

Weybridge facing “intensified urban area” risk – your comments matter!

- *The 2019 draft Elmbridge Local Plan Consultation sets out five options*
- *These reflect Government demands for sites for around 9,400 new homes in the borough*
- *Option 1 “Intensify Urban Area” would be VERY bad for Weybridge*
- *Elmbridge has no preferred option – residents’ views will help decide*
- *There is a **Weybridge public consultation** event on 27 August in Esher (also to be webcast)*
 - 7pm at the Elmbridge Civic Centre, off the High Street, Esher, KT10 9SD
 - book your place online at elmbridge.gov.uk/news/local-plan-consultation-meetings

Strong residents’ response needed

Much higher density, high-rise development with minimal private parking could be the shape of things to come for Weybridge – including housing built on allotments and urban green spaces – unless residents speak out strongly now.

We have seen early signs: on Queens Road the Trident Honda site; on the High Street consent for 28 flats in a new five storey Bridge House; and in Beales Lane plans for a giant block (refused after huge public outcry).

Impact of options on Weybridge?

Overleaf we list the five options in the draft Local Plan consultation paper considered by EBC Cabinet on 24 July.

Note that Elmbridge is offering some options which do not meet the full housing target, and seek to conserve character. Most options involve some loss of Green Belt.

We face a prospect of residents of other parts of Elmbridge – including neighbouring towns already mobilised to fight to retain all nearby Green Belt, following the 2016 review – supporting higher density in Elmbridge’s biggest towns, Walton and Weybridge.

Already we have seen the massive plans for Bridge House (opposite Waitrose) opposed by councillors for Weybridge Riverside but voted through by other Elmbridge councillors.

Don’t let ‘intensify Weybridge’ become Elmbridge policy.

Things to push for

- Don’t intensify Weybridge
- Retain the essential character of our town
- Conserve our urban green spaces
- Lobby Government for a more realistic target



Objections helped restrain the height of the Queens Road Trident Honda site redevelopment. The new five storey Bridge House in the High Street will be taller, denser and have less parking.

Where did the target come from?

The Government bases its target for housing demand on a formula that assumes high average prices in a borough reflect high market demand for higher housing density.

So Elmbridge gets punished for being a nice place to live. Our average house prices reflect low housing density, a borough that is 57% Green Belt, and green open spaces in towns.

Some boroughs of equivalent population are getting targets of nearer 6000 new homes.

Is 9,400 a realistic target?

Can a target of 9,400 be met without damaging the essence of our borough’s character? Many think it can’t.

In reality developers would be unlikely to build that many homes even if Elmbridge identified sufficient sites – they would want to build first on virgin Green Belt and allotments before tackling difficult brownfield sites.

Perhaps Elmbridge can present a case for a lower target if there is public outcry about loss of character of our local environment and impact on local quality of life?

Local Plan options and impact

Below we summarise the five options in the draft Local Plan consultation paper considered by EBC Cabinet on 24 July (a final version should be available by 19 August). Elmbridge has no preferred option. Public views matter.

Option 1 - Intensify urban area

Deliver all 9,400 new homes in Elmbridge over 15 years:

- Significantly increase densities on all sites across the urban area; and
- Identify open spaces, such as allotments and playing fields for redevelopment, and relocate these uses within the existing Green Belt.

This would mean much higher density, with tall blocks of flats and loss of urban open space, fundamentally changing the character of towns. It would put great pressure on existing larger towns, and increase traffic and parking stress.

Option 2 - Optimise urban area and 3 areas of Green Belt release

Deliver 6,800 new homes in Elmbridge over 15 years:

- Optimise densities and ensure effective use of urban land with new homes of the right type to meet local needs.
- Create areas for sustainably located new homes by removing from the Green Belt some land which
 - is weakly performing re Green Belt policy, and
 - has no absolute constraints preventing development.
- Use the Duty to Co-operate to see if other authorities can meet some of our housing need.

