

Pause for thought on paused Plan

16 June 2023



Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Licensing and Planning Policy Committee reviewed the state of play with the Draft Local Plan at a meeting Thursday 15th June.

The progression of the Draft Local Plan (the framework for local planning decisions of the future) was paused in March following an outcry about its Green Belt development proposals. Michael Gove MP, the Secretary of State responsible for planning matters, is yet to deliver on the clarifications sought to his pre-May local election indications that local authorities would have greater control over housing targets.

The meeting was chaired by Cllr **Steven McCormick** (RA Woodcote and Langley) who advised that EEBC was bound by the housing target of 573 houses per annum as extrapolated from 2014 data. A report to the meeting confirmed that if 2018 data was relied on that target would be reduced to 253.

Officers reported on the workstreams continuing on the Draft Local Plan. These included the vetting of the 1650 responses from individuals and organisations received during the public consultation period of the now paused Draft Local Plan. Officers are re-doubling their efforts to identify brownfield sites for development including Kiln Lane and Longmead areas of Epsom and Ewell.

Cllr **Kieran Persand** (Conservative Horton Ward) welcomed the work being done on brownfield development and called for Green Belt to simply be excluded from the Draft Local Plan.

Cllr **Julie Morris** (LibDem College Ward) drew attention to the Environment Act coming into force in November this year. Major developments require to prove a 10% gain in bio-diversity. An officer explained that this gain is measurable by a pre-development audit and post-development audit according to an established "metric". Developers can establish the gain from on-site or off-site "off-sets". Rather like carbon trading. Minor developments will be subject to the 10% bio-diversity gain requirement from April 2024. Cllr Morris argued that the new legal requirement should inhibit Green Belt development.

Cllr **Robert Leach** (RA Ewell Court), having served on the Planning Committee in the 20th century, was tired of it all and regarded the estimated half-million being spent on the process as a waste and questioned the benefit to residents. However, he acknowledged the legal requirement to have a Local Plan. He also predicted, after having read the Privileges Committee report on Boris Johnson in the morning, a change of government by the time EEBC settled its Local Plan. The councillor implied a new Labour Government would rigidly impose housing targets.

Cllr McCormick explained that a revised timetable for the progression of the Draft Local Plan will be submitted to the committee in due course. Meanwhile, all councillors will be invited to special briefings on the Draft Local Plan process and this would be especially important for the several new councillors elected in May.

Related Reports:

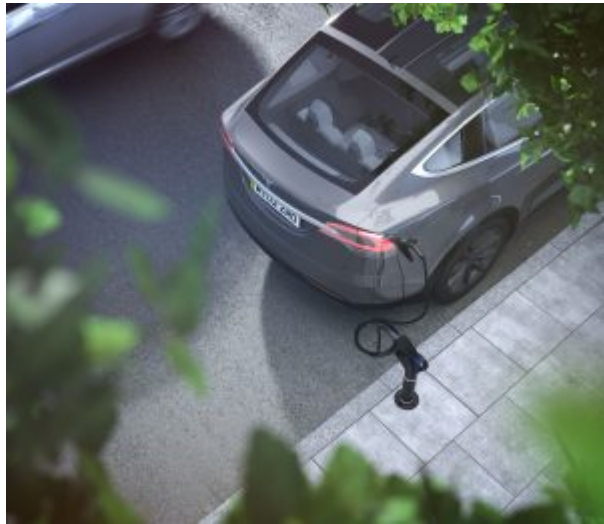
Motion to pause Local Plan process

Public meeting on Local Plan dominated by greenbelters.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Draft Local Plan.

Kerbing car pollution trial in Surrey

16 June 2023



On Thursday 15 June, **Clean Air Day**, Surrey County Council is launching the trial of two domestic kerbside electric vehicle (EV) charging solutions for Surrey residents who do not have access to off-street parking. The trial, one of the first in the UK, will allow residents to choose from two options – either cable gullies or a Trojan AON charger. Both connect to the residents’ domestic energy supply, to allow home charging for EVs without the need for a driveway.

Both options are being introduced as part of a trial, with limited numbers of each available. The trial will be used to assess effectiveness and popularity, combined with feedback from residents who participate. To find out more and to register for the trial, residents can visit this **webpage**.

The two products being trialled are cable gullies and Trojan AON chargers. Cable gullies are channels installed in the pavement that can be used to safely trail an EV charging cable, and AON chargers are installed on the pavement near the kerb with a cable laid underneath the pavement connecting it directly to a property’s own electrical supply.

Councillor Matt Furniss, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport said: *“Many Surrey residents have written to us in the last year with interest in new and innovative ways to charge electric vehicles from their home. I am delighted to be able to offer these two new kerbside charging products to our residents. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this trial and hope this could provide another charging solution for residents and allow more people to switch to electric vehicles.”*

In Surrey, almost half of our emissions come from transport, and about half of that is from private vehicles. So, reducing the emissions from the way we travel about – whether that’s by walking or cycling more, using public transport or switching to an electric car – can help to drastically reduce our carbon footprint. Electric vehicles produce no exhaust emissions, so are much cleaner than petrol or diesel cars. Approximately 40% of households in Surrey do not have access to a driveway at home, so innovative solutions are needed to encourage more people to switch to EVs.

The installation and maintenance of the cable gullies will be managed by Surrey County Council.

The AON chargers have been developed by Trojan Energy and Surrey County Council will license Trojan Energy to install, maintain and operate AON chargers on Surrey’s highways.

The Trojan AON charger differs from the cable gullies in that it can be shared across more than one local household to reduce the cost to residents. Both trials will involve a cost to residents.

