

Will the dust ever settle on Chalk Pit conflict?

13 September 2023



Following years of complaints of dust and noise pollution from the **Chalk Pit** site on **College Road, Epsom**, residents and local campaigners say that stricter council enforcement is still needed amidst claims that site owners are operating outside of the conditions of their planning permission.

The land at The Chalk Pit, College Road, Epsom, Surrey is an industrial and commercial site home to several waste management facilities including **Skip It Epsom Ltd** and **Epsom Skip Hire**.

EPSOM AND EWELL TIMES EXCLUSIVE

An application to transform what was a waste transfer site to a materials recycling centre was first made in 2017 but such an upscaling of operations remained unlicensed until 2 May 2023 when retrospective planning permission was granted by **Surrey County Council** (SCC). The permission is subject to several conditions including limitations on working hours as well as the containment of operations within a secondary building to mitigate resulting dust and noise pollution.

Reports from locals say that the site is much quieter in recent months attributing this to enforcement from Surrey County Council to turn off a loud trommel which previously operated at the site. However, they also report that operations are taking place outside of the agreed hours of working resulting in continued distress.

Residents and local councillors have expressed repeated concerns since the change of operations in 2020 surrounding the impact of noise and dust to the mental and physical wellbeing of residents, as well as concerns surrounding the impact on the local environment.

At present a building to contain operations is under construction and operations are continuing pending its completion. Skip It made an application to SCC on 4 May seeking permission to continue processing waste outside of a building for up to 6 months whilst the building is under construction. Residents express strong opposition to the redactions.

Campaigners, including MP for Epsom and Ewell, **Chris Grayling**, have asked that tighter council enforcement of the planning conditions be implemented as well as urging the **Environment Agency** (EA) to maintain tight control on the waste permit conditions and to ensure the building to enclose operations is fit for purpose. Residents have also expressed concern over the number of lorries at the site causing noise in neighbouring roads which cannot be contained.

Skip It, who own the recycling centre, claim that their business has been victim to disproportionate targeting of complaints, saying that many of the passing vehicles belong to other site users and that their vehicle numbers are within council guidelines.

Skip It director, **Mo Maan**, told the **Epsom and Ewell Times**: “We modified a few things to suit our operation...no major change, because the building is going up.”

He continued: “If there was illegal activity, the Environment Agency and the council would have shut the site down, which they’re very good at doing. The same situation with dust – if the dust was so bad, don’t you think that we would have been shut down by now?”



Aerial view of the Chalk Pit site cc Google Sat.

Planning documents, which can be found on the Surrey County Council website, show information regarding the extent of noise and dust assessments.

In July 2021 a Noise Impact Assessment by the EA (known as the 'Tofts report') stated that "NJB [land now operated on by Skip It Epsom Ltd] was at least 10dB louder than [Epsom Skip Hire] and was responsible for all of the measured noise" and stated the presence of "noise abnormal and prolonged enough to cause significant effect on human senses".

In November 2021, however, a report by **7th Wave Acoustics** stated that "it is likely that the noise from the on-site active processing operations will not result in adverse noise impact" and the site was "acceptable in noise assessment terms."

Skip It director Mo Maan told Epsom and Ewell Times: "We've had noise assessments done, which cost me a fortune to get done - independently, and by the Environment Agency and the council." Maan continued: "We've got planning permission, we're putting a building up, but they're still complaining."

Former College Ward Epsom Councillor **Nigel Collin** told the Epsom and Ewell Times: "History has shown us that the operator plays the game well when it comes to observing the licence when a planning application is under consideration. Normal disruptive service resumes once the planning outcome is determined."

On 25 July 2023 Councillor **Bernie Muir** put a motion to council proposing that they install professional noise measurement equipment around the Chalk Pit site, leaving the equipment in place for a minimum period of three months, and responding to any breaches of noise regulations on the site with the imposition of a noise abatement order. It was suggested that £60k be allocated to the project. A vote on the motion has been deferred to the next **Environment Committee** on October 17.

Cllr Muir told the Epsom and Ewell Times that previous monitoring had not been sufficient in identifying which landowner was causing the nuisance and hence the results of the assessments were "unactionable".

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) has faced criticism from residents for failing to issue an abatement notice to cease operations during the period of unlicensed operations to put a stop to the resulting noise pollution.

Nigel Collin described the council's handling of the situation as "inept" and expressed concern over the lack of an overarching person or body taking responsibility for the situation.

EEBC told the Epsom and Ewell Times: "The areas of responsibility around the Chalk Pit site are complex and EEBC, SCC Planning and the EA all have different roles. EEBC have taken a leading role in co-ordinating a multi-organisational response to the various issues arising from the site. This includes regular multi-agency co-ordination briefings and a commitment to continue working with all agencies in trying to improve the lived experience of those living near to the Chalk Pit."

"EEBC takes its responsibilities to all residents seriously and will always act where sufficient evidence is found of a statutory nuisance. The evidence gathered during the noise monitoring demonstrated that there was certainly audible noise at times from the site which could be considered as having a negative impact on the local amenity, but not enough to be considered a statutory nuisance."

Nigel Collin, who has been a key figure in the fight against the unlicensed operations, said the definition of statutory nuisance was 'more than met'.

Efforts from councillors to enforce restrictions at the Chalk Pit have been cross-party with councillors Steve McCormick (RA), John Beckett (RA) and Bernie Muir (Con) and Kieran Persand (Con) at the forefront of negotiations.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council said that they have not closed the case and that they will continue to work with the SSC and the Environment Agency to ensure statutory nuisance thresholds are not exceeded.

Surrey Fire service praised

13 September 2023



Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has received positive feedback for its progress in culture in an official report published today, 13 September 2023.

Following an inspection of the service by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) throughout March and April, inspectors praised the 'positive working culture.'

