

Leatherhead town on the way up?

17 August 2024



Artistic impression of the arrival square (SE corner)

Leatherhead could become a “destination town” with an updated shopping arcade and cinema screens, according to regeneration plans. The future project could also see a ‘new neighbourhood’ created with up to 11-storey apartment block and townhouses in Bull Hill.

The Swan Centre has been earmarked to be the “catalyst to revitalise the town” of Leatherhead. A new leisure area is set to be the “heart” of the Surrey town with four new restaurants, bars and cafes.

Plans include 14 retail units, four cinema screens for leisure and a new central market square for events. Retaining stores like Sainsbury’s, Boots, WHSmith and others is also being considered in the development proposals.

Demolishing Leret House, the former offices on Swan Street, is another key part of the proposal. Speaking at a webinar on July 30, project officers said they are looking to reuse as much of the fabric of the building as possible by retaining the concrete frame.

Locals could see apartment buildings up to 11 storeys popping up in the town centre, with houses ranging between three to four stories. Prospective plans for Bull Hill, the second part of the regeneration scheme, include apartment flats and townhouses, as well as parking facilities, offices, and a park. Officers are also looking at plans for a hotel with retail spaces on the ground floor.

Between one, two and three bedroom flats could be available in the new apartments, with the family houses being three to four bedrooms each. MVDC and Keir Property detail a mixture of open market and affordable homes for purchase and rent could be on the offer.

Councillor Keira Vyvyan-Robinson said: “We appreciate that building heights are a sensitive matter, and this is why the sketches and layouts in the masterplan show illustrative heights only at this stage.” The Cabinet Member for Projects stressed that “nothing has been decided” as the plans were still in the pre-application phase and “are likely to evolve based on [consultation] feedback”.

A Kier Property officer said the project is “looking to get the right balance” of housing heights, so it can “sit comfortably in its environment.” Upgrading the existing park in Bull Hill is also part of the initial proposals. Project officers said they wanted to make the park more accessible to people in Leatherhead by improving the play areas.

Launched on July 8 with five consultation events, people can give feedback to the prospective plans until September 26. Leigh Thomas, Group managing director, Kier Property said the consultation events so far had given him “much food for thought”. He added the team were looking to adapt the plans “according to the needs of the local community”.

MVDC and Keir Property has announced new consultation dates, including:

- Monday 19 August, 5:30pm to 7:30pm at St Mary’s Church Hall, 10A The Ridgeway, Fetcham, Leatherhead KT22 9AZ
- Thursday 5 September, 5:30pm to 7:30pm at Ashted Peace Memorial Hall (Ralli Room), Woodfield Lane, Ashted KT21 2BE
- Wednesday 11 September, 5:30pm to 7:30pm at The Old Barn Hall Bookham (Main Hall), 55 Church Road, Great Bookham, Leatherhead KT23 3PQ

Keir Property and MVDC is looking at submitting a planning application in 2025 and, if approved, to start building by spring/summer 2026.

Artistic Impression Of The Arrival Square from North Street, south east corner. (Credit: Mole Valley District Council and Keir Property)

Hyperia’s screams have mixed local responses

17 August 2024



What's it like being neighbours to one of the biggest theme parks in the UK? "It depends if you like screaming," residents say. Living next to Thorpe Park has split opinion with some locals saying they like the 'nice screams' and others saying they struggle to sit in the garden.

The park, between Chertsey and Staines-upon-Thames in Surrey, has recently introduced its newest and biggest ride, Hyperia. Some locals said they could hear the screams and noise from the ride about a mile away on opening day, but not all of the park's neighbours are bothered by it.

Joyce Hunt, 93, has lived next to the theme park for 40 odd years and "loves to hear" the screaming. She said: "It's great to see young people go and enjoy it. They have a good scream there." Joyce said the park was handy when her grandchildren were young and she could walk to the park with them.

Bricklayer Kevin Nye, 52, said it's "great" living next to the park and hearing the "nice screams". He moved into the street eight years ago for "peace and quiet". Although it's busy in the summer, Kevin said it's calmer the rest of the year.

