



## 12,000 years of Surrey history to spring to life

24 July 2025



Fetcham Springs, Surrey - One of Surrey's most important archaeological sites has secured £250,000 in National Lottery Heritage Fund backing to launch a groundbreaking five-year community archaeology initiative.

The Communities at the River: The Fetcham Springs Archaeology Project, led by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU), will uncover over 12,000 years of human history while offering local people opportunities to get involved through volunteering, open days, and educational events.

Thanks to National Lottery players, the funding will expand on discoveries made in 2009 at the site, which revealed evidence of a prehistoric hunting camp dating from the end of the last Ice Age and a high-status Roman building. The new phase of work will explore periods ranging from the Ice Age to the Saxon era.

### Hands-on history for all

The project, developed by SCAU's Community Archaeologist Hannah Potter, includes:

- **Volunteering on live archaeological digs**
- **Public open days** showcasing findings
- **Workshops** including **flintknapping** and even **gladiator training**
- **Visits from Stone Age and Roman reenactors**
- **Free school visits and loan boxes** for educational use

Fetcham Springs, which also holds the Wildlife Trust's Biodiversity Benchmark, is owned by SES Water, who are a key project partner and will help support landscape conservation alongside the archaeological work.

### A legacy for the future

Findings will be shared through a pop-up museum, exhibitions, talks, and online resources, ensuring a lasting educational impact.

Cllr Denise Turner Stewart, Deputy Leader of Surrey County Council and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, said:

"Surrey has a rich and diverse history, and projects like Fetcham Springs help us preserve and share our heritage with future generations. This initiative will provide valuable educational and volunteering opportunities, allowing residents to actively engage with archaeology and deepen their understanding of our county's past."

**Stuart McLeod**, Director for England (London & South) at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, added:

"Projects like this inspire people of all ages to connect with their local heritage. We're proud to support Fetcham Springs, thanks to National Lottery players."

Grace Wood-Lofthouse, Sustainability Manager at SES Water, commented:

"Water at Fetcham Springs has supported life for millennia. This project will help us better understand how to protect our landscapes for the future."

For further details, visit the Surrey County Archaeological Unit website.

Image: Archaeologists at work - Cleaning a Roman wall at Fetcham Springs in 2009

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## Epsom's infamous murders

24 July 2025



Epsom has witnessed several notable murder cases throughout the 20th century. These incidents, though tragic, have become part of the town's history.

Epsom is best known for its racing heritage, Georgian elegance and green Surrey charm — but it also holds its share of darker history. Between 1901 and 2000, the town was the site of several shocking murders that unsettled its sense of peace and left a permanent imprint on local memory. Here are three of the most notable.

### **The 1919 Epsom Riot and the Death of Station Sergeant Thomas Green**

On the night of **17 June 1919**, only seven months after the Armistice, Epsom found itself in the grip of a riot that had little precedent in the town's history. The trouble came not from locals, but from **hundreds of Canadian soldiers** stationed at nearby Woodcote Park Camp. Frustrated by delays in repatriation after the end of World War I, the men — many of them battle-hardened veterans — were increasingly restless.

After one of their own was arrested during an earlier pub disturbance, a crowd of between **300 and 800 soldiers marched on Epsom Police Station**, demanding his release. Violence broke out, and **Station Sergeant Thomas Green**, a 51-year-old veteran officer and father of five, was struck on the head by a wooden post and seriously injured. He died the next day in hospital.

The aftermath shocked the country. Seven Canadian soldiers were tried at the Surrey Assizes. Though the **murder charge was dropped** and replaced by manslaughter, to avoid the risk of the diplomatic nightmare of execution, they were convicted only of **riot** and received sentences of **one year in prison**. But due to diplomatic sensitivities — and the fact that Britain was hosting Canada's forces — most served just a few months before being quietly released.

To this day, Green is commemorated locally. A **blue plaque** marks the site of the incident, and his grave lies in **Ashley Road Cemetery**. The riot remains a rare example of post-war military unrest spilling onto English streets — and one of the town's earliest 20th-century murders.

### **The 1930 Horton Lane Murder of Agnes Kesson**

In June 1930, the peaceful lanes around Horton — home to several psychiatric hospitals at the time — became the scene of a macabre discovery. The **body of 20-year-old Agnes Kesson**, a young Scottish woman working as a waitress, was found dumped in a ditch beside Horton Lane.

Agnes had been living in Epsom while engaged to a man named **Robert Duncan Harper**, a local labourer with a reputation and a nickname: "**Scotch Bob**." Initial suspicion naturally fell on Harper, especially as they were last seen together, and witnesses had allegedly overheard arguments. However, police found **no conclusive evidence**, and Harper was released.

Despite inquiries, door-to-door searches and press appeals, **no one was ever charged** with the killing. The murder gripped the town — not only because of its brutality but because of the location: Horton Lane was a route many walked daily, close to the sprawling mental hospital estates that added their own shadows to Epsom's identity.

Though largely forgotten now, the case remains **unsolved**, and Kesson lies in an unmarked grave. Local historians continue to investigate the files, hoping for fresh insight into what was then one of Surrey's most talked-about unsolved crimes.

### **The 1970 Murder of Ann Smith**

On the morning of January 28, 1970, two stable lads from Treadwell Stables, Noel Flanagan and Roger Harris, were exercising horses on Epsom Downs when they discovered the body of a young woman in a ditch near a footpath between Downs Road and Burgh Heath Road. The victim was partially clothed, and her tights and underwear were found nearby, but her shoes, handbag, and money were missing. She had been strangled, battered, and possibly raped before being transported to Epsom and dumped in the ditch.