The report stated that the inspector was 'encouraged' by the cultural improvements that were evident in the service, adding: *"Staff understand the values well and demonstrate positive behaviours. We saw that service leaders have improved their visibility and approachability."*

"There is a positive working culture throughout the service, with staff empowered and willing to challenge poor behaviours."

The findings also highlighted that the service is good at keeping the public informed and has an effective Community Risk Management Plan in place.

The report outlines areas where the service has done well, areas for improvement and a 'cause of concern' regarding the risk-based inspection programme. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service are bringing together an improvement plan to address all of the areas for improvement that have been highlighted in the report.

Chief Fire Officer, Dan Quin said: *"I am extremely proud of the hard work happening across our service and want to thank all of our team for playing their part. As a service we are committed to creating a fully inclusive workplace where everybody feels supported. The improvement of the service's culture was a priority for all staff, so we are delighted to see these efforts recognised."*

He added: *"We know that there are areas where we can still improve and we will address these issues as a priority."*

"While we had expected a more positive outcome in certain areas we recognise the benefits of an independent inspectorate. This is an opportunity for us to reevaluate our current programmes and strategies. Our aim is to address the recommendations and further improve our services. I would like to thank the inspectors for taking the time to learn about our work, for their recommendations and for holding us to account. We remain committed to becoming an outstanding service as we continue to put our communities first."

Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety, Denise Turner Stewart said: *"Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Leadership Team have put in place programmes of work to improve all areas since the last inspection in 2021. I am delighted that the inspectors recognised the progress made on SFRS' cultural improvement journey."*

"I'd like to thank everyone within the service for their continued dedication and for demonstrating our positive working culture to inspectors. Staff showed exceptional commitment to support the inspection process."

"It's important to acknowledge that there are areas that demand immediate attention. We are fully committed to addressing these areas with diligence. Our goal is to make substantial and ongoing improvement. We look forward to demonstrating these improvements with HMICFRS."

Related Report:

Not such a rosy report on Surrey Fire Service

Independent Surrey SEND school slammed

13 September 2023



A “culture of discrimination and inequality” goes unaddressed at a school for children with additional needs, where pupils “fear reprisals” from some senior staff if they report concerns, according to Ofsted inspectors.

An inspection into the independent school was requested “as promptly as possible” by the Department for Education, following complaints from parents.

Inspectors described a “negative culture” across staff, pupils and parents at the school, pupils subject to “racial and homophobic slurs and sexualised language and behaviours” and leaders not showing the “capacity to lead and improve the school”.

Their findings rated **Wemms Education Centre**, in Long Ditton, inadequate overall and in the areas of behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management, in a report published on Tuesday (September 12).

The quality of education at the school and its sixth form provision were both rated “good”, and inspectors said teachers were clear about what they wanted pupils to learn and how, with curriculum leaders having “expert subject knowledge”.

But inspectors said leaders’ understanding of safeguarding was “weak”, without a shared understanding of what constituted a “serious concern”. Their report said: “Consequently, referrals to other agencies have been too slow, meaning that pupils are placed at risk of harm. Furthermore, senior leaders are not clear about who the most vulnerable pupils in school are.”

Speaking after the report was published Wemms chief executive, **Duncan Murphy**, told the LDRS the report did “not mirror other external reviews of life at Wemms” but accepted that growth has not come without its challenges. He said: “It is no secret that the school challenged some areas of the report; now that it has been published, it is important that we focus on what matters the most – being a school that reflects, learns and ensures that every child has the best possible experience under our tutelage.

“In order to achieve this, we have put together a comprehensive action plan outlining active steps we are taking to amplify our strengths and target areas of improvement. Trustees have added additional capacity to the leadership team, and it is also our aim to diversify and professionalise governance so that there is greater rigour and accountability throughout.”

According to inspectors, “strong work” done at the school was “sullied by a culture of discrimination and inequality that goes unaddressed”.

Pupils at the school are those who have been “unable to cope in mainstream education” and typically have social, emotional and mental health needs with almost all having an education, health and care plan in place.

Inspectors said: “Too many pupils do not feel happy or safe at school. They are fearful of the bullying behaviour of other pupils, which goes unaddressed. During inspection, pupils, staff and parents spoke of the negative impact on pupils of racial and homophobic slurs, inappropriate sexualised language and behaviours. Pupils trust only some adults in school to help them. Many pupils fear a lack of empathy, even reprisals, from certain leaders should they report a concern.”

The Ofsted report said pupils believed they were treated “inconsistently and unfairly” and as such “a culture of intimidation, mistrust and fear abounds”.

Six action points were set out by inspectors for the school, with fees of £50,000 per year, to improve.

Inspectors described relationships within and between all groups of staff as “severely flawed” and said the school was a “deeply fractured community”. They said there was a “a widespread lack of trust and confidence” in the school’s leadership and that parents too were “deeply divided” in their views of the school, particularly its leadership.

According to the Wemms website, the school was “proud to declare itself a ‘marmite’ school... you will love us or hate us”. It said: “Our school is for individuals and mavericks who yearn for a bespoke education, which allows them to learn in their own way and at their own pace.”

With parents able to write to the inspectors as part of the process, the Ofsted report said positive and negative opinions were equally received, and a smaller number wrote with neutral views.

Three quarters of parents who completed Ofsted’s online survey said they would recommend the school, but common themes were raised regarding “unsupportive behaviour towards pupils and parents, particularly regarding the management of concerns”.

Less than a quarter of staff who completed a survey said that the school was well led and managed, and only one third believed they were treated fairly and with respect.

But inspectors said around two thirds remained happy to work at the school and believed leaders were considerate of their workload.

Inspectors said: “A negative culture pervades the school and permeates across staff, pupil and parent groups. Some staff, parents and pupils are wary of leaders and feel unable to air their views or concerns. “Leaders should take urgent action to ensure that members of the school community are able to express their views without fear of reprisals. Leaders should

work to establish a positive, shared school ethos.” As well as this, there were concerns that leaders’ responses to pupils’ breaking the rules were “inconsistent and unfair” and that sanctions were not applied consistently.

