



Anti-slavery Parliamentary portrait purchase

Runnymede Borough Council has agreed to release thousands of pounds to help buy a “significantly important” oil painting for its museum. The painting is an oil on canvas portrait of Britain’s first foreign secretary and one-time leader of the Whig Party, Charles James Fox MP.

Mr Fox, who spent his final years in St Ann’s Hill, Chertsey, was a strong supporter of parliamentary reform and advocated for religious tolerance and individual liberty. He was a particularly vocal campaigner for the abolition of slavery and introduced what was to become the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act which made it illegal for British ships and British subjects to trade in enslaved people.

The portrait has been offered to the museum for £5,000 and half of the money for its purchase will come from donations, with the rest from the council’s museum after Runnymede Borough Council’s corporate management committee signed off the move.

Emma Warren, curator of Chertsey Museum, told the Thursday June 19 meeting: “We’ve been given the opportunity to purchase an original oil painting, quite a large item, of one of the borough’s, if not the country’s, unsung heroes.” She said the money would come from the museum’s own fund which had been “built up over many many years and can only be used for the benefit of the museum’s collections.”

“In my time at Chertsey Museum, which is 23 years, we’ve only used the purchase fund four times which is why it’s healthy. It’s normally kept for items of significant importance which I believe this painting to be, given we only have a couple of portraits of Fox and no original artworks. I could talk literally for hours about him. He is important not just to Chertsey where he spent his final years living on St Anne’s Hill. Normally I mention his debauched young life with the women and gambling but I was told to skip over that and concentrate on the important bit as to why he was our unsung hero.”

Reports presented to the meeting said Mr Fox, who was known as the Man of the People, first came to Chertsey in 1783 when Elizabeth Armistead, who would become his wife, invited him to join her at her home in St Ann’s Hill. The museum’s collection features letters from Mr Fox and gives an insight into his life on the hill. He was said to have taken up sheep rearing and learned about planting requirements for crops.

Mrs Warren added: “He was a Whig politician, had an unwavering support for liberty and parliamentary reforms and anti-slavery principles. Many of his views were quite ahead of his time. He spoke out at length against anti-government overreach.”

The image produced here is NOT the one the subject of this report.

Image: Joshua Reynolds portrait of Charles James Fox- pl.pinterest.com, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=48763729> This is not likely to be the portrait that is the subject of this article. We have been waiting for details from the museum.

Why Does No One Care About Epsom & Ewell Football Club?

By most measures, Epsom & Ewell Football Club should be one of the borough’s proudest institutions. Founded in 1918, steeped in history, and once a beacon of non-league ambition, it’s a club that has worn its local colours with pride for over a century. And yet, in 2024, it plays its home matches outside the borough, in front of modest crowds, with little official support, and almost no recognition from those it nominally represents. How did it come to this?

From Wembley to Nowhere

The club’s golden era came in the mid-1970s. Under manager Bob Smith, Epsom & Ewell reached the FA Vase final at Wembley in 1975, taking more than 10,000 fans to the twin towers. They lost narrowly to Hoddesdon Town, but the day cemented their status in the non-league elite. Just two years later, they were crowned Athenian League champions, playing stylish football and regularly attracting crowds of several hundred to West Street Ground in Ewell.

That ground, tucked between residential streets, was a symbol of grassroots football. A modest stand, small clubhouse, and



rickety fence ringed the pitch — but it was home. Children ran the lines as ball boys, pensioners leaned on the barrier rails, and on Saturday afternoons, you could hear the cheers echo down Ewell High Street.

All that changed in 1993. Pressured by rising costs and development interest, the club sold the West Street Ground, and with it, lost its physical and emotional anchor in the borough. The land was sold for housing. Since then, Epsom & Ewell FC has led a nomadic existence, groundsharing with clubs like Banstead Athletic, Merstham, Leatherhead, Chipstead, and currently Corinthian-Casuals in Tolworth — nearly six miles from the borough boundary.

A Club Without a Borough

It is now 31 years since Epsom & Ewell FC played a competitive fixture in Epsom or Ewell. An entire generation has grown up without ever seeing their town represented in senior men's football. Few children wear the club's blue and gold; few adults even realise it still exists.

What happened? And more to the point — where was the borough council?

