

Godstone’s gasworks fury while sinkhole not fixed

3 September 2025



Godstone residents are up in arms over suddenly announced gasworks on a ‘major cut through’, warning the closures could turn traffic into a nightmare and hit local businesses – all while the High Street’s massive sinkhole still has not been fixed.

The works, due to be carried out by SGN, are set to start on September 29 and could last around 23 weeks. Water Lane has already been closed since September 1 for similar work.

But people say the timing is crazy. Charlie Mayall, who lives on Tilburstow Hill Road, called the plan “bonkers”. “I’m absolutely furious. I’m spitting feathers,” He said. “It’s adding insult to injury.”

“The diversion is going to be at least twice as bad,” he said. “Some of the side lanes aren’t wide enough for two cars, let alone a lorry.”

Things are made worse by claims from councillors that Surrey County Council and Tandridge District Council didn’t know about the works — though SGN insists the project has been in the pipeline for some time and agreed with the authorities.

But residents remain unconvinced, claiming the council should have just told SGN to wait. People aren’t stupid. We understand the gasworks need to be done but they clearly don’t need to be done when the high street is also closed.”

Carol Ward, who lives on the high street, said people feel ignored. She said: “It’s ridiculous — no consultation, no signs, and no proper accountability. People feel walked over,” she said.

She added that local businesses are already struggling, including the Fox & Hounds pub, which has been around since 1603.

“I feel like I’m living on a building site,” Carol said, explaining the village has already put up with a road collapse in the high street. “I think most people have been very very patient ...but there’s a limit to the what people will put up with,”

A Surrey Highways spokesperson said: “We are sympathetic to the concerns of residents... Our Highways Officers are meeting with SGN on September 3 to fully understand the need for their works in Tilburstow Hill Road, their duration and timing. At this stage, only a ‘provisional advanced authority’ has been approved and an official permit has not been granted.”

SGN defended the work, a spokesperson said: “It’s essential we replace these 100-year-old mains to keep gas flowing safely. Delaying the work increases the risk of unexpected interruptions... We’re reviewing with Surrey County Council whether temporary traffic lights could be used instead of full closures.”

SGN says businesses will remain accessible and compensation is available for those affected. Bus services and refuse collections should continue, though residents are advised to check for updates.

Carol Ward on Godstone Green. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

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Surrey police officer barred for domestic abuse

3 September 2025



A former Surrey Police officer secretly got back with his ex while under investigation for behaviour in their relationship – then tried to persuade her to retract a statement, a misconduct panel has ruled.

The officer, referred to as Officer A in the report, was supposed to stay away from his former partner, Ms A, after concerns were raised about his behaviour. But the hearing in July and August 2025 was told he started seeing her again behind the force’s back and even pushed her to withdraw what she’d told investigators.

The panel said it was a clear attempt to interfere with a witness and undermine a formal investigation to the alleged misconduct.

The panel concluded the officer’s behaviour as gross misconduct because he tried to interfere with a live investigation, secretly rekindling a relationship with a key witness and pressuring her to change her statement.

His harassment, aggressive behaviour and invasive social media posts were judged so serious they risked undermining public confidence in the police.

Further incidents of harassment were also proved by the hearing. Ms A said the former officer showed up to her home uninvited and barged his way in, leaving her with bruises, and confronted her in a pub where he made crude remarks in front of others.

Officer A denied contacting Ms A and asking her to retract her statement to the police. He also refuted barging into Ms A’s home.

Investigators also discovered that Officer A had been posting personal and sexualised material on Pinterest- including symbols from their relationship like a fake boarding pass for her birthday trip, yellow tulips (her favourite flowers) and photos of home-made sexual restraint gear.

While not every allegation was proven, the panel ruled that Officer A had broken police rules on honesty, respect and professional conduct, and said his actions were serious enough to damage confidence in the force.

The report read: “We do note that before these matters the former officer did serve the public well as demonstrated by the service record provided. He undertook a difficult and stressful role that required a lot of hard work to achieve and maintain during his career.

“We thank the officer for that service, however this past record would not allow us to impose a lesser outcome, given the serious nature of our findings.”

