



# Menuhin Hall's Summer Festival Returns for Three Weeks of Music and Community

19 June 2025



The Menuhin Hall, one of Surrey's premier venues for classical music, will once again host its annual Summer Festival from Friday 13 June to Friday 4 July 2025. Set within the tranquil grounds of the Yehudi Menuhin School near Cobham, the festival will feature an exciting line-up of performances by the school's talented pupils, returning alumni and acclaimed guest artists.

Across three weeks, audiences can look forward to a programme ranging from family-friendly events and solo recitals to orchestral and choral works of significant scale and emotional depth. Visitors are invited to bring picnics and enjoy the setting before performances, with generous intervals designed to enhance the relaxed and celebratory atmosphere.

## Programme of Events

### Summer Solos

Friday 13 June and Friday 20 June - Grounds open 5.30pm, Concert at 6.30pm

Sunday 15 June and Sunday 22 June - Grounds open 1.30pm, Concert at 2.30pm

This four-part series highlights the individual talents and musical progress of the Yehudi Menuhin School pupils. Audiences will hear a broad repertoire including Brahms's Hungarian Dances, Tchaikovsky's Valse Scherzo, Lutosławski's Subito, and Chen Gang's *Sunshine Over Tashkurgan*. There will be a 60-minute interval for refreshments and picnicking in the beautiful school grounds.

### Seven Sayings: Triumph

Saturday 28 June - Grounds open 4pm, Concert at 5pm

An inspiring evening featuring Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, described by E.T.A. Hoffmann as "one of the most important works of the time", performed alongside Korngold's Suite for Left Hand Piano and Strings Op. 23.

### Family Day: Pictures at an Exhibition

Sunday 29 June - Activities and food from 1pm, Family Concert at 3pm

Family Day offers a chance for children and their families to explore music in a playful and accessible way. The afternoon includes outdoor games, arts and crafts, and refreshments. A special interactive performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, led by broadcaster and pianist Keelan Carew and ten young pianists, will take the audience on a journey through whimsical musical scenes, from enchanted castles to Baba Yaga's forest hut. The concert is particularly suitable for children aged 3 to 9, though all are welcome.

### Spotlight Concert: Piano Gala

Tuesday 1 July - Concert at 7.30pm

The final Spotlight event of the year showcases the school's finest young pianists performing a programme of Chopin, Debussy, Ravel, Berg and Schubert. Highlights include Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque*, Ravel's *Sonatine*, and Chopin's ballades, recently featured in the Oscar-nominated film *A Real Pain*.

### Leavers' Picnic

Wednesday 2 July - Grounds open 5pm, Concert at 6.30pm

This special occasion marks the final performance by the school's leavers. Works by Ravel, Schumann, Liszt and Kodály will be performed, with a symbolic presentation of musical scores to those moving on. The evening includes a 60-minute interval for refreshments.

### Seven Sayings: Reunion - The Festival Finale

Friday 4 July - Grounds open 5pm, Concert at 6.30pm

The festival concludes with an emotionally powerful programme featuring James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross*, performed by the Senior Orchestra, Chamber Choir, conductor Jonathan Bloxham, and the award-winning vocal collective SANSARA. The second half includes Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* and Tchaikovsky's *Serenade for Strings*, performed by current pupils and alumni.

### Ticket Information

Tickets range from £10 to £28.50, with half-price concessions for under-30s.

To book, visit [www.menuhinhall.co.uk](http://www.menuhinhall.co.uk) or contact the Box Office on 01932 559400 / [boxoffice@menuhinschool.co.uk](mailto:boxoffice@menuhinschool.co.uk).

### About The Menuhin Hall

The Menuhin Hall is an award-winning concert venue located on the grounds of the Yehudi Menuhin School. It is both a professional resource for the school's pupils and a valued part of the local cultural scene, hosting concerts by visiting artists and community ensembles. The hall has been recognised by RIBA and the Civic Trust, among others, for its architectural excellence.

### About The Yehudi Menuhin School

Founded in 1963 by renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin, the school provides an exceptional music education for gifted children aged 9 to 19, regardless of financial background. Alumni include Nicola Benedetti, Nigel Kennedy, Alina Ibragimova and Tasmin Little. Located near Cobham, the school offers a holistic education, with pupils dividing their time between academic and musical studies, and regular opportunities to perform both in the Menuhin Hall and throughout the local community.

