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Up to £1 where sold

Local Plan battle heating up?

25 January 2023



A draft **Local Plan**, that will delineate **Epsom and Ewell Borough**'s planning framework for decisions on planning applications and development for the years ahead, has been published on the Council's website. Out of 5,400 new homes proposed in the Draft Local Plan (2023-20240), some 2,175 homes (almost 41%) are earmarked to be built on the borough's Green Belt land. EEBC councillors are due to take a final Section 18 publication decision on 30 January,

Of nine "Preferred Option" development sites proposed, five are Green Belt – with Downs Farm, where 650 homes were proposed, only narrowly missing the cut after a campaign by residents. Over 55 hectares – or some 137 acres – of Green Belt land could be sacrificed. The plans include one gigantic estate of some 1,500 homes on land around Horton Farm, which will have its Green Belt status stripped away.
The "Preferred Options" for Green Belt development are:

- 150 homes around West Park Hospital
- 1,500 homes around Horton Farm
- 25 homes next to Chantilly Way
- 350 homes on the sports fields by Ewell East Station
- 150 homes on sports pitches at Hook Road Arena (land owned by the Council)

A spokesperson for a local campaign group seeking to protect green belt land has responded: "*Given the Government's "brownfield first" brief, it looks like the planners did not get the memo. They certainly did not get the new memo from Government saying that it is not necessary to review Green Belt for housing. And they appear not to have taken the hint from neighbouring Elmbridge, who creatively avoided any Green Belt destruction, and Mole Valley, whose councillors this month voted unanimously to remove all Green Belt sites from its Local Plan*."

"*Only on its own land can the Council specify 100% affordable homes – the rest will be about 40% , as developers have many canny ways to get round this stipulation and build more profitable higher end housing. The Plan is offering just around 1,000 homes in Epsom Town Centre until year 2040, with a similar number only on other brownfield spaces, plus also around 1,000 for planning permissions in the Borough already in the pipeline* "

Appendix 4 of the draft Local Plan reveal other Green Belt sites that have been offered up by developers in a " Call for Sites."

Yufan Si, campaign leader for **Keep Epsom & Ewell's Green Belt** stated: *"So where is the real challenge taken up, to redevelop Epsom Town surroundings, which most commentators agree could do with some rejuvenation? The Kiln Lane and Longmead industrial areas are said to be off limits, according to consultants for EEBC, because of the 1,800 jobs there. So not a single new brownfield affordable home is put forward here, with no imaginative plan to mix housing with job creation and revitalise an area close to the station, shops and entertainment facilities that many people prefer."*

"We are left with the conclusion that the planners – and by extension our ruling Councillors – are in a "Call for Sites" trap. This has inhibited visionary thinking and pro-active engagement with urban developers on how much-needed affordable housing might be built in tandem with an exciting redevelopment programme that Epsom's brownfield areas so desperately need. All they seem able to do about it is to bulldozer yet another field of our Green Belt heritage" said Ms Si.

If Councillors vote at the special meeting of the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee on January 30 for the Draft Local Plan (Section 18) to proceed, then it will be formally published by EEBC on February 1, followed by a six-week Public Consultation stage.

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MP’s housing solution for Epsom and Ewell

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