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New SWLP Laboratory Enhances Diagnostic Services for Epsom Hospital and Beyond

14 January 2025



South West London Pathology (SWLP) has launched one of the most advanced diagnostic facilities in the UK, with new cutting-edge laboratories set to transform healthcare delivery for patients across its network, including **Epsom Hospital**. The upgraded laboratory at Croydon Hospital marks the first phase of a significant technological overhaul aimed at improving diagnostic speed and accuracy.

Serving over 3.5 million people through five hospital sites, including **Epsom Hospital**, and 450 GP practices, SWLP is integral to the region's healthcare infrastructure. When fully operational, the SWLP network of laboratories will process over 30,000 tests daily, ensuring faster turnaround times and better outcomes for patients in Epsom and the surrounding areas.

The state-of-the-art facility will streamline clinical blood science services, including clinical chemistry, haematology, coagulation, and serology, using cutting-edge pre-analytical automation technology developed in partnership with Beckman Coulter, a global leader in diagnostics.

Simon Brewer, Managing Director of SWLP, said:
"The introduction of Beckman Coulter's advanced analysers at Croydon Hospital marks a transformative step for our diagnostic services. With these technologies soon to be implemented across the entire network, including Epsom Hospital, we are setting new standards in diagnostic efficiency and patient care."

Rob Young, UK General Manager at Beckman Coulter, added:
"By equipping SWLP laboratories with the latest diagnostic technologies, we're enabling healthcare teams to deliver faster, higher-quality results. This advancement will significantly enhance the care provided to patients across the SWLP network, including those relying on Epsom Hospital for vital healthcare services."

The upgraded laboratories will unify diagnostic services across all SWLP sites, enhancing efficiency and ensuring a consistent standard of care. For patients at **Epsom Hospital**, this means improved access to accurate and timely test results, contributing to better overall health outcomes in the local community.

About South West London Pathology (SWLP)

South West London Pathology (SWLP) is an NHS pathology partnership providing integrated diagnostic services to hospitals, GPs, and healthcare organizations across South West London and beyond. Serving over 3.5 million people, including those at Epsom Hospital, SWLP delivers a comprehensive range of tests using state-of-the-art technology to improve patient care.

Image: Rob Young, UK General Manager for Beckman Coulter Diagnostics;

Matthew Kershaw, Chief Executive of Croydon Health Services NHS Trust;

Simon Brewer, SWLP Managing Director

Surrey school children road safety faces funding challenges

14 January 2025

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Children at a special needs school could be left waiting years for a much needed crossing. Clifton Hill School, on Chaldon Road in Caterham, is a secondary school for 11-19 year olds with severe and complex learning difficulties and special needs.

Students at the school demanded action in May 2024 after telling councillors they felt scared going on the road outside their school because there is no safe crossing. Pupils are encouraged to use the cafe in the church opposite the school as part of their independent living skills, but they said people “driving like maniacs” or even honk at them if the students take too long crossing the road.

Surrey County Council said: “In the interim we are looking into rectifying shorter-term issues such as improving line painting and signage, and we will keep the school and parents updated on this as we progress. We’ll continue to do all we can to keep our roads safe.”

Short-term measures included lowering a school warning sign so drivers can see it at car-level, getting the greenery cut back so drivers can see the signs, and installing a dropped kerb for wheel-chair users.

“Another term is over and our children can’t cross the road safely,” said Rachael Forkan, mum and member of the Clifton Hill Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Ms Forkan said she and the head were “not thrilled” the signal crossing was part of a ‘long-term plan’ for improving the school’s road safety. Ms Forkan said: “It isn’t a bit helpful because that could be anything from two years to seven, and my son will leave there in five years’ time.”

Officers reported there were no dropped kerbs between the school and the church which made it “problematic to navigate” for wheelchair users trying to cross smoothly. Where the County Council would deliver road safety awareness training to students, for students with complex and multiple disabilities, like at Clifton Hill, officers said this type of training would “not be appropriate”.

“It’s definitely a priority for now,” said Councillor Jeremy Webster for Caterham Hill. “But the [County Council] is telling me there isn’t any money and that we have to wait a couple of years, but by then problems will be worse.”

The local councillor described Chaldon Road as “problematic” with existing highways issues such as increasing pressure from developments and an unstable embankment. Cllr Webster told the Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS)he would continue to urge the Surrey County and Caterham Parish council for their financial support.

Conservative MP for East Surrey, Claire Coutinho, who visited the school in summer 2024, said she recently met with Cllr Jeremy Webster at the school for an update on the crossing issue. Ms Coutinho said she asked him to maintain pressure on his colleagues at Surrey County Council to find a “funding solution” to get so a crossing installed as soon as possible.

A Surrey County Council spokesperson said: “At a site meeting completed in October 2024 we recommended a zebra or push button signalised crossing as the most appropriate road safety measure to be introduced. We appreciate that parents would like this to be implemented immediately, however this assessment forms part of a wider piece of work across the county which has seen us identify demands for road safety measures across another circa 50 sites, and we will have to prioritise which of these sites are then worked on with any available funding. At present, the council hasn’t set its budget for this area of work and as such no funding has yet been allocated.

“Which sites take priority will depend upon a number of factors including the level of road safety risk based on site observations and collision history, the number of people that would benefit from improved facilities, cost and the level support from the local community for any proposals. Once funding has been identified it typically takes a year to design, complete the legal consultations and then implement a zebra or signalised pedestrian crossing.”

Check your Epsom and Ewell train journeys January weekends.

14 January 2025

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Residents of Epsom and Ewell are advised to prepare for disruptions to South Western Railway (SWR) services due to essential engineering works in the Wimbledon area. Bus replacement services will operate on key routes over two consecutive weekends: January 18-19 and January 25-26.

While services on the London Waterloo line from Epsom will be affected, passengers can still reach Waterloo by using Southern Railway services via the Victoria line and changing at Clapham Junction. However, there will be no SWR services between Epsom and Guildford, and SWR trains to Dorking will also be unavailable.

The works will involve renewing 800 meters of track, ballast, and sleepers between Wimbledon and Earlsfield, alongside replacing points and installing 100 meters of conductor rail. These upgrades aim to improve track reliability and reduce faults, providing smoother journeys for passengers.

Key Impacts for Epsom and Ewell Residents

- **No SWR trains from Epsom to Guildford.**
- **Southern Railway services to Dorking via the Victoria line remain available.**
- **Rail replacement buses will operate between Clapham Junction and Worcester Park, affecting onward connections.**

Additional Service Changes

- SWR services between London Waterloo and Chessington South, Hampton Court, Dorking, and Woking (stopping services) will not run.
- Longer-distance services to Portsmouth Harbour, Exeter St Davids, and Weymouth will be revised, taking up to 30 minutes longer.
- Berrylands station will be closed during the works.

Plan Ahead

SWR advises passengers to check travel options in advance via the SWR website (southwesternrailway.com/plan-my-journey) or National Rail (nationalrail.co.uk) and to allow extra time for their journeys.

Apologies from Network Rail and SWR

Peter Williams, SWR’s Customer and Commercial Director, acknowledged the inconvenience:
“Customers should plan ahead if they intend to travel on these weekends, as engineers carry out vital maintenance at one of the busiest parts of our network. We’re grateful for our customers’ patience.”

Mark Goodall, Network Rail’s Wessex Route Director, added:
“We’re sorry for the disruption but completing these upgrades back-to-back is the most efficient option. We encourage passengers to check their journeys and plan ahead.”

Further closures in the Wimbledon area are also planned for Sunday, February 2, and Sunday, February 9. Updates will be available on the SWR website.

For Epsom and Ewell residents, alternative travel routes and extra planning will help navigate the disruptions while these essential upgrades take place.

Hip pain explained

14 January 2025

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Hip pain is a common complaint, particularly among middle-aged and older adults. Two frequent causes are Hip Osteoarthritis (OA) and Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome (GTPS). While these conditions share some symptoms, they differ in causes, treatment, and long-term outcomes. Understanding these distinctions is key for accurate diagnosis and management.

