



## Green Belt development objections excluded

1 July 2023



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Draft Local Plan proposes housing developments on Green Belt land. Prominent local objectors to building on Green Belt land have discovered that their objections have not been counted.

The Council undertook a public consultation on the Draft Local Plan from 1 February to 19 March 2023. Residents could submit their responses using an online questionnaire or emailing or writing. If emailing or writing it would then be a matter for local government officers to judge whether the responses were for or against various proposals in the Draft Plan.

**Yufan Si**, a leading light in the local protest group **Epsom and Ewell Green Belt**, wrote to the Council and strongly objected to Green Belt development. Yet, her response has not been classified as a "No" to the questionnaire's 8th question: "Do you support Development in the Green Belt?"

**Alexander Duval** has complained that his clear online objection to building on **Horton Farm** has not been judged by EEBC to be an objection. He said: "Q.15 of the consultation questionnaire asked 'Do you support Site Allocation 6, Horton Farm?' My answer started with 'I strongly disagree with the development of this site' and was followed by the rationale for this view.

"I believe it is clear from this statement that I do not support the site allocation of Horton Farm. Notwithstanding this, my response is not classified as 'No, with suggestions detailed below'; indeed it is not classified at all."

He added "This issue occurs frequently regarding classification of my own responses, and also in many of the responses that I have looked at from other residents, all of which appeared to be against building on the Greenbelt."

Nevertheless, preliminary analysis by Ms Si of samples of the 1736 responses indicates as much as 85% of respondents objecting to development on Green Belt land.

Both Yufan Si and Alexander Duval have written to EEBC and Councillors demanding a review of the classification of responses to the consultation on the Draft Local Plan.

The responses to the consultation can be viewed on the internet on [THIS LINK](#).

The progress of the Draft Plan has been paused. At the last meeting of 15th June of the Council committee dealing with the Plan a new timetable for progressing the process of adopting a new plan for Epsom and Ewell was promised in due course.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council counters the complaints. Read our further report:

Green complaint not black and white

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## Confusing debate on police attending mental health calls

1 July 2023



An ex-police officer has responded to **Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner**'s calls for coppers to attend fewer mental health call outs – saying the first murder he attended was initially a non-critical mental health call.

Surrey's Police and Crime Commissioner, **Lisa Townsend**, recently called for officers to stop attending every mental health call out, saying officers are being taken off the front line. She has called for the "Right Care, Right Person" model to be introduced, following the Metropolitan Police also saying from August they will no longer attend mental health call outs where there is not a threat to life.

Councillor **Richard Smith**, a Tandridge District Councillor, said he had been a police officer for 30 years and that he was in agreement with Mrs Townsend's comments. (sic)

Cllr Smith (Residents' Alliance, Burstow, Horne & Outwood) spoke at the annual meeting of Surrey County Council's Police and Crime Panel on Thursday (June 29). He said: "Probably the first murder I went to was a non-critical [mental health] call to a person who then decided to stab the nurse to death with a carving knife out of the kitchen. I feel that's where we are going to come unstuck when it comes to removing police from mental health calls."

Mrs Townsend responded that was "absolutely the right place for police to be" and there would always be a role for police to play in such cases. But she said police officers should not be attending where there was a role for other agencies, such as adult social care or the NHS, to follow up.

Earlier in the meeting she had pointed to additional money given to the NHS for mental health support, which police don't get. But she was clear the police should not get additional money, in her opinion.

She said: "If somebody has broken their leg we would not expect them to be in the back of a police car. "If somebody is having a mental health crisis I do not want them in the back of a police car."

Mrs Townsend said she'd had "difficult" conversations with NHS representatives about police officers not being able to attend all mental health calls.

She told the meeting the difference was: "I'm not walking into A&E in St Peter's on a Friday night saying can we borrow a couple of nurses because we have got some burglaries that need solving in Woking?"

She said in February, officers spent 515 hours on incidents relating to mental health which was the highest number of hours ever recorded in a single month by **Surrey Police**.

Image: Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey Lisa Townsend. Surrey Live photographer Darren Pepe.

## Local Talent Shines Bright

1 July 2023



On the evening of June 27th, 2023, **The Epsom Playhouse** opened its doors to **The Epsom and Ewell Showcase**, brought together by the **Epsom Rotary Club**. This evening had it all, proving that our community is bursting with extraordinary talent and bringing everyone together to fundraise for local charities.

The evening began with a young Epsom saxophonist whose melodic tunes transported the audience to another realm. She was followed by **Kasumi Brooker**, whose soprano voice soared through the auditorium gracefully. Then came **Ambition School of Dance**, showcasing their remarkable choreography and flawless execution. **Cam Brown** lightened the mood with his humorous songs, and the **Bharathakalayam South Indian Dance Troupe** transported the audience to the vibrant and rich world of Indian classical dance and legend. **Leatherhead Link**'s inspirational and emotional performance closed the first half with the audience in complete harmony with the choir. In the second half, **Protègèm** brought us the 70s vibes and danced to Abba's hits, the **Girlguiding Epsom** sang campfire favourites, and the **Epsom Silver Band's Brass Quintet** perfectly played well-known versions of classic songs.

The presence of the **Mayor of Epsom and Ewell** Cllr Robert Geleit and the Mayoress added a touch of prestige to the



event. Their support and appreciation for local talent underscored the importance of nurturing and celebrating our community's creative spirit.

None of this would have been possible without the support of generous sponsors: Honey & Bamboo, a zero-waste shop from Ewell Village, Alexandra Park's Park View Cafe, Rotary South D1145, a kind anonymous donor and the fantastic people at the Playhouse who helped with everything.

