Epsom Playhouse gets a 40 year uplift

Epsom Playhouse opened in 1984 as part of the development of The Ashley Centre and since opening has hosted a wide and varied programme of events featuring both professional and community productions. Highlights including The Royal Phihamonic Orchestra, Stephane Grappelli, Kenny Ball and his Jazzmen, the James Last Orchestra, Instant Sunshine, Jack Dee, Harry Hill and many many more.

At the beginning the Council head hunted **Graham Stansfield** (deceased 2018) for his contacts in the entertainment world which helped establish the Playhouse's reputation early on. Then all the theatre seats could concertina into the back wall, opening the space for balls and exhibitions. Expensive to maintain and service these seats were replaced by the comfortable fixed seating that remains today.

The Playhouse is home to a variety of local amatuer ensembles including the Epsom Sympony Orchestra and the Epsom Players.

The former "members bar" or "upstairs area" has been defunct for many years and is getting a long overdue facelift and repurposing. It will become available for private hire for functions.

A spokesperson for EEBC said "We are currently working on improvements to Epsom Playhouse using an allocation of monies from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

One of the first areas for development is the bar on the ground floor. Soon, this will split into two – there will be one bar for bottled drinks and one area for draught – alleviating some of the queues that can happen at busy times. The ground floor bar will also benefit aesthetically from a new artistic mural, depicting singer and actress, Evelyn Dove. As well as this, there are also plans to add a new platform lift to aid accessibility to the upstairs area, which will itself be transformed with a mezzanine overlooking the foyer, improved seating, new flooring, another artistic mural and a refurbished bar area."

Speaking of the upcoming plans to develop facilities, Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said, "Epsom Playhouse is a wonderful entertainment venue for the borough, and I am delighted that it is now benefitting from a much-needed uplift, which will help it to reach its full potential as a place for creatives to gather, perform and spectate!"

Epsom Playhouse's programme of events and successes are under the management of Elaine Teague.

UK SPF funds were allocated to help places around the country deliver enhanced outcomes, in recognition that even affluent areas contain pockets of deprivation and need assistance.

The main Auditorium seats 450 and plays host to major leading theatrical companies, including opera, dance, drama, comedy, light entertainment, variety, popular children's shows and more.

The Myers Studio within the Playhouse seats up to 80 and is used as a regular venue for professional productions, and community events. Both the Auditorium and the Myers Studio are available for both corporate hire and private hire.

For more information visit www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk

UK library cuts a concern for Epsom & Ewell?

With 132 libraries closing permanently between 2016-2023 in England, there are growing concerns of further actions from local councils to make savings at the expense of public libraries. Should Epsom & Ewell be concerned?

Since 2016, the UK has witnessed a net loss of 185 public libraries from Council's statutory services. In total 132 libraries were permanently closed in England, with a further 29 expected to follow suit in 2024.

Former Children's Laureate, **Michael Rosen** has expressed great concern, stating "Every time I hear of a library being closed I find it absolutely horrifying... this seems to be like a decimation of our cultural entitlement."

Permanent closures are not the only growing worry surrounding UK libraries. Libraries Connected Chief Executive **Isobel Hunter** MBE acknowledged that "it is also a gradual reduction in opening hours, staff numbers and operating budgets that can leave libraries unable to meet the needs of their communities".

A government spokesperson responded "We recognise the pressures [libraries] face, and are committed to giving stability back to

local councils so services such as these can best meet the needs of their communities."

How have libraries in Surrey and Epsom & Ewell fared since 2016?

Surrey:

Unlike several local councils, the Surrey County Council has not permanently closed any libraries since 2016. All 52 libraries are still running, 42 of which are council-run with the other 10 being community partnerships.

The Surrey County Council's 2024/25 budget indicates that they intend to enable libraries to meet the changing needs of communities while also ensuring library assets are fit and sustainable for the future.

One change Surrey has seen however is that 29 libraries are now operating with reduced hours.

Epsom & Ewell:

Of the 4 libraries in Epsom & Ewell, two are council-run (Epsom library and Ewell library). Between 2016-2023, both have been subject to the reduction of operating hours, with the council-run libraries reducing their open hours by 4.5 hours per week.

Despite the concerns of closures elsewhere, Surrey County Council is investing in several of its libraries, with Epsom library included.

A £23.2million investment for the transformation of Surrey libraries was approved by the Surrey County Council earlier this year, aiming to modernise services and create flexible spaces. Epsom, alongside Woking and Redhill, will see the creation of flagship facilities, including;

Flexible meeting rooms
Moveable partitions/walls to create workspaces
Meeting pods
New furniture
A fully flexible layout

Epsom will additionally have 'super access technology' to allow access to library services outside its opening hours (during "super access hours"). This intends to resolve the reduction of opening hours by allowing people to use the library facilities even if no staff are present. The system has a library card and pin code access point to enter the building, and self scan kiosks to check books in/out.

