

## Epsom & Ewell Local Plan Programme



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# 1. Introduction

## The form and content of the Local Plan Programme

- 1.1 The Local Plan Programme sets out a rolling project plan for the production of the documents that together comprise the Epsom & Ewell Local Plan. It seeks to identify a timetable for their production so that we can monitor and manage progress; the resources that we need to deploy to achieve our targets; and the possible risks and constraints.
- 1.2 We have always envisaged our Programmes providing a rolling three-year project plan - that seeks to inform both the process and all of the interested parties and partners about how and when the Local Plan will be brought forward. In the past we have amended and revised our Local Plan programme to take account of circumstances that have necessitated a change in our plans. Previous Local Plan Programmes and Development Schemes have typically been reviewed after being in place for two years or so. Revisions have normally been triggered by changes in national planning policies, such as the revocation of regional plans and the publication of the NPPF; and consequential changes in our approach to plan-making. Our progress against the milestones in the Programme is monitored each year in the [Annual Monitoring Report \(AMR\)](#).
- 1.3 In accordance with good project management practise we will monitor and review the Local Plan Programme annually and update it accordingly.

## The current statutory Development Plan for the Borough

- 1.4 The Development Plan for the Borough is comprised of the following documents:

### The Local Plan

- Epsom & Ewell Core Strategy 2007
- Plan E Epsom Town Centre Area Action Plan 2011
- Epsom & Ewell Development Management Policies Document 2015
- Revised Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document 2014
- Revised Sustainable Design Supplementary Planning Document 2016
- Parking Standards for Residential Development 2015
- Upper High Street, Depot Road and Church Street Development Brief 2012

### Surrey-wide Documents

- Surrey Minerals Plan Core Strategy 2011
- Surrey Waste Plan 2008

- 1.5 In addition to the above documents we have also prepared and produced a number of useful and highly valued supplementary planning guidance documents. These amplify the policies and proposals of the Local Plan. Such additional local guidance is considered necessary and for that reason is believed to be consistent with national planning policy. The main role of these documents is to clarify and support local policy and it may be taken into account as a material consideration in relation to the determination of planning applications. These include the following documents:
- Biodiversity and Planning in Epsom & Ewell 2012
  - Solar Panel Guidance for Domestic Installation 2011
  - Shopfront Design Guide 2012
  - Householder Applications 2004
  - Single plot and other types of residential infill development 2003
- 1.6 During the period covered by this Programme we anticipate that much of the design-related guidance contained within the above documents will be reviewed as part of the preparation and production of the Design Quality Guide (a new supplementary planning document). This new publication will provide detailed supplementary guidance to the design policies contained within the Development Management Policies Document 2015.
- 1.7 Following the adoption of the Design Quality Guide we do not anticipate the need to produce any additional supplementary planning documents during the period covered by this Programme.

## 2. The Partial Review of the Core Strategy

### Proposed Content

2.1 We anticipate that the partial review of the Core Strategy will encompass the following policy components:

- Revision of the Borough wide housing target to take into account of an objectively assessed demand<sup>1</sup> having regard to relevant constraints affecting the delivery of growth, particularly in relation to infrastructure capacity
- An overview of how the Borough Council will work with its housing market area partners to address unmet need<sup>2</sup>
- A Strategic review of our Green Belt<sup>3</sup>
- The identification of a deliverable housing supply strategy<sup>4</sup>
- A review of our affordable housing delivery policy<sup>5</sup>
- A new policy approach setting out how we will meet the accommodation needs of the Traveller Community<sup>6</sup>
- New policies setting our approach towards heritage assets – specifically in relation to the identification and designation of locally listed buildings and structures

2.2 We also anticipate that the revised Core Strategy will include new site allocation policies relating to:

- Green Infrastructure
- Major developed sites in the Green Belt
- Housing delivery
- Employment sites
- Retail centres
- Epsom General Hospital
- The University for the Creative Arts

2.3 Some of these policies and site allocations were originally intended for inclusion within the Site Allocations Document<sup>7</sup>. That Document had advanced to the Submission Stage. Prior to submission we decided to alter our approach towards the progress of this document – taking the decision to combine the emerging site allocations with the partial review of the Core Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> As currently set out in Core Strategy Policy CS7.

