

Surrey College fraud probe leads to housing plan

2 November 2023



Warnings a failed subcontracted apprenticeship scheme was a “major risk” were ignored leaving a Surrey college with a £25million financial time bomb that it now hopes to solve by selling land for 320 homes.

Brooklands College in Heath Road, Weybridge, borrowed a large sum from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) with the money given to SLC Security to run apprenticeship programs at the school between 2011 and 2019.

When SLC Security collapsed, a formal review was launched by the Department for Education’s further education commissioner – and soon after Scotland Yard began its own three-year fraud investigation which closed in May with no arrests – leaving the college holding the can.

The school’s solution has been to look to sell land to developers Cala Homes for a £45 million project to cover the money it owes to the ESFA and a modernisation of its campus. The planning application is due to be decided by Elmbridge Borough Council in November, potentially drawing the saga to a close.

In the months leading up to SLC’s collapse concerns of the school’s financial health had already caught the attention of the Department for Education and the college’s “capacity and capability” to get out of the mess, questioned.

The commissioners said the subcontract was a “major risk” and recommended the college “undertake further work to understand the risk associated with this contractor and to immediately review subcontracted provision”.

The school’s governors, on the other hand, told commissioners they had been given “numerous assurances” by the principal and chief executive over the college’s financial stress testing and auditing of its subcontractors which “showed no issues regarding eligibility, existence of learners or their employment status”.

At no point had any thought had been given by governors to develop a Plan B should the investigation find the college financially liable for any failings, the report read.

The college’s senior leadership team and governors at the time believed “they had undertaken all necessary and appropriate checks and due diligence on all sub-contracted SCL Security provision and from the work they have done, believed that the risk of clawback was low” according to the commissioners’ report.

A spokesperson for the Department for Education said it does not comment on individual cases but that colleges are required to ensure any education subcontractors adhere to regulations.

They added: “In all cases where apprenticeship provision does not meet the funding regulations it is standard procedure to recover those funds.”

A liquidators’ statement for SCL Security published on January 4, 2023, revealed that colleges and the ESFA have claims worth £22.5 million against the company. However, it shows there is only about £6.5m available, far short of how much the college must return to the ESFA.

Brooklands College also plans to seek damages for breach of contract, although this will require “further work” to adjudicate.

A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police said: “In June 2020, the Metropolitan Police received an allegation of fraud relating to a college based in Heath Road, Weybridge, Surrey. The allegation related to financial transactions between 2011 and 2019. An investigation was undertaken which included assessing all available evidence and speaking to staff at the college. No arrests were made in connection with the investigation. In May 2023 a decision was taken to close the investigation and the college has been informed of this outcome.”

A three-year repayment plan is now in place between the college and the ESFA. The college has also put in place a new leadership team and is working with Cala Homes on a joint planning application. The £45million scheme, the college says, will enable its Grade II listed mansion to be refurbished and restored, open 12 hectares of woodland to the public, provide a community-accessible sports centre, as well as the 320 homes – 128 of which will be classed as affordable housing.

The public consultation into the plans closed on October 23 with 235 people voicing their support for the project against 22 letters of objection.

A spokesperson for the college said: “A new leadership team and a revitalised Board of Trustees have been focussed on putting the college on a solid, long-term, financial footing and have developed a plan to repay the debt and safeguard the college’s future. Our plan will upgrade our teaching facilities to create a modern learning environment that will meet future educational needs, inspire the next generation of students, and secure a sustainable future for Brooklands College in our community.”

Image: Visualisation of completed Brooklands College campus site (Cala Homes/Elmbridge BC)

Latest news from Surrey History Centre

2 November 2023



UK Disability History Month runs from 16 November to 16 December and aims to promote disabled people's rights and their struggle for equality now and in the past.

This year's theme is Disability, Children and Youth and to coincide with this **Surrey History Centre** (SHC) has announced a collaboration with Professor **Jane Hamlett** from Royal Holloway, University of London's History Department working on a project to uncover and share the histories of children at schools for the deaf and blind.

From the early twentieth century some of the leading residential schools for the deaf and blind were based in Surrey, including the Royal School for the Blind, Nutfield Priory and Burwood School. When the schools closed in the 1980s and 1990s their records were accessioned by SHC.

The research team will carry out a new archival survey of this material, uncovering historical experience from the archives. The project aims to use participatory research to create a new historical narrative about these children's lives, through collaboration with charities who work with young people with learning disabilities. The research will be used to inform a new guide to history of disability on SHC's website Exploring Surrey's Past and a new audio resource that will narrate stories from the archives.

See more news and events from The Surrey History Centre [HERE](#)

Local historian Peter Reed will be missed

2 November 2023



In Loving Memory of **Peter Reed** (23/08/52 - 19/10/23). Peter Reed passed away on October 19, 2023, leaving a void in the hearts of many. Born and raised in Epsom and Ewell to James and Evelyn Reed, Peter's journey was defined by his unwavering dedication to his family and his profound impact on the community.

