Ewell's Sporting Ambition for Gibraltar Rec Hits the Rocks

£3.1 Million Sports Hub Proposal at Gibraltar Recreation Ground Rejected amid Transparency and Planning Concerns

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R) rejected a proposal to spend £3.1 million of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds on transforming Gibraltar Recreation Ground (GRG) in Ewell into a "Centre of Sporting Excellence" at its meeting on 25 September 2025.

The plan, fully recommended by the CIL Member Working Group (CIL MWG), would have created a multi-sport community hub featuring new and refurbished pitches, floodlit courts, a pavilion extension, solar panels, CCTV, and improved access. The project was recorded in committee papers with an overall criteria score of 8/10 and a best-value score of 2/3.

What Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Is and How It Works

Community Infrastructure Levy is a national charge on new developments designed to fund infrastructure supporting local growth, such as schools, roads, and leisure facilities. In Epsom and Ewell, receipts are divided approximately into:

- 70-80% Strategic CIL for borough-wide projects
- 15-25% Neighbourhood CIL for community-level schemes
- 5% for administration

As of September 2025, the Council reported £6.086 million unallocated Strategic CIL and £1.138 million Neighbourhood CIL.

A Closed Decision-Making Process

The CIL Members Working Group is composed of Councillors. It evaluates and recommends spending of millions, meets privately without publishing minutes or allowing public or press attendance. The group comprises Councillors Neil Dallen (Chair) (RA Town), Alex Coley (Independent – Ruxley), Liz Frost (RA Woodcote and Langley), James Lawrence (LibDem College), Rob Geleit (Labour – Court), Phil Neale (RA Cuddington), Kieran Persand (Conservative Horton), Alan Williamson (RA West Ewell), and Clive Woodbridge (RA Ewell Village). Only summary scoring and recommendations appear in the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting documents, limiting transparency about debates, votes, and possible conflicts of interest.

Open Chamber Debate Highlights

Chair Councillor **Neil Dallen** reminded members that the Gibraltar project still required an additional £500,000 in revenue funding to be considered later and that planning permission was needed before any construction.

Councillor **James Lawrence** opposed allocating £3.1 million now, citing concerns over capacity and linkage to the Local Plan: "This... is the one item that there was a bit of disagreement in the member working group on... Because we had identified... Hook Road Arena would be where we provide a centre of sporting excellence, that was always our plan... This bid kind of came a little bit out of the blue... I happen to not like this bid. I think it's a lot of money... although [Gibraltar Rec] is in need of upgrading, that would only cost about six or 700k rather than 3.1 million."

He warned about risking depletion of Strategic CIL funds: "If we vote for [Gibraltar Rec]... we'll have about 1.6 million left in a strategic CIL fund... it would lower our ability if we need to support Hook Road Arena... particularly because the one in Hook Road Arena will at least be near some big Local Plan development. This... will not be near new developments."

Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) questioned duplication and timing: "I was quite shocked when I saw this... all of a sudden, we're going to have two super sport sites... I think it should wait until the... Hook Road Arena is decided... I'm thinking 3.1 million... Suddenly here, in the face of the local government reorganization... I'm suspicious of the motivations."

On whether GRG would compete with Hook Road Arena, Councillor Dallen said: "It's not an either or... Hook Road Arena... will develop... and Gibraltar Rec can be done in parallel with that, or in advance of that, or behind that... I'm not sure they'd be

competing. I think they would be complementary... we're very short of sporting facilities, and the more we can get, I think the better."

Councillor **John Beckett** (RA Auriol) asked: "Will Gibraltar Rec be up and running before Hook Road Arena?" Councillor Dallen responded: "I personally believe it will be... long before anything at Hook Road happens."

Planning officials highlighted that Hook Road Arena is expected beyond the first five years of the Local Plan period, projecting delivery from 2030 onwards.

Governance and Potential Conflicts

Concerns emerged about spending nearly half of the remaining Strategic CIL on a single site and whether Gibraltar Rec aligns with CIL's statutory purpose, which emphasises investment near new developments. The Chair disclosed a personal interest in local scouting just before S&R approved a separate £50,000 Neighbourhood CIL grant to the 3rd Epsom Scouts for a community building rebuild. This expenditure was approved without discussion with Cllr Dallen remaining in the Chair.

