EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771

Netflix to mainstream in Surrey

27 June 2025



A Surrey film studio used by Netflix, the streaming giant behind hit shows such as Stranger Things, Bridgerton and Adolescence, will be made permanent after full planning permission was granted. The site was originally approved on a short-term basis because of its green belt location, and Runnymede Borough Council's desire to see the area eventually become an office hub as part of its Longcross Garden Village plan. The cratering demand of office space, plus the growing rise of Netflix, saw the land be taken out of green belt – meaning the temporary restrictions no longer applied and its long-term future could be secured. Officers told the Wednesday June 25 meeting: "This building was erected in 2020 under a temporary permission and has been used continually since. Permission was granted originally for the building on a temporary basis for reasons of visual amenity and so as not to prejudice the ongoing phased redevelopment of the Longcross north site. Since then there has been a change in site circumstances in respect of the commercial redevelopment of the site. The building supports the existing studio use and therefore there are no reasons why the building can not remain on a permanent basis."

The site was previously occupied by the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) with many of its old buildings used by Netflix as film studios including buildings within the Surrey Heath. The Longcross North site together with the former DERA land south of the M3 including Longcross Barracks, form the designated Longcross Garden Village and has been removed from the green belt through the 2030 Local Plan. The building is near to the northern boundary within the wider Longcross North site. The officer added: "The appearance of the building is appropriate in the context of the wider film studios site." The application was unanimously approved.

Longcross Studios (image Google)

110-Home Scheme at Langley Vale Sparks Green Belt Fears

27 June 2025



A neighbour has spoken out against early proposals by developer Fairfax to build up to 110 new homes on farmland at Langley Bottom Farm in Langley Vale, describing the plans as a "devastating blow" to the character and heritage of the area.

Langley Vale, nestled between Epsom Downs and surrounding ancient woodland managed by the Woodland Trust, is described by residents as more than just a location — but a cherished community shaped by its open fields, green spaces, and rural setting.

"This isn't empty land up for grabs," one local resident told the *Epsom and Ewell Times*. "Our green belt is a living, breathing asset — a habitat for wildlife, a natural break from urban sprawl, and a place for families to enjoy the countryside. Once it's gone, it's gone forever."

The concerns centre on potential impacts including increased traffic, pressure on schools and GP surgeries, and the loss of valuable farmland that has been cultivated for generations. Neighbours fear that if this initial consultation leads to formal planning permission, it would "irreversibly alter" the area and set a worrying precedent for green belt development.

In their public exhibition materials, however, Fairfax describes the proposals as sensitive and environmentally responsible. The scheme, which is subject to local consultation, would deliver up to 110 homes on 5.2 hectares of land,

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ISSN 2753-2771

with half of the properties designated as affordable housing.

According to Fairfax's consultation website and exhibition documents, the proposals include:

- a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%
- significant landscaping and green planting
- electric vehicle charging points
- improved footpaths and cycle storage
- a children's play area
- new public green space
- contributions to local infrastructure
- funding to extend the Surrey Connect on-demand bus service

Fairfax argues that the site, currently an arable field, scores "relatively low" for biodiversity and offers opportunities to enhance wildlife habitats while protecting the adjacent ancient woodland with buffer zones.

The developer also points to the pressing local demand for housing, highlighting that Epsom and Ewell Borough Council faces strict targets for new homes, including affordable units. The homes would be built using energy-efficient methods and aim to promote sustainable travel, Fairfax says.

Residents were requested to give feedback by 16th June but the comments link is still live at the time of this post. Online at langley.your-feedback.co.uk or by contacting the project team by phone or post.

The plans are at a consultation stage only, but campaigners fear they could soon turn into a planning application. "The green belt is supposed to protect communities from precisely this type of development," the neighbour added. "If we allow this, it will change Langley Vale for good."

Image: Langley development layout. Courtesy Fairfax Homes.

Student overdose leads to policy change

27 June 2025



A university student from Surrey could have been saved from an overdose if police had left a voicemail for her parents, an inquest jury has found. Despite needing to find her address, officers did not leave a message. Amy Levy, 22, deliberately took an overdose of her prescription pills at her student home in Bristol while on the phone to a friend on June 18, 2023. Her friend alerted the police as Amy's condition worsened. Surrey Police and Avon and Somerset Police launched an urgent search to find the University of the West of England (UWE) student and tried to contact her parents, who live in Surrey, because they did not know her address. But when officers and staff tried to reach Amy's parents, no one picked up the phone to the number showing 'no caller ID'. The calls were left unanswered, unable to ring back and no voicemail was left despite the gravity of the situation. Amy was eventually located more than 90 minutes after the first police call. Sadly, she died in hospital on June 22, 2023 from an overdose of different medications which caused hypoxic brain injury.

In a statement, Amy's parents said: "We are totally broken that Amy is no longer with us, but we are also so proud of Amy and grateful for the time we had her in our lives." An inquest jury identified a "catalogue of missed opportunities" to save Amy. The five-day inquest from June 6, 2025 concluded if the police had found her sooner, she would have survived. The jury said that despite taking a deliberate overdose of prescription drugs, it was not possible to know her true intent. Robert Sowersby, Assistant Coroner for Avon, has now issued a report raising concern about the lack of guidance or training issued to officers and staff about leaving voicemail messages – especially in circumstances where they are trying to obtain important information in a time-pressured situation. He said it was "hard to understand" why all of the officers or police staff decided not to leave any voicemail or message despite both forces grading Amy's case as requiring an "immediate" response, the most urgent category.

