

18 January 2016

By E mail:
Planning Policy, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

To whom it may concern

Notice of Direction made under Article 4 (1) by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council

The Gatwick Diamond Initiative is a business led partnership driving economic growth in the geographic area stretching in the north from Epsom in Surrey to Burgess Hill in West Sussex in the south, with Gatwick Airport and Crawley at its heart. We work with local authority, education and business membership organisations to produce an economic development strategy with an agreed vision to be a world class, internationally recognised business location. The Gatwick Diamond is also a key stakeholder of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Gatwick Diamond Initiative strongly supports Epsom & Ewell's Borough Council's Notice of Direction made under Article 4 (1). Our support is based on the results of five years of quantitative data obtained through our quarterly business surveys and our close relationship with hundreds of local businesses which has provided substantial qualitative data.

We support this Direction for the following reasons:

1. Loss of commercial property to PDR is already too high

Retaining key employment sites will ensure that a high level of occupancy is maintained, that existing businesses can grow, that emerging business sectors can be attracted and that further sustainable economic development be provided. Already in the Gatwick Diamond, we estimate that around 1 million sq. ft. of commercial property has been lost to residential. Businesses also face the loss of a further 2.3 million sq. ft. of commercial property in Crawley should the Gatwick second runway be approved.

2. Demand far outstrips supply

An important part of the role of the Gatwick Diamond Initiative is to retain existing businesses in the area, to help them expand, and to help businesses who want to locate

Mob: 07748 115411 | Tel: 01293 813950 (not always manned) | rosemary.french@gatwickdiamond.co.uk

Gatwick Diamond Initiative Ltd is a company registered in England and Wales at:

Basepoint, Metcalf Way, Crawley RH11 7XX. Company number 07498960

www.gatwickdiamond.co.uk

here. Most, but not all, of our enquiries are from abroad referred to us by UK Trade & Investment, the government's inward investment arm. In addition, local councils and property agents will have dealt with numerous more enquiries.

In 2013 we dealt with 17 serious enquiries for whom we could not find property. The sectors were mainly Professional and Business Services, and high tech, highly skilled knowledge based technology businesses. In 2014, we dealt with 22 enquiries, a 30% increase. However, we did notice a different pattern. The enquiries in previous years had mainly been foreign owned businesses and new to the area. Those continued but there were more local businesses of all sizes, already located here, looking for space to expand into.

While attracting new businesses will always be important, we are struggling simply to help those businesses currently based here to grow because we are unable to find commercial space for them.

3. Right idea, wrong location

We understand the government's strategy to bring back to life moribund town centres with boarded up shops. Residential units will certainly enliven such areas encouraging a day and night time economy. However, in Epsom and Ewell, the town centre is already vibrant because of its high business occupancy bringing business to local retailers, restaurants and cafes. It is, further, a lively town centre due to the large number of students living and studying at the University of the Creative Arts. It would be a backward step to convert occupied and viable commercial units to residential to meet housing targets. In doing so, the area risks becoming a commuter town with increased congestion on road and rail because those new residents cannot find work locally. The very homes they now live in would have provided the very jobs they need!

4. Epsom: A University Town

Epsom is a university town. Young entrepreneurs are a vital source of innovative business ideas and risk taking. They are often best placed to take advantage of new technologies, such as the rise of internet based companies. Their experience now, both successes and failures, will be invaluable in the future when they become the next generation of business leaders. However, currently, those Epsom students leave the town on graduation to go elsewhere to start and grow their new businesses, seeking suitable incubation and small serviced office accommodation. Epsom actually needs more office space, not less as caused by PDR, to provide a supply to retain students. We have already expressed our support to Epsom & Ewell council in their plans to provide increased serviced office space. But without the commercial property to convert or commercial land to build upon they will not achieve this aim.



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R French". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rosemary French
Executive Director
The Gatwick Diamond Initiative