**Epsom Rotary** is active in the community with a wonderful allotment project delivering food to **The Pantry** in South Street and working in conjunction with the **Epsom and Ewell Royal British Legion** to look after our veterans, amongst many other activities. If you would like to join Rotary or become a Friend of Rotary and volunteer to help your community as well, then don't hesitate to fill out the form:

<https://www.rotary-ribi.org/clubs/membershipenquiry.php?ClubID=874>

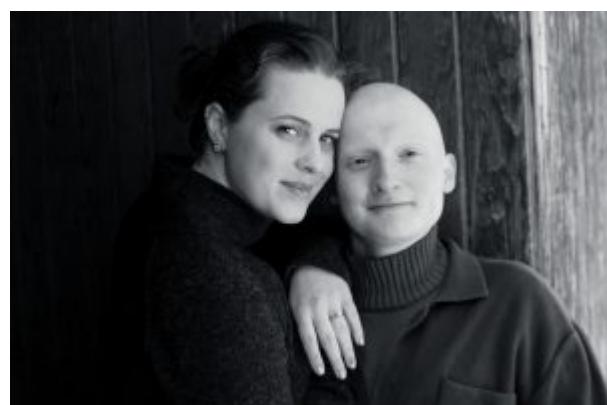
You can find out more about Rotary here: <https://www.rotary-ribi.org/clubs/homepage.php?ClubID=874>

Reporter **Romana Sustar** is a multilingual freelance journalist, University Language Tutor, marketer and owner of Epsom Digital Ltd., a local digital marketing agency.

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## Running ahead of Crohn's disease

1 July 2023



"I didn't think I would ever be able to run 10k" said **Epsom man** and Crohn's disease sufferer **Harry Reed**. But he will now compete in the London race on 9 July to raise awareness of disease.

Last year, after a long battle with Crohn's Disease, 24-year-old Harry Reed weighed just 48kg. Today he is training for the ASICS London 10k and is in his best health of recent years. "I'm super excited," says Harry who is due to compete on July 9.

"My knee's been playing up recently, so I've had to take it easy over the last couple of weeks...but apart from that...I have a feeling it's going to go very well." Before [developing Crohn's] I was an athlete," says Harry who grew up in Epsom. "I was a county sprinter and I actually qualified for the county races."

After losing much of his strength due to illness Harry's race preparation now incorporates muscle training to help with his endurance. "All the strength that you'd normally build up in like your joints, I lost it. So, I'm currently doing a lot of work to kind of build up the strength in my ligaments, tendons and around my knees and ankles."

Crohn's Disease is a chronic condition which causes parts of the gut to become swollen and inflamed resulting in symptoms including pain, diarrhoea, weight loss and extreme tiredness.

Harry developed Crohn's in 2015 when, after a calf muscle injury, he contracted glandular fever later leading to the onset of his disease. The route to a diagnosis was not straight forward and Harry spent his GCSEs through to A levels in and out of hospitals. "They just couldn't figure it out because my blood tests weren't coming back with anything specific that was wrong," Harry says.

Harry was finally diagnosed in 2017, 2 years after his symptoms began. But, that year, during an initial surgery to treat the Crohn's, Harry developed life threatening infections of the blood and stomach lining known as sepsis and peritonitis. He was transferred from Epsom to St Helier's hospital for emergency surgery.

"I wasn't expected to live. So that was a bit of a miracle in itself...I had to basically say goodbye to my parents, my family at that time because we all knew that it wasn't good."

The complications did not end there. In 2019, Harry developed hair loss known as alopecia. He also experienced two rounds of failed drug treatments which led to a severe return of symptoms in 2022.

"My diet sort of got narrower and narrower about things that were okay for me to eat...by the end of September [2022], I had not been able to eat for a couple of weeks. I ended up going into hospital through A&E due to the backlog of patients with COVID."

Harry was given intravenous nutrition before undergoing further surgery to remove the problem part of his bowel. Thankfully the operation was a success, and it was in 2022 that Harry was able to rediscover his love for running.

"When I first started.... it went terribly. But it felt great when I got back, to actually feel like I accomplished something or at least to have that sort of exercise endorphin release. Mentally the fog had been lifted for just a moment which was



really great."

"As I was able to eat more, my body was able to take in more calories, my strength grew. By November of 2022 I was given the kind of all clear by my surgeon... It's been a blessing to be able to do it for myself and prove to myself that I can do it. I didn't think I would ever be able to run 10k so to be able to feel confident about doing a good job is so exciting."

Harry will run to raise awareness of the disease, which affects over 1 in 123 people in the UK\*.

"It's an invisible illness - you'll never know if someone's got Crohn's," says Harry. "I think the tough thing... is realising the severity and the kind of the intensity that people suffer when it comes to the flare ups. It's something that is really hard to put into perspective. I think also the lack of energy that you have...it's like you have to work 10 times as hard. And most of the time your output is 10 times less. I think once you can be educated, you can then have empathy towards people and some more understanding".

Harry currently works as a creative director for a publishing house start-up based in Epsom, where he lives with his fiancé. His upcoming race will be the start of many, with plans to run the Bacchus Wine 10k at Denbies Wine Estate in September.

You can find out more about Harry's upcoming race at

<https://limelightsports.club/event/asics-london-10k-2023>.

\*Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis - stats from Crohn's and Colitis UK

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## Biggins departs for good conduct

1 July 2023



This was **Mark Biggins'** last concert in charge of **Epsom Chamber Choir**. He may return some day as a guest. The conductor Chamber Choir have shared with English National Opera moves on to take a post with the Grand Théâtre de Genève, a bit too distant to combine.

