

Fresh New Look for Ernest Jones Epsom

24 October 2024



Sponsored article:

A refreshed Ernest Jones store, designed for Epsom's shoppers, has opened its doors in the Ashley Centre.

Customers are welcomed into a bright interior, with a host of new features to improve and enhance their shopping experience.

Every aspect of the refurbishment has been thoughtfully designed with local shoppers in mind.

"We wanted our Epsom customers to feel right at home from the moment they enter our store," said store manager, Denise Ducasse.

"As a trusted jeweller with a reputation for quality, craftsmanship and expertise, we're here to help our customers celebrate milestone moments and so we really wanted to heighten that sense of occasion in our store," she said.

"We're really excited and hope our customers, will love our makeover," she added.



To celebrate the opening of the new-look store, this weekend from October 25th-27th, Ernest Jones is inviting shoppers to join them for a glass of bubbly with an opportunity to view the latest collections, learn more about the range of jewellery and watch services available as well as an enjoying an extra 10% off the final weekend of sale.

Ernest Jones Epsom is part of a multimillion-pound store investment programme by parent company Signet Jewelers UK and Ireland. A total of 14 Ernest Jones stores and 41 H Samuel stores across the UK are being refurbished.

"This significant investment underscores our dedication to local high streets and shopping centres across the country. We believe that a vibrant retail sector is a vital part of a thriving community and we hope our refurbished stores will be warmly welcomed by local shoppers," said Neil Old, Managing Director Signet Jewelers UK and Ireland.

Ernest Jones Ashley Centre, 10 Central Square, Epsom KT18 5DA

No wonder Woking went bankrupt. Scandal of

private school loans

24 October 2024



A private school was loaned millions of pounds at favourable rates by Woking Borough Council before it went bankrupt. Now questions are being asked as to whether an independent inquiry will be launched into the “extraordinary use of taxpayer’s money”.

Greenfield School in Old Woking has loans of £13,257,756 according to full accounts published in September on Companies House.

Interest is just one percentage point above the Public Works Loans Board rate. The cash was originally borrowed by Woking Borough Council for “capital projects” before being passed on to the school.

Since then the council’s finances have collapsed under the weight of its unprecedented multi-billion debt from all the money it can not afford to repay – and its investment decisions have come under close scrutiny.

The matter of its role as effectively a bank was raised during the October 17 full meeting of Woking Borough Council.

The local authority was asked directly if it would set-up an independent inquiry into the extraordinary use of taxpayers’ money into the 2019 loan to Greenfield preparatory school, reportedly topping £11m.

According to the school’s set of accounts, its fees, which brought in more than £5m last year, are very carefully controlled and exceptional value for money.

Greenfield, the accounts said, is highly competitive when compared to other independent educational establishments within the wider Woking area.

In January 2021, Greenfield opened Little School, a 50.4 week a year day-care for children aged from six months to four years. In April 2022 the school opened its new buildings and took on extra staff.

The council’s loan was challenged on the grounds that the money was not used for regeneration and education is not in the remit of a borough council.

Woking Borough Council was asked: “Will the council set-up an independent inquiry into the extraordinary use of taxpayers’ money into the loan to the single entity, Greenfield preparatory school?”

Councillor Ann-Marie Barker, who took over as leader of Woking Borough Council after the loans had been agreed.

She said: “In July 2023, the council asked Grant Thornton, its newly appointed external auditors, to undertake a ‘Value for Money’ review, looking into the governance arrangements that relate to the council’s historic investment strategy.

“This is an independent report which is reviewing how past decisions (such as those related to Greenfield School) were made and the financial impact of these decisions on the Council’s financial sustainability.

“Grant Thornton have indicated that the Value for Money report will likely be published in October 2024.

“The council will make the Value for Money review report, alongside our response to its recommendations, available on our website at the earliest opportunity.

“It is important to wait for the findings of the independent review before coming to any conclusions regarding individual decisions.”

The school is a registered charity in Old Woking and has the benefit of extensive playing fields. In addition it takes advantage of Woking’s Pool in the Park to offer swimming lessons.

The school hosts community events including annual maths and English challenges, anti-bullying training, and football tournaments.

Pupil numbers are growing at a rapid rate and income from charitable activities increased by £582,037 to £5.3m- of which £5.2m was through school fees.

Overall the school made a loss of £502,562 last year according to its accounts and it has loans totalling £13,316,871, of which £13,257,756 is listed as “other loans”.

Its annual set of accounts read: “The loans were obtained to purchase a new site for the school. The loans are secured on property owned by the school and are for a total period of up to 50 years.

“During the first three years, no repayments will be made but interest will accrue and then it will be repaid over the next 47 years.

“The interest rate applicable will be one per cent point above the 47 year Public Works Loan Board Annuity Rate.”

The Public Works Loan Board provides loans to local authorities for capital projects – usually in the form of regeneration projects such as Victoria Square or Sheerwater.

The UK Debt Management website reads: “Decisions over which capital projects to pursue and whether to borrow for these investments are the responsibility of the elected council of each local authority, who are accountable to their electorates.

“Local authorities are free to borrow so long as the finance director is satisfied that they are acting in line with statute and can afford to repay the loan.

“The PWLB is a non-discretionary lender: it does not ask the purpose of a loan, as this would duplicate the decision-making structures of the individual local authorities.”

The Grant Thornton report could be ready for release by the end of this month.

Greenfield School Woking (image Google)

Epsom and St Helier Hospitals in Desperate Need of Repairs

24 October 2024



Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals are in need of urgent repairs, with more than £150 million required to address crumbling infrastructure, according to the latest NHS data. Epsom and Ewell MP **Helen Maguire** has urged the Government to prioritise investment in the upcoming Budget to tackle these issues.

The data highlights that nearly £70 million of the required repairs are classified as ‘high risk,’ meaning a failure to address them promptly could lead to serious injury and significant disruption to healthcare services. Both hospitals have been struggling with deteriorating facilities for years, with St Helier Hospital facing particularly severe challenges, such as falling ceilings and condemned buildings.

One major issue is the division of emergency care teams across both sites, a problem that the proposed specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton is intended to resolve. However, delays in funding mean that these plans have not yet come to fruition, leaving local residents reliant on facilities that are increasingly unable to meet modern healthcare needs.

Ahead of the Autumn Budget, Liberal Democrat MP Helen Maguire has renewed her call for urgent financial support to clear the backlog of repairs and ensure that the hospitals can provide safe and effective care for local communities.

