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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Tunnel vision for Heathrow’s 3rd runway?

28 November 2025



Heathrow Airport’s plan for a third runway – requiring a major re-routing and tunnelling of the M25 – has received Government backing as the preferred option for expansion. A competing proposal for a smaller runway put forward by Arora has been rejected. Heathrow welcomed the decision to proceed with the 3,500m runway, arguing it would deliver economic gains and improved passenger experience. Critics have long criticised the plan, saying it undermines climate targets and that the motorway works risk repeating the chaos seen with the delayed A3/M25 junction upgrade, potentially bringing parts of Surrey to regular standstills. Heathrow insists the M25 realignment would be built on adjacent land, allowing the switch to the new carriageway to take place “in a series of carefully planned overnight operations”.

A Heathrow spokesperson said the expansion would mean “more connectivity, increased trade, improved passenger experience and a huge economic boost for the British businesses that will help design and build it”, but added that “further clarity” is required on regulation of the next phase. “We need definitive decisions from the CAA and Government by mid-December so that delay to the project can be avoided and we can get on with delivering this vital project for our customers and for the UK.” The £33 billion scheme is expected to be entirely privately funded. Around £21bn would cover the runway works, including £1.5bn for the M25 realignment, with £12bn for new terminal infrastructure. Heathrow says it will also invest £15bn to modernise existing facilities, including a new terminal “T5X”, an expanded Terminal 2 and three new satellite buildings.

In 2024 the airport handled 83.9 million passengers, operating at 99% of its annual flight cap of 480,000 flights. The expansion would lift these to 756,000 flights and around 150 million passengers. Heathrow’s plan will now inform the review of the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS), the framework on which the eventual planning decision will be based. The Government said Heathrow’s proposal is the most deliverable and most likely of the options to be approved before the next general election. The Department for Transport stressed this is not a final decision; any changes to the ANPS will be subject to consultation and parliamentary scrutiny next year, with details such as runway length, layout and infrastructure impacts considered throughout the review.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said Heathrow is the UK’s only hub airport, supporting “trade, tourism and hundreds of thousands of jobs”, adding that the announcement is “another important step to enable a third runway and build on these benefits”. She said the Government is acting “swiftly and decisively” to realise the project’s potential for passengers, businesses and the wider economy. Ministers also said the scheme must comply with legally binding climate obligations, while balancing economic growth, as well as air quality and noise requirements. The independent Climate Change Committee will be consulted to ensure compatibility with the UK’s net-zero framework. A planning application is expected after the ANPS review is complete.

In a promotional video, Heathrow sought to reassure the public about the M25 works: “We understand people may be concerned this could cause congestion or delays. Following previous consultation with National Highways we have developed a smarter solution. We build the future right next to the present. The vast majority of construction happens off-line. A new realigned section of the M25 is built on adjacent land while the current motorway operates as normal and the tunnels and bridges for a new runway are constructed while minimising impact on the airport or the existing motorway. Then in a series of carefully planned overnight operations, we make the switch. Traffic is transferred on to the new alignment with minimal disruption. Our approach also ensures local traffic and access for surrounding communities are kept moving with minimal disruption. This frees up the old route of the M25, creating a safe, traffic-free zone to build the final parts of the runway. The result is an upgraded and expanded M25, with new link roads separating M4 traffic from M25 mainline journeys, easing congestion and improving safety.”

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Heathrow shown with a third runway over the M25 (image Heathrow)

Related reports:

Conditional nod to southern rail link to Heathrow

Environment News Transport

Heathrow expansion – what it may mean for Epsom

Heathrow expansion reaction

© 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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

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

28 November 2025



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?

© 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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Pods off in bricks grant for Epsom homeless

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

British Railways’ 200 year celebration train coming to Epsom

28 November 2025



Free exhibition train to steam into Tattenham Corner

A free exhibition train celebrating 200 years of the modern railway will arrive at Tattenham Corner station next March as part of a 60-stop national tour.

More than 40,000 people have already visited the touring train, named *Inspiration*, which forms a centrepiece of **Railway 200**, the nationwide programme marking two centuries since the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825. Nine in ten visitors say they would recommend it to a friend.

What visitors can expect

Co-curated with the National Railway Museum, *Inspiration* explores how rail reshaped Britain and the wider world. Displays chart key “railway firsts”, interactive engineering challenges and a rapid tour of lesser-known railway careers. The exhibition has been praised as “brilliant”, “fascinating” and suitable for all ages.

One visitor reported: “I loved that it was interactive. I visited with people from age 18 to 85 and there was something for everyone.” Another said even their five-year-old “absolutely loved it”.

The train will be hosted by Southern at **Tattenham Corner station from 9 to 11 March 2026**. Tickets are free but limited.

Tattenham Corner’s royal railway history

Tattenham Corner station itself has a long connection with major public events. Opened in 1901, the station was built to provide easier rail access to the Epsom Downs racecourse, particularly for the Derby. According to local historical accounts, the new station offered an alternative to the original Epsom Downs station, which at the time had nine platforms and could be overwhelmed by Derby-day crowds.

