



Mole Valley spending plans

27 July 2025



How £11m for rail, transport, school, health and recreation upgrades will be spent in Mole Valley has been laid out. The district council has approved spending plans for community infrastructure money collected from developers since 2016 – with almost half expected to go on cycling and walking schemes. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is paid as part of the planning process to help offset the impact of the growing number of homes in the borough. Councillor Bradley Nelson, cabinet member for planning, said: “The local plan was adopted in 2024 so the time has come to focus on the £11m of strategic CIL which could rise to £34m given the local plan growth.” He said the projects should be ones “the council thinks are necessary and achievable to help support development growth.”

“The programme commits investment for vital infrastructure such as health provision in Ashtead, Bookham, and a health hub in Leatherhead. Early years provision in Ashtead and Dorking would be targeted for funding as well as train station improvements in Dorking which we hope will lead to wider improvements and help the district as a whole, as well as investment in the district parks.” The council has been working with Surrey County Council over transport, education, early years provision and flood defence, Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Partnership, Great Western Railway, Network Rail, the Football Foundation, and its own parks and open spaces team to get an up-to-date picture of the suitable projects.

It has earmarked two transport projects to upgrade rail infrastructure on the North Downs Line at the stations in Dorking. These projects, the Tuesday July 22 cabinet papers read, will complement planned improvements on the line, such as battery-electric trains, and increase the number of people using this sustainable transport mode. Deepdene Station will be upgraded as a priority and a lift installed, acting as a major contribution towards “realising the potential of the district’s east-west travel connections, supporting growth and promoting sustainable development”. School capacity issues requiring funding in Hookwood could also be addressed, as well as the expansion of the SEND school on Woodland in Leatherhead.

Surrey County Council’s early years team has identified two potential projects, one in Ashtead and one in Dorking, while football pitches at Ashcombe Secondary School in Dorking and the other at the Brockham Big Field could be upgraded to modern standards. There would also be financial support for the resurfacing of the sand-dressed pitch at Therfield Secondary School in Leatherhead to allow the installation of a new 3G football pitch “without losing a vital resource for hockey.”

Cllr Keira Vyvyan-Robinson (Liberal Democrats: Leatherhead North) said: “We all know just how much residents are concerned about the amount of development that comes and their biggest concern is where does the infrastructure come. It often seems that it’s a bit of a chicken and egg because the CIL comes from development, and without development you don’t get CIL – and therefore you don’t get infrastructure. For a long time we’ve been in the position where we’ve been telling residents we have to build these homes and we have to build these sites – and there hasn’t been anything to show – so it is really welcome to say ‘this is how we meet the infrastructure demands’. She added: “We can provide the funding, but we are dependent on the railway companies, the GP surgeries, the schools, to make those bids and to ask for the funding. But the development will pay for it and hopefully they will all come together at the same time.”

Estimated CIL Contributions by Infrastructure Category

- **Transport - Active Travel** - £11,555,000
- **Transport - Passenger Transport** - £3,450,000
- **Well Being - Health - Primary Care** - £2,350,000
- **Well Being - Open Space and Public Realm** - £3,859,000
- **Well Being - Sports Facilities** - £771,000
- **Education - SEND** - £870,000
- **Education - Early Years** - £300,000
- **Flood Defence - Nature Flood Management** - £95,000

Hosepipe ban not reached Epsom and Ewell yet

27 July 2025



Frustration is growing towards Thames Water after it announced a hosepipe ban in parts of the South East just months after residents lived through a winter of “huge” leaks and sewage overflows. Thames Water has announced a hosepipe ban will kick in on Tuesday, July 22, covering all OX, GL, SN postcodes as well as RG4, RG8, and RG9, after the UK experienced one of its warmest and driest springs in over a century – followed by England’s warmest June on record. Currently the ban only impacts towns bordering Surrey, but Thames Water has said it may need to add postcodes “if anything changes”.