“It is scandalous that people in Epsom, Ewell, Ashted, and Leatherhead are being treated in hospitals that need millions of pounds in repairs,” said Maguire. “When someone goes to the hospital, they should expect to be treated in a building that is safe. This is the bare minimum. We need to do far better. It is now down to this Government to rescue our NHS, which is why, at the Budget, the Chancellor must urgently use any changes to the borrowing rules to invest in hospitals here in Epsom and Ewell.”

NHS Response

A spokesperson for the **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust** acknowledged the extent of the challenges, stating: “We’ve spent £60 million in the past five years improving the facilities in our ageing hospitals, which are deteriorating faster than we can fix them. Local people deserve better, and we’re ready to build a new state-of-the-art hospital and upgrade our existing sites, but urgently need investment to make this a reality.”

The spokesperson also highlighted the outdated nature of parts of the hospital infrastructure, some of which predate the founding of the NHS. “The age of our buildings means they flood regularly, and when our lifts break down, we can’t fix them because they don’t make the parts anymore.”

Plans for the new specialist emergency care hospital in Sutton aim to address these issues by consolidating highly skilled medical teams, providing round-the-clock care. This would alleviate the strain on the existing Epsom and St Helier hospitals, which will continue to provide 85% of local services, including outpatient appointments and scans.

The Way Forward

The pressing need for investment in the local NHS infrastructure is clear, with both the MP and the hospital trust calling for urgent action. As the Budget approaches, the focus will be on whether the Government will step up and provide the necessary funds to ensure that residents of Epsom and surrounding areas receive the healthcare services they deserve in

safe and modern facilities.

Local residents will be closely watching developments in the Budget announcement, hoping that long-awaited improvements to the area's hospitals will finally become a reality.

Epsom's neighbour cracks on with its Local Plan

24 October 2024



More than 6,000 new homes will be built in the Surrey borough of Mole Valley, with Leatherhead taking on the largest share after the district council approved its long-term planning bible.

Mole Valley District Council has agreed to build an average of 336 homes a year between 2020 and 2039 with town centre sites in Leatherhead, such as Bull Hill, and Dorking being set aside for large scale housing-led redevelopment.

Office complexes in Ashstead and Dorking have also been earmarked for regeneration, and green belt land in Ashstead, Bookham, Dorking and Leatherhead released so developers can build homes.

The council has also agreed to hand over green belt land for housing within and around Hookwood to "complement" economic growth near Gatwick.

Villages within the green belt, namely Beare Green, Brockham, Capel, Charlwood, and Westcott will have their boundaries amended to allow "appropriate development" after Mole Valley District Council formally adopted its local plan last week (October 15).

In all, Leatherhead is expected to take on 30 per cent of the new homes (1,914), followed by the areas around Dorking 23 per cent (1,467), Hookwood, 15 per cent (957), Ashtead, 11 per cent (701) and Bookham, seven per cent (446).

The remaining 14 per cent (893) will be spread across the rest of the district.

In Leatherhead the council wants to create what it calls, a Riverside Quarter, at Claire House and James House in Bridge Street. This would go alongside an Urban Quarter at the redevelopment of the Bull Hill.

For Dorking, the Pippbrook House refurbishment remains its flagship development as well as plans to redevelop the Foundry Museum and Church Street workshops.

More locally, housing requirements for neighbourhood areas are as follows:

- Ashtead - 652 net new dwellings
- Bookham - 513 net new dwellings
- Capel Parish - 198 net new dwellings
- Ockley Parish - 135 net new dwellings
- Westcott - 123 net new dwellings

Mole Valley District Council, which passed its local plan by 28 votes to five with one abstention, said that 40 per cent of all new units would be affordable, and all come with at least one EV charging point.

The meeting heard that about 76 per cent of Mole Valley land was designated as Metropolitan Green Belt and protected from most forms of development.

Under its new plan, it said it has been able to deliver sites for housing while relinquishing less than one per cent of that.

Had the local plan not been agreed, developers would have had carte blanche to build without restrictions.

Cllr Margaret Cooksey, portfolio holder for planning on the Liberal Democrat run council, said: "It gives me enormous pleasure to be able to bring the local plan to this council for adoption at last.

"The local plan is about much more than a document about meeting housing need but a good deal of time and effort is taken up by worrying about specific development sites, particularly green belt sites,

"It's worth noting again that only 0.65 per cent of the existing green belt in the district has been identified to be released for future development.

"There are sites in most of our wards that we wish were not there however I did say, that I felt that it was a fair plan in as much as what could be seen as pain was spread as evenly as possible across the district."

Local plans go through long drawn-out processes before they are formally adopted, requiring sign off from planning

inspectors.

Councils need to identify land for development and demonstrate it can meet housing targets. Often there is a trade off between town centre intensification or protecting green belt.

As well as the housing, the Mole Valley plan creates 230 new locally listed buildings and grants 27 parks and open spaces extra protection.

Dissenting voices in the chamber felt the council could have gone further to limit the impact on green belt while Cllr Chris Hunt (Independent, Ashted Lanes and Common) said more could be done to curb building heights to stop town's from becoming the next Woking.

He told the meeting: "This is not a sugar coated pill for us to take, it's got some very good things, affordable housing, the commitment for better health and education facilities, those are very positive things.

"But it's also got some really hard to agree things.

He added: "There is still quite a lot of uncertainty about whether a key site in our key town of Leatherhead can actually be developed or not."

Adding: "It's effectively saying that the plan's foundations are uncertain in that regard and unfortunately it does echo something else, that there are no clearly defined density agreements.

"It has lots of good things but if I was on Strictly [Come Dancing] it would not be 10 out of 10, it would be a seven."

Cllr Cooksey said: "We're not Woking, Mole Valley is not Woking and we don't want to look like Woking but there's the dilemma between do we build in the green belt (or in the towns?)"

Cllr Leah Mursaleen-Plank (Liberal Democrat, Mickleham, Westcott and Okewood) said her ward has been hit by uncontrolled development "again and again" and called out at those asking to delay the plan's adoption in order to protect more green belt.

She said: "There is no alternative here.

"We have been in a position in my ward where we haven't had a local plan and we've had uncontrolled developments going through over and over again.

"We're losing green belt by delaying further.

"To say that we need more time just means more development on green belt sites, the opposite of what you would like to achieve."

Summing up Cllr Cooksey said: "I'm disappointed that we can't say that it's the overwhelming view of the whole council, it would have been very much stronger if we could have had support from the whole chamber.

"However we have an excellent plan here, I truly believe it and really think it's probably the best we could probably have come up with under all the circumstances that we've had to deal with over the years."

Mole Valley covers 25,832 hectares, 16 per cent of Surrey as a whole and is the third largest borough in the county.

Its population of 87,245 accounts for seven per cent of Surrey's total, while the average house price of £505,000 makes it second most expensive district in the county.