The woman was later identified as 20-year-old Ann Smith (née Malone), who had been living in Crokerton Road, Tooting. She was separated from her 19-year-old husband, Thomas James Smith, and had a young son. A team of 40 detectives, led by Detective Chief Superintendent Ken Etheridge, investigated the case. Initially, police considered links to other cases, such as the Hammersmith Nude Murders and the Yorkshire Ripper investigation, but these connections were eventually dismissed.



Despite extensive efforts, the murder of Ann Smith remains unsolved. The case is documented in the National Archives under the reference: "A SMITH: victim of unsolved murder. Body discovered in a ditch on Epsom Downs on 28 January 1970."

### The 1998 Murder of Lee Harris

The fourth is also the most chilling. In the early hours of **4 September 1998**, **Lee Harris**, a 30-year-old man, was asleep in his ground-floor flat on **Rutland Close**, near Longmead in Epsom. Around 1:30 a.m., three masked men forced entry. In a brutal attack, Harris was **stabbed multiple times and shot in the chest**. His girlfriend, who was also home, was unharmed but left traumatised.

Neighbours reported hearing screams and a car speeding away. Police said it appeared to be a **targeted attack**. Harris had no known serious criminal ties, and his family maintained he had no enemies. Despite a large manhunt, interviews with over 100 people, and ballistic and forensic analysis, **no suspects were ever identified**.

The murder of Lee Harris remains **officially unsolved**. It sent shockwaves through a community unused to such violence and still resonates today as one of Epsom's most disturbing modern crimes.

### Final Thoughts

These four cases span different eras and different motives — military unrest, intimate violence, and possibly gang-related vengeance. But they share a haunting link: **none of the perpetrators were ever convicted of murder**. Each case remains incomplete, a story without justice.

Image: Sergeant Green's funeral, Epsom 1919 **public domain**

## Anti-slavery Parliamentarian portrait purchase

24 July 2025



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

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

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

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

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

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



rearing and learned about planting requirements for crops.

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

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

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

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## Surrey house of distinction gets £200K to repair

24 July 2025



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

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

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

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

Pippbrook House (image Google)

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## Surrey talk for those not afraid of Virginia Woolf

24 July 2025



"Mrs Dalloway" at Woking. Celebrating the 100th anniversary of Virginia Woolf's iconic novel from the Lushington Archive at Surrey History Centre

Virginia Woolf's use of members of her own family and close friends as models for her characters is well known. Her father, that eminent of all eminent Victorians, Sir Leslie Stephen was the curmudgeonly Mr Ramsay in *To The Lighthouse* and her mother, the beautiful Julia Jackson, is sensitively portrayed as his long-suffering wife. Other characters in the



novel are drawn from friends who were invited to stay with the family at Talland House where the Stephen family spent their summer holidays. One of those families was that of the lawyer and positivist, Vernon Lushington whose daughter Kitty married newspaper owner Leopold Maxse and became the model for Mrs Dalloway in Woolf's iconic novel.

To celebrate the centenary of the publication of Mrs Dalloway, Dr David Taylor will tell the story of Kitty Maxse and her relationship with Virginia Woolf and other members of her family from the Lushington family archive held at Surrey History Centre. This talk will follow the Surrey History Trust AGM.

Location: Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 6ND.

Date and time: Monday 30 June, 7pm to 9pm.

Tickets: free, register online.

[Surrey History Centre for more news click HERE](#)

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## Farnham Museum repairs hitting £2M

24 July 2025



The cost of repairing "one of the most important buildings in Surrey" has ballooned to nearly £2 million after further setbacks were discovered - with Waverley Borough Council now on the hook for about three quarters of a million pounds.

The Grade 1 listed Farnham Museum has been protected due to the exceptional interest in its rare design. Its listing places it alongside some of the nation's most famous landmarks including Buckingham Palace, Hampton Court and the Cenotaph.

In March 2023, funding for the project was secured after the Arts Council gave Waverley Borough Council a grant of £734,335 for essential repairs to its Wilmer House, Georgian home, in West Street.

The council-owned building had fallen into disrepair with the cash used to address decaying brickwork, its collapsing second floor window arches, and deeply eroded mortar joints.

Further exploratory work uncovered a wrath on additional problems with the budget growing ever since. Senior councillors has described the work as vital to protecting the "extremely valuable building" and that describing its worth in monetary terms "felt a little grubby".

Following the Tuesday, June 3, meeting of Waverley Borough Council, which agreed to set aside an additional £243,000 for the project, the total cost is expected to be £1,720,000 - of which £735,000 will be funded by the council.

Councillor Kika Mirylees, portfolio holder for community services and leisure said: "Wilmer House is a grade one listed building and is extremely rare being one of fewer than 20 buildings of its type..

"As a grade one listed building it sits alongside other somewhat more famous buildings such as Buckingham Palace, Hampton Court, the Tower of London and the Cenotaph. However, as we know, the challenges that come with a grade 1 listed building are not easy."

She added: "The first phase was always going to be one of uncertainty, we knew that, until the scaffolding came down and we saw what was lying behind it. The extra funding we need will be for the parapet wall and the two chimneys, which will make up the majority of the extra funding because we can not leave them as they are."

"Their deterioration is much greater than expected and they were not part of the tendered contract. "Like it or not Waverley has a statutory obligation to carry out the repair work in a timely manner due to planning law and health and safety concerns - and the funding given to us by the Arts Council."

It is expected that the work will take about 18 weeks to complete and will be finished by mid October, the meeting heard. Any delay would have a knock on effect and push the project into the next year, resulting in a third consecutive winter shut down and costing a further £69,000.

Cllr Mark Merryweather, portfolio holder for finance, assets and property added: "When you go up there and have an expert explain to you the history of the building, the skill that went into the original works there, it almost feels slightly grubby to start monetising it, because it is an extremely valuable building."