The vote on the Gibraltar Recreation Ground Sporting Excellence project was one vote for, two votes against, two abstentions and the Chair not voting.

Cllr Clive Woodbridge (RA Ewell Village), a keen supporter of the Gibraltar Rec. project, told the Epsom and Ewell Times; "Naturally I was disappointed by the decision, although I accept that the bid did require a large sum of money to be allocated. However I do believe it would have provided a fantastic legacy project for the Borough, addressing for example the shortage of football and cricket pitches, as identified in the Local Plan's Playing Pitch strategy, while providing some exciting new facilities, such as a public Padel court to meet demand for this increasingly popular sport. I am confident also that it would have leveraged in external grant funding from sporting bodies. Hopefully we can now discuss within the council how to address some of the concerns raised during the S&R committee meeting with a view towards potentially resubmitting a new, and possibly revised bid, sometime next year. The project certainly continues to enjoy my full support, so I will persevere!"

What Happens to the £3.1 Million?

With the recommendation declined, the £3.1 million remains in the Council's Strategic CIL pot, increasing the unallocated balance to about £4.7 million. The funds remain ring-fenced for infrastructure under the Council's CIL Spending Protocol. However, the handling of interest accrued on unspent CIL balances is not disclosed.

Calls for Greater Transparency and Clarity

The controversy highlights debates about whether a private councillors working group should steer multi-million-pound spending without greater public scrutiny. Residents lack access to debates, detailed scoring, or councillor voting records, limiting accountability on how priorities are balanced or conflicts managed.

The broader question remains: should CIL funding follow the locations of new development closely, or should it support boroughwide projects deemed strategically important?

For now, the "Centre of Sporting Excellence" at Gibraltar Recreation Ground remains stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Image: Gibraltar Recreation ground - Google

Sam Jones - Reporter



Calculating the cost of care in Surrey

Surrey residents and their families can now benefit from a simple new online tool to help them be prepared for the costs of care, if they become less able.

Many of us don't realise that we are likely to have to pay for some or all of our own care, especially if we have savings over £14,250. And while most people who need care tend to be older, support needs can emerge at any age due to illness or injury.

Surrey County Council's new **Care Cost Indicator** allows people who arrange and pay for their care to see how much it may cost to stay in a typical residential / nursing home compared to receiving care or support in their own home. Using a simple slider to choose the number of weeks, months or years they wish to plan for, people can judge how long their savings or assets may last.

Once people know the costs, it's easier to prepare, or see how spending some money now can help avoid more expensive care further down the line. Simple equipment, new technology or small changes to people's homes can make the difference between living independently and needing assistance.

Research with Surrey residents in January 2025 highlighted:

- 81% were concerned how they would pay for their care
- Only 13% have sought or plan to seek independent financial advice about care costs

Furthermore, a recent study into care home residents by the independent health and social care champion **Healthwatch Surrey** showed only 33% of people interviewed had actually planned for the costs involved.

The new indicator, which was designed and tested with local people, aims to prompt residents to plan ahead. The online information features lots of useful tips to help with preparation and ensure that future arrangements are affordable.

Figures show that Surrey residents live longer than most other parts of the country. But the same reported data shows that at least a decade is likely to be spent in poorer health, increasing the likelihood of care being required.

While homeowners in Surrey might think they can always use the proceeds from a house sale to fund any care they need, even this is not certain. Based on an **average house sale of around £590,000**, if a couple both needed to move into a care home, their nest egg could easily be used up in a little over three and a half years.

Sinead Mooney, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care at Surrey County Council, said: "No-one knows what the future will hold for us or our loved ones, but understanding the costs of care is complex and many people are shocked to learn the true figures.

"Doing what we can to stay independent and live in our own home is most people's goal, and receiving care at home from a visiting provider can be more cost-effective than a move into a residential facility. But we also need to be aware that our needs may change – and discuss our wishes with our families.

"Every year we see people who are 'self-funding' run out of money, at which point their families may have to step in to help them stay in a more expensive care home, rather than face the upheaval of moving. Planning ahead can lessen the chance of that happening, which is why appreciating the price you can expect to pay forcare is so important."