With works already starting, as of the 5th of August 2024, Surrey County Council expects the final completion day to be in February 2025.

Despite this investment, Surrey County Council have outlined that libraries income pressures will continue in 2024/25, as outlined in their 2024/25 Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2028/29.

Reliance on volunteer work:

1 of the 10 community-run libraries in Surrey is the Stoneleigh Community library, which has previously suffered from cuts. In 2011 the Surrey County Council voted to let go of most of the full time staff there, forcing the library to appeal for volunteers. After the judicial technical challenge and revised proposal, the volunteer group Friends of Stoneleigh library was formed in 2013 to reopen and run the library, and as of 2016 had around 70 volunteers.

Today the library still holds regular activities and special events, acting as a social hub for the Stoneleigh community. The Friends of Stoneleigh Library offers a variety of volunteer roles from administrative work to helping the running of events.

The other community partnership library in Epsom & Ewell is Ewell Court Library, listed alongside the Stoneleigh Community Library in initial plans to reduce spending in 2011/12. Open 4 days a week, the community library offers a wide array of services, with the help of its volunteers.

Epsom take the boot from landlords

Epsom and Ewell 1-2 Corinthian-Casuals, Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Monday 26th August 2024.

A late rally almost enabled us to take something out of our first Tolworth based local derby, but we were ultimately unable to force an equaliser and had to accept defeat to our landlords and visitors Corinthian-Casuals by two goals to one at the KGF on

Monday.

Our club will tell you that we had a good, if slightly inflated attendance of 224 in an attempt to justify switching this match to an afternoon kick-off, but the simple truth is that they still missed out on hundreds of pounds in gate revenue. By moving this match from the original 11.30am kick off, we missed out on at least fifty more spectators, as there were very few morning kick offs around in our area. Our match would easily have been the most interesting of those early kick offs, but instead we had to compete with an almost full Isthmian League programme, including the Kingstonian v Raynes Park Vale derby, plus home matches for Dulwich Hamlet and Horsham, not to mention National League teams Woking and Dorking Wanderers. Not a smart move, but they'll still try to justify it! Quite simply, our club needs to learn to leave our rare 11.30 matches alone and if they are genuine about getting more supporters in, then to consider different kick off times to the masses on more regular occasions, not less. Running out of programmes half an hour before kick-off won't endear the club to "floaters" either!

Our line up was still missing Toby Young who completed his three game suspension in this match in addition to the injured Reece Tierney and Fabian Nunes, while Will Kendall was also absent. Carl Oblitey came in up front in Kendall's position and played alongside Ali Fofahan who had made a promising debut at Sandhurst Town on Tuesday. Felipe de Lima continued in place of Nunes as he had done on Tuesday, while Ethan Brazier was moved to the bench with his place being taken by new signing from Guildford City, Sabek Mohssine, who had a fairly uneventful hour before being replaced by another debutant in Sean Anderson.

In truth this match followed a similar pattern to many of our others this season, in that we have competed fairly well against opponents, only for errors to cost us, and this would be the case again in a match that was niggly at times, but swung both ways and was entertaining with lots of half-chances. We had the first of those when a hopeful ball was dropped into the Casuals penalty area, where their keeper and a defender almost left to it to each other, but instead the ball fell to Callum Wilson, only his shot at a half vacant goal from just eight yards was scuffed and easily cleared by the covering defender. The ball was only half cleared to Fofahan whose strike skimmed inches over the crossbar from 18 yards.

Although we had chances, our opponents had the greater share of possession, particularly in the opening half and they responded with a low shot just wide of Dan O'Donovan's goal, before a free kick from Diogo Da Silva was straight at our man between the posts. He was in action shortly afterwards as a deep delivery was punched away from an unmarked Casuals player waiting at the far post before Jonathon Gjoshe sent a shot in that just cleared our own crossbar.

In response Oblitey produced a good run and low shot that was a couple of feet wide of the near post before an Adam Green free kick was cleared away which led to a counter attack from the most dangerous player on the pitch Shea Cascoe-Rogers, but Green had recovered well to make the tackle back. Fofahan was then booked for a foul on Cascoe-Rogers and we nearly conceded from a deep free kick when two of our defenders combined to get in each other's way, luckily knocking the ball out for a corner, just wide of our own post. However, in the 42nd minute we went behind. The visitors advised that the goal was scored by their number 4 Tommy Castelo, but it was actually headed past O'Donovan by our own number 4, Adam Green from close range, giving him no chance!

It had been coming though, as they were finishing the stronger of the teams and although Fofahan had his shirt pulled in the visiting penalty area, nothing was given, before a Luke Miller header was then caught at full stretch by Murillo Bernardes and we went in at the break a goal down.