It is widely understood that the creation of Tattenham Corner station was encouraged so that **Queen Victoria**, in the final months of her reign, could travel to the racecourse with greater ease and avoid the congestion associated with the older, much busier station. The new alignment brought passengers directly to the famous turn on the Downs from which the station takes its name.

In the decades that followed, Tattenham Corner became a focal arrival point for racegoers, and extra services still run on major racing days.

A milestone for Britain’s railways

Railway 200 marks two centuries since Stephenson’s *Locomotion No. 1* steamed along the Stockton and Darlington line, an innovation that changed global travel, encouraged mass tourism, shaped timekeeping and sped up industrial development.

The anniversary year has already included a re-run of the original 1825 journey watched by around 100,000 people, commemorative stamps and coins, a global “whistle-up” of more than 200 locomotives, and what organisers describe as the world’s largest rail festival.

Angie Doll, Chief Executive of Govia Thameslink Railway, said: “Two hundred years ago the modern railway came into existence and utterly transformed our society. Working together, we hope to educate and inspire young people in rail’s past and future. The railway is great for the climate, and helps our local communities thrive.”

Emma Roberts, Programme Manager for Railway 200, added: “Inspiration is a fun, free and fascinating way to learn about the past, present and future of rail. There’s something for everyone.”

Rail Minister Lord Peter Hendy called Britain “the birthplace of the modern railway” and said the touring train aims to

© 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

inspire a new generation of engineers, drivers, conductors and technicians.

The exhibition has been supported by a £250,000 National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, with Porterbrook providing the livery for the train.

Tickets

Tickets for the Tattenham Corner visit are free but must be booked in advance.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network launches with community events and initiatives

28 November 2025



A new community movement is taking shape in the borough with the launch of the Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network (eeCAN) – a local volunteer group working to empower residents through inclusive projects that build resilience to climate change.

EECAN's mission is simple but ambitious: to help communities adapt and thrive in a changing world. Its projects focus on practical solutions, awareness-raising, and supporting climate-friendly policies. Everything the network offers at the moment is totally free and open to all, ensuring that everyone can take part in building a more sustainable, climate-resilient Epsom and Ewell. Users of the services will be given the opportunity to make any donations they feel they can afford if they want to help the charity do even more for their community.

"Epsom and Ewell Climate Action Network has grown so much in the last 12 months as a result of the energy and commitment of volunteers wanting to help their local communities reduce Climate risks while saving money" says William Ward the Chair and co-founder of the group.

Epsom and Ewell Library of Things

Launching to the public in spring next year, this innovative "Library of Things" will allow residents to borrow items instead of buying them, reducing waste and promoting sharing. From carpet cleaners and wallpaper steamers to pressure washers and gazebos, residents will be able to borrow tools and equipment for free, thanks to donated items. Donations of nearly new equipment are now being sought. Those able to help are asked to contact eeClimateActionNetwork@gmail.com or visit https://eecanlibraryofthings.myturn.com/library.

eeCAN is developing this initiative in partnership with Surrey County Council Library Services (for front of counter service) and with Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, in association with The Epsom Repair Café, who ensure that all electrical items are safe to use.

Bike Amnesty – Saturday 22 November 2025

Got a bike you no longer use? Donate it! Between 9am and 5pm at Epsom Methodist Church, Scout Hall, Ashley Road KT18 5AQ, residents can drop off unwanted bicycles to be refurbished and passed on to people who need them.

The scheme helps promote active, low-carbon travel while supporting those who might not otherwise afford a bike. Just turn up with your spare bikes. This free service is provided in partnership with Surrey County Council's "Active Surrey" team.

Contact: eeClimateActionNetwork@gmail.com

© 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

Climate Conversations – every 2nd and 4th Monday of the month

eeCAN also runs regular Climate Conversations at Birchgrove Lower Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell KT17 2DQ, from 10:30am to 12:30pm. These informal gatherings give residents a friendly space to learn, share experiences, and explore all aspects of climate change together.

One participant said, “I often feel so motivated after one of our meetings!”

The upcoming session on Monday 24 November will feature Dr Kristine Damberg, online presenting *“What can we eat for human and planetary health”*, a talk exploring how our food choices affect both personal wellbeing and the planet.

Anyone can join in using this link: https://meet2.organise.earth/rooms/95o-iug-ems-2p6/join

Living Rivers Exhibition – April to May 2026

Looking ahead, eeCAN will host a *Living Rivers Art Exhibition* at the Ebbisham Centre, Epsom KT19, in association with The Royal Marsden. Running from 22 April (Earth Day) to 22 May 2026, the free exhibition will celebrate the beauty and importance of rivers and waterways.

Inspired by writer Robert Macfarlane’s question *“Is a river alive?”*, the exhibition will showcase artwork from local schools, community groups, and individuals.

Submissions (A4 max-sized drawings or paintings) are invited by 27 March 2026, with eeCAN volunteers offering to collect (and return) artworks directly from schools and art groups. Groups will be invited to see their work on display and participate in nature-themed activities.

Email eeClimateActionNetwork@gmail.com for participation details.

A community coming together

From swapping tools and donating bikes to sharing climate ideas and artistic expression, eeCAN’s initiatives reflect a spirit of cooperation, creativity, and care for the environment.