The Care Cost Indicator can be found at www.surreycc.gov.uk/carecostindicator

It supports Surrey County Council's nationally commended **Planning for your Future** campaign which is run in partnership with local charity, Age UK Surrey. The campaign aims to help people prepare for later life, and have an early conversation with family about their plans.

Surrey County Council



Walk brings the wonders of the Solar System to Nonsuch Park

Epsom & Ewell, Saturday 25th October 2025 — Visitors to Nonsuch Park can now enjoy a journey through the Solar System thanks to the successful launch of the Nonsuch Park Solar Walk, officially opened on Saturday in a well-attended community event celebrating science, nature, and local heritage.

The Solar Walk is an engaging, scaled model of the Solar System stretching through one of Epsom & Ewell's most loved green spaces. Each planet is represented by an informative plaque showing its relative distance and size in comparison to the Sun — helping visitors of all ages experience the vastness of space in an accessible and educational way.

Developed in partnership with the Ewell Astronomical Society (EAS), the project combines outdoor recreation with science learning in a fun and interactive way. The EAS provided their astronomical expertise and educational input, helping to bring the concept to life for residents and visitors alike.

"Anyone visiting the park can now experience the scale and vastness of our Solar System whilst enjoying the beautiful surroundings of the historic park," the Society explains on its website.

The launch event saw local councillors, community volunteers, and families take part in guided walks, children's activities, and talks from members of the EAS.

Cllr Steven McCormick said: "The Solar Walk is a fantastic addition to Nonsuch Park — blending education, exercise, and the beauty of our surroundings. It's ideal for families, schools, and visitors of all ages, and it's a perfect activity to enjoy together this half term."

The Solar Walk encourages everyone — from young children discovering the planets for the first time to adults curious about astronomy — to explore the park, learn something new, and stay active outdoors. It's a great way to spend quality time with family and friends during the half-term break.

Nonsuch Park continues to be a cherished green space for Epsom & Ewell residents, offering a mix of recreation, history, and natural beauty. The Solar Walk adds a new dimension for visitors — quite literally — to walk among the planets.

For more information about the Solar Walk, including trail maps and learning materials, visit the Ewell Astronomical Society website.

Space walk launch Nonsuch Park. Featuring Epsom and Ewell Mayor Cllr Robert Leach (2nd from right) and Cllr Steven McCormick (RA Surrey County and EEBC Woodcote and Langley ward)

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Remembrance and Armistice Day activities 2025

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is proud to announce that Remembrance and Armistice Day memorial services, parades and activities will take place across the borough to honour those who have died in the service of their country and give thanks to those past and present who have served **in** the armed forces. Formal Acts of Remembrance will include the council's annual Garden of Remembrance at Bourne Hall Park on 5 November, Remembrance Day wreath laying and procession on 9 November and an Armistice Day Service on 11 November.

Garden of Remembrance: Wednesday 5 November

On Wednesday 5 November at 10.30am, The Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, the Chief Executive of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and local schoolchildren will officially open the Garden of Remembrance. Children will perform songs and poems and place poppy tokens to honour and remember all those who have died in the service of their country. **The Garden will be open to the public until the end of November,** giving people the opportunity to visit, and take time to reflect.

Remembrance Sunday: 9 November

At 9.30am the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell will lay two wreaths at the War Memorials in Ashley Road, Epsom. This will be followed by a Remembrance Day procession from the Army Reserve Centre at Welbeck Close and ending at St Mary's Church, Ewell – followed by an Act of Remembrance service, wreath laying and a church service.

Armistice Day Service (11/11/11): Tuesday 11 November

Members of the public are invited to join a ceremony at the Clock Tower at 10.40am in Epsom Market Place. The Mayor, Chief Executive and elected Councillors will join the Royal British Legion, armed forces, veterans and local schools at the service which ends with observation of the nationwide Two Minute Silence at 11am.

Jackie King, Chief Executive, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, said: "In this moment of remembrance, we pause to honour the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces. We remember with deep gratitude those who gave their lives in defence of our freedoms, and we honour those who continue to serve with courage and commitment. We will remember them."

