

# Surrey to get new recycling centre

30 November 2025



Bin lorries rumbling through Wentworth, Virginia Water and Chertsey could become a much more common occurrence after plans for a massive recycling plant on former green belt land just south of the Surrey towns was approved. The Kitsmead Lane site in Longcross will be capable of processing up to 100,000 tonnes of recycling each year - with 164 rubbish vehicle 'movements' every day. Most would be the bin lorries carrying recycling to and from the plant with the rest articulated lorries transporting the sorted waste off site.

Once built it would take recycling from the north and west of Surrey. Currently this gets shipped out to Kent, with a small amount dealt with in Leatherhead. The new facility will therefore mean fewer long journeys out of the county, but an intensification in lorries around the site. To minimise the impact, Surrey County Council's planning committee has called for a transport plan to be drawn up, but admitted it would be difficult to actually enforce it. Officers told the Wednesday, November 26, meeting: "Understandably, there still have been concerns about the potential for this to add further vehicles through some of the more sensitive locations. To that end we are also recommending, as part of the travel-plan condition, more details on the exact routes that will be used and what measures are in place to minimise movements through sensitive places."

Sight lines leading out of the plant are also poor, the meeting heard, so the speed limit along Kitsmead Lane would be reduced to 30mph. It's the first new waste recycling plant application approved by Surrey in the last quarter century, due in part to its long-term relationship with Suez. Kitsmead will sort and separate co-mingled recycling collected from residents' household bins and become the county's second recycling plant - with Leatherhead being the other.

In 2026, Surrey County Council and the 11 boroughs and districts will be dissolved and reformed into two huge authorities for the entire region. The new site is expected to take waste from across the two new councils, East and West Surrey, although this has not been formally agreed. The plans were voted through unanimously after hearing the former green belt site was now classified as grey field - and had been designated in the Surrey Waste Plan. Runnymede Borough Council raised concerns over the size of the building and the impact on nearby residents. Its views were echoed in the 21 letters of objection from residents who were worried about the increased traffic, both in volume and scale.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Former landfill site in Trumps Farm, Kitsmead Lane, Longcross (image Google)

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# Leatherhead ruined recycling road repair

30 November 2025



A crumbling, pothole-ridden road that has been the source of countless insurance claims could be given a new lease of life. The North Leatherhead Access Road leading into the Surrey County Council recycling centre off Randalls Road has been slowly destroyed by years of heavy goods vehicles entering and leaving the site. Now, Mole Valley District Council has agreed to spend £60,000 to begin the process of repairing the heavily rutted road. The task is made more complicated as the road is co-owned by Surrey County Council and Thames Water, and it is hoped the initial work, from an overall £300,000 budget, will determine not just what needs to be done, but who pays for it.

Presenting the item to the November meeting of Mole Valley District's cabinet was **Councillor Keira Vyvyan-Robinson**. She said: "Anybody who uses the recycling centre on a regular basis will be very familiar with the problems that road has. Obviously, it is heavily used by very heavy vehicles and over a period of time that heavy use has resulted in a lot of problems with the carriageway, with rutting in the verges and the channel blocks. That has resulted in increased insurance claims and also increased complaints. In February 2024, it was agreed that we would allocate just over

£300,000 in order to improve that road. It is a complicated project because Mole Valley District Council owns about half of the road, the majority of the balance of it is the responsibility of Surrey County Council and Thames Water, so it's necessary to liaise with them and reach agreements with them over the work that needs to be carried out. This budget is to start the full design and to get the proper costing, because at the moment it's a provisional figure of about 300,000. The drawdown will enable us to finalise that, submit the planning application and reach the legal agreement with Thames Water and Surrey County Council over how much they will contribute towards the costs. For anybody who uses it, it's quite plain that we can't do nothing, as it's such a detrimental situation at the moment and it will only get worse if we don't."

**Cllr Gerry Sevenoaks**, Independent member for Ashted Park and chair of the council's scrutiny committee, said: "As a user of that road I know it very well. It's dangerous, especially if you are going down there and two refuse carts are coming the other way. I say 'let's get on with it'."

