EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Surrey countryside campaigners warn new planning rules risk more speculative development

18 December 2025



Local countryside campaigners have voiced strong concerns over the Government's newly announced changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), warning that the reforms could increase speculative development across Surrey without delivering the affordable housing and infrastructure communities need.

The changes, announced by the Housing Minister this week, form part of the Government's wider pledge to accelerate housebuilding and address England's housing shortage. Ministers say the revised framework is intended to simplify the planning system, reduce delays, and ensure local authorities play a more active role in meeting housing need.

Among the key changes outlined by the Government are a renewed emphasis on meeting housing targets, revisions to how land supply is assessed, and proposals to allow some areas of the Green Belt to be reclassified as so-called "grey belt" land where development is judged to have limited environmental or landscape value. Ministers have also argued that the reforms will reduce repeated legal challenges and appeals that, they say, slow down development.

Responding to the announcement, CPRE Surrey said it was "deeply concerned" that the changes would fail to meet their stated aims while placing greater pressure on countryside land.

Andy Smith of CPRE Surrey said the proposals were "unlikely to meet the Government's aim of speeding up housebuilding but will certainly blight more of our countryside with the shadow of unwanted development".

"Yes, we need more affordable housing but these proposals won't achieve that," he said. "What we will see is a further increase in speculative development which boosts the profits of developers but will not produce the housing or public services that we really need."

CPRE Surrey has questioned why the Government is pursuing development on Green Belt land when national figures indicate there is capacity for at least 1.4 million new homes on brownfield sites across England. Campaigners argue that the absence of a legally enforceable "Brownfield First" policy means developers will continue to prioritise greenfield sites, where land values are higher and projects are more commercially attractive.

"Why, when across England there is space for at least 1.4 million new homes on brownfield sites, does the Government still want to reclassify much of the Green Belt as 'grey belt' and build on it?" Mr Smith asked. "Why do Ministers want us to lose farmland and open spaces to the developers?"

The Government has also said the changes are intended to prevent repeated attempts to overturn planning decisions. In Parliament, the Housing Minister said the reforms would help end a system that allows parties to "come back again and again if they don't get the outcome they want".

CPRE Surrey disputes that characterisation, arguing that it is developers, not local communities, who benefit from repeated appeals. Mr Smith said that if a planning application is approved by a Surrey council, local residents generally have no right of appeal, whereas developers can submit multiple revised applications or appeals following refusals.

"Developers can indeed 'come back again and again' with appeals and revised, often barely changed, planning applications, aiming to wear down the objectors," he said. "The proportion of legal challenges brought by local communities is tiny compared to the number of developments that are pushed through."

While ministers insist the revised NPPF will streamline decision-making and unlock new housing supply, CPRE Surrey said it could not see how the changes would genuinely speed up development or improve outcomes for communities.

"All these changes will do is play into the hands of speculative developers," Mr Smith said.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework is expected to guide planning decisions across England once formally adopted, with local authorities required to update their planning policies in line with the new national framework.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: View of development land west from Hookwood, Horley. (Credit: Google Street View)

Related reports:

110-Home Scheme at Langley Vale Sparks Green Belt Fears

Golf course housing tees off Green Belt preservers

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Mole Valley setting a green belt development trend?

Epsom Green Belt Debate Intensifies

Blockbuster cinema and 480 homes plan for Leatherhead town centre

18 December 2025



Hundreds of new homes in blocks of up to 12 storeys high, as well as a three-screen cinema, could be coming to Leatherhead town centre if newly submitted plans are approved. The Leret Partnership, a joint venture between Mole Valley District Council and Kier Property, has submitted its formal application to regenerate the Swan Centre and Bull Hill in Leatherhead. They want to build up to 480 new homes with 81 of those, spread between two blocks, classed as affordable. The site, already set aside for development as part of the council's local plan, would also get a cinema.

The plan has been submitted as a single build but is split across two distinct sites: Bull Hill and the Swan Centre. Detailed plans show Bull Hill will be converted into six blocks of 276 homes, 133 of which will be one-bed flats, with a further 133 two-bed apartments and 10 three-bed homes. The 81 affordable homes will be housed in blocks E and F. The private blocks will be six storeys high while block E will stand five storeys tall and block F rising to nine storeys. There are also further outline plans to go up to 12 storeys at the site to provide an additional 203 homes, office space and potentially a nursery.

The second part of the application covers The Swan Centre, which has served as Leatherhead's shopping hub since it was constructed in the 1980s. The plans want to demolish Leret House to open the space and create a new public square with a three-screen 239-seat cinema. "The Applicant has been in discussion with leisure agents and cinema operators and the building has been designed to accommodate other leisure uses (competitive socialising) should the occupier change in the future", planning documents read.