<sup>2</sup> It is anticipated that this will take the form of a separate strategy or agreement siting outside of the Local Plan

<sup>3</sup> As currently set out in Core Strategy Policy CS2.

<sup>4</sup> As set out in Core Strategy Policy CS8, which currently states that new housing will be located within the defined built up area and within the then remaining Hospital Cluster development sites, which have subsequently been largely built-out.

<sup>5</sup> As currently contained within Core Strategy Policy CS9

<sup>6</sup> The new policy will replace the approach set out under Core Strategy Policy CS10.

<sup>7</sup> This document comprised non-housing site allocations.

- 2.4 The review of the Local Plan Programme has provided an opportunity to consider the deliverability of long standing site allocation proposals. This includes the proposed Kiln Lane Link Major Transport Scheme. Whilst the objectives of this long standing proposal continue to be desirable, the deliverability of this scheme particularly in terms of how it will be funded is open to question. On that basis the Local Plan Programme does not envisage its inclusion within the current review process. However, there is sufficient flexibility within the process to accommodate it should the situation change prior to submission<sup>8</sup>.

### Coverage

- 2.5 The document covers the whole of the Borough.

### Conformity

- 2.6 The document will be in conformity with the NPPF. The document will set out the scale of local housing need and the broad areas of the Borough that will be brought forward to deliver future housing. The document will also set out the Council's approach to meeting local affordable housing need through the development process.

### Timetable

<i>Key Stages</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Issues & Options Consultation	September – November 2017
Consideration of Consultation Responses	December 2017
Pre-Submission Consultation	March 2018
Date of Submission to Secretary of State	May 2018
Pre-Examination Meeting	September 2018
Public Hearing	Late 2018
Estimated Date for Adoption	December 2019

### Arrangement for Production

*Organisational Lead*  
Head of Place Development

### Political Management

- 2.7 The review process will be considered by the Council's Licensing & Planning Policy Committee, who are responsible for approving draft policy options for public consultation and the subsequent Pre-submission stages.
- 2.8 Full Council approval will be required for the final adoption stage.

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<sup>8</sup> Much of the background work on the Kiln Lane Link scheme has already been undertaken. As a consequence there is some potential for its inclusion should funding streams for its implementation be confirmed.

## **Internal Resources**

Planning Policy Manager  
Senior Planning Policy Officer  
Planning Policy Officers  
Planning Policy Administrator  
Economic Development Officer

Other Officers as required – likely to be deployed from within the Place Development Team.

## **External Resources**

- 2.9 Consultants will be engaged to aid the production of the necessary evidence base documents. External expertise has already been deployed in relation to the identification of an ‘objectively assessed housing need’ and in preparing an assessment of the Borough’s Green Belt; both assessments being required under national planning policy. Internal knowledge and other resources will be deployed in order to optimise the value of external resources. Further studies will be produced, either in-house or by external consultants, as necessary.
- 2.10 It is anticipated that the associated Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report supporting the policy review will be carried out in-house. It is possible that some external support, from colleagues in neighbouring Surrey authorities, could be provided in the form of peer review of the SA. In the past this has been provided by Planning Policy colleagues from neighbouring local planning authorities. Should it prove necessary, we will seek to replicate this approach.

## **Stakeholder Resources**

- 2.11 We will work closely with neighbouring planning authorities and other strategic partners to discharge our duty to co-operate. Where it is clearly demonstrated that we do not have sufficient land supply or infrastructure capacity to accommodate all of our identified growth needs we will work with our neighbours and other strategic partners on how those needs could be addressed across a wider area. It is anticipated that this will form a critical part of this particular review process and will require the deployment of resources from across the Borough Council, specifically requiring input from Committee Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and Senior Officers.
- 2.12 We will work closely with local partners to ensure that the emerging policies contribute positively to meeting our strategic objectives. Specifically we will seek to ensure that future community infrastructure needs are taken into account during the preparation of new policies.
- 2.13 We will engage directly with key local community groups including all local residents’ associations, local political party groupings and other local interest groups, such as the Epsom Civic Society and the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Representatives of stakeholder groups will be invited to attend regular meetings or surgery sessions, throughout the process, where they can informally discuss issues and options raised in the consultation.

