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Epsom’s Local Plan: Councillor claims public kept in the dark

26 November 2026



Dear Editor,

Your article ‘Another Local Plan? Epsom Councillors vote to begin again’ reveals a game of musical chairs where Local Plans meet Local Govt Reorganisation.

The farce deepens because a consultation on Main Modifications to the Plan (which is currently underway) has not included crucial information: What the Inspector told the Council it needed to do to make the Plan sound. This begs the question – how do consultees assess the efficacy of the Council’s response in the schedule of Main Modifications without knowing the Inspector’s thoughts?

The existence of extensive correspondence between the Inspector and the Council was revealed, but not shared, in a report to the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee on September 22nd. Unlike previous exchanges. On October 1st, in my capacity as a member of the Council and the relevant policy committee, I asked for all Local Plan correspondence between the Inspector and the Council following examination hearings on July 2nd.

Bizarrely these were treated as a form of FOI request, specifically an Environmental Information Request (EIR). I was then told the statutory deadline for a response would be extended and I finally received the information on November 3rd. This was a week after the October 26th Extraordinary Council Meeting at which the Mayor’s casting vote sent the Main Modifications to a public consultation.

The disclosure reveals dozens of items, many redacted, pointing to yet further documents which have still not been shared. A reasonable person might think that after an examination hearing the Inspector would give clear, published instructions on what needs to be done to make the Local Plan sound. However, private correspondence reveals lengthy negotiations over two months on what the Inspector would eventually agree. Negotiations which were not made public and did not involve councillors.

Consequently on November 24th, Opposition Group Leaders have written to the Inspector with our concerns. Furthermore, eight councillors acting together have requested an Extraordinary Council Meeting to table a motion which refers to the Gunning Principles that govern public consultations. The motion asks that the Council extends the consultation and ‘provide sufficient information which is available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response.’

We await a reply.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley)

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Related report:

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Letter to the Inspector

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