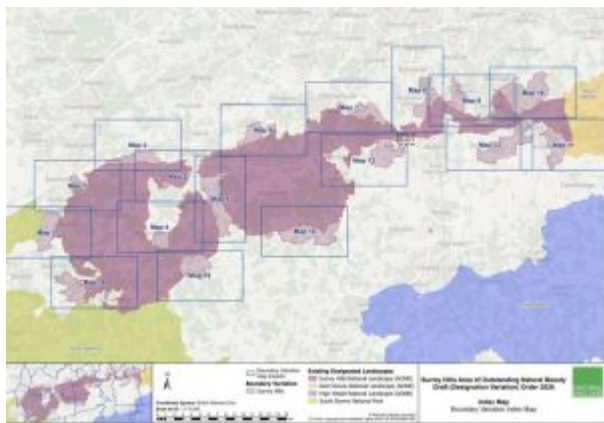
**Cllr Caroline Joseph** (Liberal Democrat, Fetcham) added: "There is a huge strength of feeling locally. It's such a small thing but it makes such a huge difference to people. If we can get this moving it will be a very positive thing to Leatherhead, Fetcham, Bookham, Ashted, everyone locally."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Image: North Leatherhead Access Road (image Google)

## Surrey Hills expansion

30 November 2025



The Surrey Hills could be expanded for the first time since it was first designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty almost 70 years ago.

The Surrey Hills National Landscape boundary has remained the same since it was first introduced in 1958 but throughout that time there have been calls locally to reconsider increasing the beauty spot's borders.

Some of the land that lies next to the Surrey Hills is currently classed as Areas of Great Landscape Value by councils to recognise its value at a county level.

Now, Natural England is exploring whether to formally include 129 square kilometres of these areas into the Surrey Hills National Landscape following a series of consultations on the proposed extensions.

The first took place in 2023 with 1,518 people taking part, a second held in 2024 received over 375 responses. Natural England's report read: "The evidence provided through the first consultation process presented strong arguments to include additional land in the Surrey Hills.

"Following the decision to add further land to the proposal a second round of consultation was required in accordance with our duties under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

"The second consultation was launched with stakeholders invited to provide a response on the changes to our proposals, including further additions, minor deletions and new land in East Hampshire. We received over 375 responses to the second consultation, the vast majority of which were supportive of the proposals."

The final review period, which the public can take part in, runs until January 14, 2026. The prime purpose of the designation is to conserve and enhance the natural and scenic beauty although it understands that the Surrey Hills is not a museum, and development may need to take place.

"A fundamental role of the local planning authorities is to ensure that the very features that make the Surrey Hills special and worthy of its designation are protected. This is achieved by strict development plan policies and through the vigilant exercise of development management powers.

"The Surrey Hills Management Plan seeks to ensure that both are applied in a consistent manner across the National Landscape. Development proposals should take into account any Landscape Character Assessments for the locality and the Surrey Hills publication", the Surrey Hills National Landscape website reads.

The draft Order 2026 relates to an area of approximately 129 square kilometres in the counties of Surrey, Hampshire and Greater London in and around:

- Wey Valley, Farnham (in Waverley Borough Council)
- Hog's Back (in Guildford Borough Council)

- Binscombe Hills (in Guildford Borough Council)
- Wey Valley (in Waverley and Guildford Borough Councils)
- Enton Hills (in Waverley Borough Council)
- Cranleigh Waters (in Waverley and Guildford Borough Councils)
- Hatchlands and East Clandon (in Guildford Borough Council)
- Headley Hills (in Mole Valley District Council)
- Chipstead Valleys (in Reigate and Banstead Borough Council)
- Happy Valley (in Tandridge District Council and London Borough of Croydon)
- Caterham Woods (in Tandridge District Council)
- Woldingham Valleys (in Tandridge District Council and London Borough of Bromley)
- Limpsfield (in Tandridge District Council)
- Godstone Hills (in Tandridge District Council)
- Betchworth Hills and Mole Valley (in Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and Mole Valley District Council)
- Ockley Low Weald (in Waverley Borough Council and Mole Valley District Council)
- Dunsfold Low Weald (in Waverley Borough Council)
- Whitemoor Vale (in East Hampshire District Council)
- Ludshott and Bramshott Comms (in East Hampshire District Council)
- Dockenfield Hills (in Waverly Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council)
- Minor boundary refinements (various)

Copies of the draft Orders and maps are also available for download online from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/surrey-hills-area-of-outstanding-natural-beauty-boundary-variation>.