The report said: “Inspectors heard repeatedly from staff, pupils and parents that pupils are not kept safe from bullying and abuse, including the use of racial and homophobic slurs and sexualised language and behaviours.”

They added that there were no established strategies to address these behaviours and that behaviour and anti-bullying policies were not effectively implemented.

The school’s nurse left the organisation during the course of the inspection in May as a result of her concerns, put in writing to the school in March 2023, relating to safeguarding, medication, staff training and a lack of autonomy to practise as a school nurse.

Staff, pupils and parents also raised concerns about the school’s response to pupils’ medical needs.
What does the school do well?

Inspectors said the pupils’ experiences at the school varied widely, and that the move from a site in Leatherhead to Long Ditton in 2022 had “proved popular”.

They said the pupils generally behaved well in lessons, whether working individually or in twos with a teacher and that there was “high academic ambition” across the school.

The report added: “Pupils achieve strongly across a range of subjects, frequently beyond their own and their family’s expectations. Older pupils learn to drive, helping them to be prepared for their futures. However, these successes are not mirrored in other aspects of school life.”

The LDRS understands some parents do not support the inspector’s findings and are looking into lodging a formal complaint about the Ofsted report. One parent said the school had been a “life changer” for their family.

How the school responded

Duncan Murphy, chief executive of Wemms Education Centre, said the school had a “proud history of supporting children with complex and challenging needs” and two positive previous inspections were the reason for moving to the bigger site.

He said the report did not mirror other external reviews of the school, but added that the school “wholly accept and understand that growth has not come without its challenges”.

With the school having challenged aspects of the report, he also pointed to pupils who “achieve strongly” and that many parents would be happy to recommend the school to others.

Mr Murphy said: “However, there have rightly been questions of consistency which we will seek to address with pace and purpose as we build for the future.”

The school would focus on being one that would reflect, learn and ensure that every child at Wemms had “the best possible experience”, he added.

With an action plan outlining steps being taken, as well as changes to governance for “greater rigour and accountability throughout”, Mr Murphy also said concerns regarding discrimination and inequality were being tackled.

He added: “We firmly believe that our community can once more be united behind a shared vision of excellence for those pupils who need a school like ours the most. It is a source of great regret to us that the essence of this aim has been misplaced since the move to a new site last year, but now is an opportunity to drive improvement and ensure a long and successful future for our school and its community.”

Cycle hub in Dorking development

13 September 2023



A football academy, a 130-place children’s nursery, and a cycling hub, have all been approved in Dorking as the Pixham Lane masterplan steps up a gear.

The site had been seen as an opportunity for a new Dorking Wanderers FC stadium but that was kicked into the long grass when it became clear the club’s future was at Meadowbank.

Now, developers Stonegate Homes have been granted planning permission by Mole Valley councillors for three new community buildings as part of a grander vision for the site that could also feature a senior living home for about 200

people and 300 new homes.

The largest of the buildings approved last week is a 414 square metre nursery, which will be built over two floors, and have space for up to 130 children across four classrooms.

A new youth academy will be used by Dorking Wanderers Football Club and features classrooms for up to 40 students at any time.

The final building will become a cycling hub after the plans sailed through the Wednesday, September 6 meeting with only minor objections from councillors.

The council said it expected the hub to be a hit with cyclists as “a place to meet and relax, as well as a place to repair and purchase cycling equipment and accessories”.

Speaking at the meeting was Councillor **Simon Budd** who questioned the need for a nursery after two had closed within the past year, suggesting a lack of demand and that “we would be much better building and SEN school rather than a nursery school”.

The site is surrounded by Dorking railway station as well as a train line running north to London and south to Horsham.

The application site (measuring 0.68ha) lies to the south of Pixham Lane, just east of the A24 and north of Dorking; within the Built up Area. The site, which lies at the south-western corner of the overall ‘AVIVA site’, comprises car parking which served the former office use. The ground level is generally flat. The site is bounded to the south west by Dorking Railway Station and rail line running north to London and south to Horsham and beyond. To the south east is a public footpath whilst to the north is the remaining part of the Aviva campus. The site itself is in the Built-up Area; adjoining to the east is land designated Metropolitan Green Belt. It is broadly level throughout. Access to the site can be obtained from the eastern end of Lincoln Road.

Cllr **Rosemary Hobbs** said: “If anyone has visited this site and walked in from Lincoln Road, they’ll know this is a particularly unpleasant looking, very messy looking, area of Dorking. It will greatly enhance the appearance of that part of the town and I think it is a good use of the land. The nursery will presumably get some business from the number of residents in the properties on the site.”

Cllr **Chris Hunt** said: “The cycling hub, who can speak against that as a principle?”

The football academy, he said was also for sports, and a nursery would be used by new families moving into the area. He added – given the use of the site “I think its a good proposal”.

Mole Valley Borough Council is currently preparing its new long-term planning bible, the Local Plan, which sets out the types and levels of permitted development in the area.

The council said it has been submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and is currently under examination by an Inspector. The draft earmarks the site for 276 dwellings and at least three Gypsy and traveller pitches.

Bullish performance beats the Salts

13 September 2023



Jersey Bulls 2-0 Epsom & Ewell – Combined Counties League – Premier Division South – Saturday 9th September 2023.

Our fourth defeat from four League matches was maybe no real surprise for most Epsom supporters as Jersey Bulls defeated us by two goals to nil, even though our failure to register a shot of any concern to the home keeper was a little concerning. On a blisteringly hot day, the home side gradually wore us down and by the end we were a well beaten side, even though I thought we did a good job defensively for much of the match.

