



Epsom and Ewell last in Local Planning

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) has approved a delayed timeframe for the development of its new **Local Plan**, putting it behind both government targets and other Surrey councils, amid debate over greenbelt development.

On 21st November, EEBC's Planning Policy and Licensing Committee unanimously approved a **Local Development Scheme** (LDS), which sets out a timeframe for the development of its new Local Plan that would see the planning authority miss a government target by more than a year. The Local Plan will set out planning policies and sites that may be developed in the borough up until 2040.

The LDS supersedes the version approved by the council in April, and delays the first stage in the development of the Local Plan by three months. It forecasts that the Local Plan will be adopted in Spring 2025. In an agenda paper, the council's interim Chief Executive **Jackie King** pointed out that "the government will want to see progression against their target date of all Local Planning authorities having an up-to-date Local Plan by the end of 2023."

In 2017, the Government made it a legal requirement for Local Plans to be updated, and if necessary updated, every five years. Epsom's current planning framework consists of four documents dated between 2007 and 2015. The council has said that the national period of mourning following the death of Queen Elizabeth II caused delays because councillor briefings were rescheduled. Ms King also said that there were delays "to allow further member briefing sessions to be undertaken to enable members to fully engage with and help shape the Local Plan."

At the committee meeting, Councillor **Julie Morris** (Liberal Democrats, College Ward) said: "The period of mourning was three weeks, and yet we have a three-month delay." She added that it was "regrettable" that the committee's chair, Councillor **Steven McCormick** (Residents Association, Woodcote Ward), had "put a lot of effort in trying to get councillors to attend briefing sessions" but that "at least one has had to be re-run because of lack of attendance." She continued: "There is a communication failure. Councillors outside the committee do not realise the importance of the document, give it the deference it deserves, or give their views."

The new LDS means that EEBC will be the last local council in Surrey to adopt a new Local Plan, with the exception of Woking Borough Council and Banstead and Reigate Borough Council, who said their plans did not need updating.

Surrey district/borough council	Pre-Publication Stage - Consultation. (Regulation 18)	Publication of Submission Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19)	Submission and Examination of Local Plan (Regulation 22)	Adoption
Elmbridge		Ran from June-July 2022	Scheduled for Winter 2022	Scheduled for Summer 2023
Epsom	Scheduled for Feb-March 2023	Scheduled for Feb-March 2024	Scheduled for June 2024	Scheduled for Spring 2025
Guildford			Part 2 submitted June 2022	Part 1 adopted April 2019. Part 2 scheduled for March 2023.
Mole Valley			Submitted February 2022	Scheduled for Spring 2023.
Runnymede				Adopted July 2020
Spelthorne		Ran from June-Sep 2022	Scheduled for Nov 2022	Scheduled for Sep 2023
Surrey Heath	Ran from March-May 2022	Scheduled for Jan-Feb 2023	Scheduled for June 2023	Scheduled for Dec 2023
Tandridge			Submitted January 2019	Scheduled for Oct-Dec 2023



Waverley				Part 1 adopted February 2018. Part 2 was scheduled for Sep-Oct 2022.
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*Woking Borough Council declared that its plan was up to date in October 2018. Reigate and Banstead Borough Council declared its plan up to date in June 2019.

There has also been debate about developing on greenbelt land in the borough. Greenbelt land includes areas of countryside that are protected from development in order to prevent urban sprawl and encourage development within existing built-up areas. A member of the public attending the committee asked what the council was doing to preserve greenbelt land, and if it would “pause greenbelt development and research brownfield development” as an alternative. Brownfield sites are areas of land that have previously been used for development but are not currently in use.

Councillor **Steven McCormick** said that the council “should follow government policy in its approach to greenbelt”. Government policy is that greenbelt land should not be altered except in exceptional circumstances. Councillor McCormick said: “If alternative options are considered, it is sufficient to release greenbelt land to meet housing needs”.

Councillor Morris said she wished to clarify that the council had “sympathy” with what the member of the public asked. She added: “But it’s too early. There is every intention of not overdeveloping the borough. It may be that we don’t go for these plans, but the evidence is needed. It’s too early to say what we’ll arrive at.”

No draft of a Local Plan has yet been made public. In a recent email to constituents, Epsom and Ewell MP **Chris Grayling** said that he expects “the Borough Council to publish its initial thinking about the plan shortly”. He wrote: “We clearly have a need for new homes locally. There are too many young people who grow up or are educated here but cannot afford to remain in the area. And we have a serious shortage of social housing.” He added: “My worry is that developing the green belt is an easy option for the Council. It is always more complicated to reorganise what has already been developed than to build on a green field, but in our area it is much better to take the more difficult approach.”

