



A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

Is the Town Hall Parade over? For some 90 years the residents of Epsom and Ewell have been accustomed to visiting the local council in the Town Hall in The Parade, Epsom. The building has not been maintained sufficiently and to bring it to a proper standard, including modern energy efficiency standards, would cost many millions of pounds.

In a move that seeks to “kill two birds with one stone” the Council intend to sell the Town Hall in the Parade permitting it to be converted to housing and move into the Council owned and vacant Number 70, East Street, Epsom. Helping to meet housing targets and saving Council money and raising capital.

It was indicated that the Surrey Police office in the Town Hall would move with the Council.

A sum of £25,000 was approved at last night’s Full Council meeting to study the option further. **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley Ward) spoke from her heart in objecting to the move. She said The Town Hall in The Parade was “treasured”. However, hers was a lone voice as the decision was overwhelmingly carried.

Local democracy to be energised?

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has taken a significant step forward in opening up its committees to public participation. Under a new constitution the public now have the right to ask questions at committees on topics on the agenda! The previous constitution prohibited this.

Last night at a meeting of the Full Council a new constitution was adopted. After a year of weekly Friday night meetings and a Byzantine network of committees and sub-committees beaver away, the fruits of a cross-party effort were approved. Cllr **Liz Frost** (RA Woodcote Ward) was widely credited for her leadership of the initiative.

The end result is admittedly a somewhat labyrinthine set of documents: annexes within appendices within operating frameworks within a constitution. But, hey ho – the public now have clearer rights and Epsom and Ewell Times has extracted what you really need to know:

[CLICK HERE](#) for the key rules about public questions and public statements allowed at most committees of the Council. Note that these rules do not apply to meetings of the Full Council.

Will we now see more public participation at Council meetings, as illustrated in our accompanying image from Connecticut USA? (Happens to bear a slight resemblance to our own Town Hall Chamber). In contrast there were no members of the public attending last night’s Council meeting.

Image: Sage Ross CC BY-SA 3.0

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Surrey’s longest sitting MP to stand-down

Sir Paul Beresford will not stand again as an MP in Surrey, citing “midnight sittings” in Parliament and “a diary built around the whims of the whips’ office” as reasons for retiring. The Conservative Mole Valley MP, who has been in Parliament since 1992, told constituents in an email he would not stand again in the newly-formed parliamentary constituency of Dorking and Horley.

The next general election is due to take place by January 2025 and changes to constituency boundaries will come in before then, meaning the current Mole Valley constituency will no longer exist.

Sir Paul, 76, who is also a practising dentist, has been the area’s MP since 1997. The Mole Valley parliamentary constituency will be split up under current plans, with just over 60 per cent of it forming most of the new “Dorking and Horley” seat.



His 25,453 vote majority in 2015, and similar in 2017, was reduced to 12,041 in the 2019 general election, with the Lib Dem candidate, and Mole Valley Councillor, Paul Kennedy in second place each time.

In an email to constituents, Sir Paul said: "I cannot express how grateful I am to the voters in Mole Valley who have consistently supported me for so long and trusted me to be their representative in the House of Commons - it has been a great honour. " He said he had given "serious thought" to standing in the next election and that the decision to step back had "not been easy".

Sir Paul added: "I am very much of the view that anyone elected as an MP owes it to their constituents to throw themselves entirely into the role - and when you find yourself beginning to wonder what life without midnight sittings of the House and a diary built around the whims of the whips' office might look like - it is probably time to step back."

[E&ET adds: Sir Paul represented Croydon Central 1992-1997]

Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?

Exclusive to the Epsom and Ewell Times we report on the housing targets of every Surrey borough council. **Epsom and Ewell** is the smallest borough in Surrey with the highest density of population. Yet aims to have the highest density of new housing, according to the draft Local Plan, out now for consultation.

The table below contains the population stated in a Local Plan, if evident in the document. Otherwise the latest population figure from Wikipedia is used.

