



Epsom Civic Society

Newsletter

*Shaping the future,
safeguarding the past*

The Downs - P.11

Climate Adaptation - P.6

Local Event Workshop- P.7

Planning Applications - P.8

Subscriptions & Retirement - P.12

Places & Spaces Art Exhibition - P.5

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly - P.10

 epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

 facebook.com/EpsomCivicSociety

 [@EpsomCivicSoc](https://twitter.com/EpsomCivicSoc)

CHAIR'S COMMENTARY

Dear Members

Celebrations, Renewals and Farewells

The advent of spring brings with it a sense of renewal and relief that winter's long dark days are done for the months ahead, with the prospect of more activities and events to enjoy, outdoors as well as in. For the Society, this is a time for celebrations, renewal and change. First of all, it gives me enormous pleasure to celebrate and thank Ishbel Kenward, the Society's super-efficient, indefatigable, and heroic Membership Secretary for the past 27 years, who has decided to retire. It is no exaggeration to say that Ishbel is the person on our committee that all ECS members know. In turn, Ishbel's curation of our membership has enabled her to know all of you. Ishbel joined the committee in 1999. She may not have envisaged, at her formal election to the committee at the 2000 AGM that her tenure would be so significant and extensive, from her regular attendance at committee meetings and volunteering to leading on and supporting the



Society's associated activities, especially those linked to membership recruitment, such as participating in Heritage Open Days, organising the Society's exhibitions in the Ashley Centre and elsewhere, and refreshing our publicity materials.

Ishbel shared her debut with the Civic Society with Angela Clifford (our Minutes Secretary for many

years and thereafter our local history champion). The membership system operated by Margaret Rogers, Ishbel's immediate predecessor as Membership Secretary, included index cards for each household – how times have changed. Membership Secretary as a job has grown due to advances in information technology which has brought both benefits and disadvantages to the role. It's a testament to Ishbel's dedication and flexibility that she has always been willing to try something new while retaining systems that are tried and tested. After her early years with the index cards, Ishbel transferred our membership data onto her computer which increased possibilities for the Society's engaging effectively with members but also made her role more time consuming: among many other things, it has become standard practice now for each of our Road Representatives (we have over 60) to receive an updated membership list each year and for all new members to receive welcome letters. When the committee agrees that we need to communicate with members urgently on matters of common interest, Ishbel unhesitatingly devotes her time to getting the message out to everyone. When the data protection regulations came in, Ishbel did an enormous amount of work to ensure the Society's records were compliant. Embracing new ways of paying subscriptions has also increased the workload, yet if circumstances require, traditional ways of working have not been cast aside: Ishbel still completes the paying in slips for our Treasurer exactly how her predecessor did it. So much of this is going on 'behind the scenes' to ensure the smooth running of the Society. Although unseen, this is vital work.

As well as being a great colleague to work with, Ishbel's exceptional organisational skills are much appreciated by the rest of us on the committee, not least by me as Chair. When Ishbel took over, membership was 1800, it dropped to 1400, rose again to 1900 in 2019 and is now back down to just over 1400 (the constraints of Covid and demographics playing a large part). In terms of membership, the Society is still one of the largest civic societies in England, and the more members we have, the stronger our voice. Since 2013, Ishbel and Sue Doughty have been a great team as regards newsletter production and distribution. Ishbel has been unstinting in her willingness to take on additional responsibilities for the Society,

particularly in recent years when we have been without an Hon Secretary, including detailed proofreading for the newsletter when her time permits, organising the Society's new leaflet, booking venues as needed and organising our social events for Road Representatives. Thank you, Ishbel for all you have done for the Society. We will miss you and we all wish you a very happy retirement, so very well-deserved.

Secondly, huge thanks must go to Eleanor Bland, who has agreed to take over as Membership Secretary. Eleanor has for several years led on events planning for the Society, where she has gone above and beyond the call in her efforts to arrange outings for members against the background of a changed, post-Covid environment. Eleanor also willingly gives her time to helping out with refreshments at the Society's events. As Minutes Secretary, a role she will be stepping away from as she takes over as Membership Secretary, Eleanor has also ensured accurate records of our committee meetings and AGMs, contributing significantly to their efficient running which I and all my committee colleagues greatly appreciate. Thank you, Eleanor, for your deep commitment to the Society and for volunteering as Membership Secretary. I, and all my fellow committee members, will be eternally grateful.

Thirdly, a warm welcome and celebration for our new Hon Secretary, Karen Overington who joined the committee last year. Now retired from the civil service, Karen has previously worked across various Whitehall departments with Ministers and senior officials. Karen was born and bred in Epsom and has a particular interest in the history of Stamford ward, where many generations of her family lived and worked. She is a keen genealogist, gardener and allotment holder. Everyone on the committee, myself most of all, owes Karen an enormous debt of thanks for taking on this important role for the Society.

