



Surrey Uni studies the climate friendly way to grow our lettuces

17 September 2025



Vertical farming has been hailed as a futuristic answer to Britain's food security challenges - but a new study led by the University of Surrey suggests the picture is more complicated.

The research, published in *Food and Energy Security*, found that while vertical farms can deliver extraordinary crop yields and use far less water than traditional fields, their carbon footprint still exceeds that of soil-based farming.

What is vertical farming?

Unlike conventional agriculture, vertical farms grow crops indoors, often in stacked trays under carefully controlled light, temperature and humidity. Plants are usually grown without soil, using hydroponic or aeroponic systems that deliver nutrients directly to their roots. This means vertical farms can operate in cities, warehouses, or disused buildings - and, crucially, they are not dependent on weather or seasons.

Proponents argue that this approach could free up farmland for nature, cut transport emissions by producing food closer to consumers, and help guarantee supplies as climate change disrupts traditional growing regions.

The Surrey-led study

The University of Surrey team compared lettuce grown in a commercial UK vertical farm with lettuce from two UK field farms - one on mineral soil and one on peat - and with Spanish farms, which supply around 95% of Britain's winter lettuce.

They found that vertical farms can produce more than 20 times the yield of field farms: around 97 kilograms of lettuce per square metre, compared with just 3.3 kilograms outdoors. Water use is also dramatically lower, at 0.9 m³/kg compared with up to 7.3 m³/kg in Spain.

But the greenhouse gas emissions are still higher. Even when powered by renewable energy, vertically farmed lettuce produced about 0.93 kg of greenhouse gases per kilogram, compared with 0.57 kg from UK field farms.

Energy and materials the key hurdles

Much of the carbon burden comes from the heavy energy demands of lighting and climate control, as well as the jute fibre plugs used to support plant roots. Researchers estimate that swapping these for alternatives such as coconut coir could cut the land footprint of vertical farms by more than 95%.

Michael Gargaro, Postgraduate Researcher at Surrey's Centre for Environment and Sustainability and lead author of the study, said:

"Vertical farming has the potential to transform food security in the UK, particularly as climate change and seasonal drought place growing pressure on traditional agriculture. Our research shows that while the technology can bring far higher yields and reduce water use, it currently comes with a higher carbon cost. The challenge now is to make vertical farming more energy-efficient and better integrated with renewable systems, so that it can become a truly sustainable solution."

Dr Zoe M Harris, Director of the Centre and Co-Director of the Institute for Sustainability, added:

"With around 95 per cent of lettuce imported from Spain during the winter months, advances in vertical farming make it possible to secure a year-round supply of fresh produce while freeing up land for restoration. But to viably compete with field farming, vertical farms must cut their energy use and rethink the materials they rely on."

Can vertical farms really feed the UK?

The study concludes that vertical farms are not yet the most sustainable option for lettuce. But with further innovation - particularly in energy efficiency and material use - they could become an essential part of Britain's food system. For now, they remain a promising supplement to, rather than a replacement for, traditional farming.

The research was funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

Big improvements required of Epsom care home

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An Epsom care home has been told it needs to make big improvements after inspectors found residents were being left to lead "very isolated lives."

Fir Trees House, a residential home in Epsom for up to seven adults with learning disabilities, was inspected between October 2024 and July this year following concerns about the quality of care and facilities. At the time of the assessment, only four people were living there - most with long-term mental health conditions and several being assessed for autism.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) said the home was "not always safe" and "not well-led," warning that some residents were at risk of harm. Inspectors branded the care homes as 'requiring improvement' in key areas.

Inspectors said the service "wasn't always meeting" standards set out under national guidance on supporting people with learning disabilities and autism. In particular, they found staff often focused on tasks rather than encouraging residents to live more fulfilled, independent lives.

One resident told inspectors they were happy at the home, but others described their care as "unsympathetic" and even disrespectful. One person told inspectors: "They went on to recall their first day at the service, saying, "Staff laughed at me as I tried to get up the stairs, I felt very unwell. I had to rest on the stairs, I thought I was going to lose consciousness, my head was spinning and they were laughing."

The CQC also criticised the service for failing to learn from mistakes. In one case, a resident was moved out after a court ruled they weren't getting the support they needed. But no managers investigated what went wrong.