Council	Population	KM sq	Density	Housing target (15 yr)	Target per KM sq	Plan To Year	Status
Epsom and Ewell	80938	34	2,380.53	8640	254	2040	Draft
Spelthorne	99900	51	1,958.82	9270	182	2037	Submitted Nov 2022
Runnymede	83488	78	1,070.36	7920	102	2030	Adopted July 2022
Elmbridge	138800	96	1,445.83	9705	101	2037	Drafting
Woking	92000	65	1,415.38	4380	67	2027	Adopted 2012
Reigate and Banstead	147757	129	1,145.40	6900	53	2027	Adopted Sept 2019
Surrey Heath	88874	95	935.52	4980	52	2038	Draft
Tanbridge	87600	248	353.23	12900	52	2033	Submitted Jan 2019
Guildford	137183	271	506.21	10395	38	2034	Adopted 2019
Waverley	121272	345	351.51	8850	26	2032	Adopted Feb 2018
Mole Valley	87245	258	338.16	5295	21	2037	Drafting

The Local Plans vary in the period covered and some are in drafting flux. The table provides the average per annum new build over a 15 year period for each Council as far as stated or indicated.

Many plans were submitted or adopted before Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, indicated November 2022 that "Housing targets remain, but are a starting point with new flexibilities to reflect local circumstances" and "If we are to deliver the new homes this country needs, new development must have the support of local communities. That requires people to know it will be beautiful, accompanied by the right infrastructure, approved democratically, that it will enhance the environment and create proper neighbourhoods. These principles have always been key to our reforms and we are now going further by strengthening our commitment to build the right homes in the right places and put local people at the heart of decision-making."

The table above does not reflect many variables that may justify different housing targets. For example areas designated as areas of special scientific interest or areas of outstanding natural beauty. Also, there are many demographic variables: distribution of the ages of populations, family sizes and average incomes.



Furthermore, the mix of different housing types of the new builds envisaged in the plans vary from one Council to another. Big houses, small houses or flats etc.

However, the table does provide a broad overview.

Epsom and Ewell's Draft Local Plan states: "The housing need for Epsom and Ewell generated by the standard method is 576 dwelling per annum, which equates to 10,368 dwellings over the Local plan period. The Councils Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (2022) confirms there is no justification to increase the housing need figure over that generated by the standard method."

"The council considers that the scale of unmet development / housing needs in the borough that would result from pursuing a brownfield only approach provides the exceptional circumstances and justification to make changes to the Green Belt boundaries in the borough."

You can meet planning officers of Epsom and Ewell Council at the following times and discuss the draft Local Plan.

Monday 13 February 14:30 - 19:30 Bourne Hall, Azalea Room

Thursday 16 February 12:00 - 17:00, Ashley Centre, Central Square

Tuesday 21 February 14:30 - 19:30, Bourne Hall, Azalea room

Wednesday 22 February 10:30 - 15:30, Community & Wellbeing Centre, Sefton Road

Saturday 25 February 11:00 - 16:00, Ashley Centre, Central Square

Tuesday 28 February 10:30 - 15:30, Community & Wellbeing Centre, Sefton Road

How you can express your views on the Local Plan can be seen [HERE](#).

See today's editorial

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[MP's housing solution for Epsom and Ewell](#)

Housing need or desire?

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has embarked on a public consultation on its Draft Local Plan. The consultation ends on 19th March 2023. As we report today it appears that already the most densely populated borough in the County, the Council envisages a growth of new housing that also tops the target unit/KM sq density table.

The voluminous documentation supporting the draft Local Plan predicates the target volume of new housing units on "need".

Epsom and Ewell is a most desirable place to live in. Served by three mainline London railway stations, close but not too close to the M25 and short journeys to the two main airline gateways to the world. We enjoy many publicly accessible open spaces including Epsom Downs, Epsom Common, Horton County Park and The Hogsmill Open Space. No wonder you hear new neighbours say "We came to Epsom for the green space and access to London".

Controversially, the Local Plan proposes turning Horton Farm over to a minimum 1500 housing development. The question the Draft Local Plan raises is if piece by piece open countryside in Epsom and Ewell is given to housing will the place become less desirable? Should those who live here, born here, moved here not now enjoy the space they live in, were born in or moved to? Should other boroughs with more space not carry a greater burden of meeting need? Should housing targets be a County wide responsibility? The three Councils of Guildford, Woking and Waverley joined forces in establishing housing targets through a West Surrey Housing Needs Assessment.