I'm delighted to welcome Jonathan Lewis, our most recent recruit to the Society's committee, whose expertise will further strengthen our planning team as we anticipate planning matters will continue as a key focus and priority for us into 2026 and beyond.

Likewise, I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to Steve Bridger who last year kindly agreed to be the Society's newsletter editor. Many thanks to Steve for volunteering to keep our publications on track and available for members.

It's unusual for us to report on a nomination for a design award. However, Artefact's [Triangle House in Epsom](#) was one of six finalists in the Royal Institute of British Architects' (RIBA's) 2025 House of the Year award, featuring in Channel 4's TV show 'Grand Designs'. According to the [jury citation](#): "The architects were tasked to extend a compact 1950s suburban house in Epsom, Surrey, to accommodate large family gatherings, and consider the future needs of their client couple into older age, in terms of access, running costs and garden pleasures. They have achieved far more than simply fulfilling the brief." Triangle House was one of only 20 projects to receive a national RIBA award. It also received an RIBA South East Award 2025, and RIBA South East Small Project of the Year 2025, details [here](#) and [here](#). The Standard's coverage (28/11/25) is [here](#). Congratulations to all involved.

It is, unfortunately, too soon to celebrate the adoption of a new Local Plan. As I reported to members in our last newsletter, the draft Plan is with the Inspector following last year's Inquiry sessions. The Society continues to follow subsequent correspondence between the Inspector and the Council regarding work required and actions taken to progress matters further, all of which is accessible [here](#). Following a review of 54 previously discounted sites in the urban area "the Council is [now proposing](#) that the 13 sites identified as 'considered developable' are allocated in the Local Plan. These sites will form part of the housing land supply from 2030/31 onwards." Following a review of evidence on Green Belt, "the Council has reached different conclusions on several green belt sites..." in consequence of which the Inspector requires the Council to assess the suitability of those sites where the conclusions have changed, for potential allocation within the Local Plan. We appreciate that any potential change to Green Belt is of interest and concern for members, hence we reproduce in full here the [update](#) (3 March) from the Programme Officer for the Local Plan examination:

"You will have noted that letters have been published between the Inspector and the Council and subsequent additional evidence from the Council has also been published. As per the Inspector's most recent letter dated 12th February, further evidence is due to be submitted to the Inspector this month. Once all of the remaining evidence has been published, the Inspector will set out next steps to the Council in writing and it will be made public. The Inspector is not inviting any

comments from anyone apart from the Council at this time, however all of the further evidence documentation will need to be subject to public consultation where members of the public will have the opportunity to comment.”

Members may be interested in the ‘[Local Plan Update](#)’ (agenda item 11) for consideration by the Council’s Licensing and Planning Committee’s March meeting. Paragraph 2.12 states: “...for the examination to proceed the Inspector requires the Council to assess the suitability of additional Green Belt sites for potential allocation. Failure to undertake this work will result in the Submitted Local Plan being found to be unsound.” This would be a most unsatisfactory outcome, since the borough would be without an up-to-date Local Plan and vulnerable to speculative development including on Green Belt sites. Paragraphs 2.14 – 2.21 - Modifications made following the Local Plan Hearings – are instructive and have been reinforced by the Programme Officer’s statement reproduced above.

Finally, at least as regards local planning matters, congratulations to Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Forum on the successful referendum on adopting their Neighbourhood Plan which now requires the Council to formally ‘make’ the Plan within 8 weeks (from 12 February). The significance of so doing is that once ‘made’, the Plan will become part of the statutory land use development plan for the defined neighbourhood area with equivalent weight and legal status as the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan. Latest information in the [agenda papers](#) for March’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) meeting..

Not perhaps a cause for celebration, but issued in the spirit of renewal, central government continued its planning reform agenda with the publication, shortly before Christmas, of an [open consultation](#) on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other reforms to the planning system (225 questions (!), closing date 10 March). It’s good to see the government has produced an ‘Easy Read’ version of the consultation to encourage wider participation. On this occasion, the Society’s committee has opted not to submit a response, but I have been liaising with colleagues at Civic Voice in putting together its submission, accessible [at this link](#), together with Civic Voice’s response to the linked consultation on the draft consolidated Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance. EEBC’s response – in draft at

the time of writing – is [here](#) with further details of the consultation in the [papers for the 10 March meeting](#) of the LPPC, agenda item 10.

Ascertaining the outcomes from the Local Listing Project (2021) continues to present a challenge, and the wait goes on for information on our nominations. In an endeavour to progress the matter I asked a formal question and a follow-up question at January’s meeting of the Council’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee which elicited a response the key aspect of which is that the intention is to consider the updated Local List in Winter 2026. Thanks must go to the Council’s Democratic Services Team for their helpful information and guidance about engaging with the committee. Not yet time for celebrations, but we live in hope.