In terms of mitigating factors, the panel noted Officer A was emotionally distraught at times during the misconduct hearing and was finding matters personally difficult, as confirmed by another officer.

A Surrey Police spokesperson said: “As soon as we were made aware of the allegations involving Officer A, a thorough investigation was carried out by the Force’s Professional Standards Department.

“It was determined that former Officer A would have been dismissed had they still been serving and was placed on the College of Policing Barred List.

“Domestic abuse by any of our officers and staff simply will not be condoned and such allegations against any of our officers or staff are always subject to a thorough investigation by our Professional Standards Department.”

Surrey Police ethics print on wall at Mount Browne HQ. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

Surrey expansion of SEN places

3 September 2025



An ‘Outstanding’ Surrey school could open a new satellite site at another primary- around eight miles away.

Surrey County Council has revealed plans to expand a top-rated school for children with severe learning difficulties. Woodlands School, in Leatherhead, could have a second location at Cranmere Primary and Nursery school in Esher – a mere 25-30 minute drive away.

The move would create up to 28 extra places for children with severe learning difficulties and autism, all of whom have an Education, Health Care and Plans (EHCPs).

Currently Woodlands only has room for 83 pupils – though it has been squeezing in an extra 16 thanks to temporary classrooms.

Meanwhile Cranmere Primary, which has been rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted, has been running under capacity for years because of falling birthrates, council documents state. The building can take 630 pupils, but numbers have dipped enough there’s now space to share.

The part of the Cranmere site earmarked for the expansion will need adapting so it can properly meet the needs of Woodlands pupils, according to reports. The work is said to have been planned to take place over the summer holidays, ready for a gradual roll-out of places from October 2025.

Surrey County Council says the set-up makes sense both for families and the budget. Officers say having local specialist places means children do not have to travel far away to school.

By providing places within the state system, the council’s education bill drops and saves money for the taxpayer. Should these pupils be required to attend an education provision in the independent sector, costs would equate to around £1.484m per year every year. This is compared to the average cost for state-maintained specialist places of £644k.

Staff at the new site will be employed directly by Woodlands School and numbers will grow slowly over time, depending on demand.

The council says the move is part of its wider ambition to increase high-quality specialist school places across Surrey as the number of children with EHCPs continues to rise- with a 10 per cent increase expected over the next five years.

The current stage of the consultation will close on Friday 5 September 2025

Outside Woodlands School, Leatherhead. (Credit: Google Street View)

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No alcohol sales between 3am and 7am rules Epsom licensing committee

3 September 2025



An Epsom corner shop has been given the green light for longer trading hours – but stopped short of being allowed to serve alcohol 24/7.

Ruxley Food & Wine, an off-licence on a busy A-road junction at 427 Kingston Road, applied to extend its alcohol license sales to 24 hours a day. The plan included serving customers via a hatch after 11pm, with Uber Eats and delivery drivers able to collect goods through the window.

But at a meeting on August 13, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s licensing committee agreed to a police-backed compromise: alcohol can be sold until 1am Sunday-Thursday, and until 3am on Fridays and Saturdays.

The store’s consultant told councillors the business had traded without incident for three years. He said crime levels in the immediate area were low with “less than one offence a month” and argued serving alcohol, cigarettes and milk late at night “will not attract a disorderly crowd”.

The consultant explained extending the corner shop’s hours was to attract additional business. Currently the shop can sell alcohol between 8am and 11pm. He said: “Why should members of the public be denied service when most people go to bed at 10pm at night?”

After hearing Surrey Police and the council’s Environmental Health department’s concerns, the applicant decided to reduce its licence application operating hours to 7am-2am the following day Sunday to Thursday, and then 7am to 3am Friday to Saturday.

But at the meeting officers still stressed their worries have not been resolved. Environmental Health officers argued the importance of protecting residents from late-night disturbance and the safety of potential lone shop workers.

Both Surrey police and Environmental Health warned of potential noise and nuisance for nearby residents – those living on adjoining streets or above the parade of shops.

