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Claygate not to suffer children's home

11 October 2022



Plans for a children's home in a **Claygate** cul-de-sac have been refused despite support from **Surrey County Council** which needs more beds for Surrey's vulnerable children. The application for a home for up to five children had received 25 letters of objection, ahead of a meeting of **Elmbridge Borough Council**'s east area planning sub-committee on Monday (October 10).

But officers also told the meeting a petition signed by 124 people had been submitted with a late objection letter.
The borough council's officers had recommended approval of the application for the home in Chadworth Way, but a motion to refuse the plans, put forward by Councillor **Mike Rollings** (Liberal Democrats, Claygate) was voted through by members.

While the meeting heard that the company putting forward the application, **HFM Care**, did not have experience running children's homes, officers said this was not something that would come under a planning consideration, and nor was the impact it may have on neighbouring property prices.

Surrey County Council supported the application because it would help with its aims to house more Surrey children within the county. In July 2022 just under 40 per cent of the children looked after by the county council were in homes in Surrey, with the authority aiming to increase that number to 80 per cent.

Councillor **Gill Coates** (Thames Ditton & Weston Green Residents' Association, Hinchley Wood and Weston Green) questioned the county council's support, but said she could see where the applicant was coming from wanting to house children in the currently residential property. She said: "You'd have to have a heart of stone not to want children from troubled backgrounds to be looked after in domestic properties of this type, in this sort of location."

But with flooding risks in the area, and in the house in particular, having been raised in the meeting and the potential for disruption highlighted by an objector to the plans, Cllr Coates said she still had questions on if it was the right property. She said: "That's effectively saying, I could put a shed at the end of my garden and employ somebody with 30 years experience in childcare and say, I want to run a children's home from it. "And Surrey will say: 'Well, we need the space. So, yes.' I think it's not good enough."

The home would cater for children who had been victims of child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. **Yasemin Dervis**, from HFM Care, said the children would mostly be from the first group and would be "quieter and more introverted". She added: "If anything it will actually be a much quieter home than most children's homes that [the objector had] been a part of. The home will operate like a normal family home, children will go to school during the week, do their homework, go to bed at a reasonable hour. During the weekends, they will go and off and see their family and do other activities."

The meeting heard the residential house was on a three-year lease to the company, and that both Surrey County Council and **Ofsted** had been supportive of the home.

The home was refused because of flooding risks and the impact of the proposed home on the neighbouring residents.

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14 against 59 = 70? Dilemma for Headley

11 October 2022



Councillors have been warned to "be under no illusions" that a plan for 70 homes at Headley Court could be progressed as they rejected an application for 59 homes on the same site. A long history of applications on the green belt site is set to continue, with various parts of it currently under appeal and the district council's local plan currently under examination.

Mole Valley District Council's development management committee meeting on Wednesday (October 6) refused the application by **14 votes to zero**, with four abstentions, in line with the officers' recommendations. After outline permission was granted in December 2020 for up to 70 homes on the site, it could now see a previous application for 70 homes approved, after an appeal was lodged with government inspectors.

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The site, former Ministry of Defence land, is located over the road from the NHS Seacole Centre, used as a temporary hospital during the coronavirus pandemic and as a temporary mortuary.

Developers warned during the meeting that if councillors rejected the scheme for 59 homes then the 70 home plan would go ahead if granted on appeal, despite having previously offered to take the larger plans off the table.
Tony Williamson, representing **Angle Property**, said: “Be under no illusion, if this application is refused tonight, and approval is granted by the planning inspectorate then the 70 unit scheme will be implemented and progressed. The concessions offered in this application will be lost. In that scenario, I’m sure the local residents will not be thanking this committee.”

The previous application, deferred from a November 2021 meeting had been appealed by the developer for non-determination. Subsequently, a June meeting of the development management committee concluded it would have refused the application, had it not been sent to central government for a decision.

The latest refused plans included three two-bedroom, 28 three-bedroom, 17 four-bedroom and 11 five-bedroom homes, with eight of them being affordable. Officers described the housing mix as “unacceptable” because a three-bed home sold under shared ownership “would not prove attractive due to affordability issues”. The district council’s local plan, currently undergoing inspection at government level, identifies the Headley Court site as a whole for 120 homes.

There is still an appeal on the east part of the site for 14 senior living homes in the listed building there and redevelopment of the rest of the site for 100 new-build senior living homes. Headley Parish Councillor **Jane Pickard** said the said the village was at risk of doubling in size, and that the new plans had seen a shift away from smaller homes. She added: “We are prepared for a major increase in the size of our community, but want it to be done in a way which enhances rather than damages the semi rural character in the green belt.”

Cllr **Tim Hall** said he knew of at least three planning applications around Headley Court and Headley road, “all of which have serious transport implications”. He said: “This needs to be linked together. Because Headley Road, as has been said previously by the residents, is not a great highway. It’s a rural Surrey lane, in the nicest possible way.”

Will “Top Tory” Surrey County lobby Coffey?

11 October 2022

A council chief has called on select committee members to use their status as a “top Tory” authority to influence health spending at government level. Calling ambulances backed up outside hospitals “dangerous” and saying “we don’t want old people on trolleys in corridors”, one of the council’s health directors said it would take everyone working together to get through the winter.

Surrey County Council’s adults and health select committee heard on Wednesday (October 6) from representatives from Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System (ICS), South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAmb) and Frimley Health and Care ICS.

As the health organisations set out their plans for winter pressures, and commitment to working together to cope, members heard of current issues including Frimley Park hospital beds being nearly 100 per cent full most of the time and systems issues causing delays in ambulance handover times.

Liz Bruce, joint executive director for adult social care and integrated commissioning (Surrey County Council and Surrey Heartlands ICS), said she “absolutely agreed” that ambulances backed up outside hospitals was “high risk and dangerous to everybody else in the community”. She said: “We don’t want old people on trolleys in corridors, and therefore we’re all in this together.” She highlighted the importance of the “whole system” working together, saying improvements were “everybody’s responsibility”.

The director said: “What can this committee do to help us? A Conservative council, a top Tory council, you can help us by influencing government around funding nationally for hospital discharge and social care, and how we support sick people safely to go into hospital and come out again. Because we don’t want to see elderly people go into long term care when they don’t need to.”

While the government had announced £500million for health care over the winter, she said it was not yet clear how it would be allocated or if it was “truly new money”. Saying she expected the winter to be “extremely challenging”, she added: “It’s very obvious that we’re going into significant and stark problems in our system for people in discharge. I’ve asked [my team] to build, very quickly, a business continuity plan around with winter discharge.”