Other Remembrance Day activities

Large poppies, kindly donated by the Royal British Legion, are being placed in Epsom High Street, Ewell High Street and Stoneleigh Broadway alongside other poppies placed around the borough.

Events and activities also taking place will include:

- Bourne Hall Museum: World War I Walk on Saturday 8 November at 10am (free event)

 The public can join Tim Richardson for a walk around Langley Vale First World War Centenary Wood. More information can be found here.
- Museum Kids club at Bourne Hall: Meet Captain Townsley on Saturday 8 November at 1pm to 2pm (£6.50)

 Children can come along and hear about tales of the war and handle real equipment and uniform. More information can be found here.

For more information on Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Remembrance Day activities - Remembrance in the borough of Epsom & Ewell | Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council



Photo: 2024 Remembrance Event Epsom Market Square, led by then Mayor Cllr Steve Bridger – credit Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

Is there a neat solution to struggling Epsom Common Club?

The long-established Epsom Common Club remains closed but not forgotten, as a handful of volunteers continue restoration work and urge fellow members to help decide whether a partnership proposal could bring the venue back to life.

Emails circulated by the Club Committee since late September set out a potential arrangement with **NEAT**, a local community organisation best known for transforming the disused bowls pavilion in Court Recreation Ground into "NEAT HQ". Founded by two former Chelsea Foundation coaches, NEAT provides wrap-around childcare, alternative schooling for pupils unable to remain in mainstream education, and a wide range of family and youth activities.

Under the plan, NEAT would rent the rear hall of the Club's premises for use during the week and contribute to finishing both the

front and back halls. The Club explains that this could secure a steady income stream, remove the need to rent the front room to outside hirers, and revive the building as a "community hub". However, it would also mean losing the existing snooker room and restricting member use of part of the premises.

The Club's emails emphasise that the idea is still a proposal only. "Before it could proceed to this stage it would require members' consent and this was stressed to NEAT as non-negotiable," wrote the Club Secretary, Mr C. O'Neil, in response to Epsom & Ewell Times.

Three rounds of consultation emails have been sent to roughly 220 members—about three-quarters of the Club's recorded list—but only around seven per cent initially replied. Later reminders lifted the total response rate, producing an approximate three-to-one majority in favour of exploring talks, though still short of what organisers regard as a clear mandate.

With no formal committee now in place and the Club being managed informally by the Secretary and one assisting member, progress has been slow. The handful of volunteers who meet on Saturday mornings to carry out repairs are credited with keeping the building from dereliction. "If this idea is allowed to wither on the vine it could well be last orders for your Club," one circular warned.

Mr O'Neil told the *Times* that if members give approval, formal negotiations would follow to settle details such as rent, permitted uses, and neighbour consultation. Any final agreement would then be put to a members' meeting for ratification. Questions about parking, noise, and the possible need for planning or licensing changes would be addressed at that stage.

For now, the Club remains closed to new memberships while restoration work continues. "The work is currently being undertaken by a few valiant members and any member wishing to assist would be welcomed," said Mr O'Neil. Volunteers can make contact via the Club's email address: **clubeventsecwmc@gmail.com**.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Epsom Common Club - Google Maps

Surrey SEND place surge - is it enough?

Surrey County Council has announced the creation of almost 500 new specialist school places for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities during the 2025/26 academic year. The expansion forms part of the council's ongoing Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Capital Programmes running from 2019 to 2026.

Of these new places, 169 were ready at the start of the autumn term, with another 298 due for completion by summer 2026. Since 2021, Surrey has delivered over 250 new specialist places each year, supported by more than £211 million in capital investment.

New and expanded schools

Among the projects completed for the current academic year are new or enlarged SEN units at **Epsom Downs Primary School** in Epsom and Ewell, Dovers Green Infant School in Reigate and Banstead, and Guildford County School. Philip Southcote School in Runnymede now benefits from a new teaching block and hydrotherapy pool, while the Fordway Centre in Spelthorne has been completely rebuilt.

Walton Leigh School in Elmbridge has undergone significant refurbishment, and additional projects in Spelthorne and Elmbridge have already been completed this term, including SEN units at Ashford Park Primary and Cranmere School.