There are also plans to build a new multi-storey car park, office space, as well as a potential GP surgery, shops, and cafes and restaurants. The council described the submission of the planning application as a key milestone in its Transform Leatherhead regeneration and that, when built, it will bring more people into the town centre. It also expects to receive about £9m in developer contributions, which can then be used on infrastructure and community improvements elsewhere in the borough. Residents are able to submit their views to the council before its planning committee votes on the proposals.

Cllr Keira Vyvyan-Robinson, cabinet member for property and projects, Mole Valley District Council, said: "The submission is a significant milestone in the delivery of the Transform Leatherhead programme and a real step forward in boosting Leatherhead's unique position as the gateway to the Surrey Hills. The proposals will breathe new life into Leatherhead's town centre, rejuvenate the Swan Centre and deliver much-needed homes for the district, providing jobs and securing sustainable investment for the local community."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Image: Jv Planning Submission

Epsom and Ewell homeless costs set to overshoot by £900k

18 December 2025

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is forecasting a substantial overspend on its homelessness budget this year, **as reported to the BBC**, with demand for help remaining “consistently high”.

According to figures provided by the council via the BBC, the number of people seeking assistance in the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year rose by 19% compared with the same period last year. The authority has already overspent by £587,412 in the first six months and now expects the gap to widen to £895,000 by March 2026.

Local and national pressures

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village), who chairs the Community and Wellbeing Committee, told the BBC the pressures facing the borough echoed those “found nationwide”, driven largely by the lack of affordable, permanent housing and the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

He added that Epsom and Ewell faces its own structural challenges, including a limited supply of affordable private rented homes, no council-owned housing stock, and a long-standing shortage of social housing.

The council’s budget for 2025/26 was set on the assumption that 70 families would be in nightly paid temporary accommodation. However, as of 24 October, the figure had climbed to 114.

Prevention schemes and charity support

Councillor Woodbridge said the council was concentrating on homelessness prevention, expanding private sector leasing arrangements and making greater use of rent deposit schemes. Local charities are also involved in reducing demand for emergency housing, notably YMCA East Surrey, which provides guidance and support for people at risk of losing their homes.

One woman from Redhill, who spoke to the BBC, said YMCA assistance stopped her falling into homelessness after a period of severe illness. She described how disability and post-traumatic stress disorder left her unable to work during and after the pandemic. With rent arrears mounting and her informal support network exhausted, she feared emergency accommodation was the next step. YMCA staff helped her with the paperwork and guided her into permanent housing.

A wider Surrey picture

Epsom and Ewell is not alone in facing escalating temporary accommodation bills. As reported by the BBC, Woking Borough Council expects to overspend by £350,000 this year, while Waverley Borough Council has forecast a £165,000 shortfall.

The national situation is equally stark. Government statistics published earlier this year showed the number of households in temporary accommodation in England at its highest level since records began in 1998, driven by rising private rents, the freeze on housing benefit Local Housing Allowance rates, and continued shortages of social housing. Councils across the South East report similar difficulties securing affordable lets for families, often at prices far above their budgets.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council is expected to revisit its temporary accommodation strategy early in 2026 as financial pressures continue to mount.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: © Copyright Evelyn Simak and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.

Related reports:

Epsom’s homelessness crisis

What are the solutions to Epsom’s homeless crisis?

Pods off in bricks grant for Epsom homeless

Did a fair view prevail on Epsom’s modular homes for the homeless?

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom and Ewell housing targets in the crosshairs

18 December 2025



The borough of Epsom and Ewell is currently engaged in a critical juncture of its planning future. The Council's Regulation 19 draft Local Plan is under examination by the Planning Inspector, and at the same time the Government's own statisticians, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), have published their new household projections. The juxtaposition of these two sets of figures highlights a growing tension between demographic trends, the Government's national housing policy tool (the "standard method"), and local deliverability constraints.

Household growth projected by ONS

According to the ONS's "2022-based" household projections for local authority areas, the number of households in Epsom & Ewell is forecast to rise from approximately **31,299** in 2022 to **35,493** in 2042 — an increase of about **4,194 households** over 20 years, which corresponds to roughly **209 additional households per year**.

It is important to emphasise that these are demographic projections (households forming under assumed migration, fertility, mortality etc). They do *not* translate directly into the number of homes that must be built: they make no allowance for planning constraints, land supply, local infrastructure, or policy decisions.

What the draft Local Plan proposes

The draft Local Plan for EEBC, covering the period 2022-2040, sets out the following key housing supply/requirement numbers:

- A minimum housing requirement of **4,700 dwellings** over the Plan period, which equates to approximately **261 dwellings per year**.
- An identified supply to deliver around **4,900-4,914 dwellings**, providing a modest buffer above the minimum requirement.
  These numbers reflect the Council's assessment of what is realistically deliverable given local constraints (Green Belt, flood risk, infrastructure, viability etc).