This year alone, residents in Surrey have endured water supply issues due to multiple pipe bursts, a report concluding water was “unfit for human consumption”, and people putting up barricades to stop raw sewage flooding homes. For some, a hosepipe ban would be the last straw. Sir Jeremy Hunt, MP for Godalming and Ash, said: “Godalming and Ash is not included in the hosepipe ban so far, but I completely understand residents’ frustration when they witness huge water leaks losing thousands of litres locally – Chilworth, Cranleigh, Ewhurst and Bramley in the last week alone – and yet Thames Water are asking us to use water sparingly brushing our teeth. I met with Thames Water CEO Chris Weston recently to press for investment locally because, although work is underway to improve water resilience, what is really needed is to connect our ‘water island’ area with the wider Thames water network – and to urgently replace those leaky pipes.”

Thames Water says its drought plan is designed to ensure the taps keep running for customers’ essential use while also protecting the environment. Water taken from the River Thames for the currently affected area is stored at Farmoor reservoir in Oxfordshire. If the warm, dry weather continues, the company anticipates reservoir levels will continue to drop. River levels are also below average, limiting how much can be drawn from the Thames while the hot weather also causes



more evaporation.

Esher and Walton MP Monica Harding said: "The threat of a hosepipe ban shows how important investment in the basics is. Thames Water's current crumbling infrastructure can't protect us now, let alone in the future from climate change and population growth. Thames Water has failed miserably in providing the investment needed up to this point and have lost the public's confidence. The Government should grip the ongoing crisis at Thames Water, place it in special administration, make it a public benefit company, and replace Ofwat with a tough new regulator with teeth, to protect bill payers and give us the clean water we all need."

Thames Water is also looking to secure future water supplies and said it was working on plans for a new reservoir in Oxfordshire, securing water supply for 15 million people across the South East, including Thames Water, Affinity Water and Southern Water customers. The company is also working on what it calls a vital drought resilience project in London which will be supported by water recycling.

A Thames Water spokesperson said: "Leakage is at its lowest ever level on our network, down 13.2% since 2020, but we know we have more work to do. The extended warm weather also brings increased risks of leaks and bursts due to pipe stress and shifting foundations in the ground. We've increased leakage teams in our region and we're fixing 650 leaks a week with our engineers targeting leaks with the greatest impact to local water supplies. We're also replacing 500km of water mains over the next five years to reduce leakage. We're using innovative technology and data to find and fix leaks faster. So far, we have installed almost 40,000 acoustic loggers on our water network to help detect leaks and expect to have 100,000 in place by mid-2027. We've installed over 1 million smart meters, which are critical in helping us to locate leaks at our customers' homes. We'll continue to roll out smart water meters to households in our area, installing or upgrading a further c.1,200,000 smart meters to homes and businesses by 2030."

Has Woking gone barking mad?

27 July 2025



People in social housing will soon need to ask for permission before getting a dog as Woking Borough Council looks to adopt a formal pet policy. The new nine-page list of rules regarding pet ownership is being drawn up to give the council greater enforcement powers should people's pooches start to play up. These include clear guidelines spelling out that residents in social housing must notify the council when they get a dog and complete the dog registration form, that dogs must be kept on a lead in all communal areas, and that they must not defecate on balconies or any shared spaces. Guidance on how to keep pets will also be updated to help mitigate noise problems.

In private housing, renting with pets is at the landlord's discretion. However, when the Renters' Rights Bill becomes effective, tenants will have stronger rights. Landlords must consider each pet request fairly, and if they refuse them, there needs to be a reasonable justification. Officers told the Monday, July 14 communities and housing scrutiny committee it has been an on-going challenge dealing with cases of nuisance pets and that the new policy should strengthen the council's hand. Committee chair Councillor Tom Bonsundy-O'Bryan said: "Noise nuisance from dogs barking (is a problem) and a real high percentage of those came from dogs being left outside at night time. You can see why the noise of barking at night time is more of a pain. The RSPCA also advises against letting dogs sleep outside, the vast majority of time it's bad as they are social animals. It's just really bad to let dogs sleep outdoors overnight."

The council says it understands the benefits of keeping a pet, particularly on people's mental and physical wellbeing, but that it needed to ensure animals do not cause nuisance to other residents or damage property. Households will generally be given permission to keep up to two dogs and two cats in a council-owned or managed house, and either one dog or cat in a flat. Anyone who wishes to have additional pets will need written permission.