The meeting heard from **South East Coast Ambulance** and **Surrey Heartlands** representatives about what was being done to improve ambulance handover times. Moving towards electronic patient records, virtual wards and daily meetings were all hoped to help with delayed handovers which were made worse by sicker patients and “systems problems”.

SECAmb’s deputy director of operations **Mark Eley** said he was having to balance offering staff overtime, particularly in the current financial situation, with the risk they might “work too hard, wear themselves out” and go off sick. He said: “Staff are becoming very weary and worn from the last two years, so I’m not pushing too hard because as I increase my overtime, I can increase my sickness if I’m not careful.”

The issues with Frimley Park hospital beds being full “almost all of the time” were also said to be caused by not being able to discharge patients who were well enough to go home.

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County children home challenges

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The challenges facing Surrey County Council’s bid for more children’s homes include high property prices, competition for places and no priority for the authority for homes in the area. Officers outlined plans to nearly double the number of spaces available for Surrey children in the county at a meeting of the children, families, lifelong learning & culture select committee on Tuesday (October 4).

The meeting heard of the authority’s aim to house 80 per cent of its looked after children within the county, a number that in July 2022 was just under 40 per cent. An officers’ report showed that in July, 45 of the 118 children in children’s homes placements were living in Surrey, but this did not include those in residential schools, parental assessment units and in “unregulated” placements.

If these groups were included, then the number was 49 of 147 children in Surrey at that time. Plans to increase the number of children staying in the county would mean increasing the number of beds available by an additional 45 just in children’s homes, or 69 to include all residential provision types.

Currently there are 28 beds in nine children’s homes that are run by Surrey County Council, following the closure of one in February within 24 hours of an Ofsted inspection which said residents were at risk “of significant harm”.
There are also 26 beds available in six children’s homes run by external providers, but not included in total figures are 12 registered beds in two specialist services solely for young people with sexually harmful behaviours.
Councillor Jonathan Essex (Green, Redhill East) asked if there was an option to bring more of the residential services in house at the council, highlighting costs in the report which showed the weekly cost of a placement in a council-run children’s home ranging on average from £3,177 to £4,294. This was in comparison to an average weekly cost in July on the open market of £5,232 per week.

The meeting heard that running children’s homes “wasn’t easy” and that having other providers could mean more support for the authority. Meeting documents show that the council’s intention would be to run the new homes in the first instance, but consideration would be given to working with “trusted and high-quality” external providers. Documents also showed that Surrey faced challenges with its location near to London, which contributed to “increased competition” for beds in children’s homes and some of the highest property prices in the country outside of London.

High costs of living made it hard for new providers to set up in the county which in turn meant “upward pressure to the cost of placements in Surrey”. The county council also does not have priority access to local homes in the area, and other local authorities can refer children to homes in the county in placements which may last for several years. There is also a need to increase the number of places available because of the number of children in “unlawful” placements in Surrey.

Unregulated placements are not subject to Ofsted inspections but the county council is responsible for quality assuring all unregulated provision where looked after children will be placed. As of September 12 2022, there were five Surrey children looked after by the county council and aged under 16 in “unlawful” placements, so called after a change to legislation in September 2021.

Tina Benjamin, the county council’s director – corporate parenting, said: “Unregulated, unlawful placements are not something we ever want to use and we try to do everything we can to avoid them. Unfortunately the national lack of placements sometimes means that we have to.” She said as well as looking for other placements for the children, the authority would work with providers to try to get their Ofsted registration.

Plans to re-purpose £18 million of capital funding to bring about the additional capacity will be brought to the council’s November cabinet meeting.

Housing plan flying in the face of opposition

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Wisley Airfield town plan: We report on a Surrey housing application that illuminates issues all local boroughs face today [Ed.] : To paraphrase from a popular TV show: “Wrong location, wrong location, wrong location.” That’s the message from campaigners against plans for 1,700 homes on the former Wisley Airfield. They say traffic concerns, an abundance of wildlife and trying to fit an urban development in a rural area are all reasons for the plans not to go ahead.

The former airfield is located alongside the A3 and is just over a mile from junction 10 with the M25, where another set of controversial works started this month. It was allocated as a new settlement in **Guildford Borough Council’s** local plan for around 2,000 homes, shops and offices. An outline planning application was submitted to the borough council by **Taylor Wimpey** for the first 1,700 in the summer, and residents have until Monday (October 3) to comment on the plans.

There are so far 168 objections to the outline plans on the borough council’s planning portal and comments received after the deadline will ordinarily also be considered. On a walk around the current site, which was used as an airfield from 1942 until 1972 and still has a tarmac landing strip in the middle, campaigner **Chris Campbell**, from Villages against Wisley New Town, told the LDRS he did not believe a new town should be built there. “Wrong location, wrong location, wrong location,” he said. “Location is everything and as you can see, this is not the location for a town.”

Around the old runway, the site is used as farmland, with two tractors out on the fields on the day of our visit.
We also see several kites in the air, and pass “Snakes Field”, so-called, the campaigners tell me, because there are grass snakes, slow worms and amphibians living there. They’ve also seen badgers and owls on and around the site, and Mr Campbell raises concerns particularly about the impact of an increase in the number of dogs walking through woodland, a special protection area, between the site and the A3.

He said the “last thing” that’s needed for the ground nesting birds on the site, including the Dartford warbler, night jar and woodlark, would be the additional 400 dogs that could come with the new homes.

A suitable alternative natural green space (**SANG**) will be allocated on the site to “avoid adverse effects on the integrity” of the special protection area according to the borough council’s local plan. Taylor Wimpey documents state that the SANG provision is a “bespoke provision agreed with **Natural England**” and that more than half of the site will be accessible open space, as well as a 20 per cent biodiversity net gain on the site.

Frances Porter, chair of Ockham and Hatchford Residents’ Association, walks across the former airfield every day with her dogs. She claimed she was told at a meeting with Taylor Wimpey representatives that traffic calming measures around the new town were designed to “frustrate” motorists out of their cars. But she doesn’t think that people living in the town will be pushed out of their cars. “People haven’t got anywhere else to go,” she said. “You’re going to need a car; you can’t get the bus.”

The borough council’s local plan identifies requirements for the site including a “significant bus network” going to Effingham Junction and/or Horsley stations, as well as Guildford and Cobham. It would also require a cycle network to key destinations including stations, Ripley and Byfleet “to a level that would be attractive and safe for the average cyclist”.