The report highlighted a lack of staff at night, meaning people's safety could not be guaranteed in an emergency. Staff also admitted they weren't sure which outside organisations they should contact if they had safeguarding concerns.

On top of that, the report said residents were not being encouraged to eat meals together, socialise, or take part in the local community - leaving them at risk of isolation.

However, inspectors did note some positives. Medication was managed safely, refurbishment work had started - including installing a stair lift - and staff spoke positively about the management team.

Inspectors said the home itself needed work. Kitchens and bathrooms were not always clean, and some areas were in poor condition. Since then, refurbishments have begun, with new flooring, a wet room and plans for a stair lift to help people with mobility needs.

The Care Quality Commission said Fir Trees House remained in breach of legal rules around person-centred care and governance.

Fir Trees House has been approached for comment.

283 Fir Tree Road, Epsom, Surrey. (Credit: Google Street View)

Epsom's Milly to share spotlight with West End star Kerry Ellis

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Local talent will step into the limelight at the Epsom Playhouse this Thursday, when Stagecoach Epsom student **Milly Playle** performs alongside one of Britain's most celebrated West End stars, **Kerry Ellis**, in the opening concert of Ellis's new UK tour.

Milly, who has already appeared in the West End production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* and featured in several television commercials, was selected from hundreds of young hopefuls to join Ellis on stage. She has trained for years at Stagecoach Epsom in singing, dancing and acting, building the skills that have brought her to this special opportunity.

Adding a further Epsom connection, both Stagecoach Principal **Rachel** and Milly's mother, **Emma**, trained at Laine Theatre Arts - the same renowned performing arts college attended by Ellis before her career took flight.

Ellis is a household name in British theatre. She made her West End debut in *My Fair Lady* before achieving international fame as the original British lead in *Wicked*, playing Elphaba both in London and on Broadway. She has starred in *We Will Rock You*, *Oliver!*, *Les Misérables* and *Cats*, and is a long-time collaborator of Queen guitarist **Brian May**, with whom she has toured worldwide. Her acclaimed solo albums and sell-out concert tours have cemented her reputation as one of the UK's leading musical theatre performers.

The Playhouse concert is being staged by **Perform Ready Events**, which creates unique performance opportunities for young people across the country. At every stop on Ellis's tour, a young performer will share the stage - and for the first night, it is Epsom's very own Milly.

Rachel, Principal of Stagecoach Epsom, said:

"We are so proud of Milly and thrilled that she'll be representing Stagecoach Epsom on stage with such an incredible performer. It's a wonderful opportunity not only for her, but also for our community to celebrate local young talent."

Surrey's education failings cost £1 million

17 September 2025



Surrey County Council's failings have cost the authority more than £1m in fines and redress payments over the past two years - the vast majority within its education services, newly published figures show.

In 2020/22, the council paid out £104,630, followed by a small decline in 21/22 to £92,698. That leapt to £258,730 in 22/23 and hit a peak of £540,611 last year before falling back this year to £480,797. The majority of its recent payouts, 93 per cent, were connected to delays or failures in its Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process, including delays in issuing EHCPs, missed or incomplete provision outlined in plans, or breaches of statutory timeframes for assessments and reviews.

Payments typically fall into two groups: fault in service provision, such as delays in EHC needs assessments, calculated at about £100 per month - and symbolic financial remedies for the distress, frustration, and uncertainty caused by its failures. About 74 per cent of the payments this year related to issues with its Special Educational Needs and Disabilities service.

Previous cases have included a Surrey teenager who lost almost a year of school due to council staff shortages, and there have been parent-led protests outside the council's headquarters calling for better provision for children. The county council has previously stated that part of its long-running special educational needs problems had been the backlog of cases, made worse due to lack of staff, as well as the national shortage of trained educational psychologists.

The county council said it will focus on quicker, more empathetic complaint handling, issue new guidance and investigation templates to staff and carry out a 'deep-dive' review of issues impacting SEND.

Councillor Jonathan Hulley, cabinet member for children, families and lifelong learning, said: "We continue to work hard to reduce spend on fines, which we know is higher than it should be. However, the Government has recognised that SEND is a broken national system in urgent need of funding and reform. Since 2018, Surrey's SEND service has made significant improvement against a hugely challenging national picture and an unprecedented increase in demand."