The second half continued in a similar fashion, concentrated mostly in midfield and Sabek picked up our second yellow card for pulling back an opponent before being replaced by Anderson. However, seconds later with the clock showing the 62nd minute, a straightforward long ball went over Wilson and with no cover, Raf Barbosa had the simple task of squaring the ball to the far post where Reyon Dillon was able to tap the ball into the net from a few yards out to give Corinthian-Casuals a two goal lead.

We weren't quite done yet though and began to push the "visitors" back on their home patch. In the 72nd minute I'm still not sure how we failed to get the ball in the net after Miller knocked the ball through for Anderson who lobbed the ball over the advancing Bernardes. Oblitey got to the ball in first, some four yards out, yet his touch then knocked the ball onto the shoulder of Marcos dos Santos and looped just over the bar like a Olympic high jumper. In fact, the only thing in the net after this was dos Santos who required a bit of treatment!

For some reason and despite Dos Santos being off the field after the treatment, we chose to take a short corner. It wasn't a good one and led to a counter-attack which required O'Donovan to keep us in the game with a good save. The next time, the ball got past O'Donovan, although Ethan Nelson-Roberts was there instead to clear the danger. Casuals chances kept coming though and in the 81st minute Frazier Osunkoya struck a shot against our bar with the ball coming down and being cleared. However, it then came back in and a cross from the left to the far post was met by a powerful close range strike from Cascoe-Rogers, but O'Donovan made another fine save to keep the ball out.

Opportunities were coming for our boys too as the game began to get more stretched, and a nice pass from Wilson put Anderson

through one on one with Bernardes, but his touch was heavy and the keeper was able to clear. We then lost De Lima temporarily with what appeared to be something in his eye, but even though we were down to ten men at this point, we then pulled a goal back as a ball over the top was latched onto by Miller as our opponents appeared to stop, and he ran in on goal from the left before cutting back onto his right foot to take the keeper out of the equation before firing into the roof of the net from eight yards in the 88th minute.

This goal led to our opponents getting a little twitchy and they picked up a yellow card for delaying a throw in before Bernardes got another for wasting time himself. Time was running out, although we had a final chance when Fofahan put Oblitey through to find the bottom corner, only for the Assistant's flag to be raised against him for offside. After seven minutes of injury time the whistle blew to confirm that the points had been lost.

So it's now a fourth straight League defeat and Spelthorne Sports' draw with Knaphill leaves us alone at the bottom of the table once again. We could argue with some justification that we were worth a draw in both of our recent losses, but blaming the referee for our League position as our unknown club reporter does is disingenuous and we will need to find a way out of this before we find ourselves in a similar position to last season when we lost our opening seven League matches of the season. Two tough home matches are up next, so we quite simply have to improve or that dreaded "R" word will start cropping up again in supporter conversations.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Adam Green (c), Felipe De Lima, Craig Dundas, Luke Miller, Sabek Mohssine, Carl Oblitey, Ali Fofahan, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Sean Anderson for Mohssine (61), Axel Kodjo for Dundas (73)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Time to press the gas on Epsom's Local Plan?

As reported in the magazine Local Government Lawyer (19/08/24) several local councils in England are accelerating the development of their local plans in response to proposed amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that could substantially increase their housing targets and require reviews of green belt boundaries.

The proposed changes, detailed in a recent government consultation, include the reintroduction of mandatory housing targets and the possibility that a council's failure to meet its housing needs could justify revising green belt boundaries. Additionally, the consultation suggests alterations to the standard methodology for calculating housing need, which would likely result in most councils being required to plan for significantly more new homes.

Under the current proposals, local plans submitted for examination before June 2025 will be assessed under the existing NPPF rules. This has prompted councils like Winchester and Uttlesford to expedite their plans to avoid the more stringent requirements that could be imposed by the new NPPF.

In Winchester, the council's planning officer emphasized the urgency of submitting the local plan due to the potential increase in the housing need figure from 676 to 1,099 dwellings per annum. Similarly, Uttlesford District Council, which currently operates under one of the oldest local plans in England, is also moving quickly to submit its plan before the deadline.

Not all councils are in favor of the proposed changes. Wirral Council, for example, is set to hold an extraordinary meeting to express its concerns, particularly regarding the potential impact on its green belt. The council's draft plan focuses on brownfield development, but under the new proposals, it could be required to deliver an additional 14,000 homes, potentially affecting large areas of its green belt.

Councillors in Wirral have expressed strong opposition, with motions being tabled to challenge the proposed standard method for housing calculations, which they argue could undermine local regeneration efforts.

