves 15 million people including many in Surrey and Kent. It is owned by a consortium of pension groups and sovereign wealth funds and, in 2023 reported an annual loss of £30.1 million.

Environment Secretary Therese Coffey has now written to Thames Water informing it to expect a meeting in order to

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scrutinise its improvement plans.

A spokesperson for Thames Water said “Our customers expect a great service from us every time, and we’re sorry when we fail to deliver at the first opportunity. In 2022-2023 , we met 55 per cent of our annual performance commitments.

“While it is our job to deliver our services whatever the weather, our performance last year was severely affected by the summer drought and December freeze/thaw event. In March this year our shareholders injected £500million of new equity into Thames Water to help fund improved operational performance. Our shareholders are willing to provide a further £750million of equity funding before 2025, subject to certain conditions.

“They also acknowledge that additional equity funding, indicatively of £2.5billion, will be required during the next regulatory period, 2025-2030, to further improve operational performance and financial resilience. This is the largest equity support package ever seen in the UK water sector and underscores our shareholders’ commitment in delivering Thames Water’s turnaround and life’s essential service for the benefit of our customers, communities, and the environment.

“Our turnaround is already delivering performance improvements. Our complaints fell by 28 per cent, the second consecutive significant year-on-year reduction and we have seen improvements in several key performance commitments including a reduction in sewage discharges, internal sewer flooding, and sewer blockages.

“We’re making progress and we’ll continue to engage and work with Ofwat as we implement our plan. We’re determined to do better for our customers and the environment.”

Related reports:

Thames Water among worst in country

Wasting water?

Local sewage uploaded

Image: Hogsmill river in Ewell where there were sewage leaks.

Mayor endorses Citizens Advice in Epsom & Ewell

28 September 2023



As Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell (CAEE) publishes its Annual Report 2022/23 today, Epsom & Ewell Mayor Cllr Rob Geleit expressed his support for the charity, having chosen it as one of his charities of the year. He said: “CAEE wants and needs to be here for another 85 years and this year I want to do my part in helping that to happen. I have chosen this charity as I greatly support the work that it does and the outcomes that it achieves for local people.”

The Mayor attended CAEE’s Annual General Meeting on 19 September where staff, volunteers, funders and local supporters gathered to celebrate the achievements over the last year. In 2022/23, CAEE helped 2,660 people in the borough, addressing 8,256 issues and gained £1,008,032 of income for their clients. Top issues that were addressed are benefits and tax, debt, housing, relationships and family, and charitable support.

CEO Lisa Davis, calls for more volunteers to help boost its face to face and outreach service. Lisa said: “A key unique selling point for us is our face to face and outreach services and our aim this year is to extend this part of our offering. Our focus going forward is the recruitment and retention of a diverse group of volunteers to help that happen.”

“Currently, the people of Epsom and Ewell can access CAEE services by phone and email, and drop in to the office in Epsom on a Tuesday or Thursday. Increasing our capacity and extending this to four days a week would greatly help those in the borough who are affected by the rising costs of living, are vulnerable and often have nowhere to turn,” said Lisa.

CAEE provides an outreach service, with regular sessions being held at the Epsom Refugee Hub, Methodist Church’s Warm Hub last winter and has recently started at the Epsom Pantry for its members.

Sue, who’s been volunteering with Citizens Advice in the local community for over 25 years in various roles, says: “I enjoy the comradeship, which because of the nature of the volunteers, creates a better than average office environment. I like the brainstorming nature of giving advice – seeing how one thing affects another. Our work provides a window into part of our community which is hidden to a lot of people living in what appears to be an affluent area.”

Volunteering for CAEE is a rewarding experience with many having been helping their community for several years. For those interested in learning more, get in touch with CAEE to talk to a volunteer or read more on the website.

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Photo of Yvette Ball (Chair of Trustees of CAEE), Epsom & Ewell Mayor Cllr Rob Geleit, Lisa Davis (CEO of CAEE)

Gove gives Tandridge a severe telling off

28 September 2023



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

David Ford
CEO
Tandridge Council
Oxted
Surrey
RH8 0BT

Via email only

16 August 2023

Dear David,

I write following a finding of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman for your failure to abide by duties under the Equality Act 2010 or act in accordance with your own safeguarding policy.

An “extremely vulnerable person” with poor mental health suffered “aggressive” and “intimidating” behaviour at the hands of **Tandridge District Council** staff.

The unacceptable behaviour has led to the secretary of state for communities, **Michael Gove**, to write to the council to formally warn that he be taking “a personal interest” in how it delivers for residents.

Levelling Up secretary Michael Gove wrote to the local authority after an investigation by the local government watchdog found the behaviour of a housing officer amounted to severe maladministration.

According to the **housing ombudsman**’s report, the resident as well as an independent mental health advocate said the housing officer’s approach was “aggressive and intimidating” and that “she had never been spoken to in that manner in all her years in the role”.

This carried on until the housing officer left three months later.

The ombudsman ordered the council to apologise to the resident in person, pay £1,000 in compensation and review its Vulnerabilities and Reasonable Adjustment policies.

Mr Gove, writing to Tandridge Council’s chief executive David Ford in August 2023, said: “I write following a finding of severe maladministration by the Housing Ombudsman for your failure to abide by duties under the Equality Act 2010 or act in accordance with your own safeguarding policy. In this case you failed an extremely vulnerable resident.

“Her case was not referred immediately, as it should have been, to the relevant support services. The behaviour of a member of your staff towards both the resident and the mental health advocate supporting the resident was described as aggressive, intimidating and neither appropriate nor solution focused.