Gina Miller, leader of the True and Fair Party, who has announced that she will run against Grayling in the next general election, criticised his comments on Twitter. She wrote: “Not surprising but disappointing that Chris Grayling backed abolishing housing targets, making it nigh on impossible to help young people onto the property ladder nationally, whilst calling for new homes in Epsom & Ewell”.

The first stage in the development of the Local Plan, which includes consultation with residents, is now scheduled for February-March 2023.

See earlier reports on The Local Plan:

Local Planning Matters

The Local Plan to plan The Local Plan

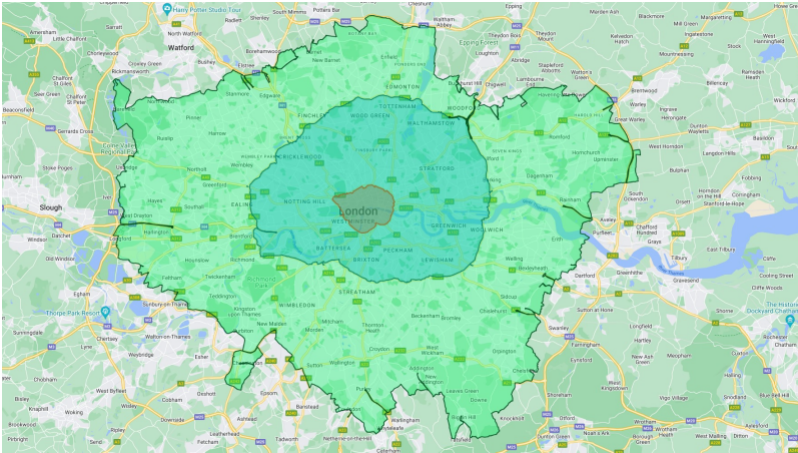
BBC misreports Epsom and Ewell planning?

Another £1/4 m to plan planning

Will Epsom think on the same lines?

Trams into Surrey have been raised as one “very possible solution” to improving public transport with the expansion of the capital’s **Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ)**. The zone’s expansion was confirmed on Friday (November 25), and Elmbridge councillors had discussed the matter with a Transport for London (TfL) representative the previous evening at an overview and scrutiny meeting.

Councillors raised issues around public transport in the borough, saying it was not as good as that in greater London, and asking what could be done to improve it so people were less reliant on their cars. The ULEZ will be expanded from August 2023 to cover the area currently in the Low Emission Zone boundary. It will mean the zone, where drivers in non-compliant cars pay £12.50 per day if they enter it, will come up to the border with Surrey.



Speaking before the decision had been announced, Elmbridge Councillor **Graham Woolgar** (The Walton Society, Walton Central) said the question of better public transport in Elmbridge was “one of money”. He said it was unlikely the county council would find more money to improve buses in Elmbridge, and TfL would not help either because the area is outside London.

He asked **Iain Killingbeck**, community partnerships lead – west, for TfL: “There wouldn’t be any prospect of public transport being improved, would you agree with that?” Mr Killingbeck said he did not accept that, though TfL’s responsibility was for transport in the capital. He said getting people out of their cars, especially on shorter journeys, and promoting walking and cycling was what TfL encouraged. He added: “That’s what we do at TfL, that’s what we’re all about. So we can help to collaborate, partner and work with you, but we don’t have the responsibility for the county or for this area.”

According to the Mayor’s office, the existing ULEZ has reduced roadside pollution levels by 44 per cent in central London and 20 per cent in inner London.

Speaking after the meeting, the county council’s leader, **Cllr Tim Oliver** (Conservative, Weybridge) pointed to the authority’s £50million investment in electric buses and the same amount in hydrogen buses in the county. There is also an on-demand electric bus service operating in some parts of Surrey including Tandridge and Mole Valley, and due to be rolled out to other areas.

Cllr Oliver told the LDRS: “We will invest whatever we possibly can. I’m a big believer that we are never going to get people out of their cars if there isn’t a good alternative public transport system.” He said the county council had “put the message across” to the London Mayor about the impact the expansion would have on Surrey residents, including in areas such as East Molesey where drivers will be charged if they cross Hampton Court Bridge towards Bushy Park.

The county council, as well as borough and district councils, responded to a consultation that ran over the summer on the plans, highlighting issues such as scrappage schemes, health appointments and requesting to delay the expansion. Cllr Oliver said: “We’ve done everything we possibly can to say: ‘You can’t do this, it’s not fair on our residents.’”