Epsom and Ewell Times asked **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** if it had any plan to accelerate the Draft Local Plan process. Councillor **Peter O'Donovan**, (Residents Association - Ewell Court) Chair of the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee responded: "Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is currently interrogating the documents for the Government's consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and will prepare a response to the consultation to be submitted within the timeframe. We are dedicated to the development of a Local Plan that meets the needs of current and future residents of Epsom & Ewell. We will continue to consider the implications for the borough following the Government's consultation, when more detail becomes available."

Cllr **Julie Morris** (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) (College Ward) said "Unfortunately the ruling Residents Association seems to have only one speed, DEAD SLOW, when it comes to the Local Plan which is already around 12 years late. It has never been a priority for them. We can't see any possibility of speeding things up now and recent progress is mostly unknown: there has been no open debate on the matter since last year. There is a meeting on 24th September which might throw some light on what's happening. Even councillors from the ruling group believe that an update on progress and potential changes to the Plan, in the run up to Regulation 19 and (hopefully) final adoption of the document, is long overdue."

A spokesperson for the campaigning group **Epsom Green Belt** commented on the Council position: "The NPPF proposals were published a month or so ago online. Without proposals it would not have been possible to launch the consultation, which runs until 24 Sept. The government's stated plan is to issue the new NPPF in Dec, applicable immediately.

Waiting until the changes are published and applicable would miss the current, and brief, window of opportunity to avoid their impact, which is why other (more enlightened and forward thinking) councils are choosing quickly to act. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council should be acting immediately to capture this opportunity."

The Epsom Green Belt spokesperson added: "The current NPPF, issued in Dec 2023, remains in force until or unless replaced by a new version. The Dec 2023 version does not require the release of Green Belt, specifically providing the option not to review any Green Belt boundaries. The Council therefore can retain the existing Green Belt boundaries and focus all housing on identified brownfield sites which, according to the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan can accommodate 3,700 dwellings. If they fail to take the opportunity to accelerate the Regulation 19 process, the target house building will exceed 14k."

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Brace for Government Housing Targets
Here we go again on the Local Plan?
Minister gets heavy on a Local Plan delay
Mystery Local Plan critic revealed
Local Plan costs eat into Council reserves
Local Plan to move forward after passionate debate
and many many more. Search "local plan".

Shaky start to season for Epsom and Ewell

Sandhurst Town 4-1 Epsom and Ewell. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Tuesday 20th August 2024.

We crashed to a 4-1 defeat in our latest League match at Sandhurst Town on Tuesday evening at Bottom Meadow in front of 86 spectators on a chillier than anticipated August evening.

Let's get one thing straight here though. We did not deserve to lose this match, particularly by such a heavy margin. In fact, some of our passing was the best I've seen all season. However, we didn't help ourselves either by failing to take chances and then by collecting a couple of sin-bins that really hurt us, just when we looked like we were about to take control of this contest.

We made four changes following our F.A. Cup loss to Hayes and Yeading United (who now travel to Margate in the next round by the way). Faebian Witter was absent and replaced by Dan O'Donovan, while Ethan Brazier replaced the suspended Toby Young. Further forward, Kenny Antony and Axel Kodjo dropped to the bench, with their places taken by Adam Green following his suspension and debutant Ali Fofahan, who started out on the left wing.

We made a bright start and Ethan Nelson-Roberts, making his fiftieth appearance for the Salts, was just over the bar with an early strike, before a Green corner led to a shot from Fabian Nunes that was dragged wide from the edge of the area. We had a scare at the other end after the Sandhurst right winger got past Nelson-Roberts and O'Donovan too, but could only find the side netting with his shot. They then attacked down the left and Shane Qoloni got past Ethan Brazier, only to then go down after a collision, with the referee deciding to award a penalty. We've seen them given before, and no doubt will do again, but it was definitely in the soft category. Regrettably, Elliott Miles then dispatched the penalty in the 24th minute, although O'Donovan did manage to get something on the shot on its way in.

This was harsh. We had been doing most of the work to this point and we nearly equalised on the half hour when a Nelson-

Roberts cross caused panic in the Sandhurst penalty area and Luke Miller and then Fofahan saw their shots blocked by defenders in quick succession. Our next corner was met at the far post by Callum Wilson, but his header back towards goal took a touch off a defender and fell kindly for the keeper to fall onto.

By this time Fabian Nunes had been replaced after suffering a groin injury, but his replacement Felipe de Lima had only been on for about a quarter of an hour when his ill-advised back pass was intercepted by Tshin Kumuaro who ran in and beat O'Donovan with a clinical strike in the 39th minute. Nelson-Roberts then had to be alert to block a shot for a corner as did Stefan Aiwone on the other side of the goal as Sandhurst threatened a third goal before the half which fortunately did not come.