"Our longstanding dedication to and extensive investment in this issue has resulted in considerable progress, with the volume of complaints about education services down 12.1 per cent from the previous year. We also recognise that delays in issuing EHCPs have historically contributed to missed provision and subsequent fines, however considerable progress has been made in this area."



"Our average EHCP timeliness in Surrey across the 2025 calendar year to date is 91 per cent, well above the national average of 46.4 per cent. We have invested heavily in SEND and in July our Cabinet approved a further £4.9m to expand and restructure the service, including an increase to the team directly supporting families through the needs assessment and EHCP process from 81 to 141."

"This will reduce the number of families each staff member is supporting, and in turn create capacity for staff to work more closely and more responsively with children and young people, families, schools and settings. Over time we expect these improvements to have an impact on the number of Local Government Ombudsman complaints. It is our absolute priority to ensure every child with additional needs and disabilities in Surrey receives the support that they need."

New Surrey County Council HQ, Woodhatch Place on Cockshot Hill, Reigate. Credit Surrey County Council

Dartford fail to bridge the gap with Epsom rugby

17 September 2025



Sutton and Epsom RFC 33 Dartfordians 29 Saturday 13th September

Last season's meetings between these two clubs reflected the Sutton and Epsom campaign. The early encounter in Bexley was one of several tight matches where the Black and Whites prevailed. The Rugby Lane return bore witness to a rampant Sutton and Epsom win in their end of season pomp. However, the hosts were greatly assisted by injuries to the experienced forward duo of prop Stephen Garrett and lock Lewis Potter who collided before the break and went straight to A and E. On the opening Saturday Sutton and Epsom enjoyed a resounding 49-19 success at Bromley RFC. In contrast, Dartfordians endured a chastening 80-14 loss at the hands of a sadistic Sidcup. There was mitigation for this dire defeat as the Kent Club were handicapped by absentees on a golf weekend. At this time of asking the sides shared ten tries and Sutton and Epsom won a hard fought contest 33-29.

Sutton and Epsom had three changes to their squad with the return of the experienced front row duo of Boaden and Mount. In addition, there was the opportunity to see the mercurial talents of the lesser-spotted Archie Fitzgerald on the wing. The shrill blast of Mr Simon Matthews' whistle initiated proceedings with the visitors playing towards the Cabbage Patch on an afternoon of changeable weather. Dartfordians started brightly before a superb 50/22 from Tom Lennard put Sutton and Epsom on the offensive. The Kent side's resolute defence turned over the ball on their line and their bold counter was rewarded as moments later they were back in the Sutton half. It took another fabulous 50/22, this time by Adam Bibby, to set up another scoring opportunity. Rob Hegarty duly obliged surging over the line from a 5-metre scrum for the first try of his personally profitable afternoon. Tom Lennard added the conversion for a 7-0 after 17 minutes.

Not downcast the Dartfordians started to dominate possession and territory. A defensive lapse had the hosts defending deep in their 22 before a clearing kick. There followed a stunning break by fly half Gubby Thomas that had Sutton scrambling to cover a chip ahead. After a momentary respite Sutton conceded a penalty only for the away team to kick the ball dead in search for the attacking lineout. However, it was not long before they had another chance to punish a Sutton indiscretion. This time the penalty resulted in a 5-metre lineout. The ball was secured and winger Liam Brencher was stopped on the line before lock Ryan Chandler forced the ball over for the try. The conversion went astray but with the first period drawing to a close the Bexley-based side only trailed 5-7 and the scoreboard now reflected more accurately the balance of play as driving rain descended upon Rugby Lane.

Crucially Sutton and Epsom raised their game scoring two tries deep into time added on. On both occasions it was the forwards who earned the garlands. Second row Kieran Finney was the first scorer touching down under the posts. As the away team discussed the score in a huddle Tom Lennard hit the upright limiting Sutton's lead to 12-5. Soon after the Rugby Lane crowd were applauding another try. Following a searching kick another lineout ball was secured and Rob Hegarty was celebrating his second score. With the successful conversion the whistle went to end the first half. At 19-5 to Sutton and Epsom the pristine new scoreboard's score rather flattered the hosts who had struggled to find the fluency of last week. Dartfordians were unfortunate to trail at all let alone by 14 points as they had the better of the half in those important currencies of territory and possession. The visiting forwards had carried powerfully and full back Joe Scott's incursions into the line had been a constant threat.

