



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

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)
- 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:

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[Epsom and Ewell Local Plan Submitted for Examination](#)

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Caterham's parochial battle.... a sign of things to come?

Caterham could soon be governed by a single town council after a majority of residents backed the idea - but the proposal has split opinion among councillors and locals.

At the moment, Caterham is split between Caterham on the Hill parish council and Caterham Valley parish council. Parish councils are the ground level tier of government in England which look after parks, community centres, funding events, lobbying on planning and making local voices are heard.

A summer consultation found 77 per cent of 237 respondents supported merging Caterham on the Hill Parish Council and Caterham Valley Parish Council. But councillors pointed out that hardly one per cent of Caterham's population responded to the consultation, at a Strategy and Resources Committee on September 25.

Cllr Michael Cooper said: "We haven't had a consultation at all - less than one per cent took part [...] We need to involve the public properly."



Others urged looking at the bigger picture. Cllr Jeremy Pursehouse said: "I know the people in the valley and people on the hill look at themselves as completely different species. I hate to disappoint you but everyone else looks at it as Caterham."

The push for the merger comes as Surrey prepares for a major shakeup with new unitary authorities due in 2026 which will replace district and borough councils. Supporters of the town council plan say Caterham needs a stronger, unified voice to stop it being overshadowed in the new system.

Supporters say the merger would give the town a stronger voice, reduce duplication and save resources. Critics argue the consultation was poorly promoted and that fewer than one per cent of residents responded.

Caterham Valley Parish Council chair Tony Pierce, who is also standing in a by-election, said: "One single council representing the residents of Caterham is the optimum way to represent people. Caterham is not two towns but one – residents don't confine their activities to either the Valley or the Hill. A larger council representing all residents will have a strong voice."

Local resident Robin Franklin, from Caterham on the Hill, backed the move but urged councillors to think about younger generations. He said: "A town council gives Caterham a single negotiating voice and a clear chance to prioritise the things young people keep asking for: safer routes to school, better street lighting and cycle parking."

Not everyone is on board. Caterham on the Hill Parish Council said it opposed a merger at this stage, arguing the process was rushed, that residents had not been given enough pros and cons, and that Valley households could face a massive hike in their local council tax bill. It also raised concerns that merging could dilute attention to local issues.

Speaking personally, Cllr Ben Horne said a merger could still bring benefits: "At the moment we've got two sets of meetings and duplication. A town council would carry more weight in seeking funding, modernise our governance and give Caterham the leadership it deserves."

The review panel has recommended pressing ahead with draft proposals. A second consultation – including details of council tax costs – will take place in the future.

If approved, Caterham Town Council would have 15 councillors across five wards, with the first elections due in May 2026.

View down Station Avenue, Caterham. (Credit: Google Street View)

Emily Dalton LDRS

Half price Surrey bus journeys for under 20s soar to one million

19,000 young people aged 20 and under are now benefitting from 50% off bus journeys across Surrey.

The Surrey LINK card was developed by Surrey County Council in 2023 to give young people half price travel on all single and return bus journeys within the county.

Each month, 100,000 trips are now made using the card, with students travelling to higher education among the biggest users.

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth at Surrey County Council, said:

"I'm delighted that our scheme to offer half price bus travel to all our young people here in Surrey is proving so beneficial. We know that cost can be a barrier to people using public transport so we hope this significant discount will continue to make bus travel a more viable option, whilst also reducing car journeys across the county."

"This is part of our significant investment in bus travel and our efforts to encourage more people to use Surrey's buses. We're investing in making our buses greener including £32.3m for more ultra-low and zero emission buses and £6.3m for more ultra-low and zero emission community transport minibuses. A further £9m is being invested in bus priority measures to ensure buses turn up on time, and £1.4m in improving information for passengers at bus stops."

Applications for the LINK card can be made at www.surreycc.gov.uk/surreylink.

Surrey County Council



Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity expands into 70 Surrey schools

The Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINs) has begun its second year in Surrey, extending support from 41 to 70 schools.

The programme, a joint initiative by NHS England and the Department for Education, helps schools with early intervention, staff training, and improving communication with families to ensure neurodiverse children are fully included in school life.

From pilot to county-wide programme

The Surrey pilot, delivered between 2024 and June 2025 with Surrey Heartlands ICB, the charity Eikon, and Family Voice Surrey (FVS), worked with 41 schools to strengthen their whole-school SEND approach. A further 29 schools in North East and South West Surrey have now joined.

To mark the expansion, school leaders, governors, and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators gathered at Esher Rugby Club, Walton-on-Thames, alongside partners from Family Voice Surrey, Surrey Heartlands ICB, and the Team Around the Schools Support Hub. Colleagues from Active Surrey, Educational Psychology and Speech and Language Therapy also set out their roles in delivering the next phase.

