



Passion in the heart of Epsom

Epsom Chamber Choir performed “**Music for Passiontide**” in Epsom’s **St Martin’s Church** on Saturday 25th March in a varied programme of singing and playing. Passiontide is a name for the last two weeks of Lent, and the repertoire for the concert, which was directed by guest conductor **Jack Apperley**, had been carefully chosen to reflect the emotions and suffering of this time.

The central work was **Dieterich Buxtehude**’s *Membra Jesu Nostri*, a Passion-meditation for Holy Week, which consists of a series of seven cantatas. On this occasion, the cantatas were performed over the course of the evening, interspersed with other a cappella anthems and motets.

For the Buxtehude, the choir was joined by the **Chamberlain Ensemble**, an early music group of 9 members, including violins, a violone (a large viol), viols, theorbo and organ, along with four excellent soloists (Lily Platts – soprano, Pete Dockrill – alto, Dominic Edwards – tenor, and Fionn Ó hAlmhain – bass). I was particularly moved by Lily’s aria in the third cantata, “Ad manus” (to the hands) and I very much enjoyed the well blended trios with alto, tenor and bass in the later cantatas.

The accompaniment by the Chamberlain Ensemble enhanced the variety of moods, often reflective and sombre but sometimes uplifting, and the sound became even more intense when 5 viols joined in the sixth cantata for orchestra and soloists alone. Each member of the ensemble added to the texture and brought out the beauty and sensitivity in the music. An extra special mention needs to be made here to one of the viol players, **Helen Williams**, who is also a long-standing member of the Chamber Choir.





But what of the **Epsom Chamber Choir** themselves? They obviously knew all the music very well and maintained good contact with the audience throughout. Dynamics, diction and storytelling were beautiful and well executed, and the blend and balance between the voice parts (as many as 9 in **Paul Mealor's** Ubi Caritas) was clearly heard.

The anthems and motets were all unaccompanied and ranged from the 16th to the 21st centuries. I had two particular favourites. To begin the second half of the concert, the choir processed to the back of the church, formed a semi-circle using the full width of the building, and sang **Antonio Lotti's** 8-part Crucifixus (written around 1718). The sound was fuller in this configuration, as if surround sound had been switched on... The

suspensions were spine tingling, and the emotional intensity exceptionally powerful representing the agonies of the Crucifixion. You could have heard a pin drop at the end.

My other favourite was Crux Fidelis, (Faithful Cross) with music by **Sarah MacDonald** (born in 1968) and set to words written by **Emilia Lanier** (1569 – 1645) and **Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886). The piece is not as complex from a musical point of view as some of the others we heard, but you could tell that the choir were fully engaged in delivering its message, with the meditative refrain of "Crux Fidelis" underpinning the excellent storytelling.

Jack Apperley, the Guest Conductor for this concert was in fine form, giving clear direction throughout. His energy, his explanations of the music in between items, and his obvious enjoyment of the performances, completed the experience for everyone.

Anne Ridge

Turn up to turn downturn in turnout!

In an exclusive for Epsom and Ewell Times we report on voter turnout in the last four Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Elections. 2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. The May 2015 Council election was held on the same day as the UK Parliamentary General Election and the turnout for the local election was much higher as a result. The next election in Epsom and Ewell will be held on Thursday 4th May.

Excluding the 61% 2015 turnout the average turnout across the Borough between 2007 and 2019 was 38.19% of the electorate, with the lowest turnout last time in 2019 with just 32.83%.

Consistently the Wards with the lowest turnouts have been Ruxley, Court and Town. Ruxley having the lowest since 2007 of just 25.23% in 2019.

The highest turnouts are in the richer wards of Woodcote, College and Stamford. Though these wards are also more closely contested and that can explain their higher turnouts as well. The highest recorded since 2007 being College Ward in 2011 with just over 59%. (Again the General Election year of 2015 excluded.)

However, Court Ward is also one of the top three contested Wards in the Borough and that is why it features in the Epsom and Ewell Hustings for three Wards that takes place on 26th April. [CLICK HERE](#) for details.