In Thursday’s Elmbridge meeting, Long Ditton Councillor **Jez Langham** (Liberal Democrat) explained his ward bordered London and agreed public transport needed to be better for residents. He pointed to the success of **trams** in cities such as Sheffield and Manchester, as well as in Wimbledon, though he mentioned the Croydon tram crash of 2016 in which seven people died. Cllr Langham said: “Nonetheless it is a successful line, and given the lack of tubes around, it would seem to be a very possible solution.”

Mr Killingbeck said trams were “relatively affordable” but that there wouldn’t be the option of getting a tram line in place before the August 2023 expansion. He added: “I accept, we need to strengthen public transport.”

Cllr Oliver said trams could work in more urban areas of Surrey such as Guildford or Woking, but believed the on-demand buses were better for many of the more rural parts of the county. He added: “[Trams would be] a major infrastructural investment and if the government were to put some funding behind that, then I’m quite sure we would look at it.”

The Mayor of London, **Sadiq Khan**, said: “Expanding the ULEZ London-wide has not been an easy decision. The easy thing for me would have been to kick the can down the road. But in the end, public health comes before political expediency. We have too often seen measures delayed around the world to tackle air pollution and the climate crisis because it’s viewed as being too hard or politically inconvenient. But there’s no time to waste when people’s lives are on the line and we are facing a climate crisis.”



Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes..?*

Battle for school gets classical with fears of a Trojan Horse. **Kingswood House School** in **Epsom** is asking local people to join hundreds of residents in opposing plans to evict the School from its site and replace it with a small school and housing estate. With objections numbering over 400, local people have risen up in opposition to developer **Steve Curwen's** plans to evict the 102 year old, 245 pupil school from its site in West Hill, Epsom. **Curwen Group** are working with the landowners, the **Aczel brothers**, with the scheme involving the construction of a small school of only 60 pupils with acute special needs.

It is anticipated that the school would be privately operated on a "for-profit" basis. In what has been described by MP **Chris Grayling** as: "an example of the worst form of business practice", the Aczel brothers have confirmed that the planning application for the new school will be followed by a second application to build a housing estate on the current school's playing field.

Amongst its 245 pupils, Kingswood House School is home to 172 local children with special needs and has the highest concentration of special needs pupils at any school in Surrey. The School has been made an Asset of Community Value by Epsom and Ewell BC in recognition of its contribution to the local community.

The School has now filed a detailed objection to the proposed development including reports by independent experts. These documents which are publicly available on the Council's website include a report by educational expert **Neil Roskilly**, a former member of the General Teaching Council for England and adviser to the Department for Education. Roskilly notes that "...none of the pupils at Kingswood House School would qualify for a place at the proposed new school because their special needs would not be considered sufficiently severe: and the need in Surrey is for schools catering for milder special needs (such as Kingswood House) not acute special needs and therefore the new school would be marketed by its owners towards pupils from outside Epsom."

Roskilly says that **Department of Education** design guidelines for schools accommodating pupils with acute special needs have been ignored, resulting in classrooms and common areas being too small and that: "... as designed the proposed school would have to operate with a limited curriculum". As such, Roskilly believes that: "...it is highly doubtful that the proposed school would receive permission to open from **Ofsted** at a post-registration inspection. This is because it would be potentially discriminatory and in breach of the: "Special Education Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25Years (2015)", which states that all SEND pupils should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum".

Access for the proposed new school would be via West Hill Avenue, currently a quiet residential road to the rear of the Kingswood House School. Transport consultants **Markides** note that the proposed access and parking arrangements are inadequate given the width of West Hill Avenue, its use for residential parking and the presence of trees restricting visibility. When combined with the intended housing estate and inadequate staff and visitor parking for the proposed new school, Markides conclude that: "... the proposed access and internal layout are regarded as seriously deficient and unsupportable."The problems identified don't stop with those spotted by Markides and Roskilly.

Officers employed by **Surrey County Council** and **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** have identified problems relating to both flood risk and ecology. The Surrey County Council Flood Risk, Planning and Consenting Team have reported that they are: "...not satisfied that the proposed drainage scheme meets the requirements..." of the relevant planning legislation and that development should not commence: "...until details of a surface water drainage scheme have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority".

Curwen's own ecology reports recommended further reports, not yet done, to establish the presence or otherwise of protected species, Great Crested Newts and Bats. Surrey's Ecology Officer notes that these reports are still not done and that: "These surveys are required and cannot now be done until spring/summer next year" .