But one couple said Thorpe Park "encroaches on [our] daily lives" and they "don't leave the house after 5pm". Jackie, 55, said the traffic on the roads is so bad after the theme park closes she "doesn't bother" leaving the house. One time, Jackie said she was stuck on the roundabout for 25 minutes, when her home was just a short walk away.

"It's one of the reasons why we're thinking about moving away from Surrey," said Jackie, "Staines is too congested". Jackie and partner Neil, 60, moved to the area 20 years ago when Thorpe was just a "small park" but now they say the number of customers is "out of proportion".

First opened in 1979, Thorpe Park has grown from strength to strength and expanded its rides and attraction offerings. A spokesperson for Thorpe Park said it has not received any complaints from local residents next door to the park about recent issues of parking, noise or litter.

Sitting outside in the garden, the couple said it's not so much the screams that disturb them but the click click clicking of the rides as the cars climb to the top, and the sudden whoosh that follows on its way down. With Halloween parties, late functions in the evening- the pair said it's "never quiet".

Other locals, like Alan, 59, said he "didn't want to sound like an old fogey" but sometimes the PA system for the autumn functions was "too loud" and lasted until 11pm at night. But he accepted it is a theme park: "What do you expect? There are worse things to live next to."

Thrill-seekers visiting Thorpe sometimes park down residential streets around the site to avoid paying parking fees. Although some neighbours said they "don't blame" people for trying to save a few quid, one couple had even taken to putting bricks on the curb outside of their house to stop people parking.

Liz and Barry Taylor, 58 and 73, said people parking outside their house at the weekends can cause a lot of traffic and congestion down their quiet road. They said sometimes they struggle to get out of their drives and dodge other cars, but it has not been "too bad" since Hyperia opened. "It's alright," said Liz, "but I'd rather it wasn't there."

Not all the neighbours mind it: Johanna said it is "no problem", adding that she is "all in favour of working people" trying to save money. She said: "When you think about the problems of the world- it's nothing. They are youngsters."

Neighbours raised issues of people chucking litter out of their car and onto the kerb as hometime comes around. "Lots of rubbish gets left along the road," said Joanne Bolton, 65. She moved next door to the park three years ago to be closer to her daughter. Residents complained of fast food packaging and wrappers being thrown out of cars and "left tumbling down the street" before people drive home.

But Joanne said: "I like looking out at the green area [of trees around the park]. If that goes I'd be mad." Although she "quite likes the screaming", she gets more wound up about the planes that fly over her garden.

A Thorpe Park spokesperson said: "Thorpe Park is very much part of the local community we operate within and has been positively contributing to the local area for 45 years. We strive to do all we can to ensure we keep our local residents, staff and guests happy, and we pride ourselves on being an established part of the community, taking our responsibility as a good neighbour seriously. We have a long-standing positive relationship with our local residents and this is something we value and want to maintain."

The vast majority of park guests visit for a single day. "Substantial" on-site car parking is available, along with good public transport links near Staines Train Station. The Thorpe Park Express bus transports guests directly between Staines Train Station and Thorpe Park at regular intervals during the day and during operational hours.

The spokesperson added: "Here at Thorpe Park we pride ourselves on being a significant employer of local people. Our teams work closely with our local community to ensure we are giving back to our local area and contributing towards making it a positive place to live and work on a number of levels."

"Thorpe Park worked hard to support the residents association in working with Cllr Hulley and Surrey Highways to bring improvements to the roundabout - at our own cost - to accelerate and resolve long standing issues impacting residents."

Some more of these initiatives include Site Conservation teams doing daily litter picking along the main road leading to Thorpe Park, in both directions, and beyond the perimeter. Teams also make regular landscaping support from our teams to ensure local green spaces are kept well maintained.

Image: Suntooooth License details

Wine tasting on the slopes of Leith Hill

17 August 2024



Wine aficionados will soon be able to sample the delights of pinot noir, chardonnay, and cabernet in their famous fermented form after a Surrey Hills vineyard was granted planning permission to build a new tasting room.

The Tanhurst Estate, on the southern slopes of Leith Hill began planting grapes in spring of 2020 as part of a growing shift away from traditional hay and dairy farming.