A man of generous spirit and unwavering kindness, Peter's life reflected a passion for understanding the inner workings of the world around him. From an early age, his curiosity led him to disassemble toys, cultivating an interest in creation, particularly in woodworking and exploring historical contexts. His inquisitiveness matured into a fascination with the evolution of technology, particularly in the realm of computers and their historical significance. His career path led him to utilize his technical acumen at the Inland Revenue, Lambeth Council, and a London medical center, where he not only honed his skills but also used his expertise to benefit various charitable causes.

Peter's profound love for history propelled him to join the **Epsom and Ewell History Centre** at Bourne Hall in 2005. There, he spearheaded the creation of the website and served as the dedicated webmaster for the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer. His commitment extended beyond mere content creation; he tirelessly assisted countless individuals, locally and internationally, with historical inquiries, demonstrating his wealth of knowledge and willingness to help others.

Recognized as the driving force behind the History Explorer website, Peter's collaborative efforts with local experts and his encyclopedic knowledge of the area facilitated an invaluable resource for researchers and history enthusiasts. His significant contributions were felt and appreciated by numerous individuals and organizations, symbolizing his profound impact on the preservation and promotion of local history.

While Peter leaves behind no immediate family of his own, he leaves a lasting legacy in the hearts of his sister, nieces, and a community that deeply appreciated his dedication and expertise. His loss is deeply felt, but his remarkable contributions to the Epsom and Ewell community will forever be remembered and cherished.

Peter Reed's passion, dedication, and selfless commitment to preserving local history have left an indelible mark. His legacy lives on in the continued work of those he inspired, ensuring that the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer remains a

testament to his invaluable contributions to local heritage. He will be greatly missed, but his impact will resonate through the cherished memories and the enduring legacy he leaves behind.

Image: Peter Reed with his local history “angels”.

New home needed for disability theatre group

2 November 2023



A performing arts charity that won the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service has been made homeless after crumbly concrete was found in the hall it had called home for the past 17 years.

Freewheelers in **Leatherhead** is on the lookout for a new base – ideally one suitable for its disabled theatre and media company members.

On Tuesday, October 17, the group was forced out of its **Bridge Centre** base after the dangerous Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) which can collapse in an instant and without warning was discovered throughout the building’s roof.

For safety reasons, the building cannot be used nor accessed by any groups, according to **Surrey County Council**.

Posting to Facebook, the Freewheelers charity said: “We are homeless and sending out an SOS!

“Freewheelers are looking for a new home in or around Leatherhead. Do you know of an accessible space or spaces, suitable for our disabled theatre and media company members? We need spaces for dance, drama, film making and music on Mondays, Tuesdays and Friday mornings.”

“We are a diverse and creative company of people with disabilities based in Leatherhead, Surrey. We work alongside directors, producers, composers, artists and writers, to co-create and produce engaging, thought-provoking, funny, joyous and highly entertaining theatre, dance, film, and music.

For over thirty years we’ve been a force for change and artistic excellence in the world of Disability Arts.”

Freewheelers website.

Survey work is being carried out at the Clare Crescent site and Surrey County Council has confirmed that it is also actively helping the search for a new suitable location for the group while the centre is closed.

A spokesperson for the county council said: “We have been in constructive dialogue with the Freewheelers Theatre and Dance Company this week so that we fully understand their requirements. We are currently working at pace alongside Freewheelers to help find a suitable location for them to use while the Bridge Youth Centre is closed.”

They added: “The closure of the youth centre will allow further investigations to take place so that we can be assured the building is safe. We understand that the short notice closure of the Bridge Youth Centre may be challenging for groups that use the building and the residents they support. However, as residents would expect, safety is our top priority.”

Other groups who regularly use the Bridge Youth Centre have been offered temporary alternative accommodation, the council said adding that they were working to ensure anyone who may need to access equipment or items stored in the building will be able to do so safely.

They said “At present, as the discovery of RAAC in the building is very recent, we need to carry out further inquiries before we can provide any details on proposals to deal with the RAAC or timelines for re-opening.”

Image courtesy: Freewheelers

Thames Water left human waste to fester

2 November 2023



Thames Water has been accused of backtracking on a goodwill gesture after subjecting Camberley residents to a “disgusting” summer of stench caused by raw, untreated, human waste left to fester in the heat.

Last summer Camberley experienced a “persistent and intolerable” rancid odour the seeped from sewage works operated by Thames Water, a full meeting of Surrey Heath Borough Council heard.

Following a series of meetings, with councillors and MP Michael Gove, Thames Water spoke of its desire to make a financial contribution to a local community project to acknowledge the impact on residents over a five month period, according to a motion that was backed unanimously by councillors.

Introducing the motion was Councillor Jonathan Quin, leader of the Labour group and ward member for St Michaels. He said: “Disgusting sewage odour... plagued Camberley for over a five month periods from May to September. The odour caused by the Camberley sewage works run by Thames Water can not be described as anything minor. It was so awfully disgusting and strong that many residents...could not open their windows or hang their washing outside during the summer.

“The distress and impact caused to mental health... has been shocking.” He added: “Thames Water agreed to meet with councillors and the MP to discuss possible compensation to make up for missing five months going outside.”