Ashstead development objectors hit a cul-de-sac

27 July 2025



"Surrey's biggest cul-de-sac" will be built after hundreds of new homes were approved next to the M25. Developers Wates was granted planning permission to build up to 270 homes to the south of Ermyn Way in Ashstead by Mole Valley District Council's development committee. The plans, which include 108 affordable properties, a community building, and space for Gypsy and Traveller pitches, were green lit by six votes to five with two abstentions much to the disappointment of many who attended the July 2 meeting.

Wates, though, said the scheme would go a considerable way to alleviating housing pressure in the area. Director of planning, John Tarvit, said Wates had been working on the proposals since 2014 with both the council and planning inspector agreeing it was a sustainable site. He added: "Mole Valley is one of the least affordable places to buy a home with about 680 households currently on the waiting list. This planning application represents a real opportunity to offer young people and families the chance to either own a home or with affordable rent securing a stable place where they can thrive."

The still-to-be-determined final layout will include a purpose-built community building with potential for a children's nursery, 30 acres of open space with green corridors and children's play areas, and cycling facilities. The developers will also make a financial contribution towards Surrey Connect - an on-demand bus service.

The item was not without its controversy with committee chair, Councillor Jo Farrar-Astrop (Liberal Democrats: Capel, Leigh, Newdigate & Charlwood) recognising it was contentious and reminding members to stay focused on the planning matters. She would also, repeatedly, warn the public gallery over its outbursts before eventually clearing the chamber and moving onlookers to watch from a room next door.

Speaking against the plans was Steve Drake who urged the committee to reject the proposals as there was "only one route into the busy cul-de-sac" already congested with incoming school-run traffic. He said: "With this development the cul-de-sac would become almost 500 dwellings with over 1,000 vehicles, doubling the traffic load on Ermyn Way." Worse, he said, was that the council had earmarked a further 140 homes for the site meaning it would eventually grow to more than 600 dwellings. Dave Beresford of the Ashstead Residents Association said: "Adding 580 residents would be unsustainable, the character of the area will certainly be harmed."

Nearby schools have told the council there is enough capacity to take on the expected increase in children moving into the area. Cllr Gerry Sevenoaks (Independent: Ashtead Park) said: "It will have a devastating impact, increasing traffic pollution and loss of biodiversity but more importantly there would be a



devastating impact on the residents living close to this development. He added: "Given that this is going to be the largest Cul de Sac in Surrey I wonder what those emergency services feel about coming down the road to be clocked with traffic and trying to actually get people to hospital or deal with fire."

280 homes plan for Ashtead (Image Wates)

Anti-slavery Parliamentarian portrait purchase

27 July 2025



Runnymede Borough Council has agreed to release thousands of pounds to help buy a "significantly important" oil painting for its museum. The painting is an oil on canvas portrait of Britain's first foreign secretary and one-time leader of the Whig Party, Charles James Fox MP.

Mr Fox, who spent his final years in St Ann's Hill, Chertsey, was a strong supporter of parliamentary reform and advocated for religious tolerance and individual liberty. He was a particularly vocal campaigner for the abolition of slavery and introduced what was to become the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act which made it illegal for British ships and British subjects to trade in enslaved people.

The portrait has been offered to the museum for £5,000 and half of the money for its purchase will come from donations, with the rest from the council's museum after Runnymede Borough Council's corporate management committee signed off the move.

Emma Warren, curator of Chertsey Museum, told the Thursday June 19 meeting: "We've been given the opportunity to purchase an original oil painting, quite a large item, of one of the borough's, if not the country's, unsung heroes." She said the money would come from the museum's own fund which had been "built up over many many years and can only be used for the benefit of the museum's collections."

"In my time at Chertsey Museum, which is 23 years, we've only used the purchase fund four times which is why it's healthy. It's normally kept for items of significant importance which I believe this painting to be, given we only have a couple of portraits of Fox and no original artworks. I could talk literally for hours about him. He is important not just to Chertsey where he spent his final years living on St Anne's Hill. Normally I mention his debauched young life with the women and gambling but I was told to skip over that and concentrate on the important bit as to why he was our unsung hero."

Reports presented to the meeting said Mr Fox, who was known as the Man of the People, first came to Chertsey in 1783 when Elizabeth Armistead, who would become his wife, invited him to join her at her home in St Ann's Hill. The museum's collection features letters from Mr Fox and gives an insight into his life on the hill. He was said to have taken up sheep rearing and learned about planting requirements for crops.