The "standard method" for housing need

Under national planning policy (the National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF) the "standard method" is the Government's default tool for calculating housing need in local authorities. This is not a requirement automatically to be delivered by local authorities, but sets a starting point that local plans should address.
In the case of EEBC:

- In the Plan examination evidence the Council cites a standard method calculation of **10,242 dwellings** over the plan period, which equates to about **569 dwellings per year** — a figure more than double the Plan's proposed annual rate.
- Separately, analysts have calculated that under the more recent **stock-based standard method** (introduced in late 2024) which uplifts areas with higher affordability pressures, EEBC's implied requirement would be around **871 dwellings per year**, i.e. nearly 900 homes a year.

Why the "affordability uplift" matters

A key message that has emerged from CPRE Surrey and elected members is that the new standard method gives very heavy weight to the "affordability uplift" — the ratio of house prices to local earnings — and that this seriously disadvantages boroughs such as Epsom & Ewell.

As **Tim Murphy** (CPRE Surrey) put it: "The latest numbers from the Government's own statisticians show that the housing target set by the Government for Epsom and Ewell is totally unrealistic. The target would mean that, over the next twenty years, the Borough would lose much of its existing open space – the character of the area would be changed for the worse for ever."

Specifically:

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

- The standard method compares local house prices with *local* earnings. In Epsom & Ewell many resident households earn London or Canary Wharf salaries (commuting to central London) which inflate local house prices but are not captured in the earnings base used for the formula.
- There is no adjustment (in the national method) for such commuting-induced distortion of house prices. The result: the formula treats Epsom & Ewell as a high affordability-pressure area and drives a very large uplift in the 'need' figure.
  In short: the standard method may be overstating "need" in places where price inflation is driven by non-local earnings rather than purely local demand or local pay.

Contrasting the figures: ONS vs Local Plan vs Standard Method

Here are the headline comparisons:

- **ONS household formation projection**: ~209 new households per year (2022–2042)
- **EEBC draft Local Plan requirement**: ~261 homes per year (2022–2040)
- **Standard method (2023 NPPF basis)**: ~569 homes per year (10,242 over the period)
- **Updated stock-based standard method (2024 NPPF basis)**: ~871 homes per year (analyst estimate)

What this shows:

- The Local Plan's 261 homes per year is *above* the demographic projection of ~209 households per year, thus it can be argued that the Plan is planning for growth above simple demographic trend.
- However, it remains *far below* the standard method starting points (569 or 871 per annum) — representing a significant gap between what the national policy tool implies and the local Plan provides.
- The gap calls into question how far the Borough should be expected to "deliver" the full standard-method figure given local constraints, and whether a higher rate is justified (or deliverable) in practice.

Additional context from councillors

Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) notes that: "Epsom and Ewell has a huge housing crisis now and can't provide suitable homes for its current residents so the borough needs to build more than just enough to keep up with household growth. There are people in serious need of rehousing who are waiting years … the Residents Association … needs to stop looking for reasons to block new housing and start working with developers to build decent homes for residents."

This underlines that local housing need is not only about future households but existing unmet need: social housing shortages, long waiting lists, temporary accommodation of poor quality, and the knock-on effects on children's life chances, health, education and emotional well-being.

Councillor **James Lawrence** (LibDem College) adds further policy context, reminding us that the draft Local Plan is being prepared under the December 2023 NPPF (which uses the earlier standard method approach). He points out that the updated 2024 NPPF uses the stock-based standard method, raising further questions of whether the Plan needs to be reassessed in light of the new method. He also highlights the circularity argument: using future population projections to determine how many homes to build, when building more homes will itself change future population.

Councillor **Peter O'Donovan** (RA Ewell Court), Chair of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Licensing Policy and PLanning Committee responded: "The Councils Local Plan was submitted to government in March 2025 and is now being examined by a government appointed Planning Inspector, this is known as the examination stage. The revised ONS household projections data do not impact the examination of the Local Plan. Keep up to date with the Local Plan Examination here: Local Plan Examination | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council"

Implications for Epsom & Ewell

The mismatch between demographic projections on the one hand and national policy-based housing "need" on the other has several implications:

- **Deliverability and infrastructure**: The higher standard method numbers assume a very much higher rate of building than the Borough has historically achieved. If such rates were imposed, the supply of suitable land, infrastructure capacity (transport, schools, services), viability of development and environmental constraints (Green Belt, flood zones) would all come under significant pressure.
- **Green space and character**: As Tim Murphy rightly flags, if nearly nine hundred homes per year were required over twenty years, the borough's character, open spaces, suburban nature and amenity would face significant change. For many local residents preservation of character is a live concern.
- **Affordability link and commuting distortion**: The standard method's reliance on local earnings means that boroughs like Epsom & Ewell (with many commuters earning London wages) may be unfairly treated. The commuting effect inflates prices but is not compensated by the earnings measure. The formula may therefore

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

over-inflate “need” in such areas.

