
Esher Vision: Consultation Statement

July 2023



1 Introduction

- 1.1** This document sets out how Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) consulted and engaged with Elmbridge communities and other stakeholders to identify the placemaking vision and objectives for Esher Town.
- 1.2** For each stage of the process, the document summaries where relevant:
- Who was consulted
 - The engagement / communication methods used
 - The number of responses received
 - The main issues raised
 - How the issues have been considered
- 1.3** Engagement and consultation with Elmbridge communities and other stakeholders were conducted after developing the draft Esher Vision.

Background

- 1.4** The Esher Vision was created to deliver the long-term vision for Esher town centre. The placemaking vision provides overarching principles based on our 2030 Vision and place-making ambitions: creating a sustainable, thriving Elmbridge driven by the power of our community.
- 1.5** Once adopted, the overarching ideas in the Esher Vision will support and direct the exploratory work required for the Civic Centre redevelopment.
- 1.6** On 8 February 2023, Cabinet agreed on the draft Vision for public consultation from 1 March to 31 March 2023. Over 50 comments on the draft Vision were made at the launch of the Elmbridge Vision 2030 event, and over 850 comments were submitted via the Council's online consultation portal (INOVEM).

2 The Consultation Process

2.1 Between 1 March to 31 March 2023, EBC sought comments on the draft Esher Vision.

2.2 The consultation was published via the following:

- Website – <https://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/news/2023/esher-civic-heart-elmbridge>.
- Elmbridge News email to approx. 3000 residents.
- Social media – Twitter, Nextdoor, Instagram and Facebook.



- Comments were submitted via INOVEM and emailed directly to EBC.
- Launch of the Elmbridge Vision 2030 Event – held at the Civic Centre on 7 March 2023, comments were recorded by officers from those attending the event.

3 Consultation Response

3.1 Due to the high volume of feedback submitted via INOVEM, the Consultation Statement will first outline the online feedback and how EBC responded. Once the online responses have been evaluated, the document will outline the responses submitted at the launch of the Elmbridge Vision 2030 event and other consultation methods.

Consultation Submitted via INOVEM

General Responses

3.2 17 individuals, groups and / organisations responded by making general comments via INOVEM. The main feedback included reducing traffic on Esher High Street, delivering a more diverse range of shops, providing improved public transport and prioritising pedestrians in the road users hierarchy.

3.3 Several comments received queried the first line of the Vision which stated that 'Esher town centre will be an experiential town centre'. As the opening line within the introduction, respondents felt that it needed to be clearly expressed as to what 'experiential' meant in order to set the framework for the remainder of the Vision and Objectives.

3.4 EBC has made the following key changes, in response to the comments received:

- amended the Sustainable Travel objective to include increasing the safety and permeability for pedestrians and other road users.
- added the objective to support the reduction in traffic and reduce the reliance on private vehicles to access the town centre to Sustainable Travel.
- Amended the first line of the Vision to read 'Esher town centre will be a place to experience multiple activities'.

3.5 As part of the wider work to deliver the Esher Vision, officers will look at ways to increase the diversity of shops.

Introduction

3.6 155 individuals, groups and / organisations responded via INOVEM to the 'Introduction' in the Esher Vision. Strong support for the overarching ideas outlined in the Introduction was received.

3.7 Not all respondents gave feedback, but the following concerns were raised:

- 31 individuals, groups and / organisations raised concerns about the road layout preventing the Vision from being achieved. The main concern was that Esher High Street connected two main by-passes, which caused cut-through traffic.
- 4 individuals, groups and / organisations highlighted the lack of signage in Esher town centre to promote, identify, provide information, and give directions to road users.
- 20 individuals, groups and / organisations raised concerns about the pedestrian crossings being unsafe and insufficient numbers to service Esher High Street.

3.8 EBC has made the following key changes, in response to the comments received:

- added objective to Sustainable Travel to support the reduction in traffic: reduce the reliance on private vehicles to access the town centre.
- amended the Destination objectives to include a clear hierarchy of well-signed posted routes. In addition, the objective of installing way-finding was added to help all users navigate the town centre.
- amended the objectives for Sustainable Travel to include increasing permeability and safety for pedestrians; and joining up walking routes through the town centre to neighbouring communities.

3.9 Officers also noted that during the Stage 1 Feasibility Study, the following objectives will be assessed: increasing the permeability of the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists and decreasing the disturbance from traffic.