“If you open up later it does open up the area to potential crime and disorder,” said a Surrey Police representative. She argued selling alcohol 24 hours a day or similar will increase the likelihood of such crimes such as anti-social behaviour.

The committee concluded that granting the full hours could undermine the licensing objectives of preventing crime and disorder, public safety, preventing public nuisance and protecting children from harm particularly during weeknights in a residential area.

Image: Ruxley Food and Wine shop on Kingston Road. (Credit Emily Dalton/ LDRS)

Keep our Valley Green say Langley Vale campaigners

3 September 2025



Campaigners in an Epsom village have hit out at proposals to build on “pristine farmland”, warning the plans will destroy a cherished stretch of countryside on the edge of the Surrey Hills. The outline application covers more than five hectares of agricultural farm land at Langley Bottom Farm, adjacent to Langley Vale village. Developer Fairfax Aspire Ltd has envisioned the 5.2 hectare field on Epsom Downs for 110 new homes. Although the exact height, design and layout will be determined later, planning documents suggest the new houses will be predominantly two-storey to eaves.

Dubbed ‘the valley’, locals are baffled that the agricultural field could ever be considered as a grey belt. The land has been classed as ‘low-quality land’ that could be prioritised for development, but residents say the designation is nonsense. “[Grey belt should be] for scrappy old car parks, not pristine farmland,” John Mumford of the Woodcote Epsom Residents Society and Save Langley Vale said. He pointed out the combine harvester in the field and explained it is still being used for agriculture. “We shouldn’t be sacrificing the green belt for land for land-owning interests,” he added. Fairfax Aspire Ltd stated in the application: “The site represents an opportunity for modest, sustainable development on the edge of the settlement boundary.”

The proposed development site sits down the road from Epsom Derby race course and is part of a landscape known for its race horse culture and rich ecology. Matt Dunn, who grew up in Langley Vale, described how buses only visited hourly, and horse riding and jockey training were common pastimes in the close-knit community. He said: “This scheme is tacked on, not integrated into the village.” Planning documents state most of the existing hedgerows and important trees will be retained and enhanced with native planting, with other features including new ecological improvements like wildlife corridors linking to the nearby woodland at The Warren. But campaigners say it is home to deer, badgers, and protected bird species like buzzards and skylarks, and that horse riders, dog walkers and ramblers make frequent use of the fields behind the village.

“It will completely destroy a much loved valley,” Matt said. “Ecology mitigation doesn’t mean anything if it doesn’t change the wrongs and the impact on wildlife.” The dispute comes amid national concerns over habitat loss — in England, the abundance of wildlife species has fallen by around 19 per cent since 1970. Matt accused the developer of trying to “whip up houses which don’t meet local need,” describing the affordable housing element as a “tick-boxing exercise”. The 29-year-old explained that selling houses at 80 per cent of the average Epsom house price (£559k according to RightMove) does not make the homes remotely affordable.

Langley Vale currently has around 400 houses, and campaigners fear the development could swell its size by more than 20 per cent, straining the roads, utilities and services. A new access road would be created on Langley Vale Road to get into the site, but residents warn this could exacerbate traffic issues in their rural community. Campaigners have also launched a petition against the development which has gained more than 1,000 signatures already. Mr Mumford has also set up a fundraiser to help pay for the campaign, gathering £3,700.

Planning documents state: “The opportunity exists for the creation of a high quality landscape and ecology led residential scheme to be provided in this sustainable location. The illustrative material demonstrates how a residential scheme, including new affordable homes, can be delivered without having undue impact on the site’s immediate neighbours, the wider area or key landscape and ecological features. The site is available, sustainable and importantly, deliverable, and will link to Langley Vale and the wider area.” The developer has been approached for further comment.

Related report:

110-Home Scheme at Langley Vale Sparks Green Belt Fears

Campaigners, Matt Dunn (left) and John Mumford (right), in front of the proposed development site. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

LGR and CGR, what’s the difference for Epsom and Ewell?

3 September 2025



Two sets of initials could soon reshape local democracy in Surrey – and in Epsom & Ewell in particular.