Will the requirement for photo ID see a further decline in voter turnout in Epsom and Ewell?

Related reports:

Worrying about voter ID law

No photo – no vote!

[Click HERE](#) for the full analysis.

Photograph © Andrew Dunn,



Worrying about voter ID law

Voter disenfranchisement and how to overcome it was discussed at **Reigate and Banstead Borough Council** Thursday 30th March as the authority wound up its business ahead of the May 4 elections.

The country goes to the polls in a little over a month amid the “biggest change to the electoral process in decades” as people will be required to present valid photo identification before casting their ballot.

Councillor **Ruth Ritter**, during questions from members at the March 30 full council meeting, asked what measures were in place to feed back on its impact on turnout.

She said: “At a time when voter turnout for local elections in Reigate and Banstead Borough Council was as low as 29 per cent in one ward last year and voters need to be encouraged to partake in democracy. Voter ID is the biggest change to the electoral process in decades, and it will affect voters in polling stations at the upcoming elections on May 4. It is therefore important that we have assurances that voters aren’t being disenfranchised by this significant change.

“With that in mind, will the returning officer be gathering data on how many people are unable to vote at polling stations due to not having appropriate ID so that this data can be fed back to national government?”

Last time the average turnout for the borough was 35 percent two power cent higher than the national leverage last year.

Responding was **Mari Roberts-Wood**, managing director at Reigate Borough Council whose responsibilities include increasing participation in elections.

She spoke of the “extensive communications about the massive changes to electoral law” and how the council had been targeting hard-to-reach groups such as younger voters and the elderly.

Ms Roberts-Wood said: “We can always do more and should do more and with the introduction of voter ID we need to do more than ever.”

Councils, she said, would also be collecting data from polling stations about the impact of the legislation and sending that to the electoral commission – who will be collecting the data centrally.

A report on its impact is expected to be published in November this year.

She said: “This data will include the number of voters who are essentially refused a ballot paper due to suspected forgery or impersonation, or they failed to answer the statutory required questions, they showed the wrong ID – there are 23 different types of ID that you can show on May 4. For those who don’t have one of those or don’t have any ID at all we will be collecting that data. Also recording those asked to show their ID in private and those who are refused a ballot paper but returned with a valid ID. We’re trying to capture as much as possible.”

She added that it was an “opportunity to collect a lot of data to understand the impact of these changes and hopefully increase our reach coming forward”.

Reigate and Banstead Council has a voter ID section on its website that people can use to ensure they can vote on May 4.

Related reports:

No photo – no vote!

Image credit: Crown Copyright fair use and DVLA CC BY-SA 3.0

Jail for prolific Epsom burglar who preyed on vulnerable women

Thanks to the determination of Surrey officers, a prolific burglar from Epsom has found himself sentenced to over three years behind bars.

Frank Smith, 27, from Rutland Close was sentenced at Guildford Crown Court on Friday (17 March), after he pleaded guilty to 19 offences over the last year making the lives of many in the borough of Epsom and Ewell a misery.



Victims spoke about being left “traumatised and anxious” after being targeted by Smith, with one saying: “I should feel safe in my home and not have to worry about things like I do, because of him”.

Another victim described how she had been “manipulated” by Smith and said it was “hard to trust people after what he did”.

A woman whose house was burgled by Smith said: “It is very difficult to put across in words how devastating it has been for me, and my family, to suffer such a violation of our home, peace of mind and family life.

“Home should be a safe and comforting place, but since the burglary, both of my children are deeply afraid to be in the house. Our home was utterly ransacked. My children’s belongings were strewn on the floor, my daughter’s toys and horse figures were left broken and they had even broken into her money box.”

In this series of offences, which started in May 2022, Smith pleaded guilty to a burglary at Buildbase in Epsom, where he stole tools totalling £4,400.

That same month he stole a black Peugeot 3008 from outside a takeaway while the owner was inside the restaurant. This was followed by the theft of a VW van from the forecourt of a petrol station while its owner was in the garage paying for fuel. He later burgled the Co-Op store on Chessington Road, Epsom managing to get into the safe in the staff room and taking several hundred pounds.