What is Hip Osteoarthritis?

Hip osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease characterized by age-related changes in the cartilage of the hip joint. The hip's ball-and-socket structure relies on cartilage for smooth movement, but this can wear down over time, leading to pain, stiffness, and decreased function.

Signs and Symptoms of Hip OA:

- **Pain in the Groin or Thigh:** Pain is typically deep in the groin, buttock, or thigh, worsening with activity and improving with rest.
- **Stiffness:** Morning stiffness lasting less than 30 minutes is common, especially after inactivity.
- **Reduced Range of Motion:** Difficulty with daily activities such as putting on socks or shoes.
- **Crepitus:** A grinding sensation during movement due to rough joint surfaces.
- **Functional Limitations:** Challenges with walking, climbing stairs, or standing up from a seated position.

What is Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome?

Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome (GTPS) involves pain over the lateral hip, specifically around the greater trochanter, the bony prominence on the hip's outer side. Unlike OA, GTPS stems from issues in the soft tissues, such as the gluteal tendons and bursae.

Signs and Symptoms of GTPS:

- **Lateral Hip Pain:** Pain over the outer hip, often radiating down the thigh and exacerbated by lying on the affected side or climbing stairs.
- **Tenderness:** Pain upon palpation of the greater trochanter.
- **Pain with Activity:** Aggravated by repetitive movements or prolonged standing.
- **Night Pain:** Discomfort when lying on the affected side, disrupting sleep.
- **Muscle Weakness:** Weakness in the hip abductors, affecting gait and mobility.

Key Differences Between Hip OA and GTPS

1. **Location of Pain**
   - **Hip OA:** Pain is typically deep in the groin, buttock, or thigh, potentially radiating to the knee.
   - **GTPS:** Pain is localized to the lateral hip, radiating down the outer thigh but rarely affecting the groin.
2. **Underlying Pathology**
   - **Hip OA:** A degenerative joint disease involving cartilage degradation.
   - **GTPS:** A soft tissue condition involving inflammation or degeneration of the gluteal tendons and bursae.
3. **Risk Factors**
   - **Hip OA:** Aging, obesity, joint injuries, genetics, and repetitive hip loading.
   - **GTPS:** More common in peri- and post-menopausal women due to hormonal changes affecting tendon health, as well as altered biomechanics like gait changes or muscle weakness.
4. **Impact of Hormones on Soft Tissue Health** Hormonal changes during menopause reduce tendon elasticity, increasing the risk of GTPS. In contrast, OA primarily results from mechanical factors and cartilage degradation.

Management and Treatment

Hip Osteoarthritis:

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- **Exercise and Physiotherapy:** Low-impact activities like swimming or cycling help maintain joint mobility and muscle strength.
- **Weight Management:** Reducing body weight can alleviate stress on the hip joint.
- **Medication:** NSAIDs are commonly used for pain and inflammation.
- **Joint Injections:** Corticosteroid injections under ultrasound guidance can provide temporary relief and aid diagnosis in complex cases.
- **Surgery:** Total hip replacement may be necessary in severe cases.

Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome:

- **Activity Modification:** Reducing activities that exacerbate symptoms, such as prolonged standing or lying on the affected side.
- **Physiotherapy:** Strengthening the hip abductor muscles and improving flexibility is key.
- **Shockwave Therapy:** Effective in some cases for promoting tissue healing and reducing pain.
- **Corticosteroid Injections:** These can temporarily reduce inflammation for patients unresponsive to conservative treatment.
- **Surgery:** Rarely required but an option for severe or unresponsive cases.

Conclusion

Hip Osteoarthritis and Greater Trochanteric Pain Syndrome are distinct conditions causing hip pain, with different causes, symptoms, and treatments. While OA is a degenerative joint condition affecting cartilage, GTPS is a soft tissue disorder involving the tendons and bursae around the greater trochanter. Accurate diagnosis is essential for effective management, and consulting a healthcare professional is critical for those experiencing hip pain.

For more information see www.genuinephysio.com

Image: Man with hip pain. Credit Towfiqu Barbhuiya

Surrey’s D’Oyly Carte Island concerts cancelled.

14 January 2025



Plans for a summer concert on a private island as part of Weybridge Festival have been cancelled over health and safety concerns. D’Oyly Carte Island hosted three days of music and entertainment as part of the Weybridge Festival over a weekend in July 2024.

The private island, inaccessible to the public for part of the year, opened its grounds last year for Weybridge Festival and celebrated music ranging from Motown and Soul to 70s’ and 80s’ soft rock. But councillors have decided to issue a counter notice to stop the event going ahead in 2025 over safety concerns.

Surrey Police and Environmental Health representatives slammed the application for its lack of important information to ensure public safety such as the limited access to and from the island, and the lack of adequate protection to prevent members of the public falling into the river. The pair emphasised that no site plans have been shared with officers, nor exit routes or briefing for marshals to judge the safety of the operation.

“We don’t want to wait for a tragedy to happen,” said Lucy Marriot, from Surrey Police at Elmbridge Borough Council licensing meeting on January 7, “We want to take a proactive approach to public safety.” Both representatives argued there was not an acknowledgement of the potential dangers of an island-based music festival and the size of the event.

But Andy Hill, the applicant and owner of the island, asked the committee in a statement: “Was it a mistake that the event was approved last year?”. Although Mr Hill submitted the same risk assessment form as last year, the council said its internal procedures for Temporary Event Notice licensing had changed and new officers have come into post.

Serious safety concerns

The council’s principal environment officer raised the alarm that no measures have been listed to protect the public. She told the committee the applicant’s risk assessment form gave no details on how the event would look after people (who may have had a few drinks) would be protected from uneven paths, the water enveloping the island or the courtyard

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fountain.

A unique location, only one bridge serves as the connection from the mainland to D'Oyly Carte Island. Almost 500 people could leave the island via the sole bridge at the same time, according to the officer, and no evidence has been given whether the bridge could hold the weight.

"I hope you don't see it as health and safety gone mad," the officer said, as both officers repeatedly urged they did not want the event to be cancelled but wanted the public to enjoy it safely. The council's environmental officer said she had "serious concerns about Mr Hill's attitude to health and safety".

Council documents state that nine marshals and one professional security marshal will be employed to look after nearly 500 people at any one time over the weekend. In his defence, Mr Hill said after the meeting that all the marshals employed for the festival had worked on the island before and so knew the land much better than other staff.

But the Licensing Officer said she did not think it was "appropriate for one [professional security] marshal, one trained person, to look after 499 people and cover the whole island." She stressed that other marshals would not be trained in crowd control or lifeguarding to look after people at the island event, according to the submitted documents.

A spokesperson from the council said: "Despite the Police and environmental health offering to meet with the applicant to discuss and address these concerns, no meeting was accepted. Consequently, our environmental health team and the Police had no choice but to object which resulted in a hearing where the licensing sub-committee refused the temporary event notice in its current form."

"Health & Safety on steroids"

Speaking after the meeting, Mr Hill said: "In 2024 D'Oyly Carte Island held a series of Summer Concerts that were enjoyed by over 3,000 of our local community as part of the wider Weybridge Festival. Before the concerts we met with the police, health & safety, noise control, ambulance services and a few others to make sure we held an event safe for the public. These bodies made some good recommendations and, at a cost of over £35,000, we implemented them all with the associated risk assessments.

"The outcome from these recommendations and the associated investment was no injuries, no complaints, no arrests, no drugs and no disorder, just a flood of compliments. We were asked by Weybridge Festival to do the same again for 2025, so I submitted an application to repeat what we held in 2024. It is a complete mystery why the Council has rejected our application, cancelling the D'Oyly Carte Island Summer Concerts in 2025.