In front of an attendance advised as 533; low for Jersey, but in my opinion around a hundred above the actual number who were present, based on a less than half full stand that holds nearly a thousand, we took the field with a few changes from our loss at Eastbourne United. Ayran Kugathas came in for the suspended Tommy Williams, while Ollie Thompson started at the back ahead of Ash Snadden. Further forward Jaan Stanley returned to the starting eleven with Tino Carpena dropping to the bench.

It was Hawaiian day at Jersey and many of the supporters were wearing garlands presented in the Jersey fan zone that opened up before the match. However, there was little for our boys to celebrate and as the players “warmed up” (as if they needed to get warmer!) you could tell that this was going to be a difficult day against a team that passed the ball around for fun.

The first real action occurred in the seventh minute when Harvey Keogh was out quickly to block as a striker broke through. We won a corner at the other end but there was no one there to finish the delivery on after it was flicked on by a defender. Both sides had another opportunity inside the first twenty minutes as a good run by the Jersey number 11 finished with a shot dragged across goal, before a Rory Edwards corner was cleared at the near post, but only as far as

Ethan Nelson-Roberts who struck the ball well enough, but it just cleared the Jersey bar. What we didn't realise at the time was that this would be our best chance of the match.

We had a scare in the 27th minute when a mis-hit shot spun up in the air, and Keogh then dropped it and we had a moment of panic in the six yard area before the danger was cleared. However, we were back on the attack soon after as Zach Powell sent a lovely pass through to Ade Batula on the right, who cut in only to see his shot blocked by a defender.

We had an unusual incident in the 33rd minute. Shortly after completing a five minute water break, the referee called a halt to proceedings once again and it transpired that he was struggling with his vision (insert joke here!), but fortunately a Jersey official was able to fill the breach on the line after one of the Assistants stepped up to take the whistle.

The game continued in a similar pattern with Jersey controlling much of the ball, and their number 10 struck at goal but it went high and in the direction of St Helier High Street with the only danger being to passers by outside the ground. On a more serious note we were beginning to concede some free kicks on the edge of the area and from one of these, the ball clipped the wall and forced Keogh into a fine save, tipping the ball over for a corner. For sure the danger signs were there at the half, but we managed to get in to the shade of the dressing room goalless.

Unfortunately, and much like the previous FA Cup match, we conceded early in the second half after another clumsy foul had conceded a free kick out on the Jersey left. The delivery was met with an unmarked header which Keogh kept out, but the ball fell to Adam Trotter around fifteen yards out and his shot went through a crowd of people into the net with Keogh either unsighted or beaten by a deflection.

This was the signal for the drums and bells to start playing for a while as the previously quiet home support suddenly found their voice. In the carnival atmosphere Keogh kept out another low drive that was just creeping inside the post with his left leg and although we attacked with a good run from Kiyo Brown, his powerful looking shot had all the pace taken off it by a defender and it dribbled through apologetically to the keeper.

The hosts sent another header straight at Keogh midway through the second half as we began to get pushed back further and Powell picked up a yellow card to go with the one Batula had picked up at the start of the half. Fresh legs came on with Carpena, Sirak Negassi, Nick Inwugwu and then Snadden all joined the action, but we were struggling to get out of our half as the Bulls seemed to be toying with us at times. Keogh made another flying full stretch save but in the 84th minute Edwards appeared to be cluttered in the middle of the park and we all stopped, expecting the free kick that never came and they nipped through to score their second goal through Le Quesne. It was the least they deserved, even if we shouldn't have switched off, but fortunately a few minutes later the torture was over. In fact this match was very similar in nature to the identical defeat we suffered on our previous visit in 2019.

Some of our Committee appeared rather over-disappointed by the result after the match, and some even expressed the view that the home side weren't that great, but they did more than enough to secure the win against us and you had the feeling that they had another gear or two if required. We have to be realistic about our ambitions this season and accept that sometimes the opposition are on a different level to us right now. That was definitely the case in this encounter and the only things we took home from Jersey were some garlands and a sun tan!

It could be said that four straight defeats to open the season is a poor start, but in our defence, we have played arguably two of the better sides in the division in Jersey and Redhill and were extremely unlucky to lose in the closing seconds at Fleet Town on the opening day, as a point gained there would have kept us off the foot of the table position we currently occupy. However, we do need to start picking up points soon and whilst I'm not that downhearted about our defeat on the Island, our next match at home to Sheerwater on Saturday is likely to be a much more telling indication of where we actually stand this season.

Epsom & Ewell: Harvey Keogh, Ayrán Kugathas, Ethan Nelson-Roberts, Callum Wilson (c), Ollie Thompson, Zach Powell, Ade Batula, Chester Clothier, Jaan Stanley, Rory Edwards, Kiyo Brown

Subs: Tino Carpena for Batula (57), Sirak Negassi for Kugathas (73), Nick Inwugwu for Powell (73), Ash Snadden for Clothier (78)

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Surrey's Big Guns ganging up

13 September 2023



Surrey is set to benefit from a deepening of ties between **Surrey County Council** and the **University of Surrey** through a new **Civic University Agreement** being developed between the two institutions.

Opportunities to work even more closely are being discussed at a special event today that hopes to explore new areas for collaboration including initiatives for economic growth, health and sustainability. The event will be opened by University of Surrey President and Vice Chancellor **Max Lu** alongside leader of Surrey County Council, **Tim Oliver**.

Both institutions recognise the huge potential that can flow from more consistently combining Surrey County Council's leadership, capacity and resources with the University of Surrey's research and innovation strengths, enormous economic contribution to the region and multiple global specialisms.

The University of Surrey has a good track record of working in and for the local community from hosting a space industry round table with the Science Minister; delivering air quality research that has benefitted local communities and schools; and carrying out health research that is helping earlier diagnosis of cancers in Surrey residents. The University also makes a significant positive impact on the Surrey economy – supporting 17,500 jobs in the county and contributing £1.3 billion to the county's economy. (Figures taken from a report by independent economic consultants Biggar Economics).