Before summer 2026, Surrey expects to complete 40 new places within Carrington School's Specialist Resource Provision and a further 33 at the Woodfield Education Centre in Reigate and Banstead. The largest development, a new all-through Hopescourt SEN School in Elmbridge, will provide 200 places.

Headteacher Alex Burrows said: "We're incredibly proud to be part of the expansion of specialist provision in Surrey. Our new school will give children and young people in the borough the support and opportunities they need to flourish – not just academically, but personally and socially too. We're excited to build a community where every child truly belongs and can take their next steps confidently."

Responding to rising demand

Over 17,000 children and young people in Surrey now have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), a number that has more than doubled in a decade. The county council says its timeliness in completing assessments now exceeds 90%, compared to a national average of 46.6%, placing Surrey in the top 20 performing authorities.

To meet growing demand, the council launched a £15 million recovery plan in 2023 and has since committed a further £4.9 million, increasing staff capacity in statutory SEND services by 74%.

Councillor Jonathan Hulley, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning, said: "These additional places are a crucial part of Surrey's Inclusion and Additional Needs Strategy. The strategy aims to improve inclusion and outcomes for children with additional needs and disabilities in Surrey, ensuring they can access the best possible education closer to home. To go alongside our unprecedented investment in building new specialist school places, we've invested heavily in our SEND service. We are determined that every child in Surrey with additional needs and disabilities gets the support they deserve."

Continuing pressures

While the council's figures point to record investment and rising capacity, parents, teachers and local MPs have repeatedly raised concerns about the system's ability to keep pace with demand. Epsom and Ewell MP Helen Maguire has called for urgent national action, highlighting the distress families face when children are left without appropriate school placements.

Other Surrey MPs have criticised the escalating costs of private specialist placements and the reliance on out-of-county provision – issues that have driven the county's dedicated schools budget into deficit. Campaigners have argued that although capital investment is welcome, progress on staffing, assessment backlogs and mainstream inclusion has been slow.

As previously reported by the Epsom and Ewell Times, the county's £4.9 million recovery package was described by some parent advocates as "a fraction of what's needed" to fix systemic problems that have built up over years of under-resourcing and policy churn.

National backdrop

Surrey's challenges mirror those across England. The number of children with EHCPs has risen nationally to more than half a million, with many councils facing multi-million-pound SEND budget deficits. The government's own review of the SEND system, first announced in 2019, remains only partially implemented, leaving local authorities to balance rising expectations with limited funding flexibility.

For many families in Surrey, the creation of new places represents a long-awaited step forward – but for others, the daily struggle to secure assessments, placements and support continues.

Sam Jones - Reporter



Phillip South Cote School classroom. Credit SCC

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell MP calls for SEND action

Surrey MPs slam SEND profiteers

£4.9 million not enough to solve Surrey's SEND problems

Sending pupils to Epsom's mainstream schools Surrey sent on a U-turn on SEND by MPs Surrey MPs unite against county on SEND silence.

Surrey Fire service workshop needs maintenance check

The garage that keeps Surrey's fire engines safe and running is "no longer fit for purpose", according to a new report

Surrey County Council has admitted that the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) main vehicle workshop in Reigate needs important maintenance work.

Without urgent work, the service "will no longer be able to continue to carry out critical safety checks" on its fire engine, a new report has revealed.

The Wray Park site, which looks after more than 140 fire engines and other vehicles, has been running on fumes for years. A council report says the buildings are riddled with problems, such as they are difficult to heat in winter and cool in summer, the ventilation system "inefficient", and the roof too low for newer, taller fire engines to fit inside.

Surrey's council cabinet, meeting on October 28, is being asked to sign off spending for a full refurbishment between 2025 and 2028, using money already set aside in its capital budget.

Officials describe the investment as "essential" to ensure Surrey's fire engines can keep rolling and protecting residents. The report says the overhaul will deliver "fit for purpose facilities to enable the maintenance, repair and servicing of the SFRS vehicle fleet".

Without it, the council warns, the fire service's ability to keep its engines roadworthy will be at risk – a situation that could impact optimal Fire Service provision and the protection of Surrey residents.