The meeting heard that a children’s playground in St Michaels was suggested as a goodwill gesture and that there had been a “meeting of minds” with the utility firm, with the only thing remaining being the exact amount of money Thames Water would put forward.

He said: “Rather than agreeing to meet us in person again, Thames Water has since backtracked on its decision to make a contribution. I’m absolutely disgusted and disappointed at the disregard shown.”

Cllr Lisa Finan-Cooke (LD, Watchetts) told of how the problem began after Thames Water started shipping in human waste into Camberley that led to more than 11,000 complaints to flood in.

She said: “Between February and April more and more sludge was imported on to the site, and let’s be honest what we are talking about was raw human sewage which was just stored in vast open tanks to just fester away, and as the weather warmed up, the sludge began to produce an unbearable odour.”

She added: “That’s five months of people feeling sick in their own homes, of not wanting to open their windows, of not letting their children out to play in their gardens, not being able to hang their washing out to dry, cancelled birthday parties and family events. The site wasn’t sufficiently resourced to process the sludge in the first place.”

The Wednesday, October 25 meeting noted the problems caused by Thames Water and called on the private utility firm “in the strongest possible terms” to honour its previous commitment to make a financial contribution to a community project.

It was also agreed to write Thames Water and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to express dissatisfaction over the importation of sludge to Camberley.

Camberley Sewage Treatment Works (Image Google)

Scoreline does not reflect performance

2 November 2023



Farnham Town 5-1 Epsom & Ewell. Combined Counties League – Premier Division. Saturday 28th October 2023.

Our trip to the Memorial Ground, home to Farnham Town, was always going to be a challenging one. They have a large budget, a great team and will almost certainly go up as Champions. In four home League matches coming into this match they had scored seventeen goals and conceded none, so under the circumstances, a 5-1 defeat not only represented the first time any club had breached their home defences in this competition, but I will go further and say that the scoreline was harsh on our boys who battled hard for the entire ninety minutes and deserved more than the one goal we registered.

In fact we more than held our own for large parts of this game and although our hosts held the balance of possession over the match, it was only the clinical finishing of our opponents, and Darryl Sanders in particular with a first half hat trick,

that proved to be the main difference between the teams.

Our Manager Steve Springett was back in the dugout and as you might expect after our win at Spelthorne Sports he made only one change with Marlon Pinder returning to the starting eleven in place of Sirak Negassi who was on the bench. We made a bright start with a good run on the left from Jaan Stanley after just 50 seconds, although his low cross was just cut out by a defender ahead of the oncoming Ade Batula.

The opening ten minutes were fairly even and it almost came as a surprise when Farnham took the lead in the twelfth minute from a free kick unnecessarily conceded, although still some way out. However, Harry Cooksley's free kick was delivered to the near post where Sanders met the ball with a deft, glancing header that gave Harvey Keogh no chance at all as the ball nestled in the far corner of the goal. Worse was to come just ninety seconds later as Sanders collected the ball from a throw in and sent a superb curling effort right into the top corner from nearly twenty-five yards to put the hosts two goals up.

Moments later we had a good chance after a poor clearance from Pat Nash which went straight to Stanley, but with a decent sight of goal he rushed his chance and scuffed the ball gently through to Nash who was able to recover his position by this time. We then had a moment of controversy when Keogh came out to punch the ball clear, only to be completely taken out by a Farnham player. Luckily our keeper was able to continue after treatment, yet not even a card was issued to the assailant. The cynic in me would call this a home town decision and this belief was enhanced when ten minutes later Tijani Eshilokun picked up a yellow card for a slightly late challenge that wasn't in the same category as the previous assault.

We were having some success with deliveries into the box as we picked up on the second ball once the initial deliveries were half cleared, and Eshilokun had the next chance as the ball fell to him just outside the penalty areas, but his volley wasn't hard enough to trouble Nash. We were actually having a real go at our hosts and Batula broke down the right, before cutting inside onto his left foot, but his attempt went wide of the near post. Keogh was down to make a good save from a powerful Farnham strike but we were soon up the other end again and Batula's shot was deflected for a corner that came to nothing.

The home side were on the attack soon after and sent a header just wide of Keogh's post, but just before half time a good passing move ended with Sanders almost walking the ball into the net to complete his hat trick and we went in at the break three goals down, which was incredibly harsh on our boys.

Just before the break we had replaced the injured Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez with Nick Inwugwu and for the first time in club history we then made a quadruple substitution as early as the 51st minute, leaving our bench hoping we didn't suffer any injuries in the remainder of the match. We have never made five changes to a line up this early in a competitive match before, but at 3-0 down, it was worth a gamble!

Farnham nearly extended their lead two minutes after this, but Adam Liddle was closed down well by Keogh and put his shot wide. In response a Rory Edwards corner was met by a Thompson Adeyemi header, but the flick on went beyond the far post and out for a goal kick. The next corner wasn't such a good one, but it was cleared to the edge of the area where substitute Negassi let fly with a powerful strike that was arrowing straight for the top corner, only for it to be diverted by the slightest deflection from the head of Sanders, who was now saving goals at one end instead of scoring them at the other!