Its organisers believe that by taking small, collective steps, Epsom and Ewell can make a big difference — helping local people live more sustainably while building resilience for the future.

For more information, contact eeClimateActionNetwork@gmail.com or follow eeCAN’s activities through their upcoming community channels.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council to stay put awaiting its demise

28 November 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council’s Strategy and Resources Committee has formally abandoned the plan to relocate the Town Hall to East Street, voting on 11 November to remain in the existing building until Local Government Reorganisation in 2027. The meeting also agreed to recommend a 3% staff pay award for 2026/27 and to support adoption of the Real Living Wage.

The decisions reverse the direction taken in earlier years which saw the Council identify **70 East Street** as the future civic office site, a plan covered previously by the Epsom and Ewell Times. The East Street building will now instead be **declared surplus and placed on the market**.

Town Hall stays put

Members unanimously approved **Option 1**, an approach which keeps both the New and Old Town Hall buildings in use with only legally-required and essential health and safety works carried out. Officers advised that the council must now

© 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

implement recommendations from the building's fire risk assessment, previously deferred when a move to East Street was expected.

The work will cost **£431,000**, with a total capital provision of **up to £517,200** once contingency is included. A further deferred-liabilities fund could be needed if ageing equipment fails during the next two to three years.

With Local Government Reorganisation due by April 2027, the report said investing more heavily in a short-term location would offer poor value. Options involving the Old Town Hall's closure or bringing the decommissioned second floor of the New Town Hall back into service were judged significantly more expensive.

Sale of 70 East Street

Under a later agenda item, the Committee agreed that **70 East Street should be declared surplus to operational requirements** and prepared for sale with a budget of up to £10,000 for marketing and upfront costs.

This effectively ends the former civic office relocation project. Surrey County Council's departure from the second floor of the New Town Hall, the worsening condition of parts of the estate, and the uncertainties of a possible unitary-authority future all contributed to the reassessment.

Staff pay award: 3% recommended

The Committee unanimously backed recommending a **3% pay increase** for 2026/27, alongside granting all staff an extra day of annual leave. Officers reminded councillors that the September CPI stood at 3.8% and that around 18% of staff at the top of their pay scales would not receive incremental rises.

Members also supported adopting the **Real Living Wage** from April 2026. The financial impact, estimated between £35,000 and £68,000 depending on next year's National Living Wage, will be built into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Coley raises concerns over transparency and financial risk

During the public session, Cllr **Alex Coley** (Independent Ruxley) spoke to highlight his continuing concerns about the handling of major financial decisions, particularly those arising from Local Government Reorganisation. He noted that asset-transfer discussions risked obliging future parish-level bodies to take responsibility for community facilities without councillors being given the information they needed about long-term maintenance liabilities.

He told the Committee he had attempted several times to obtain estimated maintenance costs and values for potential transfer assets and warned of "blank cheques with unknown risks and liabilities" that could fall on residents through an uncapped parish precept.

Cllr Coley thanked the Section 151 Officer for constructive engagement on reserve reviews but cautioned colleagues not to proceed with decisions without full supporting data.

His remarks contributed to a wider discussion later in the meeting, after the press and public were excluded, on the Council's strategic priorities and preparation for possible reorganisation.

Funding pressures still ahead

Officers confirmed that the 3% pay award would increase the projected 2026/27 budget deficit to around **£2 million**, with work continuing to close the gap before the February Full Council budget.

Councillors approved all recommendations put before them on the evening.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Related reports

Epsom and Ewell Council goes East

A new Town Hall for Epsom and Ewell?

Live facial recognition policing comes to Surrey

28 November 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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Surrey Police have begun using live facial recognition (LFR) technology after securing two mobile LFR vans in a joint bid with Sussex Police. The first deployment took place this week in Redhill following months of planning.

The vans use real-time facial recognition to compare faces captured on live camera feeds with a pre-determined police watchlist. Surrey Police say this list will include wanted persons such as sex offenders and perpetrators of domestic abuse. According to the force, images of everyone else are “instantly and permanently deleted”, and images of those on the watchlist are deleted within 24 hours.

Police acknowledge the historical concerns about gender and ethnic bias in commercial facial recognition systems but state that the national algorithm they will use “shows no statistical bias” and has been tested by the National Physical Laboratory. Officers will receive briefings on potential disparities relating to race, age and gender, and any computer-generated match will be checked by an officer before action is taken.

The force says deployments will only be authorised by a Superintendent and carried out “in a proportionate manner”, with clear signage on the vans and advance publication of deployment locations. The vans are funded by the Home Office for five years and may be made available to other forces for mutual aid.

Chief Inspector Andy Hill, Surrey Police’s lead for LFR, said the technology is “a vital tool to help us to investigate crime thoroughly and relentlessly pursue criminals”. He added that the rollout had been “meticulously planned” to ensure appropriate and transparent use. Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend described the vans as an important means of identifying violent criminals and sex offenders.

If the LFR vans come to Epsom and Ewell, Surrey Police say residents will be notified before deployments and that the vans will be signposted when in use.

