East Street Development gets Green Light

At the Epsom and Ewell Planning Committee meeting of 14th December the proposed demolition of 79-81 East Street and the construction of a part 5, part 6 storey building containing 31 residential units faced intense scrutiny and debate.

After a heated discussion, Councillor Neil Dallen (RA Town Ward) proposed to refuse the application, citing concerns about over development, lack of parking provision, and harm to the conservation area. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Jan Mason. However, the committee ultimately voted against his motion (2 For, 6 Against).

Following further consideration, the Acting Chair put forward the Officer's recommendation for approval, subject to conditions and a legal agreement. The committee resolved (6 For, 2 Against) to grant planning permission with conditions and informatives.

Conditions and Informatives: The approval is subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement, including provisions for 16 affordable rented units, restrictions on parking permits, and a car-club agreement. Conditions include time limits for development commencement, approval of external materials, construction transport management plan, and various pre-occupation and post-development requirements.

The decision reflects the complex considerations surrounding the East Street Development. The approved conditions aim to address concerns raised during the meeting, particularly regarding parking, sustainable transport, and environmental impact. The development now moves forward, albeit with strict guidelines in place.

Ruxley Lane development on casting vote

Properties on Ruxley Lane in Ewell with sizeable gardens will be demolished and replaced by 14 dwellings in two blocks. A tied vote of Councillors, at the Epsom and Ewell Planning Committee meeting of 14th December, on granting permission was resolved by the casting vote in favour of acting Chair Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Woodcote and Langley).

The committee approved the application, contingent upon the execution of a Section 106 Legal Agreement. This agreement includes a viability review mechanism to be activated if the development fails to reach the first-floor slab level on both buildings within 20 months of the decision date.

A critical provision in the decision is the requirement for the Section 106 Agreement to be completed by March 18, 2024. Failure to meet this deadline empowers the Head of Place Development to refuse the application based on non-compliance with Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy 2007.

Several conditions were imposed, including a three-year time limit for the commencement of development to comply with the Town and Country Planning Act. The approved plans, covering aspects such as site location, construction details, and landscaping, must be strictly adhered to throughout the development process.

Pre-commencement conditions were also established, such as the submission and approval of a Construction Transport Management Plan, ensuring responsible construction practices and adherence to highway safety regulations.

Post-demolition and pre-above-ground conditions mandate the submission and approval of details related to external materials, access provisions, tracking details, sustainable drainage schemes, and more. These conditions aim to safeguard visual amenities, highway safety, and sustainable development principles.

Pre-occupation conditions cover various aspects, including access closure and remediation, parking and turning layouts, visibility splays, and the installation of electric vehicle charging points. These conditions align with the National Planning Policy Framework's sustainable transport objectives and local development policies.

The committee emphasized sustainability measures, requiring the provision of solar panels, drainage verification reports, and adherence to ecological and sustainable design measures.

During and post-development conditions focus on groundwater remediation strategies, tree protection, ecological considerations, and sustainable design measures. The approved development must comply with strict regulations to control significant harm from land contamination and ensure the preservation of biodiversity.

The decision also outlines specific conditions regarding construction hours, limitations on additional windows or openings, and the installation of facilities such as refuse/recycling stores and cycle storage.

Ewell derelict site gets development go-ahead

14th December 2023 Epsom and Ewell planning committee granted planning permission for a proposed development on the Ewell-By-Pass / London Road site. The application has come before the committee several times before and now has the go ahead. The plan involves construction of a three to five-storey building plus basement for use as a care home with up to 81 bedrooms and associated communal spaces and services, together with associated car and cycle parking, refuse storage and ancillary works.

Permission was granted subject to an extensive Section 106 Agreement. An agreement where the developer gives money to the Council for related development in the area. The agreement includes various Heads of Terms aimed at enhancing local infrastructure and ensuring compliance with planning policies.



The agreement involve provisions for bus stop infrastructure improvements, push-button controlled pedestrian crossing facilities, and the establishment of a 3-meter wide footway along specified frontages. Additionally, a Travel Plan Auditing fee of £6,150 has been stipulated.