A common concern amongst the hundreds of objections filed so far is that Curwen's scheme is in reality a sham and a "**Trojan horse**" for the construction of a housing estate. This concern is only likely to have been intensified given the fundamental flaws in the scheme's design exposed by experts for Kingswood House School's and the shortcomings noted by Surrey County Council's Flood Risk team and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Ecology Officer.

A **Spokesperson** for The Curwen Group said to **Epsom and Ewell Times**:

"We are committed to providing a specialist SEND school at the Kingswood House site, and are currently working through technical responses to our application in consultation with the surrounding community. "

Those wishing to support or object should do so via the Council's website tinyurl.com/epsomewellplanning and entering the



reference number 22/01653/FUL or by email to the case officer, Gemma Patterson at gpatterson@epsom-ewell.gov.uk (ref 22/01653/FUL)

*The Trojan priest Laocoön guessed the plot and warns the Trojans "I fear Greeks, even those bearing gifts".

Dogs against knife crime

Officers have visited 14 schools and colleges across Surrey over the past week to raise awareness and tackle the grass-root causes of knife crime as part of national police campaign, **Operation Sceptre**. The visits provided officers with a chance to speak to students about misconceptions around the law when it comes to carrying a knife and scenario-based learning to highlight the dangers it can bring.

One of the colleges to take part in the campaign welcomed officers and trainee police dogs, Toby and puppy Yaris, to their campus to learn about the role police dogs play in tackling knife crime.

As part of the campaign, officers also carried out a number of area sweeps, searches and warrants, which in conjunction with the Force's knife amnesty bins, resulted in the recovery of 76 knives.

Detective Chief Inspector **Amy Buffoni**, who leads on tackling knife crime for Surrey Police, said: "We work hard all year round to tackle knife crime and we are encouraged to see that the number of knife crimes in Surrey has reduced year-on-year since 2019. This doesn't mean that we can rest though. Op Sceptre provides us with the opportunity to focus our efforts and reignite conversation around the devastating impact of knife crime on communities, families and young people. Vital to this work is building relationships with local communities so that the message carries down to the next generation. One life lost to knife crime is one too many and it simply should not happen."

Do you have information about someone who carries a knife? You can help save a life by reporting what you know to police. Even tiny details can stop knife crime and keep your community safe. You can call on 101 or if you'd prefer to remain anonymous, you can call the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111, or alternatively visit their website [here](https://www.crimestoppers.co.uk/).

Worried about a young person? For help and support as well as advice on how you could help them, visit [#knifefree](https://www.knifefree.org/) here.

If you are in danger or need immediate help, always call 999.

Save a life and surrender your knife. No questions, no arrest. **Surrey Police** have knife banks located at the following locations in Surrey:

- Staines Police Station (22 Kingston Rd, Staines, TW18 4LQ) - open every day, 8am to 10pm
- Woking Civic Centre (Civic Offices, Gloucester Square, Woking, GU21 6YL) - open every day, 8am to 10pm
- Guildford Police Station (Margaret Rd, Guildford, GU1 4QS) - open every day, 8am to 10pm
- Elmbridge Council Offices (Civic Centre, High St, Esher, KT10 9SD) - open Monday to Friday, 8.45am to 5pm
- Reigate Police Station (79 Reigate Rd, Reigate, RH2 0RY) - open every day, 8am to 10pm

Winter walks in the Surrey wilds

The darker mornings have closed in, and the clocks have gone back, so it's fair to say summer is officially over, and the cold season has begun. While the cosy evenings are one of the best bits about the colder months, staying in all day, every day - when a lot of people are working from home - can be a little bit draining. A brisk winter walk can be the perfect respite from the day-to-day routine, and it's great for both mental and physical health as well. In fact, cold weather can help the body fight infections, and it is really good for skin health as it tightens cuticles and pores!

With all that in mind, it's time to pop on the walking boots, pull on those winter woollies, and explore the stunning beauty of Surrey in all its frosty delight. There is no shortage of trails to discover, but to help any intrepid nature walkers get started, Berkeley Group has compiled their top 5 winter walks across the county.

1. Hindhead Commons and the Devil's Punch Bowl



To be genuinely amazed by the creations that nature can produce, you must visit the Devil's Punch Bowl at Hindhead Commons. The almost 700-acre natural amphitheatre is the biggest spring-formed feature in Britain; walk the 4.5-mile surrounding trail to be calmed by the streams and heather-covered slopes. Thanks to the Hindhead Tunnel, the road that was once the A3 is now covered with 200,000 trees and shrubs, providing perfect terrain for grazing cattle and wild ponies. Children will love exploring the wood for mini-beasts, while adults will be stunned by the incredible views from the top of Gibbet's Hill, the second-highest point in Surrey. On a clear day, the views even stretch all the way to Canary Wharf!