Focus on inclusion and early support

Jonathan Hulley, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said: "This programme represents our collective commitment to inclusion, early support, and meaningful collaboration across education, health, and family services. It places neurodiverse children and their families at the heart of school improvement, and empowers educators with the tools, training, and confidence to create inclusive environments."

The programme emphasises family involvement through its partnership with FVS, ensuring that parent carers play a central role in shaping provision.

Families and schools working together

Kate Goode, Participation Lead at Family Voice Surrey, said: "Working on the PINs programme has been fantastic. It's been a real partnership and an excellent example of co-production with families, Surrey County Council and all the partners. Families have really felt heard and given an opportunity to feel like an equal partner in decision-making."

Barbara Tucker, SENCO at St Peter's Catholic Primary School in Leatherhead, said the pilot "gave us the confidence to reflect, adapt and grow." She highlighted practical changes such as providing noise-cancelling ear defenders at lunchtimes, which improved concentration in class, and the introduction of parent-led coffee mornings and social groups that boosted wellbeing and connection.

Training and support

Each school in the programme will receive up to 30 hours of tailored training. This includes Occupational Therapy and playground audits, Speech and Language support, and Neurodiversity Champion training, with input from parent carers, health professionals, educational psychologists and specialist advisors.



Background

Around 46,000 children and young people in Surrey have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Earlier this year Surrey County Council approved an additional £4.9 million investment into SEND services.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Surrey's "suffer the little children..." tested

Plans to turn a family house into a home for vulnerable children on a Surrey street have been given the green light despite strong opposition from its future neighbours.

A five-bed detached home on Crosby Hill Drive in Camberley will be transformed into a children's home for up to three kids aged 10-17. Staff would live in with them around the clock, with no changes made to the building itself.

Council officers state the home is sorely needed, with rising demand for secure, regulated accommodation for children in care.

But of 28 locals who wrote in about the scheme, 27 objected. Concerns ranged from traffic and road safety to fears the change could alter the "character" of the street. But councillors said many of the concerns were based on myths and misunderstandings about children's homes.

Members of a Surrey County Council planning committee approved the scheme at a meeting on September 24.

One resident, however, wrote in support, arguing the location is exactly the kind of quiet and supportive environment vulnerable children should be given: "Everyone deserves a safe place to live," they said.

Despite traffic concerns, highway officers said there will not be a material change in the use of the road or car parking spaces down the street.

Rebecca Hanifan, responsible for looking after children's homes within Surrey, told the committee: "Children's homes are heavily regulated. The children who live in them are risk assessed and those with higher needs are placed in secure settings, not in the community.

"These are children who can live in a family setting- they go to school, they sleep well at night, and do normal activities over the weekend. Our homes blend into communities, property values do not drop and our children are well-behaved."

Cllr Ernest Mallett MBE dismissed the claims the children's home would damage the character of Crosby Hill Drive. He said: "How is that any different to children living in other houses? This is a perfectly viable use for the property. It won't be any trouble to anyone and won't be any different to any other house on the street.

"We are a first-class western society and we take care of people."

Others noted practical issues- like the lack of a bus shelter nearby and concerns about parking during staff changeovers - but backed the need for more children's homes, given the national shortage of foster carers.

The thorny issue of restrictive covenants on the property was raised by Nigel James, speaking on behalf of one of the neighbours, who said the council risked "wasting tax payers' money" if due diligence was not done. But officers and councillors stressed covenants were not a planning matter for the committee, and Cllr Mallett said they were "virtually unenforceable".

Cllr Jeremy Webster expressed unease about "parachuting" a children's home into a quiet residential area and cited apparent estate agent warnings of a 10 per cent dip in house values. Meanwhile, Cllr Trefor Hogg said he sympathised with residents' concerns but stressed: "We need both foster homes and children's homes in Surrey."

Emily Dalton LDRS



View outside 18 Crosby Hill Drive, in Camberley. (Credit: Surrey County Council documents)

Epsom's potholes. We're not alone...

'Sink holes happen' was the blunt message from a Surrey highways officer when asked if the council had the budget to repair five crumbling suburban roads.

In fairness, council budgets are often in flux with authorities never knowing how much funding they will receive from the central government and whether they will get any extra pennies from grants.

But that has not softened the blow for Walton residents who say they are "disappointed" after finding out five battered neighbourhood roads might not be resurfaced until 2028.

