

Glyn students brighten the Borough

29 September 2023



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and **Glyn School** have come together to transform an unused building on the site of the Upper High Street car park with a community mural funded through the Government's Safer Streets initiative.

Ten local secondary school students recently worked in collaboration with the council and international graffiti artists from **Positive Arts** to create a large scale mural celebrating the biodiversity within our borough. The artwork has dramatically improved the aesthetics of the building, which previously looked tired and in need of renovating.

Giving support to the project, Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said: "It is a goal of the council to ensure that our natural environment is both celebrated and accessible to all. This project showcases how culture and creative practices can help to elevate the natural landscape of our borough in new and colourful ways.

"This type of project sits within the emerging Cultural Strategy for the council, which seeks to nurture and champion the creative talents within our community while increasing access to creativity for all to enjoy and engage with. The students' teamwork has also been extremely impressive and is something to be proud of".

Julian Phethean from Positive Arts said, "The young people were really determined to produce something they could be proud of and that's exactly what they achieved!

"All of the students worked well in a team, made a positive social impact, and displayed a high level of creativity, focus and drive."

A spokesperson for Glyn School said: "The students involved thoroughly enjoyed this unique experience to give back to the community in a very different way."

ULEZ compliant taxis for Epsom and Ewell

29 September 2023



Taxis in **Epsom and Ewell** will need to be ULEZ-compliant in order to get a licence despite concerns raised from drivers. All licences will be given, providing cabs meet the standards, on July 1st, 2026.

However, from January, 1st 2025, licences will not normally be renewed for diesel vehicles that do not meet Euro 5 standards.

The ULEZ criteria was put to drivers in a consultation by **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**, with some saying their business would be affected, and one driver saying people may stop going out because of increased taxi fares. The response said: "If you want a ghost of Christmas future take a look at Sutton. Sutton once had small and large nightclubs, a cinema and a range of both independent and chain pubs and restaurants. Epsom isn't booming, but it is starting to recover and is a great place to go out. It won't take much to ruin that."

As a result of the consultation, an additional six months was added to the original timeline, with diesel car licensing planned to change from July 2024, to help drivers "already struggling with the cost of living".

A meeting of the council's licensing and planning policy committee on Tuesday (September 26) agreed the changes, and heard from officers that some drivers were already replacing their cars, having held out to see if the ULEZ expansion would actually come in.

The zone was expanded in August, and now comes up to the border with five districts and boroughs in Surrey, of which one is Epsom and Ewell.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge** (Residents' Association, Ewell Village) said he welcomed that more time had been given for vehicles to be replaced, and cited supply chain issues after Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic.

He said having spoken to Uber drivers, he understood they had been told their vehicles would have to be electric in the

future in order for them to continue to be on the app. He said the biggest change to emissions quality would be moving away from diesel and petrol to electric vehicles. The council would need to provide more electric charging points to achieve these aims, he added.

Cllr Woodbridge said: “I would support this council in doing what it can to accelerate the move towards electric.”

One respondent warned about the impact on Epsom’s “reasonable” nightlife if the cost of new vehicles was passed on to passengers and that people would “go out less or not at all”.

While another responded with concerns about his limousine business, saying their Chrysler limousine was ULEZ compliant, while their Lincoln car was not. They said: “I’m a small business and heavily rely on being able to trade to pay my mortgage, childcare fees and every other bill I have which is quite substantial. If the policy excluded me from trading it would have a detrimental impact on me and my family’s life.

“We are a service in high demand, so it would also have an impact on the public who want to use our service for their special occasions.”

An officers’ report into the policy said they had not been able to find any special exemption for limousines in Transport for London guidelines. They said there wasn’t justification for a blanket exemption for such cars and recommended they be looked at on a case-by-case basis when making a licensing decision.

On the timeline for the changes, officers said: “If the new standards are implemented too quickly it could result in significant hardship for the licensed trade, and if substantial numbers of licence holders leave the trade as a result of too fast an implementation, then this could affect service provisions, ultimately creating a risk to public safety.”

From January 1, 2025 the council will not renew licences for diesel vehicles not meeting or exceeding Euro 5 emission standards, and from From July 1, 2026 licences, including renewals, will only be granted to vehicles which meet the Petrol Euro 4 and Diesel Euro 6 standards, with some exceptions.

Specially adapted vehicles for wheelchairs users will be exempt, and those being used for home to school transport with a county council contract will get a one-year extension to both phases.

The policy was unanimously agreed by the committee, and will go to full council for agreement.

Related reports:

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Image Google street view Epsom Station taxis

Drafting of Epsom and Ewell Local Plan “unpausing”?

