

Epsom Station joins app helping visually impaired bus users

8 November 2025



Epsom Station has become one of eight new locations added to a Surrey County Council (SCC) scheme that uses an innovative app to help blind and partially sighted people travel more independently by bus and rail.

Seeing the way through technology

The **Aira Explorer** app connects users by video call to a trained visual interpreter who, using the smartphone's camera, can describe surroundings, read timetables, or guide the traveller safely between a bus stop and nearby rail station. The service is free to use at designated Surrey locations thanks to SCC's allocation from the Government's Bus Service Improvement Fund.

Initially launched in June 2025 at Guildford, Redhill, Staines and Woking bus stations, the trial has now expanded to cover bus stops and interchanges serving Caterham, Dorking, Oxted, Leatherhead, Reigate, Horley, and **Epsom Station and Clocktower**.

Support for independent travel

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said: "We're keen to make bus travel accessible for everyone and hope this expansion will support people to travel confidently and independently. We've expanded this trial to cover more bus stops and rail interchanges to create better and joined-up journeys for people who are visually impaired."

He added that the initiative forms part of a wider programme of investment in the county's bus services, including £6.3 million for ultra-low and zero-emission community transport minibuses, £9 million in bus priority measures to keep services punctual, and £1.4 million to improve passenger information at bus stops.

Backing from rail and disability organisations

Carl Martin, Accessibility Lead at Govia Thameslink Railway, welcomed the expansion:

"We're really pleased to see the expansion of Aira to further bus stops, as it's a vital step in making multimodal journeys more seamless for blind and visually impaired customers."

Clare Burgess, Chief Executive of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, called the scheme "great news" for people living with sight or combined sight and hearing loss:

"Travelling alone when you have a sensory impairment can be a daunting prospect, but having the Aira Explorer App at your fingertips makes independent travel so much easier and less stressful."

Nikki Roberts, Chief Executive of the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, said:

"It's fantastic news that the Aira app coverage has now been extended to twelve locations in Surrey. The app will provide our visually impaired members the support they need to feel much more confident when travelling independently."

A national first for Surrey

When the project began in summer 2025, Surrey County Council became the first local authority in the UK to introduce the app for bus users. It followed the success of a similar partnership between Aira.io and Govia Thameslink Railway to help visually impaired rail passengers navigate station environments.

The trial was originally launched to coincide with Better Transport Week, celebrating initiatives that help connect communities and improve access to public transport.

Ben Curtis from Campaign for Better Transport said at the time:

"Good public transport networks help connect us to the people we love, the things we need and the places that matter. The new Aira app will help ensure that everyone can access and use the county's buses, building a fairer future for everyone."

Making travel more inclusive

The Aira Explorer scheme represents one part of Surrey County Council's wider drive to make sustainable travel options more inclusive and reliable. For residents in Epsom and across the county, it means greater independence, safer journeys,

and a more connected community.

More information about the service is available on Surrey County Council's website.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports:

Bus station app for visually impaired first in Surrey

Free trees for Epsom and Ewell residents

8 November 2025



Surrey residents are being invited to collect free trees later this month, as part of Surrey County Council's drive to plant 1.2 million trees by 2030 - one for every resident.

A total of 4,000 native trees will be given away at community recycling centres (CRCs) around the county, including Leatherhead - the nearest collection point for Epsom and Ewell.

The giveaway will run from 9am to 4pm on **Friday 28 November, Saturday 29 November, and Monday 1 December** at seven CRCs: Chertsey, Cranleigh, Dorking, Earlswood, Leatherhead, Shepperton and Witley.

The closest to Epsom and Ewell is Randalls Road, Leatherhead, KT22 0BA. Tel: 01372 375 479

Each visitor can collect one free small or medium-sized native tree, such as crab apple or hazel, along with aftercare guidance. Trees should be planted within seven days of collection.

To manage demand and avoid disappointment, advance booking is essential. Residents can reserve a date and location online through Surrey County Council's website.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, said: "Our tree giveaways are always popular events, so it's really important that anyone wishing to attend books in advance. By collecting a free tree, you will be helping us with our ambition to facilitate the planting of 1.2 million trees, one for every resident by 2030. Since our pledge in 2019, 768,332 trees have been planted and we couldn't have done this without the ongoing support from schools, communities, businesses and residents, and of course the volunteers who have helped with the planting itself."

She added: "Planting a tree in your garden not only helps us tackle the impact of climate change and improve biodiversity, but you will be part of a Surrey legacy."

Trees help ease the effects of climate change by storing carbon, preventing flooding, and improving air quality and biodiversity. The county council's Tree Strategy aims to ensure the "right tree is planted in the right place" and that young trees are properly cared for as they establish.

For more information or to book a collection slot, visit the Surrey County Council website or email trees@surreycc.gov.uk.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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Epsom Hospital braces for flu spike

8 November 2025



Hospitals serving Epsom, St Helier and St George's are warning of a potentially severe flu season as national data reveals the number of deaths linked to the virus in England more than doubled last winter.

Figures from the UK Health Security Agency show 7,757 flu-related deaths were recorded in 2024-25, compared with 3,555 the previous year. Child deaths rose from 34 to 53 — a 56 per cent increase — while fewer people took up the offer of a flu vaccination.