"Were Health & Safety negligent in their duties by allowing the concerts to proceed in 2024? Why have they objected to a repeat of the same event in 2025? One can only speculate that Health & Safety has been put on steroids and they are more interested in creating unnecessary meetings and paperwork, repeating work that has already been completed, simply to keep them gainfully employed at tax payers expense.

"We have invested heavily in bringing D'Oyly Carte Island back to life and have created opportunities like the café, bar, creperie and the D'Oyly Carte Island Summer Concerts. These activities include the community on our journey to renovate this amazing piece of history and culture in Weybridge. All I would ask in return is for the 100,000 people that have visited the island to write or email the Council asking them to reverse their decision and permit the D'Oyly Carte Island Concerts to proceed."

Blot on Epsom Down's west horizon to grow?

14 January 2025



The "Croydonisation" of Woking will continue after a 26-storey town centre tower block on the former BHS site was approved. The plans for the 272-home 85-metre-tall building are nearly identical to those previously rejected in March 2024 but have been signed off following changes to Woking Borough Council's housing targets and further clarifications from the developers. Donard Real Estate will demolish the former store to create the Crown Gardens project. The build-to-rent project will include 28 affordable homes as well as retail and commercial zones on the ground floor of the Commercial Way site. There would also be public space landscaping to improve the area around Christ Church.

Approving the plans – which were also under a separate appeal – would help the council meet its new, higher housing targets and help take pressure off green belt sites. The meeting was also assured the building would be predominantly made of brick, limiting the potential of weather damaging external cladding. The town centre had to be closed off after cladding fell from the Hilton Hotel building this year due to storms. Speaking on behalf of the developers was Mervyn

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McFarland. He said, “Crown Gardens will deliver 272 high-quality build-to-rent homes addressing the growing need for housing and helping Woking’s residents, particularly young people and families, to stay in Woking and contribute to the town’s vitality and growth. It will help alleviate pressure on traditional housing stock while also contributing to meeting housing targets. It will free up homes better suited to families and other demographics, contributing to a more balanced housing market in Woking. Crown Gardens will support Woking’s regeneration, bringing up to 700 new residents to the town centre. This is expected to bring in around £10m expenditure annually in local spending, boosting businesses.”

The limited parking at the site was no longer considered a valid reason to object to the plans given its proximity to Woking Railway Station and active travel options. The January 7 planning committee also noted that a similar high-rise application at Technology House was allowed on appeal, with the Planning Inspector saying parking options were sufficient. Councillor Rob Leach (Liberal Democrat, St Johns) said: “It’s clear that the development will help meet the housing needs that we have and the new government target building levels, to a significant extent, are helped by this. I’ve always been resistant to skyscrapers in Woking, what I’ve called the Croydonisation of Woking, in the past, but I think this has to be preferable to incursions on the green belt where that can be avoided.”

Related report:

Blot on Epsom Downs horizon to grow no more?

Surrey County elections must go ahead clamour

14 January 2025



The May 2025 Surrey county elections must not be postponed, the 11 boroughs and district councils have said. That call has been amplified with the Surrey Liberal Democrat MPs writing to Government lending their support to the call – while a petition arguing the same has been signed by more than 3,000 people. The decision to call off this year’s poll will be down to Government ministers who said they would consider delaying local elections in areas going through the devolution process. Surrey has put itself at the front of that queue – which would get rid of existing councils and replace them with a new structure. What that would look like is anyone’s guess at the moment, but could range from a single mega council, or potentially two or three slightly smaller bodies. Any new system would have an overarching strategic mayor.

The county leadership argues that postponing the elections would give officers time to get on with the once in a lifetime reorganisation – which needs to have interim proposals submitted by March ahead of a more ironclad May deadline. They also question the value of holding elections, which would cost an estimated £2.48m, for a council that was effectively doomed to die within two years – the new devolved authority is expected to be up and running in 2027 with shadow elections held the year before.

The leaders of the 11 Surrey District and Borough Councils met with their Surrey County Council counterpart on January 7 to discuss the English Devolution White Paper and what this would mean for the residents of Surrey. There was acknowledgement that the central Government was determined to introduce sweeping changes through devolution with district and county councils merged into new unitary authorities. A statement released after the meeting read: “All the Leaders of the Surrey District and Borough Councils expressed their concerns around the pace of change being imposed by central government and that such widespread and significant change needs wider consultation with the residents, stakeholders, and businesses across the county. In addition there was concern that the change, as proposed, will decrease local representation for residents of Surrey. While the Leaders concluded that there needs to be a dialogue with Surrey County Council on the proposed changes, there was wide agreement that the county council’s plan to write to the Secretary of State, Jim McMahon MP on Friday January 10, requesting to postpone the county elections scheduled to take place on May 1 2025 was not supported by the District and Borough Leaders and would be opposed if submitted.”

Surrey Heath Borough Council leader Shaun Macdonald added that allowing the elections to go ahead would ensure that all those involved “in shaping the future of our communities” had the democratic mandate to represent residents. The six Liberal Democrat MPs for Surrey also co-signed a letter to Government calling on it to not pass legislation postponing this year’s elections, describing it as an affront to democracy. They also expressed concerns over the speed of devolution and local government reorganisation. They said: “A proposal of this scale requires careful consideration and broad support. Yet, just three weeks after the government’s announcement, no credible plan exists. There has been insufficient engagement with district and borough councils or MPs to justify this unprecedented step.”

Elections, they said, must go ahead to give those voted in the mandate for how to deliver those changes. They added: “This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape local government in Surrey, and it must not be derailed by unnecessary delays or a lack of transparency.”

Related reports:

Are Epsom and Ewell’s Interests Served by Postponing Democracy?

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Surrey’s Conservative leader wants to postpone May’s poll reckoning

Local government reorganisation: What will it mean for Epsom and Ewell?

All change! Epsom and Ewell Borough Council approaching its final stop?

Surrey’s affordable homes left unclaimed

14 January 2025



Millions of pounds worth of affordable Surrey homes remain unbuilt because nobody is willing to take on the project. It has left Spelthorne Borough Council scrambling around trying to find a housing partner with negotiations set to take place over a potential rent to buy scheme.

It leaves families dangling in limbo on waiting lists with nowhere to go as there are almost 2,500 people are currently on Spelthorne’s housing list.

It comes as the developers behind a massive Staines Tower block withdrew all affordable housing from the scheme and instead only offered the council money to put towards low-cost homes elsewhere in the borough.

The Elmsleigh Road scheme was given the green light on appeal in 2022, after Spelthorne Borough Council had refused the application the previous year. The site, at the Old Telephone Exchange, is still under construction by the developer, Fairview New Homes.

Developers, Fairview, asked the council to remove affordable homes from its plans for 206 new units in two towers in Staines, and agreed a £3.85m contribution to go towards off-site affordable housing, instead of the 70 homes that were originally planned.

However, the council opted to delay accepting the money and approached a rent-to-buy provider, Rent Plus, to potentially take the affordable housing off its hands. Cllr Lawrence Nichols (Liberal Democrat/ Halliford and Sunbury West) told a planning committee on January 8: “If we take the [developer’s] money, Rent Plus walk away.”

Rent Plus buys affordable homes from developers at a discount, and then leases them to low-income families on the waiting list with the long-term plan of buying them.

The council had previously rejected using Rent Plus because the company did not provide housing to “the most needy” in line with the council’s legal requirements, the Housing Officer told the committee. Cllr Nichols said Spelthorne council has a meeting with the provider, Rent Plus, scheduled for January 14, next week.

“No interest”

The developer told the committee it had approached numerous registered providers for affordable housing but there was “no interest from any to take the residential units”. There were four separate tender processes and during the most recent, 81 parties were approached. Only 21 responses were received and all declined the opportunity to purchase the homes.

Speaking at the meeting, Director of Affordable Housing for Fairview New Homes Jonathan Millership, said: “The responses highlighted several issues that were specific to this development; these include the high rise nature of the building and the inclusion of a single staircase, a lack of appetite for flats in tall buildings outside London and a general lack of appetite for developer-led section 106 schemes.”