The agreement specifies that if the Section 106 Agreement is not completed by June 14, 2024, the Council can refuse the application, citing non-compliance with key planning policies.

Several conditions have been imposed to regulate the development, including a stipulation that construction must commence within three years of the permission date. Details of external materials, a Construction Transport Management Plan, and a Car Park Management Plan must be submitted and approved before the initiation of construction.

Other conditions address aspects such as the provision of EV charging, pedestrian visibility zones, cycle parking facilities, and a Surface Water Drainage Scheme complying with national standards.

Furthermore, the development must adhere to specific noise control measures, internal noise criteria, and contamination risk management schemes. The planning committee has also mandated the closure of existing accesses, the laying out of parking and turning spaces within the site, and the implementation of measures to safeguard against unexpected contamination during development.

The approved plan emphasizes sustainable development objectives, highway safety, and adherence to national planning policies. The local planning authority has taken a comprehensive approach to ensure the proposed development aligns with visual

amenities, character, and safety standards outlined in the Core Strategy (2007) and Development Management Policies (2015).

The developer must comply with these conditions to ensure the project aligns with national planning policies and local community interests.

The councillors voted 5 in favour and 3 against.

Related reports:

Care home plan lacked the "wow" factor

"Blot on the landscape" - Ewell care home inked in

Neutrality Council for Epsom and Ewell Times

In a groundbreaking move towards transparency and community involvement, **The Epsom and Ewell Times** is proud to announce the establishment of a Neutrality Council. This council, comprising representatives from the major political parties and the Residents Associations, will play a pivotal role in completing an annual appraisal of the neutrality and quality of the Epsom and Ewell Times.

Annual Appraisals for Transparency

The purpose of the Neutrality Council is clear: to provide a representative from each major political party and the RA for the annual appraisal of our newspaper's neutrality and quality. These comprehensive appraisals will be published to ensure transparency and community engagement.

Flexible Representation

Each political party has the flexibility to change its representative, allowing for dynamic assessments that capture a range of perspectives. The form of the appraisal, including a section for free-form comments, will be provided to facilitate a thorough and unbiased evaluation.

The inaugural representatives are:

Cllr Robert Leach (RA Nonsuch)

Emma Ware (Conservative)

Cllr Alison Kelly (LibDem Stamford)

Mark Todd (Labour)

Clockwise top left: Leach, Ware, Kelly, Todd

An Independent Process

The Neutrality Council operates independently of The Epsom and Ewell Times, highlighting our commitment to objective reporting. Council members will be approached individually for the first annual appraisal in or about November 2024. If they wish to members may collaborate in joint submissions.

Community Trust and Confidence

This innovative institution aims to be a significant contributor to maintaining high standards and bolstering community confidence. By involving representatives from various political backgrounds, we ensure a diversity of perspectives that align with our commitment to being "for the community, by the community."

A Step Towards Transparency and Involvement

In an era where local news services are evolving, we strive to maintain a high standard of informative and readable content for our local residents. By submitting to this annual appraisal process, we not only enhance transparency but also actively involve the community in shaping the future of The Epsom and Ewell Times. Your feedback matters, and we believe this initiative will strengthen our bond with the community we proudly serve. Stay tuned for the first annual appraisals from our esteemed Neutrality Council members!

Battersea power ahead of local rugby team

Battersea Ironsides 38 Sutton & Epsom RFC 29. Saturday 6th January.

In September at Rugby Lane Sutton & Epsom belatedly gained their first success of their campaign with a last gasp 26-25 win over the then league leader's Battersea Ironsides. Therefore the return fixture was anticipated with great relish. Before the kick off there was much disruption from the scheduled proceedings. Storm Henk had led to torrential midweek rains resulting in Battersea's Openview facilities being unplayable. Fortunately an alternative time and venue was found. The match was rescheduled for 4pm at the splendid Grasshoppers RFC venue. The crowd enjoyed the curtain-raiser at 2pm as HAC overcame Grasshoppers 22-14 in the parallel Regional 2 Thames League before settling in for the main event. A thrilling nine-try match ensued with the lead changing hands five times before Battersea Ironsides triumphed 38-29.