National picture

The deployment in Surrey comes as the use of facial recognition technology accelerates across UK policing. Forces in England and Wales have increasingly turned to mobile LFR units, with millions of people scanned nationally each year and several hundred arrests made as a result. London’s Metropolitan Police and South Wales Police are among the heaviest users, reporting arrests of wanted individuals including violent offenders and registered sex offenders.

While these figures suggest a measurable benefit, LFR still represents a small proportion of overall policing activity, and questions remain about its accuracy, its effect on minority groups and the proportionality of scanning large numbers of passers-by for relatively small numbers of matches.

ICO guidance and safeguards

The Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) has issued detailed guidance stating that facial recognition used by police must comply with strict requirements of data protection law. Forces must demonstrate that each deployment is lawful, fair, transparent and based on necessity and proportionality. Data Protection Impact Assessments are required, and forces must show clear justification for the locations chosen, the purpose of the watchlist, and the retention policy for images. The ICO stresses that facial recognition “does not operate in a legal vacuum” and will continue auditing police use.

Advance signage and practical concerns

One issue not fully addressed in the Surrey Police statement is how advance signage will work with mobile vans. In practice, UK police forces usually publish the location of an LFR deployment only shortly before the van becomes operational. Because the vans can be moved rapidly as part of an operation, advance publication generally refers to the place where the van parks, not its movements throughout the day. Some forces update information if the van relocates, though not always in real time.

Another question is whether advance notice undermines the policing purpose by alerting wanted suspects. Civil liberties groups argue it does, but police note that most arrests via LFR occur even when deployments are announced. Many wanted individuals do not monitor police websites, and the requirement for transparency stems from data protection law rather than operational convenience. The ICO has made clear that secrecy around deployments would be unlikely to meet legal standards of fairness.

Local implications

For residents, the potential arrival of LFR vans in Epsom and Ewell would bring a technology that is increasingly common across the UK. Surrey Police emphasise that law-abiding members of the public have “nothing to fear” and that images of those not on a watchlist are immediately deleted. However, questions remain about how watchlists are created, how effectiveness will be measured and whether Surrey Police will publish statistics on matches, false matches and resulting arrests.

© 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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

As mobile facial recognition becomes a more familiar part of policing nationwide, the way Surrey Police implement and report on these deployments will be key to maintaining public confidence while pursuing the serious offenders the technology is designed to identify.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Photo: A live facial recognition van. Courtesy – Sussex Police.

Surrey’s Satellite bio-diversity project promoted at COP30 Brazil

28 November 2025



Surrey’s Space4Nature project, which uses satellite data and community science to protect biodiversity across the county, is currently being showcased by the UK Government at the COP30 UK Pavilion in Belém, Brazil (10–21 November 2025). The display forms part of the UK’s official presentation of research and innovation tackling global climate and nature challenges.

Co-led by the University of Surrey’s Centre for Environment and Sustainability (CES) in collaboration with Surrey Wildlife Trust, Buglife, and the Painshill Park Trust, Space4Nature brings together scientists, local communities and conservation groups to map and monitor key habitats across Surrey – from chalk grasslands to heathlands and acid grasslands that support some of the nation’s rarest species.

Using advanced satellite imagery and artificial intelligence trained with data from local volunteers, the project can classify habitats to Level 4 of the UKHab system – producing one of the most detailed environmental maps of its kind. This allows conservation partners to pinpoint where biodiversity is under threat and focus restoration efforts, such as reconnecting fragmented chalk grasslands – often called the “rainforests of Europe” for their carbon storage and rich biodiversity.

Surrey Wildlife Trust plays a central role in Space4Nature, leading the project’s citizen science programme, training volunteers and coordinating the collection of field data that makes its satellite and AI mapping possible. The Trust’s on-the-ground expertise connects technology and conservation, turning local knowledge into invaluable data for protecting Surrey’s landscapes.

Dr Ana Andries, Lecturer in Remote Sensing and GIS at the University of Surrey, and project lead, said:

“We’re using satellite data and artificial intelligence in a way that directly supports conservation on the ground. Citizen scientists help train our machine learning models, thus turning local field data into high-resolution habitat maps that reveal where biodiversity is under threat. To see our work featured on a global stage at COP30 highlights how our region’s innovation and collaboration can help shape the future of biodiversity monitoring.”

Andrew Jamieson, Space4Nature Project Manager at Surrey Wildlife Trust, says:

“It’s time for conservation organisations like ours to step outside traditional boundaries and focus not just on land management and individual species recovery, but also on delivering the tools and partnerships that will drive change on a landscape level. This project exemplifies that approach.”

Space4Nature was among the first projects in the United Kingdom to receive Space for Climate Observatory (SCO) accreditation from the UK’s Space4Climate network, recognising its excellence in using Earth observation data to tackle environmental challenges. This year, it has been selected as one of just 19 organisations featured in the UK Government’s Pavilion at COP30, with a video and QR-linked display presented by government representatives throughout the conference.

Dr Zoe M Harris, Director of Surrey’s Centre for Environment and Sustainability and Co-Director of the Institute for Sustainability, said:

“The Centre for Environment and Sustainability was founded on the idea that solving environmental challenges means bringing disciplines and people together. Space4Nature embodies that vision – combining engineering, data science and

© 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

community insight to create practical tools for nature recovery. Seeing this work recognised at COP30 highlights Surrey's role as a global leader in sustainability research and innovation."

