Small Business is my business says Epsom's MP

Helen Maguire, MP for Epsom and Ewell, has announced a new survey for local businesses and will spend time working alongside staff at three local establishments in the lead-up to **Small Business Saturday** on 7th December.

Small Business Saturday is an annual campaign aimed at encouraging the public to support local businesses and raise awareness of their contributions to the community and the economy.

Ms Maguire is set to visit Fatima's Hair Boutique in Epsom, All Things Nice Café in Ewell, and Lavender Flowers in Ashtead, where she plans to engage directly with staff and customers. According to her office, these visits are intended to provide her with a better understanding of the challenges faced by small businesses in the constituency.

The MP, who has previously run a charity fundraising consultancy and a fitness business, has highlighted her personal experience as a former small business owner. She says this gives her an insight into the pressures and demands local entrepreneurs encounter.

Ms Maguire's survey, available on her website, invites business owners to share their experiences and concerns. She says the results will help her advocate for better support for small businesses in Parliament.

Speaking about her initiative, Ms Maguire said:

"Local businesses like All Things Nice and Lavender Flowers are integral to our community, providing not just services but also fostering a sense of connection and vibrancy. I look forward to working alongside them and learning more about how I can help."

The MP also criticised the government's proposed National Insurance hike, stating:

"Small businesses here in Epsom and Ewell have faced rising costs and reduced support in recent years. The planned National Insurance increase will place even more strain on them, and I'll continue to press for this to be reconsidered."

The Liberal Democrats have stated that they oppose the National Insurance rise, which they claim will adversely affect small businesses nationwide.

Ms Maguire's visits will take place tomorrow and Friday.

What is Small Business Saturday?

Small Business Saturday, now a well-established event in the UK, promotes awareness and support for independent businesses. In 2022, shoppers were estimated to have spent £1 billion at small businesses on the day. The campaign encourages consumers to shop locally and highlights the broader contributions of small enterprises to communities and economies.

Small Business Saturday is an independent initiative that runs across the UK, with more details available on its official website.

Helen Maguire's Small Business Survey can be accessed here.

Surrey pharmacies need a better financial prescription

Pharmacy owners in Surrey say "enough is enough" as they complain working 12-hour days and barely breaking even. One pharmacist said it has to dispense just over 6,000 prescriptions a month to just about balance the books.

Over the last decade or so, the funding community pharmacies received from the government and NHS have been cut by 40 per cent, with 1,500 closing in the last 10 years.

The government announced a £26 billion boost for the NHS and social care in the budget. A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: "We are committed to working with the pharmacy sector and we will set out further details on allocation of funding for next year in due course."

Asma'a Al-hindawi has worked at her family-owned pharmacy in Horley, after graduating from university in 2010. What used to be a family passion, is now a tough grind. She said: "It's a lot of hard work. Sometimes me and my sister have to work 12-13 hours a day, six days a week, and still we're only breaking even."

Pharmacies are paid on a piecemeal basis for dispensing prescriptions issued by GPs. This makes up most of the community pharmacies' income. In 2012, the piecework fee was £2.75 per item; but now, despite inflation, the fee stands at £2.18 per prescription dispensed.

Despite her family business making a loss, Asma'a said: "I feel I have a moral obligation to work this hard to keep the pharmacy running and to help the community with their healthcare." She explained the pharmacy is a "community service" which he has stuck by despite often getting verbal abuse.

She said the NHS "doesn't catch up with the prices of the market" when the market cost of medicine increases. Sometimes items are out of stock so the pharmacy has to buy more expensive branded products, but the pharmacy still only receives the £2.18 fee.

"It's an ethical dilemma," said Asma'a, "because you can't tell a patient you cannot sell the medicine otherwise you will make a loss." Speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service in a bustling pharmacy, with shelves high of medicine, Asma'a said: "If the pharmacy is this busy, it should be making a profit."

Dorking & Horley MP Chris Coghlan (Liberal Democrat) said: "We really need to make sure our pharmacies are paid properly for the work they're doing so they can survive and keep helping the community."

John Bell, who runs South Street Pharmacy in Dorking, started his own mini campaign in protest against the funding situation. He turned off the lights of the pharmacy and posted a note on the window stating: "Why are the lights out in pharmacies? Find out more inside."