“This is not acceptable. Your residents should expect their concerns to be taken seriously, for reasonable adjustments to be made where appropriate, and that an investigation of any complaint should be fair. Residents, particularly those who are vulnerable, should expect that their needs are understood and acted upon.”

He added: “I will take a personal interest in how you deliver your responsibilities to your residents.”

Richard Blakeway, housing ombudsman, said: “At the heart of this case, there were three different officers involved, but none took appropriate action. Failure to appropriately respond to the resident’s requests for reasonable adjustments or to act in accordance with its own safeguarding policy caused serious detriment.

“The failure by the landlord to demonstrate that it had taken steps to ensure it understood the needs of the resident also led to missed opportunities which adversely impacted the resident. On top of this, there was a complete absence of recognition, acknowledgement or apology from the landlord for its failings, or to take any action to put things right.”

Responding to Mr Gove was Councillor **Catherine Sayer**, leader of Tandridge District Council. She said they recognised there were problems in how the council dealt with the long-running case, which stretched over several years, and that they failed to fully consider the resident’s needs and vulnerabilities.

Cllr Sayer said: “We are sincerely sorry for the distress and inconvenience caused. Compensation was paid to the resident and we continue to work with and support them with their future needs.

“In January 2023, the Ombudsman did acknowledge several reasonable adjustments were made during the handling of the case.” She said the council had also learned from its mistakes and will put all customer-facing staff into refresher training on safeguarding, vulnerability, equality and diversity and requirements for reasonable adjustments.

Among the changes the council has since made include a staffing structure review as part of a council-wide programme to ensure a dedicated housing officer is assigned to a case and that each case is reviewed monthly by senior officers.

Tandridge Council has also appointed a resident engagement manager to oversee supporting those with vulnerabilities. Cllr Sayer added: “In addition, we made a referral to the Regulator for Social Housing who was satisfied with the response and action we have taken and they did not require us to take any further action.”

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Ewell Primary school “raaced” with concrete problem

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A primary school situated in **Ewell** has been confirmed to harbour hazardous concrete that presents a potential risk of structural failure. **Danetree Primary School** is among the 147 educational facilities across England that have been identified as having reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), a lightweight construction material that was widely used between the 1950s and 1990s but is now regarded as being susceptible to collapse.

A **GLF Schools** spokesperson for **Danetree Primary School** told the **Epsom and Ewell Times**:

“Over the summer the Year 3 block was identified containing RAAC. On Thursday 31 August the Department for Education instructed the Trust to close this building immediately.

“The school then put a plan in place to relocate the Year 3 classes elsewhere within the school, so that the school opened as planned. Parents were advised of this.

“Further surveys have been arranged to clarify longer term plans for the school and we will provide updates to parents as more information is known.”

The **Department for Education** has recently released a list that reveals all the educational establishments in England where necessary measures were required to address concerns related to concrete structural integrity. The government document affirms that Danetree Primary School has successfully maintained in-person education for all its students, whether on the school premises or in nearby locations. In response to the concrete structural issues, 19 schools in England had to postpone the commencement of the term, while an additional 24 schools implemented remote learning measures, with four schools making a complete shift to remote learning.

Gillian Keegan, the Education Secretary, expressed her regret over this situation and acknowledged that it was far from the ideal way for parents, teachers, and affected students to begin the new academic term. She reassured the public that the safety of students and staff remains the top priority. She also commended the collective efforts of schools, colleges, local councils, dioceses, and academy trusts in ensuring that the majority of the affected educational settings were able to open their doors to all students at the start of the term. The Education Secretary stated, “I know this is the last way parents, teachers and children affected by this wanted to begin the new term, but it will always be my priority to ensure the safety of pupils and staff.”

Image: Danetree Primary School: Google

Local NHS Doctors and Consultants striking

28 September 2023



As tensions mount within the UK healthcare sector, doctors across the country are gearing up for strike action. The looming industrial action has sent ripples of concern through the local Epsom healthcare system and the wider public, sparking a heated debate about the grievances motivating these medical professionals to take such measures.

In a week that promises to bring a fresh wave of challenges, hospitals across the UK brace themselves as a new round of strikes is set to commence. On Wednesday, consultants and junior doctors are set to unite in a day of industrial action, marking the first instance of such joint protest. The impact of this combined strike action is expected to weigh heavily on healthcare facilities, with St George’s, **Epsom** and St Helier hospitals particularly vulnerable, having recently grappled with the added strain of a heatwave.

Amid this turbulence, healthcare authorities call upon the public to exercise discretion in their use of NHS services. It’s emphasized that individuals should continue to seek medical care during emergencies or when they have scheduled appointments.

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Dr. **Richard Jennings**, the Group Chief Medical Officer for St George's, **Epsom**, and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, acknowledges the upcoming challenges: "While we do everything we can to minimize the impact strikes have on our patients, there is no denying this week will be very challenging for us. There's been little respite this year, with several rounds of industrial action already taking place, not to mention our emergency departments becoming busier with the hotter weather. And with further industrial action planned for this autumn, and winter on the way, we would expect these extreme pressures to continue for some time."

The joint strike is scheduled for Wednesday, September 20, with consultants and junior doctors ensuring emergency care remains available. However, elective surgeries and non-emergency appointments will be rescheduled. On Tuesday, September 19, some consultants will also strike while providing Christmas Day cover, and junior doctors will stage a complete walkout on Thursday, September 21, and Friday, September 22.

During this period, the public is urged to use NHS services judiciously to ensure that the most critical cases receive timely attention. It's essential to bear in mind that visiting an emergency department for non-life-threatening issues may not result in quicker service.