The ratio of house prices to residents' salaries was 14:1 in March 2020, the fifth most unaffordable district in Surrey.

Between 2014 and 2019, 1,265 new homes were completed in Mole Valley - 230 of which were affordable.

Related reports:

[Mole Valley 'won't bend' to petitioners](#)

[Mole Valley Plan Paused](#)

Artistic Impression Of The Arrival Square from North Street, south east corner. (Credit: Mole Valley District Council and Keir Property)

Loads of coaches for Epsom tennis

24 October 2024



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s Environment committee has authorised the contracts for three tennis coaching providers in Epsom.

R&A Sport will be carrying out coaching sessions at Auriol Park, Sutton Tennis Coaching will be offering sessions at Alexandra Park and Callum Macarty Coaching operating at Court Recreation Ground.

From April, the council moved to a pay-to-play scheme on all its tennis courts. The decision was taken to make the courts self-sufficient with all funds raised being reinvested in maintenance and future improvements.

Since the pay-to-play system was introduced, the council has been committed to ensuring those of all ages, experience, and socio-economic backgrounds are able to participate in tennis. The council offered free tennis sessions throughout the summer, when 173 residents played free of charge.

In addition to this, as part of the tennis coaching contract, all tennis coaching providers are required to take part in the Barclays Free Park Tennis Initiative, offering at least one hour of free, supervised, community tennis activity at their designated location each weekend.

The council is also looking for local volunteers willing to be tennis activators. These activators will lead free tennis sessions in the parks on Saturday mornings. Until these sessions are up and running in all tennis courts across the borough, the council is offering two free, bookable sessions between 9-10am and 10-11am each Saturday.

Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Langley and Woodcote) Chair of the Environment Committee said:

“We are committed to the pay to play model which will future-proof our courts so that residents can enjoy access to tennis now and in years to come.

Residents can pay to play or purchase a membership, including a discounted membership for those or in receipt of Universal Credit or Full Time Carers Allowance or with a disability.

We would also urge anyone interested in volunteering as a tennis activator at one of our courts to get in touch - we’d love to hear from you.

We’re pleased to sign up three coaching providers, which not only provides extra investment income for the courts but also more opportunities for free coaching sessions.”

Related reports:

Anyone for tennis?

LibDems call “Love All” for local tennis

Anyone for tennis? If you pay.

Tennis at 95 is the norm.

Image - C. Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd

Modern Yard Revitalizes Epsom’s Historic Racing Scene

24 October 2024



The Daily Telegraph (Monday 21st October) has highlighted a significant revival for Epsom's historic role in British horse racing, reporting on the recent developments at **Downs House**, a training yard with a prestigious past. According to the *Telegraph's* racing correspondent, **Marcus Armytage**, the once derelict site is now undergoing a transformation into a modern facility, spearheading efforts to attract London-based owners back to the area.

The report details how New Zealander **Mark Travers**, who has lived in the UK for two decades, undertook the ambitious seven-year project to restore Downs House. Situated just a quarter of a mile from the start of the Derby, Downs House had long symbolized Epsom's decline as a training hub, having lost its prominence as a centre for racehorse training decades ago. However, the newly revamped facility, now boasting space for 70 horses and cutting-edge amenities, is positioned to revive the town's fortunes.

The *Daily Telegraph* also reports that **George Baker**, a Stewards' Cup-winning trainer, will move his operation to Downs House in January. Baker, along with his wife Candida, was struck by the state-of-the-art facilities and the untapped potential of the nearby gallops. The move signals a bold step forward for Epsom's equine industry, which has long played second fiddle to more prominent centres like Newmarket and Lambourn.

Baker, who has trained horses from his base in Chiddingfold, shared with the *Telegraph* how unlikely the move to Epsom once seemed. Yet, the combination of modern infrastructure and proximity to London convinced him to seize the opportunity. In an era when racehorse ownership is increasingly attractive to Londoners, Downs House's accessibility could be a game-changer.

As reported, Baker hopes that his move will contribute to the broader rejuvenation of Epsom as a competitive training centre. With room for 50 horses initially, Baker is aiming to fill the yard within two years, making the facility a top choice for owners seeking convenience and quality.

While Epsom's journey back to its glory days remains a work in progress, the ambitious restoration of Downs House, as highlighted in *The Daily Telegraph*, marks a pivotal step in the town's efforts to reclaim its place on the racing map.

Image: Downs House aerial - Google

Only the cashless will be “on the Hook” Road car park Epsom

24 October 2024



A town centre car park is set to go cashless after plans to upgrade its ticket machines were approved.

Pay metres at the Hook Road multi-storey car park in Epsom are nearing the end of their functioning life-span and need to be replaced.

The problem facing Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is that any new pay-and-display machines at the site only have a limited lifespan as the car park is earmarked for redevelopment - which could begin as soon as September 2025.

Redeveloping the car park will not be a straightforward job however as it was built directly on a historic coal and gas manufacturing site, dating from the 1870s.

A report presented to the council's environment committee in July read: "Gas works are some of the most contaminated sites in the UK with the council's car park situated above a concrete capped former tar pit.

"Tar pits have a very high level of contamination, and it is possible that the car park caps are the most contaminated part of the wider gas works site.

"The car park was built in the mid-1980s when it was environmentally acceptable to concrete over former contaminated land uses."

Earlier this year the council announced it had entered into an agreement with the developers of the SGN Gas Works next door as part of its long-standing ambition to build a new town centre.

The combined sites are part the council's masterplan for Epsom, and features in its draft Local Plan -which sets out where, and the type, of development that will take place in the borough.

Until then, however, the car park will remain in use - and moves to replace its worn out machines are now underway.

Those who are unwilling to go cashless, or cannot, have been advised to park elsewhere, with Depot Road and the high street named as the most likely alternatives.

Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Woodcote and Langley) chair of the Environment Committee, said: “The current barrier control payment scheme for the car park is at the end of their life and needs to be replaced and the life of this car park is limited.”

The committee had at one stage planned to spend £20,000 on a like-for-like replacement but this was thrown out and the new cheaper alternative agreed.

In 2023/24 the council made £60,000 from the car park - far below the £137,000 it had budgeted for and less than the £65,000 it costs to run and maintain.

The council’s October environment committee heard that many of those using the car park were season ticket holders and would not need the new system. Of those who do , 81 per cent already pay by card.

Ringo, which was selected to replace the pay-and-display machines, adds a 20p ‘convenience charge’ to each transaction. The committee said it would look at parking charges, and whether to pass the full increase on to motorists, at a later date.