## **Community and Stakeholder Involvement**

- 2.14 The local community, specific consultation bodies and key stakeholders, including developers, will be invited to take part in the consultation process, with a view to identifying issues and working up suitable deliverable and developable options that accord with the NPPF.



### 3. The Evidence Base

- 3.1 The partial review of the Core Strategy is supported and informed by new evidence and a refresh of existing technical studies. This work conforms to national planning policy and guidance. It also takes account of relevant existing technical evidence that is available across north east Surrey and south west London.

#### Timetable

<b>Documents</b>	<b>Publication Dates</b>
Strategic Housing Market Assessment <sup>9</sup>	October 2016
Green Belt Study Stage 1	February 2017
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment <sup>10</sup>	July 2017
Traveller Accommodation Assessment	July 2017
Constraints Study	July 2017
Green Belt Study Stage 2	November 2017

- 3.2 The preparation and production of the above technical studies will include proportionate and necessary stakeholder engagement. This is most likely to relate to the methodology used by the technical study in question, rather than the outputs or conclusions. Any party who wishes to challenge the outputs from these technical studies may do so through the Local Plan process, where they have an opportunity to present alternative evidence.

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<sup>9</sup> Prepared in partnership with Royal Borough of Kingston, Elmbridge and Mole Valley Borough Councils.

<sup>10</sup> Previous Local Plan Programmes have referred to Strategic Housing and Employment Land assessments. We already undertaken significant work on establishing our future employment needs into the future, so a joint study is no longer considered necessary.

## **4. Supporting Statement**

### **Monitoring**

- 4.1 Monitoring continues to be an important part of the planning-making process and will help gauge the effectiveness of policies and proposals. We will monitor a range of indicators to assess whether the policies and proposals are meeting the objectives set out in the Core Strategy. The key findings will be published in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The most recent, and previous AMRs are available to view on the Borough Council's website. The Local Plan AMR is normally the subject of a report to the Council's Licensing & Planning Policy Committee, following which it is published on the Council's website.

### **Reviewing the Programme**

- 4.2 We will continuously monitor progress on the implementation of the Local Plan Programme. Progress will be monitored against the proposed timetable for the partial review of the Core Strategy. Where milestones have not been reached, we will consider appropriate actions to ensure that positive momentum is maintained. When appropriate we will amend the Programme.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessments & Sustainability Appraisals**

- 4.3 Strategic Environmental Assessments of policies, proposals and plans are required under the European Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001/42/EC. These are required for plans and proposals that are likely to have significant effect on the environment. The on-going Brexit negotiations will not have an impact on the requirement to meet the Directive during the life of this Programme. It is anticipated that the requirements of the Directive will be maintained and incorporated into British law following the proposed divorce from the European Union.
- 4.4 Sustainability Appraisals differ in that they are a social, economic and environmental assessment. We believe it is important to take an integrated approach towards both the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal and to consider the implications and alternatives at an early stage. This will ensure that our Local Plan documents reflect sustainable development objectives. The requirements of a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal, which will be undertaken on the emerging policies when bringing forward new Local Plan documents.

### **Resources**

- 4.5 In the past funding from the Housing Planning Delivery Grant was allocated to assist in the plan making process. This has helped fund external expertise to undertake specialist work on technical papers. It has been proposed that remaining Housing Planning Delivery Grant monies and other sources of funding will be used to finance future work.