But councillors were not impressed. Cllr Katherine Rutherford (Independent Spelthorne Group/ Ashford Common) said the company “should have done their research”.

Cllr Darren Clarke (Conservative/Laleham and Shepperton Green) said: “Built the wrong thing in the wrong place to the wrong standard, but people don’t want them.” He added: “We all want affordable housing [and] we’ve got a real housing crisis.”

The council had also considered accepting the £3.8m and putting in its s106 pot for building community infrastructure. Officers explained the council could then use this to buy homes in the borough and then rent them out as affordable housing, generating a profit.

Councillors eventually decided to defer the decision on whether to accept the developer’s contribution until the next planning meeting in February 2025.

Image: CGI visualisation from Thames Street or the Elmsleigh Road Scheme. (Credit: Spelthorne Borough Council

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Planning documents/ Fairview New Homes)

MP spies pollution in Mole

14 January 2025



Raw sewage has spewed out of a broken manhole cover and into the River Mole. Video taken by the Dorking and Horley MP, **Chris Coghlan**, shows the waste pumping out of the ground, just yards from the River Thames tributary in Brockham. He had been alerted by residents who said they were fed up after repeatedly trying to get Thames Water to fix the problem. The utility firm has apologised to those affected and said they would also clean up the surrounding areas.

Posting a video to social media, Mr Coghlan said: “So it’s happy new year, happy new sewage spill from Thames Water. I’m here outside a broken manhole cover here in Brockham and you can see it’s literally busting sewage out of it, spraying it everywhere. And behind me you can see loo paper, what looks like condoms.

“I’ve been speaking to some of my constituents here, this has been going on for years. They have been reporting it to Thames Water and they’ve done nothing and if you look behind me down here, this is the River Mole. It’s going straight into the River Mole. We’re a little upstream from the stepping stones where many people would love to bring their kids to paddle but they just can’t because this sewage is being dumped into the river and dumping E Coli everywhere.

“So I am very upset about this, I will be writing to Thames Water and the Environment Agency. It is a completely illegal sewage dump and I want it fixed.”

Thames Water publishes an up-to-date map showing near real storm discharge activity, as indicated by its monitors. At the time of publication there were active discharges in Chertsey feeding into the River Bourne meaning “there could be sewage in that section of the watercourse,” as well as at Leatherhead into the River Mole, at Holmwood into Holmwood Stream, at Cranleigh into Cranleigh Waters, and at Ockley Road feeding into Cobbler’s Brook.

In London, Thames Water has issued an update after E. Coli was found in an area of South East London with people in Brockley advised to boil their water before using it. A Thames Water spokesperson said of the Brockham leak: “We responded to reports of external sewer flooding near Hillside Close in Brockham on Monday January 6. When our engineers attended the water had receded, however we will carry out further investigations to understand why the flooding occurred. During this time we will also clean up the surrounding areas and we are sorry to those who have been impacted.”

Related reports:

Trust the public to check our rivers

River “Bogsmill” blights Borough

Image: Broken Manhole Chris Coghlan Dorking and Horley MP

Are Epsom and Ewell’s Interests Served by Postponing Democracy?

14 January 2025

The Conservative-led Surrey County Council’s recent decision to seek a postponement of the May 2025 elections raises serious questions about the motivations behind this move. This decision, spearheaded by Councillor Tim Oliver, comes after the Conservative Party’s near-total defeat in the July 2024 General Election and appears to be as much about

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retaining control as it is about facilitating local government reorganisation.

The argument put forward by the council's leadership—that elections would create a "zombie" authority that wastes public funds—is unconvincing. Elections are a cornerstone of democracy, not a bureaucratic inconvenience. By delaying them, the current leadership retains power at a time when its mandate to govern Surrey is at best questionable. Surrey's residents, many of whom voiced their dissatisfaction with Conservative governance at the ballot box just months ago, now face the prospect of being governed by a council that is effectively prolonging its tenure without public consent.

One cannot ignore the context of this decision. Central government's push for local government reform and devolution is not an altruistic initiative aimed at better serving communities. It is a cost-cutting exercise disguised as modernisation. The Government's stipulation that new councils must serve a minimum of 500,000 residents almost guarantees the dissolution of smaller, locally focused boroughs like Epsom and Ewell.

For Epsom and Ewell, the smallest of Surrey's 11 boroughs, this means the likely loss of a council that has served its residents with proximity and understanding for decades. What replaces it may be a sprawling mega-authority or a fractured, less accountable unitary structure. Either way, Epsom and Ewell risks losing its unique voice, with decisions about its future made by those unfamiliar with its needs and aspirations.

Equally troubling is the inclusion of Woking Borough Council's extraordinary debt—reportedly the largest in UK local government history—in the negotiations surrounding devolution. This financial calamity, created under Conservative rule, should be a cautionary tale about the dangers of poor governance, not an issue swept under the rug in the rush to reform. Why should other Surrey residents shoulder the burden of Woking's mismanagement? And why has Surrey's Conservative leadership not been more transparent about its plans to address this issue?

The proposal to postpone elections also conveniently consolidates power for a party facing an uncertain future. By delaying the democratic process, Surrey's Conservative leadership ensures it remains at the table during pivotal discussions about the future shape of local government, even as the electorate has made its dissatisfaction clear.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, like others across the county, is being swept into a centralised reorganisation process with little clarity about what it will mean for its residents. The likely outcome is the erosion of local democracy, with decisions affecting communities being made further away and by people with less understanding of local needs.

Surrey's leadership has yet to explain convincingly why postponing the elections is necessary. If their proposals for reorganisation are sound, why not put them to the test of public approval? Democracy is not an obstacle to progress; it is the means by which progress is legitimised.

Epsom and Ewell's residents deserve to have their voices heard in shaping the future of their local government. They deserve transparency about what reorganisation will mean for their services, their representation, and their community identity. Most importantly, they deserve the chance to vote on who should lead that process. Anything less is an affront to democracy and a betrayal of public trust.

The May 2025 elections must go ahead. It is time for Surrey's leaders to trust the people they serve and stop hiding behind bureaucratic excuses.

Epsom and Ewell Times

Related reports:

Local government reorganisation: What will it mean for Epsom and Ewell?

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Surrey's Conservative leader wants to postpone May's poll reckoning

Tiers to be shed if Epsom and Ewell loses its Borough Council?

Local government reorganisation: What will it mean for Epsom and Ewell?

14 January 2025



The leader of "doomed" Surrey County Council will write to the Government asking for the May 2025 elections to be postponed and Woking's debt cancelled as part of devolution measures to merge the county's councils. The moves are said to allow the council the time to draft proposals for how the county and its 11 boroughs and districts will be dissolved

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and reborn as potentially a single authority with a directly elected mayor. Other plans could see the county split in two or three smaller unitary authorities in one of the biggest shake-ups in a generation.

In December, the Government placed councils on short notice over devolution plans, giving those who want to get on board until March to submit interim merger proposals. Those who do not will have their devolution plans dictated to them by Downing Street. To give councils time to reorganise, the Government also said it would consider passing legislation postponing the May 2025 elections until next year. On Wednesday, January 8, Surrey County Council confirmed it would pursue the Government's offer, with conditions.

The move to push back elections, however, was disputed in the chamber with councillors calling it undemocratic, while the leaders of the 11 boroughs and districts have also called for the May polls to go ahead. Councillor Paul Follows, leader of the opposition, told the meeting the boroughs and districts made it very clear local government reform was necessary – but that it could be done alongside the democratic process. He said: "We accept and broadly agree that some unitary council combination would make sense for a variety of reasons but we believe that the pace, the haste, and the lack of plans should not just be folly but a clear threat to services our residents need, and we do not accept that elections must be cancelled.

"The Government aren't asking us or making us cancel elections. The deputy prime minister confirmed in an interview [on Wednesday morning] that councils are not being asked this way." He added: "The timetable is going to remain as is and the work is going to happen and we can do everything that the leader is proposing to do while holding the scheduled elections. The leader has argued that leaping in here brings benefits but nobody has outlined what they are and honestly whatever they are, unless they include defined government interventions on debt and adult social care, nothing is worth taking that leap because then any successor authority will be immediately in serious troubles."