Initial proposals for development of land at Priest Hill represent a ‘renewal’ of sorts. Adjacent to Ewell East Station, the site in question, unused since 1999, is currently leased to Old Suttonians Ltd and comprises disused sports pitches and hard standing (though we understand that it may be used for parking on match days for the adjacent Sutton and Epsom Rugby Football Club). Early ideas include the provision of up to 300 new homes. I and several of my fellow committee members visited the public exhibition at Bourne Hall on 24 February and had useful discussions with the promoters. Members of the public were invited to submit comments on these ideas by 10 March. We understand that the intention is to submit a formal planning application later this year, when there will be another opportunity to comment on an updated proposal. As usual, the Society’s committee will monitor progress and submit representations, and we encourage members to do likewise. You can search weekly and monthly lists of planning applications [at this link](#). More details, including the consultation boards from the public exhibition [here](#).

Bourne Hall has an interesting and varied programme of Spring events for all ages, including ‘Glue, String and Chewing Gum’, a talk on model making, a walk in search of pre-Raphaelite Ewell, and a historical tour of Epsom and Ewell by minibus, details [at this link](#). I’m delighted that Susan Dalloe, Bourne Hall’s Museum Curator, has agreed to be our AGM’s guest speaker.

The Horton’s annual Spanish Festival of Music and Dance returns in April, celebrating the 150th anniversary of composer Manuel De Falla. The creation of the festival was also inspired by the

tragic story of a teenage Spanish dance prodigy who was committed to the Epsom Cluster under mysterious circumstances. Find out more [here](#). The Society is very pleased to sponsor The Horton's Places and Spaces Art Exhibition in June, more information below.

Local Government Elections: Thursday 7 May 2026

Surrey's two new Unitary Councils, East Surrey and West Surrey will be operational from April 2027, with elections for these authorities scheduled for 7 May 2026. Epsom and Ewell joins Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead and Tandridge in East Surrey. More information [here](#).

And Finally: It's 'Goodbye' from Me

This is my final Chair's commentary for members as I depart after 10 years in the role and 15 years on the committee. The prospect of a final decision (one way or another) on the draft Local Plan this Spring provides a fitting moment for me to step down after years of reporting on the twists and turns of its progress. It has been a privilege for me to serve as

the Society's Chair, and a pleasure to work with such dedicated and companionable committee colleagues and active supporters. I am optimistic about the Society's future and its essential role in giving voice to its members in the new East Surrey authority. I am grateful to you all for your support. I will remain an ECS member and will - inevitably - keep an eye on planning. Continuing the Society's effective operation is dependent upon more members coming forward to take on key committee roles.

At the time of writing, the Society needs a new Chair and Vice Chair, and a new Minutes Secretary.

If you can help, please do [get in touch with the Society](#).

As always, all links in the hard copy (paper) version of the newsletter are accessible and functional via our website's [Newsletter Section](#).

With very best wishes,
Margaret Hollins

PLACES & SPACES ART EXHIBITION

Epsom Civic Society is delighted to be supporting an exhibition this summer to showcase new artwork by local children and young people on the theme of Place and Spaces in Epsom & Ewell.



Exhibition space at The Horton

At a time when the borough is set for change, The Horton Arts Centre will be calling for entries from the perspective of our younger residents, asking them to draw, paint, collage, stitch or even sculpt artwork that captures their favourite or most

memorable spot in Epsom & Ewell.

Young artists are encouraged to be open-minded in their thinking – considering parks, viewpoints, street furniture, shopfronts, industrial heritage and local quirks as well as some of the impressive architecture seen our high streets and private

homes. Bets are off for predicting the most featured landmark – Epsom Clocktower is an irresistible icon. The Horton's director, Maria Reeves, said: "We are so pleased that Epsom Civic Society is supporting us with this exhibition and prizes for the winners. With so much focus on the digital world, there are increasingly fewer opportunities for young people to express themselves creatively in practical hands-on ways. This exhibition will give us all insight into what is important or striking for children in Epsom & Ewell as they travel through the borough on their own journeys."

Selected artworks will be displayed at a special two-week exhibition 17th - 30th June in The Horton's stunning Atrium.

A judging panel, including Epsom Civic Society, will select prize winners from different age categories ranging from 7 to 18 – to be announced at a special launch event.

Children will be able to enter through participating schools or independently though Curatorspace – the online portal used for The Horton's Summer Exhibition for adults – which allows applicants to upload a photograph of their artwork.