"But having said that we have to, we are a council, we have a responsibility - not only to our taxpayers, but to Farnham and the borough, and to the nation because this is a nationally important building."

"In our stewardship and custody I am confident it's going to be looked after the way it should. Its disappointing we've



found more work that needs to be doing but no one can say we weren't fully aware of the risk."

Museum of Farnham JT initials (Image Google)

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## News and events from Surrey History Centre

24 July 2025



### Surrey Photographers: A Day of Talks

Join the **Surrey Local History Committee** for a fascinating day of illustrated talks on the history of photography in Surrey. Experts will explore a variety of themes:

- **Keith Harding:** *Victorian Dorking in photographs by Walter Rose & John Chaplin*
- **Nigel Balchin:** *Picture postcards and local history*
- **Jane Lewis and Jill Hyams** (Surrey History Centre): *Portrait of a Surrey town between the wars: the photographic archive of Sidney Francis*
- **Julian Pooley** (Surrey History Centre): *Patient Portraits from Surrey Hospitals, 1850–1980*
- **Chris Shepheard:** *Farnham's war caught by the camera? Photographs that avoided the censor*

There will also be a display of Surrey photographs from the archive for attendees to explore.

#### Event Details

**Location:** Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 6ND

**Date and Time:** Saturday 26 April, 9.55am to 4.15pm

**Tickets:** £18 if booked online via the Surrey Archaeological Society website. £20 on the day (cash only).

[Sign up »](#)

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### VE Day 80 Display

Visit our foyer display from early May to commemorate the **80th anniversary of VE Day**. Featuring photographs, records, and stories from Surrey's VE Day celebrations in **1945, 1995, 2005, 2015, and 2020**, the display highlights personal memories from those who experienced the historic day.

You can also discover records to help trace family members who served in WWII.

All the latest news from the Surrey History Centre [HERE](#)

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## Epsom & Ewell athletics legend remembered

24 July 2025





## Remembering Don Turner: A Legend in Local Athletics

Epsom and Ewell's athletics community is mourning the loss of **Don Turner**, who passed away on Sunday, 9 March. A dedicated member of **Epsom and Ewell Harriers** for an incredible 70 years, Don was not only an accomplished athlete but also a respected official and administrator who left an indelible mark on the sport, both locally and nationally.

Don's career in athletics was nothing short of remarkable. An international-standard distance runner, he completed 65 marathons, but his true talent shone in even longer races. He broke the world record for a six-hour track run in challenging conditions at Stompond Lane, won the grueling Isle of Man TT course race twice, and was part of a Surrey trio who dominated the 1962 Comrades Marathon in South Africa, finishing within the top four.

His dedication to the sport extended far beyond competing. Don was a pillar of athletics officiating, holding key roles within Epsom and Ewell Harriers, Surrey Athletics, the South of England AA, and South of the Thames Cross Country Association. His expertise in timekeeping was widely recognized, and he became a mentor to many officials in the region.

A true pioneer in race technology, Don played a crucial role in introducing photofinish techniques in an era when timing relied on manual stopwatches and wet film processing. He was a key figure in international athletics, including officiating at the prestigious Crystal Palace events and working with Seiko at the Barcelona Olympics test event in 1991.

Perhaps one of his most well-known contributions was his involvement in the founding of the London Marathon in 1981, working alongside Chris Brasher and John Disley to organize the race's finish and timekeeping. Yet, despite these high-profile roles, Don remained dedicated to grassroots athletics. Well into his 80s, he could be found officiating at local youth competitions, including the Ebbisham League at Ewell Track.

**Helen Maguire**, MP for Epsom and Ewell and an Epsom and Ewell Harriers runner, paid tribute to Don's immense contribution:

"Don officiated in many a race I've taken part in during my 14 years running for Epsom & Ewell Harriers. Don also helped start the London Marathon alongside Chris Brasher in 1981. He lived in Stoneleigh. His contribution to the sport of running has been enormous and he will not be forgotten. Thanks, Don, for everything you have done for the sport."

### A Club with a Rich Heritage

Don Turner's legacy will live on through Epsom and Ewell Harriers, one of the oldest and most successful athletics clubs in Surrey. With a membership of approximately 250 athletes of all ages and abilities, the club competes in a range of track and field, cross country, and road running events at regional, national, and even international levels.

The club's facilities include a six-lane track and provisions for high jump, long jump, pole vault, hammer, discus, and javelin training. It is a strong competitor in the Surrey Cross Country leagues, Area Cross Country Championships, and road running events. Additionally, the club actively supports and encourages coaching and officiating qualifications among its members.

Epsom and Ewell Harriers also play a vital role in the local running community, including their well-established link with Nonsuch parkrun, where they frequently provide volunteer support. As a registered charity (number 1187959), the club continues to promote athletics and nurture future generations of athletes.

Don Turner's passing marks the end of an era for Epsom and Ewell athletics. He will be remembered not just for his achievements and contributions but for his unwavering passion and generosity in supporting the sport at every level. The athletics community will deeply miss him, but his legacy will continue to inspire for years to come.

Image courtesy England Athletics

## Geography Squadron celebrates 70 years in Ewell

24 July 2025



In a ceremony held on Saturday 15th March in Ewell the **135 Geographic Squadron Royal Engineers** commemorated their 70th anniversary at **Mercator House** (off Welbeck Close) by unveiling the first Ordnance Survey (OS) benchmark in over 25 years. This event not only celebrates the squadron's longstanding presence in Ewell but also highlights their historic ties with the OS, dating back to 1791.