Alex Mount announced his return at the start of the second half with a thunderous tackle on Harvey Whyte but the centre managed to complete a precise kick to the Sutton 22. The Dartfordians pack resembled an unstoppable juggernaut as the catch and drive's relentless advance of 15 metres had a sense of foreboding and inevitability with flanker Kieran Clarke scoring. Sutton's lead was reduced to 19-10. The wind dropped but the rain increased as conditions became difficult for handling. Quality back row play from Dan Jones won Sutton a penalty that was advanced to the corner. The lineout was dropped but recovered by Mount before his fellow prop Dan Johnson lost control near the line. The reinvigorated Kent players confidently ran the ball from their line and averted the danger.

Soon after, another penalty gave the Rugby Lane team chance to make amends with a lineout in the opposition 22. Finney secured the ball and Howes broke into the open field. The forwards carried up to the line before scrum half Laurence Wise espied a route to the line to score the Black and Whites' bonus point try. Tom Lennard stepped up to make it 26-10. As the final quarter approached Dartfordians went in search of a way back into the game. The crowd thought that Mr Matthews was raising his hand aloft for a try but inches from the line he spotted an infringement. Undeterred the visitors continued to lay siege and finally they were rewarded as fullback Joe Scott scored by the uprights and Thomas Gubby added the conversion as the margin was now 17-26 with 10 minutes remaining.

With the match back in the balance Sutton and Epsom produced some of their best rugby. The rain stopped, the sun shone and a rainbow covered the ground. For Sutton and Epsom there was a pot of gold at the end of it. They declined a kickable penalty in front of the posts 30 metres out as Tom Lennard drilled the ball towards the corner. A clean catch, the pack on the move and a jubilant Rob Hegarty completed his hat trick. With his fourth successful kick Lennard made it 33-17 with 5 minutes of normal time remaining and one would have thought that the win had been secured.

There was plenty of time to add there having been several stoppages for injuries and the visitors dominated every second of it. After five minutes of time added on Dartfordians scored their bonus point fourth try courtesy of a wonderful solo effort from Harvey Whyte who glided through the defence. Soon after a stunning run from Joe Scott from halfway was thwarted by a timely cover tackle from Kyren Ghumra. The Kent club continued to turn the screw as the field was littered with Sutton players requiring assistance. The visitors scored with the final play as Harry Wright crossed the whitewash to gain their second bonus point. The contest culminated with Thomas Gubby's conversion to leave the final score 33-29 to the Black and Whites.

In a keenly contested match that could have been claimed by either side the turning point was the two late Sutton and Epsom tries in the first half. The Dartfordians inspired by the athleticism of locks Chandler and Akinsete carried powerfully all game. Joe Scott made considerable yardage from 15 in a back division not afraid to run the ball out of defence. After a traumatic game last weekend every supporter from Kent will take great heart from how strongly their team have bounced back and finished strongly to push Sutton and Epsom to the very end. Once again scrum half Laurence Wise was not only at the heart of Sutton's play but also scored a try. Rob Hegarty's return of three tries highlighted once again how clinical he is when he has the ball in the last few metres. Sutton and Epsom were not at their best which was more credit to the visitors than to the detriment of the host's play but they earned the spoils for another 5 points.

Next Saturday Sutton and Epsom travel to Old Reigatian for a 3pm start against their Surrey rivals who are looking for their first win of the campaign following defeats to Old Colfeians and Sidcup. Dartfordians will host Beckenham to complete the testing trio of the top three for their opening three fixtures this campaign.

Sutton and Epsom

Ghumra, Benson, Scott, Bibby, Fitzgerald, Lennard, Wise, Johnson, Howes, Boaden, McTaggart ©, Finney, Rea, Jones and Hegarty. Reps: Mount, Tame and Munford.

Dartfordians

Scott, Kpaka, Soler-Gomez, Whyte, Brencher, Gubby, Chappell, Garrett, Hooban, Chapman, Chandler, Akinsete, Williams, Clarke and Wright. Reps: Banks, Tuffley and Taylor.



Photo credit : Robin Kennedy

Surrey County Cricket Club ground in the red

17 September 2025



A Surrey sports ground is set to get a £114,000 hand out to keep it afloat after the site racked up a big budget shortfall last year. But councillors insist residents will now get clearer oversight on how the pavilion is run.