The family, who have been living amidst the semi-ancient woodland there for the past 40 years, decided the best way to promote their wines was to let people visit and sample the fruits of their labour. At Mole Valley District Council's Wednesday August 7 planning committee, their efforts became a reality after members unanimously granted approval.

Speaking to the committee, the owners said: "The estate, has been in my wife's family since 1826. The estate comprises traditional farmland and semi ancient woodlands. The estate used to have milking herds but this became unviable in the 1980s although there remains a small herd of beef cows on the estate."

He added: "In order to keep its agricultural use we needed to find an alternative and economically viable way to farm the land so we consulted two of the most respected vineyard consultants in the country." The land's southern slopes make it ideal for growing grapes as it allows the berries to soak up as much sunshine as possible, while the hilly terrain helps water run off.

He said: "I believe the general public enjoy visiting vineyards and this is part of the experience of enjoying a bottle of wine that they buy. They need to see where the grapes were grown to understand the process the grapes have been through; from growing on the vine, to harvest, to fermentation in the tanks, and then bottling.

"We do all this at Birketts Farm. We are a small scale business and therefore rely on selling directly to customers and this requires interaction at the point of sale. We need to use these barns for wine tasting and other events in order to persuade customers that our wine is made totally on site, available, and worth the money they pay for English wine -once they see how much time and passion and effort goes into making it."

The plans for the Birketts Farm, in Tanhurst Lane, Abinger, allow for the existing barns to be converted and used for wine tasting and associated sales, as well as for hosting educational classes and private events and a cafe. There will also be added onsite parking and toilet facilities.

Surrey's cyber sleuth students at work

17 August 2024



Cyber-curious students from Ash Manor School have been inspired to consider future careers in the sector after taking part in a special one-day workshop.

The event was hosted by Surrey County Council in collaboration with the **Surrey Cyber Security Cluster (SCSC)** and **SATRO Education Charity** as part of the **Inspire Surrey** pilot programme, and was held at the Hogs Back Hotel in Farnham.

The 'Digital Detective Challenge' was developed to harness the imagination of the students and encourage them to consider a future career in this exciting and fast-growing industry.

At the end of the day, almost all of the year 8 students taking part (28 out of 31) said they would now consider taking up a career in cyber - a resounding success for the day.

Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: "Cyber security is a growing, highly innovative sector of huge importance to our regional economy. Events like this are fantastic to really capture the interest of enquiring young minds - the vital future leaders of this sector - and ensure cyber security's continued growth and success in Surrey. I'm delighted the event was such a triumph for all participants."

Surrey is a world-leader in cyber security, as home to a large and growing number of security firms and consultancy agencies including BAE Systems, CGI and F5.

Two of the UK's five Gold Standard Cyber Security Universities (Royal Holloway and University of Surrey) are also based in the county, helping to drive innovation in the sector.

Surrey County Council is further nurturing the sector and supporting growth through its involvement in the Surrey Cyber Security Cluster.

Mr S Coomber, Head of Computer Science at Ash Manor School, said: *"Events like this enable students to explore what it's like to work in cyber security. By showcasing the breadth of opportunities available, we hope to empower students to make an informed decision about considering a career in the cyber sector."*

Jane Sheridan from SATRO Education Charity, said: *"Today's event was not just about solving puzzles; it was about igniting passion and curiosity for cyber careers among young minds. We wanted to provide students with a glimpse into the exciting world of cyber security while emphasizing the importance of critical thinking and problem-solving skills."*

Hani Momenia, Director of the SCSC, highlighted the significance of nurturing future talent in the cyber field. He said: *"As the cyber landscape continues to evolve, there is a growing demand for skilled professionals capable of defending us against emerging threats. Initiatives like this play a crucial role in inspiring and nurturing the next generation of cyber leaders. It's been great to work with the Surrey Cyber Security Cluster and SATRO Education Charity to design and host an engaging event for our budding cyber professionals."*

The event was one of a number of initiatives intended to inspire a range of audiences to consider a career in cyber by the Council's Economy & Growth Team, in collaboration with the Surrey Cyber Security Cluster. Other events included a workshop for mums returning to work and a cyber careers fair at Brooklands Museum for secondary school students across the county.