Last winter, local hospitals faced intense pressure from flu alongside RSV, Covid and norovirus outbreaks, which closed wards and stretched Emergency Departments to capacity. With flu cases now rising again after the school half-term, health leaders fear a repeat.

Chief Nursing Officer for St George's, Epsom and St Helier hospitals, Elaine Clancy, urged residents to act now. "Last flu season was particularly nasty and we're very concerned that this year could be even worse - we're preparing for a spike of flu onto our wards," she said. "We see people dying every year from flu and sadly thousands more will likely this year. I strongly recommend booking your jab now, as it takes up to 14 days to fully kick in."

Local mother Amy Clare, from Sutton, knows how dangerous flu can be. Her five-week-old son Jonah was rushed to Epsom Hospital's Emergency Department with the virus in December 2022.

"What started as a fever quickly escalated," said Amy. "When the doctor told us we'd be spending Christmas in hospital, I was devastated. But he was in the best place to get better. The care we received from the moment we walked into A&E was fantastic - the staff immediately knew something wasn't right and were with us every step of the way."

Jonah was discharged the day after Christmas but continued to receive daily treatment until the New Year. "The care Jonah received saved his life," said Amy.

Pregnant women are strongly advised to have the flu jab at any stage of pregnancy. It protects both mother and baby, but uptake remains low — only around one in three expectant mothers in England were vaccinated last year.

Those eligible for a free NHS flu vaccination include:

- everyone aged 65 and over
- people under 65 with long-term health conditions such as diabetes or heart problems
- children aged two and three, and all primary school children
- some secondary school pupils (Years 7 to 11)
- residents in care homes
- carers and those receiving carer's allowance
- people living with someone who has a weakened immune system
- frontline health and social care workers

People can book or amend their flu vaccination appointment online: [Book, change or cancel a free NHS flu vaccination at a pharmacy - NHS.](#)

Sam Jones - Reporter



Tracing the history of poor relief in Epsom and Ewell

8 November 2025



Residents and researchers in the borough now have enhanced access to a fascinating trove of historic records that shed light on how our local community dealt with poverty, welfare and social care from the early nineteenth century onward.

The system of poor relief in England underwent major changes in the 1800s. Under the “Old Poor Law” (before the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act) each parish vestry was responsible for caring for its poor, sick and destitute residents. After 1834, the “New Poor Law” created groupings of parishes into Poor Law Unions, each with a Board of Guardians and a central workhouse.

In Surrey, the Surrey History Centre holds an extensive guide to Poor Law records, including minute books of the county’s Poor Law Unions. For Epsom, the records of the Epsom Poor Law Union from 1836 to 1930 are now indexed and available for consultation.

The minute books of the Epsom Poor Law Union record meetings of the Board of Guardians, who decided whether applicants should receive relief, be admitted to the workhouse, or be “removed” to another parish. They note weekly expenditure, supply orders, the appointment of staff, and the conditions of inmates.

Poor Law records can also include examination papers, bastardy bonds, settlement certificates, removal orders, and workhouse admission and discharge registers. Together they provide a detailed picture of the social realities of life in Victorian and Edwardian Epsom.

Although today a relatively prosperous borough, Epsom’s history includes many households living on the edge of poverty. The Union’s records allow us to trace how local governance responded to hardship, how relief was funded, and how the population’s needs changed across a century.

Behind the official entries lie the human stories: the widowed mother seeking parish relief, the injured labourer, the orphan placed in a workhouse, or the itinerant worker removed from one parish to another. These records reveal the rhythms of ordinary lives and the community’s efforts to care for its own.

The Surrey History Centre’s page *Poor Law records - minute books* offers guidance and shows that indexes to the Epsom minutes (1836-1930) are now online.

Visit:

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/culture-and-leisure/history-centre/researchers/guides/poor-law-records/minute-books>

Researchers should first consult the online indexes and then contact the Surrey History Centre to view the original volumes, which may require a visit or advance booking.

Tips for local researchers

- Search by parish as well as by name - many cases are listed under the parish of settlement.
- Note that “removal orders” might show a person being transferred between parishes.
- Combine minute books with census or parish registers for a fuller picture of a family’s circumstances.
- Compare relief volumes across decades to identify periods of local economic stress.

With the indexes now online, there is a fresh opportunity for local historians, schools and community groups to explore Epsom’s welfare legacy. Projects could include exhibitions of anonymised case studies, research into patterns of employment and hardship, or school activities exploring the social history of our borough.

The minute books of the Epsom Poor Law Union open a compelling window onto over a century of social welfare practice. By engaging with these records, we can better understand the changing nature of poverty, relief and governance in Epsom and Ewell - and recover the lives of those who, often in quiet dignity, sought help when times were hard.

If you make a discovery of local interest from these records, *Epsom and Ewell Times* would be pleased to hear from you.

For many more events and projects from the Surrey History Centre [CLICK HERE](#)

Sam Jones - Reporter



Epsom Methodist Church launches new Story Club and Warm Wednesdays

8 November 2025



Epsom Methodist Church (EMC) is organising two exciting ventures for local people and families this autumn.

First out of the blocks is a new Story Club for parents and toddlers that is now meeting every Monday morning at 11am in the community café at the Church in Ashley Road, Epsom. Christa Schoeni, an experienced children’s practitioner, is leading 30 minutes of reading, rhyme time and singing for children up to age five. Parents and carers are able to borrow books to read with their children during the week.