29 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 unpauseing?

"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.

"In conclusion, I support the unpauseing 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 unpauseing 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 unpauseing 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?

From “Princess” to Pauper’s grave in Epsom

29 September 2023



9000 patients of Epsom’s cluster of now closed psychiatric hospitals were buried between 1899 and 1955 in a now abandoned Cemetery. The Friends of Horton Cemetery are writing their life stories and seeking to reclaim the five neglected acres from a property speculator.

The **Horton Cemetery** is located between Horton Lane and Hook Road, **Epsom**.

On **10th October 2023** from 1.00pm The **Mayor Cllr Robert Geleit** (Labour Court Ward) and Mayoress of **Epsom and Ewell** will lead councillors, Aldermen of the Borough and the public in commemorating the lives of the 9000. The commemoration will begin beside the Horton Cemetery. Parking is open in the Hook Road Arena. Ceremonies will start at 1.00pm so the public is advised to park no later than 12.45 to allow time for the walk.

If you intend to attend the event you are requested to complete this simple online RSVP form.

If you are attending you should read the advice of The Friends of Horton Cemetery on the ground conditions and lengths of walks involved. Click [HERE](#).

Here is a taster of just one of the hundreds of life stories written by the volunteer team of the Friends of Horton Cemetery charity. **Steve Johnson**, one of the research team leaders, delved into the extraordinary story of a Polish aristocrat who’s family’s lives were upturned in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Felicja Staszewicz, daughter of Aleksander Skirmunt and Teofila Skirmunt (née Lubańska) was born c1873 – the seventh of nine children – at the family country estate of Porzecza, Piński (now Belarus), the family having retained its Polish heritage despite the partition of Poland in 1795.

At the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917, Felicja and Piotr, together with their family, moved to Vilnius where they remained until the end of WW1. Tragically, Marta-Karolina committed suicide at the outbreak of the revolution.

It is unclear where Felicja and Piotr moved to after WW1, but Piotr died in 1929, and by 1939 we find Felicja living in Teklinopol (her country estate near Vilnius which she had inherited from her mother) with her youngest daughter, Matylda, who had moved there in 1923 after her marriage to Jan Myśliński (also from a notable family that traces back to 1670).

On the 17th September 1939 the Russian army crossed the border and Felicja and Matylda, together with her two young daughters, Janina and Jolanta, were forced out of their home and moved to the nearby village of Wilejka.

On the 13th April 1940, in the middle of the night, the family were arrested and, together with thousands of others, taken by cattle train into Russia as slave labour. Two of Felicja’s sons, Aleksander and Jan Leon were taken by the Russians and were amongst the mass murder of thousands massacred in the forests of Katyn.

Read the full story [HERE](#) on www.hortoncemetery.org

Epsom and Ewell’s 3 - 1 lead lost in 12 minutes

29 September 2023



Epsom & Ewell 3-4 AFC Croydon Athletic. Combined Counties League Cup – First Round Tuesday 26th September 2023.

A devastating three goal swing in just twelve minutes enabled AFC Croydon Athletic to pinch a 4-3 win in this First Round League Cup tie at the Madgwick after we had led 3-1 and been very good value for that lead for 75 minutes.

And it’s such a shame because that first 75 minutes of the match was most definitely our most aggressive and threatening

of the entire season as we shrugged off the fact that a number of regulars were missing from this match and took the game to our visitors from the start.

The unavailable list contained Callum Wilson, Zach Powell, Chester Clothier, Ash Snadden, Tommy Williams, Kiyo Brown and Ethan Nelson-Roberts, but this opened the door for a number of players who hadn't had the chance to stake a claim for a place recently and Sirak Negassi and George Owusu both made strong claims for a starting place on Saturday with energetic performances. Ollie Thompson became our fourth Captain of the season and Nick Inwugwu came in alongside him and Reece Tierney, while Jabari Owusu-Hernandez and Ayran Kugathas both came in at the wing back positions.

Only 47 spectators were present to witness a match which would prove to be very good entertainment for a neutral and within a minute we had attacked with Ofosu-Hernandez sending an early strike over the bar from 20 yards. Then Thompson Adeyemi nearly got through with a clever piece of skill, only to be robbed at the last second. This didn't deter us and a ball over to the left found Negassi whose shot back across goal was well saved at full stretch by Oshane Brown's left leg. Brown had played for us twice back in 2014 when we needed emergency cover for a pair of FA Cup ties against Croydon, although when he was reminded about this, he couldn't remember. I suppose it was a few years back!