Ian Mackenzie, Trojan Energy CEO, said: *“At Trojan Energy, we understand the importance of accessibility and convenience when it comes to EV charging. That’s why we’re delighted to be part of this trial bringing innovative solutions to Surrey residents. Our home-connected Trojan AON makes EV charging fully accessible to residents who don’t have off-street parking, helping everyone benefit from the transition to EV.”*

The trials are expected to run for a minimum of three years, with 30 cable gullies and 50 AON chargers being installed in the first year. A new quota will be agreed for the following years and if the trial is deemed successful, the limit on numbers will be removed. The aim of the trial is to understand whether there is demand for this type of charging method and whether this provides a good solution for residents without private parking. Several factors will be monitored throughout, including how easily the charge points are maintained and whether there is demand for continued use from Surrey residents.

Site selection for the cable gullies will take place in two stages. An initial survey will need to be completed to register interest and share location details. If the site is suitable, the electric vehicle team at Surrey County Council will contact applicants for a more detailed assessment.

Site selection for the AON chargers will be determined by Trojan Energy.

Related reports:

Let’s go Electric Epsom and Ewell

Council driving forward with electric chargers

Surrey lands largest EV charging contract in UK

Mayor’s electrifying car decision

Anyone for tennis? If you pay.

16 June 2023



Plans to introduce fees to **Epsom and Ewell Borough's** currently free of charge tennis courts are underway, after several proposals were agreed upon by councillors at a meeting of the **Environment Committee** on Tuesday (13th June 2023). The plans will rely on the approval of a £20,000 grant from the **Lawn Tennis Association** (LTA) to cover the cost of a new gating and booking system.

The proposed fees start at £6 per court per hour with a maximum 5 people £40 household annual subscription available allowing for free bookings of up to 2 hours days. A 50% discount on the subscription is proposed for those in receipt of low-income benefits. Proposals would see the courts bookable three days in advance for those wishing to pay for a single session and up to seven days in advance for subscribers.

Proposed tennis court hourly costs: Ad hoc cost all courts £6.00. Additional cost for floodlit courts £6.00. Annual household subscription costs £40.00 and £20 for those in receipt of low- income benefits.

Income generated from the booking fees would be set aside solely for court maintenance, in line with recommendations agreed upon by the Committee.

Professional coaches will be required to book specific coaching slots and be prohibited from using regular ad-hoc or subscription booking services.

The report put forward to the Committee said that: "The agreement will ensure that court availability for casual play is protected, the core purpose of the parks. This will include restricting the coaching providers to a defined total number of hours to deliver the programme and ensuring that there is always a certain number of courts available for casual play."

Coaches will also be required to provide a one-hour free community coaching session each week as part of their booking agreement.

If the LTA grant is approved, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council would be required to pay a £2,380 annual subscription for a 5-year period to cover the cost of servicing and maintaining the gates and online booking system.

The LTA has estimated the uptake annual subscriptions in the borough to be £1400 with annual income generated from the courts estimated at £27,107.

The Council currently provides and maintains 12 public tennis courts across the borough at 5 sites which are currently available free of charge to recreational players.

- Alexandra Recreation Ground, Alexandra Road (three courts)
- Court Recreation Ground, off Pound Lane (three courts)
- Poole Road Recreation Ground, Poole Road (two courts)
- Gibraltar Recreation Ground, West Street (two courts)
- Auriol Park, Salisbury Road (two courts)

The report put forward to the Committee describes the current lack of service charge as a "missed opportunity for income generation."

It also expresses concern for a delay in action stating that: "if we don't pursue this opportunity the funding pot available will be depleted and an opportunity to implement the gate system to help the sustainability of our tennis courts will be missed."

The date for implementation of the new gates and booking system is currently estimated for September 2023.

Image: kance CC BY 2.0

Surrey County Council co-stars in national CoSTAR lab

16 June 2023



Surrey is to be the home of brand new state-of-the art facilities for the UK's creative industry sector, thanks to a successful bid involving **Surrey County Council**.

A partnership team, led by Royal Holloway University of London (RHUL), and involving Pinewood Studios, disguise, BT, Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership, University of Surrey, Abertay University and National Film and Television School, alongside the county council, has been announced as the preferred bidder for the 'Convergent Screen Technologies and performance in Realtime (CoSTAR)' national lab.

The successful bid will create hundreds of new jobs and add tens of millions of pounds to Surrey's economy.*

The national CoSTAR lab and three regional R&D labs will ensure the UK has the skills and infrastructure to stay on the cutting-edge of new virtual production techniques in film, TV and live events which involve using computer-generated imagery (CGI), augmented reality and motion capture to create 'virtual sets'. Instead of adding visual effects and CGI in post-production, virtual production allows filmmakers and theatre directors to create large-scale digitally-generated environments using LED panels that performers can interact with in real-time, as a quicker and less expensive alternative to green screens. The technology has been used in the *ABBA Voyage* live concert and the *Batman* and *Minecraft* immersive experiences in the UK, as well on Disney's hit show *The Mandalorian*.

The £51m funding application was submitted in February 2022 by **StoryFutures** at Royal Holloway, University of London on behalf of the wider bid team. The application focused on establishing a CoSTAR national lab at Pinewood Studios, alongside associated facilities and programmes to drive innovation and creativity in the UK's screen and performance industries.

Surrey County Council's proposed contribution includes a capital commitment of £3m to fund the establishment of a CoSTAR satellite studio and incubator space on the RHUL campus in Surrey. It's hoped these facilities will provide a sizeable boost to Surrey-based creative industry businesses, with over 200 expected to benefit.

The Surrey-based Satellite Studio Facility is also projected to create 350 jobs over six years, and make a net contribution of c£35m gross value added to Surrey's economy. Both facilities aim to open in early 2026.

The announcement yesterday came as part of the government's **Creative Industries Sector Vision**, which aims to maximise the potential of the UK creative industries and grow the economy.

Along with the national lab, the government also announced that three regional research labs will be based in Yorkshire, Dundee and Belfast. All of these facilities will work closely with Surrey's new CoSTAR satellite studio and incubator space to be located on RHUL's campus in Egham.

Together, these facilities will ensure the UK has the skills and infrastructure to stay on the cutting-edge of new virtual production techniques in film, TV and live events.

Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth, Matt Furniss, said: *"I'm delighted that our joint bid for the national CoSTAR lab has been successful.*

"These facilities will bring huge technological advantages to UK creative industries and their global competitiveness and it's fantastic that Surrey will be home to them.

"It's also hugely exciting to think of the local benefits that will come from our proposed CoSTAR Satellite Studio and Incubator space. These will bring about local jobs and investment and provide invaluable support for our local businesses, helping to deliver the skills and opportunities for Surrey's economy to thrive.

"I'd like to thank all of the partners involved in the bid for their hard work in securing this great outcome for Surrey."

*Today's announcement of the preferred bidders for CoSTAR is subject to internal government approvals processes, and where relevant, commercial discussions with external partners. Partner organisations such as BT, the National Film and Television School, Vodafone, Studio Ulster and Screen Yorkshire have today announced they will invest at least £63.3 million in CoSTAR.

Pressure on Epsom Hospital at boiling point?

16 June 2023



Visits to emergency departments (EDs) rocketed on Monday, with more people coming through the doors than ever before. More than 1,250 people went to one of St George's, Epsom and St Helier's three EDs – a rise on the previous record of 1,170, and a huge increase on a typical day of about 800 attendances.

It comes just hours before hundreds of junior doctors prepare to strike across the hospitals group – prompting fears of a “double whammy” of pressures.

ED attendances on Monday 12 June were as follows:

- St George's: 580
- Epsom and St Helier: 674
- Kingston: 533
- Croydon: 622

Croydon and Kingston hospitals also experienced very high demand and easily surpassed their previous highest number of attendances.

Kingston Hospital set a new record seeing more than 530 people visiting its emergency department in one day, including 78 ambulances and 455 walk-ins.

Croydon University Hospital saw 622 unwell patients needing to see an emergency care consultant – 16% above the previous busiest summer day on record on 17 June 2021.

Dr **Richard Jennings**, Group Chief Medical Officer at St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group, said: “We have never been busier, and with the upcoming strikes it's going to be a very challenging week.

“We're here, as always, for those who need us. But now more than ever, we need the public's support in those cases where it is not an emergency. NHS 111 online should be your first port of call in these instances, as it can direct you to where you need to go.”

Members of the British Medical Association and Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association will strike for 72 hours from **7am on Wednesday 14 June until 7am on Saturday 17 June**.

This action will impact services at hospitals, and will mean that some appointments, procedures and operations may be postponed to ensure emergency care can be prioritised. Patients will be contacted directly if their appointments are rescheduled, and should continue to come forward for care as normal unless they hear otherwise.

The mercury is expected to remain in the high 20s, and even early 30s, when these strikes start – and will hit hot temperatures once action has finished, too, with the UK Health Security Agency and the Met Office extending their heat-health alert to Monday.

When temperatures rise, more people, especially those in high-risk groups, can suffer from illnesses like heat exhaustion and dehydration, as well as sunburn.

The pollen count has also been very high, and there has been a surge in people visiting EDs with shortness of breath. This might not be anything to worry about, but it is scary and sometimes those who are experiencing it will need medical help. NHS England has this advice for people who are affected.

If you have an underlying respiratory condition, you should contact your GP or asthma nurse as needed – unless it is an emergency, in which case you should call 999 or go to ED immediately.

Everyone should stay safe and well in the hotter weather, and take steps such as: looking out for people who may struggle to keep cool and hydrated, such as elderly relatives or neighbours; keeping windows closed when the room is cooler than outside; and staying hydrated.

You should also stay out of the sun between 11am and 3pm, apply suncream regularly, and wear a hat.

Dr Jennings added: “This weather has undoubtedly contributed to the rise in people – some who are vulnerable and very sick – coming to our emergency departments.

“Help us to prioritise care for those need it the most, and use our services wisely.”

If you need urgent medical help use NHS 111 online first, which can direct you to where you need to go. Pharmacies, meanwhile, can offer advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, and aches and pains.

To find out more about staying safe during hot weather, visit the NHS's website.

St George's, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group

Related reports:

Hospitals heatwave warning

NHS website remedy for hay-fever

Junior doctor strikes to be 'monthly' in Surrey?

Surrey's vulnerable money support

16 June 2023



Surrey County Council has been allocated a further £10.6m funding to continue to support the county's most vulnerable households.

The funding comes from the Government's Household Support Fund as part of a new grant running until March 2024.

Funding has been allocated via the Department of Work and Pensions to help those families who are struggling financially in Surrey, with financial assistance available for food, fuel, water and other essentials. The funds will be distributed via a range of methods and delivery partners to ensure it reaches as many people in need as possible.

A significant portion will go as food vouchers to children on Free School Meals during holiday periods, via borough and district councils and key charities and foodbanks as well as topping up Surrey's Crisis Fund.

The 10.6m will be staggered across the year, with half the fund being distributed now and the other half in October. The first half of the funding is now with distributing partners and is ready for communities to access.

Surrey County Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety Denise Turner-Stewart said: *"It's great news that Surrey County Council has received further funding from the Household Support Fund.*

"Our top priority is to ensure no one in Surrey is left behind, and this funding will play a vital role in providing support to our most vulnerable residents.

"I'd like to thank our distributing partners for their help in ensuring the funding reaches those who need it most and together we'll continue to do all we can to support them."

For more information on the Household Support Fund and distributing partners please visit: **<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/health-and-welfare/support/financial-support/household>**

For more information on financial support available in Surrey please visit: **<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/health-and-welfare/support/financial-support>**

Related reports:

How to help "low-incomes" with your £400

Cost of living crisis fails to reach the Surrey summit

Will Epsom's Foodbank ever end?

Image: globalmoments

Epsom choristers go south for the Summer

16 June 2023



This year, **Epsom Choral Society's** summer concert will take you on a journey of discovery with two exciting British 20th

century works on Saturday 24th June 2023 in St Andrew's Church, Cheam.