- 4.6 Staffing resources for the timely production of the Local Plan remain a critical issue (see Risk Management section below). At present, the following in-house resources can be drawn upon during the period covered by the Programme:
- Planning Policy Manager
  - Senior Planning Policy Officer
  - Planning Policy Officers<sup>11</sup>
  - Planning Policy Administrator
  - Other occasional staff resources including the Head of Place Development, Economic Development Officer, GIS officer, and the Strategic Housing Manager and other Service officers
- 4.7 We will continue to use external sources of expertise where appropriate, such as on specialist topics or where there is no existing capacity. It is anticipated that Surrey County Council will continue to provide assistance with transport, education and other infrastructure capacity matters. Additionally the Planning Policy Team continues to promote joint working initiatives, whenever these are practicable and relevant, with the other Local Authorities in East Surrey to help bridge the potential staff resource gap. This has worked most effectively in the preparation of technical evidence.
- 4.8 Members are kept informed of progress on the Local Plan primarily through Licensing & Planning Policy Committee meetings. Throughout the Local Plan process we will be running a series of special evening sessions/workshops for all Members. These will provide them with additional information and opportunities to feed-in their comments into the plan making process. The outputs of the sessions/ workshops will be reported to the Licensing & Planning Policy Committee.

### **Joint Working – The Duty to Co-operate**

- 4.9 There are no proposals to set up a joint planning board with neighbouring authorities. Whilst such initiatives may provide value to the process elsewhere, there is no evidence to suggest that a joint planning board is required in northeast Surrey.
- 4.10 Nevertheless, we continue to work with other Surrey Districts and with Surrey County Council on sharing best practice, undertaking Sustainability Appraisals and where appropriate undertaking other initiatives. We have also been actively involved in joint projects with neighbouring authorities on subjects such as establishing a methodology for preparing Traveller Accommodation Assessments, preparing Strategic Housing Market Assessments, and managing flood risk (specifically in relation to the Hogsmill River). We continue to work effectively with colleagues across Surrey on strategic infrastructure planning.
- 4.11 We continue to explore meaningful mechanisms by which we can discharge our Duty to Co-operate with neighbouring local planning authorities and other key partners. We are already working closely with our immediate neighbours

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<sup>11</sup> There are current two post holders in part time roles that collectively comprise a single 4/5 full time post.

in the East Surrey local authorities, and have a positive relationship with Surrey County Council and the wider Surrey local authorities. We believe that we can build upon these existing relationships to achieve a broad consensus on future plan making. We will explore the opportunities that may be available to meet the objectives of the Duty to Co-operate through our membership of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership and Gatwick Diamond groups.

- 4.12 Most of the Surrey local planning authorities have now agreed to the County-wide Local Strategic Statement. This document provides a framework for discussing, considering and potentially reaching an agreed position on strategic planning matters. It is anticipated that this will soon be expanded to include planning for infrastructure, housing growth and consideration of Green Belt related issues.
- 4.13 Our relationship with the Greater London Authority and the London boroughs that neighbour us to the north and northwest, have historically been less developed. We are in the process of reinvigorating this relationship through continued active involvement in the London Plan process. We are in the process of expanding our strategic planning relationship with our immediate neighbours in Greater London – this has been positively demonstrated by the successful joint working on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- 4.14 However, we highlight that the differences in national planning policy relating to London actively serve to distance us from our colleagues in London. Indeed, the strategic status of the London Plan provides a dis-incentive to positive co-operation. As a consequence, whilst we may strive for a positive relationship with our neighbours to the north, the desire for fruitful co-operation may not be fully reciprocated. This remains an area of significant risk that lies beyond our ability to influence.
- 4.15 Finally, recent local examination reports<sup>12</sup> are forcing us to reconsider how we respond to specific strategic issues through the Duty. It is becoming clear that the Duty, and how it is discharged, is evolving. Previous approaches to discharging the Duty no longer appear to have currency with Local Plan Inspectors – who now appear to require that neighbouring authorities prepare and adopt agreed strategies to address key issues. In particular we anticipate that we will be required to demonstrate how we will work collectively with our neighbours (specifically within our housing market area) to address unmet housing need. We will seek to meet this possibility.

## **Project Management**

- 4.16 The review of the Local Plan is a corporate priority for the Borough Council. Consequently the Local Plan Programme is an important project management document. Progress on the Local Plan will be reported regularly to the Chief Executive, Committee Chairmen and the Borough Council's Leadership Team.

## **Council Procedures**

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<sup>12</sup> Most notably the Castle Point Interim Inspector's Report

4.17 For matters relating to the Local Plan, the following reporting protocols will apply:

- Licensing and Planning Policy Committee will be responsible for the preparation, production and completion of all local plan documents; and
- Full Council will be responsible for the formal adoption of all local plan documents following consultation and examination.

