

# FOCUS

on Weybridge



From your local Lib Dem team - Feb/Mar 2023

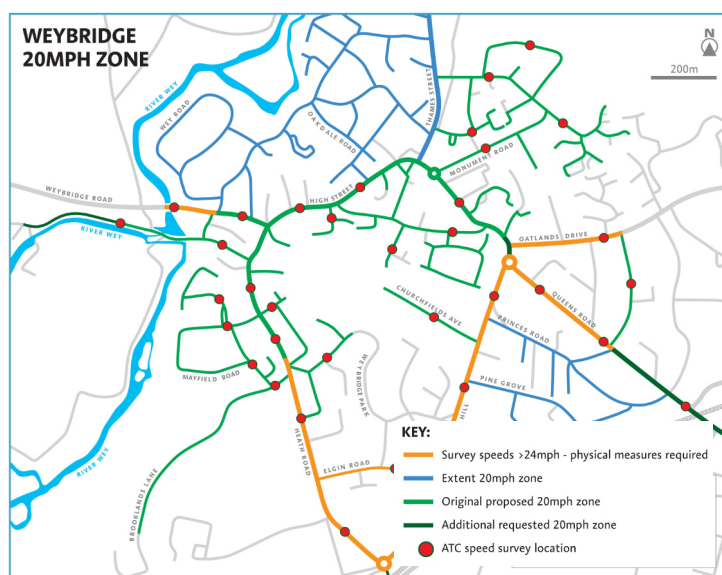
## Major traffic plans proposed

### 20 mph zone throughout the town centre

At the recent WeyBetter Weybridge pop-up event, it was the Highways stand which caused most of the buzz. Key issues, apart from the size of the proposed 20 mph zone, were the proposed closure of Elgin Road to through traffic and inadequate concern for the poor (even dangerous) pavements in our town centre. It was also disappointing that there was nothing about much needed modification to the roundabout by the station, though we have been told that this may be under consideration for the future.

Weybridge residents were also able to see and comment on long awaited plans for the new Weybridge Health Campus. Feedback at the event revealed people were largely satisfied with the proposed building and enhanced services, though there remain reservations about the nature of the provision for urgent 'same day' care. The key message was Let's get it done! Full funding of the project by the government remains a problem despite contributions from both Elmbridge and Runnymede Councils from their CIL funds.

Additionally, there was a display on the refurbishment of the existing Library.



Didn't get time to go? You can see the plans on:

<https://weybetterweybridge.commonplace.is/>

or follow the QR code.

Comments are open until 28 Feb.



## 15 more years of sewage discharges

Our MP, Ben Spencer, and many other Conservative MPs have just voted to pass a target which will allow water companies to dump harmful substances into rivers until 2038.

New regulations passed by Conservative MPs set a target of an 80% reduction in phosphates in rivers by 2038. Phosphates are naturally occurring minerals deriving from human waste and too much phosphate can cause a dramatic growth in algae and deplete oxygen levels when they are dumped in rivers. This new regulation would allow sewage to continue to be dumped in rivers for another 15 years.

Since 2010, the Environment Agency (EA) has been on the end of dramatic cuts to its budget from the Government - this has been reduced by nearly two-thirds from £120 million to just £48 million. This new target can only result in these figures getting worse as the EA struggles to inspect, monitor and enforce regulation. For the second time in a year, the EA failed to attend an invitation by the Elmbridge Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee to discuss their performance.

## Bring ID to vote in person

For next May's local elections, all voters planning to vote **in person** must bring an approved photo-ID or a Voter Authority Certificate to the polling station. Full details are on the EBC website or follow this QR code:



**Didn't know about this?** The government slipped out the new ID regulations quietly in November, despite them not being included in the shameless voter-suppression bill - the Elections Act 2022 which received Royal Assent in April 2022.

**No photo-ID and want to vote in EBC elections this May?** You can apply to Elmbridge Borough Council for a Postal Vote or a Voter Authority Certificate.

## Social housing under threat

Representatives of both PA Housing and Elmbridge Housing department recently met with Cllr Judy Sarsby at Bramcote House, Weybridge. They agreed they would allow Ukrainian evacuees to live in the building temporarily. This was a welcome decision that has offered stability to many families who travelled to Elmbridge to escape war in Ukraine. Bramcote is one of the three socially rented properties in Weybridge owned by PA Housing due to be demolished and replaced with mainly shared ownership properties. Work has started on St Catherine's in Beales Lane, and Bramcote and Kemble Houses are due for demolition later this year.

Councillors are concerned about the decision by PA Housing to replace rented social housing - especially rented accommodation for keyworkers - with shared ownership properties. We know that in Weybridge so called affordable shared ownership housing is beyond the reach of many. The decisions were made before the perfect storm of Brexit/Covid/Ukraine war and do not reflect the current and future needs of the town. We need to be able to accommodate the nurses and paramedics needed to staff the planned medical services on the hospital site. Cllr Sarsby is working with EBC to consider options for the future of key workers and Ukrainians in Weybridge.



## Too much development?

Your local councillors are concerned at the cumulative impact on traffic and infrastructure (doctors, schools, nurseries) of the number of developments that are being submitted in and around the town, mostly in the Brooklands area. We recently attended a meeting with the Weybridge Society and our Weybridge SCC councillor to review the potential impact.

Some of these started as permitted development (PD) applications whereby an unused office block can be converted to flats without going through the full planning process. An example of this is the refurbishment of Clive House on Queen's Road. But developers seem to always want more and they then put forward plans to build on adjoining land or to demolish and rebuild properties to maximise income.

Proposed developments include the JTI building, St George's Garden and Brooklands College. The total number of dwellings involved is nearly 1,000; potentially adding some 2,500 residents and 1,500 vehicles and creating an additional demand on already saturated local medical facilities, roads, and schools.

The meeting was unanimous in agreeing that such developments were unsustainable within the current Weybridge infrastructure and inconsistent with the local demand and environment.

## 2023 Council tax and support for the community

Every year, in February, Elmbridge Council has to agree a budget for the following year. For the 2023/24 budget the current Liberal Democrat and Resident Association Administration are proposing:

- a below inflation increase in Council tax of 2.98%
- income and efficiency savings of £1.8 million
- prudent use of reserves to meet some spending pressures
- continued financial support for the voluntary sector
- additional money for the cost of living crisis fund
- a programme of capital investment much of which is targeted at achieving our carbon neutral commitment

This is in the context of rising costs for running Council services which are due to the same pressures being felt by residents and businesses alike: high inflation, rising interest rates and increasing energy costs.

Weybridge Councillor Ashley Tilling - a member of the EBC Cabinet - says the proposed budget balances the need to make savings with the determination to retain and develop valued services in tough times and to make further progress towards the council's 2030 carbon reduction commitment.

**KEEPING YOU INFORMED:** Email us at [weybridge@elmbridgelibdems.org.uk](mailto:weybridge@elmbridgelibdems.org.uk) to subscribe to our regular e-newsletters which give more frequent updates on developments in Weybridge and Elmbridge.

**MEET US AT CAFE ENZO:** Come and talk with your Lib Dem councillors and the Focus team. We meet on the first Sunday of every month at Cafe Enzo in Baker Street, 11am to 12 noon.

**GET IN TOUCH:** Email: [weybridge@elmbridgelibdems.org.uk](mailto:weybridge@elmbridgelibdems.org.uk)