We continued to attack and Negassi saw his shot half blocked across the field to Owusu, but his side footed strike skipped just beyond the far post from around 15 yards, and in all honesty he probably should have at least hit the target. In response to this point, the visitors had just one strike over the bar from distance by Kamara. Then in the 20th minute Negassi was bundled over by McCarthy who picked up a yellow card for the challenge. Rory Edwards took the free kick and struck the ball at the wall, where it hit an arm and the referee awarded a penalty. Marlon Pinder stepped up to send Brown the wrong way in the 22nd minute and we were ahead.

Things got better in the 32nd minute as a great crossfield ball found Negassi who ran in and simply slotted the ball past the advancing Brown to put us two goals up. There was a suspicion of offside about the goal and there was certainly some protest by the visitors, but the goal stood. However, what next? Well, regrettably just as we needed to see out the half, Inwugwu brought the ball out of defence, but was robbed by Mal Thomas who simply ran in from thirty yards and drew Harvey Keogh out before then clipping the ball past him from close range to reduce the arrears in the 40th minute.

In a sign of things to come later in the match we got a little twitchy in the final few minutes of the half, as if we didn't know whether to go back on the attack, or try to hold on to what we had. However, we survived and went in at the break 2-1 up. Then with just 56 ticks of the second half played we restored the two goal advantage again with a pass to Negassi on the left and his left-footed cross was perfect for Owusu to head back across Brown and into the corner of the net from six yards. Moments later Owusu was inches wide with another shot, but it didn't seem to matter as we were well on top at this point.

Negassi sent another ball across goal that had both Pinder and Owusu stretching to reach it unsuccessfully, before Tierney suffered an injury and he was replaced by Jude Aikins-Hawkson at the back, making his debut for the club. Pinder made way soon after as Tino Carpene came on and then in the 74th minute Negassi was substituted. His replacement Jaan Stanley was flagged offside just as he produced a good finish from an angle with almost his first touch but we were still in charge.

Until the 76th minute, that is. It was hard to see exactly what happened, but a visiting player went down in our penalty area and a spot kick was awarded. Haile Richardson struck the ball away confidently and within seconds he was denied another by a superb close range save by Keogh. However, with the score at 3-2 and despite our dominance to this point, we suddenly seemed to go into our shell and the Rams took full advantage of this with a sweeping move from left to right that was finished off with a low shot under Keogh from Oriogun in the 84th minute. Brown asked us behind the goal if we would go straight to penalties at the 90 minute mark; which would have been the case, but we didn't manage to hold out that long, as a break on the left with just two minutes of normal time to play resulted in Keogh coming out of his goal but failing to gather and the ball across goal was then forced in from close range at the second attempt by Phillips for what would prove to be the winning goal.

We put on a couple more substitutes but the damage was done and despite the five minutes of extra time we fashioned just one more chance, earning a free kick right on the edge that Adeyemi sent high out of the ground. Our Cup hopes went with it and the whistle blew a minute later.

I am absolutely certain that we would have won this match had our recent form been better, but it almost seemed as if we froze within sight of a winning line we hadn't seen for a while, and having defended so well for such long periods in recent games, it was bit of a shock to fall apart as we did near the end. However, this level of football is relentless and unforgiving and we now have to dust ourselves down rapidly for the trip to Tadley on Saturday. This was, in my opinion, a vast improvement on anything we had seen all season from an attacking point of view and I actually saw glimmers of hope in this match, but we are going to have to be more clinical when holding the ascendancy in a match, or those glimmers won't count for many points.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ayran Kugathas, Nick Inwugwu, Ollie Thompson (c), Reece Tierney, George Owusu, Rory Edwards, Marlon Pinder, Thompson Adeyemi, Sirak Negassi

Subs: Jude Aikins-Hawkson for Tierney (57), Tino Carpene for Pinder (65), Jaan Stanley for Negassi (74), Ade Batula for Owusu (89), Ben Bauchop for Edwards (89)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Thames Water rebate

29 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 it 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 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.”

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

Another Surrey Local Plan Pauses

29 September 2023



The towns, villages, and open spaces that will take the brunt of **Surrey Heath Borough Council's** 6,000 new homes will be kept under wraps a little longer after the local authority kicked its housing plan into touch.

It is the second time this year the council has paused its local plan after announcing in February it would hold off until after housing secretary **Michael Gove's** long-rumoured but never seen planning changes take effect.

Now the council is blaming the "economic climate" and the need to develop a strategy for Camberley town centre - which has been hit by the £79 million loss in value of the Camberley Square and House of Fraser sites.

