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Oxshott Uproar as 800 Object to Green Belt Housing Plan

23 March 2026



More than 800 objections later, a controversial plan for 250 new homes on green belt land in Oxshott is set to be decided by a planning committee, and the recommendation is for approval.

Amidst traffic concerns, infrastructure worries and wanting to protect the green belt, councillors must decide if this huge village expansion in Oxshott is to go ahead.

Elmbridge Borough Council's planning committee will consider the outline application for Clouds Hill Farm on Wednesday, March 25.

The proposal would see existing buildings on the 23-hectare site demolished to make way for a new housing estate, along with roads, parking, public open space and a "suitable alternative natural greenspace" (SANG).

At this stage, only the access points from Leatherhead Road and Woodlands Lane are being decided, with details like layout, design and landscaping to come later if permission is granted. The homes are expected to be two to three storeys high.

Planning officers have recommended approval, arguing that, on balance, the benefits outweigh the harm.

They say the scheme would help deliver new housing, including affordable homes, and could meet national planning rules for building on so-called "grey belt" land. Surrey County Council highways officers have also raised no objection, subject to improvements.

But the application has sparked a major backlash locally. More than 800 letters of objection from over 600 households have been submitted, citing worries about traffic, safety and pressure on local services.

Residents say the area's roads are already congested and fear an extra 250 homes would make things worse, particularly along the busy Leatherhead Road.

Others argue that the village lacks the infrastructure of schools, GP surgeries and public transport to support a development of this size.

Environmental concerns have also been raised heavily. Objectors warn the plans would mean the loss of Green Belt land, wildlife habitats and trees, and question whether the development can genuinely deliver the required biodiversity net gain. Some have also flagged flood risk and drainage issues.

Campaign groups and residents' associations have gone further, claiming the site is not in a sustainable location and that the project could permanently change the character of the area.

People claim there is not much public transport in the area so there will be a heavy reliance on on cars, making the quiet Surrey village busier.

Support for the scheme has been far more limited, with a small number of submissions pointing to the need for more housing and potential improvements to walking and cycling routes.

If councillors agree with officers, outline permission will be granted, but only if the developer signs a legal agreement to secure key contributions, including affordable housing, environmental mitigation and transport measures.

If that deal is not finalised within six months, the application could still be refused.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Photo: Stables and outbuildings at Clouds Hill Farm, Oxshott. (Credit: Fairmile Group Ltd./Elmbridge Borough Council planning documents).

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Dorking housing plan rejected again over affordable homes shortfall

23 March 2026



Plans to build even more homes on the former Aviva site in Dorking have been thrown out after developers failed to include enough affordable housing. It is the second time the application has been before councillors after the original plans, which included no affordable homes, were deferred in November.

Then, Mole Valley District Council's planning officers had recommended the application for 69 homes at the Pixham Lane site be approved – despite there being no affordable housing included. The updated plan, which included 15 affordable units, was later recommended for refusal because it again fell short of the council's 40 per cent target, and independent assessors believed a higher proportion could feasibly be delivered.

Developers Stonegate Homes (Pixham) maintained it was economically unviable to include any more affordable homes and warned that rejecting the proposal could result in no homes being built. They told councillors: "We genuinely understand this is a very important topic. However, critically no two sites are ever the same and while the overarching policy targets are in place the amount of affordable housing each individual site can deliver will be different."

They said three different affordability consultants had reached different conclusions about what the site could support, arguing this showed there would inevitably be disagreement. "Within four months we've gone from the council's own retained affordability consultants supporting zero affordable housing to the most recent ones concluding that 40 per cent is achievable. With respect this must not be the case of asking the same question until you get the answer you want," they said.

The developer added that their proposal would still make a significant contribution locally. "Our offer is above what would be required at appeal and would provide 23 per cent of the council's annual affordable housing in one go. Refusal would not help address shortfalls in affordability."

There have already been a series of planning applications approved on the site, which was originally earmarked to be a new stadium for Dorking Wanderers FC. Around 300 new homes across the Pixham Lane development have already been granted planning permission.

Residents speaking against the latest proposal said developers were prioritising profit over community needs. "The developers are clearly trying to maximise the amount of space that is income generating while minimising the amount that isn't," they said. They also warned about the cumulative impact of development in the area, adding: "Residents are really concerned about the serious cumulative impacts that all these applications for the Aviva site, plus the developments close by at Station Approach and Lincoln Road, will have on the local environment. The overall total of around 300 new residential units on this site that have already been agreed is more than sufficient."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Former Aviva site in Pixham Lane, near Dorking (image Google)

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Council response to Epsom and Ewell Green Belt concerns

23 March 2026





In response to the report in the Epsom and Ewell Times, Fresh Local Plan row as councillor questions Green Belt revisions and governance at Epsom and Ewell, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has responded as follows:

“The Council submitted the Local Plan on the 10th March 2025 for independent Examination.