Is the Council catering for those who want to move here or for new generations born here?



The Council is providing the residents of the Borough with every opportunity to ask questions and make their views known. We suggest you do so.

Top thrashes bottom

Sutton & Epsom RFC 5 - Wimbledon RFC 42 - Saturday 11th February. When these two clubs met last season the dominant Dons arrived at Rugby Lane as the unbeaten leaders after eight matches and overwhelming favourites against a Sutton and Epsom XV who were languishing with a couple of wins that included a walkover against the hapless CS Stags. S&E upset the odds and added a further dose of unpalatable medicine to their neighbours when they also beat Wimbledon at SW20 for good measure. That happy memory for Sutton & Epsom fans now seems like Ancient History as the Wimbledon juggernaut arrived on Saturday as league leaders with 17 wins on the bounce, including a November 41-10 victory over the Black & Whites, and pressing for promotion. There was to be no Hans Christian Andersen storyline nor a story penned by Roald Dahl as the visitors departed as 42-5 victors.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

	Team	P	W	D	L	Pts
1	Wimbledon	19	18	0	1	90
2	Havant	19	15	0	4	76
3	Camberley	17	15	0	2	
10	Banbury	17	4	2	11	27
11	Royal Wootton Bassett	18	5	0	13	26
12	Sutton & Epsom	18	2	2	14	20

Wimbledon kicked off on an afternoon unaffected by the elements and most suitable for 15-man rugby. Sadly Sutton and Epsom could not resist the Circean charms of the modern fad of aerial ping-pong that resulted in conceding the opening score. The Dons pounced on an ineffective clearance and ran the ball back past the grandstand crowd with outside centre Paul Hendry scything through the defence for his first try of a personally very productive afternoon. Ed Morgan effortlessly added the extras for a 7-0 lead. Sadly S&E's starts have often been more pedestrian than express pace this season and the Cape Town centre added his and Wimbledon's second try moments later. The hosts won a lineout in their 22 and Ross Parsons exploited the blindside but the ravenous visiting pack stole the ball and released their backs and Paul Hendry made the break to saunter home. Ed Morgan did the necessary and the centre was set for the fastest ever league hat trick against the Black & Whites as the hosts trailed 14-0.

The SW20 outfit were determined to turn the screw and continued to dominate proceedings with their excellent winger Ollie Kitto to the fore. Ollie Kitto is not a winger who languishes forlornly on the flank waiting for service but buzzes around the pitch like the most irritating and evasive mosquito. He was denied an assist when his legerdemain was dropped in the but he was soon crossing the whitewash. Wimbledon burst into the 22 and the ball nestled in the winger's hands and he made light of the surrounding traffic to dance his way under the posts. Ed Morgan made it 21-0 at the end of the first quarter.

Things needed to change for the Rugby Lane team and quickly. The team dusted themselves off and reminded themselves that this was a derby game by evoking memories of not only former glories against the Dons but also of their performance against Camberley the previous Saturday as they belatedly entered the contest. Sutton and Epsom began to play with more urgency and worked tirelessly to deny their exalted visitors time and space. Their reward was instantaneous as they were awarded a penalty that they kicked into the corner. From the lineout the forwards ushered Tom Boaden over the line with clinical efficiency. The conversion from the flank drifted wide but the try injected confidence into the body of the Black & Whites. Though the league leaders enjoyed the statistical superiority in terms territory and possession for the remainder of the first period the hosts were far more competitive. The back row triumvirate of London, Hegarty and Caddy were tenacious in the tackle and on the deck and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson started to gain yardage on the extremities. There was a far more determined defence that thwarted the visitors in their quest for the vital fourth try that would secure their bonus point. Steely resolve was evident in abundance as S&E defended



for the final five minutes of the first half. A flurry of a 5-metre lineouts and 5-metre penalties were all overcome as Mr Priestley ended the half with Wimbledon 21-5 to the good.