Related report:

[Epsom and Ewell Council answers parking complaint immediately](#)

[Hook Road Car Park, Epsom \(Image Google\)](#)

Correction to our Epsom and Ewell Council reports

24 October 2024



We apologise unreservedly to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Chief Executive Officer Jackie King for an unintended publication of a report dated 26th September 2024 titled Challenges to Epsom and Ewell Council’s Handling of Local Plan, reporting on the 24th September 2024 meeting of the Licensing, Planning and Policy Committee.

This report was overtaken by a report entitled Epsom Local Plan controversy heats up also reporting on the same meeting.

We attributed remarks to Jackie King even though she was not at the meeting. This part of the report has been repeated elsewhere on social media causing some concern in this sensitive area.

The first report was a draft that was intended to be discarded as it was clear that there was a muddle in interpreting the subtitles of the meeting. We do not usually report twice on the same meeting.

The report Challenges to Epsom and Ewell Council’s Handling of Local Plan has now been unpublished.

Let us take this opportunity to appeal for new writers. You do not need a degree in English or Journalism. We can always reorganise the writing to a publishable standard. What we need is observers with time to provide us the facts of local matters. A Borough our size cannot sustain paid journalism. We rely on volunteers.

Fofahan makes FA fans as Epsom & Ewell progress in Vase

24 October 2024



Epsom and Ewell FC 3-1 Berks County. Isuzu F.A. Vase – First Round. Sunday 20th October 2024

Just 6 days before the 50 year anniversary of our very first F.A. Vase match against Reigate Priory, we played our 94th match in that competition against a new opponent in Berks County FC; a club formed as recently as 2009 and playing in the North Division of our League, and we were good value for our 3-1 win at a soggy KGF. For those interested, it was our 45th win in that time.

This result improved our recent form to just one loss in our last eleven matches and it is a shame that our club don't seem to be able to keep up with this off the field. They may claim this was a healthy looking attendance of 145 which, on the face of it, might seem ok for a Vase match, but when you bear in mind that there were only two other games at this or a higher standard anywhere in the Southern half of the country, we really missed an opportunity to pull in a crowd well over the 300 mark and it's really time that questions were asked about those people who are "running" our club, who appear uncaring or more worryingly oblivious to the opportunities they keep missing, instead believing that bringing in about fifteen of the Colts and a few of their parents each week is somehow sufficient to tick the "family club" box. Throw in a number of unanswered requests on the club Twitter site relating to whether there was going to be an inspection, which was a perfectly valid question following our postponement on Tuesday and you wonder whether our club really do care about your attendance at these matches. And in case anyone is wondering, yes, I have offered my services on many occasions.

There was only one person connected with the club who seemed to show a bit of energy and he was the chap on the tannoy system. Maybe he will even benefit the club, once he can actually get our own players names right!

The club held a minute's applause for supporter Peter Mitchell before the kick off. Whilst he may have been deserving of a minute's recognition as he was a fairly loyal supporter over the two and a half seasons he was following us, I see no reason whatsoever for any supporters or club officials to receive this fairly recent fad of a minute's applause. In my opinion, a minute's silence should be sufficient, with applause given only to former players and maybe some Managers. Having said that, our club never even bothered to hold a minute's acknowledgement of any kind for recently passed strikers Gerry O'Rourke and Ben Forey, the latter of whom even sits on our goal scoring Hall of Fame, so it will be interesting to see what happens next time one of these tributes is required at an Epsom match.

We made four changes from our recent 2-2 draw against Fleet Town. Ethan Brazier was fit again and resumed at right back in place of the absent Niall Stillwell, while David Romer came in for Callum Wilson who had suffered a small injury issue at Thursday's training session. Faebian Witter came in between the posts ahead of Dan O'Donovan, while further forward we had a debut for Kailan North who had recent spells with Colliers Wood United and Banstead Athletic. He came in for the cup-tied Jason Bloor, who had made an appearance for Langley earlier in the competition.

As the pre-match rain eased, it became apparent that the match was not starting on time. For those who were wondering why this was, as the club chose not to advise the reason, it was due to the late arrival of the visiting keeper, Harvey Rackley-Hayes. I'm not entirely sure why this delay was allowed for just one missing player, but either way we kicked off twenty minutes after the original start time in conditions that were far better than originally expected due to the virtual non-arrival in our area of Storm Ashley.

We had an early opportunity when Kionte Gillfillian-Waul sent in a good ball, but it zipped across the wet turf and Carl Oblitey couldn't quite reach it. Then in the 17th minute we probably should have taken the lead when a free kick was half cleared to Ethan Nelson-Roberts and whilst his shot was deflected for a corner, Adam Green's delivery into the danger area looked like it would be met by Anthony Nazareth, but he missed his header from close range, only for the ball to fall back to him just six yards out at an angle, from where he sent his shot over the bar.

The visitors volleyed a corner wide at the near post, but we were back on the attack soon after and a deep Fofahan cross resulted in a drop from Rackley-Hayes, but as the loose ball was drilled into the net by Nelson-Roberts, the whistle blew as the referee felt that the County keeper had been fouled. It was a soft one for sure, but in the 26th minute we went ahead anyway after a poor back pass from Will Edwards was intercepted by Fofahan and he drew the keeper before slotting the ball between his legs and into the net from just inside the penalty area.

However, within two minutes of making the breakthrough, the visitors drew level as a deep right wing cross was met at the far post with a header back across Witter from George Gould. Our keeper got a hand to the ball but couldn't keep it out.

Fofahan was giving the Berks County defenders a lot of trouble and he had a speculative effort from 25 yards that went wide, but in the 36th minute he struck the inside of Rackley-Hayes' left hand post from fifteen yards with the ball skewing across the goal and spinning out for a goal kick! Fofahan really should have scored here after he had broken through, but instead we went in at the break with the scores level.

I felt we had shaded the first half, but at 1-1, there was also the potential for a fifth straight 2-2 draw that no one would have wanted, as it would have meant that the tie would be decided on penalties instead! We then had an early scare in the second half as Brazier and Witter got in each other's way while trying to effect a clearance, but we just about got away with it and went back in front for the second time in the 55th minute after Brazier made tracks down the right, before cutting back and delivering a decent cross that Oblitey attacked. His header struck a defender but rebounded into his path and he drilled the ball low into the corner from just seven yards out, giving Rackley-Hayes no chance.

Fofahan forced a good save from a narrow angle by Rackley-Hayes before we had to reshuffle the pack after Gillfillian-Waul was replaced by Luke Miller with Fofahan moving to the left wing instead. This was our first substitution of the day, but by the end of the match all four of our starting defenders would be off the field! Romer would be one of those, but before he departed, he capped a fine performance with a run on the left wing and a low delivery in for Green to strike at goal, but Rackley-Hayes made a superb save with his right boot to keep the close range shot out.