The sports ground - home to Guildford Cricket Club and Surrey County Cricket Club - was hit by major staffing problems in 2024/25, leaving the management company more than £114k in the red.

As the ground is run as a charity and doesn't have money of its own, Guildford Borough Council, as trustee, has agreed to step in and cover the gap. Without the cash, the charity would be unable to pay its bills and could go under.

Alongside plugging last year's hole, councillors have also signed off on a three-year business plan. That means topping up the ground's budget with a further £80,687 in 2025/26 and £20,572 in 2026/27 - though beyond that no more bailouts are expected.

Without this, officers warned, the charity could fail, leaving taxpayers to foot the bill while the council runs the site directly without the specialist know-how of its cricketing partners.

Speaking at the Executive meeting on September 12, Cllr Catherine Houston said it was "encouraging to see this coming into shape," adding: "It is not the shadowy 'what's happening here' question that we've all had. I'm really pleased to see the council is able to keep an eye on what is happening in a much more formal way."

She praised the new structure, with three directors and dedicated officers in place, saying it gave the council confidence there was now 'a vision' for the site.

CEO Pedro Wrobel also backed the move, recognising that the problems stemmed from decisions made before the current Executive was in place.

"This is an issue that has a legacy that starts from prior to this Executive coming to force," he said. "What you are doing here is getting a firm grip on that [...] and putting it in a position where you are able to improve the value for money the organisation is getting."

The Pavilion was refurbished in 2018 and reopened the following year, with the idea that hosting events and matches would help cover running costs. The council's Executive will make a decision on the extra funding in the coming weeks.

The Guildford Pavilion. (Credit: Google Street View)

No Place Like Home - Until Surrey Sells It

17 September 2025



Families have been left worried sick and children devastated after Surrey County Council decided to sell their homes "to ensure best value" in the "disposal of public assets".

Residents say the council is putting profit before people as it seeks to cash in on their homes through its private company—insisting upon selling them as vacant possessions and giving them until July to move out.

They claim the council is refusing to consider offers from the families who have built their lives there and instead told them they must leave so the properties can be placed on the open market.

One family has lived in Norbury Park, Mickleham, since 2003 under a long-term lease when it was owned by Surrey Wildlife Trust, prior to being taken over by the county council's private company, Halsey Garton Residential Ltd (HGR). In that time, the family invested significantly in repairs and improvements, believing their tenancy was secure. They say they even made an offer to buy the property, but it was rejected, with Surrey insisting the house must be vacated first.

Helen Wood, who lives in one of the Norbury Park homes said she the council-created company took on the properties from the Surrey Wildlife Trust in 2022. Families have been left worried sick and children 'devastated' ..."

Mrs Wood said: "Our children are devastated at the thought of losing the house, their home. My 12-year-old has asked why this is happening, and we have tried to explain it to him, but even he says it makes no sense—they want to sell and we want to buy. We can't move on with our lives or plan anything and are just stuck in limbo. It is pretty hellish and worse than that, it just seems really unfair and nonsensical."

She added: "We saw other neighbours were being evicted and had to force a meeting to find out our own situation. Ridiculously, we can't buy it. I'm a fit and healthy 54-year-old with two kids but I've ended up on blood pressure tablets. I've never had an issue and now I'll be on them for the rest of my life. It's horrendous. All I'm doing is thinking we're another day nearer, and another week nearer, another month nearer, to losing our home. We can't buy in the area. We'll lose our workshop and my husband will lose his job. I'm just trying not to think about it as it just makes us anxious."

The families are asking Surrey County Council to allow an independent valuation of the homes and to be given first refusal to purchase and remain in the properties.

Charles Maxlow-Tomlinson, managing director of Halsey Garton Residential Ltd—a company registered at Surrey County Council's headquarters and specialising in the letting and operating of owned or leased real estate—responded: "Surrey County Council is the freeholder of various properties which are managed by



Halsey Garton Residential Ltd under a strategy approved by SCC's Strategic Investment Board. HGR is a subsidiary of the council and has a long leasehold interest in the properties. HGR was established to help generate commercial returns, providing an alternative revenue stream that supports the Council's broader financial resilience.

"HGR remains deeply committed to responsible and balanced property management. We have been actively engaging with tenants to listen to their concerns regarding the proposed sale of properties and lease arrangements. We understand how unsettling this situation can be for families and, where appropriate, we have offered new lease terms with more tenant-friendly conditions, extending occupancy until June 2026."