In the three decades since losing West Street, the club has repeatedly tried to secure land for a new stadium within the borough. Sites have been proposed, explored, and rejected. Discussions about Long Grove, Court Recreation Ground, and even sharing facilities with local colleges have all ended in failure. Most recently, informal talks about part of the Horton area being earmarked for community sports development went nowhere.

Supporters point to the contrasting support other councils give their clubs. Sutton United, for instance, receives backing from Sutton Council, which helped secure funding for facilities upgrades when the club was promoted to the Football League. In Epsom, the silence has been deafening. There has been no public plan, no council-led consultation, no transparent effort to bring the borough's only senior football club back home.

Struggling for Survival

The club is currently playing in the Combined Counties League Division One — the 10th tier of English football. It exists thanks to a dedicated band of volunteers, a threadbare budget, and the goodwill of its landlords. Crowds rarely exceed 60-70. With no clubhouse revenue, limited sponsorship, and minimal visibility, it's little wonder the club's financial situation is precarious.

In 2019, the club formally became a Community Interest Company (CIC), a status intended to attract grants and funding by aligning with social benefit goals. While that has helped underpin youth development and safeguarding policies, it hasn't solved the central issue: without a home, the club cannot grow.

Even now, Epsom & Ewell FC runs youth teams, junior girls' sessions, and has engaged in local community coaching schemes. But ask any parent at those sessions where the senior men's team plays, and many will shrug.

The Missed Potential

What's so frustrating is how easily this could be different. Epsom is one of the largest towns in the South East without a senior football club playing within its boundaries. The borough's population is over 80,000, and youth football is thriving — the likes of Epsom Eagles and Ewell Saxons run dozens of sides from U7s to U18s. Local talent is not in short supply. But with no flagship club, no clear pathway, and no local stadium to rally around, that energy is scattered.

The irony is that other non-league clubs across Surrey have built strong community models with much less historical pedigree. Why not Epsom?

Councillors have, over the years, said that land availability, planning complexity, and infrastructure costs make a return difficult. That may be true — but where is the political will? Where is the long-term strategic thinking about using sport to promote community health, pride, and youth engagement?

With millions spent on new housing, green infrastructure, and civic regeneration, a modest community stadium with a few hundred seats, changing rooms, and floodlights should not be an insurmountable dream. Yet for 30 years, it has been exactly that.

Do You Care?



This brings us to the title question: *Why does no one care about Epsom & Ewell FC?*

Maybe it's because we've forgotten how important sport can be to a town's identity. Maybe because the club's quiet survival hasn't shouted loudly enough. Or maybe we just assumed someone else would fix it.

But the truth is, without meaningful public interest — and without council support — Epsom & Ewell FC will remain a ghost club. It will still play fixtures in Tolworth or elsewhere, cheered on by a few die-hards who remember the old days, while the borough it bears in its name carries on, unaware.

It doesn't have to be this way.

A Special Correspondent

Image – an imagined modest stadium that could be Epsom and Ewell FC's.

Epsom Hospital workers to strike for equality?

More than 200 essential hospital cleaners and porters could strike over NHS equality at a Surrey Hospital Trust. Approximately 258 NHS facilities workers at St Helier and Epsom Hospital Trust will vote whether to go on strike as they demand full equality with their hospital colleagues. The ballot will open today (July 1) and close on August 12, with potential strike dates to be announced in mid August. The workers, most of whom are from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds, are NHS employees but are allegedly denied the NHS's national pay system, terms and conditions. United Voices of the World (UVW), a campaigning trade union, is representing the group.

Dennis Gyamfi, a cleaner at Epsom Hospital and UVW member, said: "I've cleaned this hospital for seven years. My fellow cleaners, porters and caterers do essential work — yet we've never been treated with the same dignity as other NHS staff." Key workers such as cleaners, porters and caterers were brought in-house in 2021 and released from private contracts. Campaigners and UVW claim they were not given the standard NHS contracts and remain on inferior terms. The union states workers get lower pay and also miss out on key benefits such as paid sick leave from day one, enhanced nights and weekend pay as well as lower pension contributions and are stuck on 24 days' holiday, with no increase for length of service. The trade union argued the pay has been frozen and they are now formally moving toward strike action after the CEO and Board of Trustees refused to enter negotiations.