Dr. Jennings advises, "We must prioritize our sickest and most seriously ill patients. That means if you attend our emergency departments and it's not life-threatening, you may be redirected to a more appropriate service. You can help us by using NHS 111 online, which is a 24/7 service and can direct you to where you need to go when your healthcare need is less urgent. But when it's an emergency or life-threatening, you should always call 999 or visit an emergency department."

Numerous inpatient and outpatient appointments have already been rescheduled due to this year's strike action, with more disruptions expected this time around. However, those with scheduled appointments are encouraged to attend unless notified otherwise. Alternative options, such as GP surgeries and pharmacies, remain largely unaffected by the strikes and can assist with common ailments like tonsillitis, coughs, colds, and earaches. Minor injuries like sprains and strains can be managed at home, or a pharmacist can provide guidance on the appropriate treatment.

For individuals in need of mental health support during a crisis in Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, or Wandsworth, the South West London 24/7 Mental Health Crisis Line is available at 0800 028 8000. More information can be found at https://www.swlstg.nhs.uk/patients-carers/crisis-support/mental-health-support-line. Similarly, in Surrey and North East Hampshire, support is accessible 24/7 for adults, young people, and children by calling 0800 915 4644. Additional information can be found at **https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/our-services**.

The dates for strike action are as follows:

- Consultants: Christmas Day cover from 7 am on Tuesday, September 19, to 8 am on Thursday, September 21.
- Junior doctors: Christmas Day cover from 7 am on Wednesday, September 20; full walkout from 7 am on Thursday, September 21, to 7 am on Saturday, September 23.
- Both consultants and junior doctors will be striking on Monday, October 2, Tuesday, October 3, and Wednesday, October 4, providing Christmas Day cover.

To understand the situation better, The Epsom and Ewell Times has delved into the arguments put forth by UK doctors explaining their reasons for considering a strike.

1. Pay and Working Conditions: One of the primary concerns voiced by doctors is the state of their pay and working conditions. Many doctors argue that their wages have not kept pace with the cost of living, and they face long working hours that often stretch them to the limit. Some argue that these conditions not only affect their own well-being but also put patient safety at risk.
2. Staff Shortages: The shortage of medical staff, including doctors and nurses, is another major concern. Doctors are often working in understaffed hospitals and clinics, leading to burnout and suboptimal patient care. They argue that without adequate staffing levels, patient safety is compromised, and they are unable to provide the level of care they would like to deliver.
3. Patient Care: Doctors frequently emphasize their commitment to providing high-quality patient care. However, they argue that the current conditions make it increasingly challenging to maintain the level of care patients deserve. Overcrowded emergency rooms, lengthy waiting times, and limited resources all contribute to a deteriorating quality of care.
4. Mental Health: The toll on doctors' mental health is a pressing issue. The immense stress and emotional burden of their work can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression. Doctors argue that addressing these mental health challenges is essential to ensure they can continue to provide effective care to patients.
5. NHS Funding: Doctors are also concerned about the overall funding of the National Health Service (NHS). They argue that the NHS needs increased funding to address the aforementioned issues adequately. Insufficient funding, they claim, hampers efforts to improve working conditions and patient care.
6. Privatization Concerns: Some doctors express worries about the gradual privatization of healthcare services in the UK. They fear that privatization could lead to a two-tier healthcare system, where those who can afford private care receive better services, leaving the public healthcare system further strained.

The doctors' strike is viewed by many as a last resort, taken only after exhausting negotiations with government officials

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and healthcare administrators. While the potential strike has raised concerns about the impact on patients, it also serves as a stark reminder of the challenges faced by medical professionals in the UK.

As the situation continues to develop, the nation watches closely, hoping for a resolution that can address the doctors' concerns while safeguarding the healthcare needs of the population. The outcome of this ongoing debate will undoubtedly have significant implications for the future of healthcare in the United Kingdom.

Angels sing their hearts out for Ukraine

28 September 2023



Epsom Social in the Epsom Square was the heart of Epsom last night as rock band The Angels beat loudly for Ukraine aid. Organised by Epsom based Surrey Stands with Ukraine (SSWU), 9 piece band The Angels rocked a packed Epsom Social with a broad range of great songs. The Angels and Epsom Social donated their time and premises to the latest project of SSWU: a fire engine for Ukraine.

Roy Deadman, who chairs SSWU reminded everyone that the war goes on, the need for aid continues. "No one in the charity receives a penny. We are all volunteers. But what we do is nothing compared with what Ukrainians are doing to protect Europe from Putin."

He went on to praise partners Medical Life Lines Ukraine (MLLU) who have to date sent 36 ambulances and a crane to the war-torn country.

Courtesy of The Ashley Centre SSWU runs its operations from offices in Global House, Ashley Avenue in Epsom. Premises shared with the Epsom Refugee Network (ERN) and used for English classes and advice sessions for refugees in the area.

The public can visit the SSWU kiosk at anytime in the main mall of the Ashley Centre and continue to donate money and necessities.

New volunteers are always welcome to help all these charitable efforts.

SSWU and MLLU are names for volunteer groups working through registered charity Harrop HR Missions Ltd (1117155), a charity founded and directed by Epsom solicitor Lionel Blackman.

ERN operates under the Epsom based registered charity The Good Company (Surrey) 1197493 directed by Jonathan Lees.

Classic growth versus environment dilemma

28 September 2023



Just 20 miles from **Epsom** weekend flights at **Farnborough Airport** could more than double if expansion plans go ahead.

The airport's owners are seeking to increase the annual number of flights from 50,000 to 70,000 a year – including a jump in weekend traffic from 8,900 to 18,900. They also hope to have aeroplanes taking off and landing from 7am to 9pm on weekends and public holidays, an hour earlier – and later – than currently permitted.