The portal will be open for submissions: 5-22nd May. For more information visit

<https://thehortonepsom.org/>

Jan Lanigan and Maria Reeves

CLIMATE ADAPTATION: A very necessary step

On the 27th November 10 of the UK's leading scientists and experts delivered a high-level [National Emergency Briefing](#) to an audience of 1250 people including politicians, business leaders and representatives from culture, faith, sport and media. The briefing presented the latest evidence on how the climate and nature crisis is **already affecting** health, food and national security and the economy.

Whilst mitigation (reducing climate warming emissions) is still required, adaptation is also essential to better prepare and manage the effects of the changing climate. Climate change is increasingly affecting communities across the UK and local authorities are at the forefront of responding to these challenges. Because they manage essential services (from planning and highways to social care and biodiversity) councils are uniquely placed to build local resilience. The Met Office provides a Local Authority Climate Service (LACS) funded by DEFRA. This service provides tailored climate information including projections to assist local authorities in assessing risks and developing adaptation plans. Figure 1 shows the likely effects on temperatures and precipitation within a +2 degree Celsius Global Warming Level (GWL).

Adaptation related duties are distributed across numerous pieces of legislation designed for other primary purposes (e.g. flood and water management, biodiversity etc.). General adaptation relies on the "de-facto" duty created by frameworks such as national planning policy, rather than a dedicated statute. For example, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) only provides material considerations in planning on how to integrate adaptation into development decisions.

It is therefore not so simple for local authorities to enable necessary adaptations (both current and into the future) and a 'Local Authority Climate Change Adaptation Act' would be useful. However, as summarised in "The Duties and Powers for Local Authorities in the UK to Adapt to Climate Change" report written by CAG for the Climate Change Committee (November 2025), in addition to duties prescribed in existing legislation in England, Local Authorities have additional powers they can use under the:

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990- where development of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) or Design Codes can provide immediate, detailed guidance on requirements like cooling measures or flood resilience, which developers are expected to follow. These could assist Local Authorities in:

- o attaching planning conditions or obligations requiring climate resilience/adaptation measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), green roofs, inclusion of solar panels).

- o Negotiating Section 106 Agreements for developer contributions to adaptation projects (active travel measures, provision of green local spaces),

- o Designating Conservation Areas or Tree Preservation Orders.

- o Refusing proposals which are unsafe or which exacerbate climate risks (e.g. buildings with significant glass facades which could lead to excessive solar heat gain).

- Procurement Act 2023 under which local authorities can embed climate adaptation criteria into procurement processes, influencing supply chains and encouraging resilient products/services, supported by an emphasis on public benefit and social value. It is noted that this is an ongoing objective of the Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Plan's progress Report from January 2026 - whereby work is underway to improve the baselining of the Council's Scope 3 emissions.

		0.6°C GWL Baseline 1951- 2000	1.0°C GWL Recent Past 2001-2020	1.5°C GWL Paris Agreement	2°C GWL Guidance: Prepare	4°C GWL Guidance: Assess risks
	TEMPERATURE	°C	°C	°C change	°C change	°C change
	Summer Maximum Temperature	30.3 29.8 to 30.5	32.0 31.0 to 33.4	+2.5 +0.9 to +3.3	+3.2 +2.1 to +4.4	+6.5 +5.4 to +8.3
	Summer Average Temperature	16.7 16.7 to 16.7	17.9 17.5 to 18.4	+1.5 +1.2 to +2.2	+2.3 +1.6 to +2.8	+4.6 +4.0 to +5.5
	Winter Average Temperature	4.8 4.8 to 4.8	5.6 5.1 to 5.9	+1.0 +0.6 to +1.3	+1.4 +0.8 to +1.7	+2.8 +2.0 to +3.4
	Winter Minimum Temperature	-6.7 -7.2 to -6.5	-5.5 -6.8 to -3.7	+2.0 +0.9 to +3.2	+2.3 +1.3 to +3.3	+4.6 +4.1 to +6.0
	Annual Average Temperature	10.5 10.5 to 10.5	11.3 11.2 to 11.6	+1.1 +1.0 to +1.4	+1.8 +1.3 to +2.0	+3.5 +3.2 to +4.1
	PRECIPITATION	mm/day	mm/day	% change	% change	% change
	Summer Precipitation Rate	1.56 1.54 to 1.57	1.53 1.30 to 1.72	-3 -13 to +11	-9 -23 to -2	-30 -44 to -22
	Winter Precipitation Rate	1.92 1.90 to 1.92	1.99 1.88 to 2.23	+6 -10 to +15	+9 -3 to +15	+18 +11 to +26

Figure 1: (Epsom and Ewell Climate report – Source: [The Met Office climate data portal](#))

This shows that under the 2degree Celsius scenario, winter precipitation will increase substantially (median of 9 additional wet days per winter with an upper bound range of an increase of up 15 days) and increases in both average and maximum summer temperatures.

So what should and could Epsom and Ewell Borough Council do to adapt and inform on the effects of Climate Change?