For more information, visit [www.menuhinschool.co.uk](http://www.menuhinschool.co.uk).

## Epsom Therapy Garden in the Running for BBC Green Award

19 June 2025



A tranquil corner of Epsom that has quietly blossomed into a hub of therapy and conservation has earned recognition in the BBC Radio Surrey Make a Difference Awards.



St Ebba's Therapy Garden, located on the former cricket ground of the old hospital site, has been shortlisted for the *Green Award*, which honours individuals or organisations that have made a significant impact on their local environment.

Developed through a partnership between Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Surrey County Council, Natural England and Surrey Wildlife Trust, the garden offers a sanctuary for people with complex mental health and neurodevelopmental needs. Many of those who benefit from the garden have found it difficult to engage with more traditional clinical settings.

Now a finalist for the BBC accolade, the garden's blend of therapeutic purpose and ecological design has struck a chord with both its users and supporters. Local businesses and volunteers—including those from a vocational programme for adults with learning disabilities—have also played a key role in shaping the space.

Therapists trained in nature-based interventions use the garden to support individuals coping with anxiety, depression, trauma and other conditions. Designed to nurture both human wellbeing and local biodiversity, the garden includes native hedgerows for birds and hedgehogs, pollinator-friendly plants for bees and butterflies, and sensory features such as grasses and scented geraniums.

A young person who receives therapy at the garden described it as "a nice, relaxed environment," adding, "The garden is a good place for me to calm down. I feel comfortable being there."

One parent shared how the outdoor space had transformed her daughter's ability to engage with therapy. "She loves the outdoors but is often too anxious to leave the house. This is a safe place for her to enjoy and it has hugely improved her wellbeing."

Another parent praised the impact on their autistic son, who volunteered to help build the garden. "He was nervous at first, but came back so proud of what he'd achieved. He's gained confidence—and we're so grateful he had the opportunity."

With the BBC Radio Surrey awards set to highlight community champions across the region, supporters of St Ebba's will be hoping the garden's unique combination of therapy and conservation will earn it the Green Award title.

For more information about the services offered by Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, visit: [www.sabp.nhs.uk](http://www.sabp.nhs.uk)  
Follow them on Twitter: @sabpnhhs or Facebook: [facebook.com/sabpnhhs](https://facebook.com/sabpnhhs)

## Debate Opens on the Future Shape of Surrey's Local Government

19 June 2025



Residents across Surrey are being asked to help shape the future of local government in what is being described as the most significant shake-up in over half a century. A government consultation launched this week invites public views on two competing proposals to reorganise Surrey's local councils into unitary authorities.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is offering two options for reorganisation:

- **A two-unitary model** (East and West Surrey), proposed by Surrey County Council and supported by Elmbridge and Mole Valley.
- **A three-unitary model** (East, West and North Surrey), backed by a majority of Surrey's borough and district councils, including Epsom & Ewell.

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and Chair of the Surrey Leaders Group, is urging residents to take part:

"Residents have consistently told us that they want decisions made by people who know and understand their communities," she said. "Over 60% of respondents to our April survey preferred a three-unitary model. We believe it delivers better services, stronger accountability, and a future that works for every part of Surrey."

The government consultation runs until **5 August**, and is the only opportunity for the public to influence which of the two options is pursued. Dalton emphasised the importance of local voices in the process:

"We've been assured by the government that every response will be treated equally. This is your only chance to shape how your area is governed for future decades."

The consultation follows the rejection of a third submission from Reigate & Banstead and Crawley Boroughs, which will not proceed.

### Financial Concerns and Woking's Shadow

Both proposals are said to be financially viable, according to Councillor Dalton, but depend on government action to address what she described as "**unrecoverable debt**"—most notably in Woking.

"We welcome the Government's recognition that this debt cannot be managed locally. But we await details on what support will follow after 2026/27," she said.

The issue of Woking's financial crisis looms large in the background, with some viewing reorganisation as an opportunity to draw a line under past mismanagement—but others fear it could result in spreading liabilities more broadly across the county.