The table-toppers looked for a reprise of the start of the match and Ollie Baptiste-Wilson was forced into defensive duties as he fly-hacked the ball through the dead ball area to prevent a try. Once more Sutton stayed strong five metres from their line. The sniping effort of Rhys Morgan was denied and a subsequent surge was held up over the line. The siege was relieved as a grateful S&E accepted the drop out from under the posts.

As the Black & White defence pressed hard to deny their opponents time on the ball the error count mounted for their illustrious opponents as passes were knocked on. The cool, calm machine that had swept all before them in the opening exchanges was becoming increasingly frustrated in their search for the fourth try. What had been a ceremonial procession for the soon to be anointed champions was now a serious contest. Throughout this period the Rugby Lane team's attempts at narrowing the deficit were thwarted by the defensive excellence of Wimbledon. Too often the host's possession was disrupted at the breakdown by the scavenging efforts of Messrs Freeman and Pearce.

The Dons tackled with the ferocity of a side who relish their defensive duties and stripped the ball in contact on more than one occasion. In the dying embers of the third quarter the leaders finally secured their fourth try after a frustrating forty fruitless minutes. The vital score followed excellent Sutton defence that included a backpedalling interception and an excellent Austin Bell tackle but the weight of numbers finally told as Paul Hendry completed his hat trick. Ed Morgan bisected the uprights for 28-5.

The game entered the final quarter with the Dons hoping to improve on their impressive points difference in the table and Sutton searching for consoling scores. From the restart replacement Mark Scott powered his way to halfway but the support failed to fully capitalise on his break. The Barham Road Boys, more relaxed after the bonus point, forced another drop out as they encamped in Black & White territory. They were rewarded with a fine score from a scrum. A quick strike was gathered and a couple of passes exchanged saw fullback Ally Duddell surge to the line. The impeccable Ed Morgan converted for 35-5. From the restart the hosts pressed hard to add to the scoreboard.

Ross Parsons took a quick tap penalty and made yards but it was brought back for Sutton and Epsom to have a second chance with a kick in the corner. Despite a fine take by Josh Glanville there was no repeat of the first period success as the Dons halted the drive and earned a scrummage. The final flourish came from Wimbledon as they countered from deep and a flyhack ended up in their grateful hands and replacement Tim Ridler scored try number six. Ed Morgan kept his 100% record with the boot to extend the lead to 42-5. Soon after the referee brought proceedings to a close. Wimbledon were excellent value for their deserved victory with periods of sustained power and pace. Additionally at the breakdown and in their tackling they were disruptive. Who knows why Sutton and Epsom so regularly begin a contest in a lacklustre fashion? Please send answers on a postcard to the Club Secretary. Then they transform into a team trading blows toe-to-toe with the opposition and play with great spirit and no little skill.

This result has propelled Wimbledon closer to the Promised Land of Promotion. For Sutton and Epsom, nails and coffins spring to mind but one must never give up hope and their followers should find solace in the story of Gilbert's poteroo. Next Saturday they travel to Hampshire to take on Havant who currently lie second in the table.

Sutton & Epsom

Ciaran Mohr, Austin Bell, Sam Hurley, Lawrence Elliott, Ollie Baptiste-Wilson, Freddy Bunting, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Alex Mount, Will Lloyd, George Drye ©, Josh Glanville, George London, Rob Hegarty & James Caddy.

Replacements: (all used) Jack Howes, Chris Farrell & Alex Mawdsley.

Wimbledon

Ally Duddell, Ollie Kitto, Paul Hendry, Jack Reville, Max Lufkin, Ed Morgan, Rhys Morgan, Tom Boot, Jake Farnworth, Sam Gratton, Matt Grobler, Jack Cooke ©, Max Freeman, Connor Pearce & Zane Dillinger.

Replacements: (all used) Bradley Ugodulunwa, Mark Scott & Tim Ridler.

10 man away win a turning point?

Hailsham Town 2 - 4 Epsom & Ewell FC. Southern Combination League - Division One. Saturday 11th February.

Cast your mind back to the 19th of November. It was the day we made our last visit into Sussex when we made the journey to Wick and came away with a 2-0 win. That was also the last time we won a match, so it's pleasing to report that we now have another positive result to our name after this 4-2 win at Hailsham Town.