Sutton & Epsom suffered a setback in the warm up as Tom Lennard injured his back. The deck was reshuffled and Gareth O'Brien went to 10 and Austin Bell, returning from University, came off the bench to 15. The unfortunate Lennard, with all the mobility of an octogenarian, was ushered to the bench and was unlikely to play any part in proceedings unless some miracle worker happened to be strolling down Syon Lane. The game started under the floodlights with Battersea Ironsides immediately in the ascendancy. A try in the opening minute was denied as the hosts were held up over the line. Five minutes later blindside flanker Ollie Davies made the first of many penetrating breaks. From halfway he broke through the first defender then palmed off prospective tacklers who were scattered like skittles as he raced in to score. Charles Stuart regally added the conversion for a 7-0 lead.

The high tempo opening from the hosts continued as Charles Stuart added a penalty to extend the lead to 10-0. Moments later Sutton were on the scoreboard from the familiar efficiency of Freddy Bunting's boot as he added another penalty to his ever-increasing season's tally to make it 10-3. However, the errant Sutton defence yielded another penalty that enabled the hosts to regain their ten-point advantage to lead 13-3 a couple of minutes later. At the end of the first quarter Battersea Ironsides were rewarded for their dominant start to the match with their second try. This time it was Number 8 Tom Jeffs who forced his way past flailing defenders from ten metres out. The ball-carrying of Davies & Jeffs was to be the difference between the sides by the final whistle. Though Charles Stuart's conversion drifted harmlessly wide the Ironsides had a healthy advantage of 18-3 with the visitors starved of territory and possession.

The early ascendancy of the SW17 outfit was replaced by a sterling Sutton comeback. At last the Black & Whites put together some phases and excellent handling got them deep into the Battersea half. The opportunity looked to have been lost but the referee brought the game back for an earlier offence. With the 15-point deficit Captain Bunting shunned the 3-point option and kicked to the corner. The gamble saw a rich reward. Josh Pulvirenti scored from close-range and Freddy Bunting added the conversion to trail 10-18. Though the S&E revival was soon deflated by another Charles Stuart penalty that saw the score at 21-10 the Black & Whites had a foothold in the game and were looking dangerous when they had possession.

With the interval rapidly approaching Sutton & Epsom enjoyed their best spell of the game as they went in search of a score before the break. Resolute and powerful tackling by the Battersea team held the line. However, under pressure the defence transgressed and they were reduced to 14 men. With the clock counting down in time added on in the first period finally flanker Rob Hegarty forced his way over following a 5-metre lineout. Freddy Bunting's conversion concluded the first half with Sutton closing the gap to 17-21.

The second half began with the Black & Whites confident that they could repeat the come from behind win they had enjoyed earlier this season. In contrast Battersea sought to regain the dominance they had enjoyed at the start of the game. As ever the opening score of the half would be vital for the hopes of both sides. Ten minutes into the second period Battersea kicked into the Sutton half. Fullback Austin Bell gathered the ball and looked for an advantageous 50-22 kick. As

the ball rolled towards the beneficial touch it trickled to a halt but Sutton's initial frustration was transformed into delight. Winger Kyren Ghumra arrived with the cover and his boot manage to nudge the ball to the Ironsides 22. He regained his footing gathered the loose ball and ran in unopposed. Freddy Bunting added the conversion and Sutton led 22-21.

If self-doubt had entered into the hosts it was soon dispelled as the redoubtable Tom Jeffs added to his account with his second try of the afternoon. A penalty was kicked to the corner and the 5-metre lineout was secured and ball was quickly transferred to Tom Jeffs who bulldozed his way over. Though the conversion was missed Battersea lead once more by 26-22. Sutton refused to be subdued and five minutes later they had regained lead. From a breakdown 15 metres from the line lock Ewan McTaggart gather the ball, broke through and sidestepped the last defender to score by the uprights. The towering second row is arguably S&E's most improved player this season and his try was greeted with joyous enthusiasm from the travelling support. With Freddy Bunting adding the extras the Black & Whites led 29-26 entering the final quarter.