Witter picked up a yellow card for time-wasting but in the 79th minute Gould went in high on Romer and received a

straight red card for his challenge, which also caused the obligatory sixteen man scuffle! Toby Young came on in relief of Romer after his own spell out with injury and we made the game safe in the 86th minute with a great move down the right where Oblitey collected the ball and sent it square to the supporting Craig Dundas, but he cleverly dummied the ball which sold the defender completely and left Fofahan through on goal, although he still cut back to beat someone before drilling the ball low past Rackley-Hayes from 12 yards to make it 3-1 to the Salts.

There were more chances as the ten men tried to get back into the game, but we were picking them off and a clever pass put Fofahan through, although he chose to pass instead of shooting from eight yards and it came to nothing. I don't think anyone in the ground would have blamed our winger if he had tried to get his hat trick, but it was a selfless decision and he almost turned provider again in the fourth minute of injury time when his deep delivery from the left wing was headed in by Green from six yards, only for the offside flag to be raised against him.

Still, by the end of the match we were fairly comfortable winners and whilst we will see Berks County again in the League Cup in January, we now look forward to an appearance in the Second Round, or last 128, for the first time since 2017/18 when we were edged out 3-2 after extra time at Whitstable Town. The draw comes out around Monday lunchtime and there are some very good teams left in the draw that would be nice to avoid; Jersey Bulls, AFC Whyteleafe and Fleet Town amongst them, and I haven't even mentioned the top teams in Sussex and Kent yet (including Whitstable again!). But this is a competition in which we have a prominent history, so it's just great to still be involved in it, fifty years after that very first amazing run.

Epsom & Ewell: Faebian Witter, Ethan Brazier, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), David Romer, Anthony Nazareth, Ali Fofahan, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Kailan North, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Luke Miller for Gillfillian-Waul (59), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Nazareth (64), Toby Young for Romer (84), Luke Taylor for Brazier (91)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom & Ewell's Green Belt controversy tightens

24 October 2024



Tensions flared during a heated meeting of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) in Epsom on October 17th, 2024, as residents voiced strong objections to the proposed housing targets and the perceived threat to the borough's Green Belt. The meeting was marked by a series of public statements and a notable exchange between committee members and the public, revealing deep-rooted concerns about the future of Epsom's green spaces and the transparency of the council's planning processes.

Government's Revised Housing Targets and NPPF Changes

At the heart of the controversy is the government's proposed revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which includes significantly higher housing targets for local councils and reduced protections for Green Belt land. Epsom and Ewell face mandatory targets of 817 dwellings per annum—more than four times the current requirement of 181 dwellings per year as stipulated by the borough's Core Strategy 2007.

Janice Baker, a resident who spoke at the meeting, expressed her dismay at the scale of the new housing targets, equating the requirement to building "50 football pitches of Green Belt land every year." She warned that such development would irreversibly alter the borough, leading to increased traffic, overwhelmed public services, and environmental degradation. Baker urged the council to take swift action: "There are only a couple of weeks left for you to avert this disaster... the window of time is still there. It is in your hands."

Public Frustration with Council Process

Several residents, including **Adrian Jones**, raised concerns over what they perceived as a lack of transparency and accountability in the council's planning processes. Jones, in a pointed exchange with the committee, highlighted the delays in receiving responses to his queries about the local plan and questioned whether these were deliberate attempts to impede public participation. "Is this deliberate to stop me preparing or just a mistake?" Jones asked. His concerns were met with a promise from Councillor O'Donovan to investigate the delay, but the tension in the room was palpable.

Samantha Bentall, who was denied the opportunity to speak at the meeting, had her written statement rejected by the committee chair on the grounds that it was deemed "defamatory, offensive, vexatious or frivolous." In an email exchange with the council, Bentall pressed for clarification on which elements of her statement were objectionable but received no detailed explanation. She accused the council of "gagging residents" and in a letter to the Epsom and Ewell Times, called

for her concerns to be published, stating that they were in the public interest.

Epsom Green Belt Group's Alternative Proposal

Adding to the public discourse, the **Epsom Green Belt Group** presented an alternative housing proposal that seeks to meet the borough's housing needs without encroaching on Green Belt land. In a letter addressed to the council's CEO, **Jackie King**, and leader of the Residents Association, **Hannah Dalton**, the group outlined a plan to focus development on brownfield sites and previously developed land (PDL), such as West Park Hospital and Hollywood Lodge.

The group argues that the borough's housing requirement—calculated as 3,840 dwellings over the plan period—can be met entirely on brownfield and PDL land, avoiding the need to release Green Belt land for development. Their proposal includes detailed site-by-site figures, with 4,199 housing units proposed across various brownfield sites, of which 1,105 would be affordable or social housing.

"We hope that you can look on our proposals favourably," the letter reads, "and utilise the suggestions to update the Local Plan then publish it for consultation as soon as possible to ensure it is submitted for examination in early January 2025." The group also highlighted the public's overwhelming opposition to Green Belt development, citing the 87% of respondents to the Regulation 18 consultation who rejected the idea.

Council's Response and Timetable

Councillor **O'Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) chair of the LPPC, acknowledged the public's concerns but stressed that the council is constrained by legal requirements and external factors in the development of the Local Plan. In response to a question from Adrian Jones about the council's timetable for submitting the Local Plan, O'Donovan explained that while the council is working towards a May 2025 submission, the timetable is dependent on the completion of external workstreams and the processing of public consultation responses.

"The timetable for progressing the local plan is as set out in our Local Development Scheme," O'Donovan said, noting that public consultation on the Pre-Submission Local Plan is expected to begin in January 2025. He also reassured residents that the council is exploring ways to expedite the process but emphasised the importance of having a robust evidence base to avoid future challenges to the plan.

However, many residents remain unconvinced by the council's assurances. **Mark Todd**, chair of the local Labour Party, expressed his support for the Epsom Green Belt Group's proposals and urged the council to prioritise the protection of green spaces while delivering the housing the borough needs. "Local people want housing and green spaces," Todd said. "I commend the local Epsom Green Belt group's drive to engage with local politicians and highlight all the options available."

The Next Steps and the Community's Expectations

The clock is ticking for the council to submit its Local Plan before the anticipated changes to the NPPF come into effect in January 2025. Failure to do so could mean that Epsom and Ewell will be forced to meet the higher housing targets, putting vast swathes of Green Belt land at risk.

Nathan Chan and **Casper Grunwald**, two Year 8 students, delivered a poignant joint statement, reminding the council of its responsibility to future generations. "This is your past, our present, and many generations to come's future," Chan said. "Do you want to be remembered as the people who saved Epsom, or the people who ruined our Green Belt?"