Frances Porter, Imogen Jamieson And Chris Campbell of Villages Against Wisley New Town. Credit Emily Coady-Stemp

Imogen Jamieson, vice chair of Ockham Parish Council, does not think the narrow roads surrounding the site can

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support the additional traffic, and isn't convinced cycle lanes would be used anyway. She said: "You're not going to pack your three children onto the back of bikes and cycle them to Horsley to get to school in the pouring rain." The parish councillor also said she believes it's a "myth" that so many new homes are needed, though she does acknowledge that there is a need for places for people to live. She said the environmental impacts of building new homes are far greater than re-purposing and retrofitting existing buildings, which can be done in towns and urban areas.

On top of the plans for the airfield, a further 1,500 new homes are planned in a three-mile radius of the site, but Mrs Jamieson said homes would be better built in areas where there are already transport links, employment opportunities and facilities such as doctors and schools. She said: "Here you're entirely reliant on a car. It's positioned right by the strategic road network. So it's going to mean that people are constantly in their cars trying to access everything." She claimed there was an over-allocation of homes in the local plan, which came to light when the census released in June showed the figures used to draw up the plan were too high. "I'm still trying to understand the way housing is delivered in the country," she said. "I think it's a bit of a myth that we need homes in the way that we're constantly told we do."

A Taylor Wimpey spokesperson said: "The former Wisley Airfield is allocated for development in the Guildford Borough Council local plan and our proposals have been carefully considered following close engagement with key stakeholders and the local community. We understand the concerns of local residents regarding traffic and our proposals include a number of measures to encourage the use of sustainable transport options, including new bus services and cycle routes. The design and layout of the development has been considered with the surrounding area in mind and we will continue to consult with residents on this as our plans progress."

Guildford Borough Council was contacted for comment.

Local plan documents: https://www.guildford.gov.uk/localplan/2015-2034
Wisley Airfield development page: https://www.wisleyairfield.com/

Image: Wisley Airfield plans. Credit Taylor Wimpey and Vivid

Tongham Tories Tetchy Tongues Ticked Off

11 October 2022



Epsom and Ewell Times's inspiration, "**The Guildford Dragon**" was a victim of inappropriate comments from two Guildford Councillors. Report from LDRS:

Two Guildford councillors breached the authority's code of conduct in calling a journalist "pea-brained" and "grubby". A hearings sub-committee of the borough council on Tuesday (September 27) concluded that one member should apologise for the remarks and another should face formal censure.
In a series of events described by the investigating officer as "unfortunate" and "regrettable" that it could not have been resolved earlier with an apology, the meeting heard about emails and WhatsApp messages sent by Councillors **Paul Spooner and Graham Eyre.**
The councillors, both Conservative representatives for **Ash South & Tongham**, were accused of sending emails and messages about the editor of local news website the **Guildford Dragon**. Its editor, **Martin Giles**, complained to the council about their comments and the committee heard from the investigating officer that the facts in the case were "straightforward and not particularly in dispute".

Simon Gaucher, a partner at **Weightmans LLP**, had looked into the communications and interviewed those involved in the case, which centred around a story about Cllr Spooner being elected the Conservative group leader on the council in June 2021. The committee found that the councillors had breached the council's code of conduct regarding treating others with respect and in terms of councillors conducting themselves in "a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or the Council into disrepute".

Cllr Spooner said in the meeting he disputed the fact he was acting in his capacity as a councillor, saying these were conversations held in a private forum, and there was a grey area in this respect. He asked the meeting: "If I go and I order a curry from the local tandoori and the proprietor greets me as: 'Hello Councillor Spooner', does that mean that I'm acting as a councillor or acting as someone collecting a curry for the family?"

In his report on the issue, Mr Gaucher said he had considered Cllr Spooner's article 10 right to freedom of expression and particularly political expression "which is afforded a high degree of protection". He added: "**Mr Giles** is a journalist writing about and commenting on political matters so must be expected to receive a certain amount of comment on his reporting by those he reports about. However, the comments made by Cllr Spooner which I have found to result in a failure to comply with the code are merely personal and abusive ("So you can get stuffed" and "pea brained editor") and cannot be categorised as political expression."

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He said the same considerations applied in Cllr Eyre's case when he called Mr Giles a, "grubby little boss" in an email to one of the site's reporters, David Reading. The meeting also heard that the context for the emails and WhatsApps was Mr Giles contacting the late councillor Richard Billington, at a time when he was ill, to corroborate what he had been told by Cllr Spooner, and a typo in a message which seemed to call Cllr Spooner untruthful.

The report stated: "Cllr Spooner had indicated that one of the reasons he was so angry about Mr Giles's behaviour was because he had chosen to contact Cllr Billington despite knowing he was seriously ill. This may provide a degree of context and mitigation it does not justify Cllr Spooner's response."

Cllr Eyre, who was not present at the sub-committee, told the LDRS before the meeting: "I don't believe I was in breach of the code of conduct because I sent the email from my private email account and it contained thought to someone I had known for years." Cllr Spooner made clear in the meeting he would not apologise to Mr Giles or the Guildford Dragon, and on this basis the committee decided he should be subject to formal censure.
He will also be sent a formal letter of advisement about his conduct.

Cllr Eyre will be sent a formal letter of advisement about his conduct and asked to apologise to Mr Giles.
A borough council spokesperson said before the meeting: "Councillors are routinely reminded of their duties at committee meetings. They are reminded to disclose any interests they may have in respect of matters to be considered. We review our code of conduct at least every four years. The next review is due following the borough council elections next year. Councillors complete training that we arrange for them on a regular basis. The next training is due to take place in October 2022. We endeavour to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by our Councillors."

Speaking after the meeting, Mr Giles said the messages sent by Cllr Spooner had come about because he had been clarifying information he was given, when "journalists are often criticised for not checking or double-checking facts".

Epsom and Ewell not stung by this Surrey debt scandal

11 October 2022



Three Surrey councils are owed a total of £30million by a council which has seen the government intervene in its borrowing problems. The government announced this month that after "serious concerns about the financial management" at Thurrock Council, neighbouring Essex County Council would be brought in to take control.
The Bureau of Investigative Journalism revealed a total of £138m of public money was unaccounted for, with questions raised over the Essex council's borrowing and investment in 53 solar farms.

Three Surrey councils have loaned money to Thurrock Council, with **Waverley, Spelthorne and Guildford** borough councils each having invested £10m in the troubled council.