The next corner again didn't get past the first man and as the home team broke away, Ethan Nelson-Roberts had to take one for the team as he cleared out the attacking player. Fortunately there were defenders covering and he received only a yellow card.

We attacked again and a great pass from Edwards to Negassi on the left resulted in him cutting inside his man and sending him the wrong way but his shot was well blocked by Nash from twelve yards. However, we conceded a fourth goal in the 62nd minute when a deep Farnham corner was headed back across goal, where it was then headed into the danger area and Liddle was able to nod the ball in from close range.

The clouds had been gathering during the second half and as was the case at Spelthorne Sports seven days previously, the heavens opened just after the hour mark, but in the 68th minute we had some reward for our hard work as some great interplay in midfield enabled the ball to be fed through to another substitute George Owusu who rounded the keeper before slotting the ball into the net with his left foot.

The game continued to swing from end to end and Keogh had to make another good save from Owen Dean before Nelson-Roberts produced a mazy run, beating three men before teeing up substitute Luke Miller, whose shot from twelve yards maybe should have been a little higher and Nash was able to get across to palm the ball away for a corner, which again didn't get past the first man. If there was a criticism today, it was that we didn't use our set pieces well enough.

There was still time for another opportunity at both ends. A nice Eshilokun pass to Negassi gave him the chance to embarrass Michael Kinsella again, although the end product was straight at Nash, and then in the second minute of injury time Dean broke through on the right hand channel and finished clinically past the exposed Keogh.

This was one of our better performances of the season. A few weeks ago we went to Jersey Bulls and subsided meekly without a shot on target, but this performance, against a team that will surely wrap up the League title before March is out and may even be walking out at Wembley Stadium in the FA Vase Final come May, proved that we are now competitive enough at this level to survive the season. We have a hard set of fixtures this month, but the most difficult of them all on paper has now passed, and whilst no one can ever be happy to be on the wrong end of a 5-1 defeat, I thought there were many positives that our team could take from this match.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Jabari Ofosu-Hernandez, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Thompson Adeyemi, Zach Powell (c), Ollie Thompson, Ade Batula, Rory Edwards, Marlon Pinder, Tijani Eshilokun, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Nick Inwugwu for Ofosu-Hernandez (45+1), Sirak Negassi for Batula (51), Luke Miller for Stanley (51), Reece

Tierney for Powell (51), George Owusu for Pinder (51)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Local Plan to move forward after passionate debate

2 November 2023



Epsom and Ewell Borough Councillors voted to “un-pause” work on a new Local Plan for the district at an extraordinary meeting held in the Town Hall chamber on Tuesday 24th October.

Introducing the motion to un-pause **Cllr Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) said “what is brought before you this evening is a recommendation from Licensing Planning Policy Committee members to un-pause the local plan immediately to restart work on the spatial strategy, site selection, and policy development. If this recommendation is supported tonight, workshop sessions will be set up with all members to discuss the results from the call for sites that finished at the end of July. Updates on what sites have come forward and, more importantly, what sites did not come forward will be shared. Discussion and debate based on up-to-date data and evidence with all members, not just those on the LPPC, on which sites would or could be included in our next version of the local plan.”

Cllr **Christine Howells** (RA Nonsuch) proposed a lengthy amendment that opened with the following wording:

“The Council is asked to note the work that has been undertaken in line with the decision by the full Council on the 22nd March 2023 to pause the local plan, to note that while the current version of the national planning policy framework (NPPF) requires the council to start with the standard method housing number, the NPPF also allows for a lower number to be used if that starting point is unachievable in light of local Green Belt, flooding, or other specific constraints.

To note that the current draft local plan has already set a precedent by using a much lower target. However, this target was only achieved under proposals to build on high-scoring Green Belt land and sites subject to flooding. The available evidence base clearly demonstrates constraint-trying factors and provides strong reasons for excluding these sites from housing development.”

In summary the amendment focused on resuming the local planning process with a set of guiding principles that emphasize sustainable development, housing affordability, and the efficient use of available land resources.

Cllr Howells said “Mr. Mayor, I have brought the motion before you today as I am passionate in my belief of the need to protect and preserve this Borough’s Green Belt land for the benefit and enjoyment of our current population and to secure a heritage for future generations. But most importantly, I believe I’m speaking on behalf of so many of our residents who are equally passionate to preserve our unique Borough and who have made their voices heard in so many ways.”

“Seven months ago, councillors voted with an overwhelming majority to pause the draft local plan following the huge public outcry at the proposed use of green belt land identified for development. Nothing has changed in the interim period to make it any more acceptable now than it was then. However, we can’t afford to wait for the government to change direction. We must un-pause and set our own conditions. But it remains vital that we continue to safeguard our green belt.”

Cllr **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) spoke on the amendment “The housing target should be achievable solely through the use of brownfield and previously developed Green Belt land with a determined focus on the art of the possible. Brownfield sites and previously developed sites are the answer, and this includes maximizing council-owned land. I have been calling on this council for years to get advice from large-scale developers as to what can be done to address the alleged barriers put forward by the council to using brownfield sites and, in particular, council-owned land, and as yet, they have resolutely refused to do so. They must do so as a matter of urgency.”

Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) called out the amendment: “ I must put on record this is not a cross-party motion, although it appears to have some merit. Labour councillors cannot support it as it’s so disingenuously drafted as to constitute a NIMBY charter. I’ve attended the same briefings as other councillors, seen the same lobbying from those behind this motion, and I know its main purpose is to minimize the number of homes built in the borough by citing excuse after excuse for not building to tie officers’ hands while purporting not to do so. It’s not a cunning plan; it’s actually very transparent. Labour is in favour of using brownfield sites, not in favor of uncontrolled and unnecessary building on the borough’s Green Belt, but we are strongly in favor of building the homes that residents need. This motion is designed to prevent that.”

“Councillor **Persand** (Con. Horton) is a strong supporter of the motion, writing in the **Epsom and Ewell Times**. He correctly pointed out that what are called housing targets are, in fact, “guidelines which provide a starting point for considering local needs.” He then wrote, “If Worthing Council can gain approval from the government’s planning inspector when they met only 25% of their target, why can’t Epsom and Ewell achieve a similar result?”

“The motion puts forward a list of so-called local constraints, exceptionalism, providing a list of reasons not to build homes for our residents. Then there’s just sloppy language dressed up as wishful thinking..”

“Finally, does anyone think that promising significant levels of proposed housing should be truly affordable to local workers has any meaning? They’re just adjectives that mean different things to different people, which will melt away at the first sign of opposition from developers.”

Cllr **Persand** spoke in favour of the motion: “This amendment is an opportunity, an opportunity for us to finally do the right thing for residents. We, as councillors, need to be strong in supporting this amendment. Point 2.1 of the officer report says officers seek confirmation for members as to what to do next. It is our role to guide policy, so let’s do that. It is important that we don’t go full circle again with this local plan and that we do learn from our mistakes. These guiding principles will ensure that we are back on the right path, delivering for residents and our community. We need a local plan that is aspirational but deliverable. This amendment lets us do that.”

Cllr **Alison Kelly** (LibDem Stamford) said “ It is clear that if we do not unpause a local plan, there are two serious consequences: developers will run with their plans on appeal, and we’ll miss the 2025 deadline and have to start from scratch, wasting money and effort. This would leave us with no control over location, density, nor social housing provision in Epsom. We are spending £1.5 million on temporary housing, and we cannot afford to let this continue. We had good feedback from residents during the consultation, and we must take their views into account, specifically with the use of the brownfield sites and the retention of the green belt.”

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Nonsuch) weighed in: “I think I have to start by rebutting what Labour colleagues have said. The reason that we have problems in accommodating people is because of Labour policy, not current policy. No, you may laugh; it was the Rent Act of 1977 under Harold Wilson....All over the country, lodgers were evicted. One of them was one of my uncles;... It was absolutely a dreadful piece of legislation. Perhaps our Labour friends haven’t actually listened to what was said at the Labour conference, which was only about a week or two ago, where Keir Starmer actually said, and I commend him for his honesty, that they don’t intend taking any notice of local authorities.”

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) “ I think if we adopted this amendment, I cannot see a path that gets us to a sound local plan. What was before us tonight is the decision whether we want to unpause this local plan to allow LPPC and officers to digest the results of the consultation and take the necessary measures from that.”

Cllr **Liz Frost** (RA Woodcote and Langley) also spoke against the amendment: “.. if it were to be approved, ... we are likely to tie the officers up in knots.”

The amendment was defeated by 14 votes to 12 with 3 abstentions.

The Council then proceeded to debate the main motion to un-pause the work on the Local Plan (as reported in Tuesday’s Epsom and Ewell Times). The motion was approved by 21 votes for the motion and eight abstentions from the motion. There were no votes against the motion.

Related reports:

[Local Plan \(2022-2040\) Un-Pause Recommended](#)

[Cllr Persand intervenes ahead of Local Plan debate](#)

[Drafting of Epsom and Ewell Local Plan “unpausing”?](#)

[Motion to pause Local Plan process](#)

Ewell “no new oil” pensioner punished

2 November 2023



Judit Murray, a 69 year old resident of Ewell, was today sentenced to a 12 month community order with 60 hours of community service at Westminster Magistrates Court.

Ms Murray and her co-defendants, Sol Bourne and Daniel Knorr, who received the same sentence, were found guilty of aggravated trespass at a previous hearing for their memorable protest at Lord’s cricket ground on 28/6/23.

The Just Stop Oil stopped play during the match between England and Australia on June 28, as security and ground staff cleaned up orange powder that was thrown on the pitch and ensured the ground was not damaged.

The three were found guilty after a trial and appeared on 24th October to be sentenced.

Ms Murray said after the hearing “I have seven beautiful grandchildren who deserve the best possible life, so when the country’s top professional, Dr Camilla Kingdon, President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health ‘the climate crisis poses an existential threat to the health and well-being of all children’ I am morally and duty-bound to act.”

“Climate change is no longer tomorrow’s problem, it is today’s. The travesty of justice is that I was forced to defend my actions whilst the real criminals; the prevaricating politicians and fossil fuel profiteers, remain unaccountable.”