### A Legacy of Geographic Excellence

Established in 1948, the 135 Geographic Squadron has evolved into a pivotal Army Reserve unit, providing comprehensive geographic support to UK Defence operations. Their expertise encompasses surveying, terrain analysis, and the production and distribution of vital geographic materials. Over the years, squadron members have been deployed to



various operational theatres, including Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Balkans, underscoring their critical role in supporting military operations.

### The Significance of Ordnance Survey Benchmarks

Ordnance Survey benchmarks are physical markers that denote height above Ordnance Datum Newlyn, the standard reference point for elevation in mainland Great Britain. Traditionally etched onto enduring structures like buildings or bridges, these benchmarks have been integral to accurate mapping and surveying. However, with advancements in technology, the maintenance of these physical markers has ceased, making the recent installation at Mercator House particularly noteworthy.

### Ceremonial Unveiling at Mercator House

The unveiling ceremony featured a parade by current squadron members and veterans, symbolizing the enduring camaraderie and dedication within the unit. Nick Bolton, Director General and CEO of Ordnance Survey, officiated the event, reflecting on the deep-rooted connection between OS and the 135 Geographic Squadron. He remarked, "I am proud to unveil such a permanent monument to the deep connection between Ordnance Survey and 135 Geographic Squadron."

The Officer Commanding 135 Geographic Squadron said: "This has been a fantastic opportunity for the Squadron to mark this significant milestone within the community of Epsom and Ewell. It also recognises the remarkable role OS Reservists played in our Squadron's early years and the deep geographic links that exist with OS today."

### A Shared History: OS and Military Collaboration

The relationship between Ordnance Survey and the military is deeply entrenched in history. The OS's origins trace back to the 18th century when Major-General William Roy initiated a detailed survey of the Scottish Highlands, laying the groundwork for modern mapping techniques. This collaboration has persisted through significant historical events, with OS providing essential geospatial data during both World Wars and continuing to support military operations and national resilience efforts in contemporary times.

The establishment of the new benchmark at Mercator House not only honours the squadron's past achievements but also signifies a commitment to ongoing excellence in geographic support. As technological advancements continue to transform mapping and surveying, the enduring partnership between Ordnance Survey and the 135 Geographic Squadron Royal Engineers remains a cornerstone of the UK's defence infrastructure.

This commemorative event serves as a testament to the squadron's dedication and the pivotal role of accurate geographic information in safeguarding the nation.

Image: 135 Survey Engineer Regiment training in the 1950s

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## Surrey's fire ruined mansion restoration plan

24 July 2025



Plans to restore an 18th century house have been waved through. The National Trust has now revealed its designs to restore and refurbish Clandon Park House to celebrate the rich history and legacy wrapped around the building.

The Grade I listed home near Guildford was considered an architectural masterpiece when it was built 200 years ago. But Clandon Park House was tragically gutted by an accidental fire in 2015, destroying the roof and leaving most of the interior with blackened and scorched brickwork.

Illustrative designs show the trust's ambitions for Clandon Park House to become a new national treasure and a defining cultural hub, with space for workshops and social events. Guildford Borough Council unanimously approved the plans last week.

Restoring the inside of the mansion house, the scheme will refurbish and replace windows and doors, reinstating the stairs as well as providing a new accessible lift from the basement to the roof. Generous walkways will be carved out in the mansion house and the scheme promises to conserve historic collections, redisplaying them in creative ways.

Alterations to the basement will provide a cafe, toilets and other back of house bits. The project will restore the exterior of the building to appear as it did before it was engulfed by the fire, planning documents state.

Image: The Marble Hall could be used to hold events for the community. (Credit: Allies and Morrison/ National Trust)



# Jekyll's Ashtead garden plan can no longer hide

24 July 2025



Recently unearthed plans of an **Ashtead** garden, designed by the renowned Gertrude Jekyll, have been donated to the Surrey History Centre.

Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932) of Munstead Wood, Godalming, is celebrated as one of the greatest English garden designers. Though she described herself as an 'artist-gardener,' Jekyll was also a painter, embroiderer, interior designer, author, and photographer. As an early exponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Surrey, her legacy includes significant garden plans, watercolours, photographs, and publications, all held at the Surrey History Centre.

The newly unearthed plans, detailing the garden at Warren Hurst in Ashtead, were thought to be lost but were discovered inside a copy of Richard Bisgrove's book, *The Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll* (1992). They were returned to a former property owner, who brought them to the attention of the Surrey Gardens Trust. The plans have been donated to the Surrey History Centre to enhance its extensive Jekyll collections.

The discovery of these two plans is important. While other plans of Warren Hurst exist in the Gertrude Jekyll Collection at the University of California, Berkeley, and can be accessed through the Surrey Gardens Trust website, these newly found plans offer more detailed evidence of Jekyll's work.

One plan is a tracing made by the house architect, Percy Leeds, to communicate with Jekyll. He wrote notes on it, asking her questions about planting and plant sourcing, and she responded with her own instructions. The other plan is a rough pencil copy of one of Jekyll's detailed herbaceous border designs, given to the architect for reference.

Together, these plans show that the garden project was active in July 1914, just before the First World War began. They capture the creative exchange between Jekyll and the architect as they brought her designs to life. These documents offer a fascinating insight into Jekyll's methods and types of plants and shrubs, confirming that the garden was fully planted.

The Surrey History Centre's Conservator, with funding from the Surrey Gardens Trust, has meticulously conserved the garden plans. The conservation process included surface cleaning, light humidification and flattening to remove creases, and repairing torn or fragile areas using wheat starch paste and Japanese paper. Once conserved, the plans will be mounted on sturdy boards and protected in archival polyester sleeves. The plans will be featured in an exhibition of archive treasures at the Surrey History Centre's Open Day on **Saturday 8th March**.