It has said it will now "review the timetable for the remaining stages of the Local Plan process, known as the Local Development Scheme".

Surrey Heath Portfolio Holder for sustainable transport and planning, Councillor Alan Ashbery said: "The council is committed to delivering the best local plan for our residents, while giving maximum protection to our highly valued green belt and special protection areas.

"Given the current economic climate, more time is required to review key policies and undertake further work to support the development in Camberley town centre. Once these important pieces of work have been completed, a new local development scheme will be published. This will set out dates for the remaining stages of the process, including publication details prior to submission to the Secretary of State."

The original draft in February was to deliver 6,213 homes up to the year 2038 - with more than 1,000 lined up for green belt sites. That left 2,700 homes, once those that had already been granted planning permission but had yet to be built were discounted.

The council's draft outlined where housing could be built - this includes employment, commercial, recreation and green spaces and was drawn up following consultation with residents and businesses in 2022.

After the February delay, it was due to submit a final draft for consideration in November 2023 but this has now been delayed again, the council said, to allow further work to be carried out.

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Spelthorne's neediest lose out on housing

Motion to pause Local Plan process (Epsom and Ewell)

Image: ffaalumni CC by ND 2

Gove: meddling and muddled over Surrey Local Plans?

29 September 2023



Michael Gove is a Surrey MP and the Cabinet Minister in charge of housing and planning. The progress of Local Plans across the County are in disarray. Local Plans set the framework for each Surrey Borough's planning policies, including housing, for years to come. The Independent Leader of Spelthorne Council in Surrey has taken on Gove in a fierce letter exposing the muddle in the Central Government's position. The draft Local Plan for Epsom and Ewell has been paused. Emily Coady-Stemp reports:

The risk of flooding in Staines has been labelled a “major concern” by the council’s leader, as she has hit back at a government intervention in planning for homes in the borough.

A last-minute intervention ahead of a key meeting this month saw a letter sent to the council saying **Michael Gove** directed the council not to withdraw its local plan.

The council nonetheless voted to pause its plan again, a move since approved by the government inspector allocated to it, and a response has been sent to the housing minister.

Councillor Joanne Sexton (Independent Spelthorne Group, Ashford East) said the authority, where she became leader after local elections in May 2023, had been preparing its plan for 9,000 homes in the borough through “an unprecedented period of instability in the planning system”.

She said during this time “major reforms” were being proposed by central government “which seem to change with the wind”.

Her letter to housing minister Rachel Maclean said the option of withdrawing the local plan was put forward at a meeting of the full council on Thursday September 14 because this may be a quicker way to get a plan through, rather than carry on with examination of the current draft.

Hearings into the plan started in May this year, but were paused in June while the council brought new members up to speed. Opening hearings heard concerns about the impact that putting more than half of the new planned homes in Staines would have on the market town.

Cllr Sexton said in her letter: “I, along with local members, also have a major concern in relation to potential flood risk in Staines which is where over 50 per cent of our new homes are planned to be provided.” She said an outstanding statement of common ground from the Environment Agency on flooding concerns could still end up being “a key issue of soundness”, the term inspectors use to say if they think a plan will or won’t work. She also asked why a timeline for policy changes that are due from central government has still not been published.

Cllr Sexton attached a list of more than 60 local planning authorities that have now paused or withdrawn their local plans “as a result of this chaos and mixed messaging”. She asked if the minister was “mistaken” when she declared in her letter that Spelthorne would be left with one of the oldest local plans in the country and highlighted other areas where the Secretary of State had not intervened, including in Basildon and Castle Point.

On Spelthorne not being left with one of the oldest plans in the country, Cllr Sexton asked: “If you concede this point, does it follow that you should rescind the intervention or is it your intention to intervene in the other councils with plans older than 2009?”

The local plan is the latest in Surrey to run into issues, with Tandridge set to put an end to its plan despite having spent £3.5m on it, and having first submitted it to government in 2019.

Cllr Sexton “took issue” with the last-minute nature of the letter from government, which came less than four hours before the meeting took place. She said: “This is completely unreasonable and unacceptable. At the very least you could have formally advised us earlier that you were minded to intervene so that we would have had the opportunity to understand and respond to your concerns ahead of the council meeting.”

She said the council would seek further legal advice on the intervention, and would send a “more detailed formal response” on the intervention in due course.

Referring to what she called a “total disparity” in the approach, Cllr Sexton also referred to a letter sent in April to Kwasi Kwarteng, Spelthorne’s MP.

In that letter, Ms Maclean said the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities was unable to discuss the details of Spelthorne’s plan in order for the examination of the plan to “remain fully independent”.