“My protest interrupted a cricket game for four minutes, a sport you simply won’t be able to play in storms, floods or fifty degree heat.”

I am no ‘dangerous radical’, those who are, to quote the UN Secretary General, are ‘the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels’. Like our own. They should have been in the dock today, not me.’

Epsom’s Erotica By Candlelight

2 November 2023



A pale and slender man, suffering from ill health, began drawing an image by candlelight inside a room in Epsom’s Spread Eagle Hotel in June 1896 probably knowing he was nearing the end of his life.

A year earlier the same man’s career had taken a dramatic turn for the worse when he was sacked from his job through no fault of his own and now, he found himself alone, poverty stricken and shunned as a consequence of Oscar Wilde, the poet and playwright being arrested and charged with gross indecency.

With one lung barely functioning and the other becoming affected, (as determined by an Epsom doctor) the well-dressed dandy who liked to wear dove-grey suits, hats, ties and yellow gloves continued to create ink drawings inside his two rooms at The Spread Eagle Hotel in Epsom, albeit for a much-reduced client base.



Aubrey Beardsley

The frail man who had booked himself into The Spread Eagle Hotel was the artist, Aubrey Beardsley, but this was not his first visit to Epsom, as he had previously spent two of his difficult childhood years living in lodgings in Ashley Road, a short distance from where The University of the Creative Arts campus is today. Sadly, Aubrey had contracted tuberculosis as a young boy, but could take long walks on the Downs in the fresh air with his mother and sister, Mabel as recommended by his doctors.

Now, thirteen years later, Aubrey Beardsley had returned to Epsom on the advice of his doctors to breathe the town's better air whilst walking on the Downs which he did for the duration of his visit, although such walks were becoming increasingly difficult to undertake.



Illustration by Beardsley for Oscar Wilde's Salome

Whilst Aubrey's second stay in Epsom only lasted a few weeks, he managed to complete eight illustrations in The Spread Eagle Hotel for a proposed privately printed edition of the ancient Greek comedy *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes which could be sold expensively to connoisseurs by his publisher. The *Lysistrata* drawings are sexually explicit and these illustrations together with his drawings for Oscar Wilde's disturbing drama *Salome* (the play premiered in Paris in 1896) are among Aubrey's most famous.

According to Wikipedia, Aubrey Beardsley was "the most controversial artist of the Art Nouveau era" who was "renowned for his dark and perverse images and grotesque erotica, which were the main themes of his later work".

Wikipedia goes on to add that Aubrey "satirized Victorian values regarding sex, that at the time highly valued respectability", so it is not surprising that he chose to hide himself away in The Spread Eagle Hotel in the aftermath of the now outdated scandal involving Oscar Wilde and his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas which led to anyone associated with Oscar Wilde being suspected of sodomy.

Despite the sexual nature of his imagery, there is no evidence to suggest that Aubrey had sexual relations with anyone regardless of their sexual orientation, although the precise nature of his relationship with his sister, Mabel (who he drew naked in an illustration which also included his client Oscar Wilde and a goat-legged faun) will undoubtedly continue to form the topic of discussion amongst historians and art critics.

Upon departing Epsom where he had completed some of his best works, Aubrey Beardsley continued to suffer from declining health leading to him having a violent haemorrhage in December 1896 and moving to the French Riviera in April

1897 in an attempt to prolong his life.

Sadly, Aubrey's days were numbered and it was whilst he was on his death bed in the French Riviera that Aubrey wrote to his publisher pleading with him to destroy the illustrations he had drawn in Epsom at The Spread Eagle Hotel. The publisher sent a telegraph to Aubrey telling him his dying wish had been granted, but the truth is the publisher lied and kept the illustrations for his own financial gain – an act that perhaps we should forgive him for selfishly carrying out.

Aubrey Beardsley died of tuberculosis in the early hours of 16 March 1898 in the presence of his mother and sister.

Aubrey may only have been 25 years old at the time of his death, but despite his young age, according to The Guardian Newspaper, "he put sexuality at the centre of modern art for the first time" and spread "his influence across Europe – to Vienna, Paris and Barcelona – 25 years before surrealism".

As the erotic ink drawings of the pale and slender young man which influenced world famous artists such as Picasso, Schiele and Klimt remain extremely important today, let us hope that in the near future a new plaque with the name "Aubrey Beardsley" prominently displayed on it will be attached to the front of The Spread Eagle (the existing plaque makes no mention of Aubrey) to remind everyone of the talented artist who came to Epsom to draw some of his most thought provoking and imaginative illustrations long before there was any acceptance of fluid sexualities and total freedom of expression.

The Spread Eagle in Epsom High Street is perhaps more significant than many people realise as a result of Aubrey Beardsley staying there and drawing erotica by candlelight.

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang in Epsom

2 November 2023



Following a successful run of Little Shop of Horrors last November, **Leatherhead Opera Society** have been busy preparing for their next musical production, and it's a big one!