- **Focus on genuine need**: The local context shows that, beyond future household growth, there is an existing backlog of need (e.g., social housing, temporary accommodation, unsuitable homes). If the borough simply aimed to match new household formation it might still fail to meet the existing need. Councillors emphasise that making provision for those already housed in inadequate conditions must be part of the strategy.
- **Policy and timing**: The draft Local Plan uses the earlier standard method (2023 NPPF) calculations; the switched methodology in the 2024 NPPF potentially changes the baseline “need” significantly. This raises questions as to whether the Plan remains future-proof and whether the examination will ask for an updated technical basis.

For the readership of the Epsom & Ewell Times and stakeholders across the local community, the following points merit emphasis:

- Clarify that the ONS figure (~209 homes per year) shows what is *likely* in demographic terms, but that housing targets set by policy may differ significantly.
- Highlight the role of the affordability uplift and how the standard method treats areas like Epsom & Ewell (with commuting wage influences) differently from truly local-wage areas.
- Encourage the Council and stakeholders to scrutinise whether the standard method’s assumptions are appropriate in the local context and whether the draft Plan provides sufficient evidence to justify deviation from higher figures.
- Promote transparency on how the Plan addresses existing housing deprivation, not just future household formation: how many social or affordable homes, how many temporary accommodation units, how many conversions of unsuitable homes, etc.
- Ask whether the local infrastructure, land supply and environmental constraints realistically allow delivery of very high build rates, and whether the Plan sufficiently tests viability at the higher levels implied by the standard method.
- Encourage local residents to comment on the Plan and its housing provision strategy, especially in light of the gap between national “need” figures and local deliverability.
- Recommend that the Council monitors any changes in Government policy or standard method revisions (e.g., if further changes to the affordability uplift or commuting adjustments are introduced) and updates the Plan accordingly.

Epsom & Ewell’s draft Local Plan appears modest but credible when viewed against demographic household growth alone. However, it falls far short of the housing “need” implied by the Government’s standard method calculations. The prominence of the affordability uplift in that method raises particular concerns for commuter-belt boroughs such as this, where local earnings do not fully capture the incomes of many resident households. The key challenge for the borough is to strike a balance between realistic deliverability, protection of local character and amenity, and the clear social housing need that exists today. The examination process offers an opportunity to test whether the Plan is positively prepared, justified and effective — but it will also require robust scrutiny of whether national formulae appropriately reflect local circumstances.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Stage 2 Examination of Epsom & Ewell’s Local Plan opens Tuesday

Epsom & Ewell’s Local Plan under the Green microscope

The Local Plan plot thickens after revised NPPF

….. and many more. Search “local plan”.

Historic Surrey Hills mansion saved from falling

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

into “rack and ruin”

18 December 2025



An additional 27 homes will be built at an abandoned Surrey Hills mansion and stables to stop the heritage buildings falling into “rack and ruin”. In February 2023, Mole Valley District Council approved the creation of Audley Headley Court, a 112-home retirement community at the historic site. Now, following the October 1 meeting of the council’s development committee, the extra units will be added to the green belt land to make the project financially viable to the developers.

The plans were passed without objection from councillors who were echoing residents’ desire to see the old site returned to use and for its much-loved garden spaces to be opened to the public. David Preedy of Headley Parish Council said: “Headley Court is critical to our community both in terms of its history and the impact on the village.” He admitted the extra homes were not without controversy but that the parish backed the plans to put an end to the “years of disruption and significant decay to the heritage of our village and the gardens and the heritage buildings”.

The mansion house has been vacant since the departure of the Ministry of Defence, with the Jubilee Complex gardens used by the NHS and Surrey County Council during the pandemic. The estate has also been used to support Help for Heroes, those who fought in the Afghanistan war and more recently the NHS throughout the pandemic.

Developers said the refurbishment and reuse of listed mansion houses and stables, alongside sensitive reinstatement of the extensive grounds, will make much of the land publicly accessible for the first time. It would also help meet the need for specialist housing for older people as well as bring social and community benefits, the meeting heard.

The applicant’s agent said: “It has received no objections from the local community with whom we have engaged extensively since our first involvement with the site back in early 2022. We will continue to ingratiate ourselves into the local community as we have done elsewhere and bring the site back to its former glory.”

Councillor Roger Adams (Liberal Democrat, Bookham West) said: “This is a historic site and it would be a great shame to see it fall into rack and ruin.” He added: “It was a pity that green belt land must be taken but on the other hand if it must be taken to preserve the whole site and improve the whole site, then so be it.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Headley Court. Credit Angle Property.

Related report:

14 against 59 = 70? Dilemma for Headley

Stage 2 Examination of Epsom & Ewell’s Local Plan opens Tuesday

18 December 2025



The Inspector appointed to examine Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s draft Local Plan, **C Masters MA (Hons) FRTPI**, will open Stage 2 hearings at **Epsom Town Hall, The Parade, KT18 5BY**, on **Tuesday 30 September 2025 at 9.30am**.