He started the campaign to raise awareness that 500 community pharmacies have closed across the country over the last year. "There comes a point when enough is enough," said John, explaining pharmacies can't afford to keep pouring money into a business just to keep it afloat.

The Dorking pharmacist said he makes "zero money" from the main pharmacy business and has to subsidise it with selling the extra hair accessories, sun cream and glasses on the shop floor. Already running at a "skeleton staff", John said he is dreading the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions. He said staffing costs have gone up by 50 per cent in 10 years.

Mr Coghlan has written to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care , to "stop the decimation of independent pharmacies". He wrote: "It's unacceptable that pharmacies are subsidising NHS work out of their own pockets while being expected to take on more responsibilities."

In his letter, the Lib Dem MP has urged Mr Streeting to review and increase NHS reimbursement rates to reflect the "true cost" of dispensing and running a pharmacy. Mr Coghlan also asked for employers' national insurance rise to be "halted" to prevent a "further financial blow" on pharmacies and health providers.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: "Community pharmacy has been neglected for years, but it has a vital role to play in the shift of care from hospital to the community as we reform the health service through our 10 Year Health Plan.

"We commend the hard-working pharmacists working to support their communities across England and there is never a justification for threatening behaviour."

Image: MP Chris Coghlan (left) visiting Asma\'a (right) at her family-run pharmacy in Horley. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

Epsom and Ewell low-income crisis support

The **Household Support Fund**, provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, offers short-term financial support to households struggling to afford essentials. Distributed by CAEE on behalf of **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council**, this fund is available until **31st March 2025**.

Who Can Apply?

You may be eligible if you:

Are on benefits

- Live in a low-income household
- Require crisis support that could otherwise lead to financial hardship

Who Can CAEE Help?

CAEE provides support to:

- Families
- Pensioners
- Disabled people
- Those in financial crisis

What Can the Funds Cover?

The Household Support Fund can help with:

- Utilities
- Food
- Essential goods
- Crisis support to avoid financial hardship

How to Access the Fund

• Online: Complete an application via our website: www.caee.org.uk/household-support-fund/

■ **Phone**: Call us on **01372 300777**

■ **In Person**: Attend a drop-in session:

■ Monday & Tuesday: 10 am - 1 pm

■ **Thursday**: 10 am - 3 pm

Message from Lisa Davis, CEO of CAEE

"We have been given more Household Support funds to distribute to those who are tipping into financial crisis. From June to September, we assisted 161 clients, including families, older people, and those with disabilities or long-term conditions. We provided essential help such as energy or supermarket vouchers and direct utility payments.

We saw first-hand the significant positive impact this support had on our community, alleviating financial pressure and anxiety.

Examples of crises we can help with include:

- Repairing an essential family car to get to work
- Providing support equipment to prevent a disabled person from falling into hardship
- Covering costs for new school uniforms
- Assisting with utility bills

Get in touch with us as soon as possible - we can help.

Unhappy couple. Photo by Timur Weber: https://www.pexels.com/photo/discord-between-man-and-woman-8560374/

Call to address mental health of health workers

Only a system-wide overhaul of the NHS that invests in staff wellbeing can address the psychological ill-health crisis amongst healthcare workers, according to research led by the University of Surrey in partnership with the University of Exeter. The research, which is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), focussed on nurses, midwives and paramedics who are disproportionately affected by psychological ill-health, which leads to significant consequences for both individual wellbeing and patient care.

The study found that whilst high-pressure environments, heavy workloads, and chronic staff shortages are key drivers of stress and anxiety among healthcare professionals, it is the features of the work environment, such as lone working and career stage, such as being newly qualified, that can be key. The NHS staff survey reports that almost half of all NHS staff reported feeling unwell due to work-related stress in the past year (47%), with many experiencing unrealistic time pressures and inadequate staffing levels.

The researchers identified several key findings, including:

- An underlying blame culture undermines staff psychological wellness by creating a toxic work environment.
- A prevalent "serve and sacrifice" culture prioritises institutional needs over individual wellbeing.
- Healthcare professionals often experience moral distress and emotional exhaustion due to the tension between upholding professional values and the realities of clinical practice.
- A more comprehensive approach is needed to address the cumulative effects of workplace stressors rather than only focus on individual-level strategies and acute stressors.
- Developing effective psychological wellbeing interventions for diverse healthcare workers is complex.