Surrey University

Image: Centre for Environment and Sustainability, University of Surrey

---

Epsom and Ewell Times adds – the Surrey project is one of only twenty presented by the UK at the COP30 summit. See the full list HERE.

Conditional nod to southern rail link to Heathrow

28 November 2025



Spelthorne Borough Council has agreed to support a new rail link between Staines-upon-Thames and Heathrow Airport, but only on strict environmental and local benefit conditions.

The proposed Heathrow Southern Rail (HSR) scheme would connect Heathrow Terminal 5 directly to the south-west rail network, using existing track between Staines and Windsor before running in a new tunnel under Staines Moor. Supporters say it could slash road congestion, help people reach work at the airport, and give the town's economy a boost.

Councillors say they welcome the idea in principle but have made clear that their backing comes with safeguards. They want guarantees that trains will actually stop at Staines, that there will be no damage to the sensitive Staines Moor landscape, and that the council will get to sign off on final plans once detailed studies are complete.

Cllr Chris Bateson, who led the council's review, told the BBC's Local Democracy Reporting Service: "We've looked at both proposals in detail. A direct rail link from Staines to Heathrow could reduce congestion and support our local economy. But we must protect Staines Moor and make sure residents benefit."

His colleague, Cllr Howard Williams, chair of the Business, Infrastructure and Growth Committee, added: "Our support relies on clear guarantees. The environment can't pay the price for progress. We will keep working with HSR to make sure residents' interests come first."

The link would run mainly in tunnel to limit disruption, emerging to join the existing railway near Staines. The promoter, Heathrow Southern Railway Ltd, says the route could remove millions of car journeys to the airport every year and cut thousands of tonnes of carbon emissions.

If built, the line could open in the second half of this decade, though no firm construction timetable has yet been confirmed. Earlier proposals suggested the service could be running between 2026 and 2028, offering a six-minute journey from Staines to Heathrow Terminal 5.

An alternative "Southern Light Rail" idea — which would have involved a surface-level route — was rejected by councillors as too intrusive, with greater impact on privacy and the landscape.

While the majority of councillors supported the HSR plan with safeguards, some voiced concern that the benefits might not be evenly spread across the borough, particularly in Stanwell, where many residents already work at the airport.

The council says it will continue talks with HSR to ensure local voices are heard before any final decision. For now, the message from Spelthorne is clear: Heathrow's southern rail link is welcome — but not at the expense of Staines Moor or local control.

Sam Jones – Reporter



© 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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Photo: Train sign (Credit: Spelthorne Borough Council)

Related reports:

Surrey’s new rail link to Heathrow?

Epsom Hospital braces for strikes amid winter pressures

28 November 2025



Further strike action by resident doctors – formerly known as junior doctors – is set to add strain to NHS services just as winter illnesses begin to rise. The British Medical Association (BMA) has confirmed walkouts from 7am on Friday 14 November until 7am on Wednesday 19 November in what will be the latest round of industrial action in a long-running dispute with the Government over pay and working conditions. Hundreds of medics across St George’s, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group could join the five-day stoppage. The Trust says services are already under pressure from rising flu cases, which have climbed earlier than expected this year. Dr Richard Jennings, Group Chief Medical Officer, warned of disruption ahead and said hospitals are “always very busy at this time of year” and are experiencing “significant pressure” due to the combined impact of seasonal illness and the upcoming walkouts. He said consultant doctors and other staff will work extra shifts “to keep patients safe”, but appointments may still need to be rescheduled to safeguard care for emergency and critically ill patients.

Local impact so far

During the previous round of resident-doctor strikes in July, 144 elective procedures and 1,084 outpatient appointments were rescheduled across the Group. On an average strike day, 211 resident doctors were recorded absent across the Trust’s sites. The public will be contacted directly if their appointment needs to be rearranged, and the Trust emphasises that any appointment not specifically cancelled should be attended as normal. Emergency departments remain open for life-threatening conditions.

Why doctors say they are striking

The BMA has repeatedly argued that resident-doctor pay has been eroded by more than a quarter in real terms since 2008. Representatives say pay restoration is essential both to retain doctors within the NHS and to halt a pattern of experienced staff leaving for better-paid roles abroad. Doctors’ leaders also say the dispute is about patient safety: they claim chronic understaffing means resident doctors are covering too many gaps in rotas, working excessive hours, and taking on responsibilities that stretch beyond their training. The BMA says that improving pay and working conditions would reduce burnout and stabilise the workforce, ultimately shortening waiting lists. The organisation has also expressed frustration that talks with Government have repeatedly stalled, arguing that below-inflation pay offers fall far short of resolving the dispute.

Government position

Ministers have previously said that the level of pay demanded by the BMA is unaffordable in the current economic climate and would divert funds from frontline services. The Government maintains that it has accepted independent pay review body recommendations and has urged doctors to return to negotiations without pre-conditions. Officials also argue that strike action adds further pressure to already stretched NHS services and risks longer delays for patients waiting for operations and specialist appointments.

