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Up to £1 where sold

Who pays for the homes we do not build?

7 August 2026



Dear Editor,

My family moved to Epsom five years ago for many of the same reasons cited by those defending the Green Belt: the space, the schools and the feel of the town. I am 16, and I am conscious that a similar family arriving five years later might not be able to manage it.

For the past month, I have been reading the Local Plan and the objections to it. In all of this debate, I have not found the perspective of the generation it is supposedly about.

Both sides speak the language of protection. Those defending the Green Belt want to protect landscape, character and the reasons families came here in the first place. Those supporting the housing numbers want to protect the ability of younger residents to remain here. Neither is a bad-faith position, although the tone of the debate does not always reflect that.

What neither side says plainly enough is where the cost goes when a needed home is not built. It does not vanish. It comes back as a higher price, a longer commute, three adults sharing a two-bedroom flat, a 28-year-old still living in a childhood bedroom, or a teaching assistant unable to afford the borough in which she works.

Those costs often fall on people who cannot object to the plan because they do not live here yet. They have no residents' association and they do not write to local newspapers. Their silence is not consent. It is absence.

I am 16, so I will not pretend to know the correct number of houses. But I would put the same question to both campaigns: if your proposal is fair, name the people who will bear its cost – and say whether you have asked them.

I would rather grow up in a borough that answers that question honestly and then decides than one that wins by outlasting everyone who might have disagreed.

My family got here in time. That is exactly why I do not think the door should close behind us.

Emad Rehman,

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