What made the result even more impressive after this chaotic week at the club is that there were more new faces on show, replacing others who had departed, including a new keeper in Toby McKimm. However, he was harshly sent off after just 27 minutes of his debut and the ten men, including emergency keeper Nick Wilson managed to produce the goods when we really needed it.

Pos		Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Pts
1		Shoreham	21	16	5	0	60	17	43	53
2		Dorking Wanderers B	23	13	4	6	40	24	16	43
3		Epsom & Ewell	20	13	2	5	46	22	24	41
4		Wick	22	12	3	7	45	36	9	39
5		Godalming Town	20	11	5	4	41	23	18	38

http://www.scd.org.uk/tables.php?comp_id=2

McKimm was not the only player making his debut this week as new signing from Raynes Park Vale Jaan Stanley played up front and later on George Owusu from Sutton Common Rovers would come on to score on his first appearance.

We were missing Gideon Acheampong, Jamie Byatt and Johnny Akoto who were all advised as injured, while Josh Owen became the latest player to leave the club. Also on the bench was the returning Alex Penfold; a decision which surprised me, but will have annoyed other supporters, given his sending off and subsequent suspension and release from the club last season. I have always found Alex to be a decent chap, but bearing in mind the tumultuous events of the previous match against Oakwood, his arrival just in time for the next one could definitely have been timed better.

With Steve Springett coming in for the released Aaron Bogle, Kevin Moreno-Gomez retained his position at left back, while Wilson played at right back for the first time, although of course, not for that long as it turned out and later on the spot would be filled by another unlikely full back in Jaevon Dyer.

Another knock to our club history and traditions occurred when we took the field in our red third kit, seeing as our club colours have been blue for 105 years, and on a pitch likened by one of our supporters to a crumple, the ball took a number of odd hops and bounces so it was clear that passing football was not going to be the order of the day. We would have to be a little more direct. We had a little scare on the quarter hour mark when the home side sent the ball in from the right, but the striker failed to make a decent contact and it drifted wide of McKimm's goal. A Ryan Smith corner was headed on, but over the bar by Springett at the near post before Ryley Tate picked up an early booking for a cynical trip on Athan Smith-Joseph with just eighteen minutes on the clock.

Two minutes later we nearly went ahead in bizarre circumstances. The referee allowed a good advantage and Smith-Joseph attacked down the left wing, with his low ball in being deflected onto the post by George Whitley and then out for a corner. However, from the corner in the 21st minute we went ahead anyway after Smith's corner was met by the giant Adeyemi and his header landed at the feet of Stanley who simply laid it back for Ollie Thompson to poke the ball into the opposite corner from around six yards out to register his first goal for our club.

Unfortunately celebrations were short lived as just four minutes later a harmless enough long ball led to a miscommunication between Thompson and McKimm and under pressure from a Hailsham striker an arm struck the ball just outside the area, for which McKimm would receive his marching orders a couple of minutes later. However, the view I was given by a number of people nearer the incident than I advised that the Hailsham player pushed Thompson into the ball where his arm then knocked the ball. Either way, it appears that McKimm was harshly dealt with and Wilson then took over between the posts; a job I'm told he had done before at Croydon in similar circumstances. Our defenders would protect him fairly well in this match, but he did well when called upon.

The resultant free kick was deflected off our wall for a corner amidst some appeals for a penalty and the corner was then cleared to Smith-Joseph, standing just inside his own half, from where he promptly ran fifty yards at goal from an angle down the right wing and from about twelve yards out literally lashed the ball as hard as he could past Ed Cooper and into the roof of the net for our second goal with 29 minutes on the clock. It was a fantastic strike and provided that little cushion a team needs when it is low on confidence and down by a player. The game continued in a fairly stop start fashion until the break with the only notable item to report being a yellow card awarded to our Manager in the 41st minute, presumably for something he said.



As the second half got going Adeyemi picked up an early yellow card for a handball, but the match settled into a pattern, with the home side trying to break through, but not having much success. Wilson was forced into a decent save in the 67th minute from a shot out on the right, with the rebound bouncing up a little too far for the incoming striker who couldn't keep the shot down from close range.