### Streamlining—or Complicating?

While the proposals are framed as streamlining governance—abolishing the two-tier system of borough/district and county councils—there is growing concern that new layers may be introduced in their place.

The two-unitary model envisages an **elected Mayor** and a **Strategic Authority** overseeing countywide functions. At the same time, **Neighbourhood Area Committees** (formerly "Community Boards") are being piloted to handle hyper-local matters. In towns like Epsom, where no town council currently exists, discussions have begun around establishing new local councils to fill the vacuum left by a dissolved borough council.

Some commentators have questioned whether the term "unitary" has become misleading in this context—raising the possibility that what was intended as simplification may, in practice, become a **reconfiguration of complexity**.

### Clash of Visions

Surrey County Council's Leader, Cllr Tim Oliver, argues the two-unitary model provides the best platform for efficient services and future prosperity:

"Two unitary councils will simplify services, save money and strengthen communities."

In contrast, EEBC and its allies believe three smaller authorities would be more responsive and rooted in local identity. They also point to stronger alignment with community geography, opportunities for targeted infrastructure growth, and better democratic accountability.

### How to Take Part

The government consultation is open until **Tuesday 5 August 2025**. Residents, businesses, community organisations, and parish councils are all invited to contribute their views.

#### Ways to respond:



- Online: [surrey-local-government-reorganisation](#)
- Email: [lgreorganisation@communities.gov.uk](mailto:lgreorganisation@communities.gov.uk)
- Post: LGR Consultation, Fry Building 2NE, MHCLG, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF
- Paper forms: Available at all 52 libraries across Surrey

Further details and background on each proposal can be found at the **Surrey Local Government Reorganisation Hub**: [www.surreylgr.co.uk](http://www.surreylgr.co.uk)

Related reports:

Surrey's partner organisations support county council plans for local government reorganisation

Surrey Councils launch Local Government Reorganisation engagement

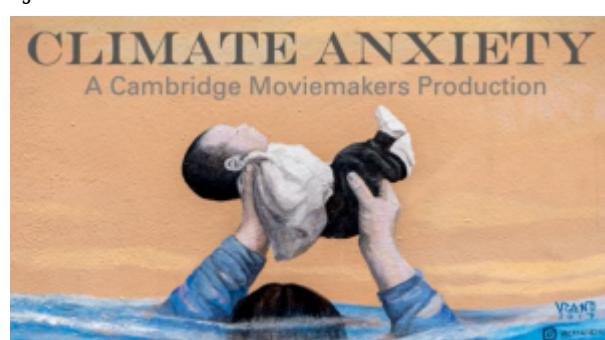
Surrey's BIG debt question in local government reorganisation

Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey: Key Proposals

---

## Green Thinking Takes the Spotlight at Epsom Picturehouse

19 June 2025



*Cinema-goers in Epsom are being invited to watch, reflect, and act, as a national eco-film initiative gains local traction.*

A new strand of community-focused cinema, "Green Screen," has arrived at Epsom Picturehouse, offering audiences more than just a night at the movies. Instead, it aims to foster conversation and local action around the pressing issue of climate change.

Following its Epsom debut on Earth Day earlier this year — hosted by The Woodland Trust and focusing on the conservation of Langley Vale Wood — the next Green Screen event is set for **Wednesday 9th July 2025 at 8pm**, this time in partnership with **Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell**.

The evening features three short films tackling different aspects of the climate crisis. First up is *#ClimateScam?* (40 mins), a documentary from Cornwall Climate Care which addresses climate change denial and misinformation. It's followed by *Climate Anxiety* (17 mins), a film from Cambridge Movie Makers exploring the psychological toll of environmental collapse. Finally, *Plan Z: From Lab Coats to Handcuffs* (23 mins), produced by A2Y Productions, tells the story of scientists who risk their careers and freedom by engaging in direct environmental activism.

But it's not all on-screen. After the screenings, the audience will be invited to stay for a 40-minute panel discussion and Q&A featuring local voices — a doctor, a scientist, an engineer, and a community organiser — all bringing their perspectives to the urgent environmental questions raised by the films.