"Both police forces knew that Amy had taken an overdose at an unknown address and that her condition was deteriorating," the report said. "Despite that factual background, none of the officers or call handlers who phoned Amy's parents left a voicemail message." The inquest found that because the missed calls were from an unknown number, Amy's parents did not know that there was an emergency, or that the police wanted to speak with them, and had no way of calling them back. Assistant coroner Sowersby wrote: "It is probable that Amy's location could have been obtained earlier than it was if the police had left a suitably worded voicemail for one or more of her parents." Surrey Police attended the family home in person and received details of Amy's current address, which led to officers being able to find her in Bristol,

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ISSN 2753-2771

Avon and Somerset Police said.

Police inspectors from both forces gave evidence at the inquest. There was guidance in Avon not to leave voicemails when the incident in question concerns domestic abuse, but there is no general guidance about when to leave a voicemail message in other cases. Surrey Police provided the coroner with evidence of updated voicemail procedure indicating that callers must consider if it is appropriate to leave a voicemail or message. Mr Sowersby said: “With limited or no guidance, training or policy on when police and/or police support staff liaising with the public should leave a voicemail, particularly in circumstances where they are trying to obtain important information in a time-pressured situation, I am concerned that there is a risk that future deaths will occur unless action is taken.”

Iftikhar Manzoor, of Hudgell Solicitors, represented Amy’s parents at the Inquest and said her death ‘must lead to clear policies’ across UK police forces when the risk to an individual has been graded as the highest level of urgency. He said: “What has been truly shocking to learn has been the fact that there is no system in place with regard to leaving messages in a situation where somebody’s life is quite clearly at risk, and the only person posing a danger to them is themselves. The calls were shown as unknown numbers, and as the police chose not to leave messages and only made one call attempt, a huge opportunity was lost immediately, and the sense of urgency dropped. It was the bare minimum effort.”

Responding to the coroner’s report, Superintendent Chris Colley of Surrey Police said: “Our thoughts and condolences remain with Amy’s friends and family following what must have been a very hard couple of years for her loved ones.” He added: “We have now made changes to our procedure around the use of voicemails and telephone contact attempts, to ensure we are doing all we can to be there for people when they need us most.” A spokesman for Avon and Somerset Police said: “Our thoughts are with the family of Amy Levy, who died in extremely tragic circumstances two years ago. A private apology has been made to her family, which we wish to repeat publicly, and we are reviewing our organisational policies in line with the findings relating to this case.” Avon and Somerset Police also said they are looking at potential changes to force polices as guided by an Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) learning recommendation earlier this month. The spokesperson said: “We will ensure any necessary changes to help protect the public are adopted and will provide a further update to the IOPC and coroner in due course.”

HM Coroners Court Woking Surrey

Two unitaries will save money says Surrey leader

27 June 2025



Splitting Surrey into two could fill the ever-widening gap for council funding, County Council leader Tim Oliver claims. In a cabinet meeting yesterday (June 26), the Surrey leader and councillor said he hoped local government reorganisation will provide a new opportunity to re-hash the old services onto new council bodies, but innovate how they are delivered to residents. He said: “Looking at reorganisation, looking at what savings can be delivered, will be really important to hopefully completely fill the gap we’re likely to see as a result of the Fair Funding Review.”

Last week, the government launched its consultation across Surrey for the two competing submissions for changing councils structures: one option is to divide Surrey into East and West unitary authorities, and the other is to split the county into three, North, East and West. The leader claimed that splitting Surrey into three mega councils, as promoted by the opposition, would break even and make no savings, whereas the two-authority model could generate ongoing yearly benefits around £25m. But ‘Team Three’ councils have argued the separation would be more evenly balanced financially in terms of delivering services like adult social care, SEND provision and collecting tax. Documents reveal, according to the District and Borough council calculations, the three-divisional plan would save £22.5m annually four years in.

Cllr Oliver clarified saving money is by no means the only drive in reorganisation, but was a significant consideration for keeping local councils afloat with income funding changes from central government. Surrey has a high council tax base meaning it has more band H houses, paying at least £3,692.70 amount in 2025, than many other parts of the country. Cllr Oliver said it will mean the county will lose the equivalent round of government grants or funding allocations, leaving a net reduction in Surrey’s income. The central government has launched a review into looking at how local councils are funded across the country, called the fair funding review. Documents reveal the government is considering an “equaliser” for local government income, directing funding towards places that are less able to meet their needs through locally raised income using council tax with others.