The Examination process is led by the Planning Inspector who is tasked with examining the Local Plan on behalf of the Secretary of State to determine whether the local plan is sound and legally compliant.

During the Local Plan Examination Hearings, the Inspector requested that the council undertake two discrete pieces of work that required revisiting and updating specific sections of two documents that form part of the Submission Library.

One of these pieces of work was updating Section 4 of the Green Belt Topic Paper in accordance with a revised methodology agreed with the Inspector during the examination hearings. This work was completed and submitted to the Inspector by the agreed deadline under delegated authority.

The Council’s letter to the Inspector dated 11th February 2026 makes it clear that the updated Section of the Green Belt Topic Paper does not consider other constraints to development or conclude whether the sites are suitable for allocation. However, we state that if this information is required to progress the Examination, then the Council can undertake this work.

The Inspector’s letter dated 12th February 2026 confirms that the above work is necessary for the examination to proceed, and has asked the Council to undertake this work along with updates to specific pieces of evidence, notably:

- Housing Trajectory / 5 Year Supply
- The Sustainability Appraisal
- The Habitats Regulations Assessment
- The Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- The Transport Assessment

The Council is now undertaking this work.

The Local Plan Programme Officer confirmed on the 3 March 2026 that the evidence detailed above in addition to the two pieces of additional work submitted in January 2026, will be subject to public consultation.

There are no timescales for the public consultation at present and it is anticipated that the Inspector will require an additional Examination Hearing(s) to be held following this public consultation.

It is the Local Plan inspector who makes the final decision on the main modifications to be made to the Local Plan. Prior to the Inspector issuing her binding report, there will be a six week statutory public consultation on the main modifications which the inspector considers necessary to make the Regulation 19 version of the plan sound.

Once that process ends, if the Inspector is happy to confirm that the Plan is indeed ‘sound’ subject to main modifications, all Members will be invited to offer a view and make a decision at Full Council, where they will then be asked to vote on whether to approve the modified Local Plan or not.”

The Council’s explanation makes clear that revisions to the Green Belt Topic Paper were carried out following requests from the Planning Inspector and submitted under delegated authority as part of the examination process. It also emphasises that the updated section does not itself determine whether sites should ultimately be allocated for development.

However, the statement does not directly address the central issue raised by Horton ward Conservative Councillor Kieran Persand — namely whether revised evidence, including document COUD_021 and related material, was submitted without prior scrutiny by the Local Plan Policy Committee or Full Council. The Council’s response focuses on the examination process and future public consultation, but does not explicitly confirm whether councillors were given an opportunity to review the revised evidence before it was sent to the Inspector.

As the Local Plan examination moves forward — with further evidence updates, public consultation and potentially

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additional hearings expected — the question of how and when elected members are involved in reviewing changes to the evidence base may remain a point of political debate within the borough.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Affordable housing scheme approved on Leatherhead green belt

23 March 2026



Greenbelt land in north Leatherhead will be built on after a 100 per cent affordable housing estate was granted planning permission.

Mole Valley District Council's development committee approved the proposals despite fears it could open the door to others looking to pick off valued sites. The 47 homes by developer Carmen Corp will be built in Oxshott Road, Leatherhead, next to the Tesco store after officers said the need for affordable housing outweighed damage done to green belt.

The site lies on rundown land near the M25 and its condition raised concerns with those opposed to development who argued it could encourage others to let greenbelt land fall into disuse to ease planning. Those in favour suggested the 47 affordable homes was too good to pass up – particularly as it was surrounded on three sides by development and currently looked like "no-man's land".

The plans were passed by seven votes in favour to four against.

Claire Malcomson (Liberal Democrat: Holmwoods and Beare Green) said: "Just because it's degraded land is not a reason. We welcome affordable houses, we really don't want people to think we don't.

"This piece of land has been used badly for flytipping, and yes it would be wonderful if it hadn't been. But I am concerned about this and I do feel that developers might be sort of almost trying to twist our arms just because it's affordable."

Others argued the site, derelict and surrounded on three sides, was exactly what was meant as grey belt. Its location next to a large Tesco store, as well as the affordable housing offer, meant the majority backed the plans.

The developer told the March 4 meeting the site suffered from historic misuse, flytipping and ecological decline – and highlighted the housing shortage in the borough. He also addressed questions on affordable housing, saying extra houses could only be occupied if they were made available at below market rates – such was the basis of Homes England funding.