Cllr Sexton said: “You are saying that you are unable to discuss the plan, but can unceremoniously intervene and stop the council deciding their own fate regarding the plan? Can you please explain the total disparity here?”

In his response agreeing to a further pause, the inspector, Jameson Bridgwater, asked the council to address issues he had raised at the hearings “in particular flood risk and its potential implications” on sites where homes may be built.

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Image: Joanne Sexton Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council, (Ashford East), at the council building in Knowle Green, Staines. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp and Michael Gove.

Land, plan and a scam mess for Tandridge

29 September 2023



A land scam, £3.5million spent and residents being “ignored” have come to a head as a district council finally looks set to call an end to its 6,000-home local plan.

As well as uneven development between the north and south of Tandridge, councillors raised concerns about the draft plan not looking enough at necessary infrastructure.

After a drawn-out process including hearings in public, the abandoned garden village planned for Godstone and terse public exchanges with the government’s planning inspector, the council’s leader declared the plan “dead”.

A meeting of the district council’s planning policy committee on Thursday (September 21) decided to ask the inspector for a final report, despite an additional bill of around £12,000, rather than withdrawing the plan.

Of the options in front of members, the council’s leader said: “In either case, the plan is dead.”

The inspector told the council in July he did not “see a route to soundness for the local plan”, but at a meeting after that the council put forward options to find a way forward.

The local plan, which set out where and when homes will be built across the district until 2033, was submitted to government for examination in January 2019.

There was a change of administration in May 2021, when a minority administration of residents’ associations took control of the council.

The current leader, Councillor Catherine Sayer (Residents’ Alliance, Oxted North and Tandridge), said she thought the local plan system was “totally unfit for purpose”.

With a government funding bid for works to improve junction 6 of the M25 failing, central to the plans for a new garden village, she said there was “a big question mark over why the planning inspector did not end the process at that point”.

Cllr Sayer told the meeting: “In an attempt to avoid ending up with no plan at all and the threat that would mean to the green belt together with a huge waste of taxpayers’ money, we tried to salvage something.

“We proposed amendments and deleted the garden community and attempted to do whatever else the planning inspector had indicated might make the plan acceptable.”

The leader also told the meeting it was “common knowledge” that some of the green belt land planned for the garden community had been part of a land scam where more than 350 small plots were sold on an investment basis.

She said: “Most of the owners are believed to reside in India and Pakistan. To enable the garden community to go ahead, it would have been likely that the council would have needed to use its compulsory purchase powers to assemble the land.”

She said asking for a report from the inspector could “bring some kind of useful closure to what is such an unhappy and costly chapter for Tandridge District”.

Councillor Jeremy Pursehouse (Independent, Warlingham East Chelsham & Farleigh) said he was “very sad to see the demise of the garden community” which he said balanced out planned development across the north and the south of district. He said: “We can’t put everything in Warlingham and Caterham, it just doesn’t work like that. It will just make people who are living in suburban areas further away from the green of the countryside, we have to share these things around.”

He said the north of the district did not have the infrastructure for the kinds of development being looked at in the plan.

Councillor Mick Gillman (Residents’ Alliance, Burstow, Horne & Outwood) said he lived in the south of the district, which did not have the railways of the north, and described the A22 as “a car park much of the time”. He added: “It’s driven by infrastructure, and you’ve got to put a lot of money into the infrastructure in the south to get it up to speed.”

But he also highlighted his reasons he thought it was important to get a report from the inspector.

Cllr Gillman said the council owed it to residents to justify why more than £3.5m had been spent on “something that has failed”. He added: “What’s even more concerning to me is many of the reasons that the inspector flagged up were those that were flagged up by residents in the consultation process and they were ignored. And I think residents need to know that they did not get it wrong, and it was the organisation within the council that got it wrong.”

The meeting unanimously agreed to ask the inspector for a report, rather than withdrawing the plan, and will recommend this to council. Full council will debate the next steps for the plan, its next scheduled meeting is on Thursday, October 19.

Photo: Catherine Sayer Tandridge District Council leader. Image credit Darren Pepe/Surrey Live.

Bunting Boots Battersea Into Touch

29 September 2023



Sutton & Epsom 26 Battersea Ironsides 25, Saturday 23rd September. This was the first time the two clubs had ever met in a league fixture as Battersea Ironsides became league opponent number 104 at Rugby Lane on Saturday. Once more the Black & Whites were set against an unbeaten side and on this occasion they entertained the league leaders. The hosts gave a debut to fullback Luca Shaw whilst the visitors, not for the first time this campaign, made a host of changes to the squad who had downed London Cornish the previous Saturday. S&E turned the early season form guide on its head with a dramatic 26-25 victory.