Mr Gyamfi added: "We are the pillars of this hospital — if we don't clean, transport people around or serve food, patients and their families suffer. The board knows this. It's time they gave us the respect we deserve. Change our contracts. Give us equality, dignity, and the recognition every NHS worker should have." But Epsom and St Helier Hospital claim those on the London Living Wage have seen annual increases in the last three years which is well ahead of staff on the standard NHS contracts. The Hospital Trust also said staff have recently had a pay rise between 3–5.3 per cent was effective from April 1

"This is not just disappointing — it's outrageous," said Farrokh, a porter at St Helier Hospital and UVW member. "It is deeply troubling that a publicly-run organisation – whose duty should be to uphold fairness and protect its employees – appears to be taking steps that deprive its lowest-paid workers of rights and benefits long established by the NHS, government and unions." Frustration has also deepened at St Helier Hospital, where staff reportedly contend with unsafe, degrading conditions, said to be impacting the wellbeing of both patients and hospital staff.

Around £60 million has been spent in the past five years improving facilities across the hospitals. But the ageing hospitals are deteriorating faster than the NHS can fix them, and bosses have accepted staff and patients deserve better. Through the New Hospital Programme, the government has committed to investing in plans to build a new hospital in Sutton and upgrade the existing hospitals, but construction will begin later than originally planned.

Petros Elia, UVW General Secretary, said: "These workers are as much a part of the NHS as any doctor, nurse, or administrator. They kept our hospitals running during the pandemic, yet in 2025 they're still treated as second-class NHS employees. This two-tier system is degrading, demoralising and discriminatory. It sends a message that their labour matters less, and their lives matter less. And it must end." An Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals spokesperson said: "Our porters and cleaners and everyone who works in our trusts are hugely valued and respected colleagues, and we were pleased to recently announce a pay rise of up to 5.3 per cent effective from 1st April. When colleagues were brought in-house in 2021 they received improved pay and conditions compared to their private contracts, including the London Living Wage. We understand their concerns and remain open to engaging with our colleagues and their Unions."



Workers at Epsom and St Helier Hospitals to vote on strike action. (Credit: United Voices of the World)

Are paper bottles the solution asks Surrey Uni

There are few excuses left for polluting our environment with plastics – and the UK can lead the charge towards a more circular future, say researchers from the University of Surrey. The comments come as the Surrey team get ready to showcase three projects tackling plastic pollution at this week's Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition in London (1-6 July).

Surrey's interactive display will present various themes – from replacing petroleum-based packaging, to capturing microplastics before they enter our rivers and seas, to recycling mixed plastic waste that would otherwise end up in landfill.

One such project is SustaPack – a collaboration aiming to reduce the 1.9 billion plastic bottles produced globally every day by developing next generation paper-based alternatives. Backed by a £1 million EPSRC grant, the project is a partnership between Surrey and sustainable packaging company Pulpex Ltd. It combines AI, thermal imaging and advanced computer modelling to improve production processes, create a new biodegradable lining, reduce energy use, and extend product shelf life – bringing low-carbon, fully recyclable packaging closer to large-scale commercialisation.

Professor Joseph Keddie, Professor of Soft Matter Physics and Royal Society Industry Fellow, said:

“The high carbon footprint of plastic and glass packaging materials demands urgent change. This collaboration is about more than simply replacing plastic – it's about designing sustainable packaging that is truly recyclable, scalable, and with a low carbon footprint. It's a powerful example of how science and industry can join forces to address the urgent challenge of the environmental impacts of plastic.”

Another project on display is addressing the recovery of plastic particles from our water systems. Some products such as sunscreens, cosmetics and disposable wipes can release microplastics, with the UK government considering restrictions or bans on certain items to reduce this form of pollution. On average, 50% of microplastics found in the world's wastewater treatment plants are fibres, mainly coming from laundry. If not captured, these tiny plastics can adsorb and carry pollutants circulating in the wastewater plant that are then ingested by marine life and ultimately enter the human food chain.

Surrey engineers are developing advanced membrane filtration technology designed to recover microplastics before treated wastewater is released into rivers and seas. By optimising membrane coatings and filtration conditions, the team is working to reduce clogging and improve long-term efficiency, paving the way for cleaner water and healthier ecosystems.

Professor Judy Lee, Professor in Chemical and Process Engineering, said:

“Microplastics are a serious and growing threat to water quality and human health. These tiny particles are difficult to remove once they're in the environment and can carry harmful pollutants. Our research focuses on practical solutions that can be deployed in wastewater treatment plants to stop these pollutants at the source.”

