

Guidance to consumers impacted by Heathrow Airport incident

21 March 2025



Selina Chadha, Group Director for Consumers at the UK Civil Aviation Authority, said: “Passengers are advised not to travel to Heathrow at this time and should contact their airlines for the latest flight updates. We appreciate the difficulties that travel disruption causes, and we expect airlines to take all necessary steps to support and assist their passengers during this period of disruption. The Civil Aviation Authority remains in close contact with Heathrow Airport, airlines, and the Government during this time.”

Heathrow Airport is closed today due to a fire at a nearby electrical substation, affecting the supply of power to its terminals. Unfortunately, this means that today’s flights to and from the airport have been cancelled. The knock-on effect may also lead to delays and further cancellations over the weekend.

Flights that had already departed that were due to land at the airport had to be diverted to other airports.

Air passenger rights

When flights are delayed and cancelled, we expect airlines to minimise the overall impact on you by keeping you informed and looking after you.

In many cases you will be protected by rights which are set out in UK legislation. The table below provides guidance on whether your flight is covered by UK legislation:

Flight Itinerary	UK or EU Air Carrier	Non-UK / Non-EU Air Carrier
Departing from Heathrow	<input type="checkbox"/> Covered	<input type="checkbox"/> Covered
Arriving to Heathrow	<input type="checkbox"/> Covered	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Covered

Whether these rights apply or not, we encourage airlines to do all they can to minimise the overall impact to their passengers.

Flight Cancellations

If your flight from Heathrow Airport has been cancelled

Please do not go to the airport and contact your airline for further advice.

Your airline is required to offer you the choice of a refund or find you an alternative flight (referred to as “re-routing”). Re-routing should be at the earliest opportunity or at a later date at your convenience, subject to availability.

Unfortunately, it may be challenging for airlines to offer re-routing during periods of major disruption, especially when an airport is closed at short notice. This may mean that your airline may not be able to get you to your destination as quickly as any of us would like. Nevertheless, if you still wish to get to your destination, we expect your airline to do all it can to offer you an alternative flight and keep you updated.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer suitable replacement flights, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

If your flight to Heathrow has been cancelled

We realise that being unable to travel home as planned will be concerning for you. We expect your airline to update you and advise you of your rights.

If your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline will be required by law to get you home and look after you while you wait by providing meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of time you are delayed.

To get you home, your airline is required to find you an alternative flight (referred to as “re-routing”). Re-routing should

be at the earliest opportunity or at a later date at your convenience, subject to availability.

Unfortunately, it may be challenging for airlines to offer re-routing during periods of major disruption, especially when an airport is closed at short notice. This may mean that your airline may not be able to get you home as quickly as any of us would like. Nevertheless, we expect your airline to do all it can to offer you an alternative flight and keep you updated.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer suitable replacement flights, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

Diverted flights

If your flight was diverted because it could not land at Heathrow and your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline should provide onward transportation (this may be by other means) to get you to Heathrow. It should also look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation while you wait, proportionate to the length of your delay.

If your airline is unable to proactively offer you care, or offer onward transportation, we expect it to promptly reimburse you for the costs you incur making your own arrangements. Make sure you keep receipts and avoid incurring excessive costs.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

If you are travelling on a package holiday

If you booked a package holiday, you may also benefit from additional rights, particularly if this means that your original package cannot be provided.

If flight delays or cancellations lead to your holiday being cancelled, or new arrangements are made that result in a significant change to your holiday, then your travel company must offer an alternative holiday if they can, or a refund for the full price of your package holiday.

Flight Delays

If your flight from Heathrow Airport is delayed

Your airline should look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of your delay.

If your flight to Heathrow Airport is delayed

If your flight is covered by UK passenger rights legislation, your airline should look after you and provide you with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of your delay.

Different rights apply if your airline is not a UK or EU carrier. Please speak to your airline or check its website for more information about your rights.

Fixed sum compensation

In addition to their obligations to look after passengers, as set out above, airlines are sometimes required to provide fixed sum compensation to passengers in certain circumstances.

Although we recognise the adverse impacts these delays and cancellations will have on passengers, the disruptions directly caused by the closure of Heathrow Airport are likely to be viewed as “extraordinary circumstances”. As a result, you are unlikely to be entitled to fixed sum compensation.

Extraordinary circumstances do not affect your other entitlements to replacement flights and care set out above — these are due regardless of the cause of your delay or cancellation.

Notes

The Civil Aviation Authority’s interpretation of extraordinary circumstances is illustrative and for guidance only, rather

than determinative of our view in any specific case that may arise. Each case will be context and fact specific. This does not mean that a passenger or group of passengers cannot try and claim compensation, including through the courts, if they disagree with our interpretation.

The protections set out above are based on Assimilated Regulation 261/2004 which collectively apply to all flights departing from the UK, and flights arriving into the UK on UK and EU carriers. Different rights may apply to passengers arriving on flights to the UK operated by non-EU carriers such as flights from the USA on US carriers.

Civil Aviation Authority News

Heathrow Airport. Mike McBey CC BY 2.0

Expanding London airports “not an environmental trade off” - Minister claims

21 March 2025



Expanding Heathrow and Gatwick is “crucial” for this government after years of people sticking “their heads in the sand” over plans for new runways at south east airports, the Secretary of State for Transport said.

Heidi Alexander made the remarks as she outlined its vision to “modernise” the aviation sector at the annual AirportsUK dinner at a time when passenger levels at the country’s airports had grown by 7 per cent - and signs indicating 2025 would be a record breaking year.

She said: “It’s clear this is a trend, not an unusual year. In fact, everything points to a record-breaking 2025 - and it’s easy to see why.

“The world has never been more interconnected. The desire for travel never stronger. Global forecasts show a near doubling of passengers and cargo in the next 20 years. So the demand is there. It’s growing. And if we don’t seize it, we not only risk being outpaced by European competitors, but we will be on the wrong side of public aspirations.”

The Government has already announced its support for a third runway at Heathrow Airport - which has put in £2.3billion to overhaul its infrastructure - and more recently said it was ‘minded to approve” a second at Gatwick.

She added: “We see airports as a crucial pillar of our plan for change. And it’s why we’ve acted, and acted quickly, across three areas - starting with expansion. It’s no secret that long ignored capacity issues in the south-east, has meant some of our major airports are now bursting at the seams.

“And yet - when it came to expansion - too many people stuck their heads in the sand. It left the industry in a perpetual holding pattern, with decisions circling around Whitehall for years, waiting for a clear signal.”

Expansion at Heathrow would be the first new full-length runway in the country for quarter of a century with the transport secretary saying her job was now to balance “economic benefits of expansion with social and environmental commitments.”

She said this was reflected in her caveated support for Gatwick - with a “clear path for expansion” set out if certain conditions are met.

A final decision on whether to approve Gatwick’s expansion is expected to be made on October 27.

The transport secretary finished: “I will never accept the false trade off that pits growing aviation against protecting our environment. I honestly believe we can, and must, do both. And how we do that is already being answered...

“Firstly, we cannot hope for quieter, cleaner and greener flights if our most critical piece of infrastructure is stuck in the past. We must ramp up work on reducing emissions. Green flight isn’t only essential for the industry, it’s existential.”

Related reports:

[“Blocks away” from airport expansions](#)

[Gatwick Airport Expansion](#)

[Report against airport expansion](#)

[Heathrow expansion reaction](#)

Heathrow Airport. Credit Heathrow Airports Limited.

Drowning in Debt: Epsom MP Demands Thames Water Takeover

21 March 2025



Thames Water should be put into “special administration” rather than given a £3billion bailout, Epsom and Ewell’s MP said after the utility company won a major court battle to stave off nationalisation.