They say the increase in flights is needed to meet shifting needs of business travellers, opponents say the airport is trying to cash in on leisure and holiday travel. Airport bosses say the move will create thousands of new jobs in the area and are urging people to have their say on the proposals at a series of consultation events.

John Eriksson, chairperson of the Farnborough Noise action group said the people in the area already have no respite from the jet engines. He said his main concerns over the expansion were that it was yet another consultation before a

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review into the impact of airspace changes had concluded.

The claimed economic benefits, he said, were still being assessed by **Rushmoor Borough Council**'s oversight and scrutiny committee, and that the Government's own climate change committee stated there should be no increase in aviation until the industry was able to reduce emissions.

He said that on average, planes from Farnborough carried 2.5 passengers per flight, with many not carrying any. Mr Eriksson said: "We're going to have a continuous drone of aircraft noise. They already fly at a lower altitude to get under Heathrow and Gatwick airspace."

Richard Nobbs, another Farnborough Noise member, said the growth of the airport had been "highly detrimental for the area". He added: "We are going to end up with an increase in pollution, an increase in noise. Farnborough Airport will say this is needed because it will make a big contribution to the local area, but I don't see that. Most of the flights are to holiday destinations."

The airport, one of the largest employment sites in the area, has said it would publish detailed information about its proposals from September 20. They claim the changes would enable it to be a "catalyst for long-term economic prosperity in the region" and support 4,100 jobs by 2040.

Opponents say it serves mostly private clients with jets averaging 2.5 passengers per trip. Campaigners said this makes it difficult to justify the airport expansion's economic argument.

The airport argues it contributes £200m to the local economy each year, which in turn supports thousands of direct and indirect jobs in the process.

Simon Geere, Farnborough Airport chief executive, said: "By satisfying the growing demand for connectivity from Farnborough Airport, our proposals will create hundreds of new jobs within the local community and give a boost to the unique aerospace cluster that we are part of. This will be vitally important for the future economic prosperity of the region. At the same time, Farnborough Airport is leading the way on airport sustainability.

"We recently achieved Level 4+ Carbon Neutrality which is the highest possible accolade, and last year we set ourselves one of the most ambitious targets in the industry, by committing to be Net Zero across our controllable emissions by 2030 or sooner. We are looking forward to sharing our proposals for the future of the Airport with the local community and receiving feedback on how we can continue to contribute to the ongoing economic prosperity of the communities we serve.

Further details are available at FarnboroughAirport2040.com.

The consultation will close on October 18 2023.

Following the consultation, the airport intends to submit its planning application in November 2023 after which a 16-week statutory consultation will follow.

It expects the first planning decision to be made in March 2024.

Image: MilborneOne CC BY-SA 3.0

Not such a rosy report on Surrey Fire Service

28 September 2023



Earlier today Epsom and Ewell Times published a press release clearly attributed to Surrey County Council. Below is a report from our BBC Local Democracy Reporting Service partner which casts a somewhat different light on the presentation of the Report by Surrey County Council.

Surrey's Fire and Rescue Service "needs to do more" to prepare and train for incidents in tall buildings, such as in the Grenfell tragedy, according to inspectors.

In a report released on Wednesday (September 13) inspectors gave a "requires improvement" rating to seven areas they looked at, with three areas rated "adequate" and one rated "good".

Roy Wilsher's report said he was satisfied with some aspects of the service's performance in keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks, but said improvement was needed in some areas.

He said: "Given the nature of some of the problems we have identified, we will keep in close contact with the service to monitor its progress."

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The fire and rescue service was given a requires improvement rating in the areas of preventing fire and risk, responding to fires and emergencies, best use of resources and promoting fairness and diversity, among others.

The report sets out that Surrey's fire and rescue service covers an area of 645 square miles and 1.2 million people.

An action plan will look at areas for improvement

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service said it was bringing together an "improvement plan" to address all areas for improvement highlighted in the report.

Chief fire officer **Dan Quin** said: "We know that there are areas where we can still improve and we will address these issues as a priority. While we had expected a more positive outcome in certain areas we recognise the benefits of an independent inspectorate. This is an opportunity for us to re-evaluate our current programmes and strategies. Our aim is to address the recommendations and further improve our services.

"I would like to thank the inspectors for taking the time to learn about our work, for their recommendations and for holding us to account. We remain committed to becoming an outstanding service as we continue to put our communities first."

Inspector 'disappointed' with tall building policies and procedures

Under the category of responding to major and multi-agency incidents, Mr Wilsher rated the service "requires improvement".

He said the service needed to do more to "prepare and train for incidents in tall buildings", such as the Grenfell Tower tragedy in which 72 people died in Kensington in 2017. He said only a "limited amount" of realistic training and exercising at tall buildings had been done, and that it hadn't included all staff groups that would be expected to respond to such an incident.

Mr Wilsher's report said: "We were disappointed to find that the service had only developed a limited number of policies and procedures for safely managing this type of incident. It has procedures in place detailing the role of the evacuation officer but no effective tall buildings evacuation policy for operational and control room staff. The service should address these policy gaps as a matter of urgency."

The inspection also saw a new "cause of concern" given, regarding the service not being able to accurately identify how many high-risk premises it has.

The inspector said within 28 days an action plan should be provided which would look at identifying the highest risk premises and making sure all staff were aware of expectations of them.
What has improved?

While Mr Wilsher did say inspectors were "disappointed" more progress hadn't been made since a 2021 inspection, he did say there had been "significant change" in the leadership team as well as the transfer of some workforce to London Fire Brigade last year.

The only area rated "good" was "promoting the right values and culture". According to the report: "We were encouraged by the cultural improvements the service has made. The service is displaying more visible leadership, and the area for improvement we described during our last inspection has been discharged."