At half time it was hard to comprehend how we could be behind, although to this point we hadn't forced the keeper into a save, so we could hardly complain just because the other side had taken their chances. Fortunately, we got a goal back quickly and it was Craig Dundas who got on the end of a Green free kick to knock the ball in from eight yards for his first goal for our club, just six minutes into the second period. Both myself and a supporter next to me were certain that it had been knocked in by Dundas's hand, but no one complained and the referee seemed happy too, so we were back at 2-1 with a long time left to play.

And play we did. We took the game to Sandhurst for a while with wave after wave of attacks. Corner after corner followed as we pushed for an equaliser and it seemed like a matter of time before we would be level. Dundas set up Kendall with a great tackle, but our striker shot straight at the home keeper from just inside the penalty area, while moments later De Lima missed a good opportunity to head at goal from another Green free kick, but in the 65th minute Wilson said something to the referee and was promptly sin-binned in the 65th minute. In that moment all of our momentum was lost.

The pattern of the match changed and we stopped creating opportunities, while the home side tried to take advantage of the extra man and a cross was well cut out by O'Donovan before Nelson-Roberts was adjudged to have brought his man down in the corner of the penalty area. It was a long way away from us, so it was hard to see whether this one was equally soft. Strangely, even with their first penalty taker still on the field, their number 16 chose to take this one in the 77th minute and O'Donovan produced a good low save to his right to keep the ball out, and although the loose ball was turned in by another player, he was deemed to have encroached and the free kick went our way. Wilson returned to the field of play and maybe we could start to press again.

Not this time though. We let the ball go out of play carelessly and from a throw in, allowed to be taken further up the field than it should have been, the home side broke away and Maurice Black smashed the ball past O'Donovan just two minutes after the penalty to make it 3-1. Things got worse a few minutes later when Nelson-Roberts was sin-binned too and as the wheels came off the ten man cart, O'Donovan was alert to make a good save from a one on one situation as we parted at the back. Debutant substitute Joel Onu had a smart shot on the turn in the 90th minute that was well saved, but from the keeper's clearance they broke straight through and whilst O'Donovan again did well to keep the first shot out, he could do nothing about the loose ball which was fired in from close range to leave the final score looking extremely harsh.

As it turned out, Spelthorne's 5-0 loss at Cobham ensured that we actually climbed a place in the League table after this defeat, but this was a harsh loss to take. We played really well at times, and yes, a couple of rather odd refereeing decisions didn't help us, but there were still self-inflicted incidents that let us down and we really need to learn that being reduced to ten men for a throwaway comment is such a severe penalty that it must be avoided at all costs. I am absolutely certain that we would have scored an equaliser in this match had we kept eleven men on the field midway through the second half and may well have gone on to win from there, but the harsh reality is three matches, three defeats, two red cards and two sin-bins. We need to keep working harder, but also work smarter too, if we are to avoid another serious relegation battle.

Epsom & Ewell: Dan O'Donovan, Ethan Brazier, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Stefan Aiwone, Callum Wilson, Craig Dundas, Luke Miller, Adam Green (c), Will Kendall, Fabio Nunes, Ali Fofahan

Subs: Felipe de Lima for Nunes (25), Joel Onu for Brazier (78)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom College murder inquest

A coroner has called on the government to tighten gun-licensing laws after the former head of Epsom College and her daughter were murdered.

Emma Pattison, 45, was found dead alongside her seven-year-old daughter, Lettie, in the grounds of the Surrey school on 5 February 2023. Mrs Pattison's husband, George Pattison, 39, is believed to have shot them at their home before killing himself.

The inquest, which concluded in July, found that George Pattison was legally allowed a shotgun under a firearms licence, but he had lied about his medical history in renewing his application. Richard Travers, senior coroner for Surrey, warned in a Prevention of Future Deaths (PFD) report that "a risk of other deaths will continue to exist" unless gun ownership laws are tightened.

Between 2019 and 2021 George Pattison used an online service to prescribe him "significant amounts" of the drug propranolol to help him with symptoms of anxiety, according to the coroner's report. This was without the knowledge of his GP.

He was then able to lie to Surrey Police about his mental health condition during safeguarding checks on his gun-licence renewal application in 2022. When he was asked if he had been diagnosed or treated for medical conditions, which included 'Depression or anxiety', he responded 'No'. Although his GP's details were included in the form, they had no knowledge of George Pattison's use of online medical services.

Coroner Travers has raised the alarm that online doctors can be used as a loophole for those seeking a gun licence to avoid medical health checks which are meant to be safeguards. These medical checks followed from a PFD report in 2019 where a mother and daughter, Christine and Lucy Lee, were killed after police failed to assess the risk of returning guns back to John Lowe.