In the 73rd minute though, we saw another brilliant goal as Smith-Joseph fed Dyer on the overlap and his cross was met by a stunning scissor volley from Adeyemi which flew into the roof of the net from fifteen yards to become the second Epsom player in this match to register his first goal for the club and put us three - nil up.

And another would follow as Owusu forced in a great low Smith-Joseph cross six minutes later after only being on the field for nine minutes. However, in between these strikes Hailsham had pulled a goal back through Tate after the ball reached him a few yards out after Wilson and / or a defender had done well to keep the original threat out, with a little help from a post in the 77th minute.

The final words went to the home side as Luca Bish, better known to younger supporters as a partner of footballer Michael Owen's daughter Gemma on TV's Love Island in 2022, but this time he did manage to score! It was another decent strike from just inside the area and gave Wilson no chance, although with the clock already showing the third minute of injury time, there was to be no further fightback and the match ended in a 4-2 victory to maintain our perfect record at the Beaconsfield of four wins from four visits dating back to 1993.

This result may just re-start our season on the field and may prove to be one of the most important results of the year when we look back.

Epsom & Ewell: Toby McKimm, Nick Wilson, Kevin Moreno-Gomez, Ryan Smith (c), Steve Springett, Oliver Thompson, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jaan Stanley, Thompson Adeyemi, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Alex Penfold for Moreno-Gomez (51), George Owusu for Stanley (70), Musa Beegun for Adeyemi (81)

Epsom's creatives urged to push for growth

Creative Businesses in and around Epsom are being encouraged to sign-up to Surrey's first Creative Growth and Business Summit. Taking place on March 1 and set-up by the **University for the Creative Arts**, the free-to-attend event will bring together the region's creative trailblazers, entrepreneurs, and creative academic experts to look at how Surrey can build on its global reputation in the sector.

Part of a £450,000 project to fund collaborations and innovation in Surrey's creative sector, the summit will also see the launch of the **Creative Industries Network**.

Professor **Simon Macklin**, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at UCA, said:

"Surrey is home to some of the world's most innovative companies, practitioners, and entrepreneurs in the creative industries. This summit is all about bringing the creative sector together so that we can look at how we can share the University's research, expertise and international connections to turbo-charge growth in the sector across Surrey."

As well as providing opportunities to network, the summit will also provide information on how businesses can access the University's expertise in securing funding to develop new opportunities.

The summit takes place on March 1 at UCA's Farnham campus. Visit uca.ac.uk/growth for more information and to sign up.

The University for the Creative Arts is a specialist art and design university in the south of England. It was formed in 2005 as University College for the Creative Arts at Canterbury, **Epsom**, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester when the Kent Institute of Art and Design was merged into the Surrey Institute of Art & Design, which already had degree-awarding status;^[4] both constituent schools had been formed by merging the local art schools, in Kent and Surrey respectively. It was granted university status in 2008, and the name changed to the present one. In 2016, it merged with the Open College of the Arts



“On Your Bike” to Surrey’s PCSOs?

A Surrey County Councillor has criticised the reduction in the number of Police Community Support Officers in recent years. PCSOs are non-warranted but provided with a variety of police powers and the power of a constable in various instances by the forty-three territorial police forces in England and Wales and the British Transport. Surrey Police employ about 2,153 warranted officers.

Analysis of new Home Office statistics commissioned by the Liberal Democrats from the House of Commons Library has shown the drastic cuts to PCSOs in Surrey. They claim a total of 88 full-time equivalent PCSOs were employed in Surrey as of September 2022. This is in stark contrast to the 123 that were employed in March 2015 – meaning there have been 35 PCSOs cut from Surrey Police in that time.

Cllr Will Forster (Woking South) stated: “These shocking figures prove that Conservative Ministers are yet again failing to prevent crime in Surrey. They should be ashamed. Police Community Support Officers play a vital role in keeping our communities safe. The Government should be empowering them to do their job, not slashing their numbers into oblivion. Liberal Democrats are calling for a return to proper community policing, where officers are visible, trusted and known personally to local people. We will build communities where people are safe – and feel safe, too.”