Councillor Denise Turner Stewart, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, said:

"The donation of these plans is a remarkable addition to our collection. Gertrude Jekyll's work continues to inspire and educate, and we are thrilled to preserve and share these historical documents with the public."

The upcoming Open Day on 8th March is a fantastic opportunity for residents and visitors to explore these plans and other fascinating collections. With our friendly and helpful staff, we would like to see as many residents as possible using the Surrey History Centre for research and discovering the fascinating history of the county of Surrey.

Whether you're a history buff or simply curious about our work, the day will offer something for everyone, so do come along and explore our diverse collections."

Sarah Dickinson, Chair of Surrey Gardens Trust, added:

"It is a rare moment when lost Gertrude Jekyll plans come to light. These are working drawings, the tools of her trade. They enhance our understanding of Jekyll's garden design practice. They narrate a moment in history, the Summer of 1914, when a Jekyll design and its planting is being implemented."

We are transported to Jekyll's desk and witness her tenacity as she responds to questions from the architect who is overseeing the planting of this garden. Surrey Gardens Trust is equally thrilled to be part of this revelation and to support the preservation and presentation of these unique documents."

For more information on the **Open Day** and to book a place on a behind-the-scenes tour, please visit the **Surrey History Centre website**.

Discover more about **Gertrude Jekyll sources** at the Surrey History Centre.

Explore **Gertrude Jekyll's Surrey Archive** on the **Surrey Gardens Trust's website** for additional insights.



## An Epsom 17th century pub to become supermarket?

24 July 2025



A 17th century pub could be transformed into a Sainsbury's Local. Plans have been submitted to refurbish the Grade II-listed drinking establishment, on Dorking Road in Epsom, to a convenience store.

If approved, a Sainsbury's convenience store would take over the ground floor of the historic building and install an ATM machine outside. Plans also include resurfacing and reducing the car park to just 13 spaces, four of which will be reserved for delivery vehicles.

The former White Horse Public House was converted into Lava Lounge, a restaurant and cocktail bar, in 2020. Lava Lounge closed in January 2024, having been on the market for at least two years according to planning documents.

Used for centuries for drinking, the former purpose of the pub is no longer viable according to Sainsbury's. "Given the wealth of drinking establishments in Epsom, not just in the town centre, it is unlikely that the loss of a facility which has already been closed for a year could be considered a detriment," the application said.

Serving a specific catchment area, the proposed Sainsbury's is said to be conveniently located for nearby residents, visitors and employees at Epsom hospital as well as passing trade. The development will also create around 20 new jobs, a mixture of full and part-time.

"Very little appears to have survived" from the 17th-18th century on the ground floor, planning documents state, perhaps only the thick walls around the chimney breasts. The timber framed structure at first floor level appears to be correctly placed for a historic building but, the report says, the timbers appear to be modern.

Sainsbury's heritage statement states the proposals would have a "neutral effect" on the special interest of a listed building. The report says the vast majority of the building's internal heritage value has been lost from modern adaptations.

Planning documents read: "The core of the building has a hipped slate roof and is of timber framed construction, some of which is evidently modern, but which may form the altered remains of the 17th or 18th century building referred to in the Listing description. The pub has a parapeted brick frontage which likely dates from the middle of the 19th century."

The scheme proposes removing the replacement of the Victorian-style sash window, as well as reconfiguring and refurbishing the insides of the former pub. Demolishing the covered yard at the back of the site, Sainsbury's plans to build an extension to form a 'back of house' for the convenience store.

Minor modifications to the historic part of the building are needed to use the original pub building for the back office part of the shop. The application clarifies the historic part of the building is not being used for a sales area.

Neighbours can comment on the application on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's website. No decision date has been listed yet.

View outside the Lava Lounge, and former White Horse Pub, in Epsom. (Credit: Sainsbury's/ Epsom and Ewell Planning Documents)

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## Epsom's Horton Cemetery gets attention of two kinds

24 July 2025



Just as **The Epsom and Ewell Times** was about to publish a letter concerning Council efforts to tidy and make safer the boundaries of Horton Cemetery (Hook Road / Horton Lane) a motor car struck railings near the roundabout and knocked over the Memorial to the near 9000 patients buried and neglected in the privately owned 5 acre cemetery.

**Surrey Police** issued a statement: "We were called to Horton Lane, Ewell at around 7:10pm on Wednesday 19 February after reports of a single vehicle collision at the location. Officers responded and found that the collision had resulted in damage to a fence and cemetery stone. The driver was not arrested and did not require medical treatment."



It is understood that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is responsible for the Memorial after former Labour Mayor of Epsom and Ewell, **Alan Carlson**, raised the money for its installation through a public appeal in 2004.

The charity The Friends of Horton Cemetery continues its campaign to restore the Cemetery to community ownership following the bizarre NHS transfer of the asset to a property speculator in 1983. **Michael Heighes** of Marque Securities has taken away the tombstones and all the crosses on each grave have gone. The cemetery is barely recognisable as a cemetery and relatives cannot enter without trespassing.

Recently, the Charity has made a submission to the Law Commission, which is considering reforms to cemetery law. It has submitted that the opportunity to update the laws should include a duty to maintain and allow access to cemeteries in private hands.

The charity has also sent a letter to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council in connection with the current Local Plan arguing any development of neighbouring **Horton Farm** for housing should seek developer's funds for the restoration of the Cemetery as an amenity of peace and remembrance open to the public.

**Mr Lionel Blackman**, Secretary of the Charity, said "The existence of the largest asylum cemetery in Europe is not going to disappear. With relatives coming forward every week and our research team publishing the lives of over 600 patients so far, it is only a matter of time and whichever local government takes over, that action will redress this historic outrage."