2. Winkworth Arboretum

Created by a local doctor whose goal was to preserve the nearby wooded hillside, Winkworth Arboretum has become one of Surrey's most stunning natural beauty spots. Located in Godalming, the area is now home to over 1,000 varieties of trees and shrubs and is celebrated for its changeable seasonal landscape. The Winter Garden boasts dazzling yellow mahonia's and vivid camellias during colder months to brighten up the day. Take the path down to the boathouse to find a peaceful sanctuary overlooking the magnificent lake or explore the woodland and take the Winkworth to Oakhurst 4km trail to try and catch sight of rare wildlife.



3. Hatchlands Park

Only 45 minutes from Greater London, Hatchlands Park offers those who live in the city a convenient winter escape. Open 363



days a year, this park is the ideal place for a snowy stroll, whether it be with your family, four-legged friend or simply for some much needed 'you' time. Set in 400 acres of magical woodland and glistening leaf-lined paths, choose from a number of trails to spot a range of birds and insects. When visiting with children, make sure to say hello to the recently fostered donkeys Callum and Morris or pop over to the Wizard Wix's Willow Warren, where kids can climb the treehouse or make their own den!



4. Reigate Hill

Reigate Hill, one of Surrey's most popular natural beauty spots, is not to be missed in winter. For incredible frost-laced views, take the 3-mile walk through crunchy grass and shimmering woodland to admire the extensive landscape of the Weald and South Downs. For a longer trail, take the 7-mile Reigate and Gatton Park walk for more stunning scenery and the chance to pop into a pub on the way. Alternatively, for the history buffs, pay a visit to the Inglis Memorial and Reigate Fort, once a 72-mile defence scheme to protect London from invasion.



5. Newland's Corner

Only four miles east of Guildford, Newlands Corner opens a wealth of walking and cycling trails and some of the best views of Surrey Hills. Also made famous as the place Agatha Christie memorably staged her short-lived disappearance in 1926, Newlands Corner offers a delightful place for a wintry escape in nature. Newland's Corner has something for everyone: empty fields for a pup to run around in, a challenging hike for the adventurous types, or even a scenic cycle ride for the next Sir Bradley Wiggins. There's even the perfect pit-stop to enjoy a tipple at either the Silent Pool distillery or Albury Organic Vineyard. If you are considering relocating to this magnificent part of South East England to enjoy some of the most beautiful landscapes, browse Berkeley Group's developments in Surrey for the latest opportunities.



Image Credits: 1. Hindhead Commons and the Devil's Punch Bowl: @Martingarnett_photography 2. Winkworth Arboretum: @Wakinguphere 3. Hatchlands Park: @sarahinsurrey 4. Reigate Hill: @Ilovereigate 5. Newland's Corner: @ordnancesurvey

Epsom Playhouse hosts a little horror.

Leatherhead Operatic Society left the audience laughing and cheering with its production of **Little Shop of Horrors** at **Epsom Playhouse**, a musical comedy directed by John Harries, choreographed by Louise E Wilson and musically directed by Sam Fisher, based on the 1982 off-Broadway musical of the same name.

A failing flower shop on skid-row run by Mr Mushnik (Ben Horseburgh) is almost at the point of closing due to a lack of clientele. A Venus flytrap-looking plant, (Toby James) mysteriously appears during a total eclipse of the sun, attracting Seymour (Daniel Burns) to purchase it and name it after his love interest (played by Ellie-Claire King). This plant, however, is not an ordinary plant – it speaks, sings and lives on human blood and flesh, bringing new customers and, along with that, money and a name.

At first, Seymour can sustain Audrey II with his own blood, but this won't be enough for the ravenous plant who promises Seymour his desires, a success story that could be "bigger than hula hoops". What is Audrey II's goal?

This is not the only question of morality that echoes throughout the performance: how far would you go for love? Or fame, or wealth? And should you feed the sadist-dentist boyfriend of your love interest to your human-consuming plant in order to keep it growing and attract customers? The story ultimately examines the extent to which individuals (Seymour, specifically) will go in order to be successful.

The cast's performance is remarkable and leaves you questioning what you would've done in Seymour's situation, with each character forcing the audience into an empathetic view of the situation. And for those who are already familiar with the story, a different ending to the 1986 adaptation of Little Shop of Horrors alongside the stellar performances makes it worth experiencing again.

The opening night on Wednesday 23rd November was a resounding success, and the show will continue throughout the rest of the week. The performance will run until the matinée show at 2:30 pm on Saturday 26th November.