“Our aim is to foster a love of reading. With tablets and other electronic devices so commonplace today there is a risk that children miss out on the value of listening, sharing stories with their parents and having their imagination fired by imaginary worlds,” said Christa Schoeni.

And EMC’s Warm Wednesdays starts a new chapter in its life. For a fourth year the church is open every Wednesday starting on 5th November.

Robert Hill commented: “Every Wednesday we provide a warm space where people can come and chat, join in with quizzes and games, enjoy free teas and coffees and a lunchtime snack of hot soup and a roll. On the first Wednesday of every month we have an expert who comes and provides practical help and advice on reducing energy costs and dealing with gas and electricity bills. Surrey County Council has also provided us with some warm clothing and accessories to help stay warm over the winter months and we will be distributing these supplies to local residents.

“Every Wednesday afternoon from 3.30 our warm space becomes an after-school club with craft activities for children and parents and a chance for older children and adults to hone their table tennis skills. We end our day with everyone enjoying a hot meal together cooked by a great team of volunteers.

“As a town centre church, we see it as our role and mission to serve the local community. We love having hundreds of people coming through our doors each day. We hope that Warm Wednesdays will provide a place not just to be warm and get help with staying warm, but a place where warmth also means friendship and a generous welcome.”

30th October 2025

8 November 2025

Council Council constitution News

Epsom and Ewell to Go East in Surrey shake-up



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Epsom and Ewell to Go East in Surrey shake-up

8 November 2025



The Government has confirmed plans to abolish Surrey's two-tier system of local government and replace it with two single-tier unitary councils — East Surrey and West Surrey — in what is being described as the biggest reform of local administration in the county for half a century.

A letter from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Steve Reed MP, sent to Surrey's council leaders on 28 October 2025, confirmed the decision to proceed with the two-unitary model, subject to Parliamentary approval. The change will dissolve Surrey County Council and its eleven borough and district councils, creating two large authorities responsible for all local services.

Under the plan, **Epsom & Ewell** will join Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, and Tandridge to form the new East Surrey Unitary Authority. The remainder of the county — Guildford, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Surrey Heath, Waverley and Woking — will form West Surrey. Each authority will be responsible for everything from waste and planning to adult social care, highways and schools.

Elections for the new shadow councils are expected in **May 2026**, with the new authorities assuming full powers from 1 April 2027, once the required Structural Changes Order has been approved by Parliament.

In a statement issued Tuesday, **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC)** said it “acknowledges the decision of Government to proceed with the creation of two new unitary councils” and pledged to work constructively to secure the best outcomes for residents.

Council Leader **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) said: “Although this is not the decision we had hoped for, our focus now is on supporting the transition in a way that protects our residents’ interests and maintains the quality of local services. Epsom & Ewell has always prided itself on being a well-run, community-focused council, and that commitment remains unchanged.”

EEBC said it would continue working closely with neighbouring councils and government officials and would “keep residents fully informed every step of the way” as plans for the new East Surrey authority take shape.

Three local Liberal Democrat MPs — **Helen Maguire** (Epsom & Ewell), Chris Coghlan (Dorking & Horley) and Monica Harding (Esher & Walton) — issued a joint statement describing the reorganisation as “an important moment of clarity for Surrey after years of uncertainty and financial mismanagement under the Conservatives”.

Helen Maguire MP said she welcomed the new chapter for Surrey, particularly the confirmation that local elections will now proceed: “I am pleased that Surrey is entering a new chapter with the introduction of these unitary authorities, and it is right that the local elections will now go ahead, especially after the delays. The Liberal Democrats have always championed decisions being made closer to the people they affect. We will continue to press the Government to give East Surrey Council the funding and freedom it needs to do its job effectively.”

Her colleague Chris Coghlan MP said he welcomed “the end to Tory mismanagement of Surrey County Council” and added that it was “entirely inappropriate that [the County Council] has such influence over the new structure,” citing its record on special educational needs and disabilities.

Monica Harding MP said Elmbridge residents should not be “expected to shoulder the debt of the failing Tory-run councils elsewhere in Surrey,” adding: “It’s high time residents get the chance to vote out failed Surrey leadership and replace them with those who will deliver for our transport systems, our adult social care, and our schools.”

The MPs said that while they support the simplification of Surrey's structures, there remain serious concerns about how much control Surrey County Council will retain during the transition process. They called for full public consultation and financial transparency throughout.

In his letter to Surrey leaders, Secretary of State Steve Reed MP said the decision to proceed with two new unitary councils was driven by the need for financial sustainability. Across Surrey's existing councils, total debt is estimated at £5 billion, led by the bankruptcy of Woking Borough Council.

He wrote: “In particular, I believe [two unitaries] performs better against the criterion of whether the councils are the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. My view is that the two-unitary proposal is more likely to be financially sustainable.”

He confirmed a Government commitment to repay **£500 million of Woking's debt** in 2026-27 — calling it a “significant and unprecedented commitment” necessary to give the new system a clean start.

Surrey County Council Leader **Tim Oliver** (Conservative) welcomed the decision, calling it “good news for Surrey residents and businesses. We welcome the Government's direction to create two new unitary councils for Surrey from April 2027 - East Surrey and West Surrey,” he said. “Reorganisation and devolution are huge opportunities, and this is good news for Surrey residents and businesses. As expected, there will be elections to the new unitary councils in May 2026. This reform will unlock huge benefits for Surrey, with more powers held closer to communities, stronger local decision-making and turbo-charged economic growth for the region.”