After the recent torrid temperatures it was a welcome return to sensible weather that was most conducive to entertaining rugby. Freddy Bunting set the game in motion and within five minutes the Ironsides had taken the lead. A solid lineout in the 22 was followed by a penetrative carry by lock Jack Wharton before captain Stuart released the backs and winger Ben Turner applied the coup de grâce. The conversion from the flank drifted wide as Battersea led 5-0. Five minutes later and the visitors had doubled their lead. A stunning break from a ruck on halfway by blindside Raphael Arboine was snuffed out by a splendid cover tackle deep in the S&E 22 but the damage had been done. The ball was recycled and spun wide for Ben Turner to dot down once more. Another challenging conversion from Charles Stuart failed as Battersea Ironsides were 10-0 ahead in as many minutes.

The league leaders were content that the natural order was being maintained as they appeared to be on their way to a regulation bonus point victory condemning the Black & Whites to another demoralising defeat. However, perhaps there should be a pitch-side sign at Rugby Lane declaring: "BEWARE OF THE BUNTING". An illegal side entry to a ruck offered the Sutton skipper his first shot at goal. He duly obliged to put S&E on the board at 3-10. A few minutes later he was caressing the ball through the uprights again for 6-10 to conclude the first quarter. The second penalty being awarded for a deliberate knock on after a fine break by Matt Whitaker. The men from Burntwood Lane responded as outside centre Jacob Charles carved through the home defences and with a modicum more of precision a try would have ensued. Moments later his centre partner Ben Lyons held on to the ball too long and another chance disappeared over the horizon.

The SW17 outfit's progress was already being hampered by the regular blasts from referee Richardson's whistle. The sight of the referee shooing back the Battersea offenders the obligatory ten metres as if they were recalcitrant hens was becoming a regular feature of the game. Almost inevitably Freddy Bunting was given another opportunity to add to his account but failed to reduce the deficit on the half hour. The hosts rang the changes with Will Lloyd replacing Callum Gibson in the front row and Jack Benton taking over from Ewan McTaggart in the second row. The remainder of the half saw more probing kicking from both XVs as if they had signed a non-aggression pact putting security ahead of ambition. In time added on, normal service was resumed as Freddy Bunting bisected the uprights for the third time as S&E trailed 9-10. There was just enough time on the clock for the visitors to also have a shot at goal. Charles Stuart kept his head and landed his penalty from near the halfway line to conclude the first period with Battersea Ironsides 13-9 to the good.

As the sides turned around a fascinating contest was evenly poised. The early dominance of the visitors had been undermined by indiscipline as they threw around penalties like confetti and failed to heed the impassioned plea of 'cut out the penalties' from within their ranks. S&E grew into the game via a solid scrum and keeping it tight with the forwards carrying to good effect to counteract the threat of the Battersea backs in open play.

The Black & Whites started the second half in fine style. An early infringement saw Freddy Bunting kick to the 22. An excellent catch and drive was followed by Matt Whitaker carrying to within five metres of the line forcing a scrum to Sutton under the posts. The resilient Battersea defence held the line until Sutton were awarded a penalty try when prop Will Lloyd was illegally prevented from collecting his annual score. The hosts now led by 16-13. In adversity the Ironsides made the perfect riposte. Probing kicks from Charles Stuart pegged the hosts in their 22 and put the visitors onto the front foot. Then more incisive running by Charles Jacobs had S&E on the retreat as centre partner Ben Lyons was on hand to shrug off challengers for an excellent finish in the corner. Despite the conversion failing Charles Stuart's side had seen the restoration of their lead as the scoreboard read 18-16 to Battersea Ironsides.

With an unpleasant echo of last Saturday's match against Old Reigatian the opposition tries were like London buses and Battersea secured a bonus point for their fourth try a minute later. Capitalising on the bouncing ball from an up and under the Openview side tore into the Sutton 22 and scrum half Jack Moates dived over. Charles Stuart gratefully accepted the easier conversion to extend the lead to 25-16. In a blink of an eye the Rugby Lane crowd, who had been contemplating a first win of the season, were now dreading a fourth defeat on the spin. As the game entered the final quarter so the action switched to the visitors' 22. Despite pressure and territory the hosts had to be content with another Freddy Bunting penalty to be within a score at 19-25.

With only seven minutes remaining the men in green ventured into Black & White territory and were given a penalty.