He also raised concerns that controlling and coercive behaviour should be considered in gun licensing after a direct plea from Emma Pattison's family during the hearing. Coroner Travers called for police leaders and the government to explore how licensing authorities could obtain details about an applicant's history of coercive controlling behaviour.

George Pattison had first gained a licence in 2012, which was then renewed in 2016 and finally 2022. Surrey Police were notified of a domestic violence incident in 2016, where it was alleged that Emma Pattison had assaulted her husband. The issue was investigated and, according to the PFD report, the shotgun certificate was temporarily removed, but later returned.

Coroner Travers highlighted it appeared there was no consideration by Surrey Police "whether this might have been an example of coercive controlling behaviour on the part of Mr Pattison". But, he added, there was evidence of later domestic abuse or coercive controlling behaviour. This evidence did not seem to be brought to the attention of the Licensing Officer when Mr Pattison applied to renew his licence.

Under current guidance, a GP has to confirm to the police whether an applicant has any relevant medical conditions, including mental health conditions. GPs often have digital markers on patient records if they have a gun licence to help monitor physical and mental health.

The PFD report has been sent to the Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, the health secretary, Wes Streeting, and the chief constable of Surrey police, Tim De Meyer. Coroner Travers has called on the government departments to take action to prevent future deaths. He has also sent it to the National Police Chiefs' Council and British Medical Association. The authorities have a duty to respond to PFDs within 56 days.

 $Image-Epsom\ College:\ Naveed\ Barakzai/Maxal\ Photography.\ Creative\ Commons\ Attribution-Share\ Alike\ 2.5\ Generic\ license$

Walk on the Downs to feel Up.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is hosting a walk around Epsom Downs on 10th September to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day. This event supports the council's Suicide Prevention Action Plan and aims to raise awareness of support and resources available to help those suffering from mental health issues or directly impacted by the loss of someone to suicide.

Funding has been allocated from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to \mathbf{We} \mathbf{Power} \mathbf{On} to help residents access support in the borough. Chris, founder of the organisation, will lead the walk for adults aged 18 and above.

Immediately after the walk, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will host another event where Chris will talk about his story and the importance of having support available for people suffering from mental health problems. A scribe will create artwork which will then go on a 'tour' of the borough ending up at the **Epsom Picturehouse** on 10th October to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Day.

Residents will need to register to attend -50 spaces are available for the walk and talk, and a further 50 spaces for those who only wish to attend the talk. Register HERE

End Stigma Surrey is also supporting this event, they are dedicated to raising awareness and reducing the stigma of mental health and are part of the council's wider Suicide Prevention Action Plan.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee said: "Mental health issues can have a devastating effect on sufferers and those close to them. No one should have to face mental health challenges alone and it's important as a council that we do all that we can to ensure vulnerable residents are informed, and can access, vital support when they need it.

Working with partners is an essential part of our Suicide Prevention Action Plan and I'd like to thank We Power On, End Stigma Surrey, and The Jockey Club for their support with this event.

I'd encourage anyone experiencing mental health issues to seek help. One life lost is too much."

Chris, founder of We Power On said: "I'm pleased to be able to support the council with its walk and talk. Walking helped me especially during Covid lockdown and I'm looking forward to leading the walk across Epsom Downs and also sharing my experiences in the following event. It's important for everybody to know that they're not alone, encourage conversations and keep highlighting where those people suffering from mental health issues can turn to for support."

Image credit: Marathon - License details

Epsom and Ewell Brace for Government Housing Targets

In a significant policy shift, the newly elected Labour government has reintroduced mandatory housing targets, a move that is set to have far-reaching implications for communities across the UK, including Epsom and Ewell. The ambitious plan aims to deliver 1.5 million new homes over the next five years, following the scrapping of such targets by the previous Conservative government. This sweeping reform has sparked debate over its potential impact on local areas, particularly in relation to the use of green belt land.

Among the key changes introduced by the Labour government is the reinstatement of mandatory housing targets for local councils, which must now be met based on a recalculated assessment of local housing needs and affordability. This approach differs from previous national metrics, focusing on areas where housing is less affordable relative to income. Consequently, regions like Epsom and Ewell, where property prices are high, may face increased pressure to deliver more housing.

Another controversial aspect of the policy is the introduction of the so-called "grey belt" land. This term refers to lower-quality land within the green belt that could be considered for development, in an effort to balance the need for new homes with the preservation of high-quality green spaces. Furthermore, the government has mandated that at least 50% of the homes built on grey belt land must be affordable, with a strong focus on social rent, addressing the UK's chronic shortage of affordable housing.

For Epsom and Ewell, traditionally resistant to large-scale development, particularly within the green belt, these changes could mark a significant shift. The new mandatory targets might require the local council to approve more housing projects than previously anticipated, including the controversial use of grey belt land. This could lead to tensions with residents keen to maintain the area's character, but it also presents an opportunity to address the local housing shortage, especially in terms of affordable homes.