Oliver added that he was “absolutely clear that, throughout this process, our vital work supporting residents will continue – services will be delivered and we will still be here for those who need us most.”

Currently, Surrey County Council runs roads, social care and education, while borough and district councils handle bins, planning, housing and leisure. Under the new model, residents will deal with one council instead of two, which ministers say will make services more efficient and reduce duplication.

Officials have confirmed that council tax rates across the new areas are likely to be “harmonised” over time, though details are yet to be finalised. The Government says the reorganisation will save money and improve accountability, but critics warn that merging larger and indebted authorities could make councils more remote and financially fragile.

For **Epsom & Ewell** — which has existed as an independent borough since 1937 — the coming eighteen months will bring detailed negotiations over staffing, budgets and boundaries as the East Surrey authority takes shape.

If Parliament approves the necessary legislation early next year, the new structure will come into force on 1 April 2027, marking the end of Surrey’s 12 existing councils and the beginning of a new era in local government.

Image: Map illustrating proposed East and West Surrey unitary boundaries. Epsom & Ewell joins Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead and Tandridge in East Surrey. Source: Surrey County Council. Credit SCC

Sam Jones - Reporter



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A former Epsom Long Grove Hospital patient remembered for his pacifism

8 November 2025



Barney Cohen (1897-1970)

By his nephew, Andy Strowman

There is a very quiet cemetery in London — East Ham Jewish Cemetery. You may be the only visitor there apart from the grave workers. Among the rows of stones lies one marked *Barnett Cohen* — the only one there by that name.

Barney, as the family called him, was born in 1897 in Whitechapel. His parents were Milka (Millie) and Hershel (Harris) Cohen, and the family lived at 17 Milward Street, behind the London Hospital. His brothers were Jack and David, his sisters Rachel and Rose. The same house later became my home too, long before I was born.

Barney grew up in hard times. Like so many of his generation, he left school at fourteen and joined the garment trade. He was gentle by nature, a man who never said a bad word about anyone. I think he lacked confidence — something I have inherited too.

When the Second World War broke out, he enlisted. But when faced with the prospect of killing, he refused. He simply could not harm another human being. For that courage — for it was courage — he was punished. He was placed in the guardhouse and later imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs as a conscientious objector.

In prison he suffered terribly. His weight fell to five and a half stone. My grandmother Millie, desperate to save him, sought help from her sisters in North London. Together, they visited a government office, and — as the old East End saying goes — *the brown envelope changed hands*. Only then was he released.

A retired officer once told me what those conditions were like: “You wouldn’t have liked it in there. Tiny cells, no space, noise all night — shouting, banging, threats. We only stepped in if someone started hitting you.”

Barney came out of prison changed. He was nervous, forever scratching, anxious about his work. If he worked beside his brother Jack, he was always asking, “*Is this all right?*”

When I was sixteen, my mother told me that Uncle Barney had endured six sessions of electro-convulsive therapy at **Long Grove Hospital in Epsom** — the same hospital that later held Ronnie Kray. Long Grove closed in 1992, but its shadow remains.

Yet Barney was no shadow. Despite his suffering, he radiated kindness. He loved to make people laugh, performing little magic tricks that delighted us as children. Once, when I was about eight, he came to visit us during his lunch break from the Ellis and Goldstein factory. While he talked to my mother, I quietly bolted the front door so he couldn’t leave. My mother struggled with the latch and he burst out laughing — a moment of warmth I have never forgotten.

He married Dolly, and my mother, then fourteen, was his bridesmaid. Life was not easy for them. Poverty, mental illness, and misunderstanding strain any family, and in those days help was scarce and sympathy rarer still.

Barney once told a story about visiting London Zoo on a Sunday in his best suit. A commotion broke out near the monkey cage; he joined the crowd, only for one of the monkeys to run off and return — to spit a mouthful of water all over his suit. The crowd roared with laughter, and so did Barney. That was his nature — to laugh even when the joke was on him.

He died in 1970, still working, collapsing at his workplace at Ellis and Goldstein in Aldgate. His brother Jack said simply, “He always lacked confidence. If I was sewing beside him, he kept asking, ‘*Is this all right?*’”

Barney’s life was not easy. He came from poverty, fought private battles with fear and illness, and faced the cruelty of others with quiet dignity. But he also gave laughter, love, and gentleness to those around him.

His was the untold story of so many — the sensitive souls caught in the machinery of war, poverty, and misunderstanding. He suffered because he refused to harm others. That is a kind of heroism that seldom earns medals.

When I think of Uncle Barney, I see not weakness but light — the quiet strength of a man who never stopped being kind, no matter what the world did to him.

I dedicate these words to him, and to all who, like him, struggled to fit into life yet gave it more compassion than it ever gave them.

Andy Strowman

Image: Barney at son’s wedding. Barney on right.

You can read many stories of former patients of the cluster of Epsom psychiatric hospitals on the website of The Friends of Horton Cemetery

Ewell’s Sporting Ambition for Gibraltar Rec Hits the Rocks

8 November 2025



£3.1 Million Sports Hub Proposal at Gibraltar Recreation Ground Rejected amid Transparency and Planning Concerns

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R) rejected a proposal to spend £3.1 million of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds on transforming Gibraltar Recreation Ground (GRG) in Ewell into a “Centre of Sporting Excellence” at its meeting on 25 September 2025.