In June 2022, whilst on bail under investigation for these offences, Smith saw a woman taking out cash from a Sainsbury’s in Epsom. He then followed her outside and back to her car. She described how Smith ran past her and snatched her bag out of her trolley whilst she was unloading shopping into the boot. The cost to the victim was estimated to be around £1,000 as she had to change the locks to her home, order replacement car keys and get a new phone. Her bank cards were then used shortly after to make two purchases totalling just under £60. Smith was caught on CCTV getting lottery scratch cards and making contactless payments, while holding the cash he had taken from her.

Smith then moved on to targeting private homes. After going out for the day, an elderly woman returned home to find a whole drawer missing from her dresser which had contained jewellery including a gold watch, two bracelets and several pairs of earrings with a total value of around £4,000. Smith was caught on CCTV carrying the drawer with its contents partly visible.

In July 2022, Smith approached an 83-year-old woman as she was being dropped home, telling her that she had a leaking gutter and offering to fix it. The victim described how he initially quoted £15 but after a brief amount of work, claimed he’d had to replace the rubber seals and the cost would now be £135. When the victim’s son later checked the guttering, he found that no work had been done. Smith later returned to the property via a side gate before climbing in her front bedroom window and taking her purse.

In September 2022, Smith knocked on the door of a property in Epsom and told the 90-year-old occupant she had a rat problem in her back garden. The victim went through the house to the garden followed by Smith. Later she checked her handbag and found that her wallet and purse were missing. She later said Smith had been constantly pestering her to do guttering or other jobs around her home. Following this burglary, Smith used the victim’s card on six occasions making contactless payments.

A further nine offences committed by Smith were also taken into consideration, including four burglaries, three thefts of motor vehicles, one offence of fraud by false representation and one theft of a pedal cycle.

Detective Constable Sam Wightman, who led the investigation, said: “Smith is a serial offender and over time, escalated from opportunistic acquisitive crime, to targeted burglaries and fraud – targeting primarily elderly women. He has caused untold distress to his victims leaving them feeling unsafe in their own homes and costing them thousands because of the way he preyed on their vulnerabilities. This case has involved a lot of hard work and tenacity from officers across several units to track down the evidence needed to link these offences to one person and, because of this work, Smith is now where he deserves to be – behind bars.”

The above is reprinted from Surrey Police website with permission. It is not a court reporter’s report.

A different kind of cutting in Surrey’s NHS?

Robots will be performing more operations, including general surgery and gynaecology at a Surrey NHS hospital trust seeking to introduce “significant savings”, a board meeting heard.



The **Surrey and Sussex NHS trust** held its much delayed annual general meeting on Thursday, March 30, where attendees heard from its chairperson, chief executive, and head of finance.

The afternoon meeting, which board members suggested may have led to its lower than usual attendance, was broken into three sections: a review of the year, a run through of its financial health, and questions from the floor.

Chairperson Richard Shaw led off proceedings explaining the AGM should have taken place in autumn last year but was delayed because of the late filing of its 2021/22 audited accounts.

Chief executive **Angela Stevenson** told the meeting that the 2021/22 year was heavily influenced by the “significant impact” of covid with “very tired” staff “having to work under pressure”. This created a backlog the trust was only beginning to get back under control.

She said: “Staff were working with a disease that we didn’t know how to treat. We had high staff absences due to covid or due to family members having covid. Since then we’ve really got to grips with the backlog. We started to work through but at the start of 2022 these numbers were at their peak.”

Post pandemic, she said, there was a huge increase in patients seeking primary care compounded by the increase in “baseline complexity” as cases were left untreated during the pandemic.”

Ms Stevenson praised the trust for **delivering robotic surgery** for the first time and that it would be rolled out further to include general surgery and gynaecology services. They will also be investing in services with a new MRI department on the horizon – including new CT scanners at East Surrey and Crawley hospitals.

The trust also plans to work in partnership with other groups to better manage the health of the population rather than solely focus on its role as an acute hospital.