Cllr Monica Weller (Liberal Democrats: Bookham West) said: "We need to be honest about what this site actually is now. Is this pristine, untouchable countryside or is it more, I hate to say, a wasteland?

"I felt that I was going into no-man's land. Let's not joke or kid ourselves that this is special, this is rough. And affordable housing is one of the biggest issues facing families."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Plans for Oxshott Road near Leatherhead (image MVDC)

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Fresh Local Plan row as councillor questions Green Belt revisions and governance at Epsom and Ewell

23 March 2026





Concerns are growing over Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Local Plan after campaigners and a borough councillor raised questions about revised evidence submitted to the Government Planning Inspector — including whether key changes were made without councillor oversight.

The controversy centres on documents submitted during the independent examination of the borough's Local Plan, which will determine where housing development can take place for years to come.

A Green Belt campaign group, a planning expert and Conservative councillor Kieran Persand have all raised concerns about revisions to the evidence base — particularly a Green Belt Topic Paper which could influence whether some land currently protected as Green Belt is opened for development.

Campaigners question governance of revisions

The issue first surfaced in a widely circulated email from the Epsom Greenbelt Group to borough councillors warning of "urgent and serious concerns regarding the recently submitted revised Local Plan documents and the process by which they appear to have been approved and issued."

Campaigners argue that councillors previously authorised officers only to make minor corrections to documents submitted to the Planning Inspector — not material revisions to the evidence.

They say that if significant changes were submitted without member oversight it would raise serious governance concerns and undermine democratic accountability.

The group has called on councillors to clarify what authority officers relied upon when submitting revised documents and whether the Council's Monitoring Officer has reviewed the matter.

Expert analysis identifies potential Green Belt changes

Planning expert Tim Murphy has reviewed the Council's January 2026 Green Belt Topic Paper and identified 33 Green Belt sites assessed for their contribution to preventing urban sprawl and protecting countryside.

Mr Murphy said several sites which scored relatively highly under the Council's own Green Belt rating system were nevertheless recommended for boundary changes that could allow development.

The sites highlighted include:

- Land north of College Road at Downs Farm
- Land near Ewell East Station
- Land west of Burgh Heath Road near South Hatch Stables
- Land extending the Noble Park estate within the Hospital Cluster

Mr Murphy said the justification offered was the existence of "exceptional circumstances", but added that he did not find the arguments convincing.

He noted that these sites have ratings comparable to Horton Farm and the Hook Road Arena — two locations which generated significant public opposition during Local Plan hearings last year.

Other Green Belt sites treated differently

Mr Murphy also pointed out that other Green Belt locations with similar ratings are **not recommended for boundary changes**, including:

- Hollywood Lodge
- Drift Bridge Farm
- Land off Banstead Road
- Land east of Burgh Heath Road

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- Several smaller sites near Downs Road

The difference in treatment raises questions about consistency in the assessment process.

Meanwhile, a separate planning application for **110 homes at Langley Vale** — on land not recommended for Green Belt boundary change — was recently rejected by councillors by six votes to two.

Councillor calls for urgent review

The debate intensified this week when Horton ward Conservative councillor **Kieran Persand** wrote to the chair of the Council's Local Plan Policy Committee (LPPC) urging urgent action.

In his email to councillors, Persand said he had become aware that revised evidence had been sent to the Planning Inspector which "materially differs from evidence previously submitted," including a document known as **COUD_021**.

He said the document appeared to have been submitted without review or approval by the LPPC, the committee responsible for overseeing the Local Plan.

Persand wrote that he had already identified "important errors and other concerns" in the document which he believed should have been addressed before submission.

He also said he had been unable to find any significant change in circumstances — such as changes in national policy — that would justify altering the conclusions of the borough's earlier Green Belt assessment.

Further Green Belt additions possible

Persand warned that the situation may be evolving further.

According to correspondence with the Planning Inspector cited in his email, council officers indicated that **additional evidence and amendments could be submitted by 6 March**, potentially including recommendations for **further Green Belt sites to be added to the Local Plan**.

Persand noted that there were no Local Plan Policy Committee or full council meetings scheduled before that date.

"This suggests that the officers' amendments to submission documents, and proposals for changes to the Local Plan they plan to submit on 6 March, will also not be subject to any review or approval by the LPPC or Full Council," he wrote.

He warned that proceeding without councillor oversight could expose the council to accusations of failing in its duties and even potential judicial review.

Call for documents to return to councillors

Persand has asked the committee chair to arrange for all evidence documents submitted to the Inspector to be brought before the Local Plan Policy Committee before any further submission.