From green and leafy Surrey, Epsom Choral Society travels firstly to **Brazil** to enjoy the jazz rhythms and sparkling piano of **Constant Lambert's** popular 1927 work The Rio Grande.

In the second half, the singers cross the Atlantic to **Africa** with **David Fanshawe's** African Sanctus (1972), a work which combines the traditional Mass with an original soundtrack of African music recorded by the composer during his travels up the Nile.

Jane Fanshawe, David's widow, will attend the concert and will give an introduction and her personal memories of African Sanctus. David Fanshawe (1942-2010) was an English composer and self-styled explorer with a fervent interest in world music. His best-known composition is his choral work, African Sanctus, written in 1972



EPSOM CHORAL SOCIETY

AFRICAN SANCTUS
David Fanshawe

THE RIO GRANDE
Constant Lambert

**Saturday 24th June
2023 at 7:30pm**

Julian Collings | conductor
Lisa Swayne | soprano
Marion Lea | piano
Peter Jaekel | piano
Percussion ensemble

St Andrew's Church, Northey Avenue, Cheam SM2 7HF

Tickets: £18, £9 (students and U18s)
www.epsomchoral.org.uk/tickets
Box office: 01372 727078 or 07522 111219

 **EPSOM
CHORAL
SOCIETY**
Registered charity number 273757

African Sanctus features soprano soloist, Lisa Swayne, and the soloist playing the fiendishly virtuosic piano solo in The Rio Grande is ECS's very own Marion Lea, a formidable pianist who next year celebrates 50 years as the choir's accompanist! Marion will also be joined by Peter Jaekel for duets from Walton's Façade. The concert will be conducted by Epsom Choral Society's Musical Director **Julian Collings**.

Chairman **Isobel Squire** said: "This is an exciting end to our season, and we look forward to transporting our audience from a gentle English summer to the dynamic rhythms of more southerly climes."

The concert takes place at St Andrew's Church, Northey Avenue, Cheam on Saturday 24th June 2023 at 7.30pm.

Entry is £18, or just £9 for students and under-18s.

Tickets are available via Epsom Choral Society website www.epsomchoral.org.uk/tickets

Epsom Choral Society has been singing for 100 years with around 90 singers. It puts on at least four concerts each year which attract a loyal following. Epsom Choral Society is a friendly choir – it does not require auditions but does aim for high performance standards. Rehearsals are on Wednesday evenings under the baton of their Musical Director, Julian Collings.

Related reports:

Epsom Choral works 100 years

Epsom Choral Society opens its centenary celebration 2022

NHS website remedy for hay-fever

16 June 2023



With hay-fever suffering at a peak the NHS urges sufferers to visit its website for advice and reduce pressures on its telephone and other services.

The number of hay fever sufferers seeking advice from the NHS website has more than tripled – reaching 122,650 visits last week.

Analysis by NHS England, which runs the NHS website, found weekly visits to the hay fever page have increased by 252% in the past five weeks from 34,878 visits during the first week of May.

Sunday was the busiest day of the year so far for visits to the web page with 27,834 visits in 24 hours – an average of one visit every three seconds.

The surge coincides with figures seen last year when hay fever page visits topped a million during the six months from March to October, peaking at 462,706 in June 2022. December was the quietest month for visits with only 5,658.

NHS information pages on hay fever treatments have also proved popular during the past five weeks. Visits to the antihistamines and cetirizine pages have more than doubled, and visits to the fexofenadine page have more than tripled to reach 45,450 visits last week.

Most hay fever symptoms can be effectively managed at home or with medication widely and cheaply available in community pharmacies or supermarkets.

Robert Cleary, NHS England's Content Director for the NHS website, said:

"Many of us experience hay fever symptoms at this time of year and the nhs.uk hay fever advice page provides the latest medical advice to manage your symptoms, as well as giving guidance on when to get support from NHS services.

"Millions of people make the NHS website their first port of call for advice and information on a wide range of conditions. The website is here for anyone 24 hours a day, making it easy for people to receive health advice and support from a trustworthy source around the clock."

There is currently no cure for hay fever, which usually hits between late March and September when the weather is warm, windy and humid, and the pollen count is at its highest.

The symptoms include sneezing, coughing, a runny or blocked nose, as well as red, itchy or watery eyes. Sufferers can also experience headaches, earache or lose their sense of smell.

The NHS hay fever page details several ways people can ease their symptoms including staying indoors, keeping their windows shut, not cutting their grass or coating their nostrils with Vaseline to trap the pollen.

The page also offers advice on different treatments available from pharmacists and recommends when people should seek help from their GP.

The NHS website is the UK's biggest health website with an estimated 2.6 million visits a day in 2022 from people seeking information and advice.

It includes over 4,000 pages and provides information about 990 medical conditions as well other health services including applying for a free UK Global Health Insurance Card for healthcare cover abroad, finding a GP, and a pregnancy

due date calculator.

For more information visit Hay fever – NHS (www.nhs.uk).

NHS England Media Team

Image: Fitzpatrick AM CC BY-SA 4.0

Surrey's do-re-me for solar to do

16 June 2023



Surrey residents can boost local renewable energy generation, cut carbon emissions and save on their energy bills with a new community led initiative to install solar panels for less.

As part of a group-buying scheme, residents are now able to come together to invest in renewables for solar panels and battery storage, confident in the knowledge that they are paying the right price for a high-quality installation from pre-approved installers.

This innovative scheme builds on six years of a highly successful Solar Together programme run across the UK. To date Solar Together has delivered over 17,000 installations and over 350,000 tonnes of avoided lifetime carbon emissions.

Surrey residents can join the group-buying scheme which offers solar panels with optional battery storage and EV charge points, as well as retrofit battery storage for residents who have already invested in solar panels and are looking to get more from the renewable energy they generate as well as increase their independence from the grid.