On finances, the meeting heard how its deficit continues to grow – even not including the covid years. It expects to run at a £26.5m deficit for 2022/23. This will be the first time the trust has run at a deficit since at least 2013/14 as spending pushes towards £400m a year.

Chief finance officer **Paul Simpson** said this could be partly attributed to an increase in staff costs. The hospital expects to take on an extra 130 new nurses. He said: “Now we have to recover the growth in costs that has happened and now we are (looking at) a significant savings plan.”

They were, however, quick to say “there should be no reason why we accept any reductions in quality of (care) for patients and that before any cuts were made there would be full impact assessments on cost improvement plans.”

Image: Nimur at the English-language Wikipedia CC BY-SA 3.0

Surrey’s leader’s life pledge for brain tumour research

Surrey County Council’s leader said his focus “for the rest of his life” will be fulfilling a promise made to his daughter before she died to fundraise for brain tumour research.

Emily Oliver was 21 when she died, 18 months after being diagnosed with a diffuse midline glioma, and after seeking medical advice “from across the world”.

Her father, county council leader Councillor **Tim Oliver**, said the fund the family set up for her 21st birthday was now nearing £150,000 but vowed to continue to raise awareness and money.

He told the LDRS: “We promised Emily that we would do all that we could. We promised her that we would fundraise for what she wanted, specific research into her type of high grade glioblastoma. Hers was a very, very rare form.

“That is our focus and that will be our focus for the rest of our lives, to raise as much as we can and to find a research team that will look at predominantly her type [of brain tumour].”

Cllr Oliver said brain tumours didn’t get the level of attention or funding as other types of cancer, because the number of cases was not as high, but said they were the biggest cause of cancer death for under 40s.

He said he and his wife, Debi, hoped to find a specific research project in the near future to give the money to. “It’s really important to us that we continue to keep that alive and deliver on that promise to her,” he added.



The council leader also has his sights set on creating a Surrey-wide bereavement service and has been having conversations about it with the chief executive at Surrey Heartlands and Surrey hospices.

He said “pulling together” the different organisations that offer support for both before and after death would help people know where to turn.

Cllr Oliver added: “I think that would be a great thing for people to be able to know where to go.” He also praised the work of the **Brain Tumour Charity** and the support they give to families on what their journey may look like and understanding what their diagnosis actually meant.

He will take part in the **Princess Alice Hospice’s** “Talk the Walk” event in April which aims to get men, in particular, to talk about bereavement.

Debi said: “The pain of her loss is with us every minute of every day, but Emily was passionate about fundraising to find a cure for brain tumours, and I absolutely know she would be really pleased that what she had started is being continued.”

Cllr Oliver also called on the government to deliver on its promise of delivering £40million for research into brain tumours.

An inquiry by the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Brain Tumours** was launched in 2021, and said that as of January 25 2023, just £15 million had been awarded since June 2018.

For advice and support from the Brain Tumour Charity, you can call its Support and Info Line on 0808 800 0004 or go to the website at: <https://www.thebraintumourcharity.org/>

Image Tim Oliver credit Surrey Live

Goalless draw a relief from 4 goal defeats for both sides.

Mile Oak 0-0 Epsom & Ewell. Southern Combination League – Division One. Wednesday 29th March.

On Wednesday evening two teams came together, both low on confidence and nursing 5-1 defeats from the previous Saturday, and they battled each other to a standstill with a competitive, but goalless draw.

I asked in my Arundel report just exactly who is in charge and we got our answer a couple of hours before the match as it was advised that our newly appointed Director of Football Anthony Jupp had left the club. In addition, Assistant Manager Matt Chapman was no longer in charge, but was still in the dugout while Vice-Chairman Barry Gartell took over again as Manager. Some may recall him having a successful stint following the dismissal of Sam Morgan in August of 2021, although these were different circumstances, as last time we were sitting near the foot of the table. The club finally advised that it was “still looking for a new long-term Manager” which tells me that they are not looking to advertise the position, or you would think they’d have said so!