Other examples of current joint working include the Surrey Climate Commission and One Surrey Growth Board – both projects that are key to the sustainable prosperity of the county, and involving significant contributions from academics at the University of Surrey.

Professor Max Lu, President and Vice Chancellor of the University of Surrey, said:

"The University of Surrey is a global community, with our students, staff and collaborators from all over the world, and our research has tremendous global reach and impact. But we are proudly anchored in Guildford and Surrey, and have a symbiotic relationship with our region and county.

"In particular, we have a long and proud record of collaborating with Surrey County Council and many regional stakeholders. The Civic University Agreement that we are launching today will give us a bold and visionary framework for harnessing our world-leading research to help put Surrey on the world map, to help transform lives in Surrey for the better today, and to work together to build Surrey's future prosperity, to enrich lives and protect the planet."

Cllr Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said:

"The University of Surrey has long been a powerful asset and a trusted partner for the County. This agreement will take that to the next level. Combining our own high ambitions for Surrey with the Universities world-leading research strengths will help us bring the best of tomorrow to Surrey today, and to project Surrey's greatest strengths on a global stage. Our residents, our communities and our economy will be the beneficiaries of this deepened partnership with the research and education powerhouse with which we share our name."

The new Civic University Agreement is part of a national movement to elevate to a strategic level the relationships between universities and the communities in which they are based. The agreement will focus on enhancing life in Surrey through:

- driving sustainable economic growth
- tackling health inequalities
- enabling a greener future
- empowering thriving communities.

University centres of excellence that will contribute to delivery of these priorities include:

- The Institute for Sustainability – which has been founded to be a critical player in the global transition to sustainable living – through research, innovation, partnerships, education and civic engagement
- The People-Centred Artificial Intelligence Institute – which is driving research and innovation that places people at the heart of the future of AI
- The Centre for Sustainability and Wellbeing in the Visitor Economy – focusing on transport, tourism, hospitality and events
- Interprofessional expertise across human and animal health – including the combined strength of the University's School of Veterinary Medicine, School of Biosciences and new School of Medicine
- Surrey Space Centre – which is a key partner with the growing space sector in the region
- 5G/6G Innovation Centre – representing decades of experience at the forefront of high-speed and reliable mobile communications with multiple economic and societal applications.

Today's event is the first step in building closer ties between organisations that share a strong purpose to help society in the local region, and brings together an experienced team from across the University's faculties, schools and institutes, with leaders from all the directorates of Surrey County Council. It is focused on identifying creative opportunities for deeper collaboration, with the potential to deliver transformational change for our community. Other local stakeholders will be invited to join the agreement in the future.

Ewell History Day returns to Bourne Hall

13 September 2023



Bourne Hall in **Ewell** is hosting a celebration of local history on Saturday 16 September. Ewell History Day will take visitors on a journey from the Bronze Age up to World War II.

The public will be able to see blacksmith **Dr James Dilly** cast a bronze axe head, watch as Iron Age folk make offerings to their gods in Bourne Hall lake, witness a gladiator fight, meet Henry VIII, try their hands at some brass rubbing, learn about the Ewell witch and listen to wartime stories from the Hampshire Regiment.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council’s Community and Wellbeing Committee, said, “Last year’s Ewell History Day was sadly cancelled following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, so I am pleased to see it return this year.

“What better way to learn about the interesting and varied history of this area, than to see it come to life before your eyes? It’s sure to be a fun day out for all the family.”

The Programme:

10am	Opens to the public
10.30am	Romans march down Ewell Village from the Grove to Bourne Hall
11am	Mayor opens History Day. Iron Age folk throw gifts in the lake
11.30am	Witchhunter tells the true story of Joan Butts - the Ewell witch
12pm	Fight to the death between a local Iron Age warrior and gladiator
12.30pm	Bronze Age metal smelting
1pm	An audience with Henry VIII
2pm	Children learn a Roman Army drill
2.30pm	Witchhunter tells the true story of Joan Butts - the Ewell witch
3pm	Bronze Age metal smelting
3.30pm	Children learn a Roman Army drill
4pm	An audience with Henry VIII
4.30pm	Fight to the death between a local Iron Age warrior and gladiator
5pm	Finish

Ewell History Day runs from 10am to 5pm, and entry is free.

The Flying Saucer Café will be open for refreshments.

Beckenham Edge Extraordinary Encounter

13 September 2023



Sutton and Epsom 41 - Beckenham 42. It was a case of polar opposites on the opening Saturday for this weekend's combatants as the hosts began the campaign with an away defeat at Reeds whilst the visitors got off the mark with a thrilling 36-31 home win against London Cornish. **Sutton and Epsom** had not had the pleasure of hosting the Kent club since their 28-8 victory in November 2013. The Black and Whites gave debuts to starting prop Callum Gibson whilst utility back Jack Briggs began on the bench. In marked contrast evergreen George London returned to the colours to make his 187th appearance. The match surpassed even the weather in terms of being unexpected and eleven tries later Beckenham won by a solitary point as the scoreboard read 42-41.

The Rugby Lane crowd palavered peacefully onwards from the clubhouse into the unclouded jollity of the afternoon to witness the Class of 2023-4 open their domestic account. The thermometer told of testing temperatures in the 90s and the challenging conditions were certain to be a factor in proceedings. Freddy Bunting kicked off for the hosts. The first opportunity was given to the visitors as Sutton strayed offside to give Lewis Bunton a simple penalty to put Beckenham on the scoreboard, 3-0, in the third minute. Sutton and Epsom replied in kind moments later as Freddy Bunting equalised with a penalty of his own for 3-3. The Bunting boot then set up a great opportunity with a fabulous 50 20 kick. An ensuing quickly taken penalty by Chris Ballard had the Black and Whites under the posts. Will Lloyd went close before it went wide for Gareth O'Brien to jink his way over. Freddy Bunting added the simple conversion for a 10-3 lead.