There is no single law explicitly mandating local authorities in England to adapt to climate change. Responsibilities are instead fragmented and incomplete.

(Scope 3 emissions include all other indirect emissions that occur in the upstream and downstream activities of an organisation such as materials suppliers, third-party logistics providers, waste management suppliers.)

Quantifying emissions is the first step to reducing Scope 3 emissions:

[Climate Change Action Plan Progress Update Jan 2026.pdf](#)

Additionally, there could also be benefit in communicating the risks and effects of climate change to residents informing them how best to protect themselves. This could include targeted communications from the Council to inform residents and/or vulnerable

groups of measures to take regarding heat risk for example or where to seek information on preparedness for high rainfall events and risks associated with surface water flooding. Following on from the National Emergency Briefing the next step is to take this vital message across the UK, bringing together people from across local communities to hear the evidence and discuss how to respond. Communities are invited to [organise community screenings](#) of the briefing.

Aurelie Paoli

LOCAL EVENT WORKSHOP:

Imagination Training with author Rob Hopkins “FROM WHAT IS TO WHAT IF?”

Rob Hopkins, bestselling author of 'From What Is to What If', is coming to Epsom to lead a dynamic and hands-on workshop. In a day of inspiring, playful and imaginative activities Rob will lead a workshop to enable attendees to imagine and discover the thriving town of the future – Epsom, Ewell and further afield - we'd all love to live in. This isn't a standard workshop – it will take out of the 'daily grind' and beyond familiar workday discussions and will be achieved through:

- Building collective imagination of a positive future through a series of engaging activities.
- Differentiating between 'Yes, but' and 'Yes, and'
- Expanding the ambition and moving beyond short-term thinking.
- Generating inspired ideas and identifying how to translate these into immediately workable proposals
- Bringing energy, humour and playfulness to the big challenges of our time and creating networks between individuals and groups

The event is open to anyone from all backgrounds including local residents, community or green groups, those working in small businesses and organisations, educational or youth sectors, the civil sector including town councils, or those wishing to be active in their local community. It is open to anyone open to a new way at future possibilities in building networks and connections within their locality.

The event will take place on Saturday 30th of May- more details and booking details are available

[Imagination Training - St Martin of Tours \(https://www.stmartinsepsom.org/imagine/\)](https://www.stmartinsepsom.org/imagine/). It is a not-for-profit event organised by St Martin's of Tours Church and Sustainable Epsom and Ewell.

Aurélie Paoli

FALL IN LOVE WITH THE FUTURE

A one day workshop led by author of 'From What is to What if' Rob Hopkins will guide us to think about how we can build a community of the future

Saturday 30th May, 10am - 4.30pm
Tickets £25 (£20 Earlybird)

For more information and to purchase tickets, scan the QR code or go to [stmartinsepsom.org/imagine](https://www.stmartinsepsom.org/imagine)

SUSTAINABLE EPSOM & EWELL

St Martin of Tours
Church Street
Epsom, KT17 4PX

stmartinsepsom • office@stmartinsepsom.org • www.stmartinsepsom.org • 01372 722 567

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Oak Glade Nursing Home



We reported in the last newsletter about this application for a 70 bed care home near the roundabout at

Christchurch Road and Chertsey Lane. We consider this to be "Grey Belt" land (poor quality Green Belt suitable for development). ECS has submitted an objection that the proposal avoids the need to provide affordable housing and that the site would be better used to provide family homes which are needed, rather than care home provision which has previously been permitted, and as yet either not started or incomplete elsewhere in the Borough.

Woodcote Stud, Wilmerhatch Lane.

New application (25/01483/FUL) for demolition of all existing buildings and structures (excluding Woodcote House) and construction of new supported living (Class C2) as an expansion to the retained Class C2 use at Woodcote House and 14 residential dwellings (including 5 affordable) together the associated access, car parking, garages and landscaping with shared open space. This application is to use a relatively small and hidden part of the important Green Belt land separating Epsom from Ashtead.

The committee considered and debated this application and decided to take a neutral stance. We responded to the planning officer in that vein but pointed out our concern that within the application documents and specifically the Location Plan, there is a line coloured blue delineating a large swathe of land outside the site application boundary and stating as being in the applicant's ownership. We have concerns that there may be a "hidden agenda" in this nomenclature.

Any grant of approval to this application must not be seen as a precedent to new build development on the wider blue edge land. This land is high performing Green Belt in the urban environment and crucial to the separation between Epsom and Ashtead.

Epsom Hospital Multi-storey car park

We reported in the last newsletter that the proposals, which have been around for over 5 years, had to be commenced by 5 December 2025 because if not, the approval of planning permission, which was granted on appeal after refusal by EEBC planning committee, would expire.