He added there was a "clear commitment" from staff and leaders to improve, with "some good foundations in place" but said it was "important the service gains momentum and moves forward".

As well as that, Mr Wilsher said SFRS had good systems in place to inform the public about ongoing incidents, helping keep them safe during and after incidents. This was under a "requires improvement" rating for the "responding to fires and other emergencies" part of the inspection.

Mr Quin said: "I am extremely proud of the hard work happening across our service and want to thank all of our team for playing their part. As a service we are committed to creating a fully inclusive workplace where everybody feels supported. The improvement of the service's culture was a priority for all staff, so we are delighted to see these efforts recognised."

The full breakdown of services in each category is as follows:

Good: Promoting values and culture
Adequate: Understanding fire and risk, future affordability, right people, right skills
Requires improvement: Preventing fire and risk, public safety through fire regulation, responding to fires and emergencies, responding to major incidents, best use of resources, promoting fairness and diversity, managing performance and developing leaders
Inadequate: None

Related report:

Surrey Fire service praised

Will the dust ever settle on Chalk Pit conflict?

28 September 2023

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For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

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Following years of complaints of dust and noise pollution from the **Chalk Pit** site on **College Road, Epsom**, residents and local campaigners say that stricter council enforcement is still needed amidst claims that site owners are operating outside of the conditions of their planning permission.

The land at The Chalk Pit, College Road, Epsom, Surrey is an industrial and commercial site home to several waste management facilities including **Skip It Epsom Ltd** and **Epsom Skip Hire.**

EPSOM AND EWELL TIMES EXCLUSIVE

An application to transform what was a waste transfer site to a materials recycling centre was first made in 2017 but such an upscaling of operations remained unlicensed until 2 May 2023 when retrospective planning permission was granted by **Surrey County Council** (SCC). The permission is subject to several conditions including limitations on working hours as well as the containment of operations within a secondary building to mitigate resulting dust and noise pollution.

Reports from locals say that the site is much quieter in recent months attributing this to enforcement from Surrey County Council to turn off a loud trommel which previously operated at the site. However, they also report that operations are taking place outside of the agreed hours of working resulting in continued distress.

Residents and local councillors have expressed repeated concerns since the change of operations in 2020 surrounding the impact of noise and dust to the mental and physical wellbeing of residents, as well as concerns surrounding the impact on the local environment.

At present a building to contain operations is under construction and operations are continuing pending its completion. Skip It made an application to SCC on 4 May seeking permission to continue processing waste outside of a building for up to 6 months whilst the building is under construction. Residents express strong opposition to the redactions.

Campaigners, including MP for Epsom and Ewell, **Chris Grayling**, have asked that tighter council enforcement of the planning conditions be implemented as well as urging the **Environment Agency** (EA) to maintain tight control on the waste permit conditions and to ensure the building to enclose operations is fit for purpose. Residents have also expressed concern over the number of lorries at the site causing noise in neighbouring roads which cannot be contained.

Skip It, who own the recycling centre, claim that their business has been victim to disproportionate targeting of complaints, saying that many of the passing vehicles belong to other site users and that their vehicle numbers are within council guidelines.

Skip It director, **Mo Maan**, told the **Epsom and Ewell Times**: “We modified a few things to suit our operation…no major change, because the building is going up.”

He continued: “If there was illegal activity, the Environment Agency and the council would have shut the site down, which they’re very good at doing. The same situation with dust – if the dust was so bad, don’t you think that we would have been shut down by now?”

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Aerial view of the Chalk Pit site cc Google Sat.

Planning documents, which can be found on the Surrey County Council website, show information regarding the extent of noise and dust assessments.

In July 2021 a Noise Impact Assessment by the EA (known as the 'Tofts report') stated that "NJB [land now operated on by Skip It Epsom Ltd] was at least 10dB louder than [Epsom Skip Hire] and was responsible for all of the measured noise" and stated the presence of "noise abnormal and prolonged enough to cause significant effect on human senses".

In November 2021, however, a report by **7th Wave Acoustics** stated that "it is likely that the noise from the on-site active processing operations will not result in adverse noise impact" and the site was "acceptable in noise assessment terms."

Skip It director Mo Maan told Epsom and Ewell Times: "We've had noise assessments done, which cost me a fortune to get done – independently, and by the Environment Agency and the council.**"** Maan continued: "We've got planning permission, we're putting a building up, but they're still complaining."

Former College Ward Epsom Councillor **Nigel Collin** told the Epsom and Ewell Times: "History has shown us that the operator plays the game well when it comes to observing the licence when a planning application is under consideration. Normal disruptive service resumes once the planning outcome is determined."

On 25 July 2023 Councillor **Bernie Muir** put a motion to council proposing that they install professional noise measurement equipment around the Chalk Pit site, leaving the equipment in place for a minimum period of three months, and responding to any breaches of noise regulations on the site with the imposition of a noise abatement order. It was suggested that £60k be allocated to the project. A vote on the motion has been deferred to the next **Environment Committee** on October 17.

Cllr Muir told the Epsom and Ewell Times that previous monitoring had not been sufficient in identifying which landowner was causing the nuisance and hence the results of the assessments were "unactionable".

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) has faced criticism from residents for failing to issue an abatement notice to cease operations during the period of unlicensed operations to put a stop to the resulting noise pollution.

Nigel Collin described the council's handling of the situation as "inept" and expressed concern over the lack of an overarching person or body taking responsibility for the situation.