Auditions for a replacement happen this autumn. Conductors leave their impression on this choir. For two decades **Michael Stevenson** worked on refinement and blend such that you needed to be very close to pick out individual voices from the ensemble. His successor, **Piers Maxim**, liked to entrust choir members with solo spots instead of hiring outside soloists. Mark Biggins has brought an added experience of the opera house, so the timbre has gained energy and exuberance, especially among higher voices, that would do justice to a larger venue even than **St Martin's Church, Epsom**.

All these influences were on show in Saturday's concert (24th June at St Martins Church, Epsom). The ensemble retains its refinement, between singers well used to listening to each other. The big and difficult tenor solo in the choral dances from Britten's Gloriana was skilfully handled by **Dominic Morris**. **Neil Thomas** took the baritone spotlight in the folksong arrangement The Lark in the Clear Air. The Britten choral dances, from Gloriana, were straight out of the opera house, with fast tempi and committed dynamic variations creating an aural spectacle.

There were over a dozen separate items, showcasing an eclectic range of repertoire, mostly on a theme of summer but with one bizarre Christmas piece apparently left over from an earlier programme, Jonathan Dove's Wellcome All Wonders. Covid may have cancelled the date when it should have been sung but the choir were not to be denied the chance of demonstrating their prowess tuning its complicated discords.

The audience got invited to sing a refrain in the title number, the mediaeval tune Sumer is Icumen In. A cuckoo has been known to visit Epsom Common. If you encounter it and were at this concert, you know now how to address it.

Instead of more Britten, Flower Songs were furnished by Eric Whitacre. His trademark use of dissonance is more velvety and luxuriant. I have heard it compared to chocolate cake. The choir tuned all the clusters confidently and allowed their audience to wallow in the rich sonority.

**Steve Ridge** played for the one jazzier piece, by Bob Chilcott, that needed a piano. The other accompanied items employed a harp, more exotic and less percussive and played by **Mared Pugh-Evans**. She was kept busy, in the Britten dances, in a mystical upper-voices song Summer by Gustav Holst and in two euphonious folk-song arrangements by **John Bawden**. He was singing tenor with Chamber Choir last time I heard these settings but has now gravitated to bass. He composes with a calm facility combined with a lifelong immersion in choral idiom. Hearing these songs was as refreshing as being handed a long, cool drink.



Mared Pugh-Evans switched from subtle accompaniment with hints of ancient bucolic tradition to virtuoso display for her solo item, *Rhapsodie*, by Marcel Grandjany. Composed by a harpist, it let her demonstrate a vast range of impossibly rapid ripples and resonant chords, sometimes at the same time, while always giving the impression that this is what harpists do for fun.

Epsom clarinettist **Zoë Humphries** joined her for the Victorian Kitchen Garden Suite by Paul Reade, a piece chosen to entertain rather than dazzle. They played with appealing, never forced tone, passing the tunes from one to the other and radiating serenity around the building as the evening started to cool. We heard a Monteverdi madrigal and two joyful, sparkling partsongs by Fanny Hensel.

Then Mark Biggins' valedictory item, a nod to his past studies in America, was Stephen Paulus' *The Road Home*, which was encored affectingly.

### Nigel Williams

Related reports:

[Passion in the heart of Epsom](#)

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## New Epsom theatre very open for business

1 July 2023



Set amidst rolling lavender fields, the **Lavender Theatre** will open for its inaugural summer season this July in **Epsom**. The theatre is located at 139 Reigate Road, Epsom KT17 3D

The 250-seat open air theatre will be home for an annual season of plays and musicals with a truly elegant backdrop. Based at Mayfield Lavender in Surrey, the theatre has been co-founded by director **Joe McNeice** (producer/director of 'DIVA: Live From Hell!'), Mayfield owner Brendan Maye and Jonathan Muir.

The inaugural season will open with Irving Berlin's classic musical '**Annie Get Your Gun**' from July 17, with music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, original book by Herbert and Dorothy Fields as revised by Peter Stone, with new direction and choreography by Simon Hardwick ('My Fair Lady').

The launch of the theatre will see the completion of a significant investment into the Epsom site, which already boasts a coffee bar, shop, and a full service glasshouse restaurant due to open alongside the theatre this summer.

"This will be more than just a visit to a theatre," commented Joe McNeice, "Audiences will be able to grab a picnic to enjoy among the blossoming rows of lavender as the sun begins to set, before taking their seats in our covered auditorium to watch a show under the stars."

Since opening in 2006, the Mayfield Lavender Farm in Banstead has grown into a major summer destination for tourists and locals in South London, and this year the team are opening the gates to a theatre at their sister location in Epsom.

Lavender Theatre Artistic Director **Joe McNeice** worked behind the scenes at London's immersive 'Great Gatsby', and was Regent's Park Open Air Theatre's Visitor Services Manager until 2022, after graduating from the University of York in 2018.

"The whole place looks incredible, just walking about the site is a real treat for all the senses," McNeice added, "so our shows have to compliment their surroundings and match the sophistication that the natural landscape has set for us."

Speaking of his plans for '*Annie Get Your Gun*', **Simon Hardwick** said: "The show will be a rip-roaring staging of the well known Broadway musical in a very raw and kinetic production that evokes the energy of Buffalo Bill's original touring celebrations of the Wild West. The Lavender Theatre will be a dream destination; an environment in which to enjoy a West End-standard production under a hazy summer sky."

The theatre, privately funded and managed by **Lavender Productions Ltd.**, will produce its own shows with plans to see the summer season expand year on year with diverse and engaging programming.

McNeice said: "With no public funding or grants to help us achieve this mammoth project, we are relying solely on our Box Office income to build the Lavender Theatre into a profitable business, but we believe that creating a new producing theatre, a proper landmark location for the arts in Surrey, is something worth the investment, for both the local community and the wider industry.