The next sortie to the Kent 22 resulted in a second Sutton goal. Michael Bennion made a break and Max Russell kept it alive before it was switched to the right. Gareth O'Brien then glided in untouched under the posts from 30 metres for his second try. Freddy Bunting did the necessary for 17-3 and the players enjoyed a much needed official hydration break. With thirsts slaked and suitably revitalised the boys from Balmoral Avenue swept into the home 22 and won a penalty five out. They set up the lineout and though their catch and drive faltered they were awarded another penalty. A quick tap and a powerful burst saw Jamaican international Rimarni Richards score. The conversion drifted wide but Beckenham had reduced the deficit to 8-17. The Black and Whites immediately extended their lead, though Michael Bennion's dummy went unsold, the ball was recycled, George London stooped to take a pass on the half-volley then made light of the attentions of the visitors' defence to relentlessly power on and touch down from 20 metres. Freddy Bunting bisected the uprights and Sutton and Epsom had clear water at 24-8 approaching the half hour mark.

That clear water was to be the high water mark for the hosts as their ascendancy was alarmingly transformed by a stunning Kent comeback. It was not so much a turning of the tide but a tectonic shift of seismic proportions. A careless penalty at the restart gifted Beckenham an opportunity from a 5-metre lineout. They executed their process to perfection as former skipper Liam Markey flopped over. Despite the conversion failing they were on their way back at 13-24. It was the visitors' turn to err at the restart, not only kicking out on the full but also following up by giving away a penalty. Sutton and Epsom opted for the kick to the corner rather than through the uprights but the gamble did not pay dividends. Moments later at the other end the men from Balmoral Avenue were more clinical as they won their lineout and a bullocking run by Rimarni Richards crossed the whitewash. On this occasion Lewis Bunton added the extras for 20-24. As a disbelieving home crowd dropped their remarks into the understanding air there was one more twist, or perhaps dagger to the heart, before the half-time whistle. Dan Hamilton gathered a loose ball in his own half and he sprinted by the grandstand with no one ahead of him. Desperate cover closed him down but a wonderful support run by Lewis Bunton saw the 10 score. He added the conversion and the visitors turned around 27-24 to the good to end a jaw-dropping half of rugby.

It was hard to know if the incarnadine faces of the Sutton players were from the heat or their embarrassment. The Kent team continued the second period where they left off in the first. Within moments Lewis Bunton had added another penalty for a 30-24 lead. From the restart the catch was run back 50 metres and soon followed try number five with a strong finish on the flank by winger Stefan Linton. The touchline conversion failed but Beckenham were 35-24 ahead with 27 unanswered points. At this stage the visitors looked to be favourites to continue their hot streak and run up a cricket score. However, the pendulum swung back in favour of the Black and Whites.

A positive carry by debutant Callum Gibson offered Sutton some respite with a penalty. Captain Bunting steadied the ship and ended the drought to close the gap to 27-35. Better was to come to raise the spirits of the Rugby Lane crowd. A desperate kick and chase by Max Russell led to a 5-metre penalty. Sadly Max Russell showed all the circumspection of the Gadarene swine with the same result as the Biblical beasts as his quick tap gave away possession. Fortunately for Sutton and Epsom they soon got a penalty that reduced Beckenham to 14 men as Mr Duncan Butler-Wheelhouse issued a yellow card to captain Hans Laud-Anderson showing no empathy towards a fellow double-barrelled man. More woe fell upon the

visitors as Ewan McTaggart emerged from a pile of players with a try from the 5-metre lineout to secure an Sutton and Epsom bonus point. Freddy Bunting converted expertly from the touchline to make it a one-point game with Beckenham 35-34 ahead.

It was time for the final official water break and cool heads were certainly at a premium as the game entered the final quarter. Sutton started to play with fluency, the tackling improved, turnovers were being won and the set scrum was secure. The Black and Whites regained the lead with their best team try of the afternoon. Multiple phases had Callum Gibson, Max Russell and Ciaran Mohr make gains and it was left to the vastly experienced George London to force his way over from close-range for his brace. Freddy Bunting once more converted from touch to lead 41-35 leaving Beckenham searching for a goal in the last ten minutes as a try would not suffice.

A spectacular finish ensued as the tension led to errors. Kicks went out on the full, balls were dropped and penalties neutered attacks. Then with the game in time added on the visitors had the chance to kick a penalty into the corner. Could they once again score from a 5-metre lineout? The ball was secured but the drive was held and anxious moments passed until a shrill blast of the whistle. Everyone expected a try but a penalty try was a surprise to those seeking shelter from the sun in the grandstand. Instead of a very challenging conversion from the flank Beckenham had an automatic 7-point score and had regained the lead 42-41. Surely that was the end of the drama.

With noteworthy game management the visiting pack controlled the restart. Slowly and steadily they advanced to the Sutton 22 and the Sutton and Epsom defence dared not concede a penalty but were desperate for a turnover. Unexpectedly Beckenham gave away a penalty and offered the hosts a lifeline. It was advanced by Bunting's boot to halfway. The lineout was secured and the endgame began. The ball went wide and the Kent territory was entered. Then the ultimate drama as Sir awarded the hosts a penalty. It was Captain Bunting who had to go to the well once more and attempt another kick from the touchline. The ball soared over the height of the uprights but inches wide and the final whistle blew. Beckenham had triumphed 42-41 and the Black and Whites had the consolation of two bonus points.

Both teams had moments of dominance but also had periods they would want to forget. It was cruel that the brilliant place-kicking of Freddy Bunting was not rewarded by one last successful strike to add to the previous magnificent seven. The Sutton scrum was a source of strength, Gareth O'Brien sidestepped his way to two tries and veteran George London also doubled up with forceful scores. Equally Beckenham had their standout performers with the powerful carrying of prop Rimarni Richards being rewarded with two tries, Dan Hamilton was central to the comeback and their lineout converted the chances they were provided with remorseless efficiency.