He would also raise concerns that without clear guidelines and financial support, scenarios where playing fields in Godalming could be sold off to pay debts in Woking could emerge. The ruling Conservative group, however, dismissed demands to keep the election saying it would not only cost millions – estimated at about £2.48m – but also elect a "zombie" body that would be dissolved in just a year's time.

Councillor John O'Reilly (Conservative; Surrey) said: "This council is doomed. This council will not survive and the 11 boroughs and districts will also not survive. So we are talking about a new structure and framework and for those saying the election to go ahead, it is quite clear, the minister's letter has said that those authorities where elections do go ahead, they have still got to provide submissions by autumn, leaving only a few months. So what is going to happen if we have elections? It will essentially be a zombie council in the twilight, lurching through its own oblivion maybe only a year or so later when elections will take place for the new authorities."

Councils have until March to submit interim devolution proposals with final drafts delivered by either May or the Autumn. The council has said it will work with "all stakeholders" over the next eight weeks in drawing up plans, including residents, as well as taking feedback from police, fire and rescue, and health services. The Government states it wants new councils to have a minimum of 500,000 residents meaning it is most likely Surrey would become either a single mega authority or split in two – with a directly elected mayor.

Some councillors raised a preference to create three bodies. Councillor Tim Oliver did not rule out expanding beyond the Surrey border to create a regional authority but hoped that all parties could come to an agreement. He said: "We propose to make it clear that the Government will be asked to deal with the debt partially, Woking that is publicly known and crystallised, but there are other levels of significant debt across the county." He said it was better to get in early to create some leverage over the debt position rather than be handed down a Government dictate.

He said: "Work will start on Friday – officers are putting together the working groups needed. This will be exceptionally time consuming. Not only will it need collaboration between the boroughs and districts, but this council will need to have an input into the proposals. We may go with more than one proposal, one from this council and one from the boroughs and districts."

The county council leader will now write to the Government setting out that Surrey wishes to be part of the accelerated devolution program and that it would support any new legislation postponing the May 2025 elections until next year.

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Heritage at Risk: Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Faces Challenges

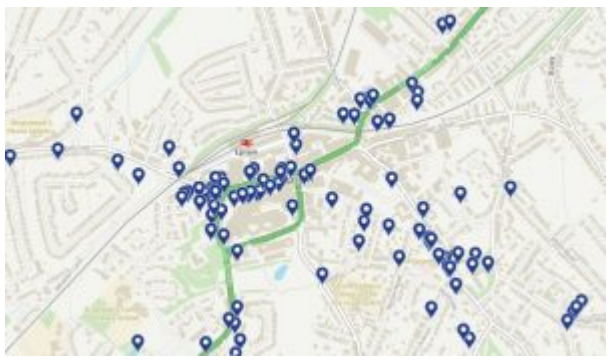
14 January 2025

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The latest **Heritage at Risk Register**, published by Historic England in November 2024, has cast a shadow over the state of heritage conservation in Epsom and Ewell. Two conservation areas—**Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area** and the **Horton Conservation Area**—have been flagged as being in **poor condition**, with a concerning trend of **deterioration**. While both areas are deemed to have "low vulnerability," this designation should not obscure the urgency of their plight.

The condition of these heritage assets is not only a reflection of their physical state but also an indicator of broader systemic issues. Without proactive measures, Epsom risks losing significant elements of its historical character.

Decoding the Heritage Assessment

Historic England evaluates heritage assets based on three criteria: **Condition**, **Vulnerability**, and **Trend**:

- **Condition**: The physical state of the asset, ranging from "very good" to "very bad." For both Epsom Town Centre and Horton Conservation Areas, the classification of "poor" signals pressing maintenance and repair needs.
- **Vulnerability**: The extent to which external factors, such as funding shortages or development pressures, threaten the asset.
- **Trend**: Whether the asset's condition is improving, stable, or deteriorating. Both conservation areas are assessed as experiencing a **deteriorating trend**.

While "low vulnerability" suggests no immediate threats, the deteriorating condition of these areas calls for decisive intervention to reverse the decline.

Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area: A Historic Hub in Decline

Epsom Town Centre is more than a commercial centre; it is the beating heart of the borough's identity. Its 39 listed buildings include the **Spread Eagle Hotel** and historic structures on **Wheelers Lane**. Each of these buildings tells a story of Epsom's rich past, from its heyday as a 17th-century spa town to its enduring role as the home of the **Epsom Derby**.

The "poor" condition and "deteriorating" trend of the conservation area suggest neglect and insufficient maintenance. While some buildings remain privately owned, the broader conservation area's status is a public concern that requires collective action.

Horton Conservation Area: A Legacy of Victorian Innovation

The Horton Conservation Area, part of Epsom's celebrated "hospital cluster," was established to protect the architectural and historical significance of the Victorian psychiatric asylum buildings. One notable structure, the **Horton Chapel**, was recently restored and reopened as the **Horton Arts Centre**. While this transformation is a success story, Historic England's continued classification of the area as "poor" indicates unresolved challenges.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council: Highlighting Achievements

Councillor **Peter O'Donovan**, (RA Ewell Court) Chair of Licensing & Planning Policy, defended the Council's track record in heritage conservation. He highlighted the Council's restoration of the **Epsom Clocktower** in 2019 and its role in transforming Horton Chapel.

Regarding the Town Centre Conservation Area, O'Donovan noted that the Council has implemented policies to guide development, enforce planning regulations, and enhance the appearance of shopfronts and buildings. The recently published **Town Centre Masterplan** prioritises a "context-led design approach," aiming to balance new development with the conservation of historic features.

"Our local heritage is integral to our unique character," said O'Donovan. "The Council works in a range of ways to protect the borough's heritage and conservation areas."

You can read Cllr O'Donovan's full response HERE.

Councillor Kieran Persand: A Call for Stronger Action

Conservative Councillor Kieran Persand, representing Horton Ward, painted a more critical picture. He expressed concerns about the lack of a robust repair and maintenance programme for heritage sites, particularly in the Horton area.

Persand also raised alarm over the Council's **draft Local Plan**, which proposes development on Horton Farm, a high-

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performing Green Belt site. “The vulnerability of these conservation areas is increasing significantly,” Persand warned. “Epsom is at risk of losing its identity as a beautiful and historic location through inappropriate development and poor maintenance.”

The Bigger Picture: Heritage and Development

Epsom’s heritage is inextricably linked to its future development. While the Council has emphasised its commitment to protecting conservation areas, critics argue that its actions often fall short of its rhetoric. The inclusion of Horton Farm in the draft Local Plan has drawn widespread opposition, with residents and conservation advocates fearing irreversible harm to the borough’s historic character.

Historic England’s findings underscore the importance of balancing development pressures with heritage conservation. The “poor” condition of Epsom’s conservation areas should serve as a wake-up call to prioritise long-term preservation efforts.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Preserving Epsom’s heritage requires a collaborative approach involving local authorities, property owners, and the community. Practical steps could include:

- **Increased Funding**: Securing additional resources for maintenance and restoration.
- **Community Initiatives**: Encouraging residents to take pride in and advocate for their local heritage.
- **Education and Awareness**: Promoting understanding of the value of conservation areas.
- **Stronger Enforcement**: Ensuring compliance with planning regulations and conservation policies.

The Path Forward

Historic England’s report is both a challenge and an opportunity. While the condition of Epsom’s conservation areas is concerning, it is not too late to act. Proactive measures, guided by a shared commitment to preserving the borough’s heritage, can reverse the trend of deterioration and secure Epsom’s identity for future generations.

As the debate continues, the question remains: will Epsom rise to the challenge, or will it allow its treasures to fade into obscurity?

