

LEADER AND CHAIRS' STATEMENTS TO COUNCIL

Councillor Liz Frost

Chair of the Environment Committee

Air quality

The Environment Act 1995 requires local authorities to review and assess the current and likely future air quality in their areas against nationally determined air quality objectives. Where these air quality objectives are not being met, local authorities should issue an Order for the particular area, designating it an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). A meeting of the EEBC Social Committee (the committee with responsibility for such matters at that time) in June 2007 received a report that a section of Ewell High Street exceeded the national objective for NO₂. The committee therefore designated that section an AQMA. The main cause of the high levels of NO₂ in that area was the heavy and congested road traffic.

Following the designation, EEBC devised an Air Quality Action Plan. They worked in partnership with SCC, the Highways Authority, to deliver the plan, which was designed to improve the traffic flow through this part of Ewell High Street.

The Council produces annual Air Quality Annual Status reports. Over the years, the actions taken as part of the plan, plus other factors such as improvements to vehicles, have seen a reduction in the concentration of NO₂. This has consistently been below the national objective over the past few years. Current legislation and statutory guidance indicates that it is not appropriate for AQMAs to be maintained with no good reason. At the Environment Committee meeting in October, it was therefore agreed to nominate and authorise the Public Protection Manager to take steps to revoke the Ewell High Street Air Quality Management Area.

Allotments

Allotments are in high demand, with waiting lists for all those managed by the borough. To make better use of our limited available space, some of the plots are now offered as half or quarter sized. This is giving more residents the opportunity to grow their own fruit, veg, flowers etc.

Climate Action Plan

As part of our Climate Action Plan, the Council has produced a 'Green Your Home Guide'. This is full of hints and advice, covering such topics as insulating your home, greener energy and saving water. It also provides information about greener ways of gardening and preserving and enhancing our wildlife. You can find the guide at [Green Your Home Guide](#).

<p style="text-align: center;">Councillor Peter O'Donovan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair of the Licensing and Planning Policy Committee</p>

Local Plan

Following the submission of the Local Plan in March 2025 the Examination stage commenced.

In July the Inspector requested that the council respond to 'Matter, Issues and Questions' relating to the Local Plan and during August and September officers responded to these.

Formal examination hearings were held in person in the council chamber during August, September and October. The Hearings were held in two stages:

- Stage 1 - Duty to Cooperate and legal compliance, held in late August. The Inspector confirmed in writing on the 9 September that the Duty to Cooperate had been satisfied and that we could progress to stage 2.
- Stage 2 – Soundness, held in September and October. During the hearings modifications (changes) to policy wording were agreed. In addition, the Inspector requested that two discrete pieces of additional work be undertaken by the council. Officers are now undertaking this work and have committed to providing it to the Inspector by 22 January 2026.

The Inspector has advised that once the above work is complete, and subject to the findings of this additional work, she will be able to assess what main modifications maybe necessary to make the plan sound. This may require an additional hearing session.

I would like to thank officers and those that participated in or observed the hearing sessions.

Stoneleigh and Auriol Neighbourhood Plan

Following the submission of the Plan to the Council on the 18 May 2025, the council managed the consultation on the Submission Neighbourhood Plan for 6 weeks in the summer.

An Independent Examiner was appointed by the Council (in consultation with the Neighbourhood Forum) in August 2025 and all responses received during the consultation (including the Council's response, approved by LPPC in July) were forwarded to the Examiner for consideration.

The Examiners Report was received on the 23 October 2025, which suggested changes that were necessary for the Plan to proceed to referendum.

On the 25 November LPPC agreed to all the Examiners recommended changes and that the plan should proceed to referendum. The referendum will be held in February 2026 and eligible voters in the neighbourhood forum area will be asked to answer yes or no to the following question:

"Do you want Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Stoneleigh and Auriol to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"

Epsom Town Centre Masterplan

On Thursday 3 July, the Epsom Town Centre Masterplan was awarded 'Best Plan' at the Royal Town Planning Institute's South East Awards for Planning Excellence.

Judges praised the team's strong desire to make Epsom a better place. They noted the commitment to a participative approach and high standard of engagement, utilising digital consultation tools, and their recognition as being a national trailblazer in the digital planning space. The judges were also impressed with how the planning team ensured that there was sustainability at the plan's core.

As a winner of the "Best Plan" category in the region, Epsom Town Centre Masterplan will now automatically be entered as a National Awards for Planning Excellence finalist.

Policy Updates

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT 2005

STATEMENT OF POLICY LICENSING ACT 2003

Both these draft documents were approved at LPPC in the September meeting and are now out for consultation, which will end in mid-January 2026