Advice for patients this week

The Trust is urging the public to continue using NHS services responsibly. NHS 111 online should be the first port of call for non-emergencies, pharmacies can advise on minor illnesses, and GP services are unaffected by industrial action. With flu infections rising, eligible residents are being encouraged to get vaccinated without delay, and people are asked to check in on vulnerable friends and neighbours. Dr Jennings emphasised that anyone with a life-threatening condition must still attend A&E or call 999.

Sam Jones – Reporter

© 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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Related reports:

Doctors’ strike to hit Epsom Hospital

Epsom Hospital workers to strike for equality?

Surrey braces for doctors’ strike

Primark finally indicates a season to open in Epsom

28 November 2025



The Ashley Centre in Epsom has confirmed that Primark is set to open its doors in Spring 2026, occupying a two-floor, 44,000 square foot retail unit. The arrival of this major fashion retailer is being billed as a milestone for the Centre and for the local retail offering in Epsom.

Background and delays

The unit which Primark will occupy has had a long and troubled history of vacancy. The previous occupier closed three years ago, leaving the large space empty ever since. Work to transform the unit was delayed when the first building contractors appointed to carry out the full refit went bust, setting the project back significantly. After these setbacks, the confirmation that Primark will finally open its Epsom store marks the end of a long wait for local shoppers and a major boost for the Ashley Centre.

The new Primark store

Primark will open next to fashion giant JD Sports and within easy reach of other major retailers such as NEXT, Marks & Spencer and Oliver Bonas. The store will span two floors and showcase the brand’s extensive range of women’s, men’s and children’s clothing, accessories and homeware. Its size and location will make it one of the key anchors within the shopping centre.

A boost for the town centre

Ashley Centre Assistant Manager Will Greenland said: “The opening of Primark is one of the most highly anticipated openings that Ashley Centre has had for quite some time, and we know just how much local shoppers are looking forward to it. Primark’s arrival will not only bring a fantastic new retail offer to Epsom, but it will create new job opportunities, increase footfall, and further elevate the centre’s role as a prime shopping destination in the community.”

The store is expected to generate new employment, draw additional visitors from across Surrey, and strengthen the Centre’s position as Epsom’s prime shopping hub.

About Primark

Primark was founded in Dublin in 1969, trading as Penneys in Ireland, before expanding to the UK in the 1970s. It has since grown into one of the country’s biggest clothing and homeware retailers, known for its affordable fashion and high turnover of seasonal collections. The company continues to rely on the appeal of physical stores rather than online sales, promoting what it describes as a lively, social shopping experience.

In recent years, the brand has invested in sustainability and responsible sourcing, aiming to improve transparency across its global supply chain. Despite broader challenges in the retail sector, Primark has consistently reported strong growth and remains a major draw for shopping centres across the UK.

Looking ahead

For Epsom, the long-awaited opening of Primark represents more than just another store. It brings one of Britain’s best-known brands to the town centre, fills a large empty space, and sends a signal of renewed confidence in the local retail economy. Shoppers can expect a broad and affordable range of fashion and homeware when doors finally open in Spring 2026.

Sam Jones – Reporter

© 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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Related reports:

Primark to open in Epsom

5 Shops that could replace House of Fraser in the Ashley Centre

Leatherhead to be home to 500 Surrey Police Officers

28 November 2025



Surrey Police will get its new East Surrey headquarters after huge plans including hundreds of homes was approved. The force has been on the lookout for a new hub after its Reigate base was forced to close suddenly when dangerous crumbly RAAC concrete that can collapse without warning was found through the old site in 2023. The plans, on the former ERA site in Cleeve Road, Leatherhead, will be built in phases after being approved by Mole Valley District Council's development committee on Wednesday, November 5.

The first work at the site will be to build a new strategic divisional police headquarters for Surrey Police with 500 officers and staff moving into the building. Stage two will see the existing redundant buildings demolished to make way for a residential block accommodating 40 affordable residential homes that the police said would ideally be for its own staff. Stage three would build out 185 new homes.

Despite being voted through without any formal objections, concerns were raised over the lack of affordable housing in the project and that the council's affordability targets had been made a mockery. It was admitted that, in the current market, it was practically impossible for new developments to have 40 per cent of the new homes be affordable, and the project be financially viable.

Speaking on behalf of the force, a spokesperson said: "We needed to move out of our Reigate Headquarters in 2023 due to the discovery of RAAC. We are lucky enough to have secured temporary accommodation, but very much a temporary solution in the knowledge that we needed a long-term divisional headquarters." He said Surrey Police settled on Leatherhead because its gave their teams "good access to the local area and the major road links so officers can fight crime and protect people in the area."

Better facilities would allow the force to attract and retain staff. He added that while there will be serving officers operating from the base it would not act as a fire type response meaning that, while they could not guarantee there would never be sirens going off, it would be "highly unlikely."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

ERA Site, Cleeve Road, Leatherhead, Surrey (image Google)

Related reports:

New Surrey police division HQ plans

Surrey police to move to Epsom and Ewell constituency

Free trees for Epsom and Ewell residents

28 November 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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Surrey residents are being invited to collect free trees later this month, as part of Surrey County Council's drive to plant 1.2 million trees by 2030 – one for every resident.