A Guildford spokesperson said lending between local authorities was a "common practice" and that the risk rating of the debt had not changed since the government's intervention. Spelthorne and Guildford are both due to have the debt repaid in 2023, with Waverley's money due to be paid back in January and March 2024, because it is two separate loans of £5m.

Essex County Council will take full control of Thurrock's finances and has powers to see if there are failures elsewhere to mitigate any further risk to services. Guildford's lead councillor for finance Cllr Tim Anderson (Residents for Guildford and Villages, Clandon & Horsley) said the authority had invested £10m with Thurrock Council from March 2022 until March 2023, at a rate of 1.35% per cent.

He confirmed the council had also loaned more than £40m to eight other local authorities, including £10m to the London Borough of Croydon, which issued a section 114 notice, effectively declaring itself bankrupt, in November 2020.

The other loans are £5m to Birmingham County Council, Derbyshire County Council, Somerset West & Taunton, Gravesham Borough Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and Cherwell District Council, and £2m to South Somerset District Council. Cllr Anderson said: "A council has never defaulted on a local authority investment.

"Councils are required, by law, to produce a balanced budget, and if they can't their chief finance officer may, as a last resort, have to issue a s114 notice. "The notice suspends all new expenditure with the exception of statutory services including schools, adult care and safeguarding until the council agrees a robust recovery plan. "If a revised balanced budget cannot be approved, then external auditors and central government may decide to intervene and impose an action plan to resolve the financial issue."

Spelthorne confirmed two loans of £5m each are due for repayment in January 2023. A spokesperson said no further loans

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had been issued and the agreed terms and conditions and risk assessment still applied.

They added: “It is important to note that government will underwrite ability of councils to meet their liabilities and there is no indication to show a different approach is being taken now, therefore, the monies will be repaid.
“In terms of low levels of credit risk councils rank only after sovereign governments.”

Waverley Borough Council did not wish to comment further, but a spokesperson confirmed two loans had been made to Thurrock Council of £5m each, one with a maturity date of March 2024 and the other of January 2024.
Then local government secretary Greg Clark MP said in a statement on September 2: “Given the serious financial situation at Thurrock Council and its potential impact on local services, I believe it is necessary for government to intervene. “I strongly believe that when a council gets into difficulties its local government neighbours should be the preferred source of help in turning it around. I know that Essex County Council possesses the expertise and ability to help its local government neighbour. Working together, I believe the councils can deliver the improvements local people expect and deserve.”

Surrey County Council and the remaining districts and boroughs confirmed they did not have any outstanding lending with Thurrock Council. Thurrock Council did not respond to a request for comment.

County Town to charge congestion?

11 October 2022



Not an Epsom and Ewell report but Guildford’s ambitions may signal a local future? [Ed.]

Congestion charge could be coming to Guildford as the council looks at ways to reduce traffic and raise money to support sustainable travel. As part of wide-ranging plans for the town centre, including more than 2,000 new homes, opening up the area around the river and overhauling the one-way system, officers are also starting to look at the options for some form of charge to drive into the town.

A meeting of the borough council’s executive on Thursday (September 22) approved £3m to be moved into the relevant budget for the next stage of planning to begin. The meeting heard that more had to be done to encourage businesses to set up and stay in the town, and more measures needed to be taken to protect from flooding.

Council leader Cllr **Joss Bigmore** introduced the range of consultants at the meeting as “a number of very expensive people” who would talk through the plans as they currently stand. All works will go through the usual planning stages at the borough council. **Andreas Markides**, from independent consultancy Markides Associates, told the meeting a lot of work had been done to gather data on how people were travelling to the town and where from, using car parks, traffic surveys and mobile phone data.

He said many elements would be considered including improved cycling and walking in the town, a better park and ride service and the consideration of “some form of congestion charging”. Mr Markides added: “I don’t know at this stage what form that will take, there are dozens and dozens of different forms. “But I think that would be a very good way of not only deterring car traffic to come into the town, but also to get money that we can put towards more sustainable measures.” He said the next step was to work on traffic modelling plans with Surrey County Council and looking at the whole town.

The basics objectives of the plans were as follows according to Mr Markides:

Getting rid of the one way system because two-way roads mean slower traffic and more attention paid to pedestrians;
Opening up the riverside to the town centre, “cutting out” a lot of existing roads “so that the the town centre can roll down to the river as required by the master plan”;
Removing some traffic lanes to give priority to cyclists, pedestrians and buses;
Maintaining access to all key destinations in the town such as the bus station, train station and car parks.

Families ‘in limbo’ as SCC fails on school transport

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Nearly 150 families have been left “in limbo” and facing additional stress without school transport as Surrey County Council deals with more than 500 applications. The authority said “urgent” steps were being taken to deal with the backlog, described by one councillor as a “tsunami” of cases.

Image: Aimee James and her son Isaac.

One single mum on Universal Credit is paying around £10 a day to take her son to school by public transport, and claims she has not had it confirmed by the council when she will be reimbursed. Aimee James’s son, Isaac, is in his first year at Gosden House School for children with learning and additional needs.

She told the LDRS she had transport approved by the county council in June for Isaac, but before the August bank holiday, just days before the start of the school year, received an email to say it would not be available for the start of the school year but with hopes it might be by the end of October.

While she said the school have been understanding about the difficulties she faces, having to drop her other child at school in Woking and then come back to Guildford to get a bus to the school, Isaac is still doing shorter days because she “can’t be in two places at once”.

No confirmation of when reimbursement will come Miss James said she only has a couple of hours in the middle of the day before she has to turn around and do the journey again for pick up. She added: “It’s really stressful because I’m a single parent, and I don’t drive. I’m also on Universal Credit, so trying to get him to school is a real pain.” Her son, who has autistic traits, is “not brilliant” on public transport and Miss James said the transition has not been an easy one for him.

While the council has confirmed it will reimburse those who are out of pocket while waiting for transport to be arranged, Miss James said she hasn’t had confirmation of when this money will come in. She added: “At the minute, life on Universal Credit isn’t brilliant anyway. Because I’ve got to spend out before they reimburse me, I’m sort of skint before they give me my money back.”

A spokesperson for the county council said “complex and significant challenges” and a 20 per cent increase in the number of applications for transport on last year were leading to the delays. They said staffing resources had been increased and temporary financial allowances were being given to allow families to make alternative arrangements where possible.

‘I’ve never seen it like this before’ Councillor Nick Darby, Residents’ Association and Independent Group Leader on the county council, said he’d heard of several cases from residents and also from other councillors. He described it as like a “tsunami” of cases, and said he had never seen it like this before. He’d heard of children who simply couldn’t go to school, others whose parents had taken most of the day out of their jobs to do school runs, and children who were “hugely stressed” at the lack of routine.