Once more the Ironsides went in search of a try. Another penalty was kicked to the corner for a 5-metre lineout. The expectant home crowd bayed for a repeat dose of the medicine. Initially it appeared that the Sutton defences had frustrated the hosts on the line. After much delay and close inspection of the mass of humanity piled in front of him the referee raised his arm aloft to signal the try. Prop Henry Warby was awarded the crucial score. The pendulum had swung back in favour of Battersea and Charles Stuart's conversion put the hosts 33-29 ahead. A couple of minutes later the confused crowd saw Josh Glanville and a Battersea forward depart with yellow cards. It came to pass that Sir had been unimpressed by some pushing and shoving though the incident was less than what commuters experience boarding a rush hour tube and to onlookers it seemed a rather draconian response.

The topsy-turvy nature of the second half had fifteen minutes to go and the outcome was still in the balance. Sutton & Epsom went in search of the 22 and a platform to launch an attack on the Battersea line. Freddy Bunting's long penalty kick from hand, intended for the corner, was gathered infield and a mark called. The threat was averted and the Ironsides set out their stall in the visitors' half. In a rousing finish multiple attacks followed as last ditch tackles frustrated the hosts. Finally, Charles Stuart rounded off a fine performance as he dummied and sidestepped his way over the line for Battersea Ironside's fifth try of the afternoon. The score resulted in an unseemly fracas in the in-goal area. No further cards were issued with only a couple of minutes remaining but Battersea were awarded a penalty at the restart. For those who revel in the unusual it was rather disappointing that Charles Stuart did not attempt the extra three points but Battersea led 38-29 with a two score cushion.

There was no further addition to the score and the Ironsides had won a most exciting game 38-29. Messrs Davies and Jeffs had been outstanding for the victors carrying numerous times collecting considerable yardage as well as three tries. Sutton had looked dangerous in attack but their defence lacked the excellence of their Cobham away win and ultimately that was the deciding factor in a match played between two sides who were notably better than their earlier meeting this season. Next Saturday Sutton & Epsom host Old Alleynians who have started 2024 in splendid fashion by crushing London Cornish 50-17. When the two sides met at Dulwich Common in September the Old Boys edged out S&E 29-25.

Sutton & Epsom:

Austin Bell, Ciaran Mohr, Willem Ratu, Kyren Ghumra, Freddy Bunting ©, Gareth O'Brien, Ross Parsons, Tom Boaden, Chris Farrell, Alex Mount, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, Rob Hegarty, Josh Pulvirenti & Matt Whitaker.

Replacements: Callum Gibson & Ben Green. Unused: Tom Lennard.

Battersea Ironsides

George Clair, Will Diamond, Ben Turner, Jacob Donovan, Mike Brennan, Charles Stuart, Jack Moates, Harry Martin, Ollie Lewis, Henry Warby, Archie MacPherson, Sam Reeves, Ollie Davies, Alex Chitan & Tom Jeffs.

Replacements: Harry Batson, Max Trickett & Cameron Baker.

A goal conceded for every year not played

Epsom & Ewell FC 0-5 Camberley Town. Combined Counties League - Premier Division. Saturday 6th January.

Our first meeting with Camberley Town for five years ended in a dispiriting home defeat by five clear goals, which marked our worst defeat of the season so far. Historians won't be particularly surprised as we hadn't won on this day in history since 1934, but this was surprisingly poor, bearing in mind our stellar second half showing just seven days previously.

Despite many other matches being called off and the knowledge that our game would definitely be on, a hugely disappointing crowd counted as 62, even though the official figure was advised as a rather ambitious 92, witnessed a very disappointing performance against a Camberley Town team that belied their League position and looked likely to score whenever they went forward, while we registered just two shots on target, with the visiting keeper Stuart Norman only having one serious save to make, and that came in second half injury time!