It is free to register and there is no obligation to go ahead with an installation. Surrey County Council is working in partnership with all district and boroughs, independent experts iChoosr, to make the transition to clean energy as cost effective and hassle-free as possible.

Marisa Heath, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Environment said: *“Our target is to be carbon net zero as a county by 2050, and to achieve this we all need to make changes and play our part. There is lots that residents and the county council can do and are already doing, but installing solar panels will make a huge difference.*

“I am pleased we are working with iChoosr on the Solar Together scheme to support our residents to install solar panels, by giving them the reassurance they are doing so in a cost effective way. We know that the cost of living plays a huge part in this, but I would urge those who are able to invest in solar panels, to really consider getting involved in the scheme.”

How does it work?

- Householders can register online to become part of the group for free and without obligation.
- Pre-approved UK solar PV suppliers participate in a reverse auction. They are able to offer competitive pricing as the volume and geographic concentration makes it possible for them to realise greater efficiencies, which they pass on with lower prices for installations.
- After the auction, registered households will be emailed a personal recommendation which is specific to the details they submitted in their registration.
- If they choose to accept their recommendation, the specifics of their installation will be confirmed with a technical survey after which a date can be set for the installation of their solar PV system.
- Telephone and email helpdesks are on-hand throughout the whole process which, together with information sessions, will allow households to make an informed decision in a safe and hassle-free environment.

Marie-Louise Abretti, iChoosr UK Solar Manager added: *“With energy prices continuing to increase, residents of Surrey are looking for opportunities to reduce their carbon emissions, save on energy bills and increase their independence from the grid. The Solar Together group-buying scheme offers a straightforward way to make an informed decision and to access a competitive offer from a trusted, vetted provider.”*

iChoosr has a strong track record of delivering group purchase schemes for local authorities. It has worked with 210 UK local authorities on its collective energy switching schemes. Furthermore, in 2018 UK councils, in collaboration with iChoosr, initiated their collective purchase schemes for solar PV systems. iChoosr's schemes have been delivered in partnership with local authorities in five countries. Over 116 schemes led to 157,000 residents installing solar PV systems.

Find out more and register your interest at solartogether.co.uk/surrey.

Surrey Youth Arts and Culture Festival

16 June 2023



This summer, Surrey based cultural organisations, creative industries and education providers will come together to deliver the Surrey Youth Arts and Culture Festivals 2023.

The festivals have been developed by Surrey County Council Libraries, Arts Services and Community Engagement team, in partnership with local and regional stakeholders, including Spelthorne Borough Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, Visit Staines BID, the Elmsleigh Shopping Centre Staines-upon-Thames, Harlequin Theatre Redhill, Spelthorne Youth Hub, YMCA and a wide range of cultural and community organisations.

Image: A youth consultation evening with young people

The two festivals will take place on Saturday 1st July in Staines-upon-Thames and Saturday 8th of July in Redhill, providing exciting interactive activities for young people aged 11 – 16 to learn about the creative sectors.

The events will feature performances by local arts groups; talks and panel discussions from creative industry experts; and workshops and activities, with support from organisations such as, University of Creative Arts, University of Surrey, Royal Holloway University London, Amazon Film Studios, Pinewood Group, CCSkills and many more.

The festivals run from 12 – 5pm on each day and feature a wide range of drop in and bookable sessions. To see more information and to book sessions please visit: www.surreycc.gov.uk/youthartsfestival.

The project aims to advocate cultural engagement for wellbeing and creative skills development; de-mystify the creative industries and creative careers; signpost young people to local cultural engagement initiatives and consult young people on what they would like to see more of in their area.

An extensive outreach programme is planned for both locations in the run up to the festivals throughout June, including assemblies in local secondary schools, activities in the local libraries and workshops to create an art installation at each festival and youth co-design sessions, to shape the creative industry panellists and questions.

Denise Turner-Stewart, Surrey County Council Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety said: *“The Surrey Youth Arts and Culture festivals provide a much-needed opportunity for young people to explore the diverse world of arts and culture in their local area. Through these festivals, we aim to inspire, empower, and support the young people of Surrey, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their artistic talents are celebrated. Together with our borough council colleagues and local organisations we are really trying to champion young people to come together in a space designed just for them, where they can develop their creative skills together. If your child or anyone you know is aged 11 to 16 I would encourage you to get them involved and sign them up for these exciting free and local events in Staines-upon-Thames and Redhill.”*

Cllr Susan Doran, Chair of the Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee at Spelthorne Borough Council, said: *“During my Mayoral year in 2022/23, I witnessed young Spelthorne residents display amazing creativity and I believe this festival is something that can inspire them further. The council are delighted to host such a variety of activities at the Elmsleigh Centre in Staines-upon-Thames and believe it is a fantastic opportunity for our residents. There is a real range of free workshops and performances to enjoy, ranging from dance and theatre to craft and animation. My thanks to all the partners and industry experts involved for bringing this wonderful initiative forward which I know will be a great success”.*

Not insulated against prosecution

16 June 2023



47 activists who caused chaos on the Surrey stretch of the M25 in the autumn of 2021 have been convicted of a variety of offences following a lengthy and complex investigation.

Officers have worked tirelessly to bring those responsible to justice following the direct-action protests, which took place between J6 and 14 of the M25 on Monday 13 September 2021, between J8 and 10 on Wednesday 15 September 2021, at J9 on Friday 17 September 2021 and between J9 and 10 on Tuesday 21 September 2021.

Numerous arrests were made at each of the protests, including 35 arrests on 13 September, 35 on 15 September, 33 arrests on 17 September and 24 arrests on 21 September.

Of these, 54 people were charged with 133 offences, with 47 subsequently found guilty following a series of hearings and trials which have taken place over the last few months.

The activists were convicted of a variety of offences, including wilful obstruction of a highway and criminal damage.

Chief Superintendent Jerry Westerman, who was in charge of policing the activity, said: “Not only did the action taken by the Insulate Britain activists over the four days cause significant delays and disruption to our road network, it also endangered the lives of our officers and staff and other motorway users, as well as the activists themselves.