On the last weekend of November 2025 a JCB machine arrived, dug a short trench, removed the soil, and dated photographic records were taken. Then an application for confirmation of a start on the project was submitted. That has been granted as being acceptable within the Town Planning regulations. The excavations remain plated over with barrier fencing around taking up two car park spaces.

We understand that amendments to the scheme are needed on the basis that the approved structural design could not accommodate the weight if all the parked cars were electric vehicles!

Car parking problems and the backup of waiting traffic was discussed at the Health Liaison committee in January. It was reported that the Hospital Trust is endeavouring to buy back some of the land sold to Guild Living to ease the congestion. Will the Guild Living scheme ever be built? That approval, likewise, has a certificate of approved commencement. Such approved commencements on projects have no end date.

Swail House

The planning application to build 48 new assisted living units with associated access and parking, etc. on land to the rear (northern side) but retaining the existing buildings remains undetermined a year after its validation. We understand that it is proposed to take the application to the planning committee at the end of May. There is no steer as to which way this may go.

There is considerable opposition to the submitted application, including the Society advancing objections to what we consider an unsuitable proposal. We appreciate that the wait the existing residents encounter about the uncertainty is worrying and of concern to them.

Michael Arthur

Fourth storeys across Briavels Court approved despite 70-plus objections

Regrettably, but sadly not surprisingly, 'prior approval' plans to add an additional floor to each of the seven 1960s blocks flats in the Briavels Court Estate have been given the green light by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

Despite a chorus of objections from Estate leaseholders, Epsom Civic Society (ECS), College Ward Residents Association, the Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board and a significant number of concerned neighbouring residents, officers determined that, on balance, the freeholder's proposals constitute a "public benefit" on account of the new 21 homes that could be created under 'permitted development rights'.

Those 'rights' – set out in "Class A, Schedule 2, Part 20 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order of 2015 (as amended) – place great weight on increasing the housing supply by "optimising the potential of potential sites particularly in sustainable and accessible locations." To an additional, but lesser, extent it also considers 'economic benefits' from employment during the construction phase of any given project, even though those 'benefits' are short-term and the construction itself is bound to be disruptive to existing residents.



Conscious of the inbuilt legislative bias towards increasing the housing stock using 'permitted development rights', ECS centred its objection to the proposed scheme on four main areas, expressing concern that:

1. The absence of proposed lift provision to the new fourth floor flats appears to contradict Building Regs. stipulations that "occupiers should be assured ease of access", including those with disabilities: Moreover, that the practicality and saleability of premium new 4th floor flats with stairs-only access is questionable and could be discriminatory.

2. The resulting likelihood that the applicant may subsequently seek permission to construct external lift shafts to serve the new flats – something that would negate permitted development rules. ECS has placed it on record that, should such an application be lodged, a recent trend towards approving such amendments without committee or effective public consultation should not be allowed to occur.

3. The number of new car parking spaces proposed – just 10 additional spaces to accommodate the 21 extra flats – fall well below the prescribed parking standards, and that a new school term-time parking survey is required as the existing one is outdated.

4. The additional on-site parking, while inadequate, still presents risks to TPO-protected tree cover along the Ashley Road frontage, and the general reduction of greenery would have a negative impact on the current fine landscaping of the development.

All the above points were dismissed by the planning officer, who stated that "parking revisions and subsequent loss of green space and impact on existing trees are not for assessment under this current prior

approval application." On the issue of disability access to fourth floor flats that are only served by stairs, the officer's report states: "Whilst there is a requirement to provide appropriate and safe access to and egress from new and existing flats, a previous appeal has determined that appropriate access and egress has to be via external doors or stairs rather than lifts."

Conditions of EEBC's prior approval do, however, include stipulations that:

- Detailed plans must be submitted for Building Regs approval before any building work commences – and none of the 21 fourth storey flats shall be occupied until all have been substantially completed, which must be no later than three years from January 27, 2026.
- No development shall commence until materials, details of design and the management plan have been submitted to, and approved in writing by the local planning authority
- High quality, secure, lit and covered cycle parking must be provided for each dwelling, with sufficient e-bike charging points being provided for 20% of all bikes being charged at any one time, and that 5% of communal cycle storage spaces should cater for disabled/adaptive cycles.
- A badger monitoring survey must be conducted, along with the implementation of recommendations set out in a 2005 bat scoping survey
- Once building contractors are on-site, arrangements must be made for wheel washing of construction vehicles to prevent the deposit of mud and debris on adjacent highways.

ECS understands that an 'action group' of dismayed Briavels Court leaseholders is currently exploring avenues that may exist to challenge their freeholder's plans for the Estate.