The plan, fully recommended by the CIL Member Working Group (CIL MWG), would have created a multi-sport community hub featuring new and refurbished pitches, floodlit courts, a pavilion extension, solar panels, CCTV, and improved access. The project was recorded in committee papers with an overall criteria score of 8/10 and a best-value score of 2/3.

What Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Is and How It Works

Community Infrastructure Levy is a national charge on new developments designed to fund infrastructure supporting local growth, such as schools, roads, and leisure facilities. In Epsom and Ewell, receipts are divided approximately into:

- 70-80% Strategic CIL for borough-wide projects
- 15-25% Neighbourhood CIL for community-level schemes
- 5% for administration

As of September 2025, the Council reported £6.086 million unallocated Strategic CIL and £1.138 million Neighbourhood CIL.

A Closed Decision-Making Process

The CIL Members Working Group is composed of Councillors. It evaluates and recommends spending of millions, meets privately without publishing minutes or allowing public or press attendance. The group comprises Councillors Neil Dallen (Chair) (RA Town), Alex Coley (Independent - Ruxley), Liz Frost (RA Woodcote and Langley), James Lawrence (LibDem College), Rob Geleit (Labour - Court), Phil Neale (RA Cuddington), Kieran Persand (Conservative Horton), Alan Williamson (RA West Ewell), and Clive Woodbridge (RA Ewell Village). Only summary scoring and recommendations appear in the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting documents, limiting transparency about debates, votes, and possible conflicts of interest.

Open Chamber Debate Highlights

Chair Councillor **Neil Dallen** reminded members that the Gibraltar project still required an additional £500,000 in revenue funding to be considered later and that planning permission was needed before any construction.

Councillor **James Lawrence** opposed allocating £3.1 million now, citing concerns over capacity and linkage to the Local Plan: "This... is the one item that there was a bit of disagreement in the member working group on... Because we had identified... Hook Road Arena would be where we provide a centre of sporting excellence, that was always our plan... This bid kind of came a little bit out of the blue... I happen to not like this bid. I think it's a lot of money... although [Gibraltar Rec] is in need of upgrading, that would only cost about six or 700k rather than 3.1 million."

He warned about risking depletion of Strategic CIL funds: "If we vote for [Gibraltar Rec]... we'll have about 1.6 million left in a strategic CIL fund... it would lower our ability if we need to support Hook Road Arena... particularly because the one in Hook Road Arena will at least be near some big Local Plan development. This... will not be near new developments."

Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) questioned duplication and timing: "I was quite shocked when I saw this... all of a sudden, we're going to have two super sport sites... I think it should wait until the... Hook Road Arena is decided... I'm thinking 3.1 million... Suddenly here, in the face of the local government reorganization... I'm suspicious of the motivations."

On whether GRG would compete with Hook Road Arena, Councillor Dallen said: "It's not an either or... Hook Road Arena... will develop... and Gibraltar Rec can be done in parallel with that, or in advance of that, or behind that... I'm not sure they'd be competing. I think they would be complementary... we're very short of sporting facilities, and the more we can get, I think the better."

Councillor **John Beckett** (RA Auriol) asked: "Will Gibraltar Rec be up and running before Hook Road Arena?" Councillor Dallen responded: "I personally believe it will be... long before anything at Hook Road happens."

Planning officials highlighted that Hook Road Arena is expected beyond the first five years of the Local Plan period, projecting delivery from 2030 onwards.

Governance and Potential Conflicts

Concerns emerged about spending nearly half of the remaining Strategic CIL on a single site and whether Gibraltar Rec aligns with CIL's statutory purpose, which emphasises investment near new developments. The Chair disclosed a personal interest in local scouting just before S&R approved a separate £50,000 Neighbourhood CIL grant to the 3rd Epsom Scouts for a community building rebuild. This expenditure was approved without discussion with Cllr Dallen remaining in the Chair.

The vote on the Gibraltar Recreation Ground Sporting Excellence project was one vote for, two votes against, two abstentions and the Chair not voting.

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village), a keen supporter of the Gibraltar Rec. project, told the Epsom and Ewell Times; "Naturally I was disappointed by the decision, although I accept that the bid did require a large sum of money to be allocated. However I do believe it would have provided a fantastic legacy project for the Borough, addressing for example the shortage of football and cricket pitches, as identified in the Local Plan's Playing Pitch strategy, while providing some exciting new facilities, such as a public Padel court to meet demand for this increasingly popular sport. I

am confident also that it would have leveraged in external grant funding from sporting bodies. Hopefully we can now discuss within the council how to address some of the concerns raised during the S&R committee meeting with a view towards potentially resubmitting a new, and possibly revised bid, sometime next year. The project certainly continues to enjoy my full support, so I will persevere!"

What Happens to the £3.1 Million?

With the recommendation declined, the £3.1 million remains in the Council's Strategic CIL pot, increasing the unallocated balance to about £4.7 million. The funds remain ring-fenced for infrastructure under the Council's CIL Spending Protocol. However, the handling of interest accrued on unspent CIL balances is not disclosed.