These hearings test whether the Plan is “sound” — whether it has been positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy. The hearings are open to the public for observation from the Council Chamber gallery. Only invited participants may speak, but all are welcome to attend and watch the process unfold.

Hearing dates:

- Tue 30 Sept (09:30 start)

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

- Wed 1 Oct
- Thu 2 Oct
- Fri 3 Oct (10:00 start)
- Tue 7 Oct
- Wed 8 Oct
- Thu 9 Oct
- Fri 10 Oct (reserve day)

The full hearing programme, Inspector's questions and examination library can be found on the Council's Local Plan examination page.

Spotlight on Horton Farm (Site Allocation 35)

Among many proposed sites across the borough, **Horton Farm (SA35)** is by far the largest single allocation, earmarked for around **1,250 homes, a 7-hectare public park and 10 Gypsy & Traveller pitches**. It sits next to Horton Cemetery and near Horton Country Park.

- **Clarendon Park Residents' Association (Alex Duval)** argue that the Council has not demonstrated the "exceptional circumstances" required to release high-performing Green Belt land. They raise concerns about flooding, sewage, school places and transport, and question why alternative sites for the Traveller pitches were not properly considered.
- **CPRE Surrey (Tim Murphy)** objects to the loss of Green Belt at Horton Farm, urging a stronger focus on brownfield redevelopment and urban densities. Council for the Protection of Rural England.
- **Friends of Horton Cemetery (Lionel Blackman)** do not oppose Horton Farm outright but call for binding commitments that developer contributions restore the historic cemetery as a garden of rest.
- **The Church Commissioners**, who own Horton Farm, strongly support the allocation. Their planning consultants argue it is a sustainable and deliverable location, capable of providing affordable and family housing, community facilities and transport links. They accept surface water flooding is a constraint but say it can be managed through design. They oppose the Council's request for 20% biodiversity net gain, though they commit to meeting national standards.
- See our report on an apparent conflict of interest concerning this allocation for the Council's consultant who's employer also represents the Commissioners. Conflict on Epsom's Green Belt plans of another kind?

Other sites

The Inspector will also be examining numerous other proposed development sites across the borough. Horton Farm is singled out here because of its size and prominence, but EET will continue reporting on the full range of allocations and community responses.

Practical note for readers

- Public seating is first-come, so arrive early for 9:30 starts.
- Proceedings are formal but led by the Inspector, not adversarial.
- Key documents, timetables and updates are on the Council's Local Plan examination page.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports:

Epsom & Ewell's Local Plan under the Green microscope

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan Submitted for Examination

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom and Ewell Council response to Local Plan criticism

The Local Plan plot thickens after revised NPPF

Council minority vote Local Plan to next stage with Green Belt in

…and many more – search “local plan” in our search box.

Elmbridge resists London’s creep into Surrey

18 December 2025



Outline plans for 60 homes on the edge of a Surrey village have been scrapped again in a bid to stop “London creeping towards us”.

Elmbridge councillors said the land north of Raleigh Drive in Claygate is green belt not ‘grey belt’ and ruled it unsuitable for housing at a planning meeting on September 16.

They also said the plans failed the flood risk ‘sequential test’ meaning safer sites should be looked at first before building there.

The scheme would have seen new homes (up to 50 per cent affordable), open space and landscaping built on the land north of Raleigh Drive and to the east of Claygate House.

The application triggered more than 300 objections from residents, alongside opposition from Claygate Parish Council. Concerns centred on traffic, flooding and the loss of open countryside.

Cllr Janet Turner said: “I have seen over the years how London is creeping towards us.” The member for Hinchley Wood explained: “When you come out of London to Hinchley Wood or Esher or Long Ditton, you will immediately relax because you have an open aspect.

“This is what Elmbridge and Surrey are all about. This is the entrance into our cultural area and we must protect it. Once it’s gone you cannot bring it back.”

Other members agreed, arguing if you weakened one patch of the green belt, you weakened the whole metropolitan ring. Cllr Alistair Mann described it as “death by a thousand cuts” to the green belt if piecemeal applications keep being approved.

The site, next to Claygate house, once home to a bowls green, pitch and putt course and tennis courts, has reportedly fallen into disrepair.

A similar plan was refused in 2023 and dismissed at appeal last year with inspectors at the time ruling it was inappropriate development in the green belt.

Planning officers initially recommended the new scheme for approval, arguing that housing demand and national policy around the green belt has changed.

Elmbridge can currently only demonstrate a 0.9-year housing supply- well below the five years required by the government. Elmbridge currently has a house building target of 1,443 homes annually.

“Our housing need is so critical now, I don’t think this scratchy bit of land is putting green belt in danger,” said Cllr Elaine Sesemann.