Epsom and Ewell Times asked Surrey Police for their take on the figures and a spokesperson said: “In 2022, to contribute to savings across the force, we reduced the number of Police Community Support Officers in Surrey Police to 96, 22 posts fewer than our previous staffing level of 118 full-time equivalent PCSOs. This reduction did not involve redundancies and achieving this staffing level did not result in a reduction in overall numbers in our Safer Neighbourhood Teams; we maintain a strong blended mix of police officers and PCSOs in these key frontline posts.

In September 2022, Surrey Police employed 88 PCSOs. This is lower than our desired number of PCSOs, so it is inaccurate to say that 35 PCSO roles have been cut by the Force. We are actively recruiting to bring our establishment level back up to 96.

We know how important a visible police team with local knowledge is to residents in each of our boroughs. A trusted, knowledgeable, and proactive local policing presence is just as important to us, and PCSOs are a valued and integral part of that.”

What is your view about visible policing in Epsom and Ewell? Write in to Epsom and Ewell Times.

Image West Midlands Police – <https://www.flickr.com/photos/westmidlandspolice/7042127963/> CC BY-SA 2.0

Blot on Epsom Downs horizon to grow no more?

Ever wondered where are those tower-blocks on the west horizon from Epsom Downs? Our LDRS journalist reports on Woking Council’s consideration of the height of its buildings:

Plans to limit high-rise development in Woking is akin to slamming the stable door shut after the horse has bolted, Surrey County Council’s ex-head of planning has said. On Thursday February 2, Woking Borough Council’s executive committee agreed to press ahead with its goal to create a masterplan that would “provide a long-term vision” for the town centre’s skyline.

It continues work that began in 2021 that included a six-month consultation which garnered more than 850 responses from about 450 individuals and organisations. According to council documents, though, there remain several legal issues the borough must overcome before it adopts the full masterplan, including the fallout of the Planning Inspectorate decision on the Crown Place from December 3 2022 that granted planning permission three towers of 23, 25 and 28 storeys respectively.

The appeal decision has had a “clear implication” for the Masterplan, the report read, “in that it has changed the nature of the townscape” and that “as a minimum, the design principles for this site, including what prospective heights may be appropriate, will need reconsidering.”

Furthermore, the report states, during the public consultation phase, Woking Borough Council received representations from developers regarding the possibility of legal challenges if it were to be adopted. There is also the financial risk with officers identifying “significant” cost implications and suggesting the only way to “avoid unnecessary additional expense to the taxpayers purse” is not to proceed to adopt the Town Centre Masterplan in its current draft form.

This has caused the council to seek legal advice on how to proceed. Whether the masterplan can ever have the impact the council



desires – fewer high rises in the town centre is debated.

Catriona Riddell is a former head of planning at Surrey County Council and current director at Catriona Riddell & Associates. She said: “Woking is a very tiny, very constrained borough with a lot of debate about how high up the developments go. Anywhere from Surrey you can see Woking. Some love it, some hate it. It’s very much Marmite.

“The Government is trying to help local authorities restrict the number of high rises but with Woking, it is going to be difficult as it already has so many. The local plan is in place in Woking and is up to date – that’s what developers will look at. Any supplementary planning won’t have the same status. Developers are used to playing this game. It’s going to be difficult for the council to change this.”

According to council papers, the masterplan will establish an “overarching vision for the town centre to enable designed, sustainable development, such as building new homes, cultivating a thriving retail and business environment and strengthening Woking’s cultural and leisure offer”.

The report said that the “ambition and need for a clear and robust plan to guide development in the town centre, to give certainty to developers wishing to invest, and provide officers with an effective tool to assess planning applications and defend decisions on appeal remains”.

This, Ms Riddell says, may be the best way for the authority to move forward. She added: ‘It will be about how to make the area a good place to live and work and the only way is through a masterplan so they are right to go ahead with it but it will be difficult with developers looking to build highrises. It will be very difficult for the council to argue its out of character. Woking has changed massively over the years, that horse has bolted.”