Joe Stroud of Epsom Picturehouse said:

"We're proud to see Green Screen take root in Epsom. It's a strand that thrives when communities take ownership — the films are the catalyst, but it's the community that brings together their perspectives, expertise, and passion."

The Green Screen series is a nationwide initiative by Picturehouse Cinemas, transforming theatres into spaces of environmental learning and grassroots conversation. Events across the UK have seen audiences inspired to take local action, supported by partnerships with schools, charities, businesses, and environmental organisations.

True to its ethos, the Epsom screening will extend the invitation to connect beyond the credits. Attendees are encouraged to continue conversations in the Picturehouse's meeting space over a free tea or filter coffee — if they bring a reusable cup.

Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell, the local host for the July event, is part of the global climate action movement and is active in local campaigning and awareness-raising through non-violent action and community engagement.

Epsom Picturehouse itself is a relatively new addition to the town, having opened in June 2024. Located in Epsom Square, the six-screen venue blends modern programming with vintage touches and a strong focus on community. Its café-bar offers a menu of pizzas, toasties, cakes and drinks, helping turn cinema visits into a more social, immersive experience.

Anyone interested in organising a future Green Screen event in Epsom is encouraged to contact the venue at [epsom.marketing@picturehouses.co.uk](mailto:epsom.marketing@picturehouses.co.uk).

For more information about the 9th July event, readers can contact Warren Bunce of Extinction Rebellion Epsom & Ewell on **07539 069659** or by email at [epsomewell@extinctionrebellion.uk](mailto:epsomewell@extinctionrebellion.uk).

---

## Epsom and Ewell Youngsters Join Thousands for Day of Outdoor Adventure

19 June 2025



*Over 2,000 Beaver Scouts and Rainbows take part in Surrey's Bazzaz event*

Young adventurers from Cuddington, Epsom, Stoneleigh, and Ewell were among more than 2,000 Beaver Scouts, Rainbows, and volunteers who gathered at Merrist Wood in Guildford last weekend for *Bazzaz* — Surrey's flagship activity day for 6- to 8-year-olds.

Held every three years, *Bazzaz* offers a rare opportunity for children to immerse themselves in over 100 action-packed activities, ranging from caving and rock climbing to tomahawk throwing, circus skills, go-karts and inflatable obstacle courses. The event aims to build confidence, teamwork, and resilience through fun and challenge.



Despite soaring temperatures, participants were well-prepared with sun hats, sunscreen and plenty of water. A midday highlight was an unexpected treat as the **Red Arrows** flew overhead, returning from the King's Birthday celebrations in London.

Feedback from the young participants was as bright as the weather:

"I had lots of fun and I liked the train ride," said Sam, aged 7, from Epsom.

"Caving was the best because it was challenging and I made a new friend," added Matthew, 7, from Guildford.

Emily, aged 5, from Woking, said: "It was awesome! I enjoyed climbing because I haven't tried that before."

Milly, 6, from Haslemere, shared: "I liked making my dad a Father's Day card."

And Noah, 7, from Banstead, summed it up simply: "I liked doing all the activities with my friends."

The event was supported by an army of adult volunteers, without whom such experiences would not be possible. Richard, a Beaver Scout leader from Surrey, said: "It was a brilliant day for everyone. Some activities were pure fun, others focused on building #SkillsForLife — all of them gave the children something special to take away."

## About Beavers and Rainbows

**Beaver Scouts** (ages 6-8) and **Rainbows** (ages 5-7) are part of the UK's long-established Scouting and Girlguiding organisations. Together, they offer thousands of children a safe and inclusive environment to learn through play, develop life skills, and enjoy the outdoors.

Nationally, the Scout Association offers over 200 different activities — from abseiling to coding — supported by more than 100,000 volunteers. But demand continues to outpace capacity, with nearly 30,000 young people currently on waiting lists across the UK.

To find out more about volunteering with Scouts in Surrey, visit [surrey-scouts.org.uk](http://surrey-scouts.org.uk)

---

## Queen of Dictionary Corner Brings Word Magic to Epsom

19 June 2025



*Epsom Playhouse set to host a celebration of the English language on 15 October*

Britain's best-loved lexicographer, **Susie Dent**, is heading to Epsom Playhouse this autumn with her brand-new live show, *Word Perfect* — a joyous celebration of the quirks, curiosities, and hidden histories of the English language.