“The tactics used by these activists, which included running out in front of oncoming traffic and lying down in the carriageway, escalated rapidly and was unprecedented in any of the protest activity we had seen previously.

“We will always seek to facilitate peaceful protest but committing criminal offences and taking part in activity which puts lives at risk cannot be condoned. That is why we took swift and robust action to ensure that these activists were removed from the road and detained as quickly as possible to enable us to reopen the affected sections of motorway as soon as we could.”

Ch Sup Westerman continued: “We have continued to see this type of direct action in Surrey, with the motorway protests last year and more recently, the activity at the **Epsom Derby Festival** last weekend and these investigations remain ongoing.

“More recently we have seen the introduction of new legislation under the Public Order Act 2023 which gives us a wider range of options to deal with these activists. The protests in 2021 were carried out before this legislation was enforced but we did everything possible to ensure that the offenders were dealt with robustly and brought before the courts.”

Ch Supt Westerman added: “I would like to thank those motorists affected by the disruption for their patience and understanding, as well as our colleagues in other forces and partner agencies for their support.

“The work to investigate and bring these offenders to justice is a lengthy and complex process and I would like to thank the team involved for their diligence and determination in seeing this through to its successful conclusion.”

Related reports:

Police maintain order at Epsom Derby Festival

Image: BBC

Epsom less flat after more flats approved

16 June 2023



Two new blocks of flats will be built next to **Epsom Railway Station** after planners gave the go-ahead.

Planning applications for 16 new homes on the corner of East Street and Kiln Lane and for 20 flats where West Street and Station Approach meet were approved by councillors on Thursday (June 8).

With just two affordable homes over the two developments, both will be subject to a review before completion, to determine if the schemes could provide more than are currently proposed.

Councillors at the **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** planning committee meeting raised concerns about the “dreadful

design” and “ruined” entrances to the town regarding the West Street development. But an attempt to refuse the application failed, when a motion put forward by Councillor **Neil Dallen** (Residents’ Association, Town) was lost and the application was approved with six votes in favour and three against.

The development of 20 homes, over five and six storeys, is planned for the former corn and coal merchants which was previously the home of Gillespies Bakery.

The 1905 building will be demolished for a development that was put forward by the developer as a sustainable location for homes that would benefit businesses in the town centre as well as creating jobs during construction.

Councillor **Bernie Muir** (Conservative, Horton Ward), who has spoken out about previous plans for the site, said the site was within the town centre conservation area and within view of multiple listed buildings. She said she wasn’t against something going on the site but worried the conservation area was “meaningless” with no reference to the surrounding buildings in the plans.

Had the designs had “some nod” to the look of that part of the town, Cllr Muir said she would be saying something different. She added: “If we don’t embrace our conservation areas and what that actually means, then we’re just another urban sprawl. And if we want to be another destination high street, this is the beginning of it. This is the one entrance to the town that hasn’t been ruined so far, and that matters to the economic life of the town.”

She and other councillors recognised the need for more housing in the borough, with the council in March having put a pause on the process to develop its plan for homes in the area.

Councillor **Clive Woodbridge** (Residents’ Association, Ewell Village Ward) pointed out that developers had responded to comments and designed a smaller building than plans that had been previously refused on the site. He said you “couldn’t get more sustainable” than a block of flats built next door to the train station and within walking distance of the town centre.

The East Street application, like the one on West Street, had also had previous applications refused and been amended before being approved at Thursday’s meeting.

The development of 16 flats, none of which will be affordable because the scheme would otherwise be deemed non-viable, will be allowed to go ahead after changes to previous plans.

Government inspectors had dismissed an appeal on a previous application because of concerns about pedestrians crossing the access road to the block, off Kiln Lane towards Sainsbury’s.

But after four year’s work on the proposal, which now includes pitched roofs and is of a lower height, plans had been changed and a new footpath had been added to give direct access to the site, avoiding blind corners that had been a concern.

With 18 parking spaces, a suggested condition put forward by Councillor **Jan Mason** (Residents’ Association, Ruxley Ward) was agreed by the committee, to allocate the spaces per flat. Cllr Mason said she wanted to avoid “fisticuffs” as there were at similar developments in her area when residents did not have allocated spaces.

She questioned the “viability” claims of developers, saying houses in Epsom sold “at a premium”, while Cllr **Kate Chin** (Labour, Court) called for a briefing for councillors on affordable housing and what the council could do to ensure more was built.

The scheme of eight one-bed, five two-bed and three three-bed flats was unanimously approved by the committee.

With a decision yet to be made on plans to turn the former Epsom police station into a 96-bed care home, which was due to come to a cancelled committee meeting in April, the committee’s next meeting is due to be on July 20.

Image: Before and after – West Street.

Related reports:

[West Street developers climbing down enough?](#)

[Two Epsom brownfield developments?](#)

Hospitals heatwave warning

16 June 2023



Summer looks like it's here at last – but with a surge in temperatures also meaning a surge in people visiting emergency departments, members of the public are urged to stay safe in the sun.

Earlier this week the UK Health Security Agency and Met Office issued their first heat-health alert of the year in six regions, including London and the South East, which comes into effect tomorrow (Friday) at 9am.



With the mercury set to peak at about 30 degrees Celsius, they are warning people to stay safe and well – and St George's, **Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals** and Health Group is echoing that plea.

Dr **Richard Jennings**, Group Chief Medical Officer, said: “When temperatures start to soar, more people, especially those in high-risk groups, can suffer from illnesses like heat exhaustion, dehydration, and of course sunburn.

“It often means our hospitals are busier as a result. As always, we are there for those who need us, but please do take steps to stay safe and well, and avoid a trip to our emergency departments.”