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Graphic: Surrey Hills (image Natural England)

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

30 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](mailto: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](mailto:eeClimateActionNetwork@gmail.com)

## **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](mailto: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](mailto:eeClimateActionNetwork@gmail.com) or follow eeCAN’s activities through their upcoming community channels.

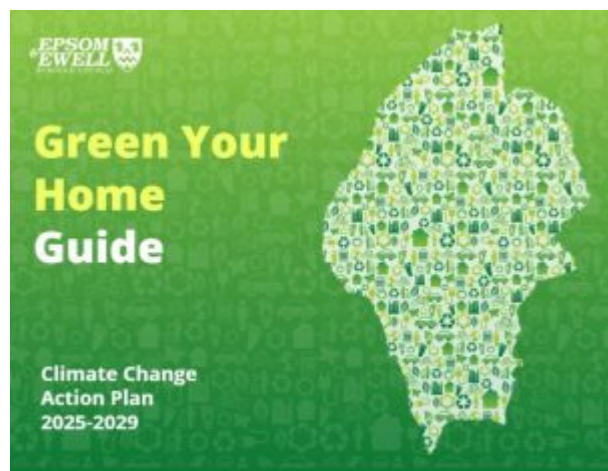
Sam Jones - Reporter



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# **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Green Guide**

30 November 2025



[www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/greenyourhomeguide](http://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/greenyourhomeguide)

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is proud to launch its Green Your Home Guide to help residents take simple, everyday actions to contribute to a healthier environment and help combat climate change. The guide offers practical advice and tips for making small changes that collectively make a big difference.

The initiative empowers individuals and households to take ownership of their environmental impact through easy-to-follow steps. From reducing waste and conserving energy to choosing sustainable transport and supporting biodiversity, the guide highlights how everyone can play a part.

The Green Your Home Guide is being rolled out as part of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029, which has already helped reduce the council's operational emissions by 16% since 2019/2020. This is part of the council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2035.

Councillor Liz Frost, Chair of the Environment Committee, said:

"This guide is about showing people they don't need to make radical changes to their lives to make a difference. Simple, ongoing changes—whether building on existing efforts or starting something new – can have a meaningful, long-term impact. From making homes more energy efficient, to planning wildlife-friendly gardens, and investing in systems that reduce reliance on fossil fuels, every step counts. We want residents to feel confident and motivated to take action, and we hope the guide supports their decision-making along the way."

The Council's Green Your Home Guide is available here – [Green Your Home Guide | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council](#)

More information about the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029 can be found here – [Climate Change | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council](#)

#### **About Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's (EEBC) Green Your Home Guide**

The council's Green Your Home Guide explains a number of ways residents can improve their property and garden, helping homes work with nature and reduce their household carbon footprint. Topics include: Insulate to end heat waste; generate green energy with renewable technology; let it drain with permeable driveways; go ahead, go electric; lights out to help nocturnal wildlife; mind the gap to save hedgehogs; give nature a home; save our streams with water butts; turn scraps to soil by composting; turf for earth; wild your garden with diverse, native landscaping; plants for bees; plants for butterflies; plants for birds; plant for the planet: plant new trees and keep existing ones. [Green Your Home Guide | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council](#)

#### **About EEBC's Climate Change Action Plan including progress so far**

In 2020, the council's first Climate Change Action Plan (2020-2024) was developed, setting an ambitious target of becoming carbon neutral by the year 2035. It set out plans to implement a range of measures to reduce the council's own emissions as well as promoting good practice throughout the borough. The council has since adopted its second Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029. The plan is a living document which will be reviewed and updated over time. [Climate Change | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council](#)

#### **About EEBC Biodiversity Action Plan 2020-2030**

The council's local Biodiversity Action Plan is a long-term plan aimed at protecting, maintaining and, where possible, enhancing biodiversity at a local level, taking into account both local, regional, national and sometimes international priorities. [Epsom and Ewell Borough Council - Biodiversity](#)

[Epsom and Ewell Borough Council](#)



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## **Epsom Station joins app helping visually impaired bus users**

30 November 2025



Epsom Station has become one of eight new locations added to a Surrey County Council (SCC) scheme that uses an innovative app to help blind and partially sighted people travel more independently by bus and rail.