Cycling for Motor Neurone Disease

Greg Culshaw of **Toyota's Epsom** Head Office (GB), has completed a gruelling 24-hour static bike ride, putting him on course to raise more than £40,000 for the Motor Neurone Disease Association. Greg is the General Manager, Customer, Network and Quality Support.

Greg began his challenge at 10am on Wednesday 17 November and was joined by a number of colleagues, including **Agustin Martin**, Toyota (GB) President and Managing Director, who completed stints on static bikes alongside him, to give him encouragement. Paralympic cyclist, **Jody Cundy**, and **Mark Chapman**, Director of Finance of the MND Association, helped cheer him on at the start of his marathon.

Toyota (GB) is halfway through a three-year partnership with the MND Association and has so far raised more than £78,000 for the charity, which focuses on improving access to MND care, funding research and campaigning on behalf of the MND community.

Greg was inspired to take on the challenge in memory of a Toyota colleague, **Rachel Rollason**, who died from motor neurone disease earlier this year. He commented: "Rachel and I spent four years working together in the Customer Services Division and it's fair to say that she made a lasting impression on me. Her boundless energy and devotion to getting things done were inspiring. She operated on 'no limitology' before I had even heard the phrase."

He added: "This has been a brutal challenge, but at the same time I've been focused on completing it for Rachel and the MND Association. The idea started in a conversation with Rachel and in her last text message to me, she told me how proud she was of me for taking it on. She continues to inspire me and in turn, made me proud of her."

To date, Greg has raised nearly £16,000 through his Just Giving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Greg24hrBikeRide>. This will remain open for donations until the end of November.



Toyota (GB) has pledged to fund-match the total raised by Greg, which means the charity should receive around £40,000 to help it keep up the great work it does on its five key promises:

1. To make MND treatable and ultimately find a cure.
2. To ensure everyone gets the help they need, when they need it.
3. To make every day with MND count.
4. To ensure people with MND are heard
5. To ensure that nobody with MND faces it alone

Mark Chapman, Director of Finance at the MND Association, commented: "Greg's challenge is particularly poignant because he's doing it in memory of his colleague Rachel. It's brilliant to see so many staff members from Toyota rally behind him to honour her, knowing that every penny raised will make a huge difference to people living with and affected by MND.

Last year we provided £1.4 million of support grants for 2,479 people living with the disease.

The grants provided by the MND Association have helped people living with MND to maintain their independence and improve their quality of life, and we couldn't do this without partnerships with companies like Toyota."

Jody Cundy, eight-time Paralympic Champion (three swimming, five track cycling) commented: "It was a pleasure to join Greg for the first hour of his 24hour charity ride for MNDA. It was a tough challenge, but I hope my support and presence helped make it a little easier."

Agustin Martin said: "Watching Greg complete this challenge while we went about our daily business has been humbling for all of us at Toyota. We congratulate him for his for raising such a significant sum for the MND Association, our charity partner, and for helping to honour the memory of our much-loved colleague, Rachel Rollason."

Defence of Surrey M25 policing

M25 protesters acting as "dead weights" means they take longer to be arrested, according to **Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner. Just Stop Oil** activists brought parts of the M25 to a standstill this month as part of their ongoing campaign calling on the government to take more action on the use of fossil fuels.

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner, elected to hold the county's police force to account, said she had attended the protests on a day when five were arrested. She added she is "enormously proud" of Surrey Police's response. Responding to a question from Tandridge District Councillor **Mick Gillman** at a meeting of the police and crime panel on Monday (November 21), **Lisa Townsend** said she disagreed with the view that Surrey Police were not doing enough.

The meeting, at which councillors from each of the county's authorities can put questions to the PCC, heard she had also received "an awful lot" of criticism from people about police not negotiating with protesters, and not listening to their demands. She said: "It doesn't matter what reason somebody is breaking the law for. If they're breaking the law, the police will get involved regardless of what their greater or not aims. I am enormously proud of the action that Surrey Police took over these protests and I will continue to praise them for it."

Cllr Gillman's (OLRG Alliance, Burstow, Horne & Outwood) question said he had found it impossible to explain to residents when asked why more action was not being taken by Surrey Police with the protesters. He said: "Residents expect the police to apply the law without fear or favour and there is strong feeling that lack of decisive action by police when the protests started have only encouraged more protests as those involved feel they can get away with this. Can I have an assurance that you will be using all your influence with the police to insist they now apply a zero-tolerance approach to any protesters who block or disrupt the highway?"