We made three changes from last week's win over Tooting & Mitcham United. Steve Springett was on dad duty and was unable to take the field, while Nick Wilson and Reece Tierney returned to the line up after being unavailable and injured respectively. They came in for the injured Ollie Thompson and also Nick Inwugwu who had to make do with a place on the bench, while Lewis Pearch came in up front.

On a day when there were some very erratic officiating calls that left players confused and sometimes frustrated at times, it is important to point out that this match wasn't close enough to be affected by them, even though we looked quite good for the opening ten minutes!

Unfortunately, the first time the visitors went into our half, their striker was brought down clumsily on the edge of the penalty area and Regan Hitch delivered a free kick casually into the bottom far corner with our keeper Harvey Keogh either slow to get down to it, or unsighted. This goal came in the tenth minute and the lead was extended just two minutes later as a right wing cross was met with an unmarked looping header from Mason Taylor that gave Keogh no chance from twelve yards.

Things nearly got worse in the 14th minute when another break on the right from Stan Jones ended with a shot past Keogh that crossed the line, but hit the diagonal stanchion supporting the post and came back out. We had a spell of incidents like this a few years back at Chipstead, but fortunately, in each case the officials had awarded the goal to us. This time there was to be no such decision in Camberley's favour, much to the amazement of a number of their players and the score remained at 2-0.

Maybe it was to be our day after all. That bit of fortune should really have motivated us to fight back, but Epsom just weren't at the races and a third goal followed in the 26th minute. Maybe appropriately it was Jones who was the scorer after being "denied" twelve minutes earlier, although his shot appeared to be scuffed and Keogh, expecting a more powerful shot, went down before the ball got there and it crept into the net.

We desperately needed a way back into this match in quick time and Luke Miller produced a pinpoint cross for Pearch, but he headed the ball over the bar from just six yards. What we didn't realise at the time was that this would prove to be our best chance of the match and the visitors were soon back on the attack with Keogh being well placed to make a good save from a close range header. As we went into the third minute of injury time Tommy Williams played a decent one-two with a teammate, but the shot with his weaker left foot was easily fielded by Norman.

Could we turn this around in the second half, as we had done just seven days previously? Well, frankly, no! We had only been playing for a few minutes when an injury to Ayran Kugathas necessitated his replacement. We did put together a decent move, starting with Jaan Stanley who found Miller who then set up Rory Edwards, whose shot went across goal, but was just out of reach of the incoming Ethan Nelson-Roberts. Keogh was forced into another good save but in the 70th minute a good run from Jones ended with a shot across goal where Brandon Vangrove was there to touch the ball in from close range for the fourth Camberley goal. Things were looking really serious now and we made a triple substitution, but Keogh still had to make another close range save to prevent the score going higher.

We had a half chance with quarter of an hour remaining when substitute Thompson Adeyemi had a try from just outside the penalty area, only to see the ball hit the full face of the cross bar and rebound to safety, but in the 79th minute a corner was headed in by the unmarked Tom Wensley at close range and we were 5-0 down. Keogh had to make another couple of saves, with the latter of these coming out of the top drawer with a full stretch save of a shot that was heading for the top corner before Norman actually had some work to do in the 92nd minute when he tipped over a Williams shot from twenty yards with the subsequent corner being headed over by Tierney, but to be honest, a goal wouldn't have even counted as a consolation, such was the standard of this performance.