The exact impact on Epsom and Ewell will depend on the specific targets assigned to the area and the availability and suitability of grey belt land for development. Local planning authorities with existing Local Plans may now be required to revise these plans to align with the new government mandates.

Tim Murphy of the local Council for the Protection of Rural England expressed his concerns, stating, "I think the new target is 821 new homes per annum. The figure is unattainable—we don't have the required skills available in this country to build all the homes the Government wants, and there will be widespread opposition across large swathes of the country to the loss of so much countryside. I calculate that the Borough, with a current population of just over eighty thousand, will need to accommodate a further 32,000 people if this target is to be met over the eighteen-year period of the Local Plan."

The **Epsom Green Belt Group** also voiced their concerns, highlighting the discrepancy between the current housing build rate and the new targets. A spokesperson for the group stated, "The current annual build rate (based on the 2007 Core Strategy) is 181 dwellings per annum. The current NPPF standard method figure (based on 2014 data) used in the regulation 18 draft Local Plan was 576 dpa. The new government proposals for a revision to the standard method would result in a target of 817 dpa. This is over four times the real need in the borough and almost triple the council's current proposals."

Cllr **Bernie Muir**, (Conservative) representing Epsom West Division and Horton Ward, acknowledged the need for more housing but raised concerns about the strategic approach. "I believe that we do need homes as we have a huge homeless issue in Epsom, plus we are desperately short of homes for key workers and those that support our care, retail, and hospitality sectors. However, the Local Plan will almost certainly end up building the wrong homes in the wrong place, primarily on Greenbelt land, with serious negative consequences," she warned. Cllr Muir advocated for the development of town centre brownfield sites instead, arguing that this would provide the right homes in significant numbers, support the local economy, and improve the socioeconomic prospects for the borough.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has responded to the recent reinstatement of mandatory housing targets by the UK Labour government, highlighting the challenges posed by its outdated Core Strategy. The current Core Strategy, adopted in 2007 and covering the period up to 2022, is now considered out of date, particularly as it predates the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduced in 2012.

In its statement, the Council pointed out that its historic housing completions, detailed annually in the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), show a consistent shortfall when compared to the significantly higher requirements generated by the standard method for calculating housing needs. For the 2022/23 monitoring year, the Council reported a notable deficit against these figures.

The draft Local Plan, which was subject to public consultation earlier this year, proposed a supply-based housing requirement of 5,400 homes over the plan period, equating to 300 dwellings per annum. However, the Council acknowledged that this figure does not meet the actual housing need calculated using the standard method, which suggests a much higher need—576 dwellings per annum based on 2022 data, with projections potentially rising to 817 dwellings per annum under the government's proposed revisions.

Councillor **Peter O'Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court Ward) Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee said "The draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) that was subject to consultation in February and March 2023 proposed a housing requirement for the borough of at least 5,400 homes of the plan period (which equates to 300 dwellings per annum). This was a supply-based requirement and is not a reflection of need which is calculated using the standard method (see above).

The Draft Local Plan identified supply exceeding this minimum requirement to provide flexibility for non delivery of sites included in the supply."

He added: "The government are currently consulting on Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system to which the council will be responding. The consultation is open to all and we would encourage those with an interest in planning to respond to the consultation.

One of the proposals is to amend the standard method for calculating housing needs. As part of the consultation, the government have published the housing need that would be generated using the revised method for all English Local Planning authorities and calculates the housing need for the borough to be 817 dwellings per annum."

The consultation ends 24th September 2024 and the Council intends to take a report to its scheduled Licensing and Planning Policy Committee on that date which sets out the implications for the Borough and the Council's suggested response to the consultation.

As the debate continues, residents and local officials in Epsom and Ewell will be closely watching how these new housing targets and policies unfold, weighing the potential benefits of increased housing against the risks to the borough's character and green spaces

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Leatherhead town on the way up?

Leatherhead could become a "destination town" with an updated shopping arcade and cinema screens, according to regeneration plans. The future project could also see a 'new neighbourhood' created with up to 11-storey apartment block and townhouses in Bull Hill.

The Swan Centre has been earmarked to be the "catalyst to revitalise the town" of Leatherhead. A new leisure area is set to be the "heart" of the Surrey town with four new restaurants, bars and cafes.

Plans include 14 retail units, four cinema screens for leisure and a new central market square for events. Retaining stores like Sainsbury's, Boots, WHSmith and others is also being considered in the development proposals.

Demolishing Leret House, the former offices on Swan Street, is another key part of the proposal. Speaking at a webinar on July 30, project officers said they are looking to reuse as much of the fabric of the building as possible by retaining the concrete frame.

