

Green light for MRI scanner at Leatherhead Leisure Centre

12 March 2026



Surrey will get a new MRI machine at Leatherhead Leisure Centre after councillors were “all in favour” of building the musculoskeletal scanner. The new machine will be housed in a temporary building, with the aim of bringing accessible, community-based imaging technology to the area.

The idea has been in motion for the past 18 months after it emerged there was a significant shortfall in MRI access and missed waiting time targets. Leatherhead Leisure Centre, in Guildford Road, Fetcham, was identified as the ideal location to help cut travel distances and relieve pressure on NHS hospitals, papers presented to Mole Valley’s March development management committee said.

The application was not without obstacles as the centre sits on green belt land where new buildings are normally considered inappropriate unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. In this case, the pressing need for new medical facilities available to all patients, together with the temporary five-year nature of the development, proved compelling enough.

Officers told the meeting: “The centre lies within the green belt but in this case the very special circumstances - the need for this type of medical facility and the proximity to the centre, with its car parking space - are strong.” Originally the building was to be navy blue but a change of provider means it will now be white. Two staff members will occupy the site at any one time, with space for a waiting room and a separate scanning area.

Councillor Roger Adams (Liberal Democrat: Bookham West) said: “I am all in favour of additional health facilities in this area.” The plans were approved by nine votes in favour, with no objections and two abstentions.

Questions were raised about whether the land might be reclassified as previously developed green belt land after the temporary building is removed, amid concerns this could open the site to future development. Officers said the five-year nature of the scheme, together with its valued community use, would see the site revert to its original protected status.

Members also pushed for the building to be finished in a colour less likely to show wear and tear, but were told the appearance was determined by the materials available rather than a simple paint choice

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Leatherhead Leisure Centre (Image Google) - the padel centre will be built behind the facility

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan tensions surface as committee debate curtailed by chair

12 March 2026



A meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Licensing and Planning Policy Committee (LPPC) on 10th March exposed growing tensions over the borough’s Local Plan after councillors attempted to debate how revised evidence is being submitted to the Government’s Planning Inspector.

The committee ultimately voted seven in favour with two abstentions simply to “note” the Local Plan update report, with the chair not voting.

But the discussion revealed frustration among some councillors over the level of member oversight of changes being

made during the examination process.

Inspector requires further work on Local Plan

The meeting began with a detailed briefing from the council's Head of Planning Policy explaining that the Local Plan, submitted for examination in March 2025, had been judged "unsound" by the Planning Inspector and required further work before it could proceed.

He told councillors that the Inspector had requested additional technical work to determine whether modifications could make the plan sound.

Two pieces of revised evidence had already been submitted earlier this year:

- a revised section of the Green Belt Topic Paper
- an updated Land Availability Assessment

Further work has now been requested, including the preparation of potential additional site allocations and updates to the housing trajectory, sustainability appraisal, habitats regulations assessment, transport assessment and infrastructure delivery plan.

All of this work must be submitted to the Inspector by 10th April 2026.

Officers warned councillors that national policy now discourages long pauses in Local Plan examinations and that delays could risk the plan being withdrawn.

Debate centres on councillor oversight

Much of the discussion that followed focused not on housing sites themselves but on whether councillors had sufficient opportunity to scrutinise documents being submitted to the Inspector.

Independent councillor **Alex Coley**, who had requested the agenda item, raised concerns about the process and argued that wider oversight of the evidence base was necessary.

He told the committee that effective decision-making required proper evaluation of alternatives and meaningful access for councillors and the public to the decision-making process.

Coley also suggested that some of the conclusions contained in recently submitted evidence appeared contradictory and said this demonstrated the need for greater scrutiny.

"I believe that sets out just one example of why wider public oversight is so important," he said.

Chair maintains procedural limits

However, councillors were advised that the committee could not introduce procedural motions or amendments relating to the Local Plan submissions.

Coley told the meeting that members had received advice from the council's Monitoring Officer stating that motions from the floor were not permitted under the committee's procedures.

He questioned that interpretation, suggesting it relied on provisions from an older model constitution that the council had replaced in 2023.

Despite this, the chair, Councillor **Peter O'Donovan** (RA, Ewell Court), maintained the procedural position and the meeting proceeded without amendments to the report or further debate on altering the process.

The committee therefore confined itself to noting the update report.

Questions raised about future scrutiny

Councillors also asked whether the committee would have further opportunities to review documents before they are submitted to the Inspector.