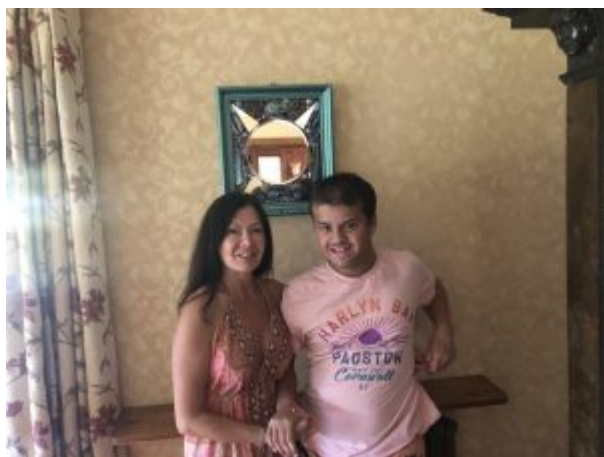
Next Saturday, 16th September, the charabanc will be heading to Geoffrey Knight Fields for a fixture with Old Reigatian. OR have opened their campaign with an impressive 33-7 home win against Sidcup before a 36-26 winning trip to London Cornish in round 2. Meanwhile the Black and Whites will hope it will be third time lucky as they search for their first win.

Sutton and Epsom: Michael Bennion, Max Russell, Ross Parsons, Freddy Bunting ©, Ciaran Mohr, Gareth O'Brien, Chris Ballard, Will Lloyd, Chris Farrell, Callum Gibson, Ewan McTaggart, Josh Glanville, George London, Rob Hegarty and Kean Orchard. Replacements: (all used) Tom Boaden, Jack Howes and Jack Briggs.

Beckenham: Luke Bosch, Stefan Linton, Dan Hamilton, Matt Lovell, Tom Bateman, Lewis Bunton, Ben Murphy, George Baker, Lamar Sinclair, Rimarni Richards, Ciall Kirwan, Josh Hiscott, Liam Markey, Tom Ward, Hans Laud-Anderson. Replacements: (all used) Rob Willden, Olly Stapleton and Sami Suliman.

School transport early term teething problems

13 September 2023



Families have been left without school transport for the start of term despite **Surrey County Council** promising to “learn lessons” after pupils were left stranded last year.

One parent of a 19-year-old with severe learning difficulties said she “stopped mentioning” going back to school to her son once she realised transport probably wouldn't be in place in time for the start of term.

Georgie Morris said her son, Greg, missed the first four days of his school term, but has now had confirmation that he will be able to get to school on Monday (September 11).

She first had transport approved for Greg, who has a placement at a New Malden college which is the nearest suitable place for him, in June.

But having waited through the summer for details to be confirmed she claims she was told the day before Greg was due to go back on September 5 that there was no transport in place.

Having spoken to someone at the county council on Thursday, September 7, Georgie then had Greg's transport confirmed.

Despite some families not having transport sorted for the start of the new term Surrey County Council bosses say "significant improvements" have been made since last year but admitted there were issues with finding providers for a small number of children who require specialist provision due to their needs.

There are also more than 350 applications waiting for travel arrangements, but a council spokesperson explained these were from 544 applications made in August. So far more than 170 have been dealt with, with the remaining ones on track to be assessed within the 30 day timescales.

But she said Greg, who is non-verbal, has severe learning difficulties and global developmental delay, is bored at home, and needs the stimulation school brings.

She said: "I tell him 'It's so many sleeps until school', so he was geared up to go to school. Once I realised this wasn't going to happen, I just stopped mentioning it, we just carried on with the holidays."

She couldn't drive Greg from her Dorking home to the college, saying she doesn't always have access to the car, and it would be too stressful for her. But once she had the transport confirmed, she said she "instantly felt okay".

Georgie told the LDRS: "I'm lucky in the fact that I can chase and I've got the wherewithal to kick up a stink and to get things done, but a lot of these parents don't."

She worried about other parents, some of whom may have additional needs themselves, or might not know where to turn.

While she's sympathetic with staff at the council who have a "very difficult" job to do, she said better accountability and communication were needed.

A county council spokesperson said: "There is a small cohort of children who require specialist provision for high and/or complex medical needs that, due to a lack of suitable providers, are waiting for appropriate arrangements. "We are in direct contact with these families and are actively working with them to find a solution. Measures such as personal travel allowances have been offered in the short-term."

In May, councillors were warned that the county council needed to tackle a £12million overspend on school transport "to avoid adversely impacting services".

A review following issues at the start of the 2022 school year led to 50 recommendations for the authority, as councillors heard that families were turning to food banks in the face of delays and suffering an impact on their mental health.

Councillor **Clare Curran**, cabinet member for education and learning, told a select committee meeting in December she didn't "underestimate" the task at hand, but was "confident" that by this September families wouldn't "suffer the failure" of the 2022 start to the year.

A council spokesperson told the LDRS this week: "Significant improvements have been made regarding the assessment and planning of families' transport arrangements, and addressing the challenges faced previously. We are not currently experiencing any application or travel delivery backlogs, and across the last six months 95% of applications were assessed within our agreed timescales.

"All applications for home to school travel assistance received prior to 31 July were processed, and families had their travel arrangements communicated to them, before the start of the autumn term."

Families with specific complaints and enquiries are urged to call the council's Contact Centre on 0300 200 1004 so it can investigate.

Related reports:

[Surrey's school transport £12M overspend](#)

[School transport failings lead to foodbanks...](#)

[Families 'in limbo' as SCC fails on school transport](#)

Unprovoked attack on man and his dog in Epsom

13 September 2023



On 5th September 40 year old Scott Smith of Tonstall Road, Epsom assaulted another Epsom man in an "unprovoked attack". After the assault, during which the victim fought back in self-defence and Smith "came off worse", Smith kicked the victim's "innocent" small dog with such force that he rendered the pet unconscious.