He acknowledged that doing so could delay the council's proposed timetable but argued this would be preferable to risking more serious problems later in the process.

Questions to the council remain unanswered

The *Epsom and Ewell Times* contacted the council's communications department on 28 February seeking clarification on the situation.

The newspaper asked whether a revised paper recommending the removal of some sites from Green Belt protection had been submitted to the Planning Inspector.

At the time of publication, no response had been received.

What happens next

The Planning Inspector will ultimately decide whether the borough's Local Plan is "sound" and can proceed.

However, the council itself remains responsible for setting the borough's strategic direction.

If significant changes to the evidence base are confirmed, councillors may face renewed debate over housing numbers, Green Belt protection and how the Local Plan examination is being managed.

The outcome could shape where thousands of new homes are built in the borough — and whether parts of its Green Belt remain protected — for decades to come.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Epsom & Ewell's Council responds to Local Plan concerns

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Horses beat cars in Epsom’s Langley Vale housing development application

23 March 2026



Plans to build up to 110 homes on agricultural fields in Epsom have been thrown out with fears of a horse vs car ‘collision corridor’. The Langley Vale scheme has been rejected following fierce objections from councillors, local campaigners, and the Jockey Club.

The proposed site, just a stone’s throw from the world-famous Epsom Downs Racecourse, was described as “unsustainable” and a threat to both local wildlife and the town’s horse racing heritage.

After a heated debate at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s planning committee on February 26, councillors shot down the application. Reasons for refusal included the site’s poor transport links, reliance on private cars, harm to the openness of the green belt, risks to horses and riders, and adverse effects on the landscape.

Cllr **Jan Mason** (RA Ruxley) did not mince her words. “It’s not just a few extra cars,” she said. “Have we actually raised the issue of the Jockey Club? The most famous race in the world is held in Epsom in June and has gone on for probably 300 years. This company is only after money.”

She also highlighted the practical issues for new residents: “If there’s no school nearby, no shops, no bus service, then sticking families up on the downs isn’t giving them a home. It’s dumping them where nothing exists.”

Highways and transport were another huge concern. Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley), who represents the area, called the application “fundamentally and legally unsafe,” citing the risk to both residents and the racing industry. “Records reveal a terrifying reality when a horse spooks, its instinct is to bolt for home, often forcing these 500 kg animals onto the public road network” he warned. “By placing 110 homes and hundreds of daily car movements at the mouth of the Warren, a known site for unseated riders, we are creating a collision corridor.”

Local campaigners echoed those concerns. John Mumford, speaking for the Langley Vale Action Group, noted the overwhelming public opposition of 374 letters of objection and a petition with 2,232 signatures. He said: “ For every reason put forward to justify the scheme, there are more compelling policy and environmental reasons as to why this scheme should be refused.”

Bernice Froud (RA Woodcote and Langley), another councillor, painted a vivid picture of the community at risk. “You cannot mitigate the destruction of a community’s soul.” She pointed to horses being part of Epsom’s heritage amongst other wildlife. “The rare and beautiful plant, the night flowering catchfly, has chosen our village as its home. Once we pour concrete over it, we will destroy this site of nature conservation importance forever.”

The Jockey Club added weight to the case, stressing that Epsom’s horse racing industry generates over £63m a year and that the development would “have a significant adverse impact” on operations and equestrian safety, including routes used by racehorses to reach training grounds.

While councillors agreed homes, especially affordable ones, are sorely needed, it does not come at any cost.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Related reports:

Keep our Valley Green say Langley Vale campaigners

110-Home Scheme at Langley Vale Sparks Green Belt Fears

Image: View of proposed Langley Vale development. (Credit: Fairfax Aspire Ltd/ Epsom and Ewell Borough Council planning documents)

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The Ripley effect of rural development in Surrey

23 March 2026



Surrey villagers say they fear their semi-rural community will be “overwhelmed” by development.

Ripley is frequently named one of the prettiest and best places to live in Surrey. But locals are worried it could soon lose the charming character that drew them there as plans for up to 540 homes on farmland edge closer to submission.

The proposed development of Grove Heath North, between Ripley and Send, would see hundreds of two- and three-storey houses built on farmland off Portsmouth Road. While the scheme is still at the environmental scoping stage, locals say the scale alone is enough to change the face of the historic village for good.

‘Completely out of character’

Brian Crosby, chairman of the Grove Heath North Residents’ Association, moved to Ripley 33 years ago from Twickenham for what he calls its “semi-rural character”.

Brian said: “We want to maintain the identity of villages at the edge of the countryside. This [development] just doesn’t sit comfortably behind the existing houses. It would virtually join Ripley to Send Marsh creating more urban sprawl.”