The revamp has been a long time coming. A decade ago, the county council had hoped to build a joint "blue light" maintenance centre with Sussex Police. But the plan collapsed when the shared site proved too cramped and too costly.

Instead, the council has now decided to invest in its existing Reigate site, which it says is "centrally located, easily accessible, and well-connected to major transport networks".

An alternative site study found nowhere better, with other options ruled out for being "unsustainable" or too expensive.

If approved, the rebuild will literally raise the roof to fit newer fire engines and include solar panels, insulation and new automated doors.

The report says the work will reduce the carbon footprint and environmental impact on neighbouring Surrey residents and ensure compliance with Health and Safety legislation. It will also mean "a secure and healthy working environment" for fire service staff.

As part of the upgrade, the fire service also plans to start servicing its smaller "white fleet" vehicles (like cars and vans) in-house for the first time, instead of paying private garages.

The council insists the project is viable and affordable within its current budget, though the exact figures are being kept under wraps for commercial sensitivity. It will be paid for through a mix of council borrowing and Home Office funding for 'Blue Light Collaboration', the report states.

But officials admit money is tight. The report warns the council "continues to operate in a very challenging financial environment, with significant budgetary pressures and limited financial resources".

Cabinet members are being urged to "have regard to fiduciary duties to residents in utilising public monies" in other words, make sure taxpayers get value for money.

Emily Dalton LDRS

Surrey Fire Service Wray Park aerial view Google Maps

Dorking's "behemouth" of a "black hole"

The "behemoth" that is Dorking Halls has been labelled a "black hole" that sucks in all resources around it after an additional £3.34million in maintenance work was approved.

The new money comes on top of the originally agreed £11.2m the refurbishment project was expected to cost after delays and lead paint saw the bills spiral.

The work has been labelled as essential by those who see the building as a Dorking icon that must be preserved for future generations. Critics have accused Mole Valley District Council of treating the public purse like 'Monopoly' money.

The decision was made at the October full council meeting where the second stage of the project was signed off and confirmed Dorking Halls would again close, this time from April 2026 through until early December.

Councillor Nick Wright, cabinet member for leisure and community assets, said: "Dorking Halls is the largest publicly owned performance venue anywhere in east Surrey.

"Dorking Halls typically gets about 180,000 visitors, there are over 60,000 registered customers of which only about half live in Mole Valley.

"Of the Mole Valley residents, approximately one third have postal codes in Dorking itself, 26 per cent from Leatherhead and the north of the district, and about 40 per cent from rural areas. So the Halls really do serve the entire Mole Valley community.

"But it's not just Mole Valley, with its 900 seated grand hall plus two other halls, two cafe bars and a conference room, this is the largest performance venue anywhere in Surrey and it's owned by us, the public. This iconic building should and must be cherished and preserved for future generations.

"It's old, it's built in 1931, but it has national significance as a venue for classical and choral music and now embraces everything from rock pop musicals, theatre pantomime, comedy lectures, to cinema and circus."

The building came into public ownership in 1947 and had its first big upgrade and expansion in the 1990s when much of the current tech was installed.

He added: "But after 30 years of continuous daily use, it was showing its age, breakdowns were occurring and running costs increased." The council had originally approved £11.2million of spending across the two phases; the first was completed late last year in time for the Christmas panto season.

Costs leapt when lead paint was found in the building and needed to be removed – so the council has had to top up the pot with an additional £3.34m this time around. The phase one work concentrated on replacing the ceiling of the grand hall which was failing but the discovery of the toxic paint made the entire project more complex.

This time the council will upgrade the Halls heating cooling, air-conditioning and electrical systems – as well as the technical infrastructure inside the grand hall – bringing it up to modern standards. Council said the extra costs of phase one, together with three years of inflationary pressures has meant a further £3.34 million is needed to finish the job.

The money also includes a one-off "unavoidable growth" of £584,000 to cover the loss of earnings during the Halls' closure. Cllr Wright said: "Without phase two this building would run the risk of falling into disrepair".