A total of 4,000 native trees will be given away at community recycling centres (CRCs) around the county, including Leatherhead – the nearest collection point for Epsom and Ewell.

The giveaway will run from 9am to 4pm on **Friday 28 November**, **Saturday 29 November**, and **Monday 1 December** at seven CRCs: Chertsey, Cranleigh, Dorking, Earlswood, Leatherhead, Shepperton and Witley.

The closest to Epsom and Ewell is Randalls Road, Leatherhead, KT22 0BA. Tel: 01372 375 479

Each visitor can collect one free small or medium-sized native tree, such as crab apple or hazel, along with aftercare guidance. Trees should be planted within seven days of collection.

To manage demand and avoid disappointment, advance booking is essential. Residents can reserve a date and location online through Surrey County Council's website.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment, said: "Our tree giveaways are always popular events, so it's really important that anyone wishing to attend books in advance. By collecting a free tree, you will be helping us with our ambition to facilitate the planting of 1.2 million trees, one for every resident by 2030. Since our pledge in 2019, 768,332 trees have been planted and we couldn't have done this without the ongoing support from schools, communities, businesses and residents, and of course the volunteers who have helped with the planting itself."

She added: "Planting a tree in your garden not only helps us tackle the impact of climate change and improve biodiversity, but you will be part of a Surrey legacy."

Trees help ease the effects of climate change by storing carbon, preventing flooding, and improving air quality and biodiversity. The county council's Tree Strategy aims to ensure the "right tree is planted in the right place" and that young trees are properly cared for as they establish.

For more information or to book a collection slot, visit the Surrey County Council website or email **trees@surreycc.gov.uk**.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Image: License: CC0 Public Domain

Epsom Hospital braces for flu spike

28 November 2025



Hospitals serving Epsom, St Helier and St George's are warning of a potentially severe flu season as national data reveals the number of deaths linked to the virus in England more than doubled last winter.

Figures from the UK Health Security Agency show 7,757 flu-related deaths were recorded in 2024–25, compared with 3,555 the previous year. Child deaths rose from 34 to 53 — a 56 per cent increase — while fewer people took up the offer of a flu vaccination.

Last winter, local hospitals faced intense pressure from flu alongside RSV, Covid and norovirus outbreaks, which closed wards and stretched Emergency Departments to capacity. With flu cases now rising again after the school half-term, health leaders fear a repeat.

© 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

Chief Nursing Officer for St George's, Epsom and St Helier hospitals, Elaine Clancy, urged residents to act now. "Last flu season was particularly nasty and we're very concerned that this year could be even worse – we're preparing for a spike of flu onto our wards," she said. "We see people dying every year from flu and sadly thousands more will likely this year. I strongly recommend booking your jab now, as it takes up to 14 days to fully kick in."

Local mother Amy Clare, from Sutton, knows how dangerous flu can be. Her five-week-old son Jonah was rushed to Epsom Hospital's Emergency Department with the virus in December 2022.

"What started as a fever quickly escalated," said Amy. "When the doctor told us we'd be spending Christmas in hospital, I was devastated. But he was in the best place to get better. The care we received from the moment we walked into A&E was fantastic – the staff immediately knew something wasn't right and were with us every step of the way."

Jonah was discharged the day after Christmas but continued to receive daily treatment until the New Year. "The care Jonah received saved his life," said Amy.

Pregnant women are strongly advised to have the flu jab at any stage of pregnancy. It protects both mother and baby, but uptake remains low — only around one in three expectant mothers in England were vaccinated last year.

Those eligible for a free NHS flu vaccination include:
– everyone aged 65 and over
– people under 65 with long-term health conditions such as diabetes or heart problems
– children aged two and three, and all primary school children
– some secondary school pupils (Years 7 to 11)
– residents in care homes
– carers and those receiving carer's allowance
– people living with someone who has a weakened immune system
– frontline health and social care workers

People can book or amend their flu vaccination appointment online: Book, change or cancel a free NHS flu vaccination at a pharmacy – NHS.

Sam Jones – Reporter



Surrey resident's views on County split ignored?

28 November 2025



The Government has been accused of ignoring Surrey residents' views on how to dissolve and merge the county's councils after it emerged there was a clear preference for three unitaries rather than the two mega authorities that have been imposed.

A consultation ran from June 17 to August 5 to help the Government understand what residents, businesses, and other stakeholders thought about the changes in Surrey. The results, we were told, would be used to "inform the final decision on which option is best for Surrey, with a decision expected in October."

On Tuesday, October 28, it was announced that Surrey County Council and its 11 boroughs and districts would be abolished and replaced with West Surrey Council and East Surrey Council. The decision flies in the face of the 51 per cent of the 5,617 respondents who backed three unitary proposals versus the 19 per cent that favoured East/West.

This, despite a costly PR drive from Surrey County Council that sent leaflets to every household pushing for the two unitaries. The results were published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of its decision – and found that, in addition to the strong resident support for three councils, 56 per cent were also strongly opposed to what has been delivered.

The Ministry said: "Support for the three unitary proposal was based on the view that a three unitary council model resulted in authorities that were a good size and that the groupings of current authority areas made sense. Residents generally believed that the proposal would achieve good economies and efficiencies and be good for local identity, accountability, community engagement and service improvement.