He described the proposal as a major speculative development that is not currently identified as a potential development site in the Local Plan and is a complete shock to our residents who are in disbelief, adding: “The developers do not care what happens to the village afterwards.”

To add insult to injury, the scheme also borrows the very name of Brian’s road, Grove Heath North, which is almost opposite the site. He said he has raised the issue with the developer, arguing it will be confusing for emergency vehicles or delivery drivers in future.

Residents are particularly concerned about three-storey homes, which they say would be “completely out of character” in a village proud of its heritage and historic High Street, once known as the first stop on the coaching route to Portsmouth from the 16th century. The Allium Park Development a mile up the road has 3 storey building being built and these are completely out of character.

While Brian accepts more homes are needed, he argues they should not be built on greenbelt farmland. “This is the easy option,” he said. “The land is used for agriculture. Don’t we need more farmers and people producing food for our country?”

Plans include a new village green, a nature trail and suggests a new local shop. However, the application does not clarify if the developers would build it and the new store would be located next to an existing farm shop.

But Brian said it felt like it was part of a tick-box exercise. “Ripley has one of the largest village greens in the country,” he said. “Giving us effectively what we have already got isn’t adding anything. Sally added the proposed site already had public right of way footpaths running across it.

The developer response

A Green Kite Homes spokesperson said: “This site presents an opportunity to deliver a landscape-led development of new homes and community uses in a highly sustainable location. Our proposals would address identified local housing needs, delivering homes in a range of sizes and tenures.

“We have also listened carefully to feedback received during the public consultation and, as a result, have decided to change the name previously used for the site. We will be engaging further with the local parish councils on this.”

Fears over traffic, schools and sewage

Brian and fellow resident Sally pointed to other large schemes in the wider area, including Wisley Airfield (around 2,000 homes), Gosden Hill (1800 homes), Send Marsh (140 homes) and Allium Park (around 620). They argued there is no “joined-up thinking” about the cumulative impact on roads, schools, doctors and drainage.

Sewage capacity has sparked particular anger. Brian claimed the local works are already struggling and have discharged into the River Wey during heavy rainfall in the last few weeks. They pointed to comments from Thames Water indicating major upgrades are not due to be completed until 2030 and Ripley Sewage plant would not be able to meet Government targets for storm overflows until 2045-2050, and questions whether new homes should be occupied before then.

They questioned the pressure on already stretched services. Brian and Sally warned there is only one GP surgery in

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neighbouring Send which serves both Ripley and Send and one private dentist in Ripley. “The surgery has already had to increase patient numbers and cannot physically increase further,” they said. “Where are all these people going to go?”

There are also claims the local primary school is oversubscribed and there are no local secondary schools nearby, and fears that hundreds of additional commuters would pile a “burden of traffic”. They said roads are already busy, with effectively one main route running through the village, which is often used as a cut-through despite the A3 bypass since there aren’t on and off connections to the A3 at each end of the village.”

A Green Kite Homes spokesperson said: “As part of the planning process, we will continue to work closely with the council and statutory consultees to ensure that local infrastructure can appropriately support development of this scale. This will also include financial contributions towards infrastructure upgrades as part of any future planning consent for the site.”

The current submission is only about setting the scope of environmental studies, not approving the homes themselves. Guildford Borough Council’s decision on the EIA will determine what issues must be examined in detail before any full planning application is considered.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Ripley village sign. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

Cllr prays for Priest Hill not to be developed in Ewell

23 March 2026



A controversial proposal to build hundreds of homes on Green Belt land at Priest Hill in Ewell has re-emerged, with developers now progressing a revised scheme for up to 300 homes. The land, adjacent to Ewell East Station, had previously been identified in the draft Local Plan as a major housing allocation but was later removed from the Regulation 19 version due to concerns over deliverability.

From 350 Homes to 300

Under the earlier Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan, the site — known as NON013 — was allocated for at least 350 net zero carbon dwellings, with buildings up to six storeys, ground-floor retail space and the re-provision of playing pitches at Hook Road Arena. However, concerns were raised during consultation. Sutton & Epsom Rugby Football Club (RFC), which leases part of the site until 2079, objected strongly, citing the importance of its pitches to its 2,000 members and warning of potential harm to its long-term viability. Sport England also raised concerns, noting that any loss of playing field land would have to meet strict national policy tests, including equivalent replacement in quality, quantity, location and accessibility. Following these issues, and in the absence of evidence that long leases could be surrendered, the Council removed the site from the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Local Plan in November 2024.

What Has Changed?