"We fully acknowledge the personal impact this may have on individual tenants. While HGR and SCC are not housing authorities and do not retain residential properties for long-term housing provision, we are committed to treating all tenants with dignity and respect throughout this process. Tenants have been informed of the proposed sales, and we want to clarify that there are no current eviction notices for the properties in Norbury Park. To ensure openness and transparency, when properties are placed on the open market for sale, anybody can make an offer to purchase, and the most proceedable offer will be accepted."

Councillor Natalie Bramhall, cabinet member for property, infrastructure and waste, said: "Surrey County Council has a statutory duty to ensure best value in the use and disposal of public assets. In fulfilling this responsibility, and to maintain transparency and fairness, the council and its subsidiaries have followed a consistent approach over the past five years: selling its properties on the open market with vacant possession. This ensures that we can secure the best possible return, which is vital for delivering essential public services to the wider community."

Helen and Grant Wood together with their dog (Image Helen Wood)

Today's racing at Epsom racecourse

17 September 2025



This afternoon's first race is a two-year-olds' seven-furlong novice (1.37). Each of the seven runners have been seen before, with the best currently presenting as Ollie Sangster's Red Tsarina, who won a fillies' race at Chelmsford most recently. She makes her turf debut today, while the best with turf form is St Anton, who placed on debut at Newmarket and will be a big player once again.

*Courtesy of Boyle Sports, who provide all the latest **horse racing odds**.*

Next is a seven-furlong handicap (2.12). Rod Millman's Cypriot Diaspora seeks a hat-trick, having won her last two starts at Ffos Las, but may not be so well suited to this track, so it may pay to look elsewhere. Dylan Cunha's Valley Of The Kings went well over course and distance last time out and, running off the same mark again, could pick up at least a place, but David O'Meara's 10-year-old veteran Orbaan looks the most likely candidate given his good track record and recent strain of form.

Race three is a handicap over a mile and a quarter (2.47). Racing Demon should have a good chance after a recent pair of places and the addition of a visor for today. Didaar also should be able to run a good race off the same mark which saw him place last time at Ffos Las, and has a useful five pounds from his rider. Questionable could be the winner, though, now just one pound above his last winning mark.

The Jump Jockeys Derby is next - a handicap over a mile and a half (3.18). Balhambar could have a good chance for Paul O'Brien, now two pounds below his last run on the Flat, in which he finished a respectable third of 11 last October. Returning from a break, he could win this, but will have to watch out for Alan King's Westerton, who has dipped down to a very workable mark.

Race five is another handicap over a mile and a half, this time for three-year-olds (3.53). Owen Burrows' Girls Night Out could go well, having come down a couple of pounds in the weights. She is ridden by a five-pound claimer, which helps her case. Drawn next door, though, is Love You Back, who makes more appeal with a good bit of course form from July and a workable mark for Gary and Josh Moore.

The penultimate race is a handicap run over the extended mile (4.25). Another for Gary and Josh Moore, Oj Lifestyle goes well at this track and is on a mark which should lend itself to winning here. Magical Merlin could run for a place under claiming rider Millie Wonnacott, while Beau Jardine could do the same from the innermost draw.

Last of all is another handicap over the same trip, this time for three-year-olds (5.00). Nigel Tinkler's Amidst The Chaos travels a long way for this and seeks a hat-trick today, while Pink Azalea - who also has a long drive from Malton to Epsom - looks more likely on a mark which may be winnable from under a five-pound claimer.

Epsom selections - Thursday:

1.37 - St Anton

2.12 - Orbaan

2.47 - Questionable

3.18 - Balhambar

3.53 - Love You Back

4.25 - Oj Lifestyle

5.00 - Pink Azalea

Horses racing Image: Credit Paul. CC BY 2.0

Epsom library opening to register births and deaths

17 September 2025



Surrey's Registration & Nationality Service has been undergoing changes over the past year with the aim of providing an improved experience for residents at important life moments. Dated and non-energy efficient buildings have undergone a makeover, and the council is increasing the number of locations where people can register births and deaths, all to make the service more accessible, modern and fit for the future.

Denise Turner-Stewart, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities, said:

"We are committed to ensuring that our Registration Services are accessible, sustainable, and reflective of the needs of our communities.