Simon Alford

Farm View, Langley Vale Road KT18 6AP (25/00846/OUT)

We initially reported to members in our Autumn 2025 newsletter that the Society had objected to this controversial outline application for up to 110 dwellings within the Green Belt. At February's meeting, after much discussion and against the Planning report's recommendation to approve, members of the Planning Committee voted to refuse the application. The decision is reported on the [BBC website](#). The latest Green Belt update submitted recently by Planning Officers to the Inspector in connection with the draft Local Plan Inquiry actually recommends that the site remains in the Green Belt because it is in an unsustainable location and harm from development could not be mitigated. The inconsistencies in approach are self-evident. We anticipate the developer will appeal.

Margaret Hollins

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly:

Mixed news from the Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory



The first three months of 2026 have brought both good and bad news for those who appreciate our leafy local environment.



Notable gains have included the appearance 60 new and replacement street trees across the Borough – with Surrey County Council continuing to build on its transformative about-turn on street tree planting.

Major beneficiaries of this year's 'green dividend' – triggered by a County-wide focus on replenishing a street tree stock that, until recently, has been diminishing for years - include residents in Parklawn Avenue and Eastdean Avenue (both off West Hill) who had collectively submitted no fewer than 20 planting requests.

Other new plantings, which are dotted right across the borough, stem from requests submitted by either individual households or small clusters from like-minded residents – with evidence mounting that the appreciation of successful plantings is contagious! In the Downs Road Estate Conservation Area, for example, 14 initial resident-requested plantings in 2024 generated a 16 further requests the following year.



“It’s heartwarming to see such enthusiasm for street trees and the tremendous environmental and aesthetic benefits they bring,” stresses Epsom & Ewell Tree Advisory Board (EETAB) chair Kevin Greening.

“Although last year’s demand for new plantings exceeded the

available budget - meaning some applications have been pushed back for consideration this autumn - that list is still currently open and accepting further requests. If you’d like a new street tree in your road please visit <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/permits-and-licences/planting-trees> without delay.

But it’s not all good news....

Unfortunately there have also been some significant losses of protected trees. These include a veteran Horse Chestnut on Sandown Lodge’s Avenue Road boundary, which blew down in squally weather just before Christmas. Also a landmark Beech at the junction of Downs Road and The Ridings which had to be felled for safety reasons last month due to a rare fungal infection. Sad though such losses are, they are part of the inevitable ‘circle of life’. EETAB does, however, press for replacement planting wherever possible to ensure continuity of tree cover for future generations. Following our representations a tree replacement duty is already in force for the felled Downs Road Beech, and we are continuing to seek a replant in the case of the Avenue Road Chestnut – notwithstanding the fact that both losses were caused by ‘natural’ factors.

Some environmental setbacks, however, are entirely man-made: One example involves some exceptionally severe recent hedge pruning at the Ashley Road Cemetery. With some sections of the formerly mature hedgerow on the Downs Road boundary reduced to the extent where EETAB believes natural regeneration is unlikely to occur, we’ve just sought and secured assurances that, where necessary, appropriate replanting will be conducted in the autumn.



Further Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has committed that no further hedge reduction works are planned this season, and that “before any future works we will review the approach, consider a more phased and proportionate programme, and ensure timing avoids the nesting period.”

- Find out more about EETAB at:

www.eetab.org.uk or [facebook.com/groups/eetab](https://www.facebook.com/groups/eetab)

THE DOWNS

Readers of previous newsletters will know that I have been attempting for a long time to have the various spoil heaps that have been left around the Downs, following works on the racehorse training tracks, either used or removed. Various promises have been made by the Council and Jockey Club but, in truth, only a little progress has been made to date with resolving this problem.

To my surprise, my attendance at the meeting of the Epsom & Walton Downs Consultative Committee on 13 October garnered much more attention than usual, when BBC Surrey reported my agenda contribution on the spoil heaps (with photos to highlight the problem). The

BBC report was subsequently picked up by other news organisations and also in an article for the **Epsom & Ewell Times** which covered the Consultative Committee meeting itself. My agenda contribution and a recording of the meeting itself can be found on the Epsom & Ewell

Council website at <https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=173&MId=1865&Ver=4>.

In my pre-meeting submission, and in discussion at the meeting, I made the case that the Downs Conservators have a duty, under the **Epsom & Walton Downs**

Regulation Act 1984 section 10, "to preserve the Downs so far as possible in their natural state of beauty" and they should therefore be taking steps to ensure that unnatural heaps of waste material were removed and disposed of. The Chair of the meeting, Councillor Steven McCormick, stated that the Downs was essentially a working environment for racehorse training and that he had been told by Racecourse owners The Jockey Club that the spoil heaps were temporary, with their contents earmarked for future project use: this seems implausible given that some of them contain waste material from resurfacing gallops that has been dumped, in some cases many years ago, and allowed to become colonised with weeds. If the intention was to re-use this material, it would surely have happened by now? In any case, even if the Downs is a 'working environment', responsible businesses do not deface their workplace.