Cllr Oliver added: “We will be even more reliant upon council taxes as the source of financing and it’s already something in the region of 80-85 per cent. So that is not going to be good news. Any new money coming into local government over the next three years, 76 per cent of that will be funded on the assumption that every council increases its council tax by 5 per cent each year, for the next three years.” Local authorities have the power to raise the tax by up to 5 per cent every year, although some choose lower increases. Legally, increasing council tax more than 5 per cent requires a local

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ISSN 2753-2771

referendum. Bin collections, libraries, public toilets, fire services, parks, SEND provision and social care are all funded by council tax. If councils are unable to make ends meet with the money raised, services will have to be cut or streamlined to balance the books. The leader said: “It is therefore hugely important for every reason that if we are to continue to deliver the services at the level that we wish to, we find areas of savings or efficiencies. We have a very good track record of delivery efficiencies year on year but this will be significant.”

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Surrey’s partner organisations support county council plans for local government reorganisation

Surrey Councils launch Local Government Reorganisation engagement

Tim Oliver Surrey County Council leader – Surrey Live

Epsom and Ewell Considers New Community Councils as Local Government Shake-Up Looms

27 June 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) will meet Thursday, 26 June for an extraordinary session to decide whether to launch a formal Community Governance Review (CGR)—a move that could lead to the creation of one or more Community Councils across the borough.

The proposal comes in direct response to the Government’s initiative to abolish all 11 borough and district councils in Surrey, along with Surrey County Council, and replace them with fewer, larger unitary authorities. The Government is currently considering submissions for either two, or three new unitary councils for the county. The Government may still impose a single authority for the whole County. A decision is expected in autumn 2025.

If the borough and county councils are dissolved—as is widely anticipated in April 2027—Epsom and Ewell would be left as one of the few areas in Surrey without a “lower-tier” of local government unless it acts now to establish one. Unlike many other parts of the county, Epsom and Ewell is currently “unparished”, meaning it has no town or parish councils. The proposed Community Councils would fill that void.

What is a Community Council?

Community Councils are parish councils in all but name, capable of levying their own precept (a share of Council Tax) and taking on responsibilities such as managing parks, allotments, bus shelters, community centres, and street lighting. They may also act as local voices on planning applications and community development.

The proposal is for either:

- One Community Council to cover the whole borough, or
- Two Community Councils dividing the borough between East and West, with four different boundary configurations under consideration.

Maps, population data, and details of council assets in each option form part of the public consultation package.

Consultation and Timeline

If Full Council agrees to proceed, the CGR would begin in July 2025 with a twelve-week public consultation. The review process must be completed within 12 months if it is to inform the April 2027 reorganisation.

A second round of consultation will follow in early 2026, with a final decision due by June 2026. If approved, elections to the new Community Councils would be held in May 2027.

A £300,000 budget has been allocated to fund the consultation and planning stages, to be drawn from EEBC’s strategic priorities reserve.

What Would These Councils Do?

Community Councils could inherit some of the Borough Council’s functions and assets. However, this would depend on detailed financial and legal planning. Transfers of property and responsibilities would need to comply with any restrictions imposed under a potential Section 24 Direction—special powers the Secretary of State may use to restrict councils from disposing of assets in the run-up to local government reorganisation.

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ISSN 2753-2771

Significantly, the new councils would be able to raise funds independently through a local precept. While this could enable more responsive services, it also raises concerns about an increased financial burden on residents—particularly if a higher precept replaces services that were formerly funded by EEBC without any direct local taxation.

Too Many Layers?

One of the central arguments for creating large unitary authorities is to streamline governance, eliminate duplication, and reduce the cost of running multiple layers of local government.

But the creation of Community Councils risks reintroducing those layers, potentially replacing one borough council with both a unitary authority *and* one or more new Community Councils beneath it. Some have questioned whether such a system would actually reduce costs at all—especially if a new strategic authority is also established to coordinate policy between two or more unitary areas of Surrey.

Critics warn of a complex and potentially costly patchwork: unitary authority, strategic body, and newly-formed parish councils—all with their own budgets, meetings, officers, and elections.

EEBC, however, is keen to preserve a strong local voice. In a statement, Council Leader Cllr Hannah Dalton said:

“We’re navigating the biggest change in local democracy for more than 50 years. We want to make sure that, whatever the outcome of local government reorganisation, the voices of our residents and local communities continue to be heard in years to come – this is a vital element of local democracy.” Epsom and Ewell Times 28/05/2025.

What Happens Next?

Should the Council vote to proceed on Thursday, residents will be invited to participate in shaping the future of their local governance. A dedicated consultation website will go live in early July, with drop-in events, online surveys, and stakeholder workshops planned through to September.

Further updates will be provided via the Council’s social media and through local publications, including the *Epsom and Ewell Times*.

Have Your Say

Residents will be asked:

- Whether Community Councils should be created
- Whether there should be one or two (or more) such councils
- What functions they should perform
- How they should be funded
- What boundaries make the most sense

More information is available at www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk and by emailing: cgr@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

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Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey: Key Proposals

Assisted Dying Bill Passes in Commons — Epsom MP Explains Absence

27 June 2025



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ISSN 2753-2771

In a historic moment for UK parliamentary debate, the Assisted Dying Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on **Friday 20 June 2025**, following a narrow but decisive vote. MPs voted **314 in favour** and **291 against**, a margin of just 23 votes, paving the way for the Bill's progression to the House of Lords.

The **Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill**, introduced by Labour MP Kim Leadbetter, proposes to legalise assisted dying for terminally ill adults in England and Wales who are medically expected to live for six months or less. Under the Bill's framework, individuals would be able to request life-ending medication, to be self-administered following a rigorous process of approvals.