The council now faces the challenging task of balancing the need for new housing with the community's desire to protect its cherished green spaces. As the debate over the Local Plan intensifies, one thing is clear: the eyes of Epsom's residents are firmly fixed on the council, and they expect nothing less than a transparent and equitable solution to the borough's housing crisis.

Conclusion

As the Local Plan moves towards its final stages, the council must navigate a complex web of legal obligations, public opinion, and environmental considerations. The decisions made in the coming months will have a lasting impact on the character of Epsom and Ewell, and the council's leadership will need to ensure that all voices are heard and that the best possible outcome is achieved for the community.

In the words of Nathan Chan: "This is your past, our present, and many generations to come's future." How the council responds to this challenge will determine whether Epsom's green spaces will be preserved for those future generations or lost to the demands of urban expansion.

Related reports:

[Epsom Local Plan controversy heats up](#)

[Challenges to Epsom and Ewell Council's Handling of Local Plan](#)

[Time to press the gas on Epsom's Local Plan?](#)

and many many more. Search "local plan".

Epsom & Ewell Council Greenlights Local Projects

24 October 2024



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Licensing and Planning Policy Committee has given its provisional backing to over £2 million in Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for a variety of local projects, following the council's annual funding round. The funding round, which ran between 7 May and 18 June 2024, saw a total of 28 bids submitted—five for strategic CIL funding and 23 for neighbourhood CIL funding.

Community Infrastructure funding derives from money provided to the Council by developers.

In a significant outcome, three strategic CIL bids, totalling £1.755 million, were recommended for approval. These include £1.25 million for public realm enhancements in Ewell Village, £405,000 for a full-size 3G football pitch at Priest Hill, and £100,000 for a new clubhouse at Old Schools Lane, Ewell. However, bids for Epsom Playhouse lighting replacement and increasing capacity at local GP surgeries were not successful. The latter was deemed "desirable" rather than "essential," with other bids seen as higher priorities.

In terms of neighbourhood projects, six bids, amounting to £331,966, received backing. These include £85,000 for a new community building at Glyn Hall and £78,644 for footpath improvements at the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve. Other successful bids include upgrades to playgrounds at Bourne Hall, Gateley Green, and Gibraltar, as well as street tree planting on Waterloo Road.

Despite the committee's overall approval, 17 neighbourhood bids did not make the cut, with reasons ranging from failing initial assessments to not scoring highly enough in evaluations. This includes several bids that did not meet the "best value" criteria set out in the council's CIL Spending Protocol.

A key moment in the meeting came when Liberal Democrat Councillor **Julie Morris** (College Ward) successfully proposed an amendment to include the **Nam Yang Martial Arts** project for funding, which had initially been overlooked. Her proposal, seconded by Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington), was passed by a majority, ensuring that the martial arts project will be considered for £161,250 in funding by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

The council's decisions on the CIL funding allocations will now be subject to final approval by the Strategy and Resources Committee, as required by the Council's financial regulations.

Image Nam Yang Martial Arts Epsom figure courtesy <https://martialartsepsom.com/>

Verdi's Requiem adapted for Epsom Church

24 October 2024



Epsom Choral Society (ECS) will perform the Verdi Requiem on Saturday 23rd November at 7:30pm, at St Martin's Church in Epsom. This concert promises to be a remarkable event, showcasing a special arrangement of Verdi's grand work with chamber ensemble by Michael Betzner-Brandt.

Celebrating over a century of musical excellence, ECS has been delivering exceptional performances to its audiences to mark its centenary in 2022. The choir has programmed a series of exciting and diverse concerts over the past two years, including a gala performance of Handel's Messiah and a spectacular rendition of Walton's Belshazzar's Feast at London's Cadogan Hall.

There are four outstanding international soloists:

Elizabeth Findon - soprano

Judy Louie Brown - mezzo

John Findon - tenor

Mark Nathan - baritone

The concert will be conducted by ECS Music Director, Julian Collings.

This November, ECS invites its loyal followers to experience Verdi's Requiem like never before. The arrangement by Michael Betzner-Brandt is designed specifically for a chamber ensemble, allowing the choir to bring the grandeur and emotional depth of Verdi's masterpiece to a more intimate setting while still capturing the essence and intensity of the original composition.

"Our aim is to create an unforgettable musical experience for our audience," said Nina Kaye, publicity manager. "The Verdi Requiem is one of the most powerful works in the choral repertoire, and this unique arrangement allows us to perform it in St Martin's Church in Epsom."

Tickets for this not-to-be-missed event are priced at £20, with a special half-price offer for under-25s and can be bought online www.epsomchoral.org.uk. Attendees are encouraged to book early to avoid disappointment, as this concert is expected to attract a large audience.

Join Epsom Choral Society on Saturday, 23rd November at 7:30pm at St Martin's Church in Epsom for an evening of stirring music, passion, and community. Experience Verdi's Requiem in a new light, and be a part of the rich musical heritage that ECS continues to build in Epsom and beyond.

For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit www.epsomchoral.org.uk.

County pledge to Epsom charity's fight to end poverty

24 October 2024



In a significant move for the region, Surrey County Council (SCC) has signed Good Company's End Poverty Pledge, marking a bold step towards addressing the growing issue of poverty across the county. The pledge, which was approved on 8th October, coincides with the United Nations' International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This year's theme of "acting together" underscores SCC's commitment to creating fairer and more inclusive communities.

Councillor Mark Nuti, SCC's Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, signed the pledge on behalf of the council. In doing so, SCC committed to developing a comprehensive, community-led Poverty Action Plan, working in collaboration with partners across the region. Councillor Nuti emphasised the urgent need to support both those already struggling to make ends meet and those at risk of falling into hardship.

"In signing the pledge, we are not only committing to support people who can't afford basic essentials like food and heating, but we are also standing with those who are on the brink of financial hardship. Poverty has a devastating effect on health and wellbeing, and the consequences ripple out into greater demand on public services," said Nuti. He highlighted the council's commitment to targeting welfare support where it's most needed and using its influence as a major organisation to "buy local," improve job opportunities, and advocate for essential changes to the benefit system.

This pledge is supported by the local charity Good Company, based in Epsom, and its East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission (ESPTC), a group working closely with individuals who have lived experience of poverty. Jonathan Lees, Founder and Managing Director of Good Company, hailed the pledge as a major step forward in the fight against poverty.

"Surrey is one of the wealthiest counties in the UK, yet we see people in our foodbank centres and pantries struggling daily to afford food and energy. Signing this pledge is an important move by SCC, and we hope that many more local organisations and individuals will join us in this fight. We can't tackle poverty alone—but together, we can make a difference," Lees stated.