EEBC told the Epsom and Ewell Times: "The areas of responsibility around the Chalk Pit site are complex and EEBC, SCC Planning and the EA all have different roles. EEBC have taken a leading role in co-ordinating a multi-organisational response to the various issues arising from the site. This includes regular multi-agency co-ordination briefings and a commitment to continue working with all agencies in trying to improve the lived experience of those living near to the Chalk Pit."

"EEBC takes its responsibilities to all residents seriously and will always act where sufficient evidence is found of a statutory nuisance. The evidence gathered during the noise monitoring demonstrated that there was certainly audible noise at times from the site which could be considered as having a negative impact on the local amenity, but not enough to be considered a statutory nuisance."

Nigel Collin, who has been a key figure in the fight against the unlicensed operations, said the definition of statutory nuisance was 'more than met'.

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Efforts from councillors to enforce restrictions at the Chalk Pit have been cross-party with councillors Steve McCormick (RA), John Beckett (RA) and Bernie Muir (Con) and Kieran Persand (Con) at the forefront of negotiations.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council said that they have not closed the case and that they will continue to work with the SSC and the Environment Agency to ensure statutory nuisance thresholds are not exceeded.

Surrey Fire service praised

28 September 2023



Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has received positive feedback for its progress in culture in an official report published today, 13 September 2023.

Following an inspection of the service by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) throughout March and April, inspectors praised the 'positive working culture.'

The report stated that the inspector was 'encouraged' by the cultural improvements that were evident in the service, adding: *"Staff understand the values well and demonstrate positive behaviours. We saw that service leaders have improved their visibility and approachability.*

"There is a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours."

The findings also highlighted that the service is good at keeping the public informed and has an effective Community Risk Management Plan in place.

The report outlines areas where the service has done well, areas for improvement and a 'cause of concern' regarding the risk-based inspection programme. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service are bringing together an improvement plan to address all of the areas for improvement that have been highlighted in the report.

Chief Fire Officer, Dan Quin said: *"I am extremely proud of the hard work happening across our service and want to thank all of our team for playing their part. As a service we are committed to creating a fully inclusive workplace where everybody feels supported. The improvement of the service's culture was a priority for all staff, so we are delighted to see these efforts recognised.*

He added: "W*e know that there are areas where we can still improve and we will address these issues as a priority.*

"While we had expected a more positive outcome in certain areas we recognise the benefits of an independent inspectorate. This is an opportunity for us to reevaluate our current programmes and strategies. Our aim is to address the recommendations and further improve our services. I would like to thank the inspectors for taking the time to learn about our work, for their recommendations and for holding us to account. We remain committed to becoming an outstanding service as we continue to put our communities first."

Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety, Denise Turner Stewart said: *"Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Leadership Team have put in place programmes of work to improve all areas since the last inspection in 2021. I am delighted that the inspectors recognised the progress made on SFRS' cultural improvement journey.*

"I'd like to thank everyone within the service for their continued dedication and for demonstrating our positive working culture to inspectors. Staff showed exceptional commitment to support the inspection process.

"It's important to acknowledge that there are areas that demand immediate attention. We are fully committed to addressing these areas with diligence. Our goal is to make substantial and ongoing improvement. We look forward to demonstrating these improvements with HMICFRS."

Related Report:

Not such a rosy report on Surrey Fire Service

Independent Surrey SEND school slammed

28 September 2023

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A “culture of discrimination and inequality” goes unaddressed at a school for children with additional needs, where pupils “fear reprisals” from some senior staff if they report concerns, according to Ofsted inspectors.

An inspection into the independent school was requested “as promptly as possible” by the Department for Education, following complaints from parents.

Inspectors described a “negative culture” across staff, pupils and parents at the school, pupils subject to “racial and homophobic slurs and sexualised language and behaviours” and leaders not showing the “capacity to lead and improve the school”.

Their findings rated **Wemms Education Centre**, in Long Ditton, inadequate overall and in the areas of behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management, in a report published on Tuesday (September 12).

The quality of education at the school and its sixth form provision were both rated “good”, and inspectors said teachers were clear about what they wanted pupils to learn and how, with curriculum leaders having “expert subject knowledge”.

But inspectors said leaders’ understanding of safeguarding was “weak”, without a shared understanding of what constituted a “serious concern”. Their report said: “Consequently, referrals to other agencies have been too slow, meaning that pupils are placed at risk of harm. Furthermore, senior leaders are not clear about who the most vulnerable pupils in school are.”

Speaking after the report was published Wemms chief executive, **Duncan Murphy**, told the LDRS the report did “not mirror other external reviews of life at Wemms” but accepted that growth has not come without its challenges. He said: “It is no secret that the school challenged some areas of the report; now that it has been published, it is important that we focus on what matters the most – being a school that reflects, learns and ensures that every child has the best possible experience under our tutelage.

“In order to achieve this, we have put together a comprehensive action plan outlining active steps we are taking to amplify our strengths and target areas of improvement. Trustees have added additional capacity to the leadership team, and it is also our aim to diversify and professionalise governance so that there is greater rigour and accountability throughout.“

According to inspectors, “strong work” done at the school was “sullied by a culture of discrimination and inequality that goes unaddressed”.

Pupils at the school are those who have been “unable to cope in mainstream education” and typically have social, emotional and mental health needs with almost all having an education, health and care plan in place.

Inspectors said: “Too many pupils do not feel happy or safe at school. They are fearful of the bullying behaviour of other pupils, which goes unaddressed. During inspection, pupils, staff and parents spoke of the negative impact on pupils of racial and homophobic slurs, inappropriate sexualised language and behaviours. Pupils trust only some adults in school to help them. Many pupils fear a lack of empathy, even reprisals, from certain leaders should they report a concern.”

The Ofsted report said pupils believed they were treated “inconsistently and unfairly” and as such “a culture of intimidation, mistrust and fear abounds”.