Destination Experience

3.10 190 individuals, groups and / organisations responded via INOVEM to the Destination Experience objectives of the Esher Vision. 107 respondents agreed with the overarching ideas, but respondents raised the following concerns about achieving the objectives:

- 45 individuals, groups and / organisations raised concerns about pedestrians' safety and the traffic on Esher High Street. Additionally, the lack of public transport was considered the cause of the gridlock. Although several respondents raised concerns that reducing the traffic on the High Street may push the traffic to surrounding routes.
- 12 individuals, groups and / organisations highlighted the lack of independent, diverse shops on the High Street, such as bakers and butchers.

3.11 EBC has made the following key changes, in response to the comments received:

- amended the Sustainable Travel objectives to include relocating the bus stop to make public transport more accessible.
- added objective to reduce the reliance on private vehicles to access the town centre to Sustainable Travel.
- amended the objectives for Sustainable Travel to include increasing permeability and safety for pedestrians; and joining up walking routes through the town centre to neighbouring communities.

3.12 Officers also noted that when assessing measures to reduce the disturbance from traffic, consideration should be given to the impact on surrounding routes.

Sustainable Living

3.13 156 individuals, groups and / organisations responded via INOVEM to the Sustainable Living objectives in the Esher Vision. 101 respondents agreed with the overarching idea of sustainable living, recognising the benefits of green space, improved air quality and safe play areas for children. However, some respondents raised the following concerns on how sustainable living will be achieved:

- 8 individuals, groups and / organisations highlighted that creating sustainable living with the current traffic and pollution in the town centre will be difficult.
- 9 individuals, groups and / organisations raised concerns that the public realm in the town centre may challenge the council's ability to deliver the objectives within Sustainable Living.

3.14 EBC has made the following key changes, in response to the comments received:

- added objective to reduce the reliance on private vehicles to access the town centre to Sustainable Travel.
- added objective to increase planting to create a more visually attractive environment and diversify habitats within the town centre to Sustainable Living.

Sustainable Travel

3.15 164 individuals, groups and / organisations responded via INOVEM to the Sustainable Travel objectives in the Esher Vision. 83 respondents agreed with the overarching ideas, but the remaining raised the following concerns:

- 23 individuals, groups and / organisations supported the need to improve safety for pedestrians, either through better crossings or safer pavements.
- 20 individuals, groups and / organisations supported the need for better public transport as an alternative to the private car.
- 13 individuals, groups and / organisations supported the need to improve cycle lanes, as currently, the roads are dangerous for cyclists.

3.16 EBC has made the following key changes, in response to the comments received:

- amended the Sustainable Travel objective to increase permeability for pedestrians and cyclists.
- added the objective to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists to Sustainable Travel.
- amended the Sustainable Travel objectives to include relocating the bus stop to make public transport more accessible.
- added objective to reduce the reliance on private vehicles to access the town centre to Sustainable Travel.

3.17 Officers have also noted that when exploring measures to reduce the disturbance from traffic, consideration will be given to improving the public transport services that serve Esher Town.

Sustainable Construction

3.18 156 individuals, groups and / organisations responded via INOVEM to the Sustainable Construction objectives in the Esher Vision. 130 of the respondents agreed with the objectives listed under sustainable construction. However, some respondents raised the following concerns:

- 7 individuals, groups and / organisations felt that achieving passive design principles was unrealistic.

3.19 EBC has made the following key changes, in response to the comments received:

- removed the objective of incorporating passive design principles from Sustainable Construction.

Launch of the Elmbridge Vision 2030 Event & Other Methods

- 3.20** Over 50 comments were received by individuals, groups and / organisations during the Launch Event and other consultation methods, which have been summarised below with EBC's response:
- 3.21** Many respondents raised concerns about traffic and pedestrian safety on Esher High Street, outlining the need to prioritise pedestrians and install traffic calming measures.
- 3.22** Many respondents wanted the cycle lanes improved as they recognised Esher High Street as a main route between London and Surrey Hills.
- 3.23** Respondents expressed support for improving the public realm in the High Street to provide a better pedestrian experience and improve the diversity of shops.
- 3.24** In terms of the geographical area that the Vision would cover, it was suggested that the boundary be amended to include the entirety of the Civic Centre campus.
- 3.25** EBC has made the following key changes to the Vision and relevant Objectives, in response to the comments received:
- added objective to reduce the reliance on private vehicles to access the town centre to Sustainable Travel.
 - added the objective to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists to Sustainable Travel.
 - added objective to increase planting to create a more visually attractive environment and diversify habitats within the town centre to Sustainable Living.
 - the map identifying the geographical area that the Vision would apply to has been amended to include the pond and other open space at the Civic Centre campus that was previously omitted.
- 3.26** Officers will look at ways to increase the diversity of shops, as part of the wider work to deliver the Esher Vision.