In February, the embattled water firm won the right to go ahead with the huge loan despite some of Thames Water’s creditors opposing the costly 9.75 per cent interest rate. The decision was then challenged on appeal with the courts this week again finding in favour of Thames Water.

The company, which has overseen record sewage spills amid rising prices for customers – while paying out hundreds of millions of pounds in dividends to shareholders – says the £3billion loan puts them on a “more stable financial foundation”. From April, bills will increase by 31 per cent.

Thames Water CEO Chris Weston said they were pleased with the court’s decision “decisively refused” the appeal and allowed the loan to go through. He said: “We remain focused on putting Thames Water onto a more stable financial foundation as we seek a long-term solution to our financial resilience.

“Today’s news demonstrates further progress. We continue to work closely with our creditors, enabling us to access liquidity to continue to implement our turnaround plan so we can deliver better results for our customers and the environment while seeking to attract new capital into the business.

“As we have previously stated, the Company Plan will not affect customer bills but will provide continued investment in our network to fix pipes, upgrade our sewage treatment works, and maintain high-quality drinking water. We remain of the view that a market led solution is in the best interest of customers, UK taxpayers and the wider economy.”

The decision to reject Charlie Maynard, the Liberal Democrat MP for Whitney’s appeal has not pleased everyone.

Helen Maguire, the Lib Dem MP for Epsom and Ewell, described the bail out as “terrible news” for people “who have been paying the price for a company that is not fit for purpose.”

She said: “Thames Water is spending almost a third of my constituents’ bills on servicing their mountain of debt, instead of investing in vital infrastructure and stopping gallons of sewage from being pumped into our rivers.

“It is in the Government’s power to end this now. Thames Water must be put into special administration and we cannot allow failing water bosses to keep throwing good money after bad, while our regulators sit on their hands and customers’ bills go through the roof.”

Thames Water’s cash flow was set to run dry in March before the loan deal was agreed with speculation growing that it could come under government control. The network is also in need of major repair and modernisation expected to cost in the billions.

Related reports:

[Surrey’s LibDem MP majority take on Thames Water](#)

[Thames Water’s reputation going down the drain](#)

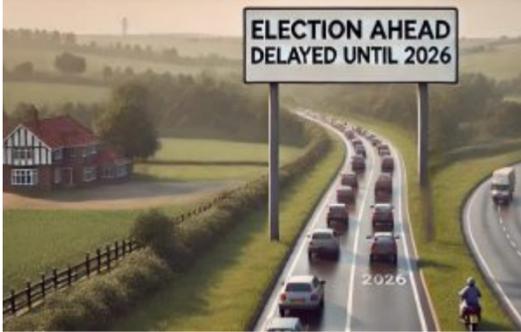
[Thames Water rebate](#)

[Epsom & Ewell households drowning as water bills rise?](#)

Image credit: By NegativeSpace in Travel (logo added).

Parliament motion to reinstate Surrey County May elections

21 March 2025



Surrey elections could still go ahead if a “fatal motion” (*see below) to overturn the decision to cancel the May 2025 ballot wins out. This year’s local elections were postponed until at least May 2026 after the Government passed legislation to delay the vote in order to allow councils to focus on devolution.

Its argument, backed by Surrey County Council, was that it would free officer time to focus on merging the lower layers of government while being overseen by more experienced politicians. It would also save millions of pounds as any newly created councils would need to hold their own polls soon after. Opponents to the delay argue that cancelling elections robs people of their right to vote and that elected officials only have authority by virtue of being backed by residents – and nobody voted for them to be in power this long.

Leader of the Conservative Party Kemi Badenoch had previously tried to stop the order passing in February, and now the fight has been picked up in the House of Lords with a debate set for March 24 to annul the government’s decision to cancel the election. Devolution would result in Surrey and its 11 boroughs and districts merging into either two or three mega councils overseen by a single mayor.

Two fatal motions put by Green Party Baroness Jenny Jones and the Liberal Democrats’ Baroness Pinnock will be debated, along with a Conservative Regret Motion. It calls on the order to be annulled as it “denies timely democratic representation to a substantial portion of the electorate; undermines local democratic accountability; disrupts established electoral cycles; lacks sufficient consultation; and erodes the democratic mandate for major restructuring of local government.”

Baroness Jones said: “I believe that a majority of peers are against the Government cancelling elections in May.” She added: “The government can’t guarantee that some areas won’t have a second year of cancelled elections as they try to impose mayors that will spend more time talking to ministers than local people. There has been no attempt to gather consensus within two-tier areas or to consult local residents about what they want. The government know that the elections in May would become a referendum of their plans to sideline local communities, and they might not like the answer that voters give.”

*Epsom and Ewell Times adds:

The phrase “**fatal motion**” is a specific parliamentary term used in the UK House of Lords. It refers to a type of motion that, if passed, effectively **annuls** or **blocks** a statutory instrument (a form of secondary legislation made by the government).

In this context, the “fatal motion” being debated on **March 24** aims to **overturn the government’s decision to cancel the May 2025 local elections**. If the motion succeeds, the original order delaying the elections would be nullified, and the elections could go ahead as planned.

This type of motion is distinct from a “**regret motion**,” which allows the Lords to express disapproval of a government decision but does not actually stop it from taking effect. The **fatal motion, on the other hand, has binding consequences** if passed.

Related reports:

[Elections Delayed as Surrey Faces Uncertain Future of Local Government Shake-Up](#)

[Political furies over Surrey election postponement](#)

[Surrey County Council election delay stirring up a storm](#)

[Surrey County elections must go ahead clamour](#)

Surrey's BIG debt question in local government reorganisation

21 March 2025



Plans for what Surrey could look like in local government reorganisation have been agreed but questions remain over looming debt. Councillors demanded to know how debt would be managed before the county is divided up.

The government outlined plans for a major reorganisation of local government in December. Two tier councils will be dissolved into unitary authorities which will carry out all local government functions like planning, bin collections as well as education and social care.

Members of the County Council have agreed on March 18 two proposals for how Surrey could be carved up in the most dramatic reorganisation of local services in 50 years. Serving 1.2m people, Surrey's current matrix - consisting of 12 borough and district councils and one county council - could be split into two or three new local authorities.

Leader of Surrey County Council, Tim Oliver, said he believes reorganisation is the "opportunity to turbo charge localism". He said: "Single councils are clearer for residents, have greater accountability, are more efficient and effective for delivery and strip out unnecessary bureaucracy and duplication."

Option 1, and the Conservative-run cabinet's preference, is to cut Surrey in half to create an east and west, or north and south. Exactly which councils will be included in the new authority are still yet to be determined, for instance whether Spelthorne borough is either on the east or west side.

Option 2, put forward by the majority of district and borough councils, consists of three new local authorities in the form of north-west, south-west and south-east Surrey. Again, full details of which councils would be included is still in the draft stages.

The two outline plans will be submitted to the central government on Friday March 21, who will ultimately have the deciding power on the new face of Surrey. Meanwhile, the local authorities will keep working to produce a final proposal by May 9.

With over £5.5bn worth of crushing debt across the county, members publicly urged the government to solve Surrey's financial issues before reorganisation. Cllr Catherine Powell said there needs to be "a clear path on the £5.5bn of debt" as it could create "significant imbalances" leading one council "more likely to fail". The Residents' Association and Independent Group Leader said she does not feel Surrey can propose new authorities without a solution.

Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr Paul Follows, said the councils' debt is "so toxic it will pollute the rest of this county". He lamented that reorganisation will not be about what is best for residents but about how money will be spent.