Calls for Greater Transparency and Clarity

The controversy highlights debates about whether a private councillors working group should steer multi-million-pound spending without greater public scrutiny. Residents lack access to debates, detailed scoring, or councillor voting records, limiting accountability on how priorities are balanced or conflicts managed.

The broader question remains: should CIL funding follow the locations of new development closely, or should it support borough-wide projects deemed strategically important?

For now, the "Centre of Sporting Excellence" at Gibraltar Recreation Ground remains stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Image: Gibraltar Recreation ground - Google

Sam Jones - Reporter



Walk brings the wonders of the Solar System to Nonsuch Park

8 November 2025



Epsom & Ewell, Saturday 25th October 2025 — Visitors to Nonsuch Park can now enjoy a journey through the Solar System thanks to the successful launch of the Nonsuch Park Solar Walk, officially opened on Saturday in a well-attended community event celebrating science, nature, and local heritage.

The Solar Walk is an engaging, scaled model of the Solar System stretching through one of Epsom & Ewell's most loved green spaces. Each planet is represented by an informative plaque showing its relative distance and size in comparison to the Sun — helping visitors of all ages experience the vastness of space in an accessible and educational way.

Developed in partnership with the Ewell Astronomical Society (EAS), the project combines outdoor recreation with science learning in a fun and interactive way. The EAS provided their astronomical expertise and educational input, helping to bring the concept to life for residents and visitors alike.

"Anyone visiting the park can now experience the scale and vastness of our Solar System whilst enjoying the beautiful surroundings of the historic park," the Society explains on its website.

The launch event saw local councillors, community volunteers, and families take part in guided walks, children's activities, and talks from members of the EAS.

Cllr Steven McCormick said: "The Solar Walk is a fantastic addition to Nonsuch Park — blending education, exercise, and the beauty of our surroundings. It's ideal for families, schools, and visitors of all ages, and it's a perfect activity to enjoy

together this half term.”

The Solar Walk encourages everyone — from young children discovering the planets for the first time to adults curious about astronomy — to explore the park, learn something new, and stay active outdoors. It’s a great way to spend quality time with family and friends during the half-term break.

Nonsuch Park continues to be a cherished green space for Epsom & Ewell residents, offering a mix of recreation, history, and natural beauty. The Solar Walk adds a new dimension for visitors — quite literally — to walk among the planets.

For more information about the Solar Walk, including trail maps and learning materials, visit the Ewell Astronomical Society website.

Space walk launch Nonsuch Park. Featuring Epsom and Ewell Mayor Cllr Robert Leach (2nd from right) and Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Surrey County and EEBC Woodcote and Langley ward)

Is there a neat solution to struggling Epsom Common Club?

8 November 2025



The long-established Epsom Common Club remains closed but not forgotten, as a handful of volunteers continue restoration work and urge fellow members to help decide whether a partnership proposal could bring the venue back to life.

Emails circulated by the Club Committee since late September set out a potential arrangement with **NEAT**, a local community organisation best known for transforming the disused bowls pavilion in Court Recreation Ground into “NEAT HQ”. Founded by two former Chelsea Foundation coaches, NEAT provides wrap-around childcare, alternative schooling for pupils unable to remain in mainstream education, and a wide range of family and youth activities.

Under the plan, NEAT would rent the rear hall of the Club’s premises for use during the week and contribute to finishing both the front and back halls. The Club explains that this could secure a steady income stream, remove the need to rent the front room to outside hirers, and revive the building as a “community hub”. However, it would also mean losing the existing snooker room and restricting member use of part of the premises.

The Club’s emails emphasise that the idea is still a proposal only. “Before it could proceed to this stage it would require members’ consent and this was stressed to NEAT as non-negotiable,” wrote the Club Secretary, Mr C. O’Neil, in response to Epsom & Ewell Times.

Three rounds of consultation emails have been sent to roughly 220 members—about three-quarters of the Club’s recorded list—but only around seven per cent initially replied. Later reminders lifted the total response rate, producing an approximate three-to-one majority in favour of exploring talks, though still short of what organisers regard as a clear mandate.

With no formal committee now in place and the Club being managed informally by the Secretary and one assisting member, progress has been slow. The handful of volunteers who meet on Saturday mornings to carry out repairs are credited with keeping the building from dereliction. “If this idea is allowed to wither on the vine it could well be last orders for your Club,” one circular warned.

Mr O’Neil told the *Times* that if members give approval, formal negotiations would follow to settle details such as rent, permitted uses, and neighbour consultation. Any final agreement would then be put to a members’ meeting for ratification. Questions about parking, noise, and the possible need for planning or licensing changes would be addressed at that stage.

For now, the Club remains closed to new memberships while restoration work continues. “The work is currently being undertaken by a few valiant members and any member wishing to assist would be welcomed,” said Mr O’Neil. Volunteers can make contact via the Club’s email address: clubeventsecwmc@gmail.com.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Epsom Common Club - Google Maps

Surrey SEND place surge - is it enough?

8 November 2025



Surrey County Council has announced the creation of almost 500 new specialist school places for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities during the 2025/26 academic year. The expansion forms part of the council's ongoing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Capital Programmes running from 2019 to 2026.

Of these new places, 169 were ready at the start of the autumn term, with another 298 due for completion by summer 2026. Since 2021, Surrey has delivered over 250 new specialist places each year, supported by more than £211 million in capital investment.