Business Surrey, the Council's new business initiative, is committed to supporting sectors, such as cyber security, with support to grow. Discover more at www.businesssurrey.co.uk.

Those businesses looking for support and advice with workforce needs can contact the team for free support at www.businesssurrey.co.uk/advice-and-support/business-support-form.

The Surrey Careers Hub also works to connect employers with schools and colleges to support young people to take their next best step. Find out how you can get involved at <https://www.businesssurrey.co.uk/workforce/careers-hub/>.

No more German supermarkets in Epsom

17 August 2024



Plans for an Aldi store have been rejected again over fears the increased traffic would have a severe impact on road safety.

[The site is a few hundred yards away from another German owned supermarket Lidl in Upper High Street.]

A proposal to create the budget supermarket on the vacant former Dairy Crest site in Alexandra Road was refused a second time at an Epsom and Ewell council meeting on July 10.

The application was first thrown out in 2015 following concerns about the site's location, level of car parking and traffic, and the effect on the character of the neighbourhood.

The new application for the £5m development in Epsom includes car parking, some landscaping but plans for residential units have been scrapped.

Councillor Jan Mason (Residents' Association/Ruxley Ward) said the supermarket giant should "do far better" on the design of the building if it "wants to come to a lovely area such as Epsom".

Although Aldi said it had "refined" its proposals, carefully designing an "attractive, bespoke Aldi food store" which would "respect the surrounding area", councillors were still concerned about its location.

Despite Surrey Highways advising the development "would be unlikely to result in a severe impact" on local traffic, councillors remained sceptical. Speaking before the debate, Ward Cllr Julie Morris (Lib Dem/College Ward) said there would be a "huge" impact on local residents who already feel the surrounding residential roads are a "rat run".

"The one thing you can't put in a spreadsheet is common sense," Cllr Chris Watson (Residents Association/ Ewell Court Road) said. He argued that regardless of "clever" data from the county council, "common sense" says it is a busy junction

which could result in queuing traffic.

Agreeing with him, other councillors said the “already challenging junction” is “fraught with danger”. It was agreed it was in the interests of residents, motorists, pedestrians and children crossing to go to school that councillors had to reject the application.

However, Cllr Clive Woodridge (Residents’ Association/ Ewell Village Ward) argued it was not viable to refuse the application on traffic and road concerns. He said Surrey Highway experts have judged the development acceptable and this could not be easily defended at appeal.

But Cllr Mason called the development a ticking “time bomb”, which could lead to a fatal collision if plans goes ahead.

Speaking to the committee, local resident Leah said: “The council has had feedback multiple times that local residents don’t want a food store here.” She cited Aldi’s own research from its application that 58-61% of local residents objected to the proposal.

Around 91 letters were sent opposing the scheme, arguing it was an ‘unacceptable location’ for a food store at a busy junction. Concerns were raised that traffic would be exacerbated, a pedestrian crossing would be dangerous and the brownfield site should be saved for affordable housing.

Aldi superstore. (Credit: Marques Thomas/Unsplash)

Not loving it in Cobham

17 August 2024



A proposed new McDonald’s is “the last thing Surrey needs”; that’s according to residents living near the proposed site.

The fast-food giant has published plans to takeover the former Loch Fyne restaurant in Portsmouth Road, Cobham, but some people living nearby are not loving it - and want it turned into a community hub instead.

The vacant Locally Listed Building has fallen into a state of disrepair with McDonald’s saying a Cobham branch would “bring it back into active use as a restaurant to ensure its long-term viability.”

While the village of Cobham was recently named one of the most affluent communities in Surrey, residents have said that the Northfield Estate, where the restaurant is proposed, is one the lowest socio-economic area in the county.

Residents said they were “concerned” over the impact a fast food restaurant could have on people’s social, mental and emotional wellbeing - and have started a petition calling for a rethink.