According to the Council’s latest position statement dated 22 January 2026, the landowner’s agents are now seeking pre-application advice for a revised scheme. The updated proposal would redevelop approximately 4.9 hectares currently under the leasehold control of Old Suttonians for up to 300 homes, while retaining the 3.7 hectares leased to Sutton & Epsom RFC as sports pitches. Old Suttonians confirmed to the Council in December 2025 that their use of the land for sports ceased in 1999, the clubhouse and changing rooms were demolished in 2015, and they have signed an option agreement to return their land to the freeholder for redevelopment. They do not sub-lease or share the land with other parties. In contrast, Sutton & Epsom RFC confirmed in January 2026 that it fully utilises its leased land for three senior pitches and one mini pitch and has no intention of ending its lease early, with 53 years remaining.

Green Belt Concerns

Nonsuch Ward Conservative councillor **Shanice Goldman** has called for urgent clarity over the revived proposals. The site lies within the Green Belt and while the revised scheme indicates that rugby pitches would remain, residential development would still take place on designated Green Belt land. Cllr Goldman said: “The protection of Green Belt and transparency in process are not optional extras. They are fundamental.” She added: “This is still Green Belt land. And

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once Green Belt is gone, it does not come back." Residents, she said, had been left with the impression that large-scale development at Priest Hill was no longer proceeding and were now asking what has changed.

Housing Need Versus Open Land

The landowner's agents have previously argued that the site is well served by public transport and should be reconsidered given the borough's unmet housing need. The current proposal is at pre-application stage, meaning no formal planning application has yet been submitted. However, the renewed activity is likely to reignite debate over housing numbers, Green Belt protection and the future of community sports provision in Ewell. Interested parties include Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, the freeholder Coldunell Limited, Old Suttonians and Sutton & Epsom Rugby Football Club. Further details are expected once a formal planning application is lodged.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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Councillors belted-up on Green Belt?

Land adjoining Ewell East Station

Image: Development area approximately overlaid on Google Map aerial view of Priest Hill.

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Now regulated, Epsom and Ewell greenlights children home

23 March 2026



Plans to turn a 'quiet' family house into a children's home for vulnerable young people have been approved despite strong objections from neighbours, warnings from police, and a heated council debate.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's planning committee gave the green light on January 29 for a house in Holmwood Road to be turned into a home for up to three children with learning disabilities and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The children will be cared for by staff working shifts, and the home will be regulated by Ofsted.

The decision comes years after an unregistered children's home at the same address was shut down following serious problems in the area. A council report said the previous children's home was closed by police after several problems including antisocial behaviour, vandalism, drug use and noise and disruption.

Residents told councillors they were frightened history would repeat itself.

One neighbour, Lucy, said at the meeting: "People are genuinely scared and simply cannot endure this again. If you put this through, they're planning to move." She quoted Surrey Police as saying: "A children's home at this location, there would be a significant increase in antisocial behaviour and calls to emergency services."

She added: "This is not just about the welfare of three children who need a home. It's about the welfare of the well-being and safety of our elderly and vulnerable and our children."

Nonsuch ward councillor **Shanice Goldman** (Conservative Nonsuch) said she supports children's care in principle, but not at this address. She told the meeting: "Safeguarding children and protecting communities are not competing objectives. They are aligned." But she warned police concerns were "a serious and material planning consideration" and

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said the plan did not give enough reassurance.

Cllr **Christine Howells** (RA Nonsuch) said neighbours had previously faced “threats, intimidation” and that problems became so bad “the home was closed by the police.” She said: “Not every location is appropriate.”

But the company behind the new home, IMPACT Children’s Residential Care, said this would be completely different. Director Javon Wilson said: “I must be absolutely clear that the unregulated provision previously closed by the police and the local authorities has no association whatsoever with IMPACT’s children residential care.” He added: “We have no intention of operating an unregulated service.”

Some councillors were still unsure. Cllr **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) said: “You haven’t really given me any confidence.” He said he was unsure of the neighbourhood impact.

Others argued planning rules meant they had to focus on the property, not past behaviour. Committee chair Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) said members must separate the application from “the previous antisocial behaviour of the previously unlicensed home.”

Cllr **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) said: “I really don’t see how it could be refused. It’s a service to the community.” In the end, councillors approved the plan, saying the need for children’s homes and strict Ofsted regulation outweighed residents’ fears.

Emily Dalton LDRS

139 Holmwood Road, Cheam, Surrey. (Credit: Google Street View)

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Red rag at Bull Hill as residents rage over high-rise plans

23 March 2026



Huge high rises including hundreds of homes near a small Leatherhead park will kill the town and plunge precious playspace into shadow, say campaigners fighting the plans.