Officers said the timetable made that unlikely for the next stage of work.

"With the deadline for the evidence base being the 10th of April... there isn't time for a committee to do that," councillors were told.

Instead, public consultation on the new material will take place later in the examination process once the evidence has been submitted.

Campaign concerns continue

Outside the council chamber, the Local Plan debate continues to attract strong public interest, particularly over potential Green Belt development.

Campaign group Epsom Green Belt circulated a message to councillors following the meeting expressing concern that revised Local Plan documents could be progressing without full scrutiny by elected members.

The group urged councillors to ensure that any material changes affecting Green Belt land are properly reviewed and debated.

Next steps for the Local Plan

The Local Plan examination will now move into its next stage.

Key steps expected include submission of new evidence to the Inspector by **10 April 2026**, followed by consultation on the new documents and potentially further examination hearings.

If the Inspector concludes that the plan can be made sound with modifications, the final decision will return to Full Council, where councillors will vote on whether to adopt the revised Local Plan.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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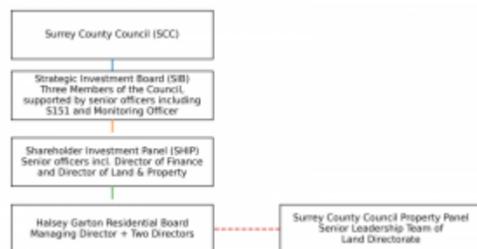
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Surrey Council reviews property sales as it signs off business plans for own firms

12 March 2026



Surrey County Council has signed off the latest business plans for two companies it owns as it tries to strengthen its finances during a difficult period for local government.

The council's Strategic Investment Board approved the 2026/27 plans for property company Halsey Garton Residential and recruitment firm Connect2Surrey on March 9. In a meeting mostly held in private (part 2) for commercial sensitivity reasons, the board also heard an update from the property data organisation TRICS Consortium Ltd, in which the council holds a smaller share.

What it means

Essentially, the council is reviewing how companies it owns or part-owns will operate over the next year and whether they can continue to bring in money.

Like many local authorities, Surrey County Council is under growing financial pressure, with rising costs and less support from central government. These companies are meant to help generate income and support council services.

Officials say the plans should help improve transparency and ensure the council keeps a close eye on how its investments perform.

Possible property sales

One of the biggest issues discussed was what to do with homes owned by Halsey Garton Residential. The council is considering the pace at which it sells off properties in the company's housing portfolio, and board members were asked to give direction on how quickly those homes should be sold.

That decision is partly being driven by changes to housing legislation coming into force in May 2026, which could affect how easily properties can be sold if they are currently occupied by tenants.

Selling homes more quickly could help the council bring in money sooner, but it also carries risks, including market uncertainty, reputational concerns and the challenge of completing sales before major local government changes take effect.

Financial pressures behind the move

Council officers warned the authority is operating in a “very challenging financial environment”. Future funding reforms mean the council is expected to receive less support from central government, leaving it increasingly reliant on council tax and other income streams.

Investment companies like Halsey Garton Residential and Connect2Surrey are intended to help support the council’s long-term finances, even if profits do not come immediately.

What happens next

The council will keep monitoring the performance of the companies over the coming year, with a half-year review planned later in 2026.

In the meantime, councillors are expected to continue weighing up how quickly to sell properties owned by Halsey Garton Residential. This decision could affect the council’s finances and its property portfolio going forward.

Emily Dalton LDRS

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Dorking housing plan rejected again over affordable homes shortfall

12 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

- 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 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

12 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)

Guide to the upcoming East Surrey Council elections

12 March 2026



When voters head to the polls on Thursday, May 7, the local election in Surrey will look very different from previous years. This local election will mark the first step in the biggest shake-up of local government in Surrey for decades.

Instead of voting for councillors to the current county council structure, residents will be electing members to two completely new councils: East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council. A whopping total of 162 seats are for the taking.

What is actually changing?

The elections are happening as part of a major reorganisation of councils across Surrey.

Currently, local services are split between Surrey County Council and 11 borough and district councils. The county council looks after highways, education services, adult social care etc, while the borough councils take care of issues like planning applications, bin collections and managing parks. But that system is set to disappear.

The government has decided to replace it with two ‘unitary authorities’: single councils responsible for everything from planning and roads to social care and education. The aim is to make councils simpler, more efficient and quicker to make decisions, according to the government.