"Negative responses relating to the three unitary proposal highlighted concern that it would not generate significant

© 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

efficiencies, as well as concerns about how debt would be addressed. Those who supported the two unitary proposal typically did so on the basis of the greater efficiencies presented in the proposal, with the belief that it would create authorities of a good size.

“It added: “There was no single factor as to why residents did not support the two unitary proposal, though the most common theme in responses was that the two unitaries were too large and secondly, that the proposals would be bad for local identity.”

Councillor Paul Follows, leader of the Liberal Democrats on Surrey County Council, was one of the drivers behind the three unitary model in his role as leader of Waverley Borough Council. He said: “They cancelled elections, asked for views, and then did the opposite.”

The Ministry said its decision process carefully considered responses to the consultation as well as all other relevant information. It said the proposals were assessed against set criteria and that, of the choices, the two-council proposal better met that – particularly as it is seen as more likely to be financially sustainable.

A spokesperson said: “Putting Surrey’s local authorities on a more sustainable footing is vital to safeguarding the services its residents rely on, as well as investing in their futures. The government consultation for both proposals, held between July 17 and August 5, treated the proposals equally.”

On the cancelled elections, the ministry said they were postponed for a year to provide additional capacity for speeding up reorganisation – given the urgency of creating sustainable unitary local government for Surrey.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Related reports:

Government Casts Doubt on Surrey’s Mayoral Devolution Promise

Residents sigh of relief if Government bail out bankrupt Woking

Epsom and Ewell to Go East in Surrey shake-up

Surrey County Council LGR leaflet misleading claim

LGR and CGR, what’s the difference for Epsom and Ewell?

No release from LGR releases

Where do we stand on local government reorganisation in Epsom and Ewell and the County?

Many more…. search local government reorganisation

Image: Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (image Google)

Government Casts Doubt on Surrey’s Mayoral Devolution Promise

28 November 2025



No promises have been made that Surrey will get full devolution and a directly elected mayor – despite it being the “entire purpose” of the lengthy and arduous process of splitting the historic county and its 11 boroughs and districts into two mega councils.

It had been understood that Surrey’s councils would be abolished and reformed into either two or three unitary authorities, with two sets of elections – first for the new bodies, and then for an overarching mayor in 2027. Surrey County Council’s website outlining the devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process mentions the word “Mayor” seven times, and even lists May 2027 as when residents would go to the polls to decide who would be responsible for strategic services such as education, policing, fire and rescue.

However, the Government’s own timetable for Surrey only lists a May 2026 election for the two shadow councils, followed by the next round of balloting in May 2031 – and then every four years after that. Furthermore, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has said that the references to Surrey getting a directly elected mayor were “not quite accurate” as the decision “has not been confirmed” and that they were only “committed to working with partners to establish a strategic authority for the area”. They clarified that the announcement that Surrey would be dissolved and reformed into East and West Surrey was “not promising a mayor”.

© 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

26th November 2026
ISSN 2753-2771

Areas with strategic mayors, such as London and Manchester, are given extra devolved powers from Government, with the argument being it gives local people a greater say in the running of their areas. Writing to the leaders of Surrey's councils, the ministry would only say that simplifying local government ensures "a strong foundation for devolution". It said it was committed to working with partners across Surrey, including the new unitary authorities, to establish a strategic authority to ensure relevant functions held at the county level can continue on that geographic footprint where possible, such as transport and adult skills.

It added that the establishment of a strategic authority would be subject to the relevant statutory tests being met and local consent – but makes no mention of a directly elected mayor. This is important because strategic authorities are different from Mayoral Strategic Authorities. According to the ministry, Foundation Strategic Authorities include non-mayoral combined authorities and combined county authorities, and any local authority designated as a strategic authority without a mayor.

Mayoral Strategic Authorities, such as the Greater London Authority, all Mayoral Combined Authorities and all Mayoral Combined County Authorities, "automatically begin as Mayoral Strategic Authorities" – and only those that meet specified eligibility criteria may be designated as Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities to unlock further devolution.

It has left the county council saying devolution is now an "ambition" rather than a formality. Others have called out the council for rushing into such a seismic shift, and cancelling elections to get devolution done – without any guarantees over whether the county would get a mayor.

Councillor Paul Follows, leader of the Liberal Democrat group at Surrey County Council, said having a mayor "was the entire purpose of the reorganisation". He added: "The county council has gone in on this nonsense without any guarantee over the reason they have it, despite that being the principal reason the county has initiated this process – but they have yet to receive any guarantees. I'm sure the county will reflect their reasons for going for this in the light that the ministry said we may not be getting devolution."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Image: Tim Oliver (credit Surrey Live) and County graphic (credit SCC).

Related reports:

Residents sigh of relief if Government bail out bankrupt Woking

Epsom and Ewell to Go East in Surrey shake-up

Surrey County Council LGR leaflet misleading claim

LGR and CGR, what's the difference for Epsom and Ewell?

No release from LGR releases

Where do we stand on local government reorganisation in Epsom and Ewell and the County?

Many more…. search local government reorganisation

© 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