Mole Valley District Council has formed a partnership with Kier Property to “transform Leatherhead” by delivering new housing and upgrading the dated 1980s Swan Centre shopping precinct.

The original plan split housing between Bull Hill open space next to the railway station and the Swan Centre. However, engineers later advised that the shopping centre could not support housing, prompting a late change that would place all 480 homes, offices and a multi-storey car park on the Bull Hill site.

Campaigners say the height of the buildings would cast much of the remaining open space and children’s playground into shade and turn a designated safe walking route for school pupils into an access road for construction workers. They say the proposals would dwarf the existing three-storey blocks near the park.

Residents say they are not opposed to housing and understand the need for town-centre development to protect the wider green belt, but argue that the scale and intensity of the proposals are too much for Leatherhead to absorb. Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service, they said the project alone would increase the town’s population by almost 10 per cent and permanently alter its character.

The council argues the homes will help meet housing targets, fund the regeneration of the Swan Centre and protect valued green space outside urban areas. It also says the project would create jobs, increase footfall for shops and include a new three-screen cinema as part of a £12m refurbishment of the centre — a figure residents compare with the £14m agreed to refurbish Dorking Halls without building on open space.

Campaigners’ concerns

Steve Preston, Susan Hood and Bev Emms have led opposition to the proposals, organising resident meetings and encouraging people to submit views to the council, whether in support or against, to ensure Bull Hill is developed in the best possible way.

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They say the scheme is far too intense for one of the last open spaces in the town centre and that instead of a welcoming park for people arriving by train, residents would be met by tiers of car parking, office blocks and towers up to 12 storeys high.

They said the plans would “absolutely kill Leatherhead”, adding that Bull Hill is a vital green space and that “it’s now or never”. While not opposing development in principle, they said any scheme must be right for the town. They pointed out that currently people leave the station and walk straight into a park, whereas under the proposals they would be confronted by an eight-storey car park with “Leatherhead” written on the side and a 12-storey tower in the corner. They questioned what would be more attractive — a park or a concrete car park.

Campaigners said the original proposals were for 150 homes at the Swan Centre and 300 at Bull Hill, but when the Swan Centre proved unworkable all housing was moved to the park to fund shopping centre upgrades. They argued the original Bull Hill buildings were much lower and warned that towers of up to 12 storeys would overshadow the playground and green space, leaving it in shade for much of the year.

Flooding is also a concern, with residents pointing to visible signs of sewage overflow near storm drains. Although the formal consultation deadline has passed, the council has said it will consider submissions received ahead of its final decision. Campaigners have urged residents to make their views known, whether in favour or opposed.

Car parking is another issue, with 300 spaces proposed for around 480 homes housing roughly 1,000 people. With the town’s population at around 11,000, residents fear overstretched services, gridlocked roads and irreversible change.

They said Bull Hill currently feels like an oasis and warned that if the scheme is approved Leatherhead would be changed forever, with no opportunity to reverse the decision.

Council and developer response

The council’s plan includes 81 affordable homes across two blocks and describes the application as a key milestone in its Transform Leatherhead regeneration. It also expects around £9m in developer contributions.

The Leret Partnership is a joint venture between Mole Valley District Council and Kier Property, combining public land ownership with private investment to regenerate the Swan Centre and Bull Hill. The council owns the land, while Kier Property is funding most planning and development costs and the majority of build costs. If planning permission is granted, some land will transfer to the partnership, while some will remain in council ownership. The council will also retain ownership and control of the Swan Centre.

Leigh Thomas, group managing director of Kier Property, said the project would boost the town and reverse recent declines in shops and footfall. He said Bull Hill was Leatherhead’s most sustainable brownfield site, next to the station, buses and the High Street, and that building homes there would reduce car commuting while supporting the town centre.

He said the scheme would generate around 870 construction jobs and around 1,300 permanent jobs, alongside approximately £9m in contributions over the lifetime of the development. He added that height had been carefully tested, with taller buildings placed next to the railway and lower buildings stepping down towards existing neighbourhoods, arguing that reducing height would also reduce affordable housing, public space and funding for the Swan Centre.

Mr Thomas said early designs had been significantly reworked following community feedback, with buildings moved, heights reduced in sensitive areas and the layout changed. He said residents could continue submitting comments via the council’s planning portal.

Councillor Keira Vyvyan-Robinson, Mole Valley District Council’s cabinet member for commercial assets and property, said the partnership’s gross development value ran into hundreds of millions of pounds, far exceeding the £12m planned for the Swan Centre upgrade. She said the investment would bring long-term regeneration benefits, increased footfall, support for local businesses, new jobs and much-needed housing.