Speaking to the council, the leader said the government has "made it clear it does not intend to write off all of Woking's debt". Cllr Oliver said he will be having detailed conversations and Surrey will "have to come up with plan B".

Creating two councils in Surrey could save £27m after five years but three authorities could potentially make a loss of £8m, according to the county council's report. But the district and borough councils argue three unitary authorities would only save slightly less money than two and not be in a deficit.

However, Cllr Oliver said they have not taken into account the cost of reorganising services, such as adult social care, which could add substantial added costs. The leader claimed splitting into two is the best value for money for residents.

"There is no desire for Ashford to sink in with Godstone should the boundaries be cut [one] way," said Cllr Robert Evans OBE. He explained slicing Surrey into two would only reveal some towns would have little in common with villages they may have not even heard of.

Creating two unitary councils with a population of around 600,000 each, opponents slammed the proposal as bad for local democracy and eroding distinctive community identities. Members also flagged there would be significantly less councillors looking after greater areas.

But those battling for a dual council-led Surrey said few residents even identify with the council and local identity would be strengthened by working with community groups and local healthcare networks.

Questions about services like adult social care as well as children and education services were raised as major issues. Cllr Sinead Mooney said splitting the adult social care beyond two units would complicate the service and people could "fall through the gaps". Cllr Clare Curran highlighted the potential difficulties in retaining and splitting staff to more than two councils, meaning experienced teams could leave.

Cllr Fiona Davidson called for a need to assess how many children homes, specialist school places and demand for foster children to ensure Surrey is covered with the right services. Members agreed it was not just about making services cheaper and simpler- they had to be run better than currently.

Related reports:

Who will be saddled with Spelthorne's and Woking's £3 billion debts?

Could Woking's debt be shared by you after reorganisation?

What Epsom could do with Woking's £75 million bail out?

Ex-Council Officers under investigation for Woking's £2 billion debt

Will Epsom and Ewell be bailing out Woking?

No wonder Woking went bankrupt. Scandal of private school loans

PM confident of success in Woking

Woking's whopping bail out and tax rise

Epsom & Ewell's Local Plan under the Green microscope

21 March 2025



Epsom Green Belt Group Lodges Formal Complaint Against Borough Council Over Local Plan Submission

The Epsom Green Belt Group (EGBG) has submitted a formal complaint to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) regarding the council's Local Plan submission, raising concerns over procedural irregularities and transparency in the consultation process.

In a detailed letter dated 14 March 2025, EGBG congratulated the council for submitting the Local Plan before the 12 March deadline, ensuring it falls under the provisions of the December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, the group identified what it describes as significant flaws in the submission, particularly concerning documents that were not made available for public scrutiny before submission.

Concerns Over Topic Papers

A key contention in the complaint is the inclusion of seven Topic Papers—covering areas such as the Green Belt, economy, housing, spatial strategy, heritage, and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation—without prior consultation or approval by councillors. EGBG argues that these documents were neither included in the consultation evidence base nor subjected to review by the Local Plan Policy Committee (LPPC) or Full Council before submission. This, they claim, violates the requirements of the *Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012*.

The group asserts that these documents were not made available to the public in accordance with regulatory requirements, including being published on the council's website and made accessible at the Town Hall or local libraries during the consultation period. Furthermore, some Topic Papers were dated after the consultation closed, raising concerns about their legitimacy as submission documents.

EGBG has called on EEBC to take one of three actions: withdraw the Topic Papers from the submission, conduct a retrospective consultation, or submit an explanatory statement to the examiner clarifying the lack of prior consultation.

Criticism of the Consultation Statement

EGBG's complaint also highlights alleged shortcomings in the Consultation Statement submitted by EEBC. The group argues that:

- The statement underrepresents the weight of objections by counting consolidated group responses as single representations, despite EEBC's guidance encouraging collective submissions.
- The narrative summary is not impartial, as it includes the council's views rather than an objective summary of objections.
- Several key issues raised by EGBG in its formal response were omitted or misrepresented, particularly concerning specific development sites such as Hook Road Arena and Horton Farm.
- The Sustainability Appraisal was described as 'robust' despite extensive criticisms submitted by EGBG, including

claims that certain rankings were ‘misaligned’ and descriptions ‘bore little or no relation to supporting evidence.’

EGBG has requested that EEBC revise and republish the Consultation Statement to accurately reflect public concerns.

Council’s Response

When Epsom and Ewell Times approached for comment, EEBC provided a brief response, stating:

“Any complaint made to Epsom & Ewell Borough Council will be dealt with according to our Complaints Policy, published on our website: Complaint Policy V1.pdf.”

Related reports:

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan Submitted for Examination

The Local Plan plot thickens after revised NPPF

Council minority vote Local Plan to next stage with Green Belt in

Epsom and Ewell’s Draft Local Plan goes to Full Council

and many more..... search “Local Pan”

Surrey ratches up record fines for education failures

21 March 2025



Surrey County Council is on pace to be hit with more than £1 million in fines and redress payments due to its repeated failures within its education service over the last two years. The council says the system doesn’t work for families, schools, or local authorities – and has lobbied the government for changes, additional funding, and urgent reform.

The “record-breaking” fines, which have climbed from £47,000 in 2020 to more than half a million pounds last year and almost double its previous high of £258,730 in 2023, show the council has “lost control and continues to put vulnerable people at risk,” according to opposition leaders. Now, Surrey County Council has paid £239,510.75 in financial remedies in the first six months of this financial year – putting it on track to hit £470,000 for the full 12 months and a million pounds in the past two years. The majority, £220,965.00, relates to its education services, with the largest individual payments arising from complaints about missed education or missed provision, reports show. These are made when a child is unable to attend school because appropriate or alternative support has not been provided, or where the provision agreed in an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) has not been put in place.

The three largest individual remedies paid out so far this year are about £11,000, £8,900, and £8,353 – primarily in recognition of time missed. The largest fine or payment in its Children’s Social Care services so far is £8,325.12, in relation to “errors.”

Clare Curran, Surrey County Council cabinet member for children, families, and lifelong learning, said: “We are working hard to reduce spend on fines, which we know is higher than it should be. Provision and support for children with SEND is a systemic issue that councils up and down the country are grappling with. The national system is not working for families, schools, or councils, and we and other bodies are consistently lobbying the government for wider system changes, additional funding, and urgent reform.”

She said the council had also been working to improve the service with £15m put into a “three-year multi-agency recovery plan” in 2023, which was “now showing clear performance improvements.” Cllr Curran added: “The volume of stage one complaints received in the first six months of this year has decreased compared to the same period in the last two financial years, reflecting the efforts made by services across the council to resolve complaints early on and in the timeliness of responses. We also recognise that delays in issuing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) have historically contributed to missed provision and subsequent fines, however progress is being made in this area too.

“Our average EHCP timeliness levels in Surrey over the six months from September 2024 – February 2025 is 72 per cent, well over the national average of 50.3 per cent. We have also caught up on the backlog of Education, Health and Care needs assessments, and over 75 per cent of overdue annual reviews have now been brought up to date. We expect these improvements to start having an impact on the number of Local Government Ombudsman cases in the near future.

“We are resolute in our ambition to continue to improve services and outcomes for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities so that they are happy, healthy, safe, and confident about their future.”

Councillor Paul Follows, Liberal Democrat group leader at Surrey County Council, said the authority had been promising to fix children's services for years but has had little to show for it so far. He added: "Surrey County Council have for years been promising families that they would get a grip of children's services and SEND provision, and as these record-breaking fines indicate, they have lost control and continue to put vulnerable people at risk."