New and expanded schools

Among the projects completed for the current academic year are new or enlarged SEN units at **Epsom Downs Primary School** in Epsom and Ewell, Dovers Green Infant School in Reigate and Banstead, and Guildford County School. Philip Southcote School in Runnymede now benefits from a new teaching block and hydrotherapy pool, while the Fordway Centre in Spelthorne has been completely rebuilt.

Walton Leigh School in Elmbridge has undergone significant refurbishment, and additional projects in Spelthorne and Elmbridge have already been completed this term, including SEN units at Ashford Park Primary and Cranmere School.

Before summer 2026, Surrey expects to complete 40 new places within Carrington School's Specialist Resource Provision and a further 33 at the Woodfield Education Centre in Reigate and Banstead. The largest development, a new all-through Hopescourt SEN School in Elmbridge, will provide 200 places.

Headteacher Alex Burrows said: "We're incredibly proud to be part of the expansion of specialist provision in Surrey. Our new school will give children and young people in the borough the support and opportunities they need to flourish - not just academically, but personally and socially too. We're excited to build a community where every child truly belongs and can take their next steps confidently."

Responding to rising demand

Over 17,000 children and young people in Surrey now have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), a number that has more than doubled in a decade. The county council says its timeliness in completing assessments now exceeds 90%, compared to a national average of 46.6%, placing Surrey in the top 20 performing authorities.

To meet growing demand, the council launched a £15 million recovery plan in 2023 and has since committed a further £4.9 million, increasing staff capacity in statutory SEND services by 74%.

Councillor Jonathan Hulley, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said: "These additional places are a crucial part of Surrey's Inclusion and Additional Needs Strategy. The strategy aims to improve inclusion and outcomes for children with additional needs and disabilities in Surrey, ensuring they can access the best possible education closer to home. To go alongside our unprecedented investment in building new specialist school places, we've invested heavily in our SEND service. We are determined that every child in Surrey with additional needs and disabilities gets the support they deserve."

Continuing pressures

While the council's figures point to record investment and rising capacity, parents, teachers and local MPs have repeatedly raised concerns about the system's ability to keep pace with demand. Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire has called for urgent national action, highlighting the distress families face when children are left without appropriate school placements.

Other Surrey MPs have criticised the escalating costs of private specialist placements and the reliance on out-of-county provision – issues that have driven the county’s dedicated schools budget into deficit. Campaigners have argued that although capital investment is welcome, progress on staffing, assessment backlogs and mainstream inclusion has been slow.

As previously reported by the Epsom and Ewell Times, the county’s £4.9 million recovery package was described by some parent advocates as “a fraction of what’s needed” to fix systemic problems that have built up over years of under-resourcing and policy churn.

National backdrop

Surrey’s challenges mirror those across England. The number of children with EHCPs has risen nationally to more than half a million, with many councils facing multi-million-pound SEND budget deficits. The government’s own review of the SEND system, first announced in 2019, remains only partially implemented, leaving local authorities to balance rising expectations with limited funding flexibility.

For many families in Surrey, the creation of new places represents a long-awaited step forward – but for others, the daily struggle to secure assessments, placements and support continues.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Phillip South Cote School classroom. Credit SCC

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell MP calls for SEND action

Surrey MPs slam SEND profiteers

£4.9 million not enough to solve Surrey’s SEND problems

Sending pupils to Epsom’s mainstream schools

Surrey sent on a U-turn on SEND by MPs

Surrey MPs unite against county on SEND silence.

Epsom and Ewell Harriers return with gold aplenty

8 November 2025



A number of **Epsom & Ewell Harriers** travelled to the beautiful island of Madeira for the European Masters Athletics Championships and returned with a big haul of medals. In total, Harriers athletes brought home seven gold and three silver medals to help GB to its most successful ever championships as the team topped the medal table with 129 gold medals, 20 clear of Germany with France a long way back in third place on 65 golds.

Most of the medals were won in the sprints. Helen Godsell claimed three golds and a silver in the W70 100m, 200m and relays while Anne Nelson was also part of the winning W70 4x100m team. Lisa Boland almost matched Helen with another 100m / 200m double, winning the 200m in a W40 British record of 25.27 seconds and anchoring the W40 team to silver in the sprint relay.

Steve Winder had a busy championships running a total of 37K across four events and capped off an exciting and enjoyable championships with an individual silver and team gold in the M50 Half Marathon on the final day.

Well done to all the Harriers and GB athletes on a memorable championships.

See below for a summary of E&E results and full results here:

<https://data.opentrack.run/en-gb/x/2025/PRT/emacs/>

Helen Godsell W70:

□ 100m 15.34

□ 200m 32.29 (31.94 in Heat)

□ 4x100m GB Team 1st

□ Mixed 4x400m GB Team 2nd

Anne Nelson W70:

100m 6th Final 17.66 (17.48 in Heat)

200m 5th Heat 2 37.31

□ 4x100m GB Team 1st

Stacey Gonzalez W50:

Hammer Throw 10th 36.62

Shot Putt 21st 7.99

Discus 14th 24.47

Steve Winder M50:

3000m s/c 12th 10:58.99

8K XC 10th 30:24

5,000m 17:10.36

□ Half Marathon (GB Team□) 1:18.53

Stuart Flack M50:

1500m 9th Heat 3 4:44.41

Lisa Boland W40:

□ 100m 12.49

□ 200m 25.27 (W40 British Record)

□ 4x100m GB Team 2nd

Ashley Reid M40:

100m 7th Semi Final 12.35 (12.31 in Heat)

200m 3rd Heat 7 25.05

4x100m GB Team 5th

Stuart Flack

The prefix **W** stands for *Women* and **M** for *Men*.