Locals could see apartment buildings up to 11 storeys popping up in the town centre, with houses ranging between three to four stories. Prospective plans for Bull Hill, the second part of the regeneration scheme, include apartment flats and townhouses, as well as parking facilities, offices, and a park. Officers are also looking at plans for a hotel with retail spaces on the ground floor.

Between one, two and three bedroom flats could be available in the new apartments, with the family houses being three to four bedrooms each. MVDC and Keir Property detail a mixture of open market and affordable homes for purchase and rent could be on the offer.

Councillor Keira Vyvyan-Robinson said: "We appreciate that building heights are a sensitive matter, and this is why the sketches and layouts in the masterplan show illustrative heights only at this stage." The Cabinet Member for Projects stressed that "nothing has been decided" as the plans were still in the pre-application phase and "are likely to evolve based on [consultation] feedback".

A Kier Property officer said the project is "looking to get the right balance" of housing heights, so it can "sit comfortably in its environment." Upgrading the existing park in Bull Hill is also part of the initial proposals. Project officers said they wanted to make the park more accessible to people in Leatherhead by improving the play areas.

Launched on July 8 with five consultation events, people can give feedback to the prospective plans until September 26. Leigh Thomas, Group managing director, Kier Property said the consultation events so far had given him "much food for thought". He added the team were looking to adapt the plans "according to the needs of the local community".

MVDC and Keir Property has announced new consultation dates, including:

- Monday 19 August, 5:30pm to 7:30pm at St Mary's Church Hall, 10A The Ridgeway, Fetcham, Leatherhead KT22 9AZ
- Thursday 5 September, 5:30pm to 7:30pm at Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall (Ralli Room), Woodfield Lane, Ashtead KT21 2BE
- Wednesday 11 September, 5:30pm to 7:30pm at The Old Barn Hall Bookham (Main Hall), 55 Church Road, Great Bookham, Leatherhead KT23 3PQ

Keir Property and MVDC is looking at submitting a planning application in 2025 and, if approved, to start building by spring/summer 2026.

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

Epsom welder's widow seeks help with cancer claim

A woman who believed her incurable cancer may have been caused by washing her husband's work clothes is looking for information. Annette, who was married to a former welder in is appealing for information following her diagnosis with an

incurable form of cancer linked to asbestos exposure.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral composed of thin, needle-like fibres which was widely used in construction. Asbestos was completely banned in 1999 after research showed swallowing and breathing in the fibres trap them in the body, inflaming and scarring the lungs which can cause cancer.

Peter Vaughan, Annette's husband, worked as a welder around **Epsom and Ewell** throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s, where he is believed to have come into contact with asbestos used in insulators for buildings and machinery such as asbestos blankets or gloves.

Annette claims she may have been exposed to asbestos while washing Peter's work clothes, if he came into contact with asbestos while at work. Annette was diagnosed with the rare and aggressive cancer, mesothelioma, in summer 2023 – six years after Peter sadly died in 2017.

Now, with the help of legal firm Leigh Day, Annette is appealing to Peter's former colleagues to help her with information about conditions at his work. She hopes the information will help her bring a legal claim as she faces the incurable disease.

"Mesothelioma is an aggressive, terminal form of cancer which can develop in an individual later in life even through secondary exposure to asbestos," said Claire Spearpoint, asbestos claims solicitor at law firm Leigh Day. "Annette believes that this may have been the case with her diagnosis, however following Peter's death she has limited access to information regarding the possible presence of exposure at his former places of work."

Leigh Day is looking to support Annette's claim by speaking to anyone who worked at Surrey Sheet Metal Crafts, Grundy Teddington and Vestec throughout the 1960s to 1980s. They may be able to offer information if asbestos was used and how asbestos exposure occurred. Annette is also hopeful that any local tradesmen who worked in the **Epsom and Ewell** area at the time may be able to offer information that could be of help.

Peter worked as a welder and director at Surrey Sheet Metal Crafts between 1965 and 1967, a company he set up with two other men. He was then employed at Grundy Teddington in the Twickenham and Teddington area throughout 1970 to 1971, before working at Vestec for 12 years between 1975 and 1987. During his time at Vestec, he was a supervisor and often referred to as 'quvnor'.

While former employees who overlapped with Peter at these companies would be particularly useful, Annette is also looking to speak to anyone who worked at Surrey Sheet Metal Crafts, Grundy Teddington or Vestec who could offer information on the kind of work undertaken.

All three companies are no longer in existence and have been dissolved, one as recent as March 2024. If you can provide any relevant information please contact Claire Spearpoint at: cspearpoint@leighday.co.uk

Picture of Peter Vaughan as a younger man (Credit: Leigh Day)