Almost 300 people signed a petition calling for urgent repairs to Cottimore Avenue, Cromwell Close, Fairfax Crescent, Monks Close and Stuart Avenue. Residents claim the roads in Walton are riddled with cracks, potholes and uneven pavements that pose a danger to pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

Residents say the situation has gone on for decades - with complaints about the roads dating back to the 1990s. But people say their calls for Surrey County Council to act have been repeatedly put aside and pushed back despite rat run traffic and speeding issues. One resident even claimed that it has been at least 40 years since the roads were last resurfaced.

Residents said they are worried the delays will only get worse once Surrey is broken into unitary councils in Local Government Reorganisation. "It seems the problem is simply being passed on to the next authority," said Paolo Orezzi, lead petitioner. "The road will simply deteriorate and it will increase the cost liability."

But highway bosses have said the streets will not be resurfaced any time soon at a Highways, Transport and Economic Growth meeting on September 23. Instead, they have been given a flatteringly modest 'medium priority' rating in the county's road maintenance list meaning it is unlikely the work will be complete before 2028/29.

Even then, the plan is not to fully resurface the roads but to 'fine mill' the concrete beneath the tarmac. This is a cheaper process but residents fear this will not go far enough.

Highway officers defended the decision pointing to the sheer scale of the challenge. "We manage 5,000km of roads across Surrey," an officer said. "There is no doubt the roads would benefit from work but we have to prioritise based on budgets, emergencies and needs. Unfortunately, we can't give firm timescales beyond next year- things change, sinkholes happen."

Cllr Rachael Lake, who said she has been backing the residents' calls for years, recalled: "I was standing next to a crack where the tarmac had totally worn away. You could actually get a child's foot stuck down it. It was dangerous."

The Conservative member for Walton said she was prepared to use her entire £120,000 allocated budget to fix the roads following residents accusing her of not looking after them. But Cllr Lake claimed highway officers would not even let her put the five worn out roads on a waiting list to be resurfaced.

Lead for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth, Cllr Matt Furniss relented and asked officers to reassess the five roads in question, speak to residents and see if anything can be done with Cllr Lake's allocated budget to get the roads on the list. Cllr Furniss added: "We can potentially do it next year but I am not promising anything."

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Pothole stock image. Credit Kathryn Anderson

Emily Dalton LDRS

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On the Hunt for pothole repairs

Don't blame us for potholes say Surrey's highway authority.

From field to fight: Bramley camp faces enforcement questions

An unauthorised traveller camp has been built on land earmarked for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape – and now plans to make the site permanent have been submitted. Witnesses reported several caravans moving on to Unstead Lane in Bramley last week, sparking frustrations among residents over the lack of enforcement action. Since then a petition has been created calling on immediate action to be taken – with more than 600 people already signing.

It says: “Residents and taxpayers expect and deserve equal protection under planning law. The Surrey Hills National Landscape and Green Belt exist to safeguard our countryside for the benefit of all, not to be eroded by unlawful development. Allowing this encampment to remain would set a dangerous precedent that planning law can be ignored without consequence.”

Guildford Borough Council has said it was aware of the work carried out and understood people's concerns. Officers visited the encampment and completed background work to gain a full understanding of the situation.

Councillor Jane Austin, leader of the Conservative opposition group in neighbouring Waverley Borough Council, represents the Bramley and Wonersh ward near the site. She said: “People went to bed on Friday looking out to a field and now they have this. Saturday the road was blocked and they were clearly doing something without planning permission, but nobody could get hold of anyone. That field was due to be national landscape land, deemed to be of that high quality. The land is on floodplain and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, they won't ever be legally built. People around here are reasonable and agree the GTL (Gypsy Traveller League) community need somewhere to live. Everybody should follow the law of the land without exception, planning is there to build sustainable communities and must be followed.”

Councils must provide adequate land for housing – whether fixed homes or traveller pitches. If they cannot demonstrate enough provision, sustainable planning applications are difficult to reject as they are often won on appeal – with the council liable for costs. In 2024 Guildford Borough Council was only able to identify 2.59 years supply for traveller pitches, below the minimum five years. Elsewhere in Surrey, Runnymede Borough Council's decades-long failure to provide the legal minimum number of Gypsy and Traveller pitches has forced families to take matters into their own hands and build their own. Runnymede's planning committee recently felt obligated to approve 12 new pitches in Hardwick Lane, Chertsey, despite concerns the site would be overcrowded and the roads unsafe.

Guildford Borough Council said it could not be expected to predict or prevent this type of incident occurring, but would react and manage it as quickly as possible. A spokesperson said: “If a breach of planning control is confirmed on any site in the borough, we have several enforcement options including negotiation and formal action. However, the enforcement powers available to local authorities do not achieve an instant solution.”

A planning application for the site was submitted on Saturday September 13. If it contains the correct paperwork, the council must validate it – with nearby residents contacted and given the opportunity to submit their views before any decision is made.