LGR - Local Government Reorganisation – is the national government’s plan to abolish the county’s current two-tier system of Surrey County Council plus district and borough councils. In its place, two or three large “unitary authorities” would run services such as bin collections, road repairs and adult social care.

CGR - Community Governance Review – is something different. It is a locally led process that can create, merge or change parish council boundaries, or set up entirely new ones. Several Surrey councils, including Epsom & Ewell, have launched CGRs to give residents a direct say in how their communities are represented at the most local level.

What CGRs Do

A CGR reviews whether the smallest level of local government – parish, town, community or neighbourhood councils – reflects local identities and meets community needs. Councils must consult the public before making recommendations. The aim is to:

- Give growing communities their own voice
- Reflect population changes
- Ensure fairer electoral representation
- Improve local accountability

Changes could mean creating a parish council for a town centre, merging existing parishes, or adjusting outdated boundaries.

Parish councils have elected members, meet regularly, and can run services such as allotments, parks, bus shelters, community centres, street lighting, litter bins, and festivals. They are funded through a “precept” added to council tax – typically a small sum, but dependent on the services provided.

Why Epsom & Ewell Is Doing a CGR Now

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is preparing for the possible abolition of the borough in 2027 under LGR. Its CGR is asking residents whether new parish councils should be created for areas within the borough so that, after the borough council is gone, communities still have a local voice.

The consultation runs until **9 October 2025**.

The LGR Position - Three Unitary Councils Proposed

This week, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council confirmed its support for a proposal backed by nine district and borough councils to replace the current two-tier system with **three unitary councils** – East, North and West Surrey – rather than one county-wide authority.

Council Leader Hannah Dalton said she has been speaking with residents at community events:

“People care deeply about their communities and local areas. They want to know their voice will continue to be heard after the changes to local government take place in 2027. This echoes what we found earlier in the year when... we asked residents to tell us what is most important to them about local government reorganisation.”

A spring 2025 survey found **63% of respondents** preferred three new unitaries, citing local decision-making and understanding of local issues as their top priorities.

The government’s decision on the future structure is expected in **October 2025**.

The Link Between LGR and CGR

While LGR is about creating larger unitary councils to simplify services and save money, CGRs are about ensuring that smaller, more local voices are not lost in the process. In effect, as the top tier becomes bigger, the smallest tier could be strengthened.

Epsom & Ewell’s view is that parish councils would give residents “a direct route to be heard” after borough councils disappear, keeping decision-making about local facilities and neighbourhood priorities close to home.

Have Your Say

Residents can take part in the **Epsom & Ewell CGR consultation** before 9 October 2025. Details are available on the council’s website.

Image shows the three unitary authority solution preferred by most Surrey district councils. Image Waverley Borough Council

Surrey town going to the dogs with 24/7 gambling casino?

3 September 2025



A budding Surrey casino has applied for a 24/7 gambling licence despite local opposition. Golden Slots (Southern) Limited has asked for a 24/7 gambling licence for an adult gaming centre in the former Barclays bank building on Church Street, Ashford.

Spelthorne Borough Council has refused planning permission three times for the gaming centre- but was eventually overruled at appeal in April 2025.

The government planning inspector green lit the scheme but the approval came with conditions: the 24-hour opening hours originally proposed were reduced to 9am-11pm and requirements were placed on sound insulation and managing potential late night disturbances.

The applicant’s agent said: “Irrespective of whether a premises licence is granted to operate 24/7 my client does not intend to breach any planning condition on opening hours.”

The licencing application states “the premises will be open 24/7” and states there is no restriction on opening times for adult gaming centres. According to the council, the adult gaming centre would still have to comply with planning conditions even if a 24-hour licence was granted. The discrepancy regarding opening hours can be dealt with at the sub-committee hearing.

Spelthorne councillors voted to support a national campaign urging the Government to modernise gambling laws at a full council meeting on July 17.

The motion proposed by Cllr Harry Boparai and seconded by Cllr Katherine Rutherford calls for councils to be granted powers to implement stronger safeguards to better protect communities from gambling-related harm and to work with local health and voluntary sector partners to signpost residents to gambling addiction support and education initiatives.