Professor Jill Maben OBE, Professor of Health Services Research and Nursing at the University of Surrey, said:

"By addressing these systemic issues, the NHS will not only improve the psychological health of its workforce, but will also enhance the quality of patient care and reduce costs associated with turnover and absenteeism".

A series of recommendations emerged, aiming to improve staff wellbeing and create a healthier workplace culture. First and foremost, prioritising staff wellbeing is crucial. This involves addressing essential needs such as providing access to food and hydration, break rooms, staff parking (including disabled parking), and financial security.

A holistic and collaborative approach to staff wellbeing is also recommended. By focusing on both prevention and intervention, organisations can adopt a systems-level strategy to promote and protect wellbeing effectively.

Other key recommendations include:

- Normalising and proactively managing psychological ill-health: Recognising that psychological stress and burnout are common challenges in healthcare is essential.
- Giving equal consideration to psychological safety alongside physical safety within the healthcare workplace.
- Developing compassionate leaders for the future: Investing in leadership development fosters a compassionate and supportive work environment.
- Fostering a learning culture and encouraging open communication: Creating a psychologically safe environment where staff feel empowered to speak without fear of retribution is vital.

Professor Cath Taylor, Professor of Healthcare Workforce Organisation and Wellbeing, said:

"We have produced a comprehensive guide to assist NHS leaders and staff in implementing our recommendations. This resource provides practical advice on how to address poor psychological wellbeing in nurses, midwives and paramedics to create a more supportive healthcare system, allowing staff to thrive and deliver excellent care for patients".

For more information, and to view the guide, visit: https://workforceresearchsurrey.health/projects-resources/cup2/workforceresearchs-resources/cup2/workforceresearchs-resources/cup2/workforceresearchs-resources/cup2/workforceresearchs-resources/cup2/workforceresearchs-resources/cup2/workforceresearchs-resources/cup2/workforceresearchs-resources/cup2/workforceres/cup2/workforceres/cup2/workforceres/cup2/workforceres/cup2/workforceres/cup2/workfo

This project was supported by the NIHR HS&DR programme with grant number 129528. The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the HS&DR programme, the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

Surrey academic to lead plastic pollution fight

Tackling the plastic pollution crisis: Legislation must evolve to address challenges for our climate, ecosystems and human health

Urgent legislative action is needed to stop the imminent threats of environmental harms caused by plastics. To help find solutions, Dr Noreen O'Meara from the University of Surrey has been awarded a prestigious Mid-Career Fellowship by the British Academy to lead vital research that seeks to reshape how we govern the lifecycle of plastics through effective legislation and policy.

Dr O'Meara's project aims to support national, European, and global efforts to combat plastics pollution at a time when negotiations for a Global Plastics Treaty are intensifying. This treaty represents the first international legally binding framework aimed at addressing the plastics crisis, and Dr O'Meara's research will play a crucial role in informing its development and implementation.

Dr Noreen O'Meara, Associate Professor (Reader) in Human Rights, European and Environmental Law at the University of Surrey said:

"Plastics pollution is a toxic contributor to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, ecosystem degradation, and environmental pollution. Plastics production accounts for a rising proportion of the global carbon budget, which undermines states' net-zero goals and action under the Paris Agreement to achieve a safer climate. The plastics lifecycle creates serious risks to human rights and human health which must be mitigated in governance efforts to tackle plastics pollution.

"We must mitigate the serious risks to human rights and health that arise from the plastics lifecycle in our governance efforts. This fellowship gives us the opportunity to advocate for a rights-oriented model that not only addresses pollution but also respects human dignity."

With a strong background in EU and European Human Rights Law, Dr O'Meara's research delves into pressing challenges in climate law and environmental justice. She has been actively involved in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), which is working towards finalising the Global Plastics Treaty by mid-2025. As United Nations negotiations resume, her insights will be invaluable as states navigate the complexities of this treaty.

Image: Muntaka Chasant Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International licence.