The incident took place outside and within a local supermarket and the episode was recorded on the shop's CCTV camera.

This led to the prompt arrest of Smith who was brought in custody before the Surrey Magistrates sitting in Guildford on Saturday 9th September.

Smith pleaded guilty to an offence of common assault and an offence of causing unnecessary suffering to an animal.

The presiding magistrate stated the offences were so serious the decision on sentence would be reached on another day when all “sentencing options” would be considered.

Council solve Scots Pine tree puzzle

13 September 2023



The Planning Committee Meeting, held at Epsom Town Hall on 7 September 2023 centred around two key topics: a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) concerning a Scots Pine tree in Grafton Road and the modification of approved plans for a construction project in Boleyn Avenue. After a brief discussion, two motions were passed.

Regarding the Scots Pine tree TPO, a historical mapping error had inaccurately placed the tree. Originally, it was marked as if it were located in the front garden of No. 10, but it was listed under the address of No. 8 in the TPO schedule. To rectify this, it was recommended to issue a new TPO, providing temporary protection to the tree. The Planning Development and Enforcement officer presented the motion and explained the TPO application procedure, highlighting the historical nature of the error.

Three key recommendations emerged:

1. Confirmation of Tree Preservation Order No. 476A without modification
2. Revocation of Tree Preservation Order No. 476.
3. Modification of Tree Preservation Order No. 6 to remove the reference to Pine T17.

However, some debate ensued as both the tree owner and the neighbour raised concerns. Their primary worries included the tree’s height, branches falling during strong winds, and damage to the pavement caused by birds. Additionally, the tree owner expressed frustration over the extended duration of their application and objection to the TPO.

During the meeting, several councillors voiced concerns about potential limitations on future actions concerning the tree if the TPO application succeeded. Councillor **Julian Freeman** (LibDem College) questioned the evaluation system and its impact on daylight where the trees were located, while Councillor **Peter O’Donovan** (RA Ewell Court) expressed concerns about the tree’s size and height and its potential impact on nearby residents and properties.

On the other hand, Councillor **Neil Dallen** (RA Town) emphasised that the motion primarily aimed to correct documentation. He clarified, “As I understand, for the TPO to be corrected and put in the right place. If the tree gets too big or branches start falling off, then even though it’s got a TPO, they can apply to prune the tree or do whatever’s needed. It’s not causing any damage to property.” The motion passed with one abstention.

The second topic discussed was the modification of approved plans for a construction project at 15 Boleyn Avenue. This project involved a two-story, two-bedroom dwelling with additional garage space. After a brief presentation by the officer and clarifications by Councillor **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington), the motion received unanimous approval.

Healthy future for Epsom’s restored White House

13 September 2023



The **White House**, located at 16 Waterloo Road, **Epsom**, nestled between Blacks Burgers and Nandos, is a Grade II listed building that dates back to the early 1700s. Recently, it has undergone a beautiful restoration in preparation for an exciting new phase in its rich history.



The new owner has successfully preserved the building's charm and character, while modernizing its internal features to create comfortable and contemporary treatment and therapy spaces. The White House is transformed into a Health and Wellness Centre, where professionals with various skills can utilize rooms once occupied by two historically significant individuals, as confirmed by the plaque on the building's front, visible from the pathway.

Around 1800, Prince George and Mrs. Fitzherbert resided in the same building now known as The White House. However, the question arises: What became of Princess Caroline, the woman Prince George married just five years earlier, and why is her name absent from the plaque?

While King George III led a scandal-free life, the same cannot be said for his son, Prince George, who lived an extravagant lifestyle characterized by heavy drinking and entertaining mistresses. Burdened by mounting debts, Prince George sought financial assistance from his father, who agreed to help him under the condition that Prince George marry his cousin, Princess Caroline of Brunswick.



Although Prince George had previously secretly married the twice-widowed Maria Anne Fitzherbert, this marriage was invalid because King George III had not consented to it. On April 8, 1795, Prince George married Princess Caroline at the Chapel Royal, St. James's Palace. However, the couple proved incompatible despite Caroline giving birth to Princess Charlotte, George's only legitimate child, just nine months after their wedding ceremony.

Upon their first meeting, Prince George called for a glass of brandy, while Princess Caroline commented on how much thinner and more handsome George appeared in the portrait she had seen of him. Prince George found his wife unattractive and "unhygienic" and could not bear to have intimate relations with her (he ensured he was drunk on the night of their wedding). Princess Caroline, on the other hand, was beloved by the public, who generally despised her husband, "the Prince of Pleasure," due to his continuous overindulgence and accumulating debts.

On January 29, 1820, George ascended to the throne as King of the United Kingdom and Hanover, with Caroline becoming Queen Consort in name. George sought a divorce from Caroline but couldn't obtain one due to the weak evidence against her. This was partly because Caroline was held in high regard by the public, who viewed George's conduct as immoral.

Caroline was barred from attending King George IV's coronation on July 19, 1821, and subsequently fell ill in London. Tragically, she passed away three weeks after the coronation she had not been allowed to attend. Her funeral procession moved slowly through London en route to Brunswick, where she was laid to rest. This allowed George to continue his romantic attachment to Maria Fitzherbert and entertain other mistresses.



The brass medallion, which I purchased a few years ago at **Oxfam in Epsom High Street**, likely belonged to one of Queen Caroline's supporters before her death. It resembles a miniature portrait, much like the one of Prince George shown above. "Caroline Queen of England" is inscribed around the perimeter of the medallion, featuring a bust of King George IV's lawful wife.

The brass medallion serves as a poignant reminder of how poorly Queen Caroline was treated by her husband, King George IV, and underscores the ongoing need to ensure that women from all cultures and walks of life are shown respect and treated fairly in today's modern society.