

FOCUS



Your Community Newsletter from Cllr ALISON KELLY and Lib Dem Parliamentary Candidate HELEN MAGUIRE

LOCAL PLAN UNPAUSED BUT CONSERVATIVE COUNCILLORS DIDN'T AGREE



"Unpausing now should mean we can hit the government's deadline to complete the Local Plan and save the Green Belt."

Epsom & Ewell's Local Plan process has been 'unpaused'. It was paused just before the local elections in May after local Green Belt protesters showed that the RA council could lose thousands of votes.

The Local Plan is an official council document that sets out the vision for future development in the borough. It provides a guide on what can be built where, so is an important document in determining future planning applications.

The Conservative government had imposed unrealistic housing targets on local authorities and it was unclear whether we would have to build on the Green Belt if that was the only way to achieve them.

However, work has now begun again, this time with more focus on greater density in urban environs and retaining Green Belt.

But, amazingly, Conservative councillors did not support unpausing the Local Plan, jeopardising the council's ability to meet the government's June 2025 deadline.

Cllr. Julie Morris, Liberal Democrat council group leader, said:

"If the Conservative councillors had been in a majority, the entire process (which is already 10 years behind schedule) would need to be scrapped and a new format adopted ... all of which could take another 6 years before we have local policies that will enable us to refuse inappropriate planning applications!"

"Thank goodness the Conservatives aren't in control here"

Lib Dem parliamentary candidate **Helen Maguire** added "Central government must give local councils the right to make decisions that are best for their area. How can housing minister Michael Gove sit in his Whitehall office and decide what is best for Epsom and Ewell residents?"

2024 Parking Review

The local committee was a useful forum for Borough and County councillors to get together to discuss various issues in our borough, including highway and parking needs.

The Conservative-led Surrey County Council (SCC) has abolished the local committees, making borough councillor input more difficult.

In their 2024 review, they have identified and will be implementing some minor changes to parking restrictions in Stamford ward.

These include adding single yellow lines or converting single yellow lines to double in **Meadway, Manor Green Road, Hookfield and Wheelers Lane**, the latter following a traffic accident at the bend.

Detailed maps of all these proposals can be viewed on the SCC website.

A TALE OF TWO BRIDGES

Just when we thought progress was being made on the Castle Road bridge, Cllr Alison Kelly has discovered that further structural issues have been found and the bridge now needs to be replaced.

Network Rail have a "loose" timeline of May 2024. In the meantime, there is a muddy diversion, partially covered with matting. The Epsom & Ewell countryside team regularly monitor this and have asked Network Rail to ensure the matting extends to the tarmac.

Meanwhile, the **Wells Road bridge** is also still causing concern. Residents raised the alarm in the summer when water was seen dripping from the bridge and the water pressure had dropped. Swift action by local councillors ensured that Thames Water found and repaired the broken pipe promptly.

However, over several years Network Rail and SCC have been monitoring the bridge for movement and this can be seen in the dated repairs and the bumpy surface. Alison will work to ensure repairs and monitoring continue in a coordinated way and will provide updates.



Electric cables have been replaced on the Castle Road bridge, but now further problems have been found.

LOCAL NEWS

WELLS CENTRE UPDATE

Congratulations to the Epsom Wells Community Association (EWCA) which has been awarded a grant from the YourFund Surrey (YFS) small grants scheme.

EWCA still need more development funding, but the YFS grant will help them bring the Wells Centre building up to a hireable condition. They are starting to rent spaces to regular hirers so, if you are interested, please get in touch.

PROJECT WENCESLAS

Local Rotary Clubs are again working with Citizens Advice Epsom & Ewell to support those in the borough in need of help with paying fuel bills this winter. They rely on donations from those who receive, but do not need, the Government's Winter Fuel Payment. If you can help, please go to epsomrotary.uk and search for Wenceslas.

Alison is a volunteer with Citizens Advice and wholeheartedly endorses this project.

BEE FRIENDLY

Could your grass verge be a more friendly environment for bees and wild flowers?

The neighbourhoods that sign up to Surrey County Council's Blue Campaign will have their verges cut towards the end of the year; residents will then have the opportunity to sow native wildflower seeds. For more information, search for Blue Campaign on SCC's website.

IN MEMORY WOODLAND

Age Concern Epsom & Ewell are hoping to plant an 'In Memory Woodland' at Long Grove Park. Two wooden benches would create a pleasant meeting place, as well as adding to the biodiversity in the park.

Epsom & Ewell's Tree Advisory Board. (EETAB) have helped design the woodland and always welcome ideas for new tree-planting sites.

TICKET OFFICES SAVED!

Government cancels plans to close Rail Ticket Offices after huge campaign backed by local Lib Dems

Local people are celebrating following the Government's recent u-turn on their plans to close our local Rail Ticket Offices.

Our local ticket offices were facing the axe as part of the Conservative Government's plans to close over 900 ticket offices nationwide.

But a huge public campaign has saved them. Nationwide over 750,000 people responded to the consultation on the plans (with 99% objecting). Here in Epsom & Ewell hundreds of local people opposed the closures.

"This fiasco is entirely the fault of the Conservative Government," said parliamentary candidate **Helen Maguire**. "They put enormous pressure on Rail Companies to make cuts and close ticket offices. But now they have been forced into an embarrassing u-turn."



"This is a victory for local people. We are delighted the huge campaign against the closures has been successful," said **Helen**

ALISON'S REUSE SUCCESS



Alison's proposal to reuse carpets and white goods has been taken up by the council

Cllr. Alison Kelly was amazed to find that people moving into a housing association property find all carpets and white goods have been removed. So she asked the council to find a way for these to be cleaned and left in place. Council staff have now met with local housing associations so that this proposal can be put into action. A win/win for both tenants and the environment!

Meanwhile, the housing needs register in our borough is growing, Alison reports.

The number of families waiting for temporary accommodation has risen to 78 and the nightly cost to the council has risen by **15%** since last year. There are a limited number of properties available, and Epsom & Ewell is competing with other areas in both Surrey and London.

Sadly the reality is that salaries are not keeping pace with the cost of housing in Epsom and so many more people are struggling.

WRITE TO US

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Only the Liberal Democrats can beat the Tories here.

A General Election is coming.

And not a moment too soon!

This will be our chance to elect a Liberal Democrat MP here.

Let's end decades of being taken for granted by out of touch Conservatives.

A vote for Labour or the Greens only helps the Tories here



General Election forecast for the new Epsom & Ewell constituency, 29 Sept. 2023
source: Stonehaven Election MRP