“The area needs a community hub, promoting social, mental and emotional wellbeing for residents, McDonald’s is the direct contrast of that,” the petition read, adding ‘ the Northfield Estate is the lowest socio economic demographic in Cobham, and one of the lowest in Surrey.’ The petition pointed to research which highlights a strong link between obesity and deprivation.

Burger giant has said it has received relatively balanced feedback with people welcoming new job opportunities

Other residents concerns include the site’s proximity to schools and the number of students who would be passing it on a daily basis. Many of the 391 signatories fear the restaurant, which would have space for 60 diners and car parking for 33 vehicles, would have on a significant impact on what was already a traffic hotspot.

The Portsmouth Road site is near the roundabout and Sainsbury’s petrol station, shortly before the road leads on to the A3. The petition says: “The Painshill roundabout is already extremely busy, with queues forming regularly to enter or leave Cobham; additionally it can be challenging to enter or leave the petrol station.”

One person wrote: “The last thing Surrey needs is another McDonald’s.” Another added: “I feel a McDonald’s would be detrimental to the village of Cobham.”

Plans for the site, which would be the group’s 15th branch in the county, are still in consultation stage ahead of being submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council for consideration.

McDonald’s has said it would “sensitively restore” the disused site and create “at least 120 new jobs”. The Cobham branch would also “address an identified demand”. A spokesperson for McDonald’s said: “We are encouraged that nearly 500 people have engaged with our consultation so far for a new McDonald’s in Cobham.

“To date, we have received relatively balanced feedback in response to the proposals, with local people welcoming the creation of new job opportunities, the diversified food choice in Cobham and the sensitive restoration of the vacant and under-utilised site.”

Image: harry_nl CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 DEED

Surrey Business Support Service

17 August 2024



Business Surrey – a new Surrey County Council service offering free and accessible support to businesses across the county – has officially been launched by Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt.

From start-ups to longstanding SMEs, Surrey companies of all sizes, sectors and stages of their business journey can access expert support for no cost via a new website www.businesssurrey.co.uk.

The Council developed the offer to coincide with the transfer of strategic powers to grow the economy previously held by the county's two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

It means for the first time there is a single, co-ordinated business support offer for the whole of Surrey – something which is welcomed by local leaders.

Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, said: *"Surrey has a fantastic economic story to tell – with more than 100,000 businesses, a highly-skilled workforce and world-leading sectors helping generate more than £50 billion a year to the UK economy.*

"But we know there's more that we can do – which is why I am delighted we have developed Business Surrey, providing a simple and easy way for companies of all sizes to access the support they need to grow.

"By being in a position to support businesses from day one of being handed these functions from LEPs, we are ahead of the national curve – something which can only be positive for our 1.2 million residents and 110,000 businesses."

Business Surrey provides free and accessible support for all businesses in Surrey – such as targeted bespoke support for high growth companies, highlighting networking events, promoting the county's innovative sectors, and hosting a live directory of more than 100 national and local initiatives.

The new website also brings together of the business-facing aspects of the Council's work, including trading standards, Greener Futures and Surrey Fire & Rescue.

Business Surrey went live in April and was officially launched at Huskins in Godalming by the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt last week (Friday May 17).

Also speaking was Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council; Shahid Azeem, the High Sheriff of Surrey; and local tech entrepreneur Terence Naidu.

Representatives from Surrey County Council, business groups, universities and the county's 11 district and borough authorities were among those attending.

Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor of the Exchequer and MP for South West Surrey, said: *"Surrey is a fantastic place to do business. The innovation and ideas of its residents, combined with sector strengths in creative industries, and tech and life sciences, make it a pivotal region in driving growth for the whole of the UK.*

"That's why it's great to see Surrey County Council using the newly transferred powers formally held by LEPs to develop a clear offer to support businesses.

"I would urge businesses at all stages of their journey to contact the Business Surrey team to access expert help and support."

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: *"Growing the economy in a sustainable way is a priority for the Council, which can only be achieved by working and engaging with our fantastic business community.*

"Growth is not only good for business; it also generates opportunities for local people, supports investment in our communities, and improves the lives and wellbeing of our 1.2 million residents.