"I'm really passionate about developing new shows, particularly musicals. The location is perfect because it's actually very close to London, but far enough away to have its own identity, which will give us the opportunity to develop work without the vast expense and pressure that comes with opening new shows in the capital. It's an incredibly exciting opportunity."



Tickets for the inaugural season are on sale today at [lavendertheatre.com](http://lavendertheatre.com).

## Time for us all to slow down?

1 July 2023



**A default 20mph speed limit** could be coming to Surrey's towns and villages. **Surrey County Council** is developing a new speed limit policy with the aim of making streets safer and tackling climate change.

The proposed changes will work on a presumption that most 30mph roads in urban and village settings will be reduced to 20mph.

There are on average nearly 30 deaths on Surrey's roads each year, and a new road safety strategy will not only work to bring that number down, but also fit in with council objectives around liveable and "healthy" streets.

A meeting of the county council's communities, environment and highways select committee on Wednesday (July 5) will look at the plans, which officers have been working on since the beginning of the year.

Council documents show that 95 per cent of pedestrians hit by cars at 20mph survive, dropping to around half at 30mph and to 5 per cent at 40mph. They also say that in 2021, 24 people were killed and 647 were seriously injured on Surrey's roads.

A bid brought to council in 2022 to make the default speed limit 20mph in town centres and residential areas was rejected by county councillors.

The council's cabinet member for highways and community resilience asked officers at the start of 2023 to come up with a new policy with "a clear ambition" for "more appropriate" speed limits town centres, residential areas, village centres and outside schools.

It comes as the council also considers adopting a "Vision Zero" approach, following the principle that "it is neither inevitable nor acceptable that anyone should be killed or seriously injured when travelling".

The approach is being brought in by councils across the UK including in London, Kent, Essex, Cambridgeshire and Devon and started in Sweden in the 1990s.

A Local Transport Plan adopted by the council in July 2022 sets out plans for changes to the transport network in Surrey up to 2032 and after. Part of that plan include introduction of 20mph limits using just signs, rather than "self-enforcing" zones which would include physical traffic calming measures like speed humps.

The plans said: "There is a presumption that most existing 30mph limits will be reduced to 20mph, however, this is not appropriate for all roads." There would still, for example, be 30mph "buffers" on the approach to towns and villages, for safe transition into and out of the 20mph limits.

Documents also said a 20mph zone would not be appropriate and higher limits would be kept where the number of pedestrians and cyclists using the road was low and would still be even with lower speeds, and where there were no need for pedestrians and cyclists to mix with motor traffic. This could include where there were segregated cycle paths, crossing points or no need for people to cross the road.

Streets likely to see speed limit reductions are those where "vulnerable road users and vehicles are expected to mix in a frequent and planned manner" including residential streets, and places where people go for shopping, leisure, socialising, business or health.

A reduction to 20mph limits also fits in with the council's plans to create "healthy streets", a scheme which prompted a councillor to pen a break-up letter from a street to a car earlier this year.

Organisations that have called for greater use of 20mph limits include the **General Assembly of the United Nations**, The World Health Organisation and The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

While meeting documents show that not all drivers would stick to a new 20mph limit, such schemes should result in an overall reduction in mean average speeds.

Since publication of this story on 29.06.2023, Surrey County Council has said 30.06.2023, the report has been withdrawn from the agenda for "further work to be undertaken".

Image: Backspace289 Public Domain



## Epsom family Opened to a two degree challenge

1 July 2023



**Joanna McLenaghan** walked quite literally in her Epsom father's footsteps when she followed dad Ian across the stage to collect identical degrees recently at a ceremony staged by **The Open University**.

The pair signed up for an OU MSc in Maths in the same year and there followed six years of "total rivalry" to see who could get the best marks for assignments.

It's the third degree for Joanna, 36, who is now a data scientist managing a team of people at Gousto, the recipe box company.

She earned a first-class degree in physics at Oxford followed by a doctorate in the same subject from the University of St Andrews. But her latest achievement was hard won by burning the midnight oil whilst working full time.

Jo, as she is also known, says her OU degree was definitely a factor in her gaining her latest job at Gousto as she says employers know the "level of effort and commitment that you have to put in, particularly doing something over six years on top of a job. Whilst I already had the undergraduate degree and a PhD, I think as an employer, when you're looking through hundreds of applications having something like this on a CV really helps you to shine," she said.

**Ian McLenaghan**, 66, from **Epsom** in Surrey, is full of praise for his daughter: "I'm incredibly proud of her achievements. We might have started out on the same pathway but she's much more of a people person, who's capable of doing things like management. "That's something I avoided like the plague when I was working. I just wanted to go away in a cupboard somewhere and work on my own solving technical problems."

Yet Ian is something of an academic himself. He *also* has an Oxford degree in physics, and in the same subject holds a doctorate from Imperial College as well as an MS from the California Institute of Technology. He began his MSc while semi-retired to "keep Alzheimer's at bay" but also admitted "I guess we like studying".

Jo says she clearly remembers Ian encouraging her and supporting her studies through childhood: "I always remember, before I went to high school, that my dad and I had these study sessions where he cut out these different molecules and then we'd attach them together with paper clips. And he was always buying me things like magnet sets, so he definitely encouraged me from a young age." She says once he bought her a book on Java programming!

For Jo, her dad is an inspiration: "He's had a lifelong love of learning that he's been willing to pass on. He taught himself coding and computer programming and it's that curiosity that has guided him his whole life." She added: "I think a lot of people think you just learn when you're a child; a teenager and then you when you go to university and then that's it!"

The Open University (OU) is the largest academic institution in the UK and a world leader in flexible distance learning. Since it began in 1969, the OU has taught more than 2.3 million students worldwide and currently has over 208,000 students. Seventy-one per cent of directly registered students are in full-time or part-time employment, and 76 FTSE 100 companies have sponsored staff to take OU courses.