You rarely get results this one-sided unless two things happen. Firstly, we didn't play well, but secondly, Camberley did. With the hugely impressive Jones on the field, we appeared to have no real answer and remain winless against the Krooners in nine attempts dating back to 2014. To his credit our Manager Springett was brutally honest about the performance on social media after the match and it is hoped that we can fight back, although we now do not have another League match for three weeks, so there should be plenty of opportunity to try things out at training during that time. Either way, we need to improve or this relegation battle will remain a concern for far longer than it really should do.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh (c), Tommy Williams, Ayran Kugathas, Rory Edwards, Reece Tierney, Nick Wilson, Luke Miller, Tijani Eshilokun, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley, Ethan Nelson-Roberts

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Kugathas (50), Thompson Adeyemi for Stanley (65), Ade Batula for Pearch (77), Tino Carpene for Miller (77), Jerry Antwi for Nelson-Roberts (77)

Dorking Halls to get refit

The "jewel in Mole Valley's crown" is set to shut over the summer as it undergoes a £3.24million safety refit. Dorking Halls has been recommended for the "minimal" amount of work needed to fix its most immediate problems. A decision on an £8m modernisation of the venue with improved seating, bars, toilets, and sound proofing will be taken next year.

Councillor Nick Wright, cabinet member for leisure and tourism, told overview and select committee at Mole Valley District Council: "The halls are a very important part of Mole Valley's cultural infrastructure, with over 114,000 tickets sold in 2023. They are used by residents from across the district and beyond.

"The halls are sorely in need of repair and refurbishment and the particular concern is over the state of the 90-year-old fibrous plaster ceiling in the great hall itself.

"This has to be dealt with urgently as a health-and-safety issue and it also costs us a lot in inspections and remedial patches. We absolutely have to avoid any chance of a forced unscheduled closure of the halls for safety reasons."

Initial studies into the work began in 2022 with three ideas put forward. The first is the minimal safety work, the second an enhanced program to upgrade stages, access and bar areas. The final, which was ultimately not considered, was an aspirational complete remodelling.

The halls would need to close in summer 2025 as well; if the council agrees to go ahead with the second phase of works. The primary focus of the first phase will be to make the ceiling safe. Critical ceiling failure has been identified as a risk. If no work is done, there is the potential that the fibrous plaster in the Grand Hall becomes so unstable that the halls are forced to close at short or no notice.

Any collapse, regardless of whether the public were in attendance, would likely lead to a fine. The report read: "The priority is to address the ceiling at the earliest opportunity, to avoid the risk of being forced to close the Grand Halls to the public at short or no notice, with the associated reputational damage, and financial consequences of cancelling events, refunding ticket sales, and compensating for loss of profit."

It has been about 30 years since the halls last underwent a large-scale refurbishment, when the building was extended and the current layout created.

The cinema was made digital in 2010 with other minor works also carried out. Cllr David Draper described the work as well deserved and necessary.

Officers told the meeting the site is compliant but that it "struggles to accommodate some shows" with adjustments and limitations enforced which often means performances are restricted, or not the full versions performed in other venues.

The meeting on Wednesday, January 3, heard: "We have to cut things to make it safe and workable so it's not presenting a danger, it's just a bit limiting and we're only just managing." Cllr Wright said: "Dorking Halls is the jewel in the crown of Mole Valley but its getting a bit tired, it needs a polish, and it needs to look much better than it does at the moment."

The plans were then signed off later that night during a brief, 30 minute long, extraordinary cabinet meeting.

Homeless child will have his day in court

The High Court has granted a judicial review into Surrey County Council's decision not to house a "child in need". In 2019, a 17-year-old who was known to Surrey's social services team was on the verge of being made homeless.

Surrey County Council caseworkers, who the judge praised, said the teen required the highest level of intervention together with a co-ordinated multi-agency approach. These are reserved for cases where children are in serious need. However, when he applied for emergency accommodation, the council's housing team said they were forced into a "snap judgement" – something the judge dismissed.

Mr Justice Calver rejected the county council's claim that their decision was made against the clock and found they had a "duty to provide him with accommodation". The judge said he was "well known to Surrey County Council with his history of children's services involvement", and that the council had already made considerable enquiries about his needs and welfare.

He added it was "clearly the case that... suitable emergency accommodation...was required, whilst his full needs, including his need for continuing accommodation and support, were further assessed."

Following the county council's decision the teenager, now 22, began to "sofa surf" between friends and family until he eventually ended up homeless and living on the streets.