"We're looking forward to continuing to work closely with our universities, businesses, and local authority partners to capitalise on our enhanced strategic economic role, as it is only through shared expertise that we stand the best chance of growing our economies."

As part of the launch, Surrey County Council has teamed up with Surrey Chambers of Commerce to hold a series of Business Surrey Roadshow events next month.

The sessions will include practical ways for business owners to access support to grow their enterprises, as well as opportunities to connect with like-minded professionals.

The events take place on:

- June 4 in Camberley - Login Lounge from 8am
- June 6 in Egham - Royal Holloway, University of London from 6pm
- June 13 in Horley - Langshott Manor Hotel from 8am
- June 21 in Leatherhead - Fetcham Park House from 8am

Pre-booking for the events is essential. Secure your space via the Business Surrey website - www.businesssurrey.co.uk/events.

Image: Cllr Matt Furniss, Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP and Cllr Tim Oliver at the launch of Business Surrey

Big employment hub coming to Leatherhead

17 August 2024



The future of a possibly major employment hub in Leatherhead has been given a huge “vote of confidence”.

Four new buildings and 13 industrial warehouse units will be built in the north of the town after decision-makers backed plans to modernise part of the Cleeve Road Business Park Research Area.

Three “rather tired” buildings, Alpha, Beta, and Cetec, will be torn down to make way for modern facilities that meet the “expectations of employers and businesses today”.

The decision, backed unanimously at the Wednesday, April 3 meeting of Mole Valley’s Development Committee, had widespread support within the room given the area was already earmarked as a business park by the borough’s planners.

Councillor Keira Vyvyan-Robinson (LD, Leatherhead North) said: “I am broadly in favour of this.

“I think it is a sort of vote of confidence in the industrial unit there, and the site, and the future of it, which is a really good thing.

“I’m pleased to see investment being put into that area.”

Cllr Chris Hunt (Ind, Ashtead Lanes & Common) said: “I really think this application is good.

“I love the mix in the size of the units, I think that appeals to firms throughout.”

He said the noise, lighting and access were all positive and added: “It’s the right site at the right time.”

Among the comments received during the planning process were concerns over the loss of existing pedestrian and cycle access.

Councillors did urge the developers Stefania Chancerygate (Leatherhead No. 1) Limited, to keep these throughways, particularly for those who work at the site as they would benefit from easy routes into town - but were told it was not a planning matter.

The meeting heard the site had good access to the M25 and that “strategically” this was where the council would direct this type of development “as it would boost employment and promote growth”.

The new plans include 112 parking bays, of which at least 50 per cent must have fast-charge sockets before any of the units are allowed to open for trading.

Cllr Phil Hammond (LD, Fetcham): “The employment land strategically for the district is really important and this is a big area but it’s got rather tired and it’s not really meeting the expectations of employers and businesses today.

“It needs upgrading, it’s important employment, we need that in north Leatherhead and we need that in the north of the district.”

Image: Leatherhead Business Park (Mole Valley Planning Portal)

More than a Hollywood Moment for Surrey

17 August 2024



Amazon MGM Studios and Netflix have taken up residence in the completed expansion of Shepperton Studios. The development makes Shepperton Studios the second biggest film studio in the world with a total of 31 purpose-built sound stages alongside ancillary production accommodation, the whole site covers 1.5 million sq ft.

Chris Bird, Managing Director, Prime Video UK said, “It feels fitting that, ten years from the launch of Prime Video, we’re beginning our tenure in brand new facilities at Shepperton Studios. It’s so exciting that some of our most loved series and movies around the world will be made right here in the UK, including season three of our fantastic UK Original The Devil’s Hour. Shepperton Studios have long been synonymous with world class filmmaking, and we’re delighted to continue supporting and investing in the UK creative industries.”

Anna Mallett, Vice President Production EMEA/UK Netflix said, “The UK is our most important production hub outside North America. Today’s announcement reinforces our long-term commitment to Britain’s creative sector. Since 2020, we have invested over \$6 billion in the UK creating shows like Sex Education, The Crown and Bridgerton here. The completion of Shepperton will allow us to expand our footprint even further, creating incredible new shows, jobs and a boost for the economy.”