### **Seeing the way through technology**

The **Aira Explorer** app connects users by video call to a trained visual interpreter who, using the smartphone's camera, can describe surroundings, read timetables, or guide the traveller safely between a bus stop and nearby rail station. The service is free to use at designated Surrey locations thanks to SCC's allocation from the Government's Bus Service Improvement Fund.

Initially launched in June 2025 at Guildford, Redhill, Staines and Woking bus stations, the trial has now expanded to cover bus stops and interchanges serving Caterham, Dorking, Oxted, Leatherhead, Reigate, Horley, and **Epsom Station and Clocktower**.

### **Support for independent travel**

Matt Furniss, Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth at Surrey County Council, said: "We're keen to make bus travel accessible for everyone and hope this expansion will support people to travel confidently and independently. We've expanded this trial to cover more bus stops and rail interchanges to create better and joined-up journeys for people who are visually impaired."

He added that the initiative forms part of a wider programme of investment in the county's bus services, including £6.3 million for ultra-low and zero-emission community transport minibuses, £9 million in bus priority measures to keep services punctual, and £1.4 million to improve passenger information at bus stops.

### **Backing from rail and disability organisations**

Carl Martin, Accessibility Lead at Govia Thameslink Railway, welcomed the expansion:

"We're really pleased to see the expansion of Aira to further bus stops, as it's a vital step in making multimodal journeys more seamless for blind and visually impaired customers."

Clare Burgess, Chief Executive of Sensory Services by Sight for Surrey, called the scheme "great news" for people living with sight or combined sight and hearing loss:

"Travelling alone when you have a sensory impairment can be a daunting prospect, but having the Aira Explorer App at your fingertips makes independent travel so much easier and less stressful."

Nikki Roberts, Chief Executive of the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People, said:

"It's fantastic news that the Aira app coverage has now been extended to twelve locations in Surrey. The app will provide our visually impaired members the support they need to feel much more confident when travelling independently."

### **A national first for Surrey**

When the project began in summer 2025, Surrey County Council became the first local authority in the UK to introduce the app for bus users. It followed the success of a similar partnership between Aira.io and Govia Thameslink Railway to help visually impaired rail passengers navigate station environments.

The trial was originally launched to coincide with Better Transport Week, celebrating initiatives that help connect communities and improve access to public transport.

Ben Curtis from Campaign for Better Transport said at the time:

"Good public transport networks help connect us to the people we love, the things we need and the places that matter. The new Aira app will help ensure that everyone can access and use the county's buses, building a fairer future for everyone."

### **Making travel more inclusive**

The Aira Explorer scheme represents one part of Surrey County Council's wider drive to make sustainable travel options more inclusive and reliable. For residents in Epsom and across the county, it means greater independence, safer journeys, and a more connected community.

More information about the service is available on Surrey County Council's website.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports:

Bus station app for visually impaired first in Surrey

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## Free trees for Epsom and Ewell residents

30 November 2025



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](mailto:trees@surreycc.gov.uk).

Sam Jones - Reporter



Image: License: CC0 Public Domain

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## Heathrow expansion - what it may mean for Epsom

30 November 2025



The Government has launched a review of the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS), which sets out the policy framework for major airport expansion. The key points:

- Aiming for faster progress than the previous ANPS, the Government intends a draft for consultation by summer 2026 and to reach a final planning decision on a third runway within the current Parliament.
- Expansion of Heathrow is being promoted as a boost to UK economic growth, international connectivity and competitiveness — specifically positioning Heathrow as Britain’s only global hub airport.
- The review will test any proposed scheme against four criteria: climate change, noise, air quality and contribution to economic growth.
- The Government says it will ask for formal advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to ensure alignment with the UK’s net-zero commitments.
- Financing must be purely private, with no taxpayer cost, and transport access improvements must be covered by the promoters.
- Two promoters remain under consideration: Heathrow Airport Limited and the Arora Group; one will be selected by end November to proceed.
- The Government also flagged wider infrastructure and planning reforms (via the upcoming Planning & Infrastructure Bill) and the establishment of a new UK Airspace Design Service to modernise airspace in the London region.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the Government is “backing the builders, not blockers”, and Chancellor Rachel Reeves added that after decades of false starts, “we are backing the builders to get Heathrow’s third runway built, creating thousands of jobs, boosting growth ...”