He called for better communication from the council with parents and councillors, saying because many of these cases related to children with additional needs, it was “very difficult and challenging” for the parents concerned.

Cllr Darby said the council was “just not delivering what we should”, and of the lack of communication with families, said: “Just ignoring it doesn’t do us any good.” ‘I’m crying a lot, because I’m so emotional’

Another parent who has been juggling multiple school runs is Claire Nash, whose daughter Justice is currently attending a mainstream school but awaiting a place at a specialist school.

Her school taxi was cancelled last school year but Ms Nash said it should have then been extended until July 2023, because of the circumstances she faces in trying to get her four children, three of them with additional needs, to school.

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Mum of four, trying to sort transport for her youngest, Justice, who is 6, but SCC have left her in the lurch. Claire Nash with daughter Justice (6). photographer byline Darren Pepe.

Having emailed the council on September 6, she is yet to hear back at the time of writing, and is currently getting her daughter to school late every day after taking her eldest two children to school and then waiting for a mini bus to take her son to his school. She said: “I’m so stressed out, my life is very stressful anyway, but I’ve lost sleep over it. “I’m crying a lot, because I’m so emotional. It’s extra stuff I just don’t need. My life’s already hard and I have to fight for the things that should just be easy to get considering my circumstances.”

A Surrey County Council spokesperson confirmed that as of September 20, there were 529 school transport applications being processed, of which 196 were received before the start of the academic year.

There were 149 families who had had their eligibility confirmed but had not yet had transport scheduled.

These families had been offered temporary financial allowances in order to make alternative arrangements.

As well as this, there are currently 141 families going through an appeal process for school transport, which the spokesperson said the independent appeal team were working through at an increased rate in order to process them as quickly as possible.

The spokesperson said they could not comment on any individual children, but the council “would like to sincerely apologise to anyone experiencing delays” with their applications. They added: “As with many services nationally we are dealing with complex and significant challenges, particularly with driver shortages in some areas. “We are concerned about the delays some families are facing and are taking urgent steps to address this by increasing staffing resources and offering temporary financial allowances to enable families to make alternative arrangements, where possible. We are determined to do everything we can to support children and young people that need us most. We know how important it is for children and young people to have access to their education setting and we are working tirelessly to manage increased demand and address issues.”

Surrey Police’s ‘nervy’ moments before Queen’s funeral

11 October 2022



Surrey Police chiefs have revealed the “nervy” moments they had ahead of the Queen’s funeral passing through the county. While the operation “went very well” from the force’s perspective, those high up did admit to underestimating just how many people would show up along the streets as the coffin passed through on its way to Windsor.

Superintendent Graham Barnett, the silver commander for the operation in Surrey, said in a press briefing today (September 20) this was one of “the very few events that has never happened” on this scale and in our lifetimes.

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He said contingency resources and several partners all working together were important on the day, from Surrey Fire and Rescue, Surrey County Council, as well as the borough and district authorities and the National Trust way finder volunteers around Runnymede.
The coffin passed through 6.2 miles of roads in Surrey on its journey to Windsor, on a route that was planned "with the public in mind" to allow as many people to bid farewell to the monarch as possible.
Supt Barnett said his most "nervy" moment was when the procession passed Town Lane on its way into Staines, when people wanted to get forward and see the coffin.
He added: "I was under no illusion that Staines was going to be busy, that the A308 was going to be busy, Runnymede meadows of course can cater for huge numbers of people.
"So we were aware. Even I underestimated quite how many people would come out to show their respects, and I will be the first to put my hand up and say there was a couple of nervous moments for me as people increased."
He said all contingency resources were "pushed in" to support the lining of the route.
Supt Barnett added: "The reality is, we were always expecting large numbers. But I was surprised at quite how large and what a fantastic turnout we had from the public of Surrey, and further afield of course, to see Her Majesty off."
He confirmed there were no reported anti-monarchy protests in Surrey, with all public engagement being "very supportive" both towards officers and in terms of taking "one last chance to be involved in something so historic".
The "clear steer" given to Supt Barnett from Chief Superintendent Jerry Westerman was that giving resources for the event could not affect "business as usual" for the force.
He said officers worked longer days and cancelled days off to play their part and that resources were only allocated after ensuring the usual needs of the public could be met, and then increasing that by ten per cent.
Chief Supt Westerman confirmed no national debrief had as yet taken place, only a "hot debrief" which looks at immediate issues after the event.
He added: "This operation, from our perspective, went very well. But we can always learn lessons and improve.
"And where it goes well, it's equally important that we make sure that in future events, it goes well."
He added that there would always be some form of "Operation Bridge" in place, the name given to arrangements made for funerals of the Royal Family, and so a debrief with other partners was important to make sure they were always ready for the next one.
The force's Chief Constable Gavin Stephens had taken on the role of the Commander of the Civil Services Contingent and so was pulled away from his usual policing duties in Surrey to be part of the central London ceremonies.
He said he had to "put his faith" in the "brilliant" team in Surrey as he went "off-grid" as the force lead.
Chief Constable Stephens said the events on the day were all about "discipline and following instructions", with all participants knowing what their role was and sticking to it, whether lining the route, in the middle of a procession or monitoring crowds.
He added: "It's the combination of everybody following their individual instruction that makes it look like such a spectacle."

New Surrey home for young with mental health needs

11 October 2022



A £10million mental health unit which will allow young people to be treated nearer to home is under construction in Charlwood. The new facility will have 12 beds for young people aged people between 12 and 18 years old, providing in patient care for those with acute mental health needs.

Funding for the unit has come in the form of around £6m from NHS England as part of a national programme to make sure specialist services are available for the needs of local populations, and £4m from private company Elysium Healthcare.

The mental health unit will prioritise young people in Surrey and, where possible, across other south east regions. It will be built and managed in a partnership between Elysium Healthcare and Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, a provider of mental health, learning disability and drug and alcohol services for people of all ages across Surrey, Hampshire, Croydon and Sussex.

According to the trust's website, when completed the unit will provide, for the first time in more than ten years, inpatient care in Surrey for young people with acute mental health needs, closer to their home and community.
On the site of April Cottage, Farmfield Drive, which was previously owned by Surrey and Borders, the facility will have 12 inpatient beds for young people as well as communal living and outdoor spaces to encourage socialising and independence.

There will also be an on-site school for the young people to continue with their schooling during treatment.