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

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has no choice but to vote for its own demise

21 March 2025



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Divided Over Local Government Reorganisation

An extraordinary meeting of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council was held on **18th March 2025**, where councillors engaged in an extensive and, at times, heated debate over the future structure of local government in Surrey. The meeting, convened in response to the Government's **English Devolution White Paper**, saw councillors grapple with the contentious question of whether Surrey should be reorganised into **two or three unitary authorities**.

Abolition of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Inevitable

Councillor **Hannah Dalton**, (RA Stoneleigh) Chair of the Standards and Constitution Committee and ruling Residents Association leader, acknowledging the gravity of the decision before the Council. "Tonight, colleagues, you have before you a report which will undo 50 years of local government," she said. She stressed that while she would not have chosen this path, reorganisation was now unavoidable due to central government's ambitions for devolution.

Dalton proposed a motion advocating for the creation of **three unitary authorities** in Surrey, arguing that this model would better maintain local democracy and ensure decision-making remained close to residents. She cited concerns that larger unitary councils could become remote and unresponsive, particularly to distinct local needs such as those of urban Epsom versus rural areas further south.

The Case for Two Unitaries

However, opposition to the three-unitary model came swiftly. Councillor **Bernie Muir** (Conservative Horton) raised concerns that splitting Surrey into three could strain service delivery, particularly for essential areas like **adult social care and children's services**. "It's not just about population size, but the nature and needs of our communities," she stated, highlighting the complexities of recruiting skilled staff across multiple authorities and the risks of disrupting services that are already under strain.

Echoing these concerns, Councillor **Julian Freeman** (Liberal Democrat College), who served Sutton Council for several years, warned against prioritising political considerations over operational efficiency. "Dividing an already overstretched county into three is not going to fix its problems," he said. Freeman pointed to **Surrey County Council's existing financial difficulties**, suggesting that smaller councils might lack the resources to deliver critical services effectively.

Democracy and Accountability at Stake

Others, including Councillor **James Lawrence** (LibDem College), pushed back, advocating for three unitaries as a way to preserve **local democratic accountability**. He cautioned against forming excessively large authorities, citing the example of North Yorkshire's unitary council, which has struggled to maintain strong community ties. "If we follow Surrey County's preference for two unitaries, we risk creating councils that are simply too large for residents to engage with effectively," he argued.

Meanwhile, Councillor **Alan Williamson** (RA West Ewell) expressed frustration with the process, describing the reorganisation as being "**railroaded through**" by the Government. "This is not about efficiency or saving money; it's about centralising power," he said. Nevertheless, he reluctantly backed the three-unitary model as the closest approximation to Epsom and Ewell's current system.

Cllr **John Beckett** (RA Auriol) said "Money is driving this. You look at all of the reports that support whether it's a two unitary or a three unitary. It's down to pounds, Shilling and pence. I personally feel that our residents will lose out it."

Cllr **Christine Cleveland** (RA Ewell Village) said "We're Residents Association. I'm proud to be a residents association councillor, because I think that brings me right smack back into the local people where we live, and that's who I care about, and that's who I'm hoping to represent. I think the bigger you do these authorities, the less that voice is heard."

Cllr **Clive Woodbridge** (RA Ewell Village) said "I am sceptical that local government reorganisation will bring many

benefits for our residents. The savings won't be as much as predicted, the costs will be far higher, and we will end up with a local government structure that is far less local than before. What is being proposed is not devolution, but to a large extent the reverse, taking many decisions about the services that local government delivers further away from residents and more towards the centre".

Labour councillors also contributed to the debate, with **Councillor Chris Ames** (Court) raising concerns about transparency and the accessibility of council discussions. "This is a public meeting. We shouldn't be putting things in code that are baffling to the public, that we're asking to engage in our democracy," he said, urging fellow councillors to ensure their discussions remained comprehensible to residents.

Councillor **Kate Chinn** (Labour Court) added that while the reorganisation was inevitable, it was vital to ensure that it worked for all residents. "The Labour Party tried to make the districts and boroughs fit better, and it's quite difficult because of the different socio-economic differences in different boroughs and districts," she remarked. She praised the efforts made in the proposal, stating, "They've done the best we can do, and I don't see why we're noting it and not voting to approve it"

What Happens Next?

With emotions running high, the meeting, following an amendment of Cllr **Alex Coley** (RA Ruxley) to approve not merely note, ultimately saw councillors **vote to approve** the submission of the interim proposal to Government, with a majority supporting the three-unitary preference. This recommendation will now be submitted as part of Surrey's interim plan for reorganisation, though the final decision will rest with the Government.

Local residents are encouraged to follow developments closely, as the reorganisation will have a profound impact on how services are delivered in Epsom and Ewell in the years to come. The debate may be over in the council chamber, but the future of local government in Surrey remains uncertain.

Related reports:

[Who will be saddled with Spelthorne's and Woking's £3 billion debts?](#)

[Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey: Key Proposals](#)

[An independent view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future](#)

[Local Labour view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future](#)

[Local LibDem view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future](#)

A comedy of errors - but it wasn't funny as Epsom & Ewell FC lose again

21 March 2025



Tadley Calleva 5-2 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League - Premier Division South. Saturday 15th March.

"We are right in the s**t now" stated our Manager Warren Burton after Wednesday's awful loss at Guildford City and if he felt bad then, who knows what he is thinking now after this self-inflicted implosion at Tadley Calleva who defeated us 5-2 without really playing that well. In fact, this was a dreadful advert for the Combined Counties League with six of the seven goals scored as a direct result of bad defensive errors, whilst the referee also got into the act with the worst display I've seen in over a hundred matches watching Epsom and non-Epsom matches this season.

On a bitingly cold day in front of a pitiful crowd, Burton handed Brendon McVey his debut after joining from South Park, but before he had a chance to get involved we were already up against it in a big way after Stefan Aiwone miscontrolled the ball and Alex Miller got through, only to be brought down for a penalty. Worse was to follow as the referee then decided our man should also receive a red card! Now, I'm aware that the rules state that this can still happen, but thought that it needed to be in cases where the defender made no effort to play the ball, which Aiwone clearly tried to do. Either way, Kieran Rodgers stepped up and sent Sami Nabbad the wrong way from the spot in just the fifth minute. It's possible this may have been our earliest ever sending off in a match and in my opinion it was the wrong decision.

This was a nightmare start but we were nearly level just three minutes later when McVey tried his luck from thirty yards, only to see the ball cannon off the face of the Tadley crossbar. It would have been a great way to mark a debut! Then Luke Miller drilled the ball low into the net, only for a foul to be awarded against Jason Bloor in the build up.

From that point though, we began to struggle as the home side began to make the extra man count. Nabbad made a great save when the Tadley player got through on goal and then a few minutes later in similar circumstances the shot was fired wide. Unfortunately Nabbad then came out for an ambitious long ball, but misjudged the bounce and caught it just outside the penalty area. The moment I saw the Assistant's flag go up, I knew we were in trouble, yet for some reason the referee

awarded only a yellow card. Any thoughts of having had a lucky escape were crushed moments later when the free kick was saved but not held by Nabbad and Ash Neal knocked the loose ball in from close range to make it 2-0 in the 35th minute.

Despite the deficit, we were still competitive. Then the home side started to make errors themselves, firstly when a pass was sent back to the home keeper Donny Burke whose touch let him down and allowed Carl Oblitey to take the ball round him, but his own touch wasn't the greatest and allowed Burke to recover and reclaim the ball. We went in at the break 2-0 down and a man down, but also fortunate to not be down to nine men.