## **Risk Management**

4.18 The main areas of risk are considered to be:

- **Staff Retention and Turnover:** During 2016 the staffing of the Planning Policy Team became an area of significant risk to the local plan process. Staff turnover became an issue - with the recruitment of replacement staff having a profound impact on the process. Whilst this issue was positively resolved, recruiting and retaining experienced staff remains an area of risk. Nationally, there is a shortage of experienced planning policy officers, which has compounded the situation. The resolution of this problem remains a high priority and we will seek to ensure that appropriate and proportionate action is taken to ensure that the Planning Policy Team continues to be fully staffed during this process.
- **Availability of Planning Inspectors:** Early notification of our timetable will forewarn the Planning Inspectorate of our anticipated timetable. The Programme will be passed to the Planning Inspectorate to aid their project management of future examinations. The Inspectorate will then enter into Service Level Agreements with us to ensure adequate resources are made available for the various examinations. This will help minimise the risk of delays to adoption dates.
- **High Levels of Response to Public Consultation Stages:** Given that forthcoming public consultation may seek views on highly contentious issues (such as the location of new housing site allocations) it is entirely possible that this will result in high numbers of responses. Experience from elsewhere in Surrey has shown that this can have an impact on the Programme timetable – due to the number of responses involved. We will seek to manage this risk by ensuring that an appropriate level of resource can be deployed to manage significant number of responses. Other areas of risk associated with this issue are difficult to predict and manage. We will seek to address some of these areas by adopting a clear communication strategy, which will seek to set out the challenges that the Borough Council faces.
- **A wildly evolving Duty to co-operate:** The absence of firm guidance and regulation relating to the Duty has always made it an aspect of the process where risk could potentially thrive. In the past an exchange of anodyne communication between authorities has proved sufficient to placate Inspectors. This is no longer the case – recent decisions suggest that Inspectors are seeking greater certainty that local planning authorities are genuinely working together to address strategic issues. We believe that this is sound planning and consequently we will rise to this challenge. However, in the continued absence of guidance and

regulation risk remains as the Duty may evolve in new and unexpected directions. Our proximity to greater London and the entirely different strategic regime that functions there suggests that such risk is high. We will continue to monitor and engage in the development of local plans in both the London Borough of Sutton and the Royal Borough of Kingston. We will try to understand and accommodate the developments in the Duty that spring from those processes. We will continue to seek to work with our partners in London – trying to establish and maintain the best relationship possible under these circumstances.

- **Changes in Government Legislation:** To ensure that the Council are not at risk from challenges resulting from not having an up-to-date Local plan, it is important to push forward and prepare the plan in accordance with current national policy. However, amendments to national planning policy or revised EU directives may necessitate a change of direction. Consultation with Members will take place in the event of the government issuing new directives that have the potential to affect the Council's capacity to produce the Local Plan.
- **Unsettled economic climate post-EU Referendum:** There is a risk that the period of uncertainty following commencement of the Brexit negotiations could result in unpredictable changes in national planning policy, particularly if the new government chooses to pursue an entirely new agenda. Consequently, we may need to prepare new evidence and re-draft policy alongside any associated consultation. This will have an impact upon the proposed timetable. Given the unknown nature of this risk there is little that the Council can put in place to ensure its mitigation.
- **Legal Challenge:** We will ensure that Local Plan documents are sound, positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy.

- **Wider Corporate Demands:** Work on the Local Plan will be monitored to ensure that sufficient time and resources are being allocated. The Local Plan has many challenges of its own – adapting the process to emerging guidance and advice, undertaking extensive monitoring, managing consultants to produce parts of the evidence base, embarking on significant amounts of consultation both internally and externally, writing numerous policy documents – but there are also a number of other pressures on the staff resources available. These include involvement in other corporate projects; delivering planning policy objectives on the ground; publications of new planning documents and advice and reporting their implications; providing policy advice to the public and stakeholders (especially pre-application discussions); implementing the Duty to Co-operate; and providing support to other Services within the Council.