Justice Calver's judgement read: "Despite this, Surrey County Council inexplicably failed to provide (him) with any accommodation and indeed failed to take any steps to assess his case at all until September 18, 2019, being five days later, which is highly regrettable." He wrote: "It is plain in my judgement that as at September, 18, 2019 it was or ought to have been clear to Surrey County Council on the facts as known to them that he could not return home, and did not otherwise have stable, suitable accommodation. Instead it merely recommended a referral to its targeted youth support."

Justice Calver also said that, given the background of the young man's situation, and how well known he was to Surrey County Council it was "extraordinary that on October 28, 2019, Surrey County Council nonetheless closed his case."

The judge said that while there was "no doubt" he had a "caring and diligent social support worker" it was "clear that Surrey County Council as an organisation seriously failed" him. He said: "I do not accept the submission of Surrey County Council that no purpose would be served now in granting the relief sought by this claim," adding "the support he receives from his supported accommodation key worker is being stepped down over time, and is accommodation-based.

"He still requires but cannot access support to return to college, access vocational training, plan his future and manage his social anxiety, all practical challenges which he struggles with owing to the lasting effects of his childhood."

The judgement, handed-down on Friday December 15th granted the man permission to bring his claim forward for review.

A spokesperson for Surrey County Council said it does not comment on active court proceedings.

Something special for Surrey athletes

Special Olympics **Surrey Athletes** Gear Up for Inaugural National Winter Games. In an exciting development for Special Olympics Great Britain, the country's leading sports training and competition provider for individuals with intellectual disabilities, the spotlight is on six talented athletes from Special Olympics Surrey. These exceptional individuals are set to represent their region at the upcoming inaugural National Winter Games organized by Special Olympics GB.

The event, scheduled to unfold in Folgaria, nestled in the picturesque northern Italian region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtiro, will feature alpine skiing and figure skating competitions for athletes with intellectual disabilities. From January 27 to February 3, the participating athletes will showcase their prowess on the icy slopes and the glittering rink.

A total of 73 athletes hailing from England, Scotland, and Wales will participate in the Special Olympics GB National Winter Games, and among them are the six accomplished athletes from Special Olympics **Surrey**:

- Mikey Lines Alpine Skiing, SO South East SO Surrey
- Bartholome Meredith-Hardy Alpine Skiing, SO South East SO Surrey
- Stef Nakoneczny Alpine Skiing, SO South East SO Surrey

- Karen Oosthuizen Alpine Skiing, SO South East SO Surrey
- Elanor Sinden Alpine Skiing, SO South East SO Surrey
- Alice Willans Alpine Skiing, SO South East SO Surrey

Colin Dyer, Chief Executive of Special Olympics GB, expressed his enthusiasm about expanding their competition calendar with the introduction of the National Winter Games. He highlighted the transformative impact of national and international events on athletes, inspiring them to develop life skills and make positive changes, supporting their independence and career growth.

Special Olympics GB is extending its gratitude to Special Olympics Grampian club for their dedicated planning efforts as the host club. Additionally, Inclusive Skating has been recognized as the delivery partner for all figure skating events. The Ski Company and Alpe Cimbra are providing crucial support to ensure the success of the National Winter Games.

Dyer emphasized that this competition will play a pivotal role in selecting athletes for the subsequent Special Olympics World Winter Games, slated for Torino, Italy, from March 8 to 16, 2025. Team Special Olympics GB will be represented by eight alpine skiers and two figure skaters, marking their return to the global stage since 2017.

Across England, Scotland, and Wales, Special Olympics GB's impact is evident, providing regular sporting opportunities for over 6,600 athletes with intellectual disabilities. With 95 accredited clubs offering training and competition in 27 different sports, a devoted team of 3,800 volunteers ensures the success of the programs.

Established in 1978, Special Olympics Great Britain is a non-profit charity dedicated to providing year-round sports coaching and athletic competition in summer and winter sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. With 95 accredited programs across England, Scotland, and Wales, the organization offers coaching and competition opportunities in 27 sports, supported by over 3,800 volunteers benefiting more than 6,600 athletes.