The second half had been in play for just three minutes when the referee; clearly struggling with the contest and appearing to be out of his depth, stopped the game for an injury and restarted it with a contested drop ball, yet this rule was removed in 2019 according to Law 8!

We tried to reduce the deficit and with the wind in our favour McVey tried a lob from 40 yards, but Burke was able to catch it comfortably. Unfortunately, in the 56th minute the contest was as good as over with the only goal of the entire match that could truly be credited to the attacking side, as Rodgers scored his second and Tadley's third with a good run and cut back before almost stroking the ball beyond Nabbad into the far corner from 18 yards.

Yet within three minutes of their third goal, the home side started to be generous too. A hopeful ball towards the penalty area wasn't dealt with at all, and Oblitey ran through on goal, guiding the ball just inside Burke's left hand post to reduce the deficit. We then had another chance as the Tadley defence was opened up with substitute Sean-Michael Anderson setting up Adam Green for a shot, but it was a difficult angle and his shot was kept out by the well-positioned Burke. The match continued to be end to end though and in the 64th minute the home side restored their three goal lead with a slide rule pass through to Rodgers as our defence parted which left Rodgers a simple finish from fairly close range to complete his hat trick.

However, we were soon back on the attack and Green saw his shot brilliantly tipped over the bar by Burke, although Burke was fortunate when his next clearance hit Anderson and could have gone anywhere, but went across goal with our man requiring treatment for a ball to the face for his troubles. Burke would not be so fortunate in the 74th minute though, when he went to claim a simple catch, only to completely fumble it and leave another of our substitutes Ali Fofahan with an empty net to fire into from ten yards out and reduce the score to 4-2.

Despite being two goals behind, there were enough errors being made to give us some small hope of turning things around, but that was extinguished in the 81st minute after another bizarre decision. Oblitey clearly thought he had been fouled and said something, earning him a visit to the sin bin. However, Oblitey clearly was injured and as he walked slowly towards the touch line, he went down again, only to be shown a second yellow card! I'm still not entirely sure what rule he broke here and many of our people were confused with the situation also. Either way though, we were down to nine men for the eleventh time in our history and any chance of recovery was gone.

There was still time for some more poor defending in the 88th minute when Nabbad kicked his clearance straight at Oliver Rowan who then put it straight back past him for a fifth Tadley goal. To be fair to Nabbad he then made two good saves in the closing minutes as we fell apart and these could be really important now, as goal difference may yet come into it, although we did ourselves no favours in this match. We could blame the referee for some of this, but he also let us off big time with Nabbad's handball, which was almost identical to the offence that led to a red card for the Guildford keeper on Wednesday.

So where does this leave us? Strangely enough, things have become a lot clearer after this week's results as Balham also lost. Quite simply this now means that a home win against them next Saturday will relegate them and require something miraculous from Spelthorne Sports to overhaul us, even if we were to accumulate no further points at all. However, a loss next week against Balham will leave us in a precarious position and it's clear that we are going to need at least three more points from our remaining seven matches, starting at Horley Town on Tuesday. We are not the only team looking over our shoulders though, as Chipstead, Sandhurst Town and Camberley Town are not safe either and all have played more matches than us. However, we can only focus at our own situation.

Epsom & Ewell: Sami Nabbad, Niall Stillwell, Ethan Brazier, Adam Green (c), Stefan Aiwone, Anthony Nazareth, Luke Miller, Craig Dundas, Carl Oblitey, Brendon McVey, Jason Bloor

Subs: Sean-Michael Anderson for Bloor (59), Ali Fofahan for McVey (68), Conrad Essilfie-Conduah for Dundas (70), Kionte Gillfillian-Waul for Brazier (75),

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom Choral Society Delivers a Classical Delight at St Martin's Church

21 March 2025



March is concert season at St Martin's Church, Epsom. Between Ashted Choral Society on the 8th and Epsom Chamber Choir on the 29th, Epsom Choral Society took their turn on March 15th, with a programme of two favourite pieces from the classical period, performed just the way everybody likes them.

Haydn's *Mass in Time of Troubles*, nicknamed in honour of Lord Nelson, has its moments of subtlety and reflection, but when the string orchestra and solo quartet get augmented with trumpets and timpani, it needs a full choral society sound to rise above it and deliver the dramatic moments too.

Conductor Julian Collings likes tempi fast, making the most of the English Sinfonietta, whose string players' fingers moved so perfectly together they could have been attached to a giant pantograph. That meant the singers, too, had to know their parts thoroughly beforehand—well enough to keep up with the speed of both cascades of notes and a whole booklet of Latin words.

Mozart's *Solemn Vespers* covers five whole psalms before the more familiar text of *Magnificat*, and the words span many human experiences—from justice, compassion, and almsgiving to footstools and skulls. Their weekly practices for the two preceding months had been well spent.

The piece they knew best was the bijou motet *Ave Verum Corpus*, which they all sang from memory. That meant they could rise and fall musically as one instrument and stay together during the conductor's extensive *rallentando* between the two stanzas. The odd forgotten note length matters not at all when the ensemble improves by a leap.

Hearing pieces as familiar as *Ave Verum Corpus* or *Laudate Dominum*, the fifth of those *Vespers* psalms, I am reminded of other times I've heard or sung them myself. Next time I hear *Laudate Dominum*, I shall enjoy being reminded of this performance. Eleanor Pennell-Briggs' soprano voice has a liquid agility that nourishes every note. Meanwhile, the accompanying choral forces took care to supply the harmony without ever being overpowering.

However easy they were for the listener, these classical-period works pose challenges for the singer. At some distance from the conductor, the basses and tenors did well to keep up with his faster tempi. Everyone had to contend with tricks like tuning odd intervals in the many fugal passages, singing on the beat while the orchestra played off it, or vice versa, and at times, half the choir having to sing a whole movement a few beats behind the other half.

The opening Haydn motet *Insanae et Vanae Curae* was the only appearance of the main church organ, played by Peter Jaekel. He found some rich and sonorous colours during the outer sections. I always enjoy his playing, but the choir couldn't quite match his volume. They wisely had to keep enough in reserve for the longer pieces to follow.

Near the end of the *Nelson Mass* is a minor-key *Benedictus* movement, with martial trumpets and drums. I was glad to hear the sopranos still had the power to confidently scale past the top of the clef, wholly in the spirit of a 'time of troubles.' Likewise, the altos were prepared for some telling moments in the concluding movement of the Creed.

The other three soloists had less chance for display than the soprano. Gavin Horsley sang a prayerful *Qui tollis*, asking gently for Jesus' mercy. Beth Moxon demonstrated that she could keep projecting even at the lower realms of a mezzo's range. In brief solo moments, Paul Hopwood showed signs that he would be comfortable in an even larger venue than St Martin's Church. All showed delightful awareness of the others during ensemble moments.

The concert ended with Helen Phillips, the choir's chairman, thanking the audience for providing the motivation that prompted the musicians to put the effort in, taking great pains to make it sound easy. It was a duty I, and all in the building, were very happy to perform.

Nigel Williams

Photo: Epsom Choral Society at St Martin's Church. Credit Clive Richardson

Who will be saddled with Spelthorne's and Woking's £3 billion debts?

21 March 2025



The Surrey Borough of Spelthorne's financial crisis is "even more critical", with millions in cuts needed to avoid catastrophic bankruptcy, says new report.

Best value inspectors were called in to review the council's finances in May 2024 in light of extremely high levels of debt and borrowing. Spelthorne's debt reached £1.096 billion in March 2023 - the second highest level of debt for a district council in England at the time.