To address the challenge of recycling plastics mixed with other materials, such as carbon fibre composites, engineers at Surrey are working to make the process more viable and commercially attractive. These composites are essential across various industries, including aerospace, transport and construction due to their lightweight, strong and versatile properties, but they are notoriously difficult to recycle.

Surrey's research focuses on developing new manufacturing routes and enhancing the thermal, electrical and mechanical properties of recycled carbon fibre, making second-life applications practical and commercially appealing. Reducing waste and using reclaimed materials also help to lower the demand for raw resources.

Dr Iman Mohagheghian, Associate Professor (Reader) in Mechanics of Materials at the University of Surrey, and EPSRC researcher in residence fellow of the National Composites Centre, said:

“Our goal is to make recycled composites a reliable, high-value option for industry. Enhancing their performance and reducing manufacturing waste is an important step towards building a truly circular economy for advanced plastics, supporting the wider journey towards net zero.”

At the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition, visitors can discover Plastic Alchemy – an outreach theme led by the University of Surrey's Circular Economy Group and Fellows from the Institute for Sustainability.



The Royal Marines Band Collingwood at Epsom Playhouse

Organised by Cllr **Dr Graham Jones** MBE (Lieutenant Colonel (retired) (RA Cuddington) the renowned **Royal Marines Band Collingwood** made a triumphant performance at the Epsom Playhouse on Friday night, delivering a rousing programme brimming with technical excellence, military precision, and heartfelt artistry. Conducted by Captain Phil Trudgeon and Warrant Officer 2 Bandmaster Jamie Gunn, the band captivated a near-capacity audience with a thrilling showcase of traditional military repertoire and popular favourites.

The evening began, fittingly, with the National Anthem performed with stately dignity, reflecting the band's deep roots in national and royal service.

The opening item, **Overture to Candide by Leonard Bernstein**, displayed infectious energy and fizzing orchestration, setting a vibrant tone. Bernstein's much-loved operetta is famed for its satirical bite, and the Marines captured its brilliance and wit with panache.

Next came John Philip Sousa's **Who's Who in Navy Blue**, a 1920 march celebrating American naval traditions, crisply articulated by the brass and percussion with authentic verve.

In a change of mood, the band shifted to the familiar strains of the **Top Gun Theme**, arranged by Laughton. Its soaring harmonies and stirring sense of adventure delighted the audience, showcasing the band's ability to cross genres effortlessly.

The **Drum Static** interlude then brought the spotlight to the Corps of Drums. Their razor-sharp discipline, complex sticking patterns and synchronised movement brought rapturous applause.

Cape Helles by Young followed, a poignant musical tribute to the Gallipoli landings of 1915, performed with great sensitivity and power.

Alford's lively **The Mad Major** quick march injected a welcome spark of lightness, its playful melody and military swagger a reminder of Alford's enduring legacy as the "British March King."

A show-stopping highlight came with Corporal Savage's clarinet solo in **Artie Shaw's Clarinet Concerto**, arranged by Cray. This 1940 swing-inspired concerto, with its swooping glissandi and jazz idioms, was delivered with aplomb and won a spontaneous ovation.

The first half concluded with two contrasting works. **In Ireland** by Lance Corporal Brooks explored traditional folk-tinged melodies with a fresh, lyrical approach. Finally, Frank Ticheli's **Vesuvius** erupted with rhythmic fire and dramatic textures, a thrilling depiction of the famous volcano's destructive power.

The second half began with **Maiden Legacy**, an arrangement by Captain Trudgeon, demonstrating the band's ability to reinterpret newer repertoire with flair.

A stylish rendition of **Skyfall**, the James Bond theme popularised by Adele with band soloist Beth McGregor, delivered a rich, cinematic grandeur which clearly resonated with the audience.

For the finale, the band turned to a cornerstone of English wind music: Gustav Holst's **A Moorside Suite**, originally written for brass band.

- The **Scherzo** sparkled with rhythmic energy,
- The **Nocturne** brought a serene, pastoral calm,
- And the concluding **March** was robust and dignified, the perfect platform for the band's tonal power and ensemble unity.