Mrs Warren added: "He was a Whig politician, had an unwavering support for liberty and parliamentary reforms and anti-slavery principles. Many of his views were quite ahead of his time. He spoke out at length against anti-government overreach."

The image produced here is NOT the one the subject of this report.

Image: Joshua Reynolds portrait of Charles James Fox- pl.pinterest.com, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=48763729> This is not likely to be the portrait that is the subject of this article. We have been waiting for details from the museum.

Netflix to mainstream in Surrey

27 July 2025



A Surrey film studio used by Netflix, the streaming giant behind hit shows such as *Stranger Things*, *Bridgerton* and *Adolescence*, will be made permanent after full planning permission was granted. The site was originally approved on a short-term basis because of its green belt location, and Runnymede Borough Council's desire to see the area eventually become an office hub as part of its Longcross Garden Village plan. The crating demand of office space, plus the growing rise of Netflix, saw the land be taken out of green belt - meaning the temporary restrictions no longer applied and its long-term future could be secured. Officers told the Wednesday June 25 meeting: "This building was erected in 2020 under a temporary permission and has been used continually since. Permission was granted originally for the building on a temporary basis for reasons of visual amenity and so as not to prejudice the ongoing phased redevelopment of the Longcross north site. Since then there has been a change in site circumstances in respect of the commercial redevelopment of the site. The building supports the existing studio use and therefore there are no reasons why the building can not remain on a permanent basis."

The site was previously occupied by the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) with many of its old buildings used by Netflix as film studios including buildings within the Surrey Heath. The Longcross North site together with the former DERA land south of the M3 including Longcross Barracks, form the designated Longcross Garden Village and has been removed from the green belt through the 2030 Local Plan. The building is near to the northern boundary within the wider Longcross North site. The officer added: "The appearance of the building is appropriate in the context of the wider film studios site." The application was unanimously approved.

Longcross Studios (image Google)



Victory for parent power after axed bus route is replaced

27 July 2025



Campaigning parents whose children were told to bring torches and walk across unlit heathland by Surrey County Council have won a long-fought victory after it was announced that axed school buses would be replaced. Early this year Surrey County Council said it was saving money and cancelling the free bus service between Molesey and Esher High, advising children to instead walk through dark alleyways, unlit heathland and unguarded viaduct sluice gates. The council's decision was made after bureaucrats decided the route was safe and that there would be no alternative provisions put on, to the horror of worried parents.

Now after months of campaigning, petitions and pressure from senior politicians to stop the 'cruel and needless punishment of children', the council has announced Falcon will trial an extra, paid for, 814 service from Molesey to Esher. Parents, though welcoming the news, are asking why the extra service could not have been announced at the same time, saving needless stress and worry, and why it took the community to fight back to make it happen?

Parent Kate Maxwell said: "This whole process has been so stressful on everyone involved, the parents, children, and schools, and for what? I'm thrilled they've seen sense but it could have been handled so much differently. They would have known it would cause a lot of problems for everyone, including the children already using paid buses. Surely, if they wanted, they could have put these arrangements in place when they axed the free buses instead of wasting everyone's time. Why did it take the community fighting back to make this happen?"

In a letter to parents, Esher High School headteacher Andy King said they were pleased to share that an additional 814 bus would be running as a trial from September, following "strong and sustained advocacy from our school and parent community." It added: "This outcome is the result of collective determination. When 81 of our students lost access to free coach transport, we were placed in a deeply challenging position - one we strongly opposed. But thanks to the powerful, united voice of our parents, carers, staff, governors and supporters, a positive step has now been taken. We want to thank everyone who spoke up, wrote in, and stood with us. Your efforts made the difference. While we regret that such a campaign was necessary, we are relieved that this decision has finally been confirmed. This will support our students getting to school safely, reliably, and ready to learn. At Esher C of E High School, we remain committed to doing what's right for our students - and this is an example of what we can achieve together."