Sam Jones - Reporter

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Letter from Matthew Walters, Epsom.

**Dear Sir,**

I would like to draw attention to recent developments concerning Horton Cemetery in West Ewell, Epsom.

For many years, concerns have been raised about the lack of respect shown to the 9,000 individuals buried there, whose



graves are no longer marked. More recently, attention has also turned to the safety risks for road users on the busy Hook Road.

Until yesterday, the grass verge alongside the cemetery was largely inaccessible due to overgrown brambles and tree branches extending from the cemetery, as well as significant fly-tipping, including building waste.

It is therefore welcome news that Surrey County Council and Epsom and Ewell Borough Council have worked together to clear the area, improving both its appearance and safety, as evidenced in the accompanying photographs.

While the decision to classify Horton Cemetery and its 9,000 graves as an “amenity woodland” remains a point of contention, the recent clearance has ensured that the surroundings are now more in keeping with a cemetery. However, the public should be aware that sections of the perimeter railings remain unsafe, with some sharp railings protruding towards Hook Road at dangerous angles, none of which are currently marked with hazard tape.

Falling branches from trees inside the cemetery continue to pose a risk to road users, and it is hoped that Surrey County Council will monitor this issue and take necessary action, as indicated in previous communications.

In the meantime, cyclists, motorcyclists, and motorists should exercise caution when travelling along Hook Road near the cemetery. Furthermore, steps should be taken to ensure that the cost of maintaining overgrown vegetation from within the cemetery does not fall upon Council Tax payers.

Horton Cemetery remains in private ownership by a property developer, and the recent clearance now allows for greater visibility into the site. This presents an opportunity for the public to assess whether greater care and respect should be afforded to those buried there.

Out of sight should not mean out of mind.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew Walters

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## The Plot of Gunpowder in Worcester Park

24 July 2025



### Unearthing History: Worcester Park's Gunpowder Mills Rediscovered

For centuries, the quiet banks of the Hogsmill River at Old Malden Lane, Worcester Park, concealed a remarkable piece of Surrey's industrial past. The site of the former Worcester Park Gunpowder Mills, which operated in the 18th and 19th centuries, has recently been brought to light thanks to an unexpected archaeological discovery during a housing development project.

This fascinating chapter in local history was uncovered through the work of Surrey County Council's Historic Environment Planning Team, led by Nigel Randall, in partnership with Cotswold Archaeology. Their findings tell a story of industrial ingenuity, featuring cutting-edge engineering by John Smeaton, the 'father of civil engineering', and contributions from the renowned inventor James Watt.

### An Unexpected Discovery

The site, long designated as an Area of High Archaeological Potential, had been a haulage yard for the past 40 years before its purchase by developers Taylor Wimpey. On the surface, it appeared unremarkable—concrete hardstanding, rough ground, and piles of demolition rubble. An initial archaeological assessment in 2018 noted the high potential for remains from the gunpowder mills but suggested they would likely be fragmented due to modern disturbances.

When planning permission was granted, it included a condition requiring archaeological investigation before construction began. What followed was a revelation: instead of minor remains, archaeologists uncovered substantial structures, including two gunpowder 'incorporating' mills, a sophisticated water management system, and a network of subterranean brick-built culverts.

### A Hub of Industrial Innovation

The Worcester Park Gunpowder Mills played a crucial role in Britain's industrial heritage. Designed in 1771 by John Smeaton, the mills incorporated advanced engineering to power their operations. At the same time, James Watt was commissioned to develop a steam engine to pump increased volumes of water from the Hogsmill River—an indication of the site's significance at the height of its production.



## Balancing Preservation with Development

Faced with such an important discovery, a collaborative approach between the developers and archaeologists ensured that as much of the site as possible could be recorded and preserved. The layout of the housing development was adjusted to avoid major disruption to the mill structures. However, due to safety concerns, some elements had to be carefully dismantled, while others were preserved beneath the new development.

To document and share this discovery, Cotswold Archaeology created a detailed 3D model of one of the incorporating mills, alongside a short video that brings the site's history to life. These resources provide a valuable opportunity for the public to engage with Surrey's industrial past and appreciate the ingenuity of 18th-century engineering.

### A Lesson in Hindsight

Reflecting on the excavation, the project's lead archaeologist acknowledges that had an earlier trial trench evaluation been conducted, more could have been done to adapt the development to preserve these historical remains. However, the funding generated by the project enabled a comprehensive archaeological investigation, ensuring that this significant chapter in local history is documented and remembered.

For those interested in delving deeper into the story of Worcester Park's gunpowder mills, further details and the 3D model can be accessed through Cotswold Archaeology's online resources.

The uncovering of these historic structures serves as a reminder of the rich heritage hidden beneath our feet—and the importance of balancing development with the preservation of our past.

**Acknowledgements:** This article is based on research conducted by **Nigel Randall** of Surrey County Council's Historic Environment Planning Team and the **Surrey History Centre**. We extend our thanks for their work and permission to share this story. For further information, contact [heritageconsultations@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:heritageconsultations@surreycc.gov.uk).

Many many more fascinating stories from Surrey's rich and varied heritage can be found on the Surrey History Centre website: <https://www.exploringsurreyspast.org.uk/>

**Image:** An aerial view of the main excavation looking south-west. It shows the two mill structures and the brick culverts that supplied the water to power them and returned it to the Hogsmill (photo courtesy of Cotswold Archaeology and Aerial-Cam).