Shenandoah, arranged by Frank Ticheli, offered a moving moment of reflection. This classic American folk tune, thought to date back to early 19th-century river boatmen, was performed with deep feeling and a sonorous blend. Played in memory of a young member of the band recently lost to motor neurone disease.

As dusk approached, the band performed the traditional **Sunset**, arranged by Green, a moment of quiet remembrance often



associated with evening ceremonies in the Royal Navy.

The concert then closed with two of the Royal Marines' most cherished musical emblems: **Heart of Oak**, the official march of the Royal Navy since the 18th century, and **A Life on the Ocean Wave**, the Royal Marines' regimental march, based on Henry Russell's 19th-century song. These stirring finales underlined the band's powerful heritage and left the audience in no doubt of their world-class standing.

However, the audience would not let them go without an encore and with Eric Coates' great Dambusters March all left satisfied.

The Royal Marines Band Service has maintained its traditions since the 18th century, combining musical excellence with operational service. The Band Collingwood, based at HMS Collingwood, continues to support Royal Navy and national ceremonial events across the UK and internationally. Its members are trained both as musicians and as deployable service personnel, maintaining a dual role unmatched in the military music world.

The evening was also attended by members of the local branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL), who noted in the programme that concerts like these are an enduring link between the public and the Armed Forces, highlighting the shared remembrance and respect for those who have served.

This concert was a brilliant reminder of the pride, tradition, and sheer artistry of the Royal Marines Band Collingwood, whose excellence lifted the hearts of all who were privileged to hear them.

Well done to Dr Graham Jones for bringing such a memorable evening to Epsom.

Image courtesy Steven McCormick Photography

Will the doomed Epsom and Ewell Borough Council rise from the ashes in other forms?

Epsom, 26 June 2025 — Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has taken a significant step towards reshaping local governance in response to the wider reorganisation of local government in Surrey, voting to launch a consultation on the possible creation of a Community Council for the borough.

At a specially convened full Council meeting on 26 June, members debated a proposal introduced by Cllr John Beckett (RA Auriol), who set out the case for consulting residents on the potential establishment of a Community Council as a means of protecting local voices once Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is abolished under the forthcoming unitary council arrangements.

Opening the meeting, the Mayor's Chaplain prayed for "wisdom as we look at conflicting interests, confidence in what is good and fitting, and the ability to work together in harmony even when there is honest disagreement."

Cllr **Robert Leach** (Mayor) (RA Nonsuch) explained the urgency of the debate, stating: *"This item requires a proposal and a seconder... I would ask for you all to exercise some self-restraint... and keep your comments concise."*

Cllr Beckett formally introduced the motion, drawing on the Council's agreed strategic priorities for 2025-2027: *"Tonight, we have in front of us a report which follows on from the agreed strategic priorities... to explore the future local governance in the borough of Epsom and Ewell."*

He described how the Government's plans to create either two or three new unitary councils in Surrey — abolishing the twelve existing borough and district councils as well as Surrey County Council — had left many residents "extremely vocal in stating that they have had no real voice in the pre-decision-making process."

Cllr Beckett continued: *"These changes are about centralisation of power and money at the expense of local democracy for our residents. This decision... gives the residents a choice. It gives the residents a voice."*

Explaining why a Community Council could matter, he said: *"Community Councils provide a vital link between residents and larger proposed unitary authorities... They also aim to enhance local representation by providing a direct route for voices of residents and local communities on local issues and decision-making."*

The meeting heard considerable debate about how the proposed consultation, budgeted at £300,000 from reserves, would work.



Cllr Julian Freeman (LibDem College) asked pointedly: *"Will we be using TikTok, Instagram, Snapper Chat... or are we just putting out bits of paper in various libraries and council buildings... And also have we set a threshold as to what would constitute adequate consultation?"*

Cllr Beckett responded that the Council's communications plan meeting the following day would consider "all options," including social media and traditional methods. He acknowledged concerns about digital exclusion, stating: *"We will be taking all options, both electronic and paper format, as to meet the needs of all of our residents."*

Concerns over the financial implications were repeatedly raised. Cllr **Alison Kelly** (LibDem College) asked: *"Will we make it clear that there could be an extra level of tax required... and have we got any evidence that shows that the county council can't run an allotment or all these other things any better than the new unitary authority?"*

Cllr Beckett emphasised that the £300,000 would be drawn from reserves and could be returned if the consultation failed to show support for a Community Council: *"If we don't get to consultation two, those will go back into reserves because we won't need them."*

Several members, including Cllr **Chris Ames** (Labour Court) and Cllr **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington), expressed scepticism about whether residents would genuinely engage with the consultation, and whether enough information was available to make an informed decision.