Surrey History Centre throws light on Epsom's hospitals

Epsom Surrey had more mental hospitals than most English counties and, at Surrey History Centre, we are justly proud of the quantity and quality of surviving records we hold. These range from the early private asylums of the late eighteenth century through to the county asylums of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Many of these records were rescued by our archivists when the institutions were closed down in the 1990s, and they include the records of some of the 'Epsom Cluster' of hospitals. In 1896 the newly created London County Council, faced with the need to provide for huge numbers of the mentally ill, purchased the Horton Manor estate at Epsom and built five large hospitals. The Manor opened in 1899; Horton in 1902; Ewell Epileptic Colony, later St Ebba's, in 1904; Long Grove in 1907; and West Park in 1924.

Among the extensive archive of The Manor hospital at Surrey History Centre is a wonderful collection of glass plate negatives of individual male and female patients dating back to 1899. The patients were photographed on admission to the hospital and many who recovered after treatment were often photographed again on discharge, showing a marked improvement in their demeanour.

These glass plates had been languishing in our strong rooms so, earlier this year, we started creating digital positive copies of some of the plates that are over one hundred years old. Once digitised, the images were identified by matching them to the photographic prints in the Manor Hospital patient case books. Sadly a few of the case books had not survived, so a number of images remained unidentified, but more of this later. Thanks to our volunteer, Brenda, we have now successfully digitised over 500 images which can be viewed by researchers in our searchroom. The names of the patients whose photographs have been identified are also available on our online catalogue.

This digitisation project was actually prompted by the work of the Epsom based **Friends of Horton Cemetery**. Their Out of Sight, Out of Mind project explores and commemorates the lives of some of the 9,000 Epsom Cluster patients buried in unmarked graves in the disused cemetery. More information about this fascinating project can be found on the Horton Cemetery website.

This has truly been a collaborative undertaking. Also working in partnership with Surrey History Centre and the Friends of Horton Cemetery is multimedia artist and medic, Dr Eric Fong. His work spans film, photography, sculpture, and installation, often exploring themes of the body, identity, and vulnerability. His moving and haunting Cyanotype Apparitions exhibition, using some of the Manor Hospital patient glass slides, won the London Independent Film Awards' Best Experimental Short October 2024 award.

And here's a fitting postscript: last month saw the recovery of one of the long-lost Manor Hospital patient case books, filling an important gap in the hospital's record collection at Surrey History Centre. Discovered in an attic, this remarkable volume, spanning May 1900 to July 1901, records the medical histories of 250 women, complete with their personal details and poignant photographic portraits. And importantly, it has allowed us to identify some more of the unnamed glass plate images.

For more news from Surrey History Centre - read more here.

Image: glass plate negative of Caroline Appleton and William Smith

Surrey History Centre

Related reports:

Attic find fills gap in Epsom local asylum history

Portraits of pauper patients in Epsom's Horton Cemetery, inspires artist

Petition to reclaim Horton Cemetery from property speculator

Epsom and Ewell to be served by publicly owned trains

The government has announced that South Western Railway (SWR), which serves commuters from Epsom, Ewell West, Stoneleigh and Worcester Park to London Waterloo, will be the first train operator to transition back into public ownership. The move comes following the passage of the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024, signalling a historic shift for Britain's railways.

Starting next year, SWR services, including the Epsom to London routes, will come under the direct management of DfT Operator Limited, a publicly owned body. This change aims to address long-standing issues of delays, cancellations, and high costs that have plagued privatized rail services for decades.

What This Means for Epsom Commuters

Epsom's SWR services connect thousands of local residents daily to key destinations such as London Waterloo, Wimbledon, and Clapham Junction and south to Dorking and Guildford. These routes are lifelines for commuters and leisure travellers alike, and reliability issues have often sparked frustration among passengers. Under public ownership, improvements in punctuality, affordability, and customer satisfaction are hoped for.

Local resident and commuter Sarah James commented: "I've been using the Epsom to Waterloo service for over ten years, and while it's convenient, the delays and rising ticket prices have been hard to justify. If public ownership can bring real improvements, it'll be a welcome change."

Government's Vision for the Railways

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said: "We're putting passengers back at the heart of our railways. For too long, privatization has failed to deliver for the British public. South Western Railway is the first step in our plan to rebuild a rail system that works for everyone."

The move forms part of a broader government commitment to overhaul the rail network, with c2c and Greater Anglia services also set to follow suit by 2025. The goal is to save up to £150 million annually by eliminating franchise fees, redirecting those funds into service improvements instead of shareholder profits.