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Graham Wareham, chief executive of **Surrey and Borders**, said the trust was please to be partnering with Elysium Healthcare to “transform the care experience for young people needing inpatient services in Surrey.”
He added: “Young people need to be cared for close to home when they are at their most vulnerable with acute mental health needs. The opening of this new unit will help us provide care and treatment for many young people, so they get the support they need without having to travel far from their families, carers, and friends.”
J**oy Chamberlain**, chief executive officer of **Elysium Healthcare**, said the project would “create a new benchmark for the future”. She added: “I am delighted that Elysium and Surrey and Borders Partnership are collaborating on this joint venture. We are bringing together expert knowledge, clinical acumen, innovation, and capital to deliver the best care for the young people of Surrey.”

The facility is due to open at the end of 2023.

Containing the Problem. A lesson in enforcement.

11 October 2022



Keeping with our current focus on planning matters. Woking Borough Council contain the container problem of a posh hotel. Read Local Democracy Reporter Emily Coady-Stemp’s report here.

A Surrey mansion hotel has been given three months to remove from its land two shipping containers being used for storage. Gorse Hill Hotel, near Woking, applied for a lawful development certificate for the containers in January but the application was refused.

Image: Gorse Hill Hotel. Credit: Darren Pepe

The containers, which according to council documents are being used to store tables, chairs and other hotel equipment, have been in place for more than three years.



The shipping containers Gorse Hill Hotel faces enforcement action over not removing. Credit: LDRS

A meeting of Woking Borough Council’s planning committee on Tuesday (September 6) voted to issue an enforcement notice saying the containers must be removed.

The hotel and conference centre, in Hook Heath Road, is described on its website as “an elegant mansion house hotel [in a] peaceful location, surrounded by expansive manicured gardens”. The Grade II listed building, which was once private house, was built in 1910 and has since been extended. Bed and breakfast at the hotel starts at £124 per night.

The borough council first received a complaint about the two containers in December 2021. Both the neighbour complaining and the hotel’s own subsequent application for the containers said they have been in place since May 2019. Each of the two storage containers measures 6m long x 2.4m wide x 2.5m tall.

According to council documents, in its application for the containers in January, the hotel said they did not amount to development, because they were “ancillary to the site’s use”, did not comprise a “building” operation or constitute a material change in use of the land.

The application was rejected by the council because the “degree of permanence” of the containers, along with their size and each being fixed to the ground through their own weight, meant they counted as buildings according to planning legislation, and therefore planning permission was required.

The council’s senior planning enforcement officer visited the hotel on May 16, when the containers were still being used and had not been moved.

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Gorse Hill Hotel has not responded to a request for comment at the time of publication.

Full agenda:

The Edge of development for Elmbridge

11 October 2022



Epsom and Ewell Times has reported recently on planning dilemmas for our Borough. We are not alone in facing pressure on Green Belt land. 2 miles away from the edge of the Borough, Elmbridge Borough Council decided on a Green Belt development. Emily Coady-Stemp reports:

Studios for business start-ups and three new homes have been given the green light at the “gateway to Elmbridge” despite fears for the future of a golf club.

Image: Waffrons proposed development of studios area. From design and access statement.

One councillor claimed others “aren’t concerned” about the borough’s local welfare or green belt as the application was approved.

The application, submitted by the family who have lived at The Waffrons, in Chessington South, for 30 years, will see the current stables on the land demolished.

Surbiton Golf Club objected to the plans due to fears that potential additional traffic to the site, which is accessed through the course, would affect play on its first, fifth and eighth holes.

Elmbridge Borough Council’s planning committee voted for the plans on Tuesday (September 6), having rejected a motion to refuse them that was put forward by Councillor Janet Turner (Hinchley Wood Residents’ Association, Hinchley Wood and Weston Green). She was talked into putting forward the motion to refuse the plans by Claygate Councillor Alex Coomes (Liberal Democrats) who said she should do it “for completeness and for democratic reasons”. Cllr Turner had previously said that listening to the debate she though there was “very little point” in her putting forward reasons for refusal for a vote. She added: “It’s fairly obvious to me that people aren’t concerned about our local welfare or our green belt, so that disturbs me quite a lot.”

Her reasons included it being inappropriate development in the green belt, as well as traffic concerns along the single track lane. Cllr Turner described the site as “very important” because it was the “gateway to Elmbridge from Greater London” and a corridor of green land from Claygate and Hinchley Wood to Long Ditton.

Officers at the meeting said the bar was very high for assessing “harm” in green belt land that was previously developed, as this had been. The three planned houses on the site would all be detached bungalows, with an applicant’s representative stating one of the homes was for the daughter of the family currently living there.

The 11 studios would be from 10 to 19 square metres each, with a communal area around a courtyard. The current use of the land for horses would stop, with commercial livery being replaced by it only being used for the private enjoyment of the new homes. BabyBarn, a shop for baby equipment currently on the site, would stay, with part of the stables being redeveloped for storage.

Keith Blake, chairman of Surbiton Golf Club, spoke at the meeting to object to the plans, which he called the “biggest threat to the future of the club and course”. The club, which has been in existence since 1895, has around 700 members and membership fees of £1,900. Mr Blake said the club did not object to some development of homes on the site, but saw the commercial element as “perhaps a step too far” and that traffic needed to be reduced or limited. He added: “Otherwise, I see the members walking and joining other clubs. “If we lose 20 per cent of our membership, the club will not be in existence for the community in the future.”

An officer’s report into the application said the plans were not “considered to adversely impact upon Surbiton Golf Club to warrant a refusal reason”. Conditions had been put on traffic entering the site both during the construction phases and once in use.

Many councillors were in favour of the small business units, saying they were in demand in Elmbridge and would be even more so when 60 offices in Weybridge were lost as part of a Regus site redevelopment.

Councillor Bruce McDonald (Liberal Democrat, Claygate) said he had “great sympathy” with the golf club and concerns around traffic on the road but like others saw no information to conclude there would be more traffic than currently on the site. He added: “I would have artisan studios everywhere, I think it’s what we need. I think it’d be great for Elmbridge.”

Councillor Rachael Lake (Conservative, Walton North) asked councillors to raise their hands if they had ever heard of a golf course going out of business or bankrupt, because she had not. She added: “I sympathise because it’s all perception. “It’s the fear of going to the dentist, when you get there, it’s nowhere near as bad as you think.”

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Full agenda

Epsom Hospital looks to ‘terrible’ Australian flu season

11 October 2022



Epsom and St Helier hospital staff will be encouraged to get their flu jab after a “terrible” Australian flu season which can be a sign of things to come in the UK.