MP for Esher and Walton, Monica Harding, has held meetings with the school and written to the council over the matter. She described it as a win for school children who were facing walks of up to three miles across unlit heathland with concerns about safety, after Surrey County Council decided to withdraw the Esher High School bus service. The MP added: "It's a shame this decision took so long, causing so much uncertainty and stress for parents. Surrey must ensure that its policy making is joined up and reflects the lived experience of our children - I'm glad that this time local families have been heard. We now need to know that this much needed bus provision will be sustained over the longer term."

Following Falcon's decision to introduce an additional bus service to transport pupils to and from Esher High School, there will now be four buses on the 814 route. The extra service will initially run as a trial for the first half-term of the 2025/26 academic year with its use monitored before a decision is made on whether it is needed on a longer-term basis.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said, "We're very aware of the challenges raised by parents and carers and have worked with Falcon to address these. As with all bus services, we need to ensure they are used to make them viable, so I encourage parents and carers to take up this new provision. This additional bus is being provided by Falcon at no cost to Surrey County Council."

Image: Esher CofE High School headteacher Andy King (Image Google and Esher High)

Surrey house of distinction gets £200K to repair

27 July 2025



One of the great Surrey buildings will have another £200,000 of repair work after its owners said they were "morally obligated" to maintain the special 19th century site. Pippbrook House is a Grade II* listed building, 'a distinction' English Heritage only bestows on about 5 per cent of all listed properties. The decision to increase the repair budget from £1.4m to £1.6m was made by Mole Valley District Council's cabinet on Tuesday, June 17, so that parts of the building that were damaged by a historic leak in October 2023 can be fixed - and to make it easier to finish the roof repairs.

Councillor Nick Wright, cabinet member for leisure and community assets, said the council had a 'moral obligation' to repair the famous Dorking building. He added: "It is very much a valued local asset. We do need to find other creative ways of funding some of the work that needs to be done, but you can't do that if you've got holes in your roof. We're not denying that there are challenges there, there are significant challenges...but these works are necessary."

In February 2023, the council originally approved a budget of £3.1m for works required to fix Pippbrook House - with £1.6m coming from Mole Valley and the rest obtained through grants. Unfortunately for the council, it was unable to bring in any external cash, limiting the overall scale of what could be achieved. This caused the council to change course and in November 2023 £1.4m was released to begin necessary work to weatherproof Pippbrook House.

The new work will also open up two rooms that cannot be used due to ceiling damage, the meeting heard, matching one of the council's objectives of bringing Pippbrook back into use. Pippbrook House was built between 1856 and 1858 and designed by the architect behind Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras station, George Gilbert Scott. Cllr Gary Sevenoaks, who chairs the council's scrutiny committee, said questions needed to be asked as to why the council was unable to secure a grant for the remaining £1.5m needed to fully repair the building.



Pippbrook House (image Google)

Gatwick Diamond authority denied

27 July 2025



Merging Reigate and Banstead Borough Council with its neighbour Crawley has been ruled out - in a decision that has left drivers behind the move "disappointed" with the Government. This week leaders from the 11 boroughs and districts, together with the county council, were told the Government planned to survey residents over merging into either two or three mega councils.

The council was told it would not be allowed to move forward with its preferred option because it had also backed the creation of three unitaries - and the rules stated councils could only support one idea, and they had to cover all of Surrey. The government also said the plan lacked enough detail on cost savings. They had wanted to form, at £13 billion plus, the largest economy in the sub-region, and to be conjoined by the world's busiest single runway airport in Gatwick.

The news was relayed to the councils by the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon. He said: "I understand this will be disappointing; however, this consultation process allows for consultees to comment on whether the Secretary of State should implement one or other of the two proposals received, including the proposal co-signed by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. If, in the future, there remains an interest in changing the boundary between Surrey and West Sussex, there are other mechanisms for doing so and this process does not prevent that. I also note your desire for the Gatwick Diamond economic area to be within the area of one Strategic Authority so as to best provide for economic growth. I want to make clear that the decision not to include your proposal in the consultation does not preempt devolution options for the wider area, including establishing or expanding a Strategic Authority that includes all councils making up the Gatwick Diamond."