### **Why this matters for Epsom & Ewell**

Our borough is already directly affected by aircraft using the London hub airports, and the proposed expansion of Heathrow would likely increase the scale and intensity of that impact.

**Flight paths and heights:** The borough is within one of the “design envelopes” identified by Heathrow Airport Limited in its previous airspace consultation, meaning more frequent overflights at lower altitudes. Currently some aircraft arrive or depart over the borough at heights of 7,000 to 22,000 ft, averaging around 12,000 ft. Under the proposed expansion there could be flights as low as 3,000 ft and up to 47 arrivals per hour over the area.

**Noise and air-quality concerns:** The borough’s geography — dense housing, many schools, and a declared Air Quality Management Area — means that increased aircraft at lower altitudes could raise noise, traffic and pollution burdens. The council previously warned of a possible four- to five-fold increase in noise levels in some scenarios.

**Community and amenity risk:** Residential areas, schools such as North East Surrey College of Technology, and leisure or nature sites like Epsom Common and Horton Country Park could experience greater disturbance.

**Airspace redesign:** The Government’s plan to modernise UK airspace may change how routes are drawn. This could either reduce or shift impacts on particular communities, but consultation with affected areas such as Epsom & Ewell will be essential.

### **The opposing case**

Environmental and local campaigners have long voiced opposition to expansion.

**Climate and emissions:** Groups such as Friends of the Earth argue that expanding a major hub airport is incompatible with the UK’s net-zero goals, warning it would lock-in high carbon infrastructure and increase air and noise pollution.

**Noise and community disruption:** CPRE Surrey has said that the borough could experience up to 47 additional flights per hour at just 3,000 ft, and that such a change would be “unacceptable”.

**Consultation concerns:** Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has criticised the information provided by Heathrow Airport Limited for lacking clarity around flight numbers, heights, and environmental impacts.

**Financial and strategic risks:** Critics also question whether the economic case for expansion remains strong in a changed post-pandemic aviation environment, and whether cost burdens such as community compensation and infrastructure upgrades have been fully addressed.

### **Current status**

The Government review of the ANPS is underway, with a public consultation on the draft expected in summer 2026. One

of the two promoter schemes will be selected by end November.

For Epsom & Ewell, the exact flight-paths and altitude projections are not yet finalised, and detailed new routes are unlikely to be confirmed until around 2027. Airspace modernisation may alter or mitigate local impacts.

### What to watch

Residents and councillors should track:

- Future flight path proposals and altitude models over the borough.
- Noise, air-quality and health impact data once new routes are known.
- Community consultation opportunities.
- Any noise-respite or mitigation measures offered.
- The outcome of financial and planning reviews.

### In conclusion

The DfT's announcement marks a major step toward the possibility of a third runway at Heathrow. For Epsom & Ewell it raises serious local questions — more frequent aircraft, lower flights, and possible increases in noise and pollution balanced against potential economic benefits.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Related reports:

[Heathrow expansion reaction](#)

[Surrey village to suffer a lot more Heathrow flights](#)

[Chance for Epsom and Ewell's say on Heathrow flights](#)

[Heathrow shown with a third runway over the M25 \(image Heathrow\)](#)

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## Epsom Downs leftovers

30 November 2025



Heaps of leftover racing dirt and old equipment have been abandoned on Epsom Downs, prompting criticism of the “weed-infested eyesores”.

Epsom Civic Society has raised the alarm over soil heaps and discarded equipment left on the beauty spot. The group claims that in some cases, the rubbish has been dumped on the Downs out of convenience rather than necessity.

The most recent example, at the junction of the path at the top Ebbisham Lane and the lower gallop track, was supposed to be removed a year ago after a new horse slipway was completed.