That process would require sign-off by two independent doctors and a special three-member oversight panel comprising a legal expert, psychiatrist, and social worker. Earlier provisions for High Court authorisation were removed in the final draft to streamline implementation, a move both welcomed and criticised in equal measure.

Supporters of the Bill argue that it reflects modern values around personal autonomy and compassionate end-of-life care, allowing individuals the dignity of choosing how and when they die. They point to robust safeguards within the Bill — including mental capacity assessments, a residency requirement, and a mandatory waiting period — as protections for vulnerable people. Medical professionals would retain the right to opt out on grounds of conscience.

Opponents, including some religious leaders and palliative care specialists, argue that the Bill could open the door to pressure on the elderly, disabled or chronically ill to end their lives prematurely. They also warn that overstretched NHS and social care services might struggle to implement the regulatory framework effectively.

Among those unable to cast their vote was Epsom and Ewell's Liberal Democrat MP, **Helen Maguire**, who has consistently supported the Bill in previous readings. Ms Maguire issued the following full statement to the *Epsom and Ewell Times* explaining her absence:

"I am disappointed to have been unable to attend the vote. I have consistently voted for this Bill.

My absence on the voting date of Friday, June 20th, was due to a pre-planned parliamentary trip. This visit was scheduled before the voting date was confirmed and unfortunately could not be moved.

This is an issue I care about profoundly, and I gave serious thought as to whether I should be away. In the end, I was paired with another MP who was unable to attend as they hold a different view from me, which meant that our absences effectively cancelled each other out in terms of the final result.

While this did offer some reassurance to my conscience, I appreciate that my absence may still be disappointing to those who had hoped to see a vote recorded in person. Please know that I have made it a priority to attend all other sitting Fridays when the assisted dying bill was debated, precisely because of how important I know these debates and votes are, particularly on such sensitive and personal matters."

With the Bill now heading to the House of Lords for further scrutiny, attention turns to whether peers will support what could become one of the most significant moral and legal reforms in recent decades. While some in the Lords remain sceptical, others are warning against frustrating legislation that has cleared the elected chamber by a democratic vote.

Whether or not the Bill survives its passage through the Lords, the June 20th vote represents a shift in the national conversation — one that brings the UK a step closer to joining countries like Canada, New Zealand, and parts of the United States in legalising assisted dying under carefully controlled conditions.

Surrey Police officer inspires change to racism law in private places

27 June 2025



Surrey Police officer Sergeant Candice Gill is celebrating this week after successfully campaigning for an amendment to the law that will have a far-reaching impact.

While it is a criminal offence to racially or religiously abuse someone in public, this does not extend to incidents occurring in homes. This loophole left police officers and emergency workers with no legal protection from such attacks during home visits.

Candice experienced the impact of this first-hand. She says: "I cast my mind back to the day of a racially aggravated incident against me. I knew the man was racist. Once I was inside his house, he made it overtly clear. The abuse he threw at me was both damaging and humiliating, and there were no legal consequences.

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“It seemed like a no-brainer to me that something had to change. But changing the law seemed way too big, far out of my remit, impossible even.”

Surrey Police Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp heard about this outdated gap in the law and committed to championing the cause with Candice.

He capitalised on opportunities to brief ministers and wrote numerous letters. Alongside Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend, Candice and Nev made a trip to Parliament to press the case for change.

When they learnt earlier this year that there was cross-party support in Parliament and the changes would be made, Candice and Nev were thrilled. Last week they received written confirmation that the government will make an amendment to the law, subject to the Police and Crime Bill receiving Royal Assent later this year. The government will introduce two new offences, ensuring that emergency workers are covered under the law when doing their jobs in private homes.

Candice says: “I am absolutely delighted to have heard that my proposal to have the law changed has been agreed.

“I hope the change will go some way into making all officers but particularly the officers who are ethnically or religiously diverse feel more protected and more valued while doing one of the hardest jobs out there. The positive impact is widespread across all police forces and other emergency services.”

Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp says: “More than once, I heard from colleagues that the impact of being singled out and attacked for simply being who you are was more profound than being physically assaulted.

“This important change wouldn’t have happened without Candice and is a reminder of the difference we can make with determination and teamwork. Letters of support from national leaders representing the ambulance service, fire and rescue service and the Police Federation have helped to confirm the difference it will make to emergency workers across England and Wales.

“Surrey is a consistently improving force, and this is further evidence of our pathway to becoming a leading force in fighting crime and protecting people.”

Policing Minister Dame Diana Johnson said: “Candice’s story is heartbreaking. Our emergency workers put themselves in harm’s way every day to keep us safe and they should never have to tolerate abuse due to their race or religion while simply doing their job.

“As part of our Plan for Change, this government is rebuilding the bond between the public and police, and part of that means ensuring our officers have the protections they deserve.

“By closing this loophole, we’re sending a clear message that racial and religious abuse directed towards those who serve our communities will not be tolerated, and I thank Candice, Deputy Chief Constable Nev Kemp and all those at Surrey Police who have campaigned for this important law change.”