He followed up in the meeting that one resident had said to him it should just take minutes to arrest someone, and not "hours of them sitting in the road" as had happened on previous demonstrations by the group. Mrs Townsend said: "The idea that police haven't acted swiftly I'm afraid is just rubbish and I absolutely won't accept that criticism at all."

On a day when protesters were climbing the gantries above the M25, Mrs Townsend said she had seen four of the arrests that took place, and that once the arrest was made, the police then had to ensure it was "absolutely safe" before they went up to get protesters down. She added: "It's not simply a case of saying 'you're arrested' then they come down quietly. In two of the cases I saw, the protesters followed a well known tactic of playing dead, basically becoming a dead weight and insisting that officers go and physically remove them. That can't happen in two minutes, although the arrest has been made. The person then needs to be



lawfully and carefully removed so that everybody's safety is protected, not least the Surrey Police officers who are up there."

Ewell Village to get an uplift?

High Street improvements to come in **Ewell** to revitalise the town and create spaces that are safer and more attractive? **Surrey County Council's** Ewell project team has worked closely with a group of residents who originally campaigned for change in the village. **Surrey County Council's** Cabinet is due to discuss £30 million of funding to deliver seven capital projects identified in the **Surrey Infrastructure Plan**.

The proposals for Ewell state:

Ewell Village currently suffers from significant levels of traffic passing through the village, with an imbalance between traffic and pedestrians, both in terms of space consumed and dominance exerted. Pedestrian movement in the village is notable, particularly that of children travelling to/from school, but resident feelings about road safety are poor given the high volumes of traffic.

This project will deliver improvements to the High Street that will support revitalisation of the village through restricting vehicular access to some degree along the High Street, bringing about more pedestrian-friendly spaces that are safer and more attractive. It will bring improvements to local environmental sustainability via new street greening in addition to reducing vehicle emissions, will enhance the economic resilience of existing and new retail outlets through the creation of more attractive spaces that encourage longer dwell times, and will enrich social cohesion by bringing about more opportunities for people to connect with one another.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) is committed to continued engagement with SCC to develop plans for the village and welcomes further collaboration with the community and community representatives to help shape the scheme.

The total scheme cost is approximately £2.5 million. SCC will be seeking a contribution of 50% from third party funding. Funding from EEBC will be determined once a preferred option is agreed.

Other proposals for the County include:

Projects include town centre and highway improvements, active and sustainable travel schemes, and flood alleviation schemes.

£8.64million of the funding would come from Surrey County Council, with the rest coming from external funding sources. These projects include the implementation of active and sustainable travel schemes to provide Surrey residents with greener options of travel, whilst improving air quality and creating healthier places to live. There are also town centre regeneration schemes to support economic growth and provide the necessary infrastructure for growing communities. These infrastructure projects are critical for the council to deliver its ambitions for the county now and into the future.

The seven capital projects are:

Town centre schemes

- High Street improvements in both Ewell and Horley to revitalise the town and create spaces that are safer and more attractive. The Ewell project team has worked closely with a group of residents who originally campaigned for change in the village and in Horley, investment is being made following the impact of Covid on how the town is used by residents.
- Town centre regeneration in Caterham through flood mitigation works, improved connectivity and improvement to public spaces in Caterham Valley and Caterham on the Hill.

Active and sustainable travel schemes

- Electric bikes (E-bikes) in Guildford – implementation of a town-wide bike share scheme to offer an alternative to car trips within the borough.
- Woking sustainable transport improvements – improvements for walking, cycling and bus infrastructure in the east of Woking, improving connections between Woking town centre, Sheerwater and West Byfleet. For this scheme Surrey County Council have submitted a bid for £12million to the Department of Housing and Levelling up as part of round two of Levelling Up funding.

Highway improvement schemes



- A320 North of Woking improvements – Plans to make all junctions and roads on the busy stretch between Chertsey and Ottershaw work well together to improve traffic flow. Improvements for walkers and cyclists, including new crossing points and wider foot and cycle paths and improved access to public transport.

Flood alleviation schemes

- Flooding Alleviation Programme 2023/24 – A mix of schemes and interventions focusing on flood resilience measures, flood risk reduction and protection against flooding.

Cabinet will also be reviewing the allocation of £2million funding to support the expansion of the on-street electric vehicle chargepoint roll-out. The funding required would support the installation of a comprehensive network of publicly accessible chargepoints right across the county. This is essential to support residents who don't have off-street parking to transition to electric vehicles. Surrey's Local Transport Plan has identified as one of its top priorities the reduction of emissions and increase in energy efficient vehicles, specifically to promote zero emission and smaller vehicles. Cabinet will also be discussing the appointment of a new supplier to deliver a wider roll-out of chargepoints across the county to meet the increased demand.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Economy, said: "Investment in infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth and to cater for the needs of Surrey's businesses and communities.