High-risk groups include elderly people, babies, young children, and those with heart, respiratory and serious health problems. But everyone should stay safe and well in the hotter weather – and take the following steps:

- Looking out for people who may struggle to keep cool and hydrated, such as elderly relatives or neighbours
- Keeping windows closed when the room is cooler than outside, but opening them at night when the temperatures has dropped, and closing curtains on rooms that face the sun to keep indoor spaces cooler
- Drinking plenty of fluids and avoiding excess alcohol. Taking water with you, if travelling
- Trying to keep out of the sun between 11am and 3pm, and staying in the shade
- Applying suncream regularly, and wearing a hat
- Not exercising during the hottest parts of the day

Staying in the sun for too long increases the risk of becoming unwell. Heat exhaustion is not serious and usually gets better when someone cools down, but if this turns into heatstroke it needs to be treated as an emergency. You may have heat exhaustion if you are experiencing headaches, dizziness, loss of appetite, and feeling sick or confused.

If you are affected by any of these symptoms, it's important to cool down as quickly as possible. There is more information on the NHS website on how to do this – and also what to do if your condition worsens.

The hospitals group is also reminding people that its emergency departments are there for serious and life-threatening emergencies – particular with a third wave of junior doctors' strikes coming up next week, which will also have a big impact on services. Hundreds of doctors from St George's, Epsom and St Helier could walk out over the 72 hours.

Dr Jennings added: “We often find we're as busy in the days following a heatwave. The hot-weather alert is in place until Monday morning – less than 48 hours before many of our junior doctors will be taking industrial action.

“That's why it's even more important for the public to take steps to help us, help our staff, and of course, help themselves.”

If you need urgent medical help you should use NHS 111 online first, which can direct you to where you need to go.

Pharmacies, meanwhile, can offer advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as coughs, colds, sore throats, and aches and pains.

To find out more about staying safe during hot weather, visit the NHS's website.

Anonymity for Surrey policeman

16 June 2023



A serving **Surrey Police officer** accused of a “series of acts of harassment” against three female officers will not be named by the force throughout his gross misconduct hearing. A five-day hearing will take place at the force’s Guildford headquarters, but the chair of proceedings will not disclose the name of the serving officer for his welfare.

[Image is illustration only – it is not the officer in question.]

The BBC’s LDRS (Epsom and Ewell Times’ news partner – Local Democracy Reporting Service) asked the legally qualified chair, **Eileen Herlihy**, why the officer was not being named, particularly in light of nationwide public concerns about misogyny across multiple police forces, in the wake of Sarah Everard’s murder, the actions of David Carrick and more.

Sarah Everard was murdered by serving Metropolitan Police Officer Wayne Couzens in 2021, when he kidnapped her from the streets of south London, having identified himself as a police officer. He was jailed for life after pleading guilty to her murder. Carrick pleaded guilty to 85 serious offences including 48 rapes over a 17-year period as a Met Police Officer.

But despite the public interest in identifying the Surrey officer accused of harassment, the chair said not naming him “outweighed the public interest in identifying the officer”. The LDRS put to Ms Herlihy that the officer should be named, and asked for the documents relating to the decision to keep his name out of proceedings.

Ms Herlihy said she had weighed up guidance from the Home Office and from police conduct regulations, which said there may be circumstances in which an officer should not be named. Stating that the Home Office Guidance, police conduct regulations and case law all identified that the “default position is one of open justice”, Ms Herlihy said the presumption was that the hearing “must be held in public open to both the public and media to attend”.

She would not provide the evidence on which she based her decision to keep Officer X anonymous, including a written statement and medical evidence from him, and written submissions on behalf of the police force.

Ms Herlihy said she could not provide the documents because they contained “sensitive and confidential information relating to Officer X’s medical condition”.

What’s more, not only does Ms Herlihy’s response mean that the LDRS cannot name the officer, we also cannot detail the reasons the name cannot be revealed. The LDRS put it to the chair that a police officer should not be given a greater standard of anonymity than would be given to a member of the public, and that in order to do this there should be significant evidence to justify the departure from the open justice principle.

She said looking at the documents provided, it was “necessary and proportionate, having weighed up the need for open justice and transparency as against the officer’s welfare, to anonymise the officer”.

The hearing, due to take place between June 12 and 16, will hear allegations that the officer, “carried out a series of acts of harassment against three female police officers”.

If proven, the allegations could amount to gross misconduct because they would be a breach of the authority, respect and courtesy and equality and diversity standards of the Police’s Standards of Professional Behaviour, according to the Surrey Police site.

A Surrey Police spokesperson says: “We expect the highest personal and professional standards of our officers and any allegations of behaviour which does not meet these standards are rigorously investigated in accordance with Police Conduct Regulations and procedures, set nationally by the Government.

“For cases of gross misconduct, these are chaired by a Legally Qualified Chair (LQC) appointed by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. “LQCs are selected from a list of independent, legally qualified persons to conduct police misconduct hearings, and are governed by Police Conduct Regulations. “It is their responsibility alone to determine whether a hearing is held in public or in private, and whether any participant should be anonymised.

“In the case of Officer X, legal representations in relation to anonymity were made to the LQC before the hearing and this was granted. Where an LQC directs that anonymity is granted, Surrey Police must abide by this decision and therefore, as per regulations, we are unable to confirm details relating to the individuals involved without the explicit direction of the LQC.”

The hearing will take place at Surrey Police’s Mount Browne headquarters from 10am from Monday 12 to Friday 16 June.

Woking bankruptcy, far or near to us?

16 June 2023



Woking maybe a town distant on the horizon of **Epsom** but its debts may yet ripple onto Epsom and Ewell taxpayers' shoulders. Chris Caulfield reports.

Woking Borough Council has gone bust under the weight of its £2billion debt and banned from any new spending after effectively being declared bankrupt.

The dire situation means the council will cut all spending for non-essential services after a section 114 notice was issued. The authority's debt is forecasted to rise to £2.6bn. The only exceptions are in cases where it must legally protect vulnerable people and for services it must cover by law.