Debate Opens on the Future Shape of Surrey’s Local Government

27 June 2025



Residents across Surrey are being asked to help shape the future of local government in what is being described as the most significant shake-up in over half a century. A government consultation launched this week invites public views on two competing proposals to reorganise Surrey’s local councils into unitary authorities.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is offering two options for reorganisation:

- A **two-unitary model** (East and West Surrey), proposed by Surrey County Council and supported by Elmbridge and Mole Valley.
- A **three-unitary model** (East, West and North Surrey), backed by a majority of Surrey’s borough and district councils, including Epsom & Ewell.

Councillor Hannah Dalton, Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and Chair of the Surrey Leaders Group, is urging residents to take part:

“Residents have consistently told us that they want decisions made by people who know and understand their communities,” she said. “Over 60% of respondents to our April survey preferred a three-unitary model. We believe it delivers better services, stronger accountability, and a future that works for every part of Surrey.”

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ISSN 2753-2771

The government consultation runs until **5 August**, and is the only opportunity for the public to influence which of the two options is pursued. Dalton emphasised the importance of local voices in the process:

“We’ve been assured by the government that every response will be treated equally. This is your only chance to shape how your area is governed for future decades.”

The consultation follows the rejection of a third submission from Reigate & Banstead and Crawley Boroughs, which will not proceed.

Financial Concerns and Woking’s Shadow

Both proposals are said to be financially viable, according to Councillor Dalton, but depend on government action to address what she described as **“unrecoverable debt”**—most notably in Woking.

“We welcome the Government’s recognition that this debt cannot be managed locally. But we await details on what support will follow after 2026/27,” she said.

The issue of Woking’s financial crisis looms large in the background, with some viewing reorganisation as an opportunity to draw a line under past mismanagement—but others fear it could result in spreading liabilities more broadly across the county.

Streamlining—or Complicating?

While the proposals are framed as streamlining governance—abolishing the two-tier system of borough/district and county councils—there is growing concern that new layers may be introduced in their place.

The two-unitary model envisages an **elected Mayor** and a **Strategic Authority** overseeing countywide functions. At the same time, **Neighbourhood Area Committees** (formerly “Community Boards”) are being piloted to handle hyper-local matters. In towns like Epsom, where no town council currently exists, discussions have begun around establishing new local councils to fill the vacuum left by a dissolved borough council.

Some commentators have questioned whether the term “unitary” has become misleading in this context—raising the possibility that what was intended as simplification may, in practice, become a **reconfiguration of complexity**.

Clash of Visions

Surrey County Council’s Leader, Cllr Tim Oliver, argues the two-unitary model provides the best platform for efficient services and future prosperity:

“Two unitary councils will simplify services, save money and strengthen communities.”

In contrast, EEBC and its allies believe three smaller authorities would be more responsive and rooted in local identity. They also point to stronger alignment with community geography, opportunities for targeted infrastructure growth, and better democratic accountability.

How to Take Part

The government consultation is open until **Tuesday 5 August 2025**. Residents, businesses, community organisations, and parish councils are all invited to contribute their views.

Ways to respond:

- Online: surrey-local-government-reorganisation
- Email: **lgreorganisation@communities.gov.uk**
- Post: LGR Consultation, Fry Building 2NE, MHCLG, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF
- Paper forms: Available at all 52 libraries across Surrey

Further details and background on each proposal can be found at the **Surrey Local Government Reorganisation Hub**: www.surreylgr.co.uk

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The Surrey school run or walk?

27 June 2025

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26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



Parents want their children to walk to school, but what holds them back?

Children are the power brokers that can shift parents' habits on the school run – and could be key to making healthier, greener travel choices the norm, according to a new report from the University of Surrey. Commissioned by Surrey County Council and delivered through the University's Institute for Sustainability Innovation Hub, the report looked at how schools across the UK and internationally are encouraging families to walk, cycle or wheel to school instead of driving.

The report's authors found that while families are generally supportive of safer, more active travel, they're often held back by concerns over road safety, time pressures and infrastructure. The most effective initiatives, the report argues, are those that bring together schools, local authorities, planners and families to tackle these issues head-on.

Professor Benjamin Gardner, lead-author of the report from the University of Surrey, said: "The school run is rarely straightforward. Families support safer, active travel, but if we want more children walking or cycling, we need to stop seeing this as just an issue for school staff and parents to deal with. Schemes and reward programmes can spark interest, but they won't bring about changes to the school run unless the wider system supports change. Parents worry about safety, time and whether their child can travel independently. We need a joined-up approach. Lasting change depends on schools, councils, planners and families working together to make walking or cycling feel like the easy and safe option."

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said: "We've commissioned this report to better understand how we can support and encourage parents, carers and children to travel to school sustainably. We're investing £5.5m over the next five years to improve road safety to encourage more walking, cycling and wheeling so children can take safer journeys, and to reduce pollution around schools. We're also continuing to deliver Feet First walking training and Bikeability cycling training to provide lifelong road safety skills for Surrey's school children. We're looking forward to working with our schools and others, to design tailored initiatives and infrastructure that will benefit children now and in the future."

The research team reviewed travel initiatives in the UK, Europe and beyond, including Canada, Australia and Brazil. They found that even young children can play a crucial role in influencing their parents' school run choices, especially when schools engage children through activities, lessons or competitions.