Best known for her long-standing role in **Countdown**'s *Dictionary Corner* and its comedy spin-off *8 Out Of 10 Cats Does Countdown*, Susie will take to the Epsom stage on **Wednesday 15 October**, promising an evening packed with surprising etymologies, linguistic delights, and audience interaction.

Ever wondered why a group of crows is called a "murder" or why owls form a "parliament"? Curious whether the colour orange predates the fruit? Or perhaps baffled by Gen-Z slang and fearful that local dialects are fading fast? Susie aims to explore these questions and many more in her witty and engaging style.

"**The English language will never stop surprising and delighting me,**" she said ahead of the tour. "It is as wayward as it is majestic, while the dictionary is as full of magic, drama and adventure as you will find anywhere. I can't wait to walk down some more of its secret alleyways with the *Word Perfect* audiences, and to hear their own questions about our curious mother tongue!"

Following the success of her 74-date tour *The Secret Life of Words* (2018-2024), *Word Perfect* builds on Susie's mission to share the joy of words with audiences across the country. The show is a blend of fascinating facts, storytelling, and humour — all rooted in her encyclopaedic knowledge of English.

In 2024, Susie Dent was awarded an **MBE** for services to literature and education, the same year she published her debut novel *Guilty by Definition*. This autumn will also see the release of her latest books: *Words for Life*, and *The Roots We Share: 100 Words That Bring Us Together*.

Tickets for *Susie Dent: Word Perfect* are on sale now via [nothird.co.uk/susie-dent](http://nothird.co.uk/susie-dent) or directly from the Epsom Playhouse box office.

For more on Susie's work, visit: [susiedent.com](http://susiedent.com)

---

## Epsom born band give birth to first single

19 June 2025



From the parks of Alexandra Rec to the playlists of rock fans across the country, a new local band with deep Epsom roots is making waves with their debut single.

**Penny Rebels**, a blues-rock outfit formed by long-time friends and musicians, are preparing to release their first original track, "*Bad Man*", on **July 1st**. The single, described by the band as "gritty, blues-infused rock with big energy and attitude," marks the culmination of years of songwriting, performing, and musical collaboration.

The band's connection to Epsom is woven into its story. Two of its members grew up in the town — attending local schools including **St Martin's, Wallace Fields**, and **Glyn** — and spent their formative years playing at **Alexandra Recreation Ground**. The group's bass player, a long-time resident of **Ewell Downs Road**, still calls the borough home.

Formed in **Farnham**, Penny Rebels emerged from a shared passion for music among friends balancing work, family, and creative life. "We were in bands when we were younger, but life took over," the band explained. "Now, with more space in our lives, we've returned to music — and we're loving every minute of it."

Their debut single is accompanied by a newly completed music video, available via a private link ahead of the public release. The band has also released an **electronic press kit (EPK)** featuring promotional images and media resources for broadcasters and press.

With all members contributing vocals and a sound described as "originals with soul and grit," Penny Rebels are setting their sights on **festival stages** and **high-energy live performances** throughout the region and beyond.

The band welcomes opportunities to share more about their journey and would be delighted to speak to local media or take part in community music features.



- Website: [www.pennyrebels.com](http://www.pennyrebels.com)
- Instagram | YouTube | TikTok | Facebook: *Penny Rebels*
- Email: [pennyrebelsband@gmail.com](mailto:pennyrebelsband@gmail.com)

Listen to "Bad Man" from July 1st on all major platforms.

## Surrey leaders review spending review

19 June 2025



### Government Spending Review Falls Short for Surrey Councils and Epsom Hospital, Say Local Leaders

The UK Government's latest Spending Review has drawn a mixed reaction from Surrey leaders, with concerns mounting over local council finances and delays to urgently needed hospital upgrades in the Epsom area.

#### Surrey County Council: Welcome Commitments, Ongoing Pressures

Responding to the Chancellor's announcements, Surrey County Council Leader Cllr Tim Oliver acknowledged "important announcements," including increases in core funding for local government, funding pledges for children's services, and a renewed commitment to reforming Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision.