Special Olympics GB goes beyond sports, transforming lives by boosting confidence, realizing potential, enhancing physical fitness and mental well-being, fostering courage, and fostering new friendships. Financial support from individuals, trusts, and corporate donations is crucial for the continuation of their impactful work.

Founded in 1968, Special Olympics is a global movement aimed at ending discrimination against individuals with intellectual disabilities. Using the power of sport and programming in education, health, and leadership, Special Olympics fosters acceptance and inclusivity.

With over six million athletes, Special Olympics Unified Sports® partners, one million coaches, and volunteers in over 200 accredited programs, Special Olympics organizes more than 30 Olympic-type sports and over 100,000 Games and competitions annually. Learn more at www.SpecialOlympics.org.

Surrey social landlord downgraded by regulator

Problems with repairs, service charges, complaints, damp and mould, contributed to one of Surrey's largest social housing landlords being downgraded by regulators for failing its tenants.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) found that issues at A2Dominion had "crystalised over a breadth of areas" which "resulted in poor outcomes for its tenants".

The report, published on Wednesday January 3 said A2Dominion had been working to make improvements but had not yet been able to deliver the changes required. This led to poor quality data, poor reporting, and the board not having effective oversight.

Harold Brown, senior assistant director for investigations and enforcement at RSH, said: "We found significant issues with A2Dominion's data and its business planning, risk and control framework, leading to a failure by the provider to manage key risks effectively. A2Dominion is working with us to address these issues and we will continue to monitor the provider as it works to return to compliance."

The group owns and manages more than 38,000 homes across 79 local authority areas in London, the South East and Wiltshire. The majority of its housing stock is for general needs. It also has significant levels of shared ownership housing as well as supported or sheltered accommodation. A2Dominion, as a charitable housing association, must meet certain regulatory standards over how it is run.

Its new board took over in September 2022 and referred itself to RSH following concerns over the quality of some services, as well as its financial position. A2Dominion was then under review for three months while it was investigated for potential noncompliance.

n a letter to stakeholders, CEO Ian Wardle said: "We know that outcomes for some customers have been poor. Earlier this year, we issued an apology to customers who had been adversely affected. While we have made some improvements, work is still underway to fully resolve issues with repairs, service charges, complaints, damp and mould, latent defects and the roles and responsibilities with managing agents. We also know that our services aren't as responsive as they could be. In some of these areas, we aren't always delivering the high standards we set ourselves and customers expect."

The regulator downgraded A2Dominion from G1, which means a provider meets governance requirements, to G3 where there are issues of serious regulatory concern which the provider is working to improve. It's financial position is unchanged. The new grading does not affect services and it will continue to deliver its day-to-day operations as normal.

Mr Wardle said: "Over the past few months, we've been in positive and constructive discussions with the regulator following our self-referrals. We've welcomed the opportunity to identify further steps that we can take to make improvements for our customers and the communities we serve. "The regulator has confirmed that it has assurance that we have an adequately funded business plan in the short term, sufficient security in place, and is forecast to continue to meet its financial covenants.

"Since I joined in September 2022, we've had a new chair of the board appointed, many new board members, and changes to our management team. All our colleagues are passionate about what we do. However, in far too many instances, colleagues haven't had the resources and processes to fully deliver outstanding customer service. It is my job to fix this, and we've made improvements throughout 2023, with more planned in 2024.

"At the same time historic decisions on development schemes, tougher trading conditions and rising costs have affected our finances, but we will weather the storm. We've already made a number of significant improvements in relation to customer complaints and have prioritised our commitment to social housing as the core of our business, including our exit from care services and fine tuning our development strategy so we can focus on getting things right first time for our customers. We also remain financially strong, with an A credit rating from Fitch, £3.6 billion of assets, and over £300 million of undrawn available facilities.

"I look forward to continuing to work closely with the regulator following their decision, and will collaborate on the steps we need to take to return to our previous rating."

Image: A2dominion Home