

Late hour Epsom kebab decision gets a grilling

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Fans of late-night burgers, kebabs, and wraps are in for a treat after the Epsom Grill was given permission to extend its opening hours. The hot food takeaway in Waterloo Road, between High Street and Epsom Railway Station, can currently keep cooking until 2am to close at 2:30am at weekends. On Monday to Thursday it can serve until 1am, and on Sundays this is brought back to midnight.

Now, following a January licensing application that granted the extension, and a 'Pythonesque' planning meeting where Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors almost voted against its own decision - those hours are to be extended.

The grill originally applied to allow service and closure until 4am, with all remaining days unchanged, but this was revised to 3am on weekends, subject to a condition requiring security door staff until 3:30am.

It then went to planning to be confirmed.

Councillor **Robert Leach** (Residents Associations of Epsom and Ewell: Nonsuch Ward) told the May, Thursday 28 planning committee. "This area is next to a railway station that has two lines going up to London. Every few minutes 300 tons of metal storms through Epsom station creating socking great sound and we're worried about the disturbance from a few people sitting in a grill eating burgers? I mean this is something straight out of Monty Python. I don't see why we have any restrictions on any hours at all.

"Frankly, if someone wants to eat a burger at 3 o'clock in the morning and Epsom Grill is prepared to stay open and cook them, I mean, why should anybody stop them?"

The meeting, and subsequent vote, went back and forth; between those who thought the matter had already been decided at licensing and that the planning decision was a formality, and those who wanted to reopen the debate.

Cllr **Jan Mason** (Residents Associations of Epsom and Ewell: Ruxley Ward) said: "It's far too late, three. I think what the police are saying must be from past experience and my own experience of it all. I feel that that time is far too late, they'll all be as drunk as lords. They will cook to three, it wont be four until they get out and people live here. They live in flats in Station Approach.

"Surely they want a decent night's sleep and I think four o'clock is ridiculous. So as far as I'm concerned, I agree with the police."

Opponents pushed to reject the plan, only for the motion to fail by one vote.

It left the officer recommendation to approve as the sole option remaining - which only passed after the chair's deciding vote.

Cllr **James Lawrence** (Independents Group: College Ward) said: "We're at risk of duplicating the debates that happened at licensing and came to a decision."

He added: "We have case law in front of us that says...you need to have a really good reason why we are going go against a decision that we just made at our licensing (committee) and why you think it will hold up against a judge's decision that's just been made a few months ago."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

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