Philippa Green reporting.

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## Accountant's fees in dispute

1 July 2023



**Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's** external audit fees, provided by **Grant Thornton UK LLP**, are in the region between £50,000 to £60,000 per annum for an annual budget in the region of £8.5 million. Another Surrey council with a budget in the region of £11.5 million is facing auditor fees between about £160,000 and £245,000. **Emily Coady-Stemp**



reports:

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A Surrey council will challenge its auditors over a staggering 479 per cent increase in fees for the work it did on two years of the authority's accounts.

Standard fees for the audits, which relate to accounts for 2019/20 and 2020/21, were set at £36,000 per year. But **Tandridge District Council** has now been hit with a bill for additional fees totalling £345,000, a difference which officers say represents three per cent of the council's annual budget.

**Mark Hak-Sanders**, the district council's chief finance officer, told the meeting that officers were in the early stages of discussing fees with **Deloitte** and would undertake the first stage of challenging them.

Should they not be able to reach an agreement with the auditors, which he said was a "distinct possibility", the challenge would be escalated to the **Public Sector Audit Appointments**, the body responsible for setting the standard scale fees.

Meeting documents set out the reasons for the increase in fees charged, which stood at an additional £136,000 for 2019/20's account and an additional £209,000 for 2020/21.

Deloitte's submission said: "The scale fee is based on assumptions about the scope and required time to complete our work, and does not reflect any additional audit issues for the year, or the increasing scope of work required due to new auditing requirements and regulatory requirements."

Quality or preparation issues led to the largest additional fees in both years, and documents showed that compared to around 700 hours of work built in to the scale fee, the total time spent on the 2019/20 audit was around 4,600 hours and in 2020/21 around 5,800 hours.

The meeting heard that some level of variation was expected, though not as high as this, and Mr Hak-Sanders said officers would report back to the committee on the progress of the challenge.

Additional work on the audits included more detail requested by the Financial Reporting Council, new assets being bought in a year which were not included on original figures, and in one case a delay of five months for a document to be passed on to auditors by the council.

Mr Hak-Sanders said any increase in the fees should not impact on the council's service delivery for the coming financial year but there nonetheless was a risk associated with the increase which needed to be managed. He told the meeting: "As with any risk, the council has contingency set aside to manage it and so it wouldn't affect frontline spending decisions as such. In the long term, any money that we spend on audit is money that's either less in reserves or less to spend on front line delivery."

After the meeting, Mr Hak-Sanders said: "The accounts for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 were produced before a complete transformation of financial management at Tandridge District Council.

"The transformation of the council's finances has put us in a much stronger place to meet challenges such as reduced funding, inflation and the cost of living crisis, as well as strengthening our approach to financial reporting and accounts

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## Chris Grayling MP on new homes and biodiversity

1 July 2023



Now that the local elections are out of the way, we all wait with interest to see what the Borough Council is planning to do about its controversial plan to build all over the green belt. I hope they will now think again.

The loss of green belt is not just about the loss of character in our area. It would also have a huge impact on local biodiversity. The loss of Horton Farm would have a knock on impact on the Common and Horton Country Park, with the loss of habitat for birds and animals which range across the whole area.

And that would come at a time when local authorities are expected to play a much more active role in the restoration of nature.

For half a century we have seen a sharp decline in native species in the UK. While a few have thrived, and nature is to blame for some of the decline - have you noticed how many more magpies there are around to empty the nests of smaller birds - the reality is that continuing development and the loss of habitat, alongside the use of pesticides, has made a huge difference.

I hope and believe that is now beginning to change. There are firm Government targets for the restoration of nature.



Councils are obliged to have a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with real action plans in it. Developers will, from November, be obliged to build a plan for biodiversity net gain into their developments. That means if they take away a habitat, they need to invest in developing another elsewhere. I hope that will narrow the cost gap between building on brownfield sites and just building on open fields.

The new system of agricultural support will also make a difference. Outside the European Union we have been free to develop an entirely different approach to supporting farmers, away from the constraints of the Common Agricultural Policy. The new UK approach will reward farmers for achieving a better balance between production and nature - for example by restoring hedgerows that were ripped out in the past, or by leaving much wider margins around fields where insects and small animals can flourish. Or by restoring the copses that so often stood in the middle of their fields, or the ponds that have so often disappeared.

In particular it will help the growing number of Nature Friendly Farmers around the country, who are taking an entirely different approach to agriculture with far fewer pesticides and by using what are called cover crops to stimulate the soil instead. Those who have already gone down this route are finding their costs fall, and often their profitability rises while they produce the same amount or even more food. A combination of more traditional methods with modern technology is really making a difference.

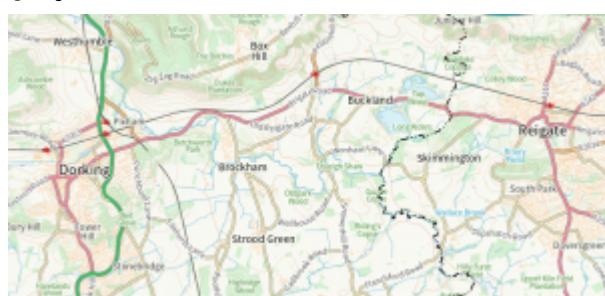
But in an area like ours where farming is only present on a limited scale, the importance of the open spaces as corridors through which animals can pass is of particular importance. From the borders of London in West Ewell to the M25, and across to the far side of the Downs and beyond, there are wide areas where local wildlife can roam. Deer in particular are thriving locally. You can often see them grazing in the fields between Epsom and Ashtead in the early evening.