The full impact on residents is not yet clear. Croydon Council, which issued its third 114 notice last year, had to increase council tax by 15 per cent and its till negotiating a bail out for about half a billion pounds.

Woking Borough Council's notice comes three weeks after Government appointed commissioners were sent in by, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLHUC) over the "serious concerns" over the "exceptional level of financial and commercial risk" the authority exposed itself to, "as well as its approach to strategic financial decision making and debt management".

Julie Fisher, Woking Borough Council's chief executive, said: "The issuing of a Section 114 Notice is a very serious matter that rightly reflects the scale and breadth of the acute financial situation facing the Council. Through the commissioning of an independent financial review of the Council's borrowing and loans to its companies, we have a comprehensive understanding of our severe financial position which informed the Section 151 Officer's decision to issue a Section 114 Notice.

"The Council is required to meet within 21 days to consider the notice. I am preparing a response to this notice for an Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council that is being arranged for Tuesday June 20 to meet this requirement. Following the Secretary of State's appointment of a Commissioning Team, I will be seeking their expertise and using their critical insight to help the council deliver an Improvement and Recovery Plan at pace to ensure we take actions that are in the interests of the public purse.

My first report on these actions will be to the Thursday 13 July meeting of the Council's Executive."

The council's debt soared into the billions on the back of an investment strategy that saw it borrow hundreds of millions of pounds for regeneration projects.

The most high profile, the Victoria Square development in Woking town centre, was based on £750million in borrowing, with reports now showing the project to be worth just £200m.

The council said its Section 151 officer and interim director of finance issued the notice "in response to the unprecedented financial challenges facing the Council." It said "the expenditure of the council is set to exceed the financial resources available, and therefore it can no longer balance its budget for the current financial year nor subsequent years.

"Against the core funding of £16million available in the 2023/24 financial year, the Council faces a deficit of £1.2billion."

The council has been on DLUHC's radar for sometime, given the scale of its commercial activity and financial situation, noting that, relative to its size is became the "the most indebted local authority" in the UK.

As of December 2022 it had amassed £1.9bn of debt compared to a core spending power of £14m. The section 114 notice means it is no longer possible for the council to balance its budget but as yet the government has not committed to a bail out - the scale of which could have national implications.

The amount of money needed to get the council on to an even keel is beyond the remit of DLUHC and needs formal government approval. However leaked documents from an unpublished report suggested this could impact government borrowing ability.

Two main private companies run by the council, Wey Group and Victoria Square Woking Ltd, generated the majority of its debt through housing and regeneration schemes between 2016 and 2019.

Cllr **Ann-Marie Barker**, leader of Woking Borough Council, said: "My administration has been very clear about the huge financial challenges facing the council due to the legacy of inherited debt.

"The Notice makes clear the true scale of these challenges which are so significant that the Council cannot simply deal with them on its own. We must work in partnership with the whole of government and its agencies to support us in

delivering a robust Improvement and Recovery Plan.

“I understand the concerns and questions this will raise, and I am committed to maintaining transparency with residents and partners as we progress through this unsettling time. Difficult decisions will lie ahead as we seek to balance the Council’s budget and address the unaffordable debt.”

WOKING’S DEBT CRISIS EXPLAINED

Related reports:

Woking Council has the worst debt in Britain!

Woking £490m write down sparks ‘worst fears’

Waking to Woking’s woeful debt

Would you want to live in Woking?

Woking up to a very big debt problem

Verging on the ridiculous

16 June 2023



Opinion by County Councillor **Eber Kingston**: The decision by the Conservative ruling group at **Surrey County Council** to take back from April the cutting of highway verges from **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** was heralded as means of securing consistency across the County. Whether that was meant to be a consistent levelling down of the service (but not the height of the grass!) I am not so sure. But so far it has been a very public display of how not to launch a new service to the public.

It’s nine weeks into the new regime and still many verges in Epsom and Ewell have not been cut, and the latest website information shows that many roads in Epsom and Woodcote will have to wait another week before the mowers move in.

There is grass so high that street name plates, bollards and signs cannot be seen, and sight lines that are dangerously obscured, making driving hazardous. Clovers, trefoils and daisies in verges that are of most nectar value and will best cater for our wildlife, are swamped by tall growing grass and weeds. And a policy of blowing back grass cuttings on to the verge, whilst sensible and manageable when the grass is cut at a reasonable level, is not workable when the grass has been left to grow so high. The blow back just spreads the grass on to the footpaths and has the potential to block the drains.

And when the machines have actually done their work, residents in our urban streets are far too often looking out at poorly mown verges peppered with clumps grass, as though our verges were experiencing a bad hair day!

SCC puts it down to “operational issues at the start of the new contract and the wet weather we had in April and at the start of May”. Is that politicians way of saying a failure to plan effectively and ensure sufficient resources were deployed from the start. And if a period of rain delays the schedule by nine weeks, that does not augur well for the future given our unpredictable climate.

Sadly, the problem has been compounded by poor communication from SCC. A website page with the scheduled dates for cuts regularly missed and not updated, and just general locations listed (Epsom, Ewell, Stoneleigh) so that residents of Cuddington and Langley Vale, for example, have no idea when their verges will meet up with a SCC grass mower.

At least the Leader of SCC has acknowledged this is not his finest hour and set up Task and Finish Groups to find what went wrong and how it can be fixed. Residents’ Association and Independent County Councillors have put in a joint submission highlighting the failings and offering solutions. Those solutions include a commitment to return to the 6 to 8 cuts previously provided by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council – the verges in residential roads are too narrow to support the meadow look.

It is going to take some time for our verges (and residents) to recover from this. Sadly there may be more to come.....from April SCC has also taken back responsibility for weeds, alleyway clearance and highway roundabouts!



County Councillor Eber Kington (RA Ewell Court, Auriol & Cuddington)

Related reports:

Verging on reason?

A Greener Future in Partial Sight As Verges To Be Left Unmown