Map of many of the listed buildings in Epsom Town Conservation Area: © Crown copyright [and database rights] 2025. OS AC0000815036. | © Historic England | © Crown Copyright 2024. Released under OGL. | © Crown Copyright 2024. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2024. Released under OGL.

All change! Epsom and Ewell Borough Council approaching its final stop?

14 January 2025



Surrey is changing “whether we like it” or not and county council leader **Tim Oliver** says it’s better to be at the forefront of that change.

The Government wants to introduce new mayoral authorities across the country in a bid to streamline councils and shift power away from Westminster.

For Surrey, that means scrapping the 11 boroughs and districts as well as the county council, and replacing them with either a single, or what seems more likely, two authorities with a Strategic Mayor.

The question is how will it be done? The answer; it will either be imposed on Surrey, or the councils can create their own plans to merge under devolved powers.

County Council leader, Councillor Tim Oliver, favours playing a central role, arguing that change is inevitable, and it’s best to be part of the conversation in order to shape the future, rather than sit on the sidelines waiting to be told what to do.

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The Government wrote to the county council in December outlining how it planned to “transfer power out of Westminster through devolution and to fix the foundations of local government.” It wants a simpler structure that is “clearer for residents” and said it would even pass new laws to postpone the May 2025 elections “to help manage” the once in a lifetime opportunity to restructure.

Writing to Surrey, Jim McMahon, minister of state for local government and English devolution, said: “We are under no illusion about the scale of issues facing local government. It is in all our interests to make sure we are avoiding unnecessary spend at a time when budgets are already tight.”

He added: “I have heard from some areas that the timing of elections affects their planning for devolution, particularly alongside reorganisation. To help manage these demands, alongside our objectives on devolution, and subject to meeting the timetable outlined in this letter, I am minded-to lay secondary legislation to postpone local council elections from May 2025 to May 2026. However, I will only do this where this will help the area to deliver both reorganisation and devolution to the most ambitious timeframe – either through the Devolution Priority Programme or where reorganisation is necessary to unlock devolution or open up new devolution options.”

Cllr Tim Oliver is already minded to take up the offer of pushing back the elections for a year to get devolution done. Holding the elections this year would cost about £1million, he says, and would take time away from officers already working to a tight five-month deadline to get devolution over the line.

“The Labour Government has set up their agenda in the white paper and that is to create Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA) across England. They have a strong majority and we can assume they will pass the legislation,” Cllr Oliver said. “If you don’t reach an agreement locally, then they will legislate. It’s going to happen. It’s better that we try to control or have some influence over what happens rather than have it imposed on us down the line.”

“The primary focus should be ‘what is in the best interests of the residents of Surrey?’ Whether we like the model or not it is going to happen in Surrey and the reason for getting in early as we are, is that we are slightly unique here in that there are councils in Surrey that have significant debt levels.”

This, he says, gives the Government a huge stick, to push councils to get on board. Councils such as Woking are bankrupt and need Government intervention. Merging the councils would pile its £2billion debt on to others.

Similarly, though not bankrupt, Spelthorne Borough Council has debts of more than a billion and Runnymede has debts of more than £600m. Surrey County Council, albeit with significantly larger spending power as a top tier authority, is also heavily indebted.

Cllr Oliver said: “The longer we leave it, the less likely we will get any support from the Government. That’s what’s driving me.”

Historically, Surrey councils have not benefited as greatly as other local authorities from Government funding reviews and have to raise more money locally. Areas that can raise taxes will continue to be required to. Removing tiers of local government will be an efficiency driver and help stave off service cuts, or lead to more investment.

He said: “We have to divide up the county to create a minimum of two strategic authorities, and then we get a mayor. If we don’t get on with that reorganisation, we will be years away from the benefits of a mayor, compounded with almost certainly reduced funding to Surrey councils.”

Papers published ahead of the January 10 deadline to respond suggest the council leader will take up the Government’s offer to hold off on this year’s elections “to give time to consult.”

Cllr Oliver said: “If we go ahead with elections in May, and I’m fine with that, I wasn’t going to run again. But, ignoring who wins, you end up with an election in May that will cost over a million pounds, which they do, and then you will have a bunch of new councillors who have to find their feet, only to be out in two years when the council disappears. The next five months should be about the negotiation with the Government about what the future looks like.”

“Every political party, and all the existing councillors who know the county better, will have the opportunity to input. I can’t see what the Liberals, if they got a majority, would do differently? This way, we will get a bit of goodwill from the Labour Government by engaging with them now.”

“Hampshire, Essex, and Hertfordshire are already getting on with their own plans for devolution, and if Surrey County Council just puts its head in the sand and gets on with the elections we will miss the opportunity to have the conversation with the Government about the debt levels.”

“We’ve got five months to consider it, the key thing is to do an intensive piece of work now. We’re not at the point where we’ve had the conversation about how it’s split, but we’ve got five months to do this either the Government’s way or our way. Yes, the timetable is much shorter than anybody would want particularly putting a letter in by January 10 but we have to respect the fact that this Government has an agenda and it can deliver because it has the mandate.”

Later this month the Government will set out which areas will be included in its Devolution Priority Programme with a view to inaugural mayoral elections in May 2026. They are looking at creating new unitary councils with populations of 500,000 or more. Surrey has a population of about 1.2 million. Exceptions will be made to ensure new structures make sense for an area.

An extraordinary meeting of Surrey County Council is set to go ahead on Wednesday January 8 where the council will be “asked to note” that the leader intends to express interest in pursuing devolution and local government reorganisation.

Related reports:

Surrey’s Conservative leader wants to postpone May’s poll reckoning

Tiers to be shed if Epsom and Ewell loses its Borough Council?

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Tim Oliver Surrey County Council leader – Surrey Live

Epsom Green Belt Debate Intensifies

14 January 2025



The ongoing debate surrounding Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Proposed Submission Local Plan has escalated as the Epsom and Ewell Times publishes two sharply contrasting letters – one from the Epsom Green Belt Group (EGBG) and the other a formal response from the Council itself. At the heart of the dispute lies the proposed development of Green Belt land, the availability of affordable housing, and the transparency of the consultation process.

Epsom Green Belt Group: A Call for Change

The Epsom Green Belt Group's letter criticises the Council for failing to heed public sentiment and expert advice during the Regulation 18 consultation earlier this year. Despite overwhelming opposition to the proposed release of over 175 hectares (around 12%) of the borough's Green Belt, the Council has pressed ahead with plans that include development on high-performing sites such as Horton Farm and Hook Road Arena.

The EGBG highlights a key inconsistency: while the Council advised neighbouring Sutton Borough in September 2024 that they were under no obligation to review Green Belt boundaries, they have not followed this guidance themselves. Furthermore, the EGBG argues that prioritising brownfield and 'grey belt' land, as outlined in the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of December 2024, has been neglected.

The group also casts doubt on the Council's promises of 'affordable housing,' pointing out that discounts on market prices still place homes out of reach for many. Flats on brownfield sites, they argue, offer a more viable path to genuinely affordable housing.

A looming concern raised by the EGBG is the likelihood of the Local Plan being deemed unsound by the Planning Inspectorate. They warn that if the plan proceeds in its current form, it could pave the way for further Green Belt loss.

Read the full Epsom Green Belt Group letter here.

Council's Response: Balancing Competing Priorities

In their formal response, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council defends the Proposed Submission Local Plan, arguing that it strikes a necessary balance between meeting housing needs and protecting the borough's environment.

The Council acknowledges the high demand for affordable housing, with over 1,350 households on the housing register. They stress that their policies reflect both national guidelines and financial viability assessments.

Regarding the consultation process, the Council points out that Regulation 19 is a statutory stage primarily focused on assessing the plan's legal compliance and soundness. They also address concerns over the timing of the consultation—spanning the Christmas and New Year period—explaining that it was essential to meet the submission deadline of 12 March 2025 under the current NPPF.