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## Heritage at the heart of Epsom and Ewell

24 July 2025



The Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council convened on January 23rd, to address several key issues, including the annual Heritage Champion's statement, fees and charges for 2025/26, budget estimates, and an urgent decision regarding the local development scheme. The meeting, held at the Epsom Town Hall and broadcast online, saw a full agenda with a number of significant decisions taken.

### Heritage Champion's Report Praised

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Heritage Champion's annual statement by Councillor **Kim Spickett** (RA Cuddington). This was the first such statement that Committee Chair, Councillor **Peter O'Donovan** (RA Ewell Court), could recall seeing. Councillor Spickett, unfortunately, was not present at the meeting due to a prior engagement at the Epsom Playhouse (The Band of the Scots Guard: Gala Concert staged by Cllr **Dr Graham Jones** MBE RA Cuddington, for the Mayor's charities), but her report was met with high praise from committee members.

Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) lauded the "enthusiasm and the depth of the research" in her report, adding that "it really does show... that there is such a deep heritage in Epsom". Councillor **Julie Morris** (LibDem College) echoed this sentiment, saying "ditto that" and praised Councillor Spickett for her work in trying to trace the culverts in the area. Councillor O'Donovan also acknowledged the work done, noting "it is a remarkable work and it shows you what I think, really, what a champion should be providing". The committee unanimously resolved to receive and note the annual statement of the Heritage Councillor Champion.

The Heritage Champion's report detailed a number of local heritage projects. Some examples include:

- **St. Martin of Tours Church:** Councillor Spickett detailed a fact-finding mission related to the car park, noting issues of ownership, access permissions, and the involvement of English Heritage and the Church of England. She also highlighted a musket ball lodged in the old wall, masonry around the steps and a red granite edging



under the tarmac. Her report also focused on how non-permeable areas in town displace water and cause surface flooding, a problem she has experience of with the South East Rivers' Trust.

- **D-Day 80 Commemoration:** Councillor Spickett was tasked with designing a badge for the Girl Guides and Scouts to commemorate D-Day. She also provided research material for a reading at the ceremony, which was a letter home from Captain Gerald Ritchie.
- **Mysterious Streams and Tunnels:** Councillor Spickett discussed her interest in the borough's hidden history, including the industrial past of the Pound Lane/Kiln Lane area. She made reference to the brickworks that sprang up all over the borough.
- **The Hogsmill River:** Councillor Spickett detailed a project that aimed to raise awareness of the importance of a clean river. This involved the creation of an information lectern at the Hogsmill Tavern, with funds from a Surrey County Council grant.
- **Old Barn in Woodcote Ward:** Councillor Spickett has been investigating an old barn, with the help of local photographer, Richard, noting a need for its sympathetic restoration.
- **Shadbolt Park** Councillor Spickett has worked with officers to develop a heritage and natural history information board.
- **Park Wall to the Durdans** Councillor Spickett has met with Councillor Liz Frost to look at a listed clunch wall which is covered in graffiti.
- **Royal Connections at Durdans** Councillor Spickett has detailed connections to the Royal Family and scientists who have stayed at the Durdans.

**Fees and Charges for 2025/26 Approved** The committee then moved to discuss and approve the fees and charges for the upcoming financial year. A council officer explained that pre-application advice and planning performance agreement fees would remain at the 2024/25 level. However, planning application fees, which are set nationally, are expected to increase by the Retail Price Index (RPI) from April 2025. Many general licensing fees were set to increase by 6%, whilst taxi licensing fees would mostly remain unchanged due to a rise in operators, except for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire drivers whose fees would increase by 3% and 7%, respectively, and missed appointments without notice rising by 7.7%.

Councillor **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) raised a question about some of the licensing fees, wondering "do we really have all these things going on? I mean, I'm not aware how many zoos do we have". A council officer clarified that there was one zoo. Councillor Phil Neale also asked about additional charges for retrospective planning applications. A council officer clarified that these are set nationally and not included in local fees. The committee resolved to agree on the fees and charges for 2025/26 as set out in the appendices.

**Budget Estimates for 2025/26** The committee also reviewed the budget estimates for licensing and planning policy services for the next financial year. A council officer reported that the second quarter outturn for 2024/25 showed no net variance against the budget. The base net budget for 2025/26 is set at £1.279 million, compared to £1.237 million for 2024/25. An additional £94,000 is expected in revenue, which will be used to fund additional staff and a new software system.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) asked whether expenditures relating to the local plan were included in the budget. A council officer clarified that these costs are funded from reserves and strategy resources, but the costs of staff working on the local plan were included within the planning policy section of the budget. The committee resolved to recommend the 2025/26 service estimates for approval at the full council budget meeting in February.

#### **Urgent Decision on Local Development Scheme**

Finally, the committee noted an urgent decision made by the Director of Environment, Housing, and Regeneration regarding the Local Development Scheme. A council officer explained that the scheme needed to be updated to align with a new government timetable. This required moving the consultation period to December and the submission to March, rather than the previously scheduled dates of January and May. The committee resolved to note the urgent decision and the reasons for it.

The meeting concluded with the committee having made important decisions regarding the borough's planning and licensing policies, demonstrating their commitment to the efficient operation of local governance.

Related report:

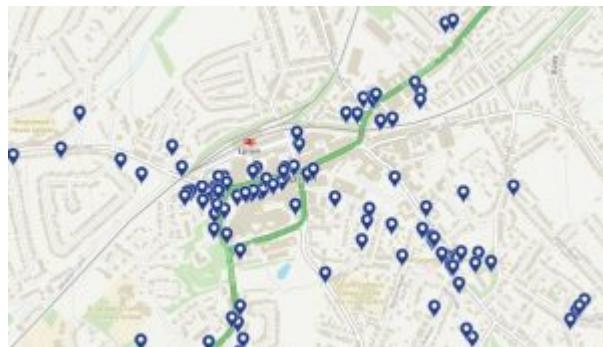
Heritage at Risk: Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Faces Challenges

Image: A spoof Epsom and Ewell Times report contained in Cllr Spickett's Heritage Report. Click [HERE](#) to see her full report within the "Reports Pack" presented to the LPPC councillors. We are taking no action for the unauthorised breach of copyright of our logo!