On a heavy pitch we finally managed to get the match underway at the fourth time of asking, following three previous postponements, and as usual we had changes to our line up. Gartell decided that the midfield needed changing up, so club Captain Ryan Smith and Nick Wilson started on the bench, having been replaced by Rory Edwards who made his first start for the club, while Jaan Stanley came back in on the left wing in what appeared to be a slightly different formation with Athan Smith-Joseph still absent. At the back Chris Boulter and Alex Penfold came back into the line up in place of the absent Kevin Moreno-Gomez and Oliver Thompson, both of whom had failed to complete the match at Arundel.

We started brightly enough and had the majority of the possession in the first half. An early Penfold cross was met by a Jamie Byatt header, but it was a tough chance and he was unable to get the ball on target. The ball stayed mainly in the Mile Oak half as the predicted heavy rain began to come down, sheeting across the ground and the home side then had a couple of chances, firstly when a free kick was headed over from close range, but then in the 25th minute when a right wing cross was met by the head of Zak Kladis who directed his header back across goal. Tom Theobald made a great diving save to divert the ball on to the post and then as it bounced back towards him, he clawed the ball away before it crossed the line. It was a fantastic save and one that ultimately would earn us a point.

Gavin Quintyne saw his shot deflected wide for a corner and Jaevon Dyer produced a low shot that was well saved by the foot of Aaron Stenning in the Oak goal before he had to be alert to parry a Stanley free kick to safety. Stenning also had a slice of luck as



the pitch bobbled on him and he produced an air shot, just getting back in time to save a corner. As the half ended Quintyne was only just over the bar from twenty yards, so you could argue that it was a fairly respectable first half from an Epsom perspective as the teams went for their half time break.

Regrettably the second half was nowhere near as interesting from an Epsom point of view. Mile Oak had a header at goal in the early stages which was deflected over and Theobald then had to make a low save on the hour mark. He had a lucky escape in the 66th minute when he came out to clear a ball near the edge of the penalty area but missed it. Fortunately we had defensive cover.

For our part, we seemed to be restricted to sending long balls up to Byatt, who tried his best with the limited service he had. In the 68th minute a nice one-two with Lewis Pearch gave him a shooting opportunity, but he dragged his shot beyond the far post from twelve yards and our best chance of the night had gone.

As so often happens with tight encounters, a little bit of niggles started to enter the contest and after Kladis had been fouled, he then clattered into Gideon Acheampong who reacted; both players earning yellow cards for their trouble, following the obligatory player scuffle. However, the game was beginning to deteriorate by this stage and our threats were becoming less and less. Dyer and Stanley became non-factors on the wings, although Dyer nearly pulled a moment of magic out in the 86th minute with a good run and powerful strike that missed the far post by inches.

In truth though we were beginning to lose the game in midfield as the home side kept pushing us back and it did seem odd that on such a heavy surface we waited until the 88th minute before making a substitution. We appeared to be crying out for fresh legs in the middle of the park, yet with two players that could do just that job on the bench, Wilson would only get on in the fifth minute of injury time, while Smith wouldn't take the field at all. We did nearly pinch a winner when a long throw bounced up, but I don't think Byatt expected the ball to reach him and he only managed to get the faintest of glances to the ball literally two yards out, which Stenning still caught anyway.

In reality the longer this game went on, the more it looked like Mile Oak would pinch the win, but ultimately neither team really did enough to deserve all three points and we had to settle for the goalless draw.

These dropped points mean that the opportunity to finish in second place is now no longer exclusively in our hands, with both Wick and Godalming Town now three points behind us and holding a game in hand. Godalming also now have a better goal difference than us and are clearly in a better run of form, although they have a tough finishing schedule so there is still hope if we can win our final four fixtures. Who do we face this Saturday? It's Mile Oak again!!

Epsom & Ewell: Tom Theobald, Gideon Acheampong, Alex Penfold, Rory Edwards, Chris Boulter, Dylan Merchant, Jaevon Dyer, Gavin Quintyne, Jamie Byatt, Lewis Pearch, Jaan Stanley

Subs: Musa Beegun for Pearch (88), George Owusu for Stanley (91), Nick Wilson for Edwards (95)

Pothole payouts and repairs penalise Councillor projects?