How Will the Transition Work?

The Department for Transport (DfT) is prioritizing a seamless handover, ensuring minimal disruption for passengers. Ticketing systems and staffing will remain unchanged during the transition period, with SWR's current workforce continuing to support commuters.

Publicly managed services will eventually integrate into Great British Railways (GBR), the government's new overseeing body for track and train operations. GBR promises a more unified and efficient approach to rail management, focusing on reliability, accessibility, and value for money.

Local Impacts Beyond the Commute

Epsom is known for its vibrant community and attractions like Epsom Downs Racecourse and Epsom shopping centre, which rely on reliable rail links to draw visitors. Public ownership of SWR could boost local tourism by ensuring smoother travel to and from Epsom.

Additionally, the promise of greater transparency and accountability could restore faith in public transport, encouraging more residents to opt for trains over cars, which aligns with Surrey County Council's environmental goals.

What's Next?

The first publicly run trains will start operating in 2025, and residents can expect regular updates on planned improvements, including timetable adjustments and station enhancements. The Epsom and Ewell Times will continue to monitor the situation closely, bringing you the latest developments as they happen.

For now, commuters and local businesses will be watching closely to see if public ownership delivers the transformative results promised by the government.

Image: CA850 (with cropping and exposure alterations by XAM2175) - CC BY-SA 2.0

Lucy Porter Returns to Her Roots with "No Regrets" at Epsom Playhouse

Epsom Playhouse is set to welcome one of comedy's most beloved figures, Lucy Porter, on **18th January 2025**, as part of her nationwide tour with the brand-new show *No Regrets*. For Lucy, this performance will be more than just a stop on her tour—it's a nostalgic homecoming.

Lucy, who grew up in nearby Croydon and Wallington, has fond memories of Epsom. "Epsom was the place we went for a fancy day out—it seemed so much posher than anywhere else nearby," she reminisces. "I used to hang out at the Ashley Centre, which is right next to the theatre. I'll relive my youth by putting on some baggy jeans and Kickers, hanging around and terrorising the locals!"

Reflecting on her formative years, Lucy recalls special occasions at the **Berni Inn at Tattenham Corner**, where she developed her love of prawn cocktails, and visits to the Playhouse itself as a young fan. "I never dreamed that one day I'd get to perform there myself," she says.

A Hilarious Exploration of Regret

In *No Regrets*, Lucy takes audiences on a journey through her most embarrassing mistakes and missteps, from disastrous dates and professional mishaps to parenting fails and ruined friendships. With her trademark wit, she examines the nature of regret, guilt, and shame—topics she knows all too well as a self-confessed middle-class, middle-aged ex-Catholic.

"It's not all doom and gloom," Lucy promises. "Regrets can also be inspiring. You can use them to change your ways. This show is about learning to laugh at the past and maybe using it to build a better future."

Lucy's comedic reflections are infused with sharp social commentary. In the show, she explores collective regrets, such as not maintaining the work-life balance we rediscovered during lockdown or failing to realise clapping for the NHS wasn't enough to sustain it.

From Epsom to Stardom

Lucy Porter's career spans acting, writing, and comedy. A familiar face on television, she has appeared on *QI*, *Mock the Week*, *Have I Got News for You*, and *Would I Lie to You*. Her stage credits include *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and even a stint on *Eastenders*. A passionate quizzer, Lucy co-hosts the hit podcast *Fingers on Buzzers* with Jenny Ryan (The Vixen from *The Chase*), and she's a former Celebrity Mastermind Champion of Champions.

Her dulcet tones are regularly heard on BBC Radio 4, where she contributes to shows like The News Quiz and Just a Minute.

Don't Miss Out

For those eager to catch Lucy's laugh-out-loud performance and hear her candid confessions, tickets are available now at **www.boundandgaggedcomedy.com**.

Lucy's final word on her return to Epsom? "I'm so excited to come back and share this show with a place that meant so much to me growing up. I hope everyone brings their prawn cocktails!"

Surrey schools not out for so long in summer?

Surrey County Council is looking at possible changes to school holidays.

A consultation has been launched on whether the county council should switch to a two-week half term break in the autumn – and is asking for families to give their feedback before making a decision.