Following the prevailing orthodoxy the pot at goal was declined in favour of the kick towards the corner. In hindsight, Charles Stuart's decision might have been a tad cavalier as a successful kick would have translated to a nine-point lead. Fortune did not favour the bold as they were undone by conceding their umpteenth penalty. In time added on a collapsed scrum gave Freddy Bunting the chance to kick to the corner for S&E to have a shot at glory. There followed 5 minutes of unrelenting assault on the Battersea line, heroic defence and unbearable tension with penalties and scrums as the action concentrated under the posts. Finally, a mass of bodies slumped over the line and jubilant Sutton players thrust their arms skyward. Mr Richardson took a considered look and finally raised his arm aloft for Rob Hegarty's try. It was left to Freddy Bunting to add the conversion that was greeted with rapturous applause and the final whistle as Sutton won 26-25.

Battersea Ironsides had the ideal start with a quick-fire Ben Turner brace of tries. Their lineout, whether on their ball or against the Sutton throw, was excellent. Centre Charles Jacobs was a threat every time he had the ball. Captain Charles Stuart varied the attack from 10 but ultimately they were let down by their discipline. The profligate penalty count spread like a contagion and not only cost them 12 points, but also hefty yardage and time spent with 14 men.

The Black & Whites showed character in bucketfuls coming back from the dire start and then overturning the 9-point deficit that culminated with the nail-biting denouement. For Sutton the pack was a source of great strength in the set-piece and the loose, Matt Whitaker was a giant in attack and defence whilst Freddy Bunting kept the scoreboard ticking over.

Next Saturday the Black & Whites visit newly promoted Old Alleynians for the first time since November 2012. The OAs have had a solid start to the campaign lying sixth in the table after wins over Gravesend and Sidcup.

Sutton & Epsom:

Luca Shaw, Jack Briggs, Ciaran Mohr, Freddy Bunting ©, Max Russell, Gareth O'Brien, Chris Ballard, Tom Boaden, Jack Howes, Callum Gibson, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, George London, Rob Hegarty & Matt Whitaker. Replacements: (all used) Will Lloyd, Chris Farrell & Jack Benton.

Battersea Ironsides:

Jack Winch, Ben Turner, Charles Jacobs, Ben Lyons, Charlie Craig, Charles Stuart, Jack Moates, Sam Chetwynd, Harry Vigar, Harry Batstone, Jack Wharton, Max Trickett, Raph Arboine, Alex Chitan, Charlie Horrell. Replacements: (all used) Jonny Newsham, George Williams & Billy Diamond.

Epsom Common Association: A History of Conservation and Biodiversity

29 September 2023



Founded in 1974 by local residents deeply concerned about the state of Epsom Common and the looming threats to its existence, the **Epsom Common Association** has since been a stalwart defender of this natural haven. The roots of their mission trace back to the 1930s when borough and county planners contemplated the construction of an Epsom bypass, with a road cutting across the Common at the forefront of their plans.

By the 1960s and 70s, these proposals began to take concrete shape, much to the dismay of the community. In response, determined local individuals rallied to form the Epsom Common Association, a pivotal moment in the ongoing debate that would rage on throughout the following decades.

One of their early triumphs was the restoration of the Great Pond, a landmark achievement completed in 1979. Yet, their work encompassed a broader range of objectives:

1. Preserving the Common: The Association was committed to safeguarding the Common from any potential housing or construction projects, road developments, or encroachments.
2. Enhancing Amenity Value: Their mission extended to preserving and enhancing the Common's amenity value for all users.
3. Conservation of Biodiversity: Recognizing the Common's unique status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), they sought to maintain and enhance a diverse range of habitats for various wildlife species.
4. Nature Reserve Status: Their efforts also aimed at maintaining the Local Nature Reserve status and advocating for National Nature Reserve status.

5. Contributing to Conservation: The Association played a vital role in conservation work through their volunteer team, ECoVols. These volunteers were engaged in various tasks, including scrub clearance, charcoal burning, tree planting, and bracken reduction.

To keep their members informed, the Association produces three newsletters each year, covering recent activities, wildlife observations, news, and potential threats. They also maintain an active online presence through their website and a Facebook page. See www.epsomcommon.org.uk

The Association's governance is facilitated by a Committee, elected annually during the AGM. This Committee includes representatives from **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council** and the **Lower Mole Partnership**, ensuring collaboration and effective management.

Membership of the Association is just £3.00 per household, and an additional £2.00 for postal members, making it accessible to a wide range of residents.