Surrey County Council has spent more than £800,000 in pothole compensation payouts in the last five years but it hopes front-loading the road maintenance budget will help end the broken-road scourge.

In that time it repaired about 221,456 potholes along its rundown road network, at an average of 121 per day. It was also announced that the Government was to give the county £3million to tackle the problem but some say this is "just a drop in the ocean" compared with how much the road budget falls in future years.

County hall's finances this year include a capital fund of £69.8million for highways maintenance as part of a front-loaded £188m that was announced in February.

That is set to fall back to £29.5m a year - for the next four years - much more in line with the spending under its previous highways strategy which has led to the roads we have today.

It was also announced that individual councillor allowances of £100,000 to spend in their divisions would go, meaning any individual projects earmarked by members can not go ahead.

If highway's can not be maintained, the opposition leader at Surrey County Council warned, then the roads will fall into further disrepair and the number of potholes, and motorists insurance claims, will rocket.



Councillor **Will Forster** said: "The cut to is to the road maintenance budget, this will mean the road surfaces will get worse. The cut is notable in the next financial year 24/25 and makes the £3m to repair the potholes from the Government look like a drop in the ocean."

In 2018, Surrey County Council paid out £399,189 in compensation payments for claims relating to potholes – on both carriage and footway.

This declined to £135,949 in 2019 and was followed by two years where people were off the roads during the pandemic £83,415 and £79,364 in 2020 and 2021 – before climbing again as roads got busier in 2022 to £118,553.

These figures, the council said, relate to both property damage and personal injury with the "best endeavours" made to only include compensation payouts, however, "some figures may also include elements of legal costs and disbursements."

A spokesperson for Surrey County Council said the road maintenance, capital, budget agreed by council in February totalled £188m for the next five years.

They added that the budget was front loaded, because work had been accelerated in order to realise the benefits sooner.

Image: Potholes in Surrey (Surrey Ad)

Related reports:

On the Hunt for pothole repairs

Don't blame us for potholes say Surrey's highway authority.

Going potty about pot-holes?

The Hills Are Alive With the Sound of Drilling... ?

The owners of a Surrey oil field have signed an agreement to "deliver increased production and revenues" that will allow it to focus on its Dunsfold site.

Environmental campaigners, however, are still holding out hope the Supreme Court stops the drilling.

Uk Oil & Gas (UKOG) announced to shareholders that it was to "farm out" production at **Horse Hill** to the US-based **Pennpetro Energy**.

The Texas firm is to takeover 12 kilometres at the site, just north of Gatwick Airport, at a maximum cost of £4.6m.

Announcing the tie up **Stephen Sanderson** UKOG's chief executive said: "This mutually advantageous transaction will inject new activity into Horse Hill, aiming squarely to deliver increased production and revenues from the oil field.

"The farmout enables UKOG to move this asset forwards without the need to raise capital, enabling our resources to be firmly focussed upon the appraisal and development of the Loxley gas discovery, our most material petroleum asset. We look forward to a close working relationship with Pennpetro and a mutually successful future at Horse Hill."

UKOG refers to its holdings at Dunsfold as its Loxley site and hopes to drill for £123 million of oil near the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – pending its own High Court review.

Environmental campaigners who have been fighting against oil drilling at Horse Hill are still confident that the new company's involvement will not change things materially.

In June the **Supreme Court** will sit for a legal challenge against **Surrey County Council's** 2019 decision to grant planning for the four extra wells at Horse Hill. The same year the county also declared a climate emergency.

The application will go before the UK's highest court after three judges were split in their findings – that the county council's decision to grant permission for 25 years of oil drilling and production was lawful.

According to UKOG the Horse Hill site has so far produced about 185,000 barrels of with approximately 1.362 million barrels still available.



Redhill climate campaigner Sarah Finch at Horse Hill rally 5 Nov 2021. Credit Denise Laura Baker.

Campaigner **Sarah Finch** of Redhill argues that the permission is out of touch amid the global climate crisis, Sarah Finch said: “We are taking legal action that is going through the Supreme Court in June.