But it is still there, according to the society, and now adorned with discarded plastic rails.

“It’s difficult to say that these are just there because they’re needed for operational reasons,” said Nick Lock, from the civic society at a Epsom and Walton Downs Consultative Committee meeting at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council on October 13. He said: “They’re just there for convenience of not taking it somewhere else.”

Other spoil piles have been spotted at the 7th Furlong car park, behind the Derby Start of the main racecourse and near the bottom of Six Mile Hill.

The materials vary from soil and chippings to old water containers and tractor equipment. All this contributed to a cluttered, unsightly scene on what should be a natural scenic area, the civil society claims.

The Downs Conservators, who manage the site, say the area is a working environment for racehorse training, and some spoil heaps are awaiting future projects.

Cllr Steven McCormick told the Epsom and Walton Downs committee meeting he will go around the site with the Jockey club and identify the mounds to see what they are there for or not there for.

But Cllr McCormick added there is a “balance” between the council’s responsibility in protecting the Down’s natural

beauty and the function of the site as a working training ground. He added the council would also have to find a budget to move the spoils as it will cost money and resources.

Some progress has been made, the committee acknowledged. A large pile from resurfacing the bottom nine-furlong gallop was removed following Civil Society pressure, and most reported flytipped material has also been cleared.

But Mr Lock said more needs to be done. "It still does look quite a mess up there," he told the committee. "It seems a bit of a shame if you're sitting looking at the nice view from the grandstand and the grounds and the downs and you're sitting next to all these piles of rubbish."

Nigel Whybrow from the Training Grounds Management Board confirmed that current materials in the car park are earmarked for planned projects, and redundant equipment will be removed over the winter with some hoped to end up in a museum.

For now, the Civic Society is urging the Conservators to adopt a clear policy: reusable spoils should be stored neatly in designated areas, and all other material should be removed from the Downs promptly.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Image: Dumping of material on the Downs. (Credit: Epsom Civil Society/ Epsom and Ewell Borough Council documents)

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## Ewell High Street gets a cleaner bill of health

30 November 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Environment Committee has agreed to revoke the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for Ewell High Street, marking a major milestone in local environmental improvement.

The decision, made at the committee's meeting on 14 October 2025, follows nearly two decades of monitoring and action to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels that once exceeded national safety limits. The designation, first imposed in 2007, will now be formally lifted after a sustained and verified improvement in air quality, confirmed by data approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Councillor **Liz Frost**, (RA Woodcote and Langley) Chair of the Environment Committee, described the development as "fantastic news" and said the result reflected years of cooperation between the borough council, Surrey County Council as the highways authority, and national agencies. She added that the improvement "is a testament to the work of both Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and our partners in the area, as well as interventions that have taken place both regionally and nationally to tackle nitrogen dioxide emissions."

The Ewell High Street AQMA had been declared when air quality readings showed nitrogen dioxide levels breaching the annual mean limit of 40 micrograms per cubic metre. The pollutant, primarily generated by vehicle exhausts, is known to aggravate respiratory conditions and contribute to ground-level ozone formation.

Over the years, the council and the highways authority introduced several targeted measures to tackle traffic congestion and emissions. These included disapplying certain parking bays during rush hours, widening the road outside 76 to 62 High Street, and re-engineering the busy junction with Cheam Road (B2200). Together with broader improvements in vehicle efficiency, cleaner fuels, and regional policies, these steps brought pollution levels below the national threshold.

A cleaner trend across UK high streets

The revocation in Ewell reflects a wider national trend. Across the UK, councils have been removing long-standing AQMAs after years of falling nitrogen dioxide concentrations. DEFRA's latest data show that the number of AQMAs in England has dropped by more than a third since 2019, largely due to the tightening of vehicle emissions standards, expansion of low emission and clean air zones in cities such as London, Birmingham, and Bristol, and increased adoption of electric vehicles.

Nitrogen dioxide levels nationally have declined by around 45% since 2010, although urban areas with dense traffic still exceed targets. According to Public Health England, poor air quality contributes to between 28,000 and 36,000 premature deaths each year.