The findings of the inspection have been published today (March 17). The report highlights that the council "is in a critical financial position, burdened by unsustainable debt levels, significant investment risks, and systemic governance weaknesses".

Between 2016 and 2018, Spelthorne Borough Council borrowed around £1 billion to invest in a commercial portfolio of Grade A office buildings and residential land in and around the borough. But slow progress on regeneration and housing projects highlights a limited understanding of regeneration delivery as well as finance and risk, the inspectors said.

Best Value Inspectors concluded: "The council's use of its resources is inadequate". In the damning report, they said Spelthorne's approach to property acquisitions "lacked due regard to long-term planning and risk management" and had an "overly-optimistic reliance on consistency" of the market that the Council first entered.

The report said: "The combination of voids, expiring leases, and falling income streams from the investment portfolio threatens the stability of its budget. Adding to the strain are the ongoing revenue costs of housing and regeneration projects, which were suspended in late 2023. Despite these mounting financial pressures, no clear path forward has been outlined to address them."

The recovery process will be overseen by government-appointed commissioners. Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon, wrote to leader Cllr Joanne Sexton to say the local authority is failing in its 'best value' duty to residents, essentially meaning the authority is defecting on its ability to make decisions that are economic, efficient and effective and work towards continuous improvement.

Inspectors said the council has a "poor record" of fully and effectively implementing recommendations from external reviews. The report read: "Senior officers display an optimism bias and a lack of awareness of the true situation facing the council. We do not believe the council has the capacity and capability to make the urgent changes needed without significant external support."

Both the inspection and the recent external audit found errors in the council's financial practices including the miscalculating the minimum amount Spelthorne needs to keep paying back its debt, incorrectly classifying expenses as assets, further undermining the revenue budget.

"The outline budget report for 2025/26 to 2028/29 presented to members on December 9, 2024 shows the need to deliver £8.6 million in savings by 2028/29, equating to 64 per cent of the council's core spending power for 2024/25, or 33 per cent of the net budget, assuming contributions from commercial income. In our view, even these projections are understated. Despite this, we have seen no credible strategy in place to achieve savings of this level," said the report.

Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council, Cllr Joanne Sexton, said, "This Group Administration has faced a challenging time and has been actively pursuing the right solution to manage the historical debt that it has inherited. We have met with the Local Government Minister from central government, and we have agreed to work in partnership to take decisive action in the remaining time we have before local government reorganisation is implemented. Our pledge remains that we will always put residents at the heart of everything we do."

The council's senior management team also came in for criticism in the report. Inspectors said the team seemed "overly confident" and "appear to underestimate the scale of the financial risks". Member challenges remain "limited" according to the report, with many councillors not fully understanding the risks at hand. Inspectors highlighted there was a "wider breakdown" of relationships between senior management and the political leadership.

The findings of the inspection highlight the council is failing to meet best value standards in five critical areas:

- Use of Resources;
- Continuous Improvement;
- Governance;
- Leadership;
- Culture.

Inspectors have published thirteen recommendations for Spelthorne:

1. Commissioner-led intervention
2. Comprehensive commercial strategy
3. Review and strengthen asset management
4. Review of the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision
5. Revised Medium-Term Financial strategy
6. Debt reduction strategy
7. Transformation strategy development
8. Review and strengthen finance function
9. Improvement and recovery plan
10. Revised Corporate Plan
11. Audit Committee structure
12. Culture and relationship building
13. Housing delivery

Emily Dalton

Spelthorne Borough Council offices in Knowle Green, Staines. Credit: Emily Coady-Stemp

Chris Caulfield compares Woking and Spelthorne:

The "critical" state of Spelthorne Borough Council's finances means it must cut at least £8.6 million from its budget by 2028. To put that into perspective, bankrupt Woking Borough Council made £8.4 million in cuts last year in an effort to right its own mess. It managed it by cutting 20 per cent of its workforce, scrapping all grant funding to community groups, and shutting services such as public toilets.

Spelthorne Borough Council's finances are "unsustainable", with a £1 billion pound debt and a falling income stream. It means the authority must also cut millions in services to avoid the catastrophe of bankruptcy. The damning critique of the north Surrey council's situation was published today, Monday, March 17, on the back of a best value review into the way the borough has been managed.

Spelthorne Borough Council, like Woking, borrowed heavily to invest in property and used the income to pay for services above and beyond what it could have otherwise afforded. And, again like Woking, it failed to put enough money aside to cover the cost of debt interest repayments.

"In essence, the council's revenue budget is under far greater pressure than recognised by the council. Inherent risks are beginning to materialise, and could accelerate rapidly", the Spelthorne Borough Council: Best Value Inspection report read.

It comes as the government confirmed it was proposing an intervention package, including appointing commissioners to oversee changes in how Spelthorne Borough Council is run because the borough lacks experience needed to make the cuts and had "no credible strategy in place to achieve savings of this level."

Spelthorne has to shed £8.6 million from 2028/29 budget. Last year Woking Borough Council - the only local authority with a higher per capita debt than Spelthorne - achieved £8.4 million in savings.

This is how residents and community groups in Woking were affected. It is being used to paint a picture of what cuts at that scale look and feel like

How Woking achieved its savings.

- Centres for the community and day care facilities closed and merged
- Sports pavilions transferred to sports clubs to take over and "ensure as many of these facilities can remain open".
- Grants to voluntary and community groups stopped
- Woking Community Transport reduced but reviewed annually as part of the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- Grounds maintenance and street cleaning services scaled back to statutory levels.
- Independent living and family services transferred to Surrey County Council or other boroughs, which means they will continue to operate as normal with no impact to services users.
- Business liaison and support services will be scaled back
- All public toilets closed, except those located in Victoria Place and Wolsey Walk in Woking Town Centre.

- Fees and charges increased
- Loss of up to 60 council staff
- Council tax was also increased that year by 10 per cent. Since then it has risen by a further 2.99 per cent.

Related reports:

Who will be saddled with Spelthorne's and Woking's £3 billion debts?

Could Woking's debt be shared by you after reorganisation?

What Epsom could do with Woking's £75 million bail out?

Ex-Council Officers under investigation for Woking's £2 billion debt

Will Epsom and Ewell be bailing out Woking?

No wonder Woking went bankrupt. Scandal of private school loans

PM confident of success in Woking

Woking's whopping bail out and tax rise

Geography Squadron celebrates 70 years in Ewell

21 March 2025



In a ceremony held on Saturday 15th March in **Ewell** the **135 Geographic Squadron Royal Engineers** commemorated their 70th anniversary at **Mercator House** (off Welbeck Close) by unveiling the first Ordnance Survey (OS) benchmark in over 25 years. This event not only celebrates the squadron's longstanding presence in Ewell but also highlights their historic ties with the OS, dating back to 1791.

A Legacy of Geographic Excellence

Established in 1948, the 135 Geographic Squadron has evolved into a pivotal Army Reserve unit, providing comprehensive geographic support to UK Defence operations. Their expertise encompasses surveying, terrain analysis, and the production and distribution of vital geographic materials. Over the years, squadron members have been deployed to various operational theatres, including Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Balkans, underscoring their critical role in supporting military operations.

The Significance of Ordnance Survey Benchmarks

Ordnance Survey benchmarks are physical markers that denote height above Ordnance Datum Newlyn, the standard reference point for elevation in mainland Great Britain. Traditionally etched onto enduring structures like buildings or bridges, these benchmarks have been integral to accurate mapping and surveying. However, with advancements in technology, the maintenance of these physical markers has ceased, making the recent installation at Mercator House particularly noteworthy.