Among concerns that covid is now “old news” staff will also be encouraged to take their coronavirus booster in a campaign to encourage take-up in front-line staff.

A board meeting of the Epsom and St Helier hospital trust on Friday (September 2) heard that Jacqueline Totterdell, group chief executive of the St George’s and Epsom and St Helier hospitals group, had “nearly died” when she was admitted to hospital with flu a couple of years ago.

She said this experience gave her “a real passion” for making sure people took up the jab.

The chief executive added: “We always look towards Australia for what sort of flu season they’ve had, and they’ve had a pretty terrible one.

“That, for me, is a real driver about how we can encourage more of our staff to have the flu jab.”

Non-executive director Peter Kane raised a concern that coronavirus may be “yesterday’s news” and asked about how staff at the trust would be reminded of the importance of the coronavirus booster and the flu vaccination, which can be given at the same time.

Arlene Wellman, group chief nursing officer, said communications would begin going out to staff and that the best practices would be pulled from both St George’s and Epsom and St Helier trusts.

The two trusts formed a hospital group last year with the aim of sharing and working together on services.

According to the NHS, more people are likely to get flu this winter as fewer people will have built up natural immunity to it during the pandemic.

It can be life-threatening for some people, particularly those with certain health conditions.

The chief executive also confirmed the next board meeting in November would be updated on the trusts’ winter resilience programme, which is already being planned, and included looking at having the capacity to vaccinate all staff.

The coronavirus booster will be offered to certain groups including residents and staff in care homes and front line health and social care workers.

The meeting also heard about staff at St Helier “doing their absolute best” in a hospital building that was often not fit for purpose, with leaking roofs and lifts that were not big enough to fit hospital beds.

In July it was announced that a planned new hospital in Sutton has been delayed to 2027 at the earliest.

Board papers: https://www.epsom-sthelier.nhs.uk/board-papers-and-agendas

Local hospital’s building woes

11 October 2022

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Buildings “Absolutely not fit for purpose”, a meeting has heard as staff at **St Helier hospital** are trying to provide care. NHS bosses were told about a labour ward with a leaking roof, an intensive care ward where temperatures reached 35 degrees and lifts that were too small for hospital beds.

There are also corridors “cluttered” with equipment and staff “doing their absolute best in circumstances they should probably shouldn’t be asked to work in”. The board meeting of the NHS trust which runs the site took place on Friday (September 2) after members had done a walk around of the hospital to inspect first-hand.

It followed the announcement that a new planned hospital in Sutton, which would see the **Epsom and St Helier** sites’ services downgraded, will now not be ready until at least 2027. The trust formed a hospital group with St George’s hospital last year, which it was stressed in the meeting was not a merger between the trusts but a way of working together on services.

Jacqueline Totterdell, group chief executive of the St George’s and Epsom and St Helier hospitals group, had been on a visit to the St Helier site’s gynaecology and maternity wards, including pre- and post-natal and labour wards. The hospital leader said that staff based at the site a pre-fabricated building staff “do pretty well”, despite a lift that is 50 years old, regularly breaks down and “is a real risk”.

Ms Totterdell added: “When it really rains they have buckets and pads down because it rains and there’s not much else we can do with that roof.” While she said there were some issues around staffing, and around sick leave, annual leave and maternity leave, those she spoke to said they worked in good teams and generally enjoyed working. She added: “That’s just the context that they work in.”

Phil Wilbraham, an associate non-executive director on the board, called the hospital’s intensive therapy unit (ITU): “The good, the bad and the ugly”. He said going from the old unit where the beds were too close together and there was little air conditioning and exchange of air was a “massive contrast” to the new area, completed in 2020. Mr Wilbraham said: “When you go to the new ITU, you see how it should be.”

He also said he’d heard about patients being brought into the unit and put in rooms where it was 35 degrees in August, and said in this environment patients couldn’t be expected to recover as quickly as they should. He added: “I would say the staff seemed to be extremely calm, organised and professional. It’s the classic of people doing their absolute best in circumstances they should probably shouldn’t be asked to work in.”

The meeting also heard about “clutter” in corridors and the demands of trying to balance bed space with break rooms for staff and storage at the site. Group chairman **Gillian Norton** highlighted a lot of the “clutter” was actually essential equipment. She said: “The whole discussion just illustrated why we need our new hospital at St Helier. We’re trying to provide outstanding care, which we largely do, but in buildings that absolutely are not fit for purpose.”

The board also heard from **Derek Macallan**, a non-executive director, about a patient who had been in the hospital for six months and not yet been able to be discharged because he was waiting to get his home situation sorted out. Mr Macallan said as well as patients in the renal department not being able to be discharged because they did not have the necessary social care available on release, he too noticed the poor state of the buildings.

In reply, he heard that when discharging patients the hospital trust could be dealing with up to 17 separate district and borough councils because patients extend out into Hampshire and Berkshire.

On the paediatrics ward, **Andrew Grimshaw**, group chief finance officer, saw that specific beds had to be bought to get in the lift, because the generic hospital beds didn’t fit. He said he’d heard from staff that the planned Specialist Emergency Care Hospital in Sutton would solve a lot of those problems and challenges.

Managing director at the trust, **James Blythe**, told a Sutton Council meeting in July the trust was still “waiting for feedback” on the next steps and funding of the project from central government.

Surrey Councils at local plan loggerheads?

11 October 2022

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Spelthorne councillors are “not behind” the authority’s plans for 9,000 homes in the borough, according to a neighbouring council.

An Elmbridge Borough Council response to Spelthorne’s draft local plan also raised concerns surrounding the wording of the plan, which was introduced as making Spelthorne “a less attractive place to live”.

At an individual cabinet member decision making – planning and environmental health meeting on Thursday (September 1), portfolio holder Councillor Karen Randolph agreed the wording of a letter to be sent to Spelthorne Borough Council regarding its local plan, which is currently going through public consultation.

The neighbouring councils have a duty to co-operate on each other’s plans for homes, with Elmbridge focussing its response on the areas of the plan which could have cross-boundary implications for the borough.

Cllr Randolph’s letter said that Elmbridge appreciated there was a “balance to be struck” when preparing a local plan, and that, like Elmbridge’s the Spelthorne plan “centred around place-making and responding to the climate change emergency”.

She added: “However, it would appear that Spelthorne councillors are not behind the draft local plan and have been led by a continued over-emphasis on the perceived requirement that its housing need must be met in full.”