She explained: “I would protect greenbelt forever along with every other councillor in this chamber but the world of planning has changed so dramatically.”

Council leader Mike Rollings admitted the local housing need has dramatically increased since 2023 when the plans were first put forward. However Cllr Rolling still determined the square patch of land was not appropriate for house building.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Illustrative view looking south of application site (left) and former Claygate House with Shanly Homes Oaklands Park development to the rear (Credit: Elmbridge Borough Council)

Big housing development coming to Guildford

18 December 2025

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Guildford could soon see one of its biggest housing developments in decades, with fresh plans submitted to build up to 1,800 new homes at Gosden Hill.

Developers Martin Grant Homes want to transform farmland off the A3 into a new neighbourhood complete with schools, shops, sports pitches, and even a Park and Ride.

The outline applications sets out a long-term vision for the site, which would include:

- Up to 1,800 homes, including 40 per cent affordable housing
- Six Gypsy and Traveller pitches
- A new local centre with shops, health and community facilities
- Land for both a primary school and secondary school
- Around 10,000sqm of employment floorspace
- A 250-space Park and Ride near the A3
- Large areas of green space, including allotments, play areas, and a new woodland walking rout

Developers say the project would create a “gateway for Guildford” for drivers coming off the A3. The site, covering more than 130 hectares of farmland and woodland, sits between Burpham and the A3. If approved, the first phase 150 homes would be built with access from Merrow Lane.

The bulk of the site will be housing in a mix of family homes, apartments and some specialist accommodation. Planning documents detail the homes will be built in phases including a mixture of sizes from smaller flats to larger family homes, around 720 affordable homes, space for self-build plots and some elderly care housing.

Most of the higher density housing, like apartment blocks, would sit around the centre and the main street of the new community, while the rest of the site would focus on family housing with gardens.

Not everyone will welcome the idea of more traffic but the scheme includes a new A3 junction, cycle paths, and upgraded bus services to ease the pressure on local roads.

About 34 hectares of open space is planned including a big new woodland walking area at Cotts and Frithy’s Wood. Developers say overhead power lines will be buried underground and much of the existing woodland kept to help the site blend in with the landscape.

Guildford Borough Council cannot currently meet government housing supply targets so the developers argue the project should be green-lit to help tackle the housing shortage.

If given the green light, Gosden Hill would become home to thousands of people, with the developer promising it will be a “healthy, happy and sociable” place to live.

Only eight people have objected to the scheme so far with the majority of comments slamming the construction traffic plan as “wholly inadequate” for the road and likely to cause “intolerable disruption”.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Outline of the proposed development on Gosden Hill Farm. (Credit: Guildford Borough Council/ Martin Grant Homes)

No Place Like Home – Until Surrey Sells It

18 December 2025

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Families have been left worried sick and children devastated after Surrey County Council decided to sell their homes “to ensure best value” in the “disposal of public assets”.

Residents say the council is putting profit before people as it seeks to cash in on their homes through its private company—insisting upon selling them as vacant possessions and giving them until July to move out.

They claim the council is refusing to consider offers from the families who have built their lives there and instead told them they must leave so the properties can be placed on the open market.

One family has lived in Norbury Park, Mickleham, since 2003 under a long-term lease when it was owned by Surrey Wildlife Trust, prior to being taken over by the county council’s private company, Halsey Garton Residential Ltd (HGR). In that time, the family invested significantly in repairs and improvements, believing their tenancy was secure. They say they even made an offer to buy the property, but it was rejected, with Surrey insisting the house must be vacated first.

Helen Wood, who lives in one of the Norbury Park homes said she the council-created company took on the properties from the Surrey Wildlife Trust in 2022. Families have been left worried sick and children ‘devastated’ …”

Mrs Wood said: “Our children are devastated at the thought of losing the house, their home. My 12-year-old has asked why this is happening, and we have tried to explain it to him, but even he says it makes no sense—they want to sell and we want to buy. We can’t move on with our lives or plan anything and are just stuck in limbo. It is pretty hellish and worse than that, it just seems really unfair and nonsensical.”

She added: “We saw other neighbours were being evicted and had to force a meeting to find out our own situation. Ridiculously, we can’t buy it. I’m a fit and healthy 54-year-old with two kids but I’ve ended up on blood pressure tablets. I’ve never had an issue and now I’ll be on them for the rest of my life. It’s horrendous. All I’m doing is thinking we’re another day nearer, and another week nearer, another month nearer, to losing our home. We can’t buy in the area. We’ll lose our workshop and my husband will lose his job. I’m just trying not to think about it as it just makes us anxious.”

The families are asking Surrey County Council to allow an independent valuation of the homes and to be given first refusal to purchase and remain in the properties.