Ceremonial Unveiling at Mercator House

The unveiling ceremony featured a parade by current squadron members and veterans, symbolizing the enduring camaraderie and dedication within the unit. Nick Bolton, Director General and CEO of Ordnance Survey, officiated the event, reflecting on the deep-rooted connection between OS and the 135 Geographic Squadron. He remarked, "I am proud to unveil such a permanent monument to the deep connection between Ordnance Survey and 135 Geographic Squadron."

The Officer Commanding 135 Geographic Squadron said: "This has been a fantastic opportunity for the Squadron to mark this significant milestone within the community of Epsom and Ewell. It also recognises the remarkable role OS Reservists played in our Squadron's early years and the deep geographic links that exist with OS today."

A Shared History: OS and Military Collaboration

The relationship between Ordnance Survey and the military is deeply entrenched in history. The OS's origins trace back to the 18th century when Major-General William Roy initiated a detailed survey of the Scottish Highlands, laying the groundwork for modern mapping techniques. This collaboration has persisted through significant historical events, with OS providing essential geospatial data during both World Wars and continuing to support military operations and national resilience efforts in contemporary times.

The establishment of the new benchmark at Mercator House not only honours the squadron’s past achievements but also signifies a commitment to ongoing excellence in geographic support. As technological advancements continue to transform mapping and surveying, the enduring partnership between Ordnance Survey and the 135 Geographic Squadron Royal Engineers remains a cornerstone of the UK’s defence infrastructure.

This commemorative event serves as a testament to the squadron’s dedication and the pivotal role of accurate geographic information in safeguarding the nation.

Image: 135 Survey Engineer Regiment training in the 1950s

Epsom & Ewell ranks in the middle of Surrey Councils’ tax charges

21 March 2025



Residents will face another jump in council tax bills from April 1 as local authorities have announced their budgets for the coming year. Surrey County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and each of the county’s 11 districts and boroughs, confirmed their increases separately last month, with council tax bills and collection being the responsibility of the districts and boroughs.

Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend confirmed a rise of £14 per year for residents amid an increase in national insurance contributions and officer pay rises. While Surrey County Council, responsible for adult social care as well as services including road repairs and schools, increased its tax by 4.99 per cent on Band D homes.

Meanwhile, many local authorities have had to make tough decisions to balance the books. Councils slammed the government for giving an ‘unkind’ or ‘difficult’ financial settlement, meaning they have had no increase in spending power. Inflation, wage rises and rocketing costs for employer’s national insurance contributions have all pulled at the seams of councils’ pockets.

	Borough Council	Band D
1	Woking	£ 2,482.03
2	Reigate and Banstead	£ 2,448.79
3	Elmbridge	£ 2,442.06
4	Surrey Heath	£ 2,439.20
5	Tandridge	£ 2,436.24
6	Epsom and Ewell	£ 2,416.84
7	Spelthorne	£ 2,412.78
8	Waverley	£ 2,397.78
9	Guildford	£ 2,388.01
10	Mole Valley	£ 2,381.20
11	Runnymede	£ 2,380.06

Table created by Epsom and Ewell Times

Where the thousands of new homes will be built in Surrey’s smallest borough - Epsom and Ewell

21 March 2025



“Critical” details on nearly 5,000 homes across 35 sites in Epsom and Ewell have been laid out after the borough council submitted its planning masterplan.

The local plan will shape the future of the borough’s jobs, environmental protections, and leisure development – as well as allocating land for new homes and much-needed infrastructure improvements, the council said.

The single largest development will be in Horton Farm, between Horton Lane and Hook Road, where more than 1,250 homes are earmarked to be built alongside business spaces, a community building and park.

The plan will go before public examination by an independent inspector later this year for sign off.

Councillor Peter O’Donovan, chair of the licensing and planning policy committee, at Epsom and Ewell Council said “I am very grateful to officers who have worked diligently to reach this milestone, ensuring that the local plan is assessed against the framework to which it was developed.

“Overall, it has been a huge undertaking.”

The council has been set housing targets of about 4,700 homes with the local plan identifying a supply of 4,914.

He added: “I know that the plan will not please everyone.

“However, I believe it is a huge step forward for our borough and our communities, and if adopted it will help ensure that all Epsom and Ewell residents can enjoy the benefits that this strategic plan aims to deliver – whether their focus is on access to affordable homes, leisure facilities and green space, to jobs and economic growth.”

Included in the target are 456 homes that have already been built. Green belt land will be used to provide 1,580 homes.

The council says its planning bible will create “new vibrant communities” centred on currently underdeveloped transport hubs or development of larger sites.

It hopes these new developments will “form new communities and grow to be distinct places with their own identities.”

To support this, they will need to be “supported by appropriate investments in community and transport infrastructure to ensure existing and new residents are supported in terms of movement, health, education and other services.”

Epsom town centre will also be redeveloped to create improved retail space.

“It is important that the town centre continues to diversify and attract uses other than retail to the town centre to reflect the social and economic changes that have affected demand for retail and office space and investment.

“Developing the night-time economy is a key opportunity, with recent investment in a new cinema and the Playhouse Theatre”, the submitted plan read.

So far 35 sites have been allocated for redevelopment. Some, such as the 455 homes and a bespoke performing arts centre for the Laine Theatre Arts at the Southern Gas Network Site have already begun working through the planning system.

The 35 site allocations the council hopes will deliver a significant proportion of the Local Plan’s housing requirement.

- Southern Gas Network Site Allocated for: Approximately 455 dwellings and a bespoke performing arts centre for the Laine Theatre Arts
- Hook Road Car Park Allocated for: Approximately 150 dwellings
- Solis House, 20 Hook Road Allocated for: Approximately 20 dwellings
- Bunzl, Hook Road Allocated for: Approximately 20 dwellings
- Epsom Town Hall Allocated for: Approximately 90 dwellings
- Hope Lodge Car Park Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Former Police and Ambulance Station Sites Allocated for: Erection of a new 85 bedroom residential, nursing and dementia care home for the frail elderly
- Epsom Clinic Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Depot Road and Upper High Street Car Park Allocated for: Approximately 100 dwellings and a decked public car park

- 79-85 East Street Allocated for: Approximately 35 dwellings
- Finachem House, 2 - 4 Ashley Road Allocated for: Approximately 20 dwellings
- Global House Allocated for: Approximately 75 dwellings
- Swail House Allocated for: Refurbishment of Swail House for residential use and the provision of replacement purpose-built specialist accommodation for the RNIB consisting of approximately 45 dwellings (net) located to the rear of Swail House
- 60 East Street Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Corner of Kiln Lane and East Street (101b East Street) Allocated for: Approximately 5 dwellings
- Land at Kiln Lane Allocated for: Approximately 40 dwellings
- Hatch Furlong Nursery Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Land to the Rear of Rowe Hall Allocated for: Extra Care Accommodation comprising 96 self-contained apartments, staff and communal facilities
- 7 Station Approach Allocated for: Approximately 5 dwellings
- Esso Express, 26 Reigate Road Allocated for: Approximately 10 dwellings
- Richards Field Car Park Allocated for: Approximately 7 dwellings
- Etwelle House, Station Road Allocated for: Approximately 20 dwellings
- 140-142 Ruxley Lane Allocated for: Approximately 12 dwellings
- Garages at Somerset Close & Westmorland Close Allocated for: Approximately 6 dwellings
- 64 South Street Epsom Allocated for: Approximately 6 dwellings
- 35 Alexandra Road Allocated for: Approximately 8 dwellings
- 22-24 Dorking Road Allocated for: Approximately 18 dwellings
- 63 Dorking Road Allocated for: Specialist Care Home with ancillary nurses accommodation (equivalent to 6 dwellings)
- 65 London Road Allocated for: Care home up to 81 bedrooms
- Epsom General Hospital Allocated for: Approximately 305 units older people's accommodation (Use Class C2), 24 key worker dwellings and a children's nursery
- Land at West Park Hospital (South) Allocated for: Approximately 50 dwellings
- Land at West Park Hospital (North) Allocated for: Approximately 150 dwellings
- Land at Chantilly Way Allocated for: Approximately 30 dwellings
- Hook Road Arena Allocated for: New Sports Hub for the borough to include playing pitches (grass and artificial), a new pavilion and changing facilities. The provision of approximately 100 dwellings on the eastern part of the site
- Land at Horton Farm Allocated for: Approximately 1,250 dwellings including some specialist housing and self-build plots, 10 gypsy and traveller pitches, business incubation space, community building and a public park of approximately 7ha in addition to other green and blue infrastructure.