Why are the boundaries changing?

As part of the overhaul, the boundary lines have also been redrawn. The county will be divided into 81 new wards, with two councillors representing each ward.

That means:

- East Surrey Council will have 72 councillors across 36 wards
- West Surrey Council will have 90 councillors across 45 wards

Currently Surrey County Council is made up of 81 seats, including: 38 Conservative, 19 Liberal Democrat, 16 Residents’ Association/Independent, 2 Labour, 2 Green, 2 Reform UK, 1 non-aligned independent and 1 vacancy.

Why were elections cancelled last year?

The vote also comes after the planned Surrey County Council elections were cancelled in 2025. The decision sparked criticism from some politicians, who argued residents had effectively lost their chance to vote while the government decided how the new council structure would work. Ministers said the delay was necessary to avoid electing councillors to a system that was about to be abolished.

What issues could shape the election?

Campaigning is only just getting under way, but some local issues are frequently raised by residents.

Among the biggest are:

- potholes and road repairs
- support for children with special educational needs (SEND)
- large housing developments and planning decisions
- council debt
- cost-of-living

Several parties are expected to field candidates, including the Conservative Party, Liberal Democrats, Labour Party and the Green Party, as well as independent councillors and residents' associations. The Reform UK party is also expected to stand candidates as it looks to expand its presence in local government.

Will the new councils take power straight away?

Not immediately. Even after the elections, the new councils will initially operate as shadow authorities' for almost a year. That means councillors will spend the next 10 months preparing for the handover, rather than immediately running services.

The current councils will continue delivering services until 1 April 2027. This is when the new East Surrey and West Surrey councils will officially take over and replace the 12 existing councils.

How and when people can vote

Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on Thursday, May 7. Residents can vote in person, by post or by proxy vote (someone voting on their behalf). Ballot papers will be counted the following day, with results expected throughout Friday, May 8.

For Surrey voters, the elections will decide who runs the brand-new councils that will eventually take charge of all local services, making this one of the most significant local ballots the county has seen in years.

Emily Dalton LDRS

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[Surrey elections: Democracy delayed, democracy denied?](#)

Could you put Surrey Council's empty buildings or land to good use?

12 March 2026



Surrey residents could soon have the chance to take over unused council buildings and land under a new policy designed to put more local assets into community hands.

Surrey County Council is drawing up a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy, which would set out how community groups can lease council-owned buildings or land if they can prove it will benefit local people. The draft policy was backed by councillors this week and will be sent to the county’s cabinet for approval in April 2026. Officers told councillors: “The community asset transfer policy has been intentionally designed to enable community participation in its simplicity.”

Essentially, the policy would allow local organisations - such as charities, sports clubs or community groups - to take on council properties that are underused or no longer needed for services. Instead of selling them off or leaving them empty, the council could lease the assets to community groups, sometimes at below market value, if the social benefit outweighs the financial return. Council officers said the policy would give communities the opportunity to “reimagine, repurpose and reinvigorate” local spaces, meaning disused buildings could become youth centres, community hubs, sports facilities or spaces for local projects.

Under the proposed system, groups interested in taking over a building would first submit an expression of interest and, if the idea appears viable, they would then be asked to produce a business case showing they can run and maintain the asset long-term. Applications would be assessed against several criteria including the level of community benefit, the financial stability of the organisation and how the plans fit with the council’s wider priorities. If approved, transfers would generally happen through leases rather than outright sales, with community groups responsible for maintaining the building.

Council officers stressed the policy is intended to make the process clearer and fairer because, although transfers can already take place, there is currently no single framework guiding decisions. During the meeting councillors broadly welcomed the proposal but raised concerns about volunteer-run organisations taking on complex legal responsibilities and the potential financial risks of maintaining buildings or signing long leases.

Cllr Edward Hawkins said: “I still feel that we are exposing residents to a liability which some will understand, but some will not.” Another councillor suggested community groups should seek legal advice before committing to such arrangements. Officers responded that the council already provides hands-on support during the application process, including meetings and guidance, and would continue to help groups develop proposals. They added that every application would be carefully assessed to ensure organisations are capable of managing the asset before any transfer is agreed.

The CAT policy follows the approval of a motion by Cllr **Eber Kington** (RA Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington) to council on March 18, 2025.