The title character in this show holds the record for the most expensive stage prop ever, and with "Chitty Hire" on board, this production certainly won't disappoint. This November, LOS proudly present a dazzling production of the beloved musical "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" at the Epsom Playhouse. This amateur production is set to captivate the hearts of audiences young and old with its enchanting story, memorable tunes, and the sheer excitement of live theatre.

The musical, with a book by Jeremy Sans and music by Richard and Robert Sherman, is based on the classic 1968 film, which follows the adventures of the eccentric inventor Caractacus Potts (played in this production by Joe Black) as he rebuilds a magical car and sets off on a whirlwind journey with his children Jeremy and Jemima. They are joined along the way by Truly Scrumptious (played by Charlotte Fisher) and together they must outwit the villainous Baron & Baroness, as well as the evil Child-catcher – prepare to experience heart warming moments, daring escapades, and the power of imagination throughout!

The Leatherhead Operatic Society's cast and crew have been hard at work for the last few months under the watchful eye of director John Harries-Rees, and are perfecting this production with their talent, dedication and passion, which is sure to shine through in every performance. With musical direction from Sam Fisher, and choreography by Louise E. Wilson, this production features a talented ensemble of local actors, singers and dancers, all coming together to create a show that promises to be a 'fantasmagorical' treat for the whole family.

"Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" boasts a memorable score, with songs including "Truly Scrumptious," "Hushabye Mountain," and of course, the hugely popular "Me Ol' Bamboo". Audiences can expect top-notch musical performances that will have them humming the tunes long after the show has finished!

This production is a must-see for all ages, and the Epsom Playhouse is the perfect venue to bring this timeless tale to life. Don't miss this chance to experience the magic of "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" with your friends and family. Tickets are on sale now and selling fast, so make sure to secure your seats early!

Performance Details:

Dates: November 21st – 25th, 2023

Venue: Epsom Playhouse, Ashley Avenue, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5AL

Tickets can be purchased from www.epsomplayhouse.co.uk or by calling the Box Office on 01372 742555.

The Leatherhead Operatic Society started way back in 1904, and since then have staged hundreds of musicals old and new, including Beauty and the Beast, Hairspray, South Pacific, Oklahoma, My Fair Lady, Camelot, Guys and Dolls, Oliver, Fiddler on the Roof etc.

Image – Chitty Chitty Bang Bang in the Epsom Market Square

Local Plan (2022-2040) Un-Pause Recommended

2 November 2023



Ahead of tonight's Extraordinary Council Meeting to be held at The Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom at 7.30pm the Epsom and Ewell Times summarises the Report submitted to Councillors by the Head of the Council's Development Department.

In an effort to ensure the future development and planning of their locality aligns with contemporary standards and requirements, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council initiated a public consultation on the Draft Local Plan (2022-2040) from February 1, 2023, to March 19, 2023. This process aimed to gather input from the community, enabling the council to make informed decisions regarding their local development strategy.

Following the conclusion of the consultation, the council convened an extraordinary meeting on March 22, 2023. During this meeting, the council opted to halt the Local Plan temporarily to undertake specific tasks.

Fast forward to September 24, 2023, and the Licencing and Planning Policy Committee has recommended to the Full Council that it is time to revive the Local Plan. The suggestion to un-pause the Local Plan underscores the importance of keeping the plan up to date and conforming to national planning policy.

An officer's report to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council puts forward the following recommendations:

1. Un-pause the Local Plan immediately.
2. Acknowledge the work done since the pause decision in March 2023.

The rationale behind this proposal is multifaceted. The primary reason is a legal obligation to review the Local Plan every five years. The current development plan in Epsom and Ewell includes documents that date back more than five years, such as the Epsom and Ewell Core Strategy (2007) and Plan E (2011). These documents predate significant national policy changes in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance. The absence of an updated Local Plan poses risks to the council, including the potential loss of a 5-year housing land supply and implications related to the Housing Delivery Test and sustainable development.

Delays to the Local Plan timetable could also jeopardize the transitional arrangements that may be introduced through a revised National Planning Policy Framework. Furthermore, the government has reiterated the need for Local Plans prepared under the current system to be submitted for examination by June 30, 2025, and adopted by December 31, 2026. The actualization of these dates hinges on the Royal Assent of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, as well as parliamentary approval of related regulations. Thus, it is prudent to continue Local Plan development to meet these timeframes.

The existing Epsom and Ewell Development Plan consists of three documents that were locally produced. Two of these documents were adopted before the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, which have been subject to revisions since their inception. Local Plans must adhere to national planning policy, necessitating an update to bring them into conformity.

The council initiated a consultation on the Draft Epsom and Ewell Local Plan (2022-2040) between February 1 and March 19, 2023. This Draft Local Plan outlined a growth strategy for the borough, intending to provide a minimum of 5,400 homes over the plan period. The strategy had to balance housing provision with environmental and policy constraints such as land designated for special purposes, nature reserves, and the Green Belt.

During this consultation, the council received feedback from 1,736 individuals and organizations, including residents, statutory consultees, and other stakeholders. It's essential to note that all responses have been made available for public viewing, with any inappropriate comments appropriately redacted.

A Consultation Statement will be released alongside the next version of the Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) to summarize the main issues raised and how they've been considered.