Charles Maxlow-Tomlinson, managing director of Halsey Garton Residential Ltd—a company registered at Surrey County Council’s headquarters and specialising in the letting and operating of owned or leased real estate—responded: “Surrey County Council is the freeholder of various properties which are managed by Halsey Garton Residential Ltd under a strategy approved by SCC’s Strategic Investment Board. HGR is a subsidiary of the council and has a long leasehold interest in the properties. HGR was established to help generate commercial returns, providing an alternative revenue stream that supports the Council’s broader financial resilience.

“HGR remains deeply committed to responsible and balanced property management. We have been actively engaging with tenants to listen to their concerns regarding the proposed sale of properties and lease arrangements. We understand how unsettling this situation can be for families and, where appropriate, we have offered new lease terms with more tenant-friendly conditions, extending occupancy until June 2026.

“We fully acknowledge the personal impact this may have on individual tenants. While HGR and SCC are not housing authorities and do not retain residential properties for long-term housing provision, we are committed to treating all tenants with dignity and respect throughout this process. Tenants have been informed of the proposed sales, and we want to clarify that there are no current eviction notices for the properties in Norbury Park. To ensure openness and transparency, when properties are placed on the open market for sale, anybody can make an offer to purchase, and the most proceedable offer will be accepted.”

Councillor Natalie Bramhall, cabinet member for property, infrastructure and waste, said: “Surrey County Council has a statutory duty to ensure best value in the use and disposal of public assets. In fulfilling this responsibility, and to maintain transparency and fairness, the council and its subsidiaries have followed a consistent approach over the past five years: selling its properties on the open market with vacant possession. This ensures that we can secure the best possible return, which is vital for delivering essential public services to the wider community.

Helen and Grant Wood together with their dog (Image Helen Wood)

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

12th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom care home to become hotel and staff HMO

18 December 2025



A former Surrey care home is being given a new lease of life – not for elderly residents but as a mix of hotel rooms and shared housing.

The Elders, on Epsom Road, Ewell, will now officially become a 12-room guesthouse with an 8-bed HMO (house of multiple occupation), plus a manager's flat, after councillors approved the proposal on September 4.

The decision by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's planning committee follows a rocky planning history of previous refusals, enforcement notices and accusations the owners were running it without permission.

Cllr Clive Woodbridge said: "Moving it from a sort of limbo where it's operating as it is but without any ability to be regulated – because it's not supposed to be happening – it probably tips my balance."

The building has been empty for several years and developers argue it is no longer suitable for modern care needs.

The scheme has divided opinion with some councillors saying they were uneasy about losing a care facility at a time when demand is only growing. Members noted the loss of the care home – capable of housing up to 24 residents – would also mean a loss of housing.

HMOs tend to have a bad reputation and are sometimes attributed for noisy neighbours and anti-social behaviour. But Cllr Phil Neale admitted this one looked "more for professional people" than "itinerant" workers.

Planning documents reveal the HMO rooms are aimed at housing staff employed by the owners in local care homes, providing affordable accommodation for new workers before moving into the housing market.

Cllr Alison Kelly argued the units could help newcomers find their feet. She said: "It's quite a reasonable use of a HMO."

Not everyone was convinced. Cllr Jan Mason tore into the design, claiming: "It looks like it's been produced on a packet of cigarettes." While Cllr Neale raised concerns about sustainability. He said: "I'm disappointed again that we've missed the opportunity to push solar panels."

Outside the former care home on Epsom Road. (Credit: Google Street View)

RNIB blind to the interests of its Epsom residents?

18 December 2025



The future of Swail House in Epsom, a landmark housing estate for visually impaired people, has become the subject of debate as residents and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) present differing perspectives on redevelopment plans.

Swail House, opened in 1952 and named after Martha Swail, was one of the first estates in the UK designed specifically for blind people. With flats laid out to aid navigation, landscaped grounds, and facilities for social activities, it was hailed as a flagship initiative. Over time it has included social rooms, a restaurant, and a Chelsea Flower Show award-winning garden.

Residents' Concerns

Some residents and supporters have voiced fears that redevelopment will diminish the estate's original character and reduce the number of flats for visually impaired tenants. They argue that facilities such as communal spaces, gardens, and the on-site Epsom & Ewell Talking Newspaper (EETN) studio, which has operated from Swail House for over 40 years, are at risk.

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

Complaints have also been made about the consultation process, with claims that residents' questions have gone unanswered and that accessible formats, such as tactile scale models of proposed buildings, have not been provided.

Russell Bailey, Chair of the Swail House Association for the Visually Impaired, told the *Epsom and Ewell Times*:

"We are very keen for the development to go through. We are not so keen about the way it's being done – i.e. selling off land to pay for the new development – and we are certainly not keen with the fact that there's going to be fewer flats for visually impaired people. If the RNIB were more financially secure, they could have lent money against the value of the property, kept the land, and built more flats.