Epsom Common, though no longer a pristine wilderness untouched by human influence, has been integral to the local community for centuries. From its historical use for grazing animals and gathering firewood to wartime cultivation, the Common has a rich heritage intertwined with human activity.

To guide its future as a public nature reserve and promote biodiversity, the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council unveiled a Hundred Year Management Plan (2016-2116), approved by **Natural England**. The Association wholeheartedly endorsed this long-term approach and commitment to biodiversity conservation.



In their bid to create a mosaic of habitats and maintain a balance between grassland and woodland, the Association undertakes various management activities. These include the removal of young secondary woodland to restore lost grassland and heath, as well as the reintroduction of summer cattle grazing.

A success story of their strategy lies in the thriving butterfly population on the Common. It now hosts a range of butterfly species, from woodland dwellers like the Purple Emperor and White Admiral to grassland species like the Meadow Brown and Marbled White.

The diverse habitats have not only benefited butterflies but also thousands of other flora and fauna, including plants, fungi, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

The Association ensures active engagement with its members through events such as two annual evening meetings featuring guest speakers on topics related to the Common's heritage and natural history.

Additionally, they organize natural history walks led by experienced naturalists, covering topics like butterflies, wildflowers, bush crickets, birds, fungi, and bats. These walks provided valuable insights into the richness of the Common's ecosystem.

The Association's commitment to conservation extends to the welfare of cattle on the Common, with members responsible for daily health and security checks.

Another intriguing facet of their work is charcoal production, a monthly endeavor from February to November. The charcoal is made from felled trees on Epsom and Ashted Commons.

Finally, conservation task days, carried out from January to May and September to November, involve both hand tools and some power machinery. These efforts are conducted in close coordination with the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and Natural England.

As the Association looks ahead, their plans include the removal of young trees to enhance wetland meadows, continued

scrub and young tree removal to improve habitat for heathers and flowering plants, and hand-pulled bracken during the summer months to encourage grasses, meadow flowers, and heathers.

In sum, the Epsom Common Association stands as a shining example of community-led conservation efforts, dedicated to preserving the beauty, biodiversity, and heritage of the Epsom Common for generations to come.

You can get involved in the upcoming activities:

Sunday 15th & Monday 16th October at the Great Pond:

Removal of young trees along part of the eastern margin to open up a small wet land meadow for benefit of wild flowers and water fowl.

Sunday 19th & Monday 20th November at Bramble Heath:

Removal of scrub and young trees to maintain the open area and improve habitat for heathers and flowering plants.

Related reports:

[Epsom Common Green Flagged again](#)

[Epsom Common Bird Walk Poem](#)

[Uncommon commitment to the Common](#)

Local action to tackle global climate crisis

29 September 2023



According to the **Eco-Friends of Epsom** we are in an era marked by the increasingly pressing issue of climate change. The urgency of understanding its scientific underpinnings and potential solutions cannot be overstated.

Join The Eco-Friends of Epsom for a discussion with **John Mackintosh**, local expert in environmental matters, who serves as the Environment Manager at Mole Valley District Council and an Environmental Consultant at GreenGoals.

On Wednesday 27th September at 7.30 in the **Methodist Church, Ashley Road, Epsom** a meeting open to the public will take place. The event is not just about delivering information—it's about fostering a deeper understanding. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage with John, probing him with questions to better grasp the challenges and solutions.

Neil Dallen, who is a local RA councillor and active in Eco-Friends said: "Climate change knows no boundaries, and its impact is being felt across the globe. Unusual weather patterns have led to a surge in natural disasters, including floods, extreme temperatures, and debilitating droughts. While the causal link between specific events and climate change can be debated, the stark reality is that thousands of lives have already been lost, and countless more have seen their homes and possessions reduced to rubble.

"The evolving landscape of our planet demands immediate attention. While some may harbour doubts about whether it's too late to reverse the course, one thing is unequivocal: doing nothing is not an option. Our actions, or lack thereof, will profoundly influence the lives of future generations."

"The question that looms large is, "What is the right course of action?" This quandary is not one that any individual or nation can resolve in isolation. Climate change is an international predicament, and governments worldwide must come together to find viable solutions.

"You might be wondering, "Can I, as an individual, truly make a difference?" The answer is a resounding yes. Change begins at the grassroots level, and each of us can play a part in mitigating the impacts of climate change. By coming together as a community and sharing knowledge, we can embark on a journey towards a sustainable future."

Mr Dallen added: "Join us for an enlightening evening with Eco-friends in Epsom, where we'll explore answers to these pressing questions and more. Together, we can take the first steps towards a better-informed, more sustainable future for our planet and generations to come."

Related reports:

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