Surrey researchers conducted two focus groups with staff and caregivers at Surrey schools, analysed a range of international case studies, and reviewed both academic and grey literature. They used the COM-B model – which looks at capability, opportunity and motivation – to understand what stops or supports families from choosing active travel on the school run. The findings will help shape the Council's new School Travel Effectiveness of Planning (STEP) tool, designed to measure what's working – and what's not – in encouraging active school travel across Surrey.

About the Innovation Hub

The Innovation Hub is the delivery arm of the University of Surrey's Institute for Sustainability. It brings researchers together with local authorities, businesses and communities to co-create practical responses to real-world challenges. By supporting projects like the School Travel Plan report, the Hub helps translate research into action and strengthen partnerships that benefit both Surrey and the wider region.

To learn more about the project, read the full report at www.surrey.ac.uk/news/promoting-active-school-travel

Image: Benjamin Vautier Snow scene (Children leaving school) VA – PICRYL – Public Domain Media

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Surrey jail addresses prison population crisis

27 June 2025



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ISSN 2753-2771

Sixty six temporary prisoner cells, built at HMP Coldingley during the Covid-19 pandemic, will be made permanent in an effort to “ease” the crisis facing the service. Nationally, the prison population has doubled in the past 30 years while only 500 new cells have been built in the past 14 years. It has left the service scrambling around looking for a series of short-term ways to increase capacity until four new prisons come online by 2031, creating 14,000 extra spaces.

The latest stop gap has been the approval of 66 cells in HMP Coldingley in Bisley by Surrey Heath Borough Council on Thursday, June 6. The cells were approved unanimously during a brief two-minute item with no questions or debate from members. Case officers addressing the meeting said: “No objections have been raised by any statutory consultees, while there is a national need for prisoner accommodation. The application is therefore recommended for approval.”

The plans were reported to committee due to its size – although details were scant on the advice of the Ministry of Justice, which said the application contained officially sensitive information, including the layout. The confidential information has not been shared in the public domain however the publicly available aspects of the report said the overall site comprises a variety of buildings of up to four storeys in height, predominantly concentrated towards the north-western flank and centre. Among them are a central accommodation block, an engineering workshop and a laundry building. Sports pitches and open spaces are at the south-west with the prison entrance at the north-eastern corner of the site. The entire perimeter of the category C site, that is male prisoners who cannot be trusted in open conditions, is secured by a 5.2-metre-high security fence.

The report read: “The proposed development supports a demonstrable national infrastructure need and aligns with national and local policy objectives.” It added: “The installation of the cells was considered necessary in the event of a national emergency to allow for safeguarding procedures to be implemented during COVID-19. There is also an on-going national shortfall of prison spaces, with the prison population having roughly doubled in the last 30 years with only 500 places added to the country’s stock of jail cells in the last 14 years. At national level four prisons are being built as part of the Plan for Change to create 14,000 extra spaces by 2031 to assist with the crisis. Until then, however, short term measures such the installation of Rapid Deployment Cells, and the retention of the temporary accommodation installed during the pandemic such as this site, help to ease the burden of rising demand.”

The application is supported by comment from the Department of Justice (see confidential paper). “There is a clear need for existing prison sites to support the increased demand and shortage of supply of prison places across the country. The proposed development therefore helps to support a demonstrable national need.”

Related reports:

Surrey prison failed IPP prisoner

HMP Coldingley (image Google)

Smarter tickets would boost bus travel

27 June 2025



Public transport in Southern England is struggling, not just because of cost or convenience, but because it has failed to keep up with the digital age, according to a new study from the University of Surrey.

In a study published in Public Transport, researchers simulated improvements in areas like payment convenience and real-time service updates. The study found that these tech-driven changes could boost bus ridership by over 30%.

Researchers have found that simple innovations, such as easy payment systems, e-ticketing, and mobile applications, can transform public transport, boost ridership, and improve passenger satisfaction.

The study employed a novel analytical approach, Machine Learning Influence Flow Analysis (MIFA), to understand the attitudes and behaviours of bus passengers in Southern England. The team also analysed detailed survey data, which helped them identify the key factors that influence whether people choose the bus over their private cars. These factors where: addressing issues around payment convenience and real-time information can make buses far more appealing.

Dr Wolfgang Garn, one of the authors of the study and Associate Professor in Analytics at the University of Surrey, said:

“We discovered that passengers want a seamless, hassle-free experience. If paying for a bus journey feels complicated or outdated, people are more likely to opt for driving instead. By introducing smart ticketing and contactless payments, alongside mobile apps that provide real-time updates, we can not only make bus travel easier but also more attractive. This isn’t just about technology, it’s about fundamentally changing how people view public transport.”

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ISSN 2753-2771

The study used advanced machine learning methods, including neural networks and random forests, to create predictive models from survey responses. These models enabled the researchers to identify the factors that most strongly influence bus usage decisions. By simulating improvements in passenger sentiment, such as increased satisfaction with payment methods, the MIFA framework can predict how these changes may alter people's willingness to use buses. The results suggest that these technological enhancements could increase bus ridership by over 30%.