We do need new homes. But we cannot just build at the expense of biodiversity. And in an area like ours, where there is an alternative to the Council's controversial plan, we would be crazy not to take a different route.

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## Surrey's worst road to be improved

1 July 2023



A £1.8million scheme to improve a Surrey A-road branded "one of the worst in the country" has moved to its next stage. Councillors at **Surrey County Council**'s cabinet highlighted the "frightening statistics" on the A25 between Dorking and Reigate, which saw 70 collisions resulting in injury between 2017 and 2022.

The stretch of road, just over six miles long, has been named by **The Road Safety Foundation** as one of the worst A roads in England for the number of fatal and serious injuries per vehicle kilometre travelled.

Thanks to a £1.8 million grant from the **Department for Transport**, Surrey County Council's cabinet agreed at a meeting on Tuesday (June 27) to progress works and make changes to the road to reduce the risk of collisions resulting in injury.

The decision means work will begin on the next phase of projects as part of the **Surrey Infrastructure Plan** for road improvements across the county. The projects will now have a full business case developed and reported to the council's Capital Programme Panel before they formally start.

From 2017 to the end of November 2022 there were 70 collisions on the road, one of them a fatality and 22 resulting in serious injuries. Meeting documents show there were 26 (37 per cent) involving injury to motorcyclists and 17 (24 per cent) where pedal cyclists were injured.

The reasons given for this were the nearby Rykas Café and Box Hill, both popular spots for those on two wheels, and that the road was the main east to west route through Surrey.

Cabinet member for transport, infrastructure and growth, Councillor **Matt Furniss** (Conservative, Shalford) told the meeting the risk of collisions was "significantly high" on this route. He said as well as reducing the risk of collisions, there could be segregated cycle lanes and other active travel measures introduced.

Cabinet member for highways and community resilience, Cllr **Kevin Deanus** (Conservative, Waverley Eastern Villages), said the "frightening" figures about injuries on the road reiterated the "absolute need" for the project.

While Cllr **Rebecca Paul** (Conservative, Tadworth, Walton & Kingswood), the council's deputy cabinet member for levelling up, said it was "key" that local residents were engaged and consulted with to make sure there was community support for any changes made.



# ULEZ driving old cars to Epsom market

1 July 2023



**Epsom** has the highest number of second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 people, followed by Winsford and Preston. Hatchbacks are the most common type of second-hand car, accounting for 38% of all listings. The Ford Fiesta, VW Golf and the Ford Focus are the most common second-hand car models.

New research reveals the UK towns and cities with the highest number of second-hand cars for sale.

The research, commissioned by car finance refund experts Undisclosed.co.uk, looked at more than 400,000 used car listings from AutoTrader, in order to find the areas of the UK with the highest number of second-hand cars per 10,000 people.

With The Mayor of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone expanding to **Epsom and Ewell**'s London Borough borders with Sutton and Kingston many local residents are changing cars to avoid the charge.

Comfortably in first place, with 549 second-hand cars listings per 10,000 residents, is Epsom. The Surrey town sits at the top of the list, cementing itself as the second-hand car capital of the UK. The data shows that there are 1,729 second-hand cars for sale in Epsom.

With 498 second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 residents, Winsford is close behind in second place. The data shows that the Cheshire town boasts 1,699 second-hand cars for sale.

In third place, is the Lancashire city of Preston, with 348 second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 residents. The first city to appear on the list, Preston has a total of 3,955 second-hand cars for sale.

Fourth place belongs to Peterborough, with 318 second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 residents, and ranking in fifth place with 294 is Stirling.

The remainder of the top ten features Wakefield in sixth place (253), Oldham in seventh place (236), Canterbury in eighth place (234), Blackburn in ninth (231).

Rounding off the list in tenth place is Stafford, with 227 second-hand cars listings per 10,000 residents.

Hatchbacks were found to be the most common type of used car, accounting for 38% of all listings (164,910 listings), while SUVs were the second most popular, accounting for 33% of listings (143,842 listings).

Rank	Place	Second-hand cars for sale per 10,000 residents
1.	Epsom	549
2.	Winsford	498
3.	Preston	346
4.	Peterborough	318
5.	Stirling	294
6.	Wakefield	253
7..	Oldham	236
8.	Canterbury	234
9.	Blackburn	231
10.	Stafford	227

A spokesperson for Undisclosed.co.uk commented on the findings, saying:

"This research offers valuable insight into the areas of the UK which see a disproportionately high number people trying to sell off their vehicles. The more saturated the second hand car market is in a given area, the more tricky is to be to sell, with many potential buyers being less willing to travel further afield in order to secure a slightly better deal."

Related reports:

[Can you beat the ULEZ charge?](#)

[Challenge to ULEZ gaining grounds](#)

[Many Surrey motorists will be paying the ULEZ charge.](#)

Surrey Council's ULEZ talks ongoing with TfL

Image: Wilsons car dealers in Kiln Lane Epsom. One of the country's largest second-hand forecourts.



## A Midsummer's Night's Dream in Cheam

1 July 2023



**Epsom Choral Society** gave us a night to remember at St Andrews Church in Cheam last Saturday. Their programme was an unusual and attractive coupling of works by **Constant Lambert** and **David Fanshawe**. In *The Rio Grande*, Lambert sets a poem by Sacheverell Sitwell for choir, two pianos and percussion, while in *African Sanctus*, written following visits to Africa in 1969, Fanshawe combines African sounds, both human and natural, with live musicians and a Latin Mass.

The concert got off to rousing start with the choir in fine voice, with plenty of rhythmic verve and effective dynamic contrasts throughout. It's worth remembering, however, that in very soft passages articulation needs to be even crisper. I did also wonder whether there might have been slightly more sway and swagger in phrases such as "... they dance in the city, down the public squares...". These are minor quibbles; the performance was as accomplished as one might expect.