Councillor McCormick agreed that he would meet with representatives of the Jockey Club and Council officers to identify all the various spoil heaps and determine what they are intended to be used for (and when), with

any not required being removed. I have recently met with him and pointed out the various heaps – as well as the 10 or so in the 7th Furlong Car Park, there



are another 4 spread out across the Downs – and he agreed that they did need to be tidied up. On a positive note, the old agricultural equipment that had been abandoned next to the car park has now been removed; but another three large plastic water containers have appeared instead alongside the rolls of astroturf! The November meeting of the Epsom & Walton Downs Conservators approved a proposal from the Racecourse to re-route a track that crosses the very beginning of the '6 furlong chute' start, and work started on this in early February. This has created yet another spoil heap (!), near to the Epsom Lane North, but I am assured this will be very short-term as the soil will be used very soon to strengthen earth barriers designed to prevent vehicles from illegally accessing the Downs.

As regards another long-running saga, we remain hopeful that some progress will finally be made with installing content on the 'new' noticeboards that were erected some four years ago with funding from the EU. The October Consultative Committee was shown mock-ups of the material intended to be

displayed and some amendments were suggested by members. Final versions are understood to have been agreed, so all that remains is for the Council to print them so that can be attached to the boards. We live in hope that the noticeboards will have material by the time this newsletter gets to you!

The next Consultative Committee meeting is on 16 March 2026, and I will be raising the spoil heaps and noticeboards issues again!

In January, the conservators agreed their budget for 2026 which includes money for more/newer litter bins (much needed) and they also approved plans for sheep grazing on Juniper Hill as part of a new focus on conservation management. Councillor McCormick is planning to set up a 'Friends of the Downs' group of volunteers to help with small projects, scrub clearance etc, so please email him if you are interested in looking after the Downs! His email address is

smccormick@epsom-ewell.gov.uk.

Nick Lock

ECS ROAD REPRESENTATIVES

Welcome to our new Road Reps and thank you to three current Reps who have agreed to add a few households to their lists. Hopefully they will all be able to come along to our 'Thank you afternoon tea and cake' in May.

Ishbel Kenward – Membership Sec.

01372 438361 membership@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thank you to those who have paid 2026 subscriptions already following my note in the last Newsletter and apologies for any time wasted because 2 digits were missing from the bank account number.

If you haven't already paid and were not in when your Road Representative called to collect subscriptions, they will have left a small envelope with his / her name and address for you to arrange payment in a way that suits you. If paying by cheque, please make this payable to 'Epsom Civic Society'. You can pay online by Bank Transfer (*Epsom Civic Society Sort code 20 29 90 Account No 20353078*) or PayPal as detailed on the brown envelope. Select individual (£3) or household (£5) membership as appropriate or pay a different amount if you wish to make a donation.



RETIREMENT

As some of you will know, I am retiring from my role as Membership Sec. at the AGM and I would like to take this opportunity to say how much I have enjoyed my interaction with Epsom Civic Society members. I have got to know so many more people in Epsom. I've also enjoyed getting to know the town itself. Having already lived in Epsom for over 20 years when I took this on, I thought that I knew the town but hand-delivering 'welcome' letters and occasionally doing Newsletter deliveries I've got to know the town so much better with all its different areas, especially all our footpaths. I have also learnt a bit about planning over the years, thanks to the expertise of a number of people on our committee.

Not for the first time, I would like to thank Sue Doughty who took over the distribution of Newsletters to our approx. 1000 households 13 years ago. She has been so helpful and efficient.

I hope that our next Membership Sec. will enjoy this job as much as I have. Eleanor Bland has volunteered to stand as Membership Sec. at the AGM and I'm sure that you will all welcome her as I've been made welcome.

Ishbel Kenward - Membership Sec..

01372 438361 membership@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Chair: **Margaret Hollins**

Vice Chair: **Vacancy**

Hon Secretary: **Karen Overington**

Hon Treasurer: **Nick Lock**

Other Committee members:

- **Simon Alford** (Heritage)
- **Michael Arthur** (Planning)
- **Johnathon Lewis** (Planning)
- **Eleanor Bland** (Minutes, Events)
- **Mark Bristow** (Webmaster)
- **Ishbel Kenward** (Membership)
- **Jan Lanigan** (Events)
- **John Mumford** (Planning)
- **Aurélie Paoli** (Climate change and sustainability)

Hon Archivist: **Vacancy**

Hon Photographic Archivist: **David Rowe**

Newsletter Editor: **Steve Bridger**

Publicity: **Vacancy**

Hon Auditor: **Brian Atkinson**



Please send any letters or comments for consideration to: Newsletter Editor: publicity@epsomcivicsociety.org.uk

All of our newsletters are available in colour on our website: www.epsomcivicsociety.org.uk