I don't think residents feel they have had the opportunity to input into how it's going to develop. One real concern is that there will be no communal lounge and no facilities for recording the Epsom newspaper which has been going for many years."

RNIB's Position

The RNIB, however, says it has engaged with tenants and will continue to do so. Kathryn Sherratt, RNIB's Chief Financial Officer, said:

"In March 2025, RNIB submitted an outline planning application to redevelop land at the back of Swail House to build 48 units, and we're currently waiting for a decision on the planning proposal.

RNIB has consulted with tenants on the planning proposal and will continue to share information and consult as the proposals develop, subject to the outcome of the planning decision."

Wider Concerns

Supporters of the estate point out that Swail House is more than just a residential complex. Its natural grounds provide quiet areas for guide dogs and for residents to experience sounds of nature in place of visual cues. Campaigners say this unique environment is at risk if large sections of the site are sold.

Local residents outside Swail House have also raised objections to the design and scale of the proposed development, citing environmental and aesthetic impacts.

Next Steps

The future of Swail House now rests with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's planning process. Whatever the outcome, the debate highlights tensions between the need to modernise housing stock and preserve the historic vision and facilities that made Swail House a pioneering model for visually impaired people more than 70 years ago.

Image: Swail House aerial – Google Maps.

Keep our Valley Green say Langley Vale campaigners

18 December 2025



Campaigners in an Epsom village have hit out at proposals to build on "pristine farmland", warning the plans will destroy a cherished stretch of countryside on the edge of the Surrey Hills. The outline application covers more than five hectares of agricultural farm land at Langley Bottom Farm, adjacent to Langley Vale village. Developer Fairfax Aspire Ltd has envisioned the 5.2 hectare field on Epsom Downs for 110 new homes. Although the exact height, design and layout will be determined later, planning documents suggest the new houses will be predominantly two-storey to eaves.

Dubbed 'the valley', locals are baffled that the agricultural field could ever be considered as a grey belt. The land has been classed as 'low-quality land' that could be prioritised for development, but residents say the designation is nonsense. "[Grey belt should be] for scrappy old car parks, not pristine farmland," John Mumford of the Woodcote Epsom Residents Society and Save Langley Vale said. He pointed out the combine harvester in the field and explained it is still being used for agriculture. "We shouldn't be sacrificing the green belt for land for land-owning interests," he added. Fairfax Aspire Ltd stated in the application: "The site represents an opportunity for modest, sustainable development on the edge of the settlement boundary."

The proposed development site sits down the road from Epsom Derby race course and is part of a landscape known for its

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY

ISSN 2753-2771

race horse culture and rich ecology. Matt Dunn, who grew up in Langley Vale, described how buses only visited hourly, and horse riding and jockey training were common pastimes in the close-knit community. He said: “This scheme is tacked on, not integrated into the village.” Planning documents state most of the existing hedgerows and important trees will be retained and enhanced with native planting, with other features including new ecological improvements like wildlife corridors linking to the nearby woodland at The Warren. But campaigners say it is home to deer, badgers, and protected bird species like buzzards and skylarks, and that horse riders, dog walkers and ramblers make frequent use of the fields behind the village.

“It will completely destroy a much loved valley,” Matt said. “Ecology mitigation doesn’t mean anything if it doesn’t change the wrongs and the impact on wildlife.” The dispute comes amid national concerns over habitat loss — in England, the abundance of wildlife species has fallen by around 19 per cent since 1970. Matt accused the developer of trying to “whip up houses which don’t meet local need,” describing the affordable housing element as a “tick-boxing exercise”. The 29-year-old explained that selling houses at 80 per cent of the average Epsom house price (£559k according to RightMove) does not make the homes remotely affordable.

Langley Vale currently has around 400 houses, and campaigners fear the development could swell its size by more than 20 per cent, straining the roads, utilities and services. A new access road would be created on Langley Vale Road to get into the site, but residents warn this could exacerbate traffic issues in their rural community. Campaigners have also launched a petition against the development which has gained more than 1,000 signatures already. Mr Mumford has also set up a fundraiser to help pay for the campaign, gathering £3,700.

Planning documents state: “The opportunity exists for the creation of a high quality landscape and ecology led residential scheme to be provided in this sustainable location. The illustrative material demonstrates how a residential scheme, including new affordable homes, can be delivered without having undue impact on the site’s immediate neighbours, the wider area or key landscape and ecological features. The site is available, sustainable and importantly, deliverable, and will link to Langley Vale and the wider area.” The developer has been approached for further comment.

Related report:

110-Home Scheme at Langley Vale Sparks Green Belt Fears

Campaigners, Matt Dunn (left) and John Mumford (right), in front of the proposed development site. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

© 2021-2026. No content may be copied without the permission of Epsom and Ewell Times Ltd. Registered office: Upper Chambers, 7 Waterloo Road, Epsom KT19 8AY