Six action points were set out by inspectors for the school, with fees of £50,000 per year, to improve.
Inspectors described relationships within and between all groups of staff as “severely flawed” and said the school was a “deeply fractured community”. They said there was a “a widespread lack of trust and confidence” in the school’s leadership and that parents too were “deeply divided” in their views of the school, particularly its leadership.

According to the Wemms website, the school was “proud to declare itself a ‘marmite’ school… you will love us or hate us”. It said: “Our school is for individuals and mavericks who yearn for a bespoke education, which allows them to learn in their own way and at their own pace.”

With parents able to write to the inspectors as part of the process, the Ofsted report said positive and negative opinions were equally received, and a smaller number wrote with neutral views.

Three quarters of parents who completed Ofsted’s online survey said they would recommend the school, but common themes were raised regarding “unsupportive behaviour towards pupils and parents, particularly regarding the management of concerns”.

Less than a quarter of staff who completed a survey said that the school was well led and managed, and only one third believed they were treated fairly and with respect.

But inspectors said around two thirds remained happy to work at the school and believed leaders were considerate of their workload.

Inspectors said: “A negative culture pervades the school and permeates across staff, pupil and parent groups. Some staff, parents and pupils are wary of leaders and feel unable to air their views or concerns. “Leaders should take urgent action to ensure that members of the school community are able to express their views without fear of reprisals. Leaders should

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work to establish a positive, shared school ethos." As well as this, there were concerns that leaders' responses to pupils' breaking the rules were "inconsistent and unfair" and that sanctions were not applied consistently.

The report said: "Inspectors heard repeatedly from staff, pupils and parents that pupils are not kept safe from bullying and abuse, including the use of racial and homophobic slurs and sexualised language and behaviours."

They added that there were no established strategies to address these behaviours and that behaviour and anti-bullying policies were not effectively implemented.

The school's nurse left the organisation during the course of the inspection in May as a result of her concerns, put in writing to the school in March 2023, relating to safeguarding, medication, staff training and a lack of autonomy to practise as a school nurse.

Staff, pupils and parents also raised concerns about the school's response to pupils' medical needs.
What does the school do well?

Inspectors said the pupils' experiences at the school varied widely, and that the move from a site in Leatherhead to Long Ditton in 2022 had "proved popular".

They said the pupils generally behaved well in lessons, whether working individually or in twos with a teacher and that there was "high academic ambition" across the school.

The report added: "Pupils achieve strongly across a range of subjects, frequently beyond their own and their family's expectations. Older pupils learn to drive, helping them to be prepared for their futures. However, these successes are not mirrored in other aspects of school life."

The LDRS understands some parents do not support the inspector's findings and are looking into lodging a formal complaint about the Ofsted report. One parent said the school had been a "life changer" for their family.

How the school responded

Duncan Murphy, chief executive of Wemms Education Centre, said the school had a "proud history of supporting children with complex and challenging needs" and two positive previous inspections were the reason for moving to the bigger site.

He said the report did not mirror other external reviews of the school, but added that the school "wholly accept and understand that growth has not come without its challenges".

With the school having challenged aspects of the report, he also pointed to pupils who "achieve strongly" and that many parents would be happy to recommend the school to others.

Mr Murphy said: "However, there have rightly been questions of consistency which we will seek to address with pace and purpose as we build for the future."

The school would focus on being one that would reflect, learn and ensure that every child at Wemms had "the best possible experience", he added.

With an action plan outlining steps being taken, as well as changes to governance for "greater rigour and accountability throughout", Mr Murphy also said concerns regarding discrimination and inequality were being tackled.

He added: "We firmly believe that our community can once more be united behind a shared vision of excellence for those pupils who need a school like ours the most. It is a source of great regret to us that the essence of this aim has been misplaced since the move to a new site last year, but now is an opportunity to drive improvement and ensure a long and successful future for our school and its community."

Unprovoked attack on man and his dog in Epsom

28 September 2023



On 5th September 40 year old Scott Smith of Tonstall Road, Epsom assaulted another Epsom man in an "unprovoked attack". After the assault, during which the victim fought back in self-defence and Smith "came off worse", Smith kicked the victim's "innocent" small dog with such force that he rendered the pet unconscious.

The incident took place outside and within a local supermarket and the episode was recorded on the shop's CCTV camera. This led to the prompt arrest of Smith who was brought in custody before the Surrey Magistrates sitting in Guildford on Saturday 9th September.

Smith pleaded guilty to an offence of common assault and an offence of causing unnecessary suffering to an animal.

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The presiding magistrate stated the offences were so serious the decision on sentence would be reached on another day when all “sentencing options” would be considered.

Hampton Court ULEZ maze challenge

28 September 2023



The expansion of London’s Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to the Surrey border affects attractions like Hampton Court Palace, some of which is on the charge boundary.

ULEZ, introduced by Transport for London to improve air quality in the capital, sees drivers of non-compliant cars charged to enter the area it covers.

Hampton Court Palace, located alongside the Thames and just over Hampton Court Bridge from Surrey is largely inside the new London ULEZ however some routes from its car park avoid charges.

The A308 towards Staines and the M3 forms the border of the ULEZ, meaning cars travelling along it are not passing into the zone.

Therefore non-compliant cars will not need to pay the daily charge of £12.50, and those driving to Hampton Court Palace will not be in the zone on entering the landmark’s car park.

However the exit from the palace’s car park is on the other side of the roundabout, where Hampton Court Road continues towards Kingston, and is just inside the charging zone.

According to a camera map on ulez.co.uk, the first camera on the A308 is further up the road, on the corner with Campbell Road.