Paul Golding CBE, Chairman, Pinewood Group said, “We’re incredibly pleased to have opened our new state-of-the-art facilities at Shepperton Studios and to see Netflix and Amazon MGM Studios making this long-term commitment to the studios and to the UK.”

Commenting on the announcement, **Tim Oliver**, Leader of Surrey County Council, said: “This is fantastic news for Shepperton and for Surrey as a whole, cementing our reputation as a region for innovation, creativity and top class talent.

“The fact that two of the largest content producers in the world have chosen Shepperton and Surrey for a global base speaks volumes for the amazing offer the county provides to businesses, large and small.

“We look forward to deepening our relationships with Shepperton, Amazon and Netflix in the months and years to come, so we can ensure our residents and businesses benefit from the investment, jobs and opportunities this brings.”

Prime Minister **Rishi Sunak** said, “The decision by the two largest content producers in the world to choose their long-term home in the UK and base their global productions at Shepperton Studios backed by private sector investment is testament to the support the Government has given to the UK’s screen sector.

“I am thrilled that Amazon MGM Studios and Netflix have taken possession of 17 new state of the art sound stages at Shepperton Studios making Pinewood Group, the biggest studio complex in Europe.

“This support was further demonstrated by the recent £1billion package of measures for the creative industries announced in the recent Budget. The UK is now the second largest production hub, second only to Hollywood, in the world.”

Surrey’s vulnerable without expert legal advice

17 August 2024



Surrey has become a ‘legal aid desert’, marked by a critical shortage of support services, leaving vulnerable individuals without expert advice on key issues such as, community care, education, and immigration.

The Access to Justice Report, by South West London Law Centres (SWLLC), was launched at the University of Surrey’s School of Law Access to Justice Clinic on Wednesday, 20 March, by His Honour Sir Robin Knowles CBE, Chair of the Commercial Bar Association of England & Wales. Sir Robin is a member of the Civil Justice Council and chairs its Standing Committee on access to justice for those without means.

The report highlights the need for accessible legal aid and representation and raises awareness of the challenges faced by vulnerable people in Surrey.

It catalogues the gaps in legal aid within Surrey; it highlights cases where people have had to rely on non-legal advice services instead of specialist legal services. The lack of specialist legal advice is particularly acute in employment, education and immigration.

The report shows that most social welfare advice is provided by voluntary or not-for-profit agencies, with Citizens Advice taking the leading role; however, there is a lack of specialist legal services.

People were left without expert legal advice on areas such as:

- School admissions and appeals
- School transport
- Special Education Needs
- Community care packages and complaints
- Immigration advice.

Stacey Edgar, Deputy CEO, South West London Law Centres, said:

“At the South West London Law Centres, we have directly observed the significant difficulties faced by individuals and families lacking proper guidance on matters such as immigration and education.

“Our findings now confirm that Surrey has limited mechanisms for accessing justice, signalling the urgency of leveraging insights from this new research to implement a strategy that addresses community needs.

“We’re pushing to fill these gaps because access to justice shouldn’t depend on where you live or what you can afford.”

The report proposes new initiatives to improve legal support, including a Family Law Court Help Desk, an Education Rights Advice Project, and Immigration and Asylum Caseworkers in Surrey.

Currently, the research proposals are transforming into a project to create these mechanisms in Surrey, and SWLLC is welcoming donations, volunteers, and partners to be involved in expanding access to justice to meet the needs of impacted community members.

Liz Williams, Associate Professor and Director of Clinical Legal Education at the University of Surrey, said:

“The Access to Justice Clinic at the School of Law understands that social transformation and legal impact is only possible through a collaborative approach. The Clinic has been a flourishing initiative since its launch four years ago and plans to expand in partnership with South West London Law Centres, local charities and legal professionals on a broad range of collaborations to help solve the access to justice crisis in Surrey.”

Professor Veronica Rodriguez-Blanco from the School of Law added:

“The School of Law is committed to placing access to justice at the centre of legal education in developing social sensitivity among the future lawyers that we are educating.”