Emily Dalton LDRS

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Image: Grafton “Stables”

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Last round of developers’ funds in Epsom and Ewell to be spent

12 March 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is inviting local community groups and organisations to apply for funds, raised by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), to deliver projects that benefit residents and support new development across the

borough.

Bid applications will open on Monday 9 March 2026 and close on Sunday 17 May 2026.

This will be the final time that Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will run this funding process. From April 2027, the council will be dissolved and replaced by the new East Surrey Council, which will be responsible for delivering local infrastructure projects across the geographic areas of Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge.

When new development takes place, it can place extra pressure on local services and facilities. The Community Infrastructure Levy enables councils to raise funds from development to be spent on the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of local infrastructure—the levy is intended to give councils more choice and flexibility in how they fund the infrastructure required to support local growth.

Last year, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council allocated over ?230,000 from the 2024/2025 Neighbourhood CIL Fund for community infrastructure projects, including:

- a permanent secure storage shed for The Library of Things enabling residents to borrow useful household items
- energy-efficient lighting installed in a pedestrian tunnel for the Cattle Arch/Under-Rail Tunnel project
- a Road Safety Outside School Scheme implemented at Linden Bridge School improving pedestrian accessibility, a safety crossing for children on Grafton Road and traffic flow aids.

Councillor **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) , Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee said: “This Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding is a real opportunity to make a meaningful and lasting difference in our community. As this will be the last chance to apply through Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, we strongly encourage local community groups and organisations to put forward ideas that could benefit their neighbourhoods.

“We’re proud that the Neighbourhood CIL funding has already helped deliver a wide range of successful local projects – from the recently installed 3G football pitch at Glynn School, to secure specialist bike storage for Wheels for Epsom, the regeneration of disused grounds at the Horton Arts Centre, and the water fountains installed at various locations across the borough. These achievements show just how powerful this funding can be when community ambition and local investment come together.

“As the council launches its final tranche of Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy funding, we want to ensure that money raised from new development continues to support projects that strengthen our community and improve the quality of life for residents across the borough for years to come.”

Application process

The bidding process is designed to be as clear as possible and the application form — available to download from the council’s website, with hard copies at Epsom Town Hall, Bourne Hall and Epsom Playhouse — aims to help make the process simpler. Neighbourhood CIL Funding | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Bids will be shortlisted using the criteria set out in section C of the CIL Spending Protocol (adopted March 2025). More information on the process and prioritisation criteria can be found in section 5 of the CIL Spending Protocol.

To receive funding, all CIL spending applications must be for infrastructure. All bids that pass stage 1 of the assessment process will be examined by the CIL Member Working Group, who will make recommendations to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval.

It is important for each application to be completed in full. The CIL Spending Protocol (adopted March 2025) needs to be read alongside the application form.

Any questions about the application form or process can be emailed to: CIL@Epsom-Ewell.gov.uk.

About the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allows councils to raise funds from new developments for infrastructure projects which help to mitigate the impacts of new development. Of the total collected:
 - 80% goes towards strategic borough-wide infrastructure – examples include highway schemes, permanent school expansions, hospitals, and other health and social care facilities
 - 15% is allocated for local projects (neighbourhood CIL) a portion of the CIL is to be spent on local projects in accordance with the CIL regulations and aligns with the Corporate Plan – examples include sport pitches, courts upgrades, public realm improvements and community gardens
 - 5% for the day-to-day costs of administering CIL.
- The Epsom & Ewell Borough Council CIL Spending Protocol was approved by the Licencing and Planning Policy Committee on 11 March 2025.
- The CIL Spending Protocol sets out the Epsom and Ewell Borough specific protocol governing the process and criteria for selecting infrastructure projects for funding through CIL. When completing a CIL bid form please read the CIL Spending Protocol alongside, as this sets out the guidance and criteria required for your Neighbourhood CIL bid application.

- More information about the Neighbourhood CIL Fund can be found here: <https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/Neighbourhood-CIL>

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council



Epsom and Ewell to ditch Parish Councils plan

12 March 2026



Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has all but confirmed it will **not proceed with plans to create community councils** in the borough after consultation responses indicated a lack of public support.

The announcement follows an expensive Residents' Association led nine-month **Community Governance Review (CGR)** exploring whether the borough should introduce parish-style local councils – sometimes referred to as community councils – ahead of the planned reorganisation of local government in Surrey.

In a media statement issued on 4th March, the council said responses to the second phase of consultation showed residents did not support the proposals.