Local authorities continue to play a key role through the Local Air Quality Management framework introduced by the Environment Act 1995. Where air quality standards are achieved and are expected to be maintained, Section 83(2)(b) of the Act requires AQMAs to be revoked, as in the case of Ewell.

Looking ahead

The committee noted that the borough's 2025 Air Quality Annual Status Report has been approved by DEFRA and published on the council's website. Monitoring of nitrogen dioxide and particulate levels will continue across Epsom and

Ewell, in line with national guidance.

The revocation also contributes to the council's Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029, specifically its goal to improve local air quality and maintain a "green and vibrant" borough.

While Ewell's achievement highlights positive progress, environmental experts caution that rising traffic volumes and population growth could reverse gains unless clean transport initiatives continue. Measures such as promoting active travel, installing more electric vehicle charging points, and supporting public transport remain central to long-term sustainability.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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## Surrey solar study shows cheapest energy source

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Solar energy is now so cost-effective that, in some of the sunniest parts of the world, it costs as little as two pence to produce one unit of electricity - cheaper than power generated from coal, gas or wind. That is the finding of a new study by researchers at the University of Surrey's Advanced Technology Institute (ATI), who say solar photovoltaic (PV) technology has become the key driver of the world's shift to clean, renewable energy.

Publishing their work in *Energy and Environment Materials*, the Surrey team point out that the global capacity of installed solar power passed 1.5 terawatts in 2024 - double the figure in 2020 and now enough to supply hundreds of millions of homes.

Professor Ravi Silva, Director of the ATI and co-author of the study, said: "Even here in the UK, a country that sits 50 degrees north of the equator, solar is the cheapest option for large-scale energy generation. Simply put, this technology is no longer a moonshot prospect but a foundational part of the resilient, low-carbon energy future that we all want to bring to reality."

The study notes that the price of lithium-ion batteries has fallen by almost 90 per cent since 2010, making combined solar-plus-storage systems as cost-effective as gas power plants. Such hybrid installations allow solar energy to be stored and released when required, turning an intermittent source into a dispatchable one that helps balance grid demand.

However, the researchers warn that the next major challenge lies in connecting vast amounts of solar generation to existing electricity networks. In regions such as California and China, high solar output has already caused congestion on power lines and wasted energy when supply outstrips demand. Co-author Dr Ehsan Rezaee said: "Connecting growing levels of solar power to electricity networks is now one of the biggest challenges. Smart grids, artificial-intelligence forecasting and stronger links between regions will be vital to keep power systems stable as renewable energy use rises."

Professor Silva added that advances in materials such as perovskite solar cells could raise energy output by up to 50 per cent without using additional land. "With the integration of energy storage and smart grid technologies, solar is now capable of delivering reliable, affordable and clean power at scale," he said. "But progress depends on consistent, long-term policy support. The US Inflation Reduction Act, the EU's REPowerEU plan and India's Production Linked Incentive scheme show how clear direction can drive investment and innovation. Sustained commitment and international collaboration will be essential if we are to accelerate the world's transition to a clean and reliable energy system."

Across the UK, renewable sources supplied just over half of all electricity in 2024 - the first time that clean generation surpassed fossil fuels. Wind power dominated with nearly 30 per cent of total generation, while solar contributed about 5 per cent, equivalent to one unit in every ten generated from renewables. Biomass, biogas and hydro made up most of the rest. When nuclear is included, low-carbon sources together delivered around two-thirds of the UK's electricity.

Globally, renewables produced about 30 per cent of electricity in 2024, with wind and solar together accounting for roughly 15 per cent and expanding faster than any other energy source. The International Energy Agency expects global renewable capacity to rise by almost half again before 2030, with most new investment in solar.

While Britain's relatively low sunshine hours limit its solar potential compared with southern Europe or Asia, domestic generation costs have plunged, making rooftop and community-scale arrays increasingly popular. Planning delays and grid connection backlogs remain obstacles, but the UK Government has set a target to increase installed solar capacity

fivefold by 2035.

As Professor Silva observed, solar power has crossed the threshold from promise to practicality. The next test, he said, is building the smart, interconnected systems and political consensus needed to make affordable solar energy work everywhere - even in less sunny countries like the UK.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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