"The projects being presented to Cabinet take into consideration changing infrastructure requirements for our communities. Following the Covid pandemic, the way people live and work has changed. These projects consider new travel patterns and behaviours, whilst focusing on improving local places."

Surrey County Council News and with additional reporting on Ewell by Epsom and Ewell Times

Cllr Dalton leads street night light fight

Epsom and Ewell's Councillor Hannah Dalton (Residents' Association, Stoneleigh) said she lived in a zone five area, but when she got the last train home, she would still get the torch out on her phone in order to get home safely once off the main streets. Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner has hit back at a claim she "doesn't understand what she's talking about" as she says the decision to turn street lights on at night is the county council's responsibility.

Lisa Townsend said street lighting has been "one of her great frustrations" with "mixed messages" at council level, as another councillor shared her experience of walking home with her phone's torch on to get back safely.

In a heated meeting of Surrey County Council's police and crime panel, in which councillors and non-elected members ask questions of the PCC, Runnymede Councillor **John Furey** (Conservative, Addlestone South) said residents could make a request to get lights switched back on in certain areas.

Street lights on some of Surrey's residential roads started to be turned off at night in 2017, usually between the hours of 1am and 5am, to save money.

Epsom and Ewell's Councillor Hannah Dalton (Residents' Association, Stoneleigh) said she lived in a zone five area, but when she got the last train home, she would still get the torch out on her phone in order to get home safely once off the main streets.

In response the elected Conservative PCC said: "You and I have both, I suspect, walked home from train stations using the light on our phone, clutching our keys, speaking to somebody on the phone hoping that if anything happens, there will at least be a record but conscious that by the fact that we're on our phone means we're not paying the proper attention to our surroundings. Any woman I know has been there."

She said she got "very annoyed" when told by officers that the reason that lights hadn't been turned on was because police hadn't asked for them to be. Mrs Townsend added: "That's not the reason. It's entirely in the county council's gift as to whether they turn them back on or not. I'm frustrated by the mixed messaging that my office gets I'm frustrated by the different answers that I get when I ask about it."

Calling on councillors to lobby the county council that where residents didn't feel safe and wanted street lights switched back on, they should be, she added it was not for the police to be making the case for residents.

Mrs Townsend added: "Something should not have to happen to us, or to any other woman or man, in order for a case to be made



to put the lights on. If you don't feel safe, and it's what the community wants, the lights should be switched on. I couldn't be clearer in that."

Cllr Furey had previously interrupted Mrs Townsend, saying: "This is quite out of order. The PCC doesn't understand what she's talking about." He said the police would be asked for their opinion if there was a request for residents to switch lights back on, but that the request went through the county council and that if there was a case, the lights would be switched back on.

Mrs Townsend, saying she had been "rudely interrupted" by Cllr Furey, said she understood the process but was concerned about the "extra bureaucracy" and said she didn't want to see any more delays to requests. She added: "My point is police shouldn't have to become involved in it. If a woman doesn't feel safe and she wants to have the lights turned on, that should be a matter for the county council. It should not be a matter for policing because the police cannot interfere on whether somebody feels safe or doesn't."

Surrey County Councillor **Keith Whitham** (Conservative, Worplesdon) said it was "not a black and white situation". He said in his area he had seen successful examples of lights being switched back on where Surrey Police had supported residents in their appeals to the council. Mole Valley Councillor **Paul Kennedy** (Lib Dem, Fetcham West) said the blanket approach "simply doesn't work" and that people had "to work really hard to try and get the lights back on." He said he would be taking it up with the county council, but also recognised that many people in his rural area valued and wanted to protect their dark skies.

On the wider issues of the safety of women and girls, the meeting heard the responses to a survey carried out in April and May 2021 which showed that 45.6 per cent of the 5,427 participants felt unsafe in their neighbourhoods at night, and 55.7 per cent felt unsafe in the nearest town centre at night. A report into the findings said: "One of the main themes when respondents were asked to explain why they sometimes feel unsafe, was lighting, or lack of it in local areas. A lot of these comments mentioned the lack of street lighting in their local area, and how this made it feel unsafe when out and about after dark."

Mrs Townsend pointed to the almost £1million received from Government to help tackle violence against women and girls in the county, including training for teachers in schools. She said: "We're not going to police our way out of this problem. We do need to take a whole society approach."