The letter went on to quote Spelthorne’s local plan, for 9,270 new homes in the borough, which said: “Whilst it is appealing to consider producing a plan that does not meet our need in full, this will not be a sound strategy and would be rejected by the Planning Inspector.”

Elmbridge’s local plan went through its regulation 19 representation stage up until the end of July, and will now be sent to the planning inspector for feedback.

A spokesperson for Spelthorne said since June 2020, a ‘collective team’ of officers and councillors from every ward had spent more then 100 hours in task group meetings, and debated the plan at cabinet and environment and sustainability committee meetings.

They said this was to ensure the draft local plan and draft Staines development framework were “the best, most robust and most defensible they can be”.

The letter from Elmbridge said the authority would query how Spelthorne’s approach to meeting its housing requirement was consistent with central government policy, and how, overall, it had been “positively prepared”.

The letter said the plan outlined that development within the town centres would consist of “sterile, high-rise blocks”, something, according to the letter, “that no Councillor wants to support”.

Catriona Riddell was brought in last September by the then leadership at Spelthorne to do three workshops with councillors on developing a shared vision around not just the local plan but working with local communities.

The document she had worked on with councillors was not voted through for inclusion in local plan documents at a full council meeting on December 9, 2021.

Speaking before this week’s Elmbridge meeting, she said in terms of a council’s local plan being “positively prepared”, this would include community responses to consultations, the plan’s approach to growth and its “overall vision for a place”.

She added: “It’s very much about when a local council gets to an examination, they’re sitting there saying: ‘This is the plan we want, this is our plan.

“This is going to make a difference to the local area in a positive way. And it’s ours.’”

The plan releases around 0.7 per cent of the borough’s green belt for development.

The Elmbridge response said none of these were on the boundary of the two authorities, and highlighted Spelthorne considered this to allow the building of family homes with gardens, and lower building heights in Staines.

The response also questioned the release of green belt in Land to the west of Long Lane and South of Blackburn Trading Estate for the building of 200 homes, over sites such as Land to the South and West of Stratton Road, Sunbury and Land off Worple Road, Staines.

The other sites could take 260 and 256 homes respectively, according to the response, which queried that they had been discounted because they may “not aid distribution of development across the borough” and because of negative feedback at a previous preferred options stage.

Cllr Randolph’s letter said: “The approach taken appears inconsistent and that these sites have been discounted on the basis of the reception of the community.”

The Spelthorne spokesperson said: “Between them, the [draft local plan and draft Staines development framework] have been considered by councillors at either cabinet or committee on six different occasions to ensure that members were comfortable with the direction of travel and the progress being made at every stage.

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On May 19, 25 of the 33 councillors at the authority's full council meeting voted to send the plan to public consultation.

The council spokesperson added: "The local plan strategy proposed seeks to meet Spelthorne's housing needs in full and is considered to be a measured approach that takes into account the views of stakeholders and the evidence developed through the local plan process."

Public consultation on the plan has been extended up to September 19.

Spelthorne local plan:

Elmbridge meeting agenda:

Spelthorne December meeting: https://democracy.spelthorne.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=3470

Surrey's Police Chief cracks down on cover-up

11 October 2022



A **Surrey Police officer** who "deliberately concealed" her friend's criminal damage to a car has been barred from policing. The officer told her friend she had put her in "an awkward position", and an accelerated hearing at the force's **Mount Browne headquarters** heard she would be dismissed without notice.

The hearing, in Guildford on August 1, heard that Special Constable 6846 **Leigh Beams** did not report her knowledge of the incident until several weeks later, when she was questioned by her supervisor.

SC Beams was present, though off duty, on April 13 2021, when a friend of hers committed criminal damage to a vehicle – but she did not take any proactive steps to notify police.

Despite being at an early stage of her career, **Chief Constable Gavin Stephens** said he did not believe such a "lack of judgement" was compatible with a continued policing career. He also noted she had "limited experience and basic training, and a previously unblemished record".

"Ms A" has subsequently admitted this offence and received a conditional caution but the initial police investigation was closed due to insufficient evidence, most notably the identity of the offender.

Chief Constable Stephens said: "I consider it to be serious gross misconduct where personal interest was put before public interest, in such circumstances where it was obvious what the consequences would be for the victim.

"In short, the failure to act amounted to a deliberate concealment of relevant evidence.

"I do not believe that such a lack of judgement is compatible with a continued career, including a voluntary one, with policing.

"That is, to continue in policing would declare to others that it is possible to put friendships ahead of justice, and this is clearly not acceptable. You've put me in an awkward position".

In his decision, Chief Constable Stephens said the officer's culpability was "high" because as a "key witness" she made a conscious choice not to report the offence "over a protracted period".

The hearing was told she had recalled a conversation with the offender immediately after the offence had taken place, in which SC Beams said: "I said to her: 'What have you done? You've put me in an awkward position here.'"

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Ms A's response was said to be: "Oh don't worry about it, it's fine, no one will know."

It was May 2 before SC Beams gave any account of the offence, and the hearing was told this only happened due to a complaint being made about her involvement.

SC Beams was not present at the hearing, and was not represented there but Chief Constable Stephens was satisfied the appropriate steps had been taken to give notice of the hearing and allow her to attend.

Chief Constable Stephens had considered a final written warning, given how early SC Beams was in her policing career, but said he did not think it would protect the force's standards or public confidence.

He said: "I accept that the position was awkward for the friendship or relationship, but I do not accept that it was awkward for policing duties.

"That responsibility is very clear to any reasonable person, and I consider that if SC Beams' conduct was known to the public then it would seriously undermine their confidence in the impartiality of policing. Failure to act was 'wrong'". He said that while SC Beams had some insight into her conduct and reflected afterwards that her actions were wrong, he also believed evidence showed SC Beams knew immediately after the offence that her failure to act was wrong.

He added that "she was more concerned about what the implications would be for her friend, who was the offender, and herself".

In his decision, the Chief Constable said the "key aggravating factor" was that the officer "continued to conceal the wrongdoing, even after subsequent discussions on what had taken place". He said SC Beams had recalled in interview a conversation which happened the following day with Ms B, who was also a witness, about how to report or seek advice.

Chief Constable Stephens added: "This continuing concealment is a fundamental lack of judgement required for public service." The hearing judged that she had committed gross misconduct, should be dismissed without notice and would be placed on the College of Policing's barred list.

Chief Constable Gavin Stephens said: "Such actions had the potential to deprive the victim in this crime of justice, and at the same time seriously undermine public confidence in the standards, impartiality, and effectiveness of policing in Surrey."

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