**Marion Lea**, the choir's regular accompanist, took the solo piano role, with its virtuosic cadenzas, while **Peter Jaekel**, a regular visitor, took the 'orchestral' part. Both pianists dealt expertly with the technical demands, and they displayed an excellent rapport. This was also apparent as two pianos became one for the three lollipops from Walton's *Façade* suite, namely Polka, Popular Song and Foxtrot, hugely enjoyed by the sizeable audience. The first half ended with a brief introduction to *African Sanctus* by the late composer's widow **Jane Fanshawe**. During her very informative words and photographs, conductor **Julian Collings** was presented with one of David Fanshawe's trademark caps.

The second half of the concert was heralded by a mighty roar of "Sanctus" from the choir, accompanied by a full percussion ensemble. Having conducted this work myself many moons ago, I recall just how tricky it was to get all elements perfectly aligned - I wish I had had professional sound engineers such as the excellent team on Saturday! A mesmerising muezzin's call to prayer got the next movement under way. Here the gorgeous blend of the voices produced some exquisite singing with perfect intonation. Other qualities such as stamina and staying power presented themselves in the next two movements. The call of the muezzin translates into the key of D, and as any soprano will tell you a very high D lies well out of the comfort zone so full marks to the sopranos here.

Following the Credo came Love Song, a tender and moving episode in which a cattle boy in East Sudan sings about a girl called Abdha. At the start of the movement, we hear a recording of a mother ringing tiny bells outside her tent in an ancient custom signifying the birth of a baby son. In the context of the mass this signifies the birth of Jesus Christ, and as the sound of the bells gently faded the effect was intensely poignant.

The Crucifixus is described by the composer as the "heart of the work" and it features a fearsome mix of war cries, rainstorms and dances, resulting in a dramatic and menacing texture. I wondered for a moment whether the percussion was slightly overpowering here - the war cries from South Sudan, for example, were not easily picked out. A belated mention here of the excellent soprano soloist, **Lisa Swayne**, who managed the wide jagged leaps with great style and aplomb.

The gentle Lord's Prayer which followed drew a lovely gospel feel to the singing, although I did feel that the lead guitar was slightly over-amplified. After a movement of chants and a superbly effective Agnus Dei - with the soloist once again shining in her three consecutive cries of Jesu Christe - a thrilling, exhilarating and exuberant finale brought this unique work to a close. Rapturous applause followed, leading to an encore - a repeat of the Lord's Prayer - during which Julian Collings, fittingly I thought, wore the cap presented to him earlier.

### Martin Seath

Related Reports:

[Epsom choristers go south for the Summer](#)

[Epsom Choral Society opens its centenary celebration 2022](#)

Photo credit: Clive Richardson

## Surrey splashing out

1 July 2023



Making a Claygate outdoor swimming pool an all year round indoor facility is one of many projects supported by Surrey County Council's Community Fund. Since November 2020 the Fund has splashed out over £10 million. This year sees a commitment of £2.9 million to Surrey's premier theatre, The Yvonne Arnaud in Guildford.

The money will be used to improve the accessibility of the entire theatre and ensure existing and new community spaces be accessible for a variety of new groups, building on the community initiatives and outreach programmes already delivered by the theatre.

**Joanna Read, Theatre Director and Chief Executive of Yvonne Arnaud said:** *"By making this award Surrey County Council is recognising the value the people of Surrey place upon the Yvonne Arnaud and its' integral role as an arts provider across the county. This funding will help make the theatre accessible, sustainable and fit for purpose, better able to serve Surrey for future generations.*

*"The Arts play a critical role in supporting our health and wellbeing and building cohesive communities. It's good to have the backing of our County Council as we continue our work bringing excellent theatre and arts engagement to the people of Surrey. Our vision for the Arnaud maintains its theatre traditions while building on our creative heart; repurposing a 1960's building to deliver multi-faceted offerings for 21st century audiences."*

**Surrey County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety Denise Turner-Stewart said:** *"This is a truly ambitious project to develop Guildford's iconic and much-loved building into a friendly, cultural community hub and is exactly the sort of project which offers a wider community benefit.*

*"Surrey's cultural offer caters for all ages and budgets. It is an important part of what makes the county a great place to live, work and visit. I would like to congratulate Yvonne Arnaud who have been successful in their application to Your Fund Surrey.*

*"Improving accessibility will enable Yvonne Arnaud to build on its existing excellent reputation and become a place everyone can enjoy."*

Master Park Pavilion in Oxted, another recent successful applicant to Your Fund Surrey Large Community Project Fund, will receive £1.86m towards replacing the current building with a new fit-for-purpose two-storey community and sports hub.

The Park Hub, set in the 11-acre park will become a valuable resource for the whole community with new facilities including a café, rooms for classes and community activities, improved changing facilities and accessible toilets.

**Pammy McNaughton, Chair of Master Park said:** *"We will be forever grateful to Your Fund Surrey for helping Master Park towards this goal. We knew that our request for £1.86 million was a large sum, but by granting us this amount, not only will Your Fund Surrey be helping Master Park Charity, but they will also be helping the many other charities, activities, clubs, and communities that we are engaged with."*

Other projects awarded funding via Your Fund Surrey so far include:

**Claygate Community Pool, £363,500** to develop an existing outdoor pool into an indoor facility that will enable the whole community to use the pool all year round.

**Leatherhead & Dorking Gymnastics Club, £550,000** to extend the current facilities and build a new gymnasium and sensory room.