# Heritage at Risk: Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Faces Challenges

24 July 2025



The latest **Heritage at Risk Register**, published by Historic England in November 2024, has cast a shadow over the state of heritage conservation in Epsom and Ewell. Two conservation areas—**Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area** and the **Horton Conservation Area**—have been flagged as being in **poor condition**, with a concerning trend of **deterioration**. While both areas are deemed to have “low vulnerability,” this designation should not obscure the urgency of their plight.

The condition of these heritage assets is not only a reflection of their physical state but also an indicator of broader systemic issues. Without proactive measures, Epsom risks losing significant elements of its historical character.

## Decoding the Heritage Assessment

Historic England evaluates heritage assets based on three criteria: **Condition**, **Vulnerability**, and **Trend**:

- **Condition:** The physical state of the asset, ranging from “very good” to “very bad.” For both Epsom Town Centre and Horton Conservation Areas, the classification of “poor” signals pressing maintenance and repair needs.
- **Vulnerability:** The extent to which external factors, such as funding shortages or development pressures, threaten the asset.
- **Trend:** Whether the asset’s condition is improving, stable, or deteriorating. Both conservation areas are assessed as experiencing a **deteriorating trend**.

While “low vulnerability” suggests no immediate threats, the deteriorating condition of these areas calls for decisive intervention to reverse the decline.

## Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area: A Historic Hub in Decline

Epsom Town Centre is more than a commercial centre; it is the beating heart of the borough’s identity. Its 39 listed buildings include the **Spread Eagle Hotel** and historic structures on **Wheeler’s Lane**. Each of these buildings tells a story of Epsom’s rich past, from its heyday as a 17th-century spa town to its enduring role as the home of the **Epsom Derby**.

The “poor” condition and “deteriorating” trend of the conservation area suggest neglect and insufficient maintenance. While some buildings remain privately owned, the broader conservation area’s status is a public concern that requires collective action.

## Horton Conservation Area: A Legacy of Victorian Innovation

The Horton Conservation Area, part of Epsom’s celebrated “hospital cluster,” was established to protect the architectural and historical significance of the Victorian psychiatric asylum buildings. One notable structure, the **Horton Chapel**, was recently restored and reopened as the **Horton Arts Centre**. While this transformation is a success story, Historic England’s continued classification of the area as “poor” indicates unresolved challenges.

## Epsom and Ewell Borough Council: Highlighting Achievements

Councillor **Peter O’Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) Chair of Licensing & Planning Policy, defended the Council’s track record in heritage conservation. He highlighted the Council’s restoration of the **Epsom Clocktower** in 2019 and its role in transforming Horton Chapel.

Regarding the Town Centre Conservation Area, O’Donovan noted that the Council has implemented policies to guide development, enforce planning regulations, and enhance the appearance of shopfronts and buildings. The recently published **Town Centre Masterplan** prioritises a “context-led design approach,” aiming to balance new development with the conservation of historic features.

“Our local heritage is integral to our unique character,” said O’Donovan. “The Council works in a range of ways to protect the borough’s heritage and conservation areas.”

You can read Cllr O’Donovan’s full response [HERE](#).



## Councillor Kieran Persand: A Call for Stronger Action

Conservative Councillor Kieran Persand, representing Horton Ward, painted a more critical picture. He expressed concerns about the lack of a robust repair and maintenance programme for heritage sites, particularly in the Horton area.

Persand also raised alarm over the Council's **draft Local Plan**, which proposes development on Horton Farm, a high-performing Green Belt site. "The vulnerability of these conservation areas is increasing significantly," Persand warned. "Epsom is at risk of losing its identity as a beautiful and historic location through inappropriate development and poor maintenance."

## The Bigger Picture: Heritage and Development

Epsom's heritage is inextricably linked to its future development. While the Council has emphasised its commitment to protecting conservation areas, critics argue that its actions often fall short of its rhetoric. The inclusion of Horton Farm in the draft Local Plan has drawn widespread opposition, with residents and conservation advocates fearing irreversible harm to the borough's historic character.

Historic England's findings underscore the importance of balancing development pressures with heritage conservation. The "poor" condition of Epsom's conservation areas should serve as a wake-up call to prioritise long-term preservation efforts.

## Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Preserving Epsom's heritage requires a collaborative approach involving local authorities, property owners, and the community. Practical steps could include:

- **Increased Funding:** Securing additional resources for maintenance and restoration.
- **Community Initiatives:** Encouraging residents to take pride in and advocate for their local heritage.
- **Education and Awareness:** Promoting understanding of the value of conservation areas.
- **Stronger Enforcement:** Ensuring compliance with planning regulations and conservation policies.

## The Path Forward

Historic England's report is both a challenge and an opportunity. While the condition of Epsom's conservation areas is concerning, it is not too late to act. Proactive measures, guided by a shared commitment to preserving the borough's heritage, can reverse the trend of deterioration and secure Epsom's identity for future generations.

As the debate continues, the question remains: will Epsom rise to the challenge, or will it allow its treasures to fade into obscurity?

Map of many of the listed buildings in Epsom Town Conservation Area: © Crown copyright [and database rights] 2025. OS AC0000815036. | © Historic England | © Crown Copyright 2024. Released under OGL. | © Crown Copyright 2024. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2024. Released under OGL.