However, Cllr Oliver warned that the headline increase in "core spending power" rests on councils raising council tax by the full 5%—a move that may place strain on households during a cost-of-living crisis. Even with that assumption, county and unitary authorities across England are projected to face a £2.2 billion funding gap next year.

"Whilst our finances have been transformed to a point where we have delivered stable, balanced budgets year after year," Oliver said, "we are not exempt from the financial challenges faced by councils."

Oliver stressed the urgency of the upcoming *Fair Funding Review*, calling for a "fair and proportionate" outcome to ensure long-term stability for local authorities like Surrey.

Locally, the council has invested an additional £15 million into a three-year SEND recovery plan, begun in September 2023, which is reportedly beginning to bear fruit. But Oliver added that the government's announcements stop short of tackling deeper issues. "Provision and support for children with SEND is a systemic issue... and the current system does not work for families, schools or councils," he said.

#### SEND Deficits and Budget Certainty

Perhaps the sharpest criticism came over the government's silence on the spiralling SEND deficits many councils face. Without intervention, these deficits—currently kept off balance sheet—will be formally accounted for from next April.

"Many local authorities, including Surrey, are facing a continuing increase in demand in comparison with levels of funding received," Oliver said. "Councils will soon start planning their budgets for next year and cannot afford to have this can kicked down the road any longer."

#### Future of Local Government in Surrey

The Spending Review did include a continued commitment to *Local Government Reorganisation* (LGR)—a development welcomed by Surrey County Council. Surrey recently submitted a proposal to transition to two unitary authorities, a move that could reshape local government in the county.

"We have worked hard to form that proposal," said Oliver, "to deliver the best possible outcome for Surrey residents."

#### Local MPs Condemn "Missed Opportunity" for Epsom & St Helier Hospitals

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrat MPs for Epsom & Ewell, Carshalton & Wallington, and Sutton & Cheam expressed deep disappointment over the absence of additional investment in the long-delayed redevelopment of Epsom & St Helier Hospitals.

Despite a known £150 million repair backlog, the government has only committed £12 million to date, with the timeline for a new specialist emergency hospital now postponed until 2033 under the Labour government. Local MPs Bobby Dean, Helen Maguire, and Luke Taylor said this continued delay threatens the "very future of our hospitals."

"The Government has missed a massive opportunity to deliver real change for Epsom & St Helier Hospitals," they said in a joint statement. "£12 million is simply a drop in the ocean."

The trio highlighted years of cross-party pressure in Westminster, including Prime Minister's Questions and debates, aimed at securing vital upgrades for the "crumbling" estate. "After 14 years of broken promises, the Government has an opportunity to do better," they added.

#### Rising Council Tax on the Horizon

Further national analysis has added to concerns around the financial implications of the Spending Review for local authorities. Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), noted that while English local government fared "perhaps a little bit better than it might have expected," there is a "sting in the tail": council tax bills are now set to rise at their fastest rate of any parliament since 2001–2005.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves confirmed that councils' *core spending power* will rise by 2.6% annually from next year. However, this figure is based on the assumption that councils will impose the full 5% annual increase in council tax—an option many local authorities may feel compelled to take. "We won't be going above that," Reeves said. "That is the council tax policy that we inherited from the previous Government, and that we will be continuing."

Liberal Democrat deputy leader Daisy Cooper described the overall package as a "missed opportunity," warning that council budgets—especially in areas such as social care—remain "very, very stretched." She added: "The Government is now looking to local councils to put up council tax to plug the gap in these particular areas... We cannot wait. This can't be kicked down the road any longer. The Government has got to act now."

For residents of Epsom and Ewell, the message is clear: whether through delays to vital infrastructure or increasing local taxation, the burden of national decisions may be felt most acutely at the community level.

## Grafton Stables to Remain Green Space

19 June 2025



Grafton Stables in Cuddington, a 13.5-acre green space bordered by residential properties, is set to remain open to the public after Surrey County Council (SCC) confirmed it will be managed by the council's Countryside Team.

Earlier this year, the council placed the land on the market with the potential for housing development—sparking local concerns that up to 40 homes could be built on the site. The move led to significant opposition from residents, local groups and councillors, who argued that the site's mature trees—some protected by Tree Preservation Orders—and its value as a community green space made it unsuitable for development.