"The improvements at Rylston in Weybridge and the expansion of services into our modern Library Hubs demonstrate our ambition to deliver high-quality, convenient services for residents across Surrey.

"These changes are part of our wider vision to modernise council services and create ceremony venues that are fit for purpose and truly special. We want every couple, every family, and every individual marking a significant life event to feel that they are in a space that reflects the importance of the moment.



"Whether it's welcoming a new life, registering the death of a loved one, or celebrating a union in marriage or civil partnership, our venues are designed to provide a warm, friendly, and memorable setting for these cherished occasions."

Rylston, Weybridge reopens

Refurbishment works are now complete at Rylston Register Office. These were undertaken to preserve its future as a premium ceremonies venue in Weybridge. The whole building has benefitted from new carbon-efficient heating systems and windows and newly decorated ceremony rooms, ensuring it is a sustainable ceremonies venue for the county in the long term.

The redecoration works complement the historic building's elegant style, enabling couples to exchange their vows in a classic and beautiful space.

More locations to register births and deaths

Epsom Library Hub and the new flagship Library Hub at Staines-upon-Thames now offer additional locations in Surrey to register births and deaths. Both library hubs have undergone major refurbishment offering multi-functional spaces in the heart of communities. Registrations are now part of that, helping to bring together complementary services all under one roof.

By October 2026, it is expected that Guildford Library will also be offering a registrations service for births and deaths, making sure residents can access key services in places and locations that are convenient to them.

Ceremonies in Guildford

To provide better value and more efficient services for residents, the council is moving towards the use of modern, efficient, multi-purpose buildings that allow multiple services to operate from a single location.

Guildford Register Office, also known as Artington House, does not meet the criteria to support this approach. It is a building which is not carbon efficient and where the ongoing costs of maintenance and necessary upgrades have significantly increased.

Following careful consideration, the decision has been made to vacate and sell Artington House. Bookings for ceremonies at this location will continue to be taken up until 31 October 2026. It is expected there will be alternative local provision in place for the registration of births and deaths at Guildford Library from October 2026. Customers will still be able to book appointments online as usual.

Surrey is home to over 100 licensed ceremony venues across the county where couples can marry or form a civil partnership. This includes two council register offices in Weybridge and Leatherhead, each offering a range of different ceremony options. Other council venues are also being considered for ceremony use to increase the offer available for residents.

Further information

Frequently Asked Questions about the closure of Artington House can be found here: [Guildford Register Office as a ceremony venue - Surrey County Council](#)

A full list of registration services can be found here: [Birth, death and ceremonies - Surrey County Council](#)

[Surrey County Council](#)

Image: Epsom Library

Surrey Police HQ development dogged by flood risks

17 September 2025



Plans to redevelop Surrey Police's Mount Browne headquarters in Guildford — including a new dog training school — have been green-lit for a second time despite fresh flood risk modelling showing "pockets of high surface water flooding" across the site.

Guildford Borough Council's Planning Committee approved the scheme in November 2024, but since then national planning rules have changed and the Environment Agency has issued new flood maps.

As a result, Surrey Police and the council agreed to bring the scheme back to committee.

The updated modelling shows parts of the site, including the former bowling green earmarked for the new dog school, face a high risk of surface water flooding.

Councillors raised concerns about what that actually means in practice at another planning committee meeting on September 9.

"On one hand we say there's a high risk of flooding — and then we say the infrastructure will support that regardless," Cllr Stephen Hives said. "So I'm a bit confused: is there a danger to welfare or not?"

Planning officers insisted the scheme still passes the required "sequential test" — which means no safer, alternative sites are reasonably available — and that the approved drainage strategy will prevent increased flood risk.

"In practical terms it will make no difference to this development," an officer told the committee. "The drainage strategy already approved is sufficient even with the updated flood risk."

The development does not fall within the newly created "Grey Belt" category introduced in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), but it was judged to still harm the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

With no new highways flooding issues identified and no change to the approved drainage plan, officers confirmed the project remains compliant with planning rules. Plans to redevelop the police HQ and build a new access road was unanimously approved.

Mount Browne has been the headquarters of Surrey Police for more than 70 years. The current campus contains a large number of buildings which have been constructed mainly on a piecemeal basis and are judged no longer fit for purpose.

Emily Dalton

Proposed Redevelopment of Mount Browne, Surrey Police's HQ. (Credit: Surrey Police)