Related reports:

[Epsom and Ewell Local Plan Submitted for Examination](#)

[The Local Plan plot thickens after revised NPPF](#)

[Council minority vote Local Plan to next stage with Green Belt in](#)

[Epsom and Ewell's Draft Local Plan goes to Full Council](#)

[and many more..... search "Local Pan"](#)

Local Government Reorganisation in Surrey: Key

Proposals

21 March 2025



The leaders of all 12 Surrey councils have reached an agreement on the fundamental principles for an interim proposal concerning local government reorganisation (LGR) within the county. The proposal, which follows a government directive issued in February, outlines the potential restructuring of Surrey's local government into either two or three unitary authorities.

Dividing Surrey: Two or Three Unitaries?

While Surrey County Council has advocated for the creation of two unitary councils, the majority of the district and borough councils favour a three-unitary model. The proposal has now been submitted to the government, which will decide whether to pursue one of these options further before a final business case is due in May. A government decision on the restructuring is anticipated in the autumn.

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, expressed his confidence in the two-unitary approach, stating:

"I am clear that two unitary councils would bring the most benefits for Surrey's residents. It would create a simpler model of local government that is more efficient, offers better value for money and improved outcomes for all."

He also highlighted the potential for devolution under this model, allowing for the election of a mayor who could secure additional powers and funding for Surrey.

However, the vast majority of district and borough councils, including Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, have shown strong support for a three-unitary model. Hannah Dalton, Chair of Surrey Leaders Group and Leader of the Residents Association ruling group in Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, remarked:

"The leaders of Surrey's councils have been meeting weekly to discuss how local government will be structured here in Surrey. Later today, district and borough councils will publish a report outlining potential options on what form local government reorganisation may take, which will include scenarios for two and three unitary councils. The vast majority of the 11 districts and boroughs are supporting three unitaries."

Dalton emphasised the importance of securing the best possible outcome for Surrey's residents, reaffirming the commitment of local councils to work collaboratively in developing the final proposal.

Financial and Structural Implications

The recently released **Interim Plan - Part B** provides a high-level analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal.

Two Unitary Councils:

- Would create larger, more financially sustainable authorities (populations between 500,000 and 600,000 each).
- Would align with government criteria for devolution and financial sustainability.
- Risks include potential disruption in service delivery and the challenge of balancing financial stability between the two authorities.

Three Unitary Councils:

- Would offer more localised governance, aligning with existing borough and district identities.
- Could weaken financial resilience due to smaller council tax bases and greater complexity in disaggregating existing services.
- Risks include higher long-term costs and potential for economic disparity between wealthier and less affluent areas.

According to the financial appraisal, the three-unitary option is expected to be the most expensive to implement and least likely to meet government criteria for financial sustainability.

Next Steps and Government Decision

The submission of the interim proposals on 21st March marks the first step in the government's review process. Local

councils across Surrey are set to hold **Extraordinary Council Meetings** in the coming weeks to discuss and note the submission.

A full business case is required by 9th May, and consultations with residents, businesses, and stakeholders will continue in the interim period. Surrey's final decision will ultimately rest with central government, which is expected to announce its verdict in the autumn.

The coming months will determine whether the vision of two or three unitary authorities prevails and what the reorganisation will mean for local governance, service delivery, and financial sustainability across Surrey.

Stay updated with the Epsom and Ewell Times for ongoing coverage of the local government reorganisation process.

Related reports:

Could Woking's debt be shared by you after reorganisation?

An independent view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future

Local Labour view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future

Local LibDem view on Epsom and Ewell Council's future

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan Submitted for Examination

21 March 2025



Residents Encouraged to Stay Engaged and Make Representations

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has officially submitted the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan (2022-2040) to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination. This significant step, taken on 10 March 2025, means that an Inspector will now be appointed by the Government to assess whether the Plan meets legal compliance and soundness criteria under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023.

The Local Plan, which will shape the development of the borough for the next 15 years, has already undergone public consultation between 20 December 2024 and 5 February 2025 as part of the Regulation 19 Proposed Submission process. The appointed Inspector will consider the representations made during this period as part of the examination.

What Happens Next?

A Programme Officer, Charlotte Glancy, has been appointed to facilitate the examination process. Independent of the Council, she will manage all procedural and administrative matters, acting as the point of contact between the Inspector, Council officers, and those who submitted representations.

Anyone who requested to appear at the examination hearings will be contacted by the Programme Officer in due course regarding the issues the Inspector wishes to explore further and the relevant hearing dates.

How to Access the Local Plan Documents

Residents who wish to review the submitted Local Plan and supporting documents can access them online at the Council's Local Plan Examination webpage: <https://www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/localplanexamination>.

Hard copies of key documents are available for public inspection at the following locations:

- **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Offices** (Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, KT18 5BY) - Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- **Epsom Library** (6 Epsom Square, KT19 8AG) - Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9.30am-5.30pm; Tuesday, Thursday: 9.30am-7pm; Saturday: 9.30am-5pm
- **Ewell Library** (Bourne Hall, Spring Street, KT17 1UF) - Tuesday to Saturday, 9.30am-5pm
- **Ewell Court Community Library** (Ewell Court House, Lakehurst Road, KT19 0EB) - Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: 10am-5pm; Saturday: 10am-4pm

- **Stoneleigh Community Library** (1 Stoneleigh Broadway, KT17 2JA) – Monday, Tuesday, Friday: 10am-1pm, 2pm-5pm; Thursday: 10am-1pm; Saturday: 10am-4pm

Residents should check the library opening times before attending, as they may be subject to change. For enquiries about library access, contact Surrey County Council at 03456 009 009.

Making Representations and Further Enquiries

Those with queries regarding the Local Plan examination process should direct them to Programme Officer Charlotte Glancy:

- **Email:** bankssolutionsuk@gmail.com
- **Telephone:** 01903 776601 / 07519 628064
- **Postal Address:** C/O Banks Solutions, 80 Lavinia Way, East Preston, West Sussex, BN16 1DD

For general information on the Local Plan, residents can contact the Planning Policy Team at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council:

- **Email:** localplan@epsom-ewell.gov.uk
- **Telephone:** 01372 732000

This is a crucial stage in the Local Plan’s development, and residents who have previously submitted comments or have an interest in the borough’s future planning policies are encouraged to stay informed and involved in the process. The examination will determine the Plan’s suitability in guiding local development, housing, infrastructure, and environmental policies up to 2040.

Related reports:

The Local Plan plot thickens after revised NPPF

Council minority vote Local Plan to next stage with Green Belt in

Epsom and Ewell’s Draft Local Plan goes to Full Council

and many more..... search “Local Pan”