The gambling licence application details an electronic lock will be used between 10pm-8am with the door locked during these hours and opened by a staff member when a customer wants to enter the casino.

The maglock will also be used when the machines are being emptied and refloated when the premises will be closed, the application said.

The application reads: “At least two members of staff working on site at any given time on the basis of a maximum of eight customers, if the numbers increase then an additional member of staff will be used for busier periods.”

Proposed design layouts of the casino show 42 seats around the edge of the premises, including a kiosk/ customer service desk with 20 seats. The number and type of adult gaming machines have not been included in the licence application.

The application also includes a local gambling risk assessment outlining how the operator plans to minimise harm to children, vulnerable people and the wider community.

Mitigation measures include 24-hour CCTV, staff training, a ‘Think 25’ age verification policy and access to self-exclusion tools for customers.

The risk assessment acknowledges the site’s proximity to schools, care homes, ATMs and existing gambling premises but insists there is a low risk of harm because of the proposed safeguards.

The application read: “Golden Slots is an established operator that has held an Operating Licence since January 2016 without any enforcement action taken against it. It operates other sites in Milton Keynes, Haringey, Cricklewood and Northampton.”

Residents can comment on the application on the council’s website until August 27. Police and public health officials can also submit comments.

Plans submitted to turn the vacant bank into an 24/7 adult gaming centre (image Google)

Asylum hotel tension mounts in Surrey

3 September 2025



The leader of Spelthorne Borough Council has again written to the Home Office, demanding the government to abandon controversial plans to use Stanwell Hotel exclusively for single male asylum seekers.

The Home Office announced on August 1 it was temporarily pausing the scheme. But it has not been abandoned.

In her second letter on the matter, this time addressed to the Minister of State for Border Security and Asylum, Cllr Joanne Sexton warned the Home Office there could be “further escalation within the community” if this “urgent and significant” issue is not seen to.

She wrote: “I am writing to you to register heightened community concern over the potential consequences of the proposed changes and the impact they will have on Stanwell Village.”

The renewed letter comes just days after hundreds of people protested outside the hotel near Heathrow Airport. Dozens of signs were held stating ‘Just say no’ and people were chanting outside the hotel.

So far two people have been arrested during the protests, one on suspicion of attempted arson and another on suspicion of “conspiracy to commit violent disorder and aggravated trespass”.

Councillors and Spelthorne MP Lincoln Jopp have also expressed disappointment at the situation, urging the Home Office to listen to the community.

The Home Office have since paused the plans but Cllr Sexton has urged for a meeting to be arranged with herself and the Labour Group Leader, Cllr Jon Button, in whose ward the hotel is located.

In her first letter on July 25, Cllr Sexton had warned the Home Office has caused “alarm” in the community and is completely inappropriate for the area.

She said the decision would undo months of successful integration and was made without any proper consultation with the council or residents.

A Home Office spokesperson said: “The government is reducing expensive hotel use as part of a complete overhaul of the asylum system.

“From over 400 asylum hotels open in summer 2023, costing almost £9m a day, there are now less than 210, and we want them all closed by the end of this Parliament.

“We will continue to work closely with community partners across the country, and discuss any concerns they have, as we look to fix this broken system together. The security of the local communities within which hotels are located will always be our paramount concern.”

Image: Stanwell Hotel protest on July 31. (Credit: Sam Jennings/ Facebook) Permission for use.

A Surrey Council debates its bank’s “support” for Gaza genocide

3 September 2025



Pro-Palestinian campaigners have urged a Surrey council to cut financial ties with Barclays Bank, accusing the firm, of funding what they called Israel’s “genocide of the Palestinian people”. But no formal decision on divestment was made at the meeting.

Simon Higgins, on behalf of West Surrey Palestine Solidarity Campaign, delivered a statement to Guildford Borough Council on July 30, calling for the authority to take an “ethical and moral stand” by divesting from Barclays.

He claimed research shows Barclays holds billions in shares and loans to arms companies whose weapons are being used in Israel in attacks on Palestinians.