SCC's Ongoing Efforts to Combat Poverty

This winter, SCC's health and welfare hub will serve as a crucial resource for those affected by rising living costs. It will provide information on Warm Welcomes and the Energy Advice Tool, grants for energy-efficient homes, and local foodbank locations. Last year, SCC's Warm Welcome venues saw 46,000 visitors, and 86,000 residents benefited from the Household Support Fund, which distributed much-needed assistance to those in financial crisis. This year, the council's Fuel Poverty programme has attracted nearly £1 million in funding, aimed at helping residents in or at risk of fuel debt.

Councillor Nuti acknowledged the strides made to help those in need but recognised the work ahead: "We'll continue to learn from those with first-hand experience of poverty, ensuring that our services respond more effectively in the future."

The Work of the East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission

The Good Company's East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission (ESPTC) has played a pivotal role in shaping the county's approach to poverty. Launched in 2019, the ESPTC brings together individuals with lived experience of poverty and senior representatives from civic and business sectors to work collaboratively towards solutions. The Commission has helped raise awareness of poverty's root causes, and its efforts have led to tangible changes in local services.

For example, after hearing first-hand accounts from residents, a local housing association shifted its approach to customer care, ensuring that tenants struggling with rent payments are treated with compassion. The ESPTC also initiated a laptop recycling project, addressing digital exclusion by providing over 360 laptops to students from low-income families.

As Good Company embarks on the second phase of the ESPTC, its focus remains on building relationships and addressing key issues identified by Community Commissioners. The charity is committed to amplifying the voices of those affected by poverty, ensuring they are central to decisions on how to tackle it.

Upcoming Event: East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission Celebration

On Wednesday, 27th November, Good Company will be hosting a special event to celebrate the work of the East Surrey Poverty Truth Commission over the past 18 months. The event, which will take place at Bourne Hall in Ewell from 11am to 1:30pm, will showcase the transformational journey of the Commission's members and explore the exciting ideas and plans for future change.

This celebration is a chance for the community to come together and hear about the Commission's work to create long-term solutions to poverty in East Surrey. Tickets are free, and all are welcome to register online.

With Surrey County Council's pledge and the continued work of Good Company, there is renewed hope for a future where poverty is no longer an invisible problem, but one actively tackled by local communities, organisations, and government alike.

For more information and to register for the event, visit the Good Company's Eventbrite page.

Image: Mart Production

Mole Valley 'won't bend' to petitioners

24 October 2024



The fight to protect the green gateway into a Leatherhead goes on after campaigners seeking to stop a popular park from being turned into high rises were told the council would not "bend the knee" to their petition.

Mole Valley District Council heard from residents representing the 1,500 people who joined the call to stop the "unnecessary" development at Leatherhead's Red House Park by Bull Hill.

They argued the open space could be saved if the council instead redeveloped the raft of empty offices or unused industrial estates in the town.

The petition, discussed at the Tuesday, October 15 full meeting of Mole Valley District Council read: "This park is used by many people and also home to lots of wildlife and historical trees.

"The plans are to build high rise flats and apartments which would look unsightly. The town has barely enough space in schools, and doctors and dentists have waiting lists so understandably very concerning for local residents."

The plan, part of Transform Leatherhead, seeks to redevelop the land within the existing one-way system known as Bull Hill, including the Red House Gardens.

The council and its development partner Kier say this is to complement the retail and leisure quarters of the town.

Bull Hill is currently made up of office space, public car parks and open space.

It was originally earmarked for retail but after work to the Swan Centre and transport studies, as well as the trend away from high street shopping, the decision was made to go for a mixed development.

In October 2023 the council and Kier Property signed the legal agreements and the joint venture is now working to develop the project.

Presenting the petition, the speaker said: “If we destroy everything that makes Leatherhead a destination in favour of becoming a carbon copy of London then people will leave.”

Campaigners pressed for the use of alternative sites and said there was 140,000 square metres of empty office space in Leatherhead – enough for 190 two-bed family homes.

However this was quickly shot down as they were told the council was powerless to force private landowners to hand over vacant properties – and were restricted to sites identified in its local plan.

Instead they want the campaigners to work with the council to make the site the best it can be for the town – while understanding the council needs to build on the land to hit its housing targets.

Cabinet member Councillor Keira Vyvyan-Robinson (Liberal Democrat; Leatherhead North) praised the strength of feeling but said the council can only put forward sites their owners put forward for development.

She said the new local plan has put in restrictions and that developments with high rise buildings have to prove their worth, and that play and open spaces must be provided.

The council also expected the redevelopment to increase biodiversity in the town by at least 20 per cent.

Cllr Vyvyan-Robinson told the meeting she hoped residents would continue to be involved in the process as the plans continued to be revised.

Cllr Ben Wall (Liberal Democrat; Leatherhead North) dismissed fears the project would turn the town into the next Woking or Croydon. He said: “The tallest building in Croydon is 150metres tall, you can see that for miles, we’re suggestion a building that’s maximum 20m, you are not going to see it from Leatherhead North.

He added: “We’ve been talking about this for the best part of a decade, we’ve had countless opportunities for residents to talk to us. We are listening. Listening is not the same things as bending the knee entirely to a petition. We will listen to a petition, it doesn’t mean we have to come to the same conclusion as a petition.

“Leatherhead has suffered from a chronic lack of investment for decades it’s not the time to start throwing out multimillion investment and investment opportunities without fully assessing their potential benefits.

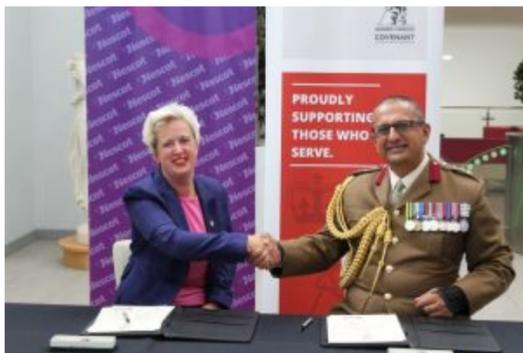
“I’m cautiously optimistic that these proposals incorporating public feedback can be successful.

“I’m not saying that we will come to a perfect solution but we can not let perfect be the enemy of good.”

Cabinet member Cllr Claire Malcolmson (Liberal Democrat; Holmwoods and Beare Green) added: “ We are listening these are not the final designs.”

Nescot proud to sign the Armed Forces Covenant

24 October 2024



North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) is proud to have officially signed the Armed Forces Covenant at a special event at the college today (16 October). The Covenant is a formal commitment to those who serve and have served that they will be treated with fairness and respect, and a recognition of the valuable attributes they bring to the workplace.