The findings also highlight several critical issues that undermine bus usage, including inconvenient payment processes, a lack of clear information about bus routes and fares, and concerns about reliability and security. The research recommends practical solutions such as integrated smartcard payment systems, real-time travel apps, and expanded bus lanes to reduce journey times. Together, these measures can create a public transport system that competes with the convenience of private cars.

Dr Garn continued:

"Integrated ticketing is an option that needs to be further explored. It allows passengers to travel across different public transport modes using a single ticket or system, typically a smart card, for their entire journey. This means a traveller can switch between buses, trains, trams, and other modes of transport without needing to purchase multiple tickets or navigate different payment systems – an issue that arises when governmental policies do not sufficiently guide multiple private bus transport companies. A related study I worked on demonstrated that increased frequency, low fares, and an improved bus network significantly boost bus ridership.

The future of bus travel in Southern England depends on embracing digital convenience and improving the passenger experience. With smart payments and better information at the heart of this transformation, buses can become the preferred mode of travel for many, not the last resort."

Image credit: Geoff Charles, National Library of Wales. Public domain

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9 year process finalised for 1200 Surrey homes

27 June 2025



The final planning application of the 1,200-home Deepcut regeneration project has been approved. The massive housing project was given the initial green light back in 2014 when Surrey Heath Borough Council agreed the site was suitable for the major residential development. Now, nine years later, the final reserved matter has been signed off, with members at the Thursday, June 5, planning committee bursting into spontaneous applause in celebration of the milestone.

The former Princess Royal Barracks covers 114 hectares. What was once a military site has been slowly transformed into 1,200 homes, public open spaces, community buildings, a primary school and new retail and commercial opportunities. The decade-long project was divided into three housing phases, and three non-residential ones. All had been agreed with the exception of last Thursday's.

Councillors unanimously approved Weston Homes' bid to transform the redundant security hut and Sergeants, together with car parking, into 37 new homes, of which five will be marketed as affordable. Planning officer Sarita Bishop told the meeting, in between the cheers: "Members, I am delighted to bring this application to you this evening. It is the last reserved matter on Deepcut. We have finally got there. This is phase 4H, and unlike the rest of the scenes that we've looked at, this is actually quite separate to the main Deepcut site."

The process has moved slowly but surely towards the finish line as the different stages got approved. In August last year, the council signed off on a new sports pavilion as part of the final application for infrastructure, to sit alongside the sports hub and play area. More recently, in November 2024, a care home that will act as a gateway to the development was granted permission.

Image: Final reserved matters approved for Deepcut (Surrey Heath)

Epsom Picturehouse hosts Refugee Week

27 June 2025

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

26th November 2026

ISSN 2753-2771



This year's Refugee Week theme, "Community as a Superpower," celebrates the influence and connection with other cultures that enrich us all, offering fresh perspectives, traditions, and stories that shape a more vibrant, inclusive society.

Between 16–22 June, Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network (EERN) will honour the talents, stories, and successes of the refugees they support through a series of uplifting cultural events and film screenings. Film has a unique way of showing us what unites us—that shared experience of seeing stories on the big screen and sharing the best of our cultures.

Community is indeed a superpower—especially during Refugee Week—as it reminds us of the strength found in unity. It celebrates the transformative power of welcoming communities to change lives and challenge the narrative around migration.

Local Solidarity and Support

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, the Epsom and Ewell community has shown extraordinary solidarity—welcoming refugees into their homes, raising vital funds, and providing practical support to help newcomers rebuild their lives. All members of the community are warmly invited to attend Refugee Week events in a spirit of unity, compassion, and cultural celebration. Let us come together to show that Epsom stands strong in solidarity with those affected by conflict and displacement.

Cultural Events & Film Screenings

Curated in partnership with Ksenia Bugrimova—award-winning Ukrainian film producer and founder of Talented U, a Ukrainian-British screen industry association—Refugee Week events will take place at Epsom Picturehouse, a vibrant new boutique cinema and community hub in the heart of Epsom. Each screening is paired with live music or cultural programming that showcases the creativity and resilience of refugees from Ukraine, Syria, and beyond.

> *"Film reflects the joy and humanity in every culture—it reminds us that community isn't just where we live, it's who we are. That's our superpower."*
> *—Joe Stroud, Marketing Manager at Epsom Picturehouse*

Tuesday, 17 June

Live Performance by Yuliia Komyshan
Yuliia Komyshan is a professional bandura player from Poltava, Ukraine. The bandura—a traditional Ukrainian plucked-string folk instrument—holds a special place in the country's musical heritage. Since arriving in the UK at the start of the war in Ukraine, Yuliia has dedicated herself to sharing the richness of Ukrainian culture through music. She is passionate about introducing global audiences to the sound of the bandura and fostering a deeper connection with Ukrainian musical traditions, both ancient and contemporary. Yuliia performs at concerts whenever she can, using each opportunity to celebrate and preserve her cultural roots.

Film Screening: The Taste of Freedom
A young cook discovers a rare 1929 Ukrainian cookbook and, through traditional cuisine, reconnects with her roots and inner strength.

Thursday, 19 June

Performance by the Ukrainian Renaissance Choir
The Ukrainian Renaissance Choir, founded by concert pianist Nataliia Zadorizhna, will perform the Ukrainian National Anthem and other cultural songs.