The Council Motion, passed on March 22, 2023, mandated the Local Plan's pause for specific tasks, including further work on brownfield sites, consideration of alternatives that exclude green belt sites, analysis of future housing needs based on 2018 data, and a clearer understanding of the government's intentions regarding green belt protections and

housing targets.

The selected workstreams under the Council Motion have been completed, including the call for sites process and the publication of responses to the Draft Local Plan. Thirteen new sites were submitted during this process. However, the decision to un-pause the Local Plan is crucial for further progress, such as revising the Local Plan timetable and site selection, taking into account the latest information.

The Council Motion imposed restrictions on what work could be undertaken in preparing the Local Plan, making it necessary to formally un-pause the plan for further progression. Un-pausing the Local Plan will lead to the production of a revised timetable and the advancement of other critical pieces of evidence. Work on site selection will also commence, considering the latest information on land availability.

“It’s important to understand that un-pausing the Local Plan doesn’t mean the Proposed Submission version of the plan will remain unchanged. Additional sites have been proposed through the call for sites process, and the Proposed Submission Local Plan will undergo public consultation.”

However, it has also been reported to Councillors that there are limited actively promoted sites for development within the Longmead and Kiln Lane areas. The existing employment sites are well-occupied and support various businesses, indicating a need for additional land to accommodate more employment space, including uses suitable for an industrial estate. The council has already invested significant resources in exploring opportunities for industrial estate redevelopment.

Further investigation is deemed reasonable only if a substantial portion of land becomes available through the call for sites process. It is suggested that the council be formally approached to consider making its land available for redevelopment. Obtaining a formal response through the call for sites process would provide essential evidence to inform future decisions regarding the location of development in the Local Plan.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill is in progress, and if implemented, it will significantly alter how Local Plans are produced. This shift may lead to more streamlined Local Plans and a focus on spatial aspects over detailed development management policies. Transitional arrangements will apply, and the government has set a deadline of June 30, 2025, for the submission of Local Plans prepared under the current system.

In conclusion, this report recommends un-pausing the Local Plan to ensure it aligns with national planning policy and complies with legal requirements. Reviving the Local Plan is essential to the future development and planning of Epsom and Ewell Borough.

Drafting of Epsom and Ewell Local Plan “unpausing”?

Motion to pause Local Plan process

Cllr McCormick’s own answers on Local Plan

Public meeting on Local Plan dominated by greenbelters.

Housing need or desire?

Can Epsom and Ewell get more dense?

A bridge closed too far?

2 November 2023



In a saga that has left many residents scratching their heads, a seemingly routine footbridge closure in Epsom has morphed into an unexpected and prolonged headache. The bridge, over the railway line connecting **Castle Road** to **Epsom Common**, which was initially shut down at the end of February, has confounded locals with its persistent downtime, offering more questions than answers.

Initially, the bridge’s closure seemed to be prompted by some mysterious “movement,” which had caught the attention of passersby and authorities alike. However, the reasons behind this decision were left shrouded in mystery.



Castle Road bridge to Epsom Common - Google Earth

A brief flurry of activity was seen shortly after the initial closure, with residents hopeful that the issue would be resolved. But this optimism was short-lived. Fast forward to late July, and the mystery deepened as news surfaced that the bridge had been closed due to the discovery of an electricity cable. Many were left puzzled as to why such a discovery had not been anticipated in the first place, leaving the community without their bridge connection.

Since August, the situation appeared to be inching towards a resolution, as services crossing the railway were reportedly lifted and temporarily attached to the bridge's parapet. Work was ongoing, although without any obvious sense of urgency. In late September, Surrey County Council dropped a bombshell, renewing the closure order for an additional six months, prolonging the ordeal for beleaguered locals.

Chris Grayling MP, brought some semblance of hope when he announced that Network Rail expected the bridge to finally reopen in November. However, skepticism lingered, and residents continued to endure the inconvenience of the ongoing closure.

The closure's ramifications have rippled through the community, prompting discussions between the **Epsom Common Association** and **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**, although the influence of both parties on the situation remains in doubt. Notably, the footpath diversions on the bridge's north side have proven problematic, especially as they traverse areas that traditionally transform into quagmires during the winter months.

In an effort to mitigate these challenges, the community proposed an extension of rubber mats to cover all unpaved sections of the diversion route. Though the Council has been in contact with contractors to address this issue, it offers little comfort to those who rely on the bridge for daily crossings.

Adding a twist to this already puzzling tale, Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley Vale) has stated "Following excavations on site, the understanding of how dire the condition of the bridge has started to come to light. Due to the extent of the movement of the bridge and the size of the cracks visible only beneath the surface, it was deemed not safe to excavate further with machinery."

Engineers were brought to the site to investigate the matter further, and their conclusion was nothing short of alarming - the bridge, it appears, is in such a precarious state that it must be demolished and replaced. This revelation has shaken the community, as further ground investigations are planned to determine suitable foundations for the new bridge.

In light of this troubling development, it seems that the footbridge will remain inaccessible until further notice, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the community's daily routines.

Image courtesy Epsom Common Association