This means drivers coming out of the car park and turning left to go back towards the roundabout, as they would need to, may not be caught entering the zone.

In response to a query on Twitter about driving to and from the palace in the newly-extended zone, Historic Royal Palaces said: “Hampton Court Palace and its car park are within ULEZ, however if you are driving from outside of London into our car park and back out again you will not be seen by the enforcement camera and will not be charged – provided you don’t re-enter the zone.”

A link was included to the TfL site to check whether or not a car meets the emissions standards, and would therefore need to pay the charge.



What would Henry VIII have made of a tax like the ULEZ charge?

in addition to non-Parliamentary “benevolences” he exacted from the wealthy he did impose a tax on all beards, except his own. So maybe the vagaries of ULEZ would have been to His liking.

A Historic Royal Palaces spokesperson said: “Our priority is to continue to provide clear information for visitors, to inform the decisions they make about travel to and from Hampton Court Palace. We will continue to work with TFL to ensure that we provide the most up to date information on this.”

The ULEZ is in force 24 hours a day, midnight to midnight, every day of the year, except for Christmas Day.

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According to TfL, nine out of ten cars seen driving in outer London already meet the ULEZ emissions standards.

Since its introduction, TfL said the ULEZ had already helped to reduce nitrogen dioxide pollution by nearly half in central London and by a fifth in inner London.

Several Surrey councils objected to the expansion of the zone, calling for a scrappage scheme to be extended to Surrey residents and for more exemptions.

Related reports:

Signs of Surrey resistance to ULEZ continue

London Mayor confirms drive of ULEZ to Epsom border. ULEZ explainer.

High Court gives ULEZ the green light to Epsom's borders

ULEZ court challenge begins

ULEZ driving old cars to Epsom market

Challenge to ULEZ gaining grounds

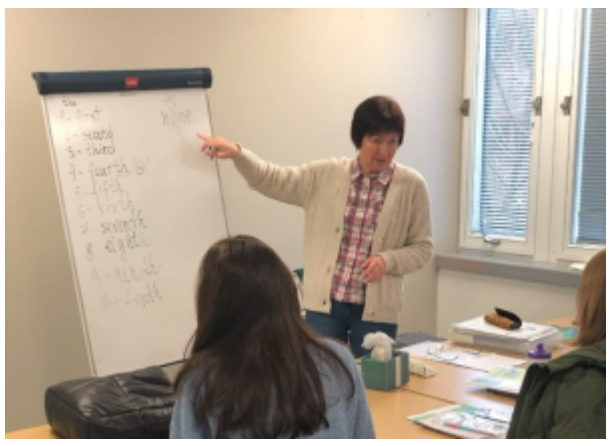
Many Surrey motorists will be paying the ULEZ charge.

ULEZ Court battle looming

Image: Luke Nicolaides CC BY-SA 2.0

Hosts of Ukrainian refugees appreciated

28 September 2023



On the Independence Day of Ukraine – 24th August, **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** offered a huge thank you to more than 60 hosts who have welcomed Ukrainian people into their homes as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and asks anyone who is interested in finding out more about becoming a sponsor to get in touch.

The council, in partnership with **Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network** (EERN), has facilitated more than 120 placements in the borough as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme since it began last February.

Galyna, who arrived in the UK from Ukraine in May 2022, said: "When I first arrived in the UK I felt really lost, as I didn't know anybody or how things worked. I was supported by the Homes from Ukraine team at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council soon after arrival."

Amanda, one of the borough's valued hosts, said: "Back in March 2022, we signed up for the Homes for Ukraine scheme and had no idea what we had signed up for, it just seemed like the right thing to do!

"We now have our second set of lovely guests, we know a lot more about the history of Eastern Europe, have negotiated government systems and learnt much about ourselves. We have no regrets and feel very proud to be a part of Homes for Ukraine."

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said: "I have been overwhelmed by the kindness that people in Epsom & Ewell have shown in welcoming displaced people from Ukraine to our borough.

"Hosts have helped families feel at home in a new place where they may not speak the language, showing them around and helping them feel safe.

"I'd like to say thank you to the many people who have supported efforts to help people in Ukraine, by taking part in the Homes for Ukraine scheme, raising money, or donating money or goods."

Nicky Marshall, Host Supervisor for EERN, said: "95% of placements work very well. Guest(s) become like members of the family.

"Hosts join the scheme for many different reasons and have fed back that it is enriching and enlightening, giving both parties the chance to learn about a different culture (and sometimes experience a different cuisine!)."

EERN works with Epsom & Ewell Council to support Ukrainians in our borough, providing regular English lessons, helping families navigate school requirements, and aiding people in finding employment, for example putting them in touch with the Epsom & Ewell Employment Hub. EERN also run social events that help Ukrainian guests feel more at home.

Anyone who is interested in finding out about the Homes for Ukraine scheme should email homesforukraine@epsom-

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ewell.gov.uk.

Anyone in the UK who has not been matched with a Ukrainian person or family can record their interest in the scheme, as long as:

· they can offer a spare room or home for at least 6 months

· if not a British citizen, they have leave to remain in the UK for at least 6 months

· they do not have a criminal record.

'Thank you' payments: hosts have the option to receive a monthly payment of £350 for up to 12 months, paid in arrears, for as long as they are hosting their guests and the accommodation provided is of a suitable standard. Hosts are eligible for the first monthly payment once the accommodation they are providing has been checked.

Find out more and register interest here: https://www.gov.uk/register-interest-homes-ukraine

Epsom & Ewell Refugee Network is a registered charity, part of Good Company (Surrey). They operate under a service level agreement with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, supporting Ukrainian families in the borough.

Their website is: https://epsomrefugeenetwork.org/ukraine-support

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