On the contentious Green Belt issue, the Council offers specific figures: 52.6 hectares of greenfield Green Belt land (3.36% of the total) and 85 hectares of previously developed Green Belt land (5.44%) are earmarked for development. They maintain that these changes are necessary to meet housing targets while acknowledging the flexibility offered by the NPPF.

The Council concludes by noting that while changes can still be proposed following the consultation, the Planning Inspectorate ultimately determines their validity.

Read the full Epsom & Ewell Borough Council letter here.

Diverging Priorities, Uncertain Outcomes

Both letters reveal deep divisions not only in policy direction but also in trust between the Council and sections of the local community. While the Council presents its plan as a pragmatic response to national housing targets and local affordability issues, the EGBG sees it as a short-sighted and flawed approach.

Key questions remain unanswered:

- Why hasn't brownfield land been prioritised more explicitly?
- Will the Local Plan survive scrutiny by the Planning Inspectorate?
- Are the proposed 'affordable homes' truly affordable for local residents?

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The coming weeks will be crucial as the consultation progresses and residents have their final opportunity to submit their views. One thing is clear: the future of Epsom's Green Belt hangs in the balance, and both sides are prepared to stand their ground.

Residents can participate in the consultation process until 5 February 2025 via the Council's consultation portal.

Related reports:

Can the green light to Epsom's Green Belt housing turn red?

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

Conflict on Epsom's Green Belt plans of another kind?

Epsom and Ewell Green Belt battle lines drawing near

and many more. Search "local plan" in search bar.

Walton Golf Club's dismissal of one-in-hole unfair

14 January 2025



A greenkeeper who had worked at a Surrey golf course for almost 40 years has won a case for "unreasonable" dismissal after he was sacked when his digger fell into a hole. An employment tribunal found the disciplinary action taken against the 58-year-old had "snowballed" before alternative options were considered.

Michael Hayne's digger had to be hauled from a ditch at Walton Heath Golf Club, in Tadworth, after the machine had tumbled into a hole, cab-side down while the driver was not warring a seatbelt. The deputy course manager initially dismissed the accident as minor because no harm was done, and so did not formally report it in an accident log book.

But his bosses at the golf club viewed it as a significant incident and Mr Haynes was later dismissed for gross misconduct. The managers argued it was a "serious breach" of health and safety rules that the accident was not reported, and could cause more incidents.

Mr Haynes argued that he was sure he told Mr Mann about the accident at the time and considered he did not need to write up the event in the health and safety book.

The report, published December 23, 2024, detailed that the golf course had two diggers weighing 7.5 tons and 2.5 tons. Mr Haynes had been externally trained on how to use the diggers since around 2005, and his certification was updated every five years- although his current renewal had been overdue.

During a staff training session in November 2021, the instructor reportedly told course manager at the time, Michael Mann, that Mr Haynes was "very lucky with his accident that he hadn't been seriously hurt or worse". But Mr Mann said he did not know about the digger incident.

After some initial investigation, the Surrey club launched a disciplinary hearing against Mr Haynes, accusing him of "gross misconduct" for failing to comply with health and safety standards.

In a letter before the disciplinary hearing in November 2021, Mr Haynes wrote: "I have been a faithful employee of this Club for nearly 40 years. I love this Club and have spent my life in its service. I have a clean disciplinary record.

"If I were to be dismissed, not only would I lose my livelihood but also my wife and I would lose our home. I can assure this meeting that I have learned a lesson and will never fail to report any incident again. I would welcome any additional training that is felt necessary."

Mr Haynes was dismissed without notice, and escorted off the site. The Chief Executive, Mr Woodward, had decided his explanation was "unacceptable" and the "trust and confidence placed" in him had been "completely undermined". He added further dangerous incidents could have been avoided if Mr Haynes had reported the initial accident.

In desperation, Mr Haynes appealed the dismissal twice and provided photographic and video evidence of incidents not reported by other members of staff. However, this appeal was rejected both times.

However, the employment tribunal has now found Mr Haynes' dismissal was "procedurally unfair". It said there was no real evidence that any of the decision-makers weighed up the possibility of an alternative sanction for the Claimant.

The report stated there were "flaws" with the golf club's investigation process such as "exaggerating and maximising the seriousness of the incident". For instance, inconsistencies in describing the final position of the digger as "tipping over" and "almost horizontal".

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The tribunal still found Mr Haynes “culpable” for failing to report the digger incident in the accident book as he was involved. Employment Judge Leith said: “His failure to [report it] was rendered considerably starker because of his [senior] role […] he should have known better.”

Concluding the case, the tribunal ruled that Mr Haynes’ compensation will be reduced by 50 per cent because of his failure to log the accident. The report did not disclose the amount.

Walton Heath Golf Club has been contacted for comment.

New Year less cheerful for Epsom and Ewell football

14 January 2025



Jersey Bulls 5-1 Epsom and Ewell FC. Combined Counties League – Premier Division South. Saturday 4th January 2025.

A trip to the Channel Islands for a meeting with the Jersey Bulls is never an easy fixture, and so it proved once again as we lost our third straight match there by a score of 5-1, although at least we broke our scoring duck this time!

This week our club referred to “A big away day to Jersey” as if it was an exciting fixture to look forward to, which, in fairness, it should be, but nobody seemed very keen to make the journey, as we were very poorly represented, apart from a few Committee and, yes, two regular supporters!

We also had new signing Nathan Best, who joined from Colliers Wood United where their very informative website advised he had scored thirteen goals in twenty-five appearances for the midtable Step Six team. Kardel really received a baptism of fire, while Best looked like a younger Jaevon Dyer by way of appearance and if he can be as good then he will prove to be a fine addition. Unfortunately his touch let him down a couple of times, never a good look when wearing sky blue boots!

We kicked off towards the St Helier end of the ground, or, if you’ve sat in the stand there before, we played from right to left, and started breezily enough, as was maybe appropriate when considering the bitter wind chill and freezing rain that was unpleasant enough for us, let alone the home crowd who were even less used to this sort of weather. We earned an early pair of Adam Green corners and it was also Green who provided the first shot of the day following a good run from Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, although it was wide of the mark.

Kardel was called into action with a low save from an angled shot by Rai Dos Santos before the ball in from the subsequent corner was sent over the bar from close range. It was a lucky escape but the hosts went ahead in the 23rd minute when a corner from Dos Santos was met a couple of yards ahead of our near post with a flick on by Toby Ritzema which eluded everyone and nestled in the far corner of the net.

The hosts were monopolising possession by this stage and we were struggling to get out of our half, although Will Kendall was challenging for everything, while Jason Bloor looked dangerous with the ball at his feet, but he was often a long way out from goal and we were just unable to get the numbers forward to help. Bloor picked up a yellow card for a clumsy challenge on Luke Watson and not long after that we had a small flash point that resulted in bookings for Green and Jersey’s Luke Campbell.

However, from the Jersey free kick, the ball to the far post was knocked in first time where Dos Santos was waiting to head the ball in off Kardel from close range in the 39th minute. Kardel kept the score at 2-0 with a good low save but we were definitely second best at the break, with the two goal lead being a fair one.

We seemed to have a little more ambition in the second half and Green saw his shot on target easily gathered by Euan van der Vliet, although this shot on target was our first one in Jersey after we had even failed to do that on our two previous visits. We continued to press and a Niall Stillwell free kick to the back post was headed across goal by Kendall at which point there was a collision which resulted in four players hitting the deck, but no penalty was awarded and probably rightly so.

A deep cross was volleyed wide by the hosts but then things got interesting as we pulled a goal back. Green sent a clever pass down the right for Best to cut in and his pass resulted in a low shot from Anderson which was not held and a corner was conceded. From the 63rd minute Green corner, it was Stillwell who was able to time his run perfectly to head the ball in from close range. The hosts felt there was a foul on their keeper and they might have had a case, but Stillwell’s first goal for our club, and of course, our first on either of the Channel Islands, threatened to make things interesting.