Surrey County Councillor Matt Furniss said he has been speaking with Guildford's planning team and that Surrey Highways Enforcement has also visited the site to assess the new unauthorised access onto the highway for safety and to determine next steps. He added: “It is always disappointing when some individuals choose to work outside the planning process and I will be pressing both councils for a quick resolution.”

MP Jeremy Hunt said: “Residents all express the same sentiment – why is there so little action to address unauthorised encampments like this, which are appearing with increasing frequency. It is absolutely infuriating to see the law being ignored this way – and the people who do it getting away scot-free. This latest case is another rural field, recognised as being of such quality that it is earmarked for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape. Yet local people now face the prospect of potentially years of planning enforcement action – with no guarantee of success. The point is that such drawn-out processes risk consuming vast amounts of council time and money, while the local community continues to suffer the consequences. Early intervention and decisive action such as prompt issuance of a Stop Notice would help prevent situations like this from



worsening.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Image of site in Unstead Lane, Bramley

Dorking Halls to shut again for restoration?

One of Surrey’s “largest and most comprehensive arts and performance” spaces could shut its doors again if the next phase of its near £10m revamp is approved. Dorking Halls closed last year as Mole Valley District Council agreed to fund £6.1m in “sorely needed” repairs and refurbishments to avoid safety risks and any unscheduled problems. It later became clear the original scope and scale of the issues had been underestimated and that work would take longer and cost more than first forecast. This has been made worse by rises in material prices and market rates over the past year, the council said. Hoped-for grant funding through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme has also stopped being available.

Mole Valley District Council is now seeking an extra £3.34m of upgrade works to replace outdated air handling units and chillers, cut annual carbon emissions by 75 tonnes with solar panels and heat recovery systems, as well as upgrading the Grand Hall to modern safety and performance standards. Councillor Nick Wright, cabinet member for leisure and tourism, said: “Dorking Halls is arguably the largest and most comprehensive arts and performance venue in eastern Surrey. It is central to our community and is key to the local economy. Dorking Halls plays a vital cultural role in the district, with a busy programme of shows, concerts and films, as well as hosting youth theatre, school productions, live screenings, and community events. It also provides employment opportunities, particularly for young people entering the hospitality sector. This investment will ensure the Halls continue to serve residents and visitors with high-quality cultural experiences for many years to come, while also helping MVDC to meet its carbon reduction goals.”

The Mole Valley’s cabinet is expected to agree to the additional funding when it meets on September 23 ahead of formal sign off at the following month’s full council. The proposed works will be scheduled to minimise disruption, with the venue expected to close temporarily in 2026 from mid-April to early December. The halls last closed over the summer last year as the council addressed making its ceiling safe after a critical failure risk was identified. Had no work been done there was the potential the Grand Hall’s fibrous plaster could become unstable – forcing its closure at short or no notice. Any collapse, regardless of whether the public were in attendance, would likely have led to a fine.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Dorking Halls Grand Hall (Image MVDC)

Related reports:

[Dorking Halls to reopen after upgrade](#)

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[Dorking refurb: “it’s behind you”!](#)

Elmbridge resists London’s creep into Surrey

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)

Dorking to slow down?

Plans to cut speed limits in Dorking town centre to 20mph are being considered. Surrey County Council is looking at cutting speeds along the A25 Reigate Road, West Street, South Street, Vincent Lane and surrounding roads - and carrying out a resident survey until October 13 to gather views.

It comes after the county council introduced limits across Surrey in 2024. This proposal is being funded through Surrey's Integrated Transport Schemes - with a countywide budget of £2.8 million.

Before the council can introduce changes it advertises its intentions to give people the opportunity to tell us what they think about them. The council is then obliged to consider any feedback before making a final decision whether to still go ahead, with or without any changes. If there is enough support for the scheme it is anticipated to come into force early next year.

Surrey County Councillor Hazel Watson (Liberal Democrat: Dorking Hills) said lower speed limits give drivers more time to react, reduce the severity of any collisions, and makes the roads safer for vulnerable users. She said: "There will be some additional 20mph signs, but mostly the existing 30mph signs will be replaced."

She added: "She added, "Road safety is a very high priority for Surrey residents and this lower, appropriate, speed limit proposal for Dorking Town has been requested by many residents for a long time. It builds on the very successful introduction of lower, appropriate, 20mph or 30mph speed limits which have been introduced on many of the rural lanes and through the village centres across the Dorking Hills over the last few years."

"It is important that every resident who has an opinion on this proposal registers their comments at <https://dorking-20mph-scheme.commonplace.is/> so that their views can be taken into account."



Chris Caulfield LDRS

Dorking Town Centre Streets (image MVDC)