This would miss the Government target but would protect urban areas from significant change of character. It would permit new homes on 3% of current Green Belt, possibly on the edges of Cobham and of Long Ditton. (We would like to see wildlife corridors retained between new and old, so home owners retain their green outlook.)

Option 3 - Optimise urban area and large Green Belt release

Deliver the 9,400 target new homes AND an extra 7000 to help other boroughs meet their housing needs:

- Optimise densities for effective use of urban land.
- Remove from the Green Belt land which is
 - weakly performing / not essential to Green Belt policy;
 - put forward by landowners regardless of importance;
 - only partially affected by absolute constraints.

This would deliver a lot of homes, but lose 53% of Elmbridge Green Belt and change the character of the whole borough.

Option 4 - Optimise urban area

Deliver 5,300 new homes over the next 15 years:

- Optimise densities and ensure effective use of urban land with new homes of the right type to meet local needs.
- Use Duty to Co-operate to seek help of other authorities.

This would maintain Green Belt boundaries and ensure effective use of brownfield sites, but fall far short of target.

Option 5 - Optimise urban area and small areas of Green Belt release

Deliver all 9,400 new homes in Elmbridge over 15 years:

- Optimise densities, ensuring effective use of urban land with new homes of the right type for local needs.
- Create areas for new homes by removing smaller sub-divided parcels of land from the Green Belt where it:
 - is weakly performing or not essential for Green Belt policy to work properly, and
 - has no absolute constraints preventing development.

This would protect urban areas from significant change of character, and would permit new homes on 7% of Green Belt, including extending urban areas around edges. (Again, we would like to see wildlife corridors to soften impact.)

You can download the Local Plan Consultation Paper via our website at portmore.org.uk.

Learn more and share your views at the Elmbridge Local Plan Weybridge Consultation event on 27 August in Esher.

[Read more at portmore.org.uk](http://portmore.org.uk)

Hands off Churchfields!

The long-term deferral of Weybridge Charity's controversial plans to build houses on part of Churchfields Allotments was warmly welcomed at our recent PPDR community meeting.

Churchfields Allotments and the Recreation Ground are vital areas of green space in the heart of our town, enjoyed and valued by generations of Weybridge residents.

Recreation Ground at risk

Local residents at our meeting also voiced strong opposition to any proposal to pave over part of Churchfields Recreation Ground, specifically the old community bowling green – an idea Surrey County Councillor Tim Oliver raised at a PPDR meeting last September, for a new car park on Churchfields, with reduced parking on the Weybridge Hospital site.

This green community land is an integral part of Churchfields Recreation Ground, only fenced off in 2002 to protect the bowling green surface. It has subsequently been used for mini golf and touch tennis.

Some residents feel that building anything on it would be a nail in the coffin of our central local community open space. Once gone, it would be lost forever.

An alternative proposal (also on Cllr Oliver's feasibility list) of ground-level undercroft parking beneath any new building on the hospital site seems by far a preferable solution.

The green land of Churchfields is worth defending.

Join PPDR – help residents have more of a voice on local matters

Aims: We are a non-political voluntary association of local residents, supporting local heritage, quality of life and community

How to join/renew Please use one of our green forms, or visit www.portmore.org.uk/join

Contact us – contactus@portmore.org.uk – PPDR c/o 3 Clinton Close, KT13 8NU, or c/o 38 Portmore Park Road, KT13 8HU

PPDR Committee 2019-20: Miles Macleod (Chair) Clinton Close, Tel 844449; Jane Heard (Secretary) PPR; Michael Freeman (Treasurer) PPR; Eleanor Butler, Church Walk; Lester Gange, Walton Lane; Pippa Graeme, Elmgrove Rd; Sarah Jane Groves, Grendside Rd; Barbara Oates, Greenlands Rd; Pauline O'Sullivan, Wey Road; Diane Phillips, PPR; William Rutherford, Mount Pleasant.