She said the £14m allocated to Dorking Halls related to essential safety and maintenance works to keep the historic venue operational and that without the investment the building would face significant risks to its future.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

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Plans for Bull Hill Leatherhead (image Leret Group)

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Redhill developers make a towering mistake

23 March 2026



Two major landmark towers that would have dominated a Surrey town have been dismissed with campaigners claiming a major victory in their long-running battle. Developers Solum Regeneration had been hoping to build high-rises of 14 and 15 stories next to Redhill station, but were refused planning permission by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council in 2024. Undeterred, they dug in and challenged the decision through the courts forcing a long drawn-out process. Residents, however, galvanised to challenge the process.

Now, they are celebrating after the planning inspectorate threw out the bid to create Redhill's tallest buildings saying it would forever harm the town's character, blot out existing views of wooded hills outside Redhill, and create pedestrian safety risks. Redhill Residents Action Group (RRAG), formed to represent hundreds of residents and rail users.

The appeal, brought by Solum Development, a partnership between Network Rail and Keir, was opposed on planning grounds relating to design quality, impact on heritage and town character and the effect on access to a vital transport hub.

Jan Sharman, Campaign lead for RRAG said: "We have always believed this was the wrong development for such an important site. Redhill station should be embracing the future, with integrated rail, bus and active travel.
"Developers need to think with vision and create places that genuinely work for communities."

Solum had insisted the development was needed for the town and would deliver 255 much needed housing to the area – particularly as the council is missing its targets. The scheme would have also revamped the railway station, and increased footfall to town centre.

The taxi rank would have been relocated to the back of the station, with most drivers and cyclists directed to the steep Redstone Hill entrance. Disability campaigners said this would shut those mobility issues out. The inspector however decided the sheer size of the scheme was just too much.

Jan added: "We fully recognise the need for more homes, particularly for younger people. But homes must be genuinely affordable, well designed and properly integrated into their surroundings. Building housing that people cannot afford, in the wrong place, helps no one."

The inquiry was held over September 2 to 5 and continued between November 24 to 28 last year. Planning inspector Joanna Gilbert issued her decision on January 19, 2026. She said: "The proposal would provide the benefit of 255 housing units that carries substantial weight. There would be other benefits to which I have afforded significant, moderate and limited weight. However, I have afforded very substantial weight to the adverse effects on the character and appearance of the area."

"There are moderate, limited and very limited levels of less than substantial harms to designated heritage assets and a moderate indirect adverse effect on a non-designated heritage asset. There would also be significant weight to the harm in respect of highway and pedestrian safety, including parking. Additionally, there would be moderate weight to the harm to living conditions for some occupiers of Quadrant House."

She added: "For the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Redhill Train Station development 15-storey tower block distance CGI (Credit Solum planning documents)

Epsom and Ewell one of the most expensive places to own a home in the UK

23 March 2026

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Residents in Epsom and Ewell could be spending the equivalent of more than four-fifths of a ***single*** average salary on mortgage repayments, according to a new affordability analysis published by property buying firm Sell House Fast. The study ranks Epsom and Ewell fourth among UK areas outside London for the proportion of “net annual pay” it estimates would be taken up by annual mortgage repayments, putting the figure at 82.2%.

The analysis combines earnings data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings with local average house prices from the UK House Price Index. It then models mortgage repayment costs by assuming a 20 per cent deposit and applying the Bank of England base rate. On that basis, Sell House Fast lists Epsom and Ewell with a median annual net pay of £35,380, an average house price of £560,957, and estimated annual mortgage repayments of £29,083.

Official figures suggest the house-price element of the estimate is broadly consistent with published data. ONS housing statistics show the average house price in Epsom and Ewell was around £556,000 in October 2025 (provisional), rising to about £570,000 for homes bought with a mortgage.

Housing analysts caution, however, that figures of this kind are highly sensitive to assumptions. The analysis does not describe what existing homeowners in Epsom and Ewell actually pay each month, but instead models repayments using a fixed deposit level and an interest-rate assumption that may not reflect the mortgage products many households are on, particularly those who secured fixed-rate deals in earlier years. The Bank of England base rate has also changed several times over the past year, which can significantly affect illustrative repayment calculations.

It is also important to note that the comparison is based on the average net salary of a single individual. In practice, many mortgages in Epsom and Ewell are taken out jointly, with repayments shared between two wage earners, which can substantially alter affordability at the household level.

Even with these caveats, the analysis adds to wider evidence that Epsom and Ewell remains one of the least affordable areas in the South East when local incomes are set against local house prices, underlining the continued pressure faced by first-time buyers and households seeking to move within the borough.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: An Epsom Street – Google Maps

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