For just three minutes, as it turned out, as a ball across goal was met with a superb strike from Ritzema that gave Kardel no chance from around the edge of the penalty area. His first goal could have been questioned as to whether he meant it, but there was no doubt about this one!

We tried to fight back but with no real success. Watson picked up a yellow card for a foul after he stumbled before making

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a challenge on Best. Some of the Jersey players were saying it wasn't even a foul, but it was reckless and whilst accidental, left our new guy on the deck for a while, although he would recover to complete the ninety minutes.

Jack Torbett came on for the tiring Bloor while it was also good to see Stefan Aiwone back on the field as he replaced Tobi Falodi, but in between those replacements we conceded twice; in the 77th minute when a right wing cross was headed in unmarked by Karl Hinds and three minutes later when a simple straight pass caught us out and Dos Santos cleverly guided the ball underneath the advancing Kardel to make it 5-1. If it hadn't been all over at 3-1, it was now!

Aiwone made a superb block to keep the hosts out and after four extra minutes the final whistle blew to signify our fifth loss in a row to the Bulls. It wasn't pretty, but the guys who were present tried their best and if there is fault to be apportioned from this match, it should be aimed at the absentees.

Hopefully we'll have many more players available for our two upcoming big Cup matches, starting on Tuesday, weather permitting, when we are due to welcome Berks County in a League Cup tie.

In summary, and as the only Salts supporter to have attended all four of our matches in the Channel Islands, it's fair to say that a trip over can be both a blessing and a curse. The islands are lovely and the welcome from the locals is great, but it is a bit of a slog with the early start and the cost involved, not to mention the risk of the whole thing being postponed at short notice due to weather conditions, as was the case when we were first due to visit Guernsey back in 2012/13, eventually getting over at the third attempt. Based on this match, it may well be that we've had our last trip to Jersey for a while, as we've met all the top teams now, many of them twice, and I make the still unbeaten islanders clear favourites right now to finally reach the Isthmian League this season after a few near misses.

Epsom & Ewell: Kevin Kardel, Tobi Falodi, Kionte Gillfillian-Waul, Adam Green (c), Nicolas Bostan, Niall Stillwell, Sean Anderson, Craig Dundas, Will Kendall, Jason Bloor, Nathan Best

Subs: Jack Torbett for Bloor (77), Stefan Aiwone for Falodi (80)

New Year Cheer For Sutton and Epsom Rugby

14 January 2025



Sutton & Epsom RFC 21 Battersea Ironsides 20. Saturday 4th January.

The September fixtures had concluded with a rousing encounter at Garratt Green when these two fine sides could not be separated and fought to a standstill for an engrossing 19-19 draw. It was the first indication in this campaign that Sutton had transformed their rather porous defence of recent times into a far more formidable outfit. The Ironsides still remain the benchmark for this league and another fiercely competitive contest was expected. Rugby Lane had witnessed five home victories on the bounce but every one of them by a miserly margin. This match maintained that sequence as Sutton edged out Battersea by a solitary point to win 21-20.

With winter arriving in the week there were concerns the pitch might be under threat from the elements. Rugby Lane was spared and a small but knowledgeable crowd gathered in gelid amiability. Freddy Bunting initiated proceedings as Sutton attacked the clubhouse end. The hosts were in top gear at once with multiple phases and commendable continuity they advanced steadily into the visiting 22 but concluded by conceding a penalty. The defences held sway as they thwarted the best endeavours of both teams. However, S&E put themselves under unnecessary pressure with errant kicking from hand that has been an unwelcome feature in recent weeks. The first instance came on ten minutes when a simple touch kick failed to cross the whitewash. It was returned with interest, led to a penalty and suddenly the Black & Whites were defending a lineout near their line. The pack were held short of glory before the ball was transferred to Charles Jacobs on the wing who could empathise with Buridan's ass as he pondered whether to go outside or cut back and the brief hesitation enabled Adam Bibby to hold him up over the line.

Shortly afterwards from the first scrum Sutton failed to find touch and Charles Stuart executed a perfect 50/22 to put the hosts under the cosh once more. The 2024-5 Sutton vintage is far more robust than recent predecessors and the defence forced a handling error. From the scrum Rob Hegarty made his first penetrative carry from Number 8 on an afternoon that was to garner impressive yardage for a man celebrating his 50th cap. At the third time of asking S&E cleared with the boot. Back in the opposition half the fluent movement looked to have broken down disastrously. Charles Stuart intercepted and was sauntering off for a certain score when the referee, Matt Blackett, brought play back for a penalty for the home team. Bunting stepped up to the oche and slotted over a 45-yard penalty for the 3-0 lead.

Both teams were showing admirable attacking intent that was neutered by well-organised defences with ferocious tackling. The Ironsides were also hindered by ambisinistrous handling with the mitigation being the cold weather. On the half hour another Sutton attack floundered in the Battersea 22 but Mr Blackett brought play back for an infringement near halfway. Once again Freddy Bunting impressively bisected the uprights for 6-0. From the restart the Greens soon

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won a penalty of their own and kicked to the 22. The lineout drive shifted the play laterally before the attack drove towards the corner. The ball was recycled and spun to the opposite side and a mismatch in the centres was expertly exploited and Charles Jacobs ran in untouched for the try. Charles Stuart put Battersea 7-6 ahead with a perfectly struck conversion.

The hosts were soon offered the chance to restore their lead but on this occasion the penalty was just beyond the range of the Bunting boot. This was the start of a period of intense pressure from Sutton as they sought the lead before the break. A penalty was kicked into the corner and from the attacking lineout the ball was sent towards the wing only to be intercepted. Again Sir brought play back for a penalty. From the tapped penalty Rob Hegarty went close before hooker Sam Lennie forced his way over for his first Sutton try. Freddy Bunting converted and the whistle blew for the interval with S&E leading 13-7.

It was the type of afternoon where the pinquid offerings of a burger van are enjoyed more for the warmth given to the hands than their culinary delights. One local resident was seen to take pity on two elderly spectators on a bench. Having popped home he returned with cups of tea and added brandy much to the appreciation of the lucky supporters. The game was living up to expectations and the score reflected an even contest that was in the balance. No one doubted that the second half would be more of the same with no quarter being given by two excellent defences.

From the restart Battersea Ironsides set out to dominate the rest of the proceedings playing at a higher tempo and with great intensity they subjected Sutton to intense pressure. The hosts were up for the challenge and weathered the early storm. Aided by a knock on by Cameron Baker, resplendent in white tights, the hosts gained a foothold in Battersea territory. Soon the familiar and reassuring sight of Freddy Bunting lining up a penalty was followed by cheers as the captain extended the lead to 16-7. Minutes later Charles Stewart replied in kind to reduce the deficit to a single score as Battersea Ironsides trailed 10-16.

The game entered the final quarter with the visitors' best efforts being undone by handling errors in the face of the relentless pressure from the home defence. Sutton's counters were promising rather than significant as the balance of play was in Battersea's favour with their glabrous Number 9 Ed Carr urging his team ever onwards. Finally, the pressure paid dividends as the Ironsides forwards were denied near the line the ball was spun wide. It was the turn of the men in green to benefit from Mr Blackett bringing the play back for a penalty. Charles Stuart accepted the easy 3-point option as the scoreboard eventually registered Sutton 16 Battersea 13 with ten minutes of regular time left on the clock.

For regulars at Rugby Lane this season this was familiar territory. Following the opening day thrashing of Old Colfeians every home game since has gone down to the wire.

Sutton & Epsom:
O'Brien, Huie, Bibby, Bunting ©, Findlay, Lennard, Munford, Johnson, Lennie, Boaden, Glanville, McTaggart, Tame, Jones & Hegarty.
Replacements: Gibson, Mount & Rea.

Battersea Ironsides:
Baker, Diamond, Magee, Banton, Jacobs, Stuart, Carr, Martin, Lewis, Chetwynd, Trickett, Wharton, Macpherson, Chitan & Dollard.
Replacements: Borup, Plater & Hirons.

Image courtesy Robin Kennedy

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