> *"It is an enormous privilege to stay in the UK and to be surrounded by such noble, caring, and generous people," says Nataliia, who has lived in Ashtead with her 11-year-old daughter since May 2022.*

Attendees will also have the opportunity to meet members of the Ukrainian community and EERN volunteers supporting

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displaced families.

Film Screening: Rocky Road to Berlin
A road-trip comedy set in the chaos of the 1990s USSR. Two musicians drive to Berlin in an old Pobeda car to trade it for a Mercedes—and discover much more than they bargained for.

Plus: Home for Ukraine
A moving documentary featuring former tennis champion Andrew Castle, who shares his story alongside that of a young woman from Mariupol. Previously screened by Film London and other UK festivals. Andrew Castle is hoping to attend and support the event.

Saturday, 21 June

Live Performance by Basel Saleh
Internationally renowned Syrian musician Basel Saleh will perform a fusion of Arabic and Western classical music on the oud. A conductor and composer, Basel has played at major festivals including Glastonbury and Roskilde and collaborated with artists such as Damon Albarn of Gorillaz.

Film Screening: The Walk
Directed by Tamara Kotevska, this hybrid documentary follows Little Amal, a giant puppet symbolising a young Syrian refugee, as she journeys across Europe in a powerful allegory of hope and resilience.

Booking and More Information

To book one of the performances or screenings, visit:
https://www.picturehouses.com/event-details/0000000167/refugee-week/100

To learn more about Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network, visit:
https://epsomrefugeenetwork.org

For more information about the cinema and upcoming events, visit:
www.picturehouses.co.uk/epsom

Community Event – The Great Get Together
Sunday 22 June 2025 1pm-4pm

St Joseph's Church Hall, St Margaret's Drive, Epsom KT18 7QJ

You will already have received details about our Great Get Together event. This is a FREE community event for all the family, part of a network of events inspired by the Jo Cox Foundation to celebrate all that unites us as a community. We have loads of activities for all ages, so please come and join us and bring friends and family. Although entry is free of charge, please can you book tickets online so that we know the numbers to expect. Also, we would ask you to bring a donation of food to contribute to Good Company's Food Bank.

Book your free online tickets here where you can also see the range of activities available, all of which are free.

Oxshott High Street redeveloping?

27 June 2025



Plans to redevelop part of a Surrey high street have been put forward.

Oxshott village store and post office and a former takeaway spot could be knocked down and transformed into a whole new high street development. The proposal features two large commercial spaces on the ground floor for residents, and nine apartments spread over the first and second floors.

"This is a significant opportunity to improve the character and appearance of this part of the High Street," planning documents state. Details reveal the new building design will be traditional and reference the neo-classical/Georgian style houses which match the surrounding character of Oxshott.

For market sale, the property could consist of 6 one-bed and 3 two-bed flats in the heart of the high street. This reflects

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the most critical type of housing needed in Elmbridge borough and will help fill the gap between the existing shortfall, according to the planning statement.

Planning permission was previously granted on the site in October 2023 for a similar scheme to create five apartments. The new proposal seeks four extra homes to be added, as well as including additional land from The Victoria pub to the back of the site for an extra eight parking spaces.

Oxshott village store and post office, (No. 50 on the high street) is currently a two-story building at 8.52m. But under the proposed development plans the height would scale up to 12m tall rather than the 9.65m previously approved.

Only one person has objected to the scheme so far, claiming the new design is “overbearing and will adversely dominate the high street”. Concerns were also raised by residents in the comments’ section that the path would be obstructed during the demolition and development of the buildings and how construction would operate on the site.

Not the only part of the village’s high street to get a new look, the Heath buildings opposite to the village store and post office will also be redeveloped after planning permission was agreed in October 2024. The new Heath buildings will be 13.2m tall from the ridge.

Comments on the application are welcome on Elmbridge Borough Council’s website until July 4, with a target decision date for July 17.

Surrey talk for those not afraid of Virginia Woolf

27 June 2025



“Mrs Dalloway” at Woking. Celebrating the 100th anniversary of Virginia Woolf’s iconic novel from the Lushington Archive at Surrey History Centre

Virginia Woolf’s use of members of her own family and close friends as models for her characters is well known. Her father, that eminent of all eminent Victorians, Sir Leslie Stephen was the curmudgeonly Mr Ramsay in To The Lighthouse and her mother, the beautiful Julia Jackson, is sensitively portrayed as his long-suffering wife. Other characters in the novel are drawn from friends who were invited to stay with the family at Talland House where the Stephen family spent their summer holidays. One of those families was that of the lawyer and positivist, Vernon Lushington whose daughter Kitty married newspaper owner Leopold Maxse and became the model for Mrs Dalloway in Woolf’s iconic novel.

To celebrate the centenary of the publication of Mrs Dalloway, Dr David Taylor will tell the story of Kitty Maxse and her relationship with Virginia Woolf and other members of her family from the Lushington family archive held at Surrey History Centre. This talk will follow the Surrey History Trust AGM.

Location: Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking GU21 6ND.

Date and time: Monday 30 June, 7pm to 9pm.

Tickets: free, register online.

Surrey History Centre for more news click HERE

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