Leader of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, Councillor Richard Biggs said: "We are disappointed that the Government will not be including our joint proposal with Crawley within the consultation. I am pleased that we took the opportunity to highlight to Government the important contribution that our combined area makes to the national economy, as well as its economic growth potential. While we accept the Government's decision, we will continue to advocate for joined up economic and infrastructure planning and investment across both authorities. In terms of local government reorganisation, we are now focused on trying to secure the best available model of local government in Surrey - which we continue to strongly believe is three unitary councils. A three unitary model in Surrey will achieve the best balance of delivering value for money for our residents whilst maintaining strong local connections and identities and delivering high-quality service."

Chris Caulfield

Epsom and Ewell Times adds:

The **Gatwick Diamond** is a term used to describe a key economic area in the South East of England, centred around **Gatwick Airport**. It includes parts of **Surrey and West Sussex**, notably towns such as **Crawley, Reigate, Redhill, Horsham, and Haywards Heath**.

Key features of the Gatwick Diamond:

- **Economic significance:** It is one of the UK's most dynamic business regions, home to over **45,000 businesses** and supporting around **500,000 jobs**.
- **Transport hub:** Gatwick Airport, one of the UK's busiest international airports, makes the area a major transport and logistics hub.
- **Sectors:** It hosts a mix of industries, including **aviation, engineering, financial services, professional services, and advanced manufacturing**.
- **Strategic location:** Situated between **London and the South Coast**, with excellent rail, road, and air links.

Purpose of the name:

The term is used by **local authorities, business partnerships, and regional planners** to promote regional cooperation, attract investment, and plan infrastructure in a way that supports sustainable economic growth. The **Gatwick Diamond Initiative** is a public-private partnership that actively markets the region for inward investment.

So, when Reigate and Banstead refer to the "**Gatwick Diamond economic area**", they are aligning with this identity and economic cluster, arguing that the area's interests may be best served by a unified strategic authority.

Additional reporting - Sam Jones.

Gatwick Airport (Credit Gatwick Airport)

Surrey jail addresses prison population crisis

27 July 2025



Sixty six temporary prisoner cells, built at HMP Coldingley during the Covid-19 pandemic, will be made permanent in an effort to "ease" the crisis facing the service. Nationally, the prison population has doubled in the past 30 years while only 500 new cells have been built in the past 14 years. It has left the service scrambling around looking for a series of short-term ways to increase capacity until four new prisons come online by 2031, creating 14,000 extra spaces.

The latest stop gap has been the approval of 66 cells in HMP Coldingley in Bisley by Surrey Heath Borough Council on Thursday, June 6. The cells were approved



unanimously during a brief two-minute item with no questions or debate from members. Case officers addressing the meeting said: "No objections have been raised by any statutory consultees, while there is a national need for prisoner accommodation. The application is therefore recommended for approval."

The plans were reported to committee due to its size – although details were scant on the advice of the Ministry of Justice, which said the application contained officially sensitive information, including the layout. The confidential information has not been shared in the public domain however the publicly available aspects of the report said the overall site comprises a variety of buildings of up to four storeys in height, predominantly concentrated towards the north-western flank and centre. Among them are a central accommodation block, an engineering workshop and a laundry building. Sports pitches and open spaces are at the south-west with the prison entrance at the north-eastern corner of the site. The entire perimeter of the category C site, that is male prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions, is secured by a 5.2-metre-high security fence.

The report read: "The proposed development supports a demonstrable national infrastructure need and aligns with national and local policy objectives." It added: "The installation of the cells was considered necessary in the event of a national emergency to allow for safeguarding procedures to be implemented during COVID-19. There is also an on-going national shortfall of prison spaces, with the prison population having roughly doubled in the last 30 years with only 500 places added to the country's stock of jail cells in the last 14 years. At national level four prisons are being built as part of the Plan for Change to create 14,000 extra spaces by 2031 to assist with the crisis. Until then, however, short term measures such the installation of Rapid Deployment Cells, and the retention of the temporary accommodation installed during the pandemic such as this site, help to ease the burden of rising demand."

The application is supported by comment from the Department of Justice (see confidential paper). "There is a clear need for existing prison sites to support the increased demand and shortage of supply of prison places across the country. The proposed development therefore helps to support a demonstrable national need."

Related reports:

[Surrey prison failed IPP prisoner](#)

[HMP Coldingley \(image Google\)](#)