**Normandy Community Shop and Café, £570,189** towards building a new community shop and café at Manor Fruit Farm

**Ripley Village Hall, £645,036** towards rebuilding of the Village Hall, including accessible community rooms and a new kitchen.

**South Park Sports Association, £150,000** towards the construction and installation of a 3G artificial grass pitch with a spectator area.

**Tatsfield Parish Council, £10,146** to install new picnic benches and planters on the village green.

**Weybridge Men's Shed, £30,000** towards the internal fit-out of two sheds and the installation of an underground water treatment system.

Communities can submit applications via the Your Fund Surrey website for both small and large scale community projects and have their say on projects being proposed in their local area [www.surreycc.gov.uk/yourfund](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/yourfund).



## Mole Valley Plan Paused

1 July 2023



As Epsom and Ewell's Draft Local Plan's progress awaits a new timetable we take a look at what's happening in neighbouring Mole Valley. Chris Caulfield reports.

The decision on where, and how many, houses will be built in Mole Valley has been paused, again. It means the council's local plan will almost certainly be delayed, the planning inspector said.

Mole Valley District Council was originally given permission to delay the publication of its local plan until after the May 2023 elections and to give it time to understand any Government revisions to the **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF) which had been due for publication in the spring.

The deadline passed and the elections are over however the Government has still to finalise and publish the NPPF.

Writing to Mole Valley District Council, the Planning Inspectorate said that "Given the council's position", that changes to the NPPF "may have implications for its plan, and that the final NPPF changes are yet unknown, it seems reasonable to agree to the council's request (to pause the local plan). The extended pause will enable the council to fully consider the implications of any revised national policy."

Councils waiting for the NPPF update have been told they will not be treated as having out-of-date local plans.

The inspectorate's decision was welcomed by the council's cabinet member for planning, Councillor **Margaret Cooksay**. She said "The Inspector has again recognised that delays in the Government adopting a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - which may include important changes for Mole Valley's draft Local Plan - has created ongoing uncertainty for us as the local planning authority.

"In her most recent response to us, she emphasised that she does not want the examination of our draft Local Plan to become 'unduly protracted'. We could not agree more, and we urge the decision-makers in government to publish the new NPPF quickly so that clarity concerning the impact potential changes could have on our Plan is achieved as soon as possible.

"Whilst we would of course rather not delay further, we know that this is the right thing to do to get the right plan. We will bring you any future updates concerning the Plan via our normal publicity channels as soon as they are made known to us."

Related Reports:

[Mole Valley Local Plan paused: official](#)

[Lessons for Epsom in Mole Valley's "shouty" Local Plan struggle?](#)

[How Green is My Mole Valley?](#)

[Pause for thought on paused Plan \(Epsom and Ewell\)](#)

Image: Mole Valley District Council. CC Surrey Advertiser.

## Multi-million pound transformation for Surrey libraries

1 July 2023





A multi-million investment into **Surrey's libraries** has been approved by **Surrey County Council's** Cabinet to modernise services and create flexible, innovative and inclusive spaces that best meet the needs of our residents. This will revolutionise our libraries offer and make them fit for the future.

The first phase of this work will focus on key libraries including **Epsom**, Redhill, Staines, Woking and Weybridge with completion expected by the end of 2024.

The work is part of a library strategy focused on ensuring that Surrey libraries deliver a service that is fit for the future and accessible to all. The plans include significant changes at each location, including the creation of community 'Hubs' in Staines and Weybridge.

For Epsom, Woking and Redhill this means the creation of flagship facilities that will include:

- Flexible meeting rooms with kitchenette
- Moveable partitions/walls to create agile workspaces
- Meeting pods
- New furniture
- A fully flexible layout throughout with space for events and performances, exhibitions, partner organisations and community use.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding of £500k has been secured for Redhill Library from Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.

For Staines, this will include:

- Creation of a state-of-the-art flagship modern Library and Cultural Centre
- Relocation to the former Decathlon store located in the Elmsleigh shopping centre
- The new hub will include Citizens Advice, Voluntary Action, Spelthorne Museum and other lettable space.
- Integration of Spelthorne Museum into the layout of the library will create an enhanced resident experience
- External branding to windows and brickwork and landscaping to outside area

For Weybridge, this will include:

- Extending the ground floor library space
- Improving the current spaces and facilities to better serve the building's current occupiers such as Brooklands Radio and create a space for other partner organisation to deliver additional essential services
- External upgrade to improve the look of the building
- The refurbishment will also reduce energy use and carbon emissions, contributing to the Council's net zero ambitions
- A fully flexible layout throughout with space for events and performances, exhibitions, partner organisations and community use.

**Denise Turner-Stewart**, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety at Surrey County Council, said: "It's fantastic to be able to invest in our libraries and create cultural and community hubs so they are better placed to serve Surrey's residents. The improvements will provide the opportunity to redesign and refurbish some of our key libraries, providing updated, attractive and inviting places where people can read, socialise, study and relax. This work is all about making sure Surrey's libraries are all vibrant hubs, providing warm, friendly spaces where everyone is welcome."

**Cllr Clive Woodbridge**, Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee at **Epsom & Ewell Council**, said: "It is fantastic news that our much-loved library in Epsom is going to receive this investment. Our libraries are a vital resource for so many of the borough's residents, and ensuring that Epsom Library is fit for the future and accessible to all will mean our communities can benefit from all it has to offer for years to come."

The development of the libraries follows on from the approval of the 2019 Library and Cultural Services Strategy and is closely aligned with the Surrey 2030 Community Vision and the Hubs programme, which looks to deliver services in a joined-up way allowing residents to access multiple services in one location and support the council's ultimate ambition - that no one is left behind.

To find out more about libraries in Surrey visit the Surrey Libraries web pages:

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/libraries>