Cllr Chris Hunt (Independent: Ashtead Lanes and Common), said was one of the first to speak out against the added costs. He said: "This isn't fair on council tax payers. Nobody is saying it's a bad building. I was arguing that the scheme should be built quicker. The administration said 'no slow it down', they have got to be responsible to this overspend, this monopoly (money) approach to council tax."

Cllr Patricia Wiltshire (Independent: Ashtead Lanes and Common) said: "This is a massive, massive, overspend and there are people in Mole Valley who are desperately resentful of all these resources going into this one building. Every time we ask for something, little things we get told 'there's no money', or 'the budgets are too tight'.

"Yet here we are with this behemoth of a building, like a black hole absorbing the resources going into it. It's a nice venue, it's useful, people enjoy themselves, but don't kid yourself that every single person in Mole Valley enjoys it or uses it. It's a relatively small number in comparison to the whole population.

She added that the burden should fall on those who use Dorking Halls instead and that, if you want to go to the theatre you should pay without expecting everyone else to cover the cost.



Defending the project however was Cllr Stephen Cooksey (Liberal Democrats : Dorking South). He said: "It's a big chunk of money but if we don't spend it we could lose Dorking Halls."

Chris Caulfield LDRS

Image: Dorking Halls - Google.

Related reports:

Dorking Halls to shut again for restoration?

Dorking Halls to reopen after upgrade

Dorking Halls to get refit

Dorking refurb: "it's behind you"!

Epsom and Ewell Harriers return with gold aplenty

A number of **Epsom & Ewell Harriers** travelled to the beautiful island of Madeira for the European Masters Athletics Championships and returned with a big haul of medals. In total, Harriers athletes brought home seven gold and three silver medals to help GB to its most successful ever championships as the team topped the medal table with 129 gold medals, 20 clear of Germany with France a long way back in third place on 65 golds.

Most of the medals were won in the sprints. Helen Godsell claimed three golds and a silver in the W70 100m, 200m and relays while Anne Nelson was also part of the winning W70 4x100m team. Lisa Boland almost matched Helen with another 100m / 200m double, winning the 200m in a W40 British record of 25.27 seconds and anchoring the W40 team to silver in the sprint relay.

Steve Winder had a busy championships running a total of 37K across four events and capped off an exciting and enjoyable championships with an individual silver and team gold in the M50 Half Marathon on the final day.

Well done to all the Harriers and GB athletes on a memorable championships.

See below for a summary of E&E results and full results here:

https://data.opentrack.run/en-gb/x/2025/PRT/emacs/

Helen Godsell W70:

□ 100m 15.34

 \sqcap 200m 32.29 (31.94 in Heat)

 \square 4x100m GB Team 1st

☐ Mixed 4x400m GB Team 2nd

Anne Nelson W70:

100m 6th Final 17.66 (17.48 in Heat)

200m 5th Heat 2 37.31

 $\hfill \hfill \hfill$

Stacey Gonzalez W50:

Hammer Throw 10th 36.62

Shot Putt 21st 7.99

Discus 14th 24.47

Steve Winder M50:

3000m s/c 12th 10:58.99

8K XC 10th 30:24

5,000m 17:10.36

 $\ \square$ Half Marathon (GB Team $\ \square$) 1:18.53

Stuart Flack M50:

1500m 9th Heat 3 4:44.41

Lisa Boland W40:

□ 100m 12.49
□ 200m 25.27 (W40 British Record)
□ 4x100m GB Team 2nd
Ashley Reid M40:
100m 7th Semi Final 12.35 (12.31 in Heat)
200m 3rd Heat 7 25.05
4x100m GB Team 5th

Stuart Flack

The prefix \mathbf{W} stands for *Women* and \mathbf{M} for *Men*.

- The number indicates the **age category** of the athlete in Masters athletics (veterans' competition).
- So W70 means Women aged 70-74, W40 means Women aged 40-44, M50 means Men aged 50-54, etc.

These age brackets allow athletes to compete fairly against others of similar age at international Masters events.