- The number indicates the **age category** of the athlete in Masters athletics (veterans' competition).
- So **W70** means *Women aged 70-74*, **W40** means *Women aged 40-44*, **M50** means *Men aged 50-54*, etc.

These age brackets allow athletes to compete fairly against others of similar age at international Masters events.

Photo: W40 100M final - Epsom and Ewell Harriers YouTube

Since 1890, Epsom and Ewell Harriers has been bringing together athletes of all abilities at its home in Epsom. Whether you dream of breaking records or simply want to stay active, you'll find a place at Epsom and Ewell Harriers. Join [HERE](#)

Heathrow expansion - what it may mean for Epsom

8 November 2025



The Government has launched a review of the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS), which sets out the policy framework for major airport expansion. The key points:

- Aiming for faster progress than the previous ANPS, the Government intends a draft for consultation by summer 2026 and to reach a final planning decision on a third runway within the current Parliament.
- Expansion of Heathrow is being promoted as a boost to UK economic growth, international connectivity and competitiveness — specifically positioning Heathrow as Britain's only global hub airport.
- The review will test any proposed scheme against four criteria: climate change, noise, air quality and contribution to economic growth.
- The Government says it will ask for formal advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to ensure

alignment with the UK's net-zero commitments.

- Financing must be purely private, with no taxpayer cost, and transport access improvements must be covered by the promoters.
- Two promoters remain under consideration: Heathrow Airport Limited and the Arora Group; one will be selected by end November to proceed.
- The Government also flagged wider infrastructure and planning reforms (via the upcoming Planning & Infrastructure Bill) and the establishment of a new UK Airspace Design Service to modernise airspace in the London region.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the Government is “backing the builders, not blockers”, and Chancellor Rachel Reeves added that after decades of false starts, “we are backing the builders to get Heathrow’s third runway built, creating thousands of jobs, boosting growth ...”

Why this matters for Epsom & Ewell

Our borough is already directly affected by aircraft using the London hub airports, and the proposed expansion of Heathrow would likely increase the scale and intensity of that impact.

Flight paths and heights: The borough is within one of the “design envelopes” identified by Heathrow Airport Limited in its previous airspace consultation, meaning more frequent overflights at lower altitudes. Currently some aircraft arrive or depart over the borough at heights of 7,000 to 22,000 ft, averaging around 12,000 ft. Under the proposed expansion there could be flights as low as 3,000 ft and up to 47 arrivals per hour over the area.

Noise and air-quality concerns: The borough’s geography — dense housing, many schools, and a declared Air Quality Management Area — means that increased aircraft at lower altitudes could raise noise, traffic and pollution burdens. The council previously warned of a possible four- to five-fold increase in noise levels in some scenarios.

Community and amenity risk: Residential areas, schools such as North East Surrey College of Technology, and leisure or nature sites like Epsom Common and Horton Country Park could experience greater disturbance.

Airspace redesign: The Government’s plan to modernise UK airspace may change how routes are drawn. This could either reduce or shift impacts on particular communities, but consultation with affected areas such as Epsom & Ewell will be essential.

The opposing case

Environmental and local campaigners have long voiced opposition to expansion.

Climate and emissions: Groups such as Friends of the Earth argue that expanding a major hub airport is incompatible with the UK’s net-zero goals, warning it would lock-in high carbon infrastructure and increase air and noise pollution.

Noise and community disruption: CPRE Surrey has said that the borough could experience up to 47 additional flights per hour at just 3,000 ft, and that such a change would be “unacceptable”.

Consultation concerns: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has criticised the information provided by Heathrow Airport Limited for lacking clarity around flight numbers, heights, and environmental impacts.

Financial and strategic risks: Critics also question whether the economic case for expansion remains strong in a changed post-pandemic aviation environment, and whether cost burdens such as community compensation and infrastructure upgrades have been fully addressed.

Current status

The Government review of the ANPS is underway, with a public consultation on the draft expected in summer 2026. One of the two promoter schemes will be selected by end November.

For Epsom & Ewell, the exact flight-paths and altitude projections are not yet finalised, and detailed new routes are unlikely to be confirmed until around 2027. Airspace modernisation may alter or mitigate local impacts.

What to watch

Residents and councillors should track:

- Future flight path proposals and altitude models over the borough.
- Noise, air-quality and health impact data once new routes are known.
- Community consultation opportunities.
- Any noise-respite or mitigation measures offered.
- The outcome of financial and planning reviews.

In conclusion

The DfT’s announcement marks a major step toward the possibility of a third runway at Heathrow. For Epsom & Ewell it raises serious local questions — more frequent aircraft, lower flights, and possible increases in noise and pollution balanced against potential economic benefits.

Sam Jones - Reporter





Related reports:

[Heathrow expansion reaction](#)

[Surrey village to suffer a lot more Heathrow flights](#)

[Chance for Epsom and Ewell's say on Heathrow flights](#)

[Heathrow shown with a third runway over the M25 \(image Heathrow\)](#)