Cllr **Freeman** was forthright, describing the proposal as "a complete waste of time, money, officers' time and effort, when we've got other priorities that are being neglected."

Others robustly defended the initiative. Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) argued: *"It's only right that while this Labour government talks about empowering local communities and devolution, we actually say to them, 'we are going to practice what you preach.'"*

Cllr **Hannah Dalton** (RA Stoneleigh) similarly supported proceeding, while acknowledging: *"So much is going on in local government that our residents aren't really getting any opportunity to input on... We've got to at least ask our residents."*

The meeting closed with Cllr Beckett reminding colleagues that the evening's decision was only about launching the consultation, saying: *"Several of our colleagues seem to be jumping the gun... This is more than what LGR and other local authorities have done with our residents in the past."*

The first recommendation — to approve a community governance review — was carried by 19 votes to 0, with seven abstentions. The second recommendation, authorising the Chief Executive and Head of Legal to finalise consultation materials and take necessary steps to progress the review, was carried by 16 votes to six, with four abstentions.

An Epsom & Ewell Borough Council spokesperson confirmed afterwards that consultation with residents will start in July, with further details to be published on the Council's website.

In a press release following the meeting, Cllr Beckett said: *"We believe that parish councils would provide an essential link between Epsom & Ewell residents and a new unitary council... ensuring that resident and community voices in Epsom & Ewell are heard and considered by decision-makers in local government in the future."*

The Council is expected to finalise the consultation questions imminently, with public engagement running through the summer.

Related reports:

Two unitaries will save money says Surrey leader

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

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council out – Community Council's in?

Epsom and Ewell parents taking on the child smartphone challenge

Local parents are joining a national movement to delay children's exposure to smartphones, with a sold-out event next week highlighting local concerns.



Epsom & Ewell's Smartphone Free Childhood (SFC) group is hosting *The Hidden Impact of Smartphones on our Children* on Wednesday 3 July, 7.30-9pm, at St Martin's Junior School on Ashley Road. The event will feature contributions from local headteachers, youth speakers, and safeguarding experts.

The movement, which has already attracted nearly 150,000 signatories to its "Parent Pact" across the UK, encourages families to hold off giving children smartphones before age 14. Surrey parents have been among the strongest supporters of the initiative, which aims to reduce the mental health and online safety risks faced by children in a hyper-connected world.

Laura Baker, from Epsom & Ewell's SFC group, said:

"It's all about strength in numbers — if your child knows that other kids in their class won't be getting a smartphone for a few years either, the peer pressure instantly dissolves."

The event's speaker line-up includes:

- Mrs Donna Dove, Health and Wellbeing Lead and teacher at St Martin's, Epsom
- Mr Joe Hordley, Assistant Headteacher at St Andrew's, Leatherhead
- Mrs Rachel Hall, Associate Headteacher at Glyn School
- Health Professionals for Safer Screens
- Advisors from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, addressing online safety and child protection
- Young people aged 13, 18, and 24 sharing personal perspectives on growing up in a digital age

Local MP Helen Maguire is expected to attend, and educators from more than ten primary and secondary schools across Epsom and Ewell are anticipated, reflecting the growing concern among school communities.

The organisers say school policies on smartphone use vary widely across Surrey, as staff attempt to manage the impacts of cyberbullying, mental health pressures, misogyny, and distraction in class.

Parents behind the initiative argue that urgent action is needed to protect children's wellbeing, rather than waiting for government regulation of Big Tech. The cultural conversation around children and screens has been driven by hard-hitting documentaries such as *Swiped* and dramas like *Adolescence*, adding momentum to calls for change.

Epsom & Ewell SFC hope the borough could follow in the footsteps of St Albans, Bromley, and Southwark in developing a "smartphone free childhood" community.

The event is free to attend, but places must be booked in advance. After an initial sell-out, a limited number of extra tickets have now been released.

Booking and further information:

Laura Baker

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Netflix to mainstream in Surrey

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



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

Longcross Studios (image Google)

110-Home Scheme at Langley Vale Sparks Green Belt Fears

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



change Langley Vale for good.”