“If Guildford Borough Council keeps investing in Barclays, it’s helping fund this genocide,” Mr Higgins said. “This cannot continue.” He added the bank helps the Israeli government raise money by acting as a dealer for its bonds.

Mr Higgins said: “Data obtained by independent research organisation, Profundo has revealed that

- Barclays holds over £2 billion in shares and provides £6.1 billion in loans and underwriting to nine companies whose weapons are being used by Israel in its genocidal attacks on the Palestinian people.
- Investment and financial services to these arms companies facilitates the provision of weapons for Israel’s attacks.
- Barclays acts as a ‘primary dealer’ for Israel’s government bonds, enabling it to raise money to fund its genocidal policies. By investing in Barclays, GBC is aiding this genocide.”
- He said over 700 local people have signed a petition calling for the council to divest, adding both the Mayor of Guildford and the council’s finance lead

have acknowledged the seriousness of the situation.

Responding to the claims, Cllr Richard Lucas, lead for finance and property said he shared Mr Higgins’ horror at what is happening in Gaza, but did not believe the case against Barclays was clear-cut.

Cllr Lucas said: “[Guildford council] share Mr Higgins’ revulsion of what is going on but we don’t think he has made a clear case against Barclays and furthermore we are not in a position to make a detailed judgment on this.

“We’re already moving away from Barclays as part of our wider investment strategy,” he added. “We understand the concerns, but we have to make decisions responsibly.”

He said the research quoted by Higgins contradicts Barclays’ own statements, which say the bank doesn’t use its own money to invest in arms companies and that it pulled out of Israeli government bond deals last summer.

Cllr Lucas also explained how the council’s investment policy works. “We follow national guidelines that tell us to prioritise security and liquidity, and to act as responsible investors,” he said.

The council currently has two investments with Barclays – £3 million in a 95-day notice account (which is already being withdrawn), and £1.5 million in bonds that mature in 2027. Lucas said pulling out of the latter early would result in a significant financial loss.

“We’re already moving away from Barclays as part of our wider investment strategy,” he added. “We understand the concerns, but we have to make decisions responsibly.”

Speaking afterwards, Mr Higgins said: “At the meeting I was shut down and denied a right of reply. This is unfair, undemocratic and unconstitutional.”

Image credit: rawpixel.com CC 1 License details

Male only asylum Surrey hotel “shock”

3 September 2025



A Surrey council leader has said she was “shocked” to learn of Home Office proposals to house exclusively male asylum seekers in a hotel in a village.

In a strongly worded letter to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC) leader Joanne Sexton expressed “serious concerns” regarding changes to plans for The Stanwell Hotel on the villages Town Lane.

SBC said it had previously approved for families and single women to be accommodated at the venue but the new plans would mean relocating the current families and women and replacing them with men.

The Home Office said it wants to close all hotels by the end of Parliament and will “continue to work closely with community partners”.

Cllr Sexton said the existing group of families at the hotel were “integrating well and building community ties. This abrupt change risks undermining all of that”.

In her letter to the Home Office, the leader said the council is “determined to avoid circumstances that could lead to civil unrest”. Describing the potential upheaval as an “adult male intensification”, Cllr Sexton added she is “alarmed about the potential consequences of the proposed changes and the impact they will have”.

A council spokesperson added that, while Spelthorne had a history of supporting asylum seekers including both Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, it still expects to be properly consulted and involved in decisions that significantly impact the local area.

SBC is urging the government to listen to the concerns of the local authority and the community, and is calling on the Home Office to immediately reconsider and consult on the way forward.

A Home Office spokesperson said: “The government is reducing expensive hotel use as part of a complete overhaul of the asylum system.

“From over 400 asylum hotels open in summer 2023, costing almost £9m a day, there are now less than 210.

“We will continue to work closely with community partners across the country, and discuss any concerns they have, as we look to fix this broken system together. The security of the local communities within which hotels are located will always be our paramount concern.”

The Home Office has a legal obligation to support asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute by providing appropriate support, which usually includes accommodation.

Outside of The Stanwell Hotel, Stanwell, Staines. (Credit: Google Street View)