About one in ten state-funded schools have already made the switch, including some in Surrey.

It has led some families facing added challenges when term times at different schools are not aligned.

If the switch to a two-week autumn half term break goes ahead, the added five days would be clawed back from the summer break, although the council said it would look to minimise this reduction "where there are opportunities to recover days through the natural positioning of bank holidays during the Christmas and Easter breaks".

The consultation letter sent to parents read: "We are seeking to understand the views of all stakeholders in determining our future approach to term dates and if there is any appetite for change.

"This will enable the council, schools and multi-academy trusts to work in partnership to set term dates with an aim for more consistency for schools, school staff, and families.

"We acknowledge that there may be strong views on either side of this question, but we feel it is right and responsible to seek those opinions at a time when we are seeing movement towards a longer October half term by some schools.

"The combined responses from education settings, families and partners will help inform our approach to term dates for the 2026/27 academic year onwards.

"If it is determined that there is significant appetite for change, the council will adopt a two-week autumn half term break from the 2026/2027 academic year at the earliest."

The survey runs until the end of the year, and closes at 5pm on Tuesday December 31 2024.

The school year would still be 195 days, including the five inset training days for staff.

Local Plan lessons from our neighbour?

"Four more years?" is the resounding cry after a Surrey council has been moved back to square one with its plan for 8,000 new homes, potentially at a cost of £1m.

Local plans are a crucial framework for councils as they set out where and what type of development is allowed in the borough. Without one, developers effectively have a free-for-all to build where they wish and the council could struggle to defend it.

A planning inspector told Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC) in September to reconsider its local plan, especially to increase the number of affordable housing. Despite asking for a 12-15 month extension to straighten out its plan, after six years working on the proposals, the council was given a firm 'no' by the inspector.

Christa Masters, the independent planning inspector, judged that Elmbridge could not prove it had five years' worth of housing for residents. The inspector has also labelled the borough – which includes Cobham, St George's Hill and Weybridge – as one of the "least affordable in the country".

The two choices in front of the council are to withdraw the plan and start again, or accept the inspector's findings of the report being 'unsound' and leave the borough open to speculative development. A report will be presented to the council in February 2025 for the council to decide.

"It is clear to us that building new homes is not this government's priority," a statement read from three senior councillors. They said: "Instead, it seems intent on forcing Elmbridge Borough Council and our residents to restart the lengthy 3-4 year process of developing a new Local Plan, with the significant additional costs (potentially £1million) this will bring to the council."

Council leader Mike Rollings, deputy leader Simon Waugh, and leader of Hinchley Wood Residents' Association Janet Turner, who wrote the statement, said they have been left with no choice by the government than to start again.

A Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government spokesperson said the decision was up to an independent inspector who found the council's plan 'unsound'. They said: "We are in a housing crisis and all areas of the country need to play their part in building more and delivering the homes that communities need. We want to see every council have a local plan as soon as possible, but it is for an independent Inspector to examine a local plan to ensure it is sound and legally compliant."

But not everyone has been so forgiving of the update on the Local Plan. Cllr John Cope, leader of the Conservative opposition on the council, said: "It's now clear years of work and millions of pounds of local people's money have gone down the drain – and an acute shortage of affordable housing allowed in Elmbridge."

He added that the borough will "have to accept the Labour government's 121% increase in top-down development targets meaning a huge loss of green belt and loss of local democratic control of planning – but with no new roads, GPs, or schools to support the development."

Dr Ben Spencer MP (Runnymede and Weybridge) and Cllr Cope have also written a joint letter to Planning Minister Matthew Pennycook MP, urging him to review the situation. The pair ask him to grant the council an extension "so this can be resolved with minimal further financial drain on the council's resources".

In the letter, Dr Spencer and Cllr Cope also requested for Elmbridge residents to "not pay the consequences" of the failed Local Plan through "higher council tax and reduced local services".

"As a Council, we have done everything right," said Cllr Rollings, speaking to the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS). He said the council has worked to prepare a Local Plan "that meets its responsibilities" but the government has "have constantly changed and shifted the goalposts". He explained that mandatory housing targets have kept replacing each other and national planning policy is constantly being tweaked.

Cllr Rollings said: "As a Council leadership we will continue to work for the best outcomes for our residents. And we will do everything we can to protect the green spaces we all love."