“Currently the planning is subject to a legal challenge. There is still a possibility that the Supreme Court will not give it the go ahead. There has been low level production for a while there even though they got permission for expansion in 2019. I don’t think this new company’s involvement will change anything.”

Sarah started the campaign against the drill site on climate impact grounds -not just from the impact the drilling would have in the immediate area but the wider overall effect from burning the collected oil.

She added: “It will take us away from keeping climate change within limits. Horse Hill will just make hitting those targets more difficult. I’ve been concerned about climate change for a very long time and when a new oil well was proposed near my home I was horrified and we really needed to stop it going ahead. And it’s not just me, lots of residents have been involved. There have been a series of planning applications for the site but these four new wells were agreed in 2019, such a huge ramp up. That is why I decided it needed a legal campaign.”

The Supreme Court is due to sit on June 21 after the Court of Appeal reached a split decision.

Surrey County’s Cathedral citadel conserved...

The “fundamental specialness” of Guildford and its cathedral have been preserved after plans to build 124 homes next to the historic site were refused.

Guildford Borough Council’s planning committee met on Wednesday, March 29, and heard a “really definitive” 25 minute officer’s report that outlined the scheme.

The cathedral, along with developer Vivid Homes, wanted to demolish the existing staff housing and create 124 homes in a mix of flats and housing – 54 of which would be affordable properties – on undeveloped woodland.

The cathedral said it was selling land surrounding its Grade II listed site to create an endowment fund to pay for maintenance costs but during the presentation, the public heard that cash from this sale would only last five years. When combined with a separate sale, planners said, this would only raise 23 per cent of the budgeted maintenance costs.

Top image: The 124 new homes would be built in the area surrounding the cathedral (Image: Grahame Larter)

Officers at the council recommended refusing the plans of a host of reasons including its harm to the the setting of heritage assets, “visual prominence of the apartment blocks” and the impact on the “green collar” forming part of the “landmark silhouette”.

The plans attracted 286 letters of objection raising issues such as over development, a lack of details on a wider masterplan, and



harm to the heritage assets.



Indicative Cgi Of Planning Application For Homes Near Guildford Cathedral. (Image: VIVID Homes)

Councillor **Will Salmon** said: “We’ve been looking at it this for a number of years and there’s definitely been some improvements made in the application over those years particularly on issues like sustainability. The percentage of affordable housing is also admirable here. My overall feeling is it would have to be somewhere else.

Fundamentally this is not the location for this scheme. My concern is the scale, the whole setting, it’s the openness and semi-wild spaces that you can really appreciate as part of the community, that’s the green collar that we see from all sorts of distances. That is the sense that I can certainly feel coming from the many representations.

“The parkland provides very special setting with different short and long views of the cathedral and it provides a sense of proportion which is really essential for a building as big as the cathedral and I think a lot of that would be lost with the high density scheme. Overall my feeling is very much that this is a heritage asset that must be protected. I do worry that the over development here would actually risk the fundamental specialness of the cathedral.”

His concerns were echoed by both Cllrs **Chris Blow** and **Angela Gunning** among others as the chamber united almost unanimously in its opposition to the plans.

The only exception was Cllr **Marsha Moseley** who did not speak on the application but abstained from voting.

A spokesperson for the **Friends of Stag Hill** group which has been campaigning against the application, said: “We would like to thank the **Guildford Borough Council** planning officer for her care and attention to what must at times have been a difficult task, and the committee for looking out for the interests of Guildford.

“Friends of Stag Hill will wait to see the cathedral’s reaction to this second refusal, but would hope that the cathedral now pauses and realises the damaging nature of their proposals, both for the cathedral and the community. The community has now been fighting with the cathedral over the development plans for over seven years, and it is time to accept that developing the land is not an appropriate way to raise funds for the cathedral.

“They have put the local community through significant distress over the last 7.5 years.”

The Grade II-listed cathedral was designed by **Sir Edward Maufe** and work began at the site 1936. This was interrupted by the Second World War and eventually finished through a fund-raising campaign.

The cathedral was consecrated on May 17, 1961.



Related reports:

Will Cathedral repairs threaten Canadian WW1 memorial?