Consultation result halts proposal

Councillor **John Beckett** (RA Auriol) chair of the council's Standards and Constitution Committee, said the engagement process had asked residents both whether they wanted parish councils and, later, for views on a model dividing the borough into two areas.

The proposal would have created two bodies: **Epsom Community Council and Ewell Community Council**.

Beckett said: "Responses to the phase two consultation indicate that, at this time, residents do not support the proposals that were consulted upon. The recommendation that will be discussed at full Council is that the Community Governance Review is now concluded and will not be progressed further."

Councillors are expected to formally confirm the decision at a full council meeting scheduled for 12th March.

Threat of legal challenge

The decision comes after a **formal pre-action legal letter** warned the council it could face judicial review if it proceeded to create the councils.

Local resident and former senior local government chief executive **Nathan Elvery** wrote to EEBC chief executive Jackie King on 4th March raising concerns about the consultation process.

In the letter, sent under the judicial review pre-action protocol, Elvery argued the review process was procedurally flawed and warned that if the council made a reorganisation order creating the councils he would seek to have it quashed by the courts.

His challenge raised a number of potential grounds including:

- alleged flaws in the design of the first consultation survey
- reliance on a response rate of around **352 replies from roughly 57,000 electors**
- concerns that residents may not have been given full financial information about possible council tax precepts
- failure to present alternative governance models
- and consultation timing spanning the Christmas period.

He also submitted a series of **Freedom of Information requests** seeking internal documents, financial modelling and details of the consultation design.

Elvery requested the Council defer any decision until the issues were addressed and warned that proceeding regardless could lead to legal proceedings.

Experienced public sector leader

Elvery is a long-standing public sector leader with more than three decades of experience in local government transformation and finance.

He has served in senior roles including chief executive, chief operating officer and executive director across a range of councils and national public sector bodies, and now runs a consultancy advising councils and senior leaders.

Long-running debate

The CGR began in 2025 following Surrey’s **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)** plans, which will abolish the borough council and replace it with a new East Surrey unitary authority expected to take over services in 2027.

Supporters of community councils argued they could preserve a layer of local representation after the borough council disappears.

Critics, however, warned they would create a new tax-raising tier of government funded through an additional council tax precept.

Early council estimates suggested a precept of around **£43-£46 per Band D household**, though opponents argued the real cost could rise significantly depending on staffing and responsibilities.

Readers sceptical in Epsom and Ewell Times survey

An Epsom & Ewell Times reader survey on local government reorganisation gathered 112 opinions. The survey showed a big majority against the idea of new parish-style councils. The survey offered an opportunity for residents to express an opinion about alternative neighbourhood area committees. An option the Council had not provided in its consultation.

The survey results suggested readers were more concerned with maintaining effective local representation and protecting services during the transition to the new unitary authority.

Readers also expressed caution about adding an additional tier of governance funded by council tax.

And readers by a clear majority are against maintaining even a ceremonial mayoralty for the Borough.

The full survey results can be read here:

<https://epsomandewelltimes.com/epsom-and-ewell-times-lgr-reader-survey-results>

Elections in Epsom and Ewell to the new East Surrey Council are due to take place in May.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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Public of Epsom and Ewell to be asked if they want two new Councils

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Have your say on the future of Epsom and Ewell

government

12 March 2026

The Epsom & Ewell Times is launching an independent reader survey to invite views not only on Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's proposals, but also on an alternative approach to local consultation and civic participation which is not included in Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's formal consultation. Namely, Neighbour Area Committees.

The Council's consultation

The Borough Council consultation follows its Full Council decision in December to continue exploring the creation of two new parish-style councils. According to the council's press release, the proposed bodies would:

- initially be responsible for allotments
- act as statutory consultees on planning matters
- be funded by a parish precept of around £43-£46 for a Band D property
- hold elections in May 2027 if created

The consultation also asks for views on warding arrangements and councillor numbers for the proposed new bodies.

The Epsom & Ewell Times encouraged residents to read the council's consultation material in full and respond to it, whether in favour or opposed, so that the decision ultimately reflects as broad a range of resident opinion as possible.

The EEBC CGR Consultation officially closed on 31st January.

Why EET is running an additional poll

During the December council debate and in the public correspondence that followed, a number of councillors and residents raised questions about whether the consultation should also invite views on alternative forms of local representation, such as Surrey County Council's pilot Neighbourhood Area Committees, under the new unitary structure. See the Epsom and Ewell Times guide to Neighbour Area Committees [HERE](#)

See letters to the Epsom and Ewell Times from a number of Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors [HERE](#).