Image: Langley development layout. Courtesy Fairfax Homes.

Epsom Picturehouse blossoms with Pride

Picturehouse Epsom is proud to announce a powerful new partnership with Blossom LGBT to launch OUT — a year-round celebration of LGBTQ+ cinema.

Together, we’re amplifying queer voices on screen and creating space for connection, reflection, and community — showing that Pride isn’t just a once-a-year event, but an ongoing conversation and opportunity to build lasting community.

About Blossom LGBT

Blossom LGBT is a national non-profit supporting LGBTQIA+ young adults aged 16-30. Based in Surrey, their mission is to ensure that no young person faces exclusion — social or economic — because of who they are or whom they love.

They work to break down systemic barriers of discrimination, poverty, and disadvantage, empowering the next generation to thrive.

At Blossom, we are dedicated to creating a world where LGBTQIA+ young adults can overcome discrimination, thrive in safe and supportive communities, and access the tools and opportunities needed to succeed with dignity and purpose. We are designed for the community, by the community.

It’s vital that young people see themselves reflected in film, not just to feel visible, but to know that their stories, identities, and futures matter. Representation can inspire confidence, spark ambition, and help young people imagine a world where they belong.

Our Venue: Epsom Picturehouse

Epsom Picturehouse is a brand-new six-screen cinema in the heart of Epsom Square. With a rich programme of arthouse and quality mainstream films, plus a stylish café and bar, it offers a perfect setting for inclusive, community-focused events.

We’re excited to open our doors to OUT and host a variety of screenings, discussions, and gatherings that celebrate the richness and diversity of LGBTQ+ lives and experiences.

Joe Stroud from Epsom Picturehouse said:

“I’m delighted that, at the heart of all this, we’re celebrating community. What better way to do that than by sharing powerful stories on screen and using them as inspiring conversation starters?”

What is OUT?

OUT is a long-running Picturehouse initiative that celebrates LGBTQ+ stories — from reclaimed classics to bold new voices. Now in its tenth year at Clapham Picturehouse, we’re thrilled to extend this initiative to Surrey, helping local audiences build connections and community through film.

Clapham’s OUT journey began in 2014 with a screening of *Dallas Buyers Club*, and has since included landmark titles such as Barry Jenkins’ *Moonlight*, the historic Best Picture winner at the 2017 Academy Awards. Now, it’s Epsom’s turn.

Upcoming Events: Brokeback Mountain + Q&A Panel — 6 July

Join Blossom LGBT for a special 20th anniversary screening of *Brokeback Mountain*, directed by Ang Lee and starring Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal — a landmark film for the LGBTQ+ community.



Following the screening, we'll host an open and thoughtful Q&A with invited panellists, exploring the film's emotional journey — touching on themes of love, repression, and resilience.

Together, we'll reflect on how life for LGBTQ+ people has changed (and in some ways stayed the same), especially in rural communities. How do those experiences echo in today's legal battles and cultural conversations?

The evening will feature invited guests, including Outline, an organisation supporting people with their sexuality and gender identity through a helpline, website, and support groups. Also attending are the Mary Frances Trust (MFT) LGBT Peer Support Group, as well as Walk and Talk 4 Men — a free support group for men to come together, walk, talk, and support their mental health while enjoying some fresh air.

This event is for anyone seeking connection — whether you're exploring your own journey, supporting someone close to you, or simply curious to learn more. We invite you into a warm, inclusive space to listen, reflect, and be part of a growing community.

Mark your calendars for more upcoming events celebrating LGBTQ+ stories:

Sun 29 Jun

- reDiscover *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (15) at 17:10

Mon 30 Jun

- Out Queer Futures (Cert TBC) at 20:30
- reDiscover *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (15) at 19:45

Tue 01 Jul

- Discover — Preview *Hot Milk* (15) at 20:15

Wed 02 Jul

- *Brokeback Mountain* plus Q&A (15) at 18:30

Stay tuned for more film nights, conversations, and creative community events throughout the year. Whether you're a long-time advocate or new to the conversation, there's a seat here for you.

Let's make Pride more than a moment — let's make it a movement. See you at the cinema.

For more information about the organisers, visit blossom.lgbt or email Steph Elhaddad at Steph.Elhaddad@blossom.lgbt.