Local County Councillor **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington) met with SCC officials to highlight planning restrictions and the importance of the site to the community. "I felt there was a strong case against the sale," he said. "The site is a vital part of our local green space network."

Cuddington Residents' Association, the local sports community at Wandgas Sports and Social Club and other campaigners also put forward an alternative bid to retain much of the green space, alongside limited development to fund its upkeep. Meanwhile, Cuddington Borough Councillors Kim Spickett and Phil Neale launched petitions that attracted more than 1,000 signatures.

In March, a motion was passed at County Hall, calling for SCC to adopt a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy—a process that allows local authorities to transfer land to community groups at less than market value if it promotes social and environmental well-being. With no existing CAT policy at SCC, Councillor Kington's motion cleared the way for Grafton Stables to be considered under such a scheme.

Following discussions, SCC has now confirmed that the site has been withdrawn from sale and will instead be managed as a public green space. Resident Julie Willis, who has lived next to Grafton Stables since childhood, welcomed the decision. "It's an incredible outcome for the community and for the trees and wildlife that call this space home," she said.

No details have yet been released on how the new countryside management arrangements will operate, but residents and community groups are expected to be invited to help shape the future of Grafton Stables.

Related report:

[Shock as Surrey Council Puts Protected Woodland Up for Auction](#)

---

## Redesigning the Surrey skyways?

19 June 2025



### Quicker, Quieter Flights on the Horizon for Heathrow and Gatwick Passengers and Neighbours

Passengers at Heathrow and Gatwick are set to enjoy quicker flights and fewer delays under new government plans to redesign flight paths, aimed at modernising one of the world's busiest airspaces.

Announced on Monday (2 June), the largest overhaul of UK airspace since the 1950s will prioritise London's crowded skies, promising more efficient, direct routes for aircraft. The changes are expected to support expansion at Heathrow and growth at Gatwick, while also cutting delays and noise pollution for communities under the flight paths.

Transport officials say the new UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) will be fully operational by the end of 2025, run by NATS (En Route) plc (NERL). With 2.7 million flights expected this year alone, the new system will help manage soaring demand more sustainably, with fewer planes circling while waiting to land.

Local residents living near Heathrow and Gatwick could benefit from quieter skies, as modernised 'skyways' will allow aircraft to climb more quickly after take-off and descend more smoothly, reducing noise and emissions.

Heathrow's expansion, including its long-discussed third runway, is expected to generate over 100,000 new jobs, while Gatwick is also poised to gain from increased passenger capacity and investment. Aviation Minister Mike Kane said the changes would "turbocharge growth in the aviation industry", with faster and more reliable journeys for holidaymakers and business travellers alike.

Local airports, airlines and residents' groups are watching closely, with officials promising that community consultation will remain central to the process. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) will oversee the implementation, ensuring transparency and evidence-based decisions.

Rob Bishton, Chief Executive of the CAA, said: "Modernising our airspace is key to enabling growth and helping mitigate impacts like noise."

Martin Rolfe, CEO at NATS, added: "We have one of the busiest and most complex airspaces in the world. To maintain our performance as traffic grows towards 3 million flights per year, we have to modernise. UKADS is a crucial step."

Karen Dee, Chief Executive of AirportsUK, called the move "a vital step in making our airspace fit for the 21st century," while Tim Alderslade of Airlines UK said the changes were "long overdue" and would reduce delays, improve resilience, and lower carbon emissions.

The government's plans also pave the way for future air travel technologies such as drones and flying taxis, with London's airspace set to lead the way.

Local residents can expect more information as the CAA and NATS engage with communities to design the new routes, with a full consultation expected by September 2025.

The Department for Transport says it is determined to strike the right balance between economic growth and protecting communities from excessive noise and



pollution.

**Notes to Readers:**

- UKADS will be led by NATS (En Route) plc (NERL).
- Heathrow's expansion plans, including a potential third runway, will benefit from the new airspace design.
- The initial focus is on modernising London's airspace, but future phases could benefit airports nationwide.
- A consultation on the regulatory changes will begin later this year.