Photo: W40 100M final - Epsom and Ewell Harriers YouTube

Since 1890, Epsom and Ewell Harriers has been bringing together athletes of all abilities at its home in Epsom. Whether you dream of breaking records or simply want to stay active, you'll find a place at Epsom and Ewell Harriers. Join HERE

Heathrow expansion - what it may mean for Epsom

The Government has launched a review of the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS), which sets out the policy framework for major airport expansion. The key points:

- Aiming for faster progress than the previous ANPS, the Government intends a draft for consultation by summer 2026 and to reach a final planning decision on a third runway within the current Parliament.
- Expansion of Heathrow is being promoted as a boost to UK economic growth, international connectivity and competitiveness specifically positioning Heathrow as Britain's only global hub airport.
- The review will test any proposed scheme against four criteria: climate change, noise, air quality and contribution to economic growth.
- The Government says it will ask for formal advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) to ensure alignment with the UK's net-zero commitments.
- Financing must be purely private, with no taxpayer cost, and transport access improvements must be covered by the promoters.
- Two promoters remain under consideration: Heathrow Airport Limited and the Arora Group; one will be selected by end November to proceed.
- The Government also flagged wider infrastructure and planning reforms (via the upcoming Planning & Infrastructure Bill) and the establishment of a new UK Airspace Design Service to modernise airspace in the London region.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the Government is "backing the builders, not blockers", and Chancellor Rachel Reeves added that after decades of false starts, "we are backing the builders to get Heathrow's third runway built, creating thousands of jobs, boosting growth ..."

Why this matters for Epsom & Ewell

Our borough is already directly affected by aircraft using the London hub airports, and the proposed expansion of Heathrow would likely increase the scale and intensity of that impact.

Flight paths and heights: The borough is within one of the "design envelopes" identified by Heathrow Airport Limited in its previous airspace consultation, meaning more frequent overflights at lower altitudes. Currently some aircraft arrive or depart over the borough at heights of 7,000 to 22,000 ft, averaging around 12,000 ft. Under the proposed expansion there could be flights as low as 3,000 ft and up to 47 arrivals per hour over the area.

Noise and air-quality concerns: The borough's geography — dense housing, many schools, and a declared Air Quality Management Area — means that increased aircraft at lower altitudes could raise noise, traffic and pollution burdens. The council previously warned of a possible four- to five-fold increase in noise levels in some scenarios.

Community and amenity risk: Residential areas, schools such as North East Surrey College of Technology, and leisure or nature sites like Epsom Common and Horton Country Park could experience greater disturbance.

Airspace redesign: The Government's plan to modernise UK airspace may change how routes are drawn. This could either reduce or shift impacts on particular communities, but consultation with affected areas such as Epsom & Ewell will be essential.

The opposing case

Environmental and local campaigners have long voiced opposition to expansion.

Climate and emissions: Groups such as Friends of the Earth argue that expanding a major hub airport is incompatible with the UK's net-zero goals, warning it would lock-in high carbon infrastructure and increase air and noise pollution.

Noise and community disruption: CPRE Surrey has said that the borough could experience up to 47 additional flights per hour at just 3,000 ft, and that such a change would be "unacceptable".

Consultation concerns: Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has criticised the information provided by Heathrow Airport Limited for lacking clarity around flight numbers, heights, and environmental impacts.

Financial and strategic risks: Critics also question whether the economic case for expansion remains strong in a changed post-pandemic aviation environment, and whether cost burdens such as community compensation and infrastructure upgrades have been fully addressed.

Current status

The Government review of the ANPS is underway, with a public consultation on the draft expected in summer 2026. One of the two promoter schemes will be selected by end November.

For Epsom & Ewell, the exact flight-paths and altitude projections are not yet finalised, and detailed new routes are unlikely to be confirmed until around 2027. Airspace modernisation may alter or mitigate local impacts.

What to watch

Residents and councillors should track:

- Future flight path proposals and altitude models over the borough.
- Noise, air-quality and health impact data once new routes are known.
- Community consultation opportunities.
- Any noise-respite or mitigation measures offered.
- The outcome of financial and planning reviews.

In conclusion

The DfT's announcement marks a major step toward the possibility of a third runway at Heathrow. For Epsom & Ewell it raises serious local questions — more frequent aircraft, lower flights, and possible increases in noise and pollution balanced against potential economic benefits.

Sam Jones - Reporter



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