The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) was signed at the event by Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO of Nescot and Brigadier Ben Banerjee KHS QVRM DL VR, Head Army Medical Services Reserve, Army HQ.

By signing the AFC, Nescot has pledged to uphold its key principles and to recognise the critical contribution that the Armed Forces community make to our country.

Nescot has already been awarded the Bronze ERS Award for the college’s commitment to the Armed Forces.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO of Nescot said, “Nescot is extremely proud to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and pledge to continue to show our support for the Armed Forces community, both as an education and training provider and as an employer.

“Indeed, Nescot’s first Principal, Colonel Thomas Buchanan was a decorated army veteran of ‘legendary coolness and bravery’. He was admired for his compassion, foresight, leadership and encouragement. In 1964 he became Deputy Lieutenant for Surrey, and was appointed an OBE for services to education in 1970. I am very proud to stand in his shoes today and to do something that I believe he would have been proud of and that continues his legacy.”

Julie Kapsalis added, “We continue to have a unique role as an educational institution in providing opportunities for

members of the Armed Forces to further their education and enhance their career prospects. We are also committed to being an Armed Forces friendly employer. We recognise the unique skills and experiences that members of the Armed Forces bring to our community. Their leadership, discipline, and resilience enrich our campus culture and provide valuable perspectives that benefit all students.”

The event at the college included a flag raising ceremony by students representing our Public Services cohort, Leo, Skye and Poppy.

Leo, a student on our Level 3 Public Services programme said, “It’s an honour to be part of the Covenant signing event today. I am interested in a military career and it’s great that we get a chance to have visits and opportunities to interact with the Armed Forces here at Nescot.”

Through our Public Services courses, our students are offered regular engagement opportunities with the Armed Forces as part of their training and also take part in the annual Poppy Appeal with the Royal British Legion.

Earlier in the day, our Public Services students benefitted from inspirational talks in the college’s theatre from Brigadier Banerjee, Head Army Medical Services Reserve who spoke to them about some of the amazing experiences from his career, and from Ben Trevan from Nescot’s Foundation Learning team and British Army Reservist with The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Ben Trevan spoke to the students about his role as a Learning Support Assistant at the college and as a Reservist. He said, “I have been a Reservist for two years now. Although the role can be challenging, it offers a great sense of camaraderie. I have been able to use my transferrable skills from both, teaching and my role as a Reservist. More importantly, I am able to fit my Reservist role around my teaching job. I am very grateful and thankful to my employer, Nescot for their support with respecting my commitments and allowing me the time to train. The signing of the Armed Forces Covenant reiterates the fact that I’m supported both by the Army and Nescot, which are both a part of my daily life.”

Invitees at the event also had opportunities for networking and were invited to tour Nescot’s facilities including the college’s cutting edge immersive learning spaces.

The event which was held at the college’s Skills Park was also attended by representatives from the Armed Forces community and local organisations from: Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’ Association for Greater London (GL RFCA); 135 Geographic Squadron; Epsom & Ewell Royal British Legion; Royal Navy; Epsom & Ewell Borough Council; Combat Stress, Nescot staff and students.

More information about the covenant, including how organisations can help support the forces community, is available on the Armed Forces Covenant website.

Related report:

Surrey Scouts honour Armed Forces Covenant

Image: Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO, Nescot and Brigadier Ben Banerjee, Head Army Medical Reserve, Army HQ, sign the Armed Forces Covenant at Nescot.

Epsom and Ewell adopts new Climate Action Plan

24 October 2024



Tuesday 15th October Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Environment Committee approved a new five year Climate Action Plan (2025-2029).

The Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to meet the Council’s commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2035. This second five-year plan builds upon the first Climate Change Action Plan, which ends in 2024, and introduces 52 key objectives across six main themes, aiming to reduce the Council’s own carbon footprint and address Borough-wide emissions. The Plan also reflects input from cross-party groups and officers involved in climate change and biodiversity efforts.

The six themes include:

1. Council Leadership and Influencing Others: Focused on policy development, leadership, and collaboration with external partners to influence carbon reduction across the Borough.
2. Council Buildings and Energy Use: Aimed at reducing energy consumption in council-owned buildings and exploring renewable energy options such as solar panels and energy-efficient systems.

3. Transport: The plan includes strategies to reduce emissions from the Council's fleet and encourage electric vehicle infrastructure in public car parks and on streets.
4. Environmental Improvements: Objectives include increasing biodiversity, promoting local food production, and ensuring sustainable land management practices.
5. Waste Management: Targeting reductions in waste production and improving recycling rates across the Borough.
6. Technology and Information Systems: Leveraging data and new technologies to track carbon impacts and implement climate-smart solutions.

The plan incorporates specific performance indicators, financial costs, and the projected carbon impact for each objective, ensuring transparent monitoring of progress. Key initiatives include transitioning to a green fleet, enhancing energy efficiency in public buildings, supporting local energy projects, and promoting biodiversity and sustainable transport options. The plan stresses the importance of partnerships, particularly with Surrey County Council, to foster local and regional collaboration on environmental sustainability .

Here is a summary of ten interesting objectives from the 52 listed in the Climate Action Plan:

Local Plan Development: Integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation into the Local Plan, focusing on low carbon design, energy-efficient buildings, sustainable transport, and environmental impact minimisation .

Green Procurement: Revise procurement policies to prioritise low-carbon products and services, thereby reducing the Council's total carbon footprint from supply chains .

Supplier Engagement: Identify the Council's most carbon-intensive suppliers and collaborate with them to reduce their emissions .

Energy Efficiency in Private Rentals: Support compliance with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) in private rental properties, ensuring properties achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E or above .

Green Skills Development: Work with Surrey County Council to promote green careers and skills development, particularly in the areas of construction and retrofitting, to meet future workforce needs .

Tree Planting: Implement the Council's Tree Management Plan to increase tree cover in the borough, enhancing biodiversity and contributing to carbon sequestration .

Sustainable Energy Production: Explore options for larger-scale sustainable energy projects on Council-owned land, such as solar farms .

LED Lighting Replacement: Replace traditional lighting at Council assets, like Epsom Playhouse and Bourne Hall, with energy-efficient LED lighting .

Solar Energy Feasibility: Investigate the potential for installing solar panels, solar storage, and solar carports on Council-operated assets and land .

Government Funding for Green Projects: Actively pursue government and external funding opportunities for energy efficiency and decarbonisation projects across Council buildings .

These objectives exemplify the Council's comprehensive approach to addressing climate change, focusing on reducing carbon emissions, enhancing energy efficiency, and fostering community engagement in sustainability efforts.