Surrey Uni taking lead on future network security

17 August 2024



A national effort is needed to train the next generation of the United Kingdom’s workforce in intelligent and resilient telecom networks, says a world-leading 5G and 6G expert from the University of Surrey.

The comment comes as the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) announced that Surrey’s 5G/6G Innovation Centre will lead a new £8 million Centre for Doctoral Training in Future Open Secure Networks (FORT).

Over the next eight years, FORT will train more than 50 post-graduate researchers, who will become leaders with unique expertise in wireless communications, cybersecurity, networking, and artificial intelligence (AI). Surrey’s future cohort will influence the roadmaps of future open networking and security technologies and their applications.

In partnership with Queen’s University Belfast’s (QUB) Centre for Secure Information Technologies, FORT also enjoys support from more than 21 industry partners. These partners include: Amazon Web Services, Ampliphae, Angoka, AWTG, Catapult Satellite Applications, Cudasip, Ericsson, Hewlett Packard Enterprises, HP, Intel, Interdigital, Keysight Technologies, Kyndryl, National Physical Laboratory, Nvidia, OpenWeb, Qualcomm, Rolls Royce, Virgin Media O2, and Viavi Solutions.

Regius Professor Rahim Tafazolli, FEng, Director of the 5G/6G Innovation Centre at the University of Surrey and Principal Investigator of FORT, said:

“I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to EPSRC for backing the Future Open SecuRe NeTworks (FORT) initiative. I am equally thankful for the support of our 21 industry partners and look forward to working closely with colleagues from Queen’s University Belfast. This powerful team has a unique vision, expertise, and mission of making the UK a powerhouse for future telecommunications.

“In a world evolving at breakneck speed, our programme is designed with this dynamic future in mind. We’re committed to nurturing future visionaries and leaders with in-depth knowledge of advanced space and terrestrial networks, environmental considerations, and AI technology. The UK’s focus must now shift towards upskilling individuals capable of addressing the cyber security challenges posed by AI and take advantage of opportunities presented by societal shifts, environmental concerns, and industrial advancements.”

Along with providing a world-class education with access to industry, FORT will create an environment for students to research new and better ways to build communication networks that are safe, reliable, and ready for the future. FORT is committed to conducting responsible, ethical research in cybersecurity, AI technologies, and future networks, with a strong societal focus. This approach is designed to generate world-class academic contributions and establish a pipeline of talent for the future.

Dr Jesus Martinez del Rincon, Co-Director of FORT and Research Director of Secure Intelligence at CSIT at QUB, said:

“With the FORT programme, we aim to create a community of 50 PhDs who will become the future, industry-conscious thinkers and leaders on secure, trustworthy and autonomous future network communications.”

Along with Professor Tafazolli and Dr Martinez del Rincon, FORT will be led by: Dr Tim Brown from Surrey, who will serve as Director of FORT, and Professor Máire O’Neill from QUB, who is Co-Investigator of FORT.

Should we be going to.....?

17 August 2024



The Specsavers Surrey Youth Games is back. Following on from the success of the games last year, a wide range of activities are available in **Epsom & Ewell** again, including tennis, judo, swimming and more. The Games are the largest multi-sport youth programme of their kind in the South East, offering **free** local training for 7-16 year olds across Surrey, leading to a final celebratory event for the whole family.

The Games are ideal for beginners who may not get the opportunity to attend clubs or are put off by the thought of competing against others. Supportive coaches will help participants join in, have fun, learn new skills, and boost their confidence.

Registration is now open for the free training sessions which start after Easter and are aimed at those who live or go to school in the borough. Following the training, teams can unite for a family-friendly event at the Surrey Sports Park in Guildford on Saturday 15 June.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, (RA Ewell Village) Chair of the Community and Wellbeing Committee, said “I’m so pleased that we are running the Specsavers Surrey Youth Games in Epsom & Ewell again this year. The initiative provides a fantastic opportunity for young people who are still building their confidence in sport to access training free of charge.

“I hope that everyone in our borough will take a look at what’s on offer and even tell friends and family about the initiative, so that we can ensure that as many children as possible can access the training.”

You can find out what’s on offer in the Epsom & Ewell borough and register for a place by visiting www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/syg