The council's consultation asks residents only whether they wish to establish parish-style community councils and, if so, how they should be constituted. It does not ask whether residents would prefer any alternative approach or different mechanisms for an additional local voice to the 10 Epsom and Ewell elected Councillors to the East Surrey Unitary Authority

The Epsom & Ewell Times believes that the wider discussion about local democracy after 2027 may benefit from hearing resident views on more than one potential model. Our independent survey therefore allows participants to express:

- support for or opposition to the creation of community councils
- support, if any, for the alternative form of additional local consultation of Neighbour Area Committees
- views on cost, value for money and accountability
- opinions on how civic traditions, such as the mayoralty, might continue

The results will not form part of the official consultation process, but may provide an additional picture of community sentiment to inform public debate and future reporting.

Click [HERE](#) to access the Epsom and Ewell Times reader survey

Two platforms, one community conversation

Residents are invited to complete both the council consultation and the Epsom & Ewell Times survey. The two exercises serve different purposes:

- the council consultation forms part of the statutory Community Governance Review
- the EET poll provides a space for residents to express views on a wider range of possibilities and priorities

Both, however, share a common aim — helping to ensure that local voices are heard at a time of significant change in how Epsom and Ewell will be governed in future.

The Epsom & Ewell Times will continue to report on developments in the Community Governance Review, the consultation outcomes and the wider debate about the future of local representation as the borough approaches the transition to the East Surrey Unitary Authority in 2027.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports and articles:

[Parish power, democratic ideals — and the Residents' Association dilemma](#)

[Epsom and Ewell's Local Democracy Debate: What's at Stake as Consultation Enters Phase Two](#)

Letters from local Councillors on Epsom and Ewell parishes

Epsom and Ewell Council leader message for 2026

Long serving Epsom Councillor blasts LGR and NACs

Neighbour Area Committees [HERE](#)

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

12 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
- 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



Related reports:

Epsom & Ewell's Council responds to Local Plan concerns

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and many more. Search "local plan".

Ewell's Looe Set for Flush of New Industrial Investment

12 March 2026



An ageing industrial site in Ewell is set for a major overhaul after councillors backed plans to knock it down and rebuild it with bigger, more modern units.

The scheme at The Looe, off Reigate Road in Nonsuch, will see 17 tired single-storey units demolished and replaced with a new part one, part two-storey building containing nine industrial and business units. Councillors green-lit the plans at an Epsom and Ewell Borough Council planning committee on February 26.

Cllr **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) said: "I think it is going to be a vast improvement. I have had a look at the current site and it's not one of our most attractive industrial units at the moment."

There will be fewer units overall (nine instead of 17) but they will be larger, creating more workspace. The total floorspace will jump from 732sqm to just over 1,200sqm.

The new building will mainly cater for industrial and storage businesses. Plans include:

- One commercial unit (such as a shop or service business)
- Four general industrial units
- Four storage and distribution units
- 16 car parking spaces
- 18 cycle spaces
- Solar panels on the roof
- A small security and plant hut

There will also be a new pedestrian refuge crossing on Reigate Road and a segregated footpath along the access road to improve safety for people walking to and from the site.

Planning officers said the land counted as previously developed 'grey belt' land, meaning the redevelopment is not considered inappropriate under national planning rules. The developers have also promised a new planting and habitat improvements to the site, over and above the council's requirement.

Less office space, more industry

The plans will reduce the amount of office space on the site. But council officers said there is enough office capacity elsewhere in the borough, particularly in Epsom town centre and East Street, to absorb the loss. At the same time, the borough has a shortage of industrial and storage space so the new scheme could help meet demand.

Traffic worries raised

Three neighbours objected, raising concerns about large lorries struggling to access the narrow entrance road, vehicles blocking Reigate Road while waiting to enter, sewage capacity and asbestos removal. Concerns about shared boundary walls were deemed a civil matter, and asbestos removal would be handled under separate legislation.

Highways officers said the development would generate slightly more traffic than the current site, but not enough to cause a “severe” impact on the local road network. The new footpath and crossing were described as public benefits.

Emily Dalton LDRS

The Looe, Reigate Road, Ewell. (Credit: Google Street View)

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

12 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)