



## Surrey Police HQ development dogged by flood risks

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Plans to redevelop Surrey Police's Mount Browne headquarters in Guildford — including a new dog training school — have been green-lit for a second time despite fresh flood risk modelling showing "pockets of high surface water flooding" across the site.

Guildford Borough Council's Planning Committee approved the scheme in November 2024, but since then national planning rules have changed and the Environment Agency has issued new flood maps.

As a result, Surrey Police and the council agreed to bring the scheme back to committee.

The updated modelling shows parts of the site, including the former bowling green earmarked for the new dog school, face a high risk of surface water flooding.

Councillors raised concerns about what that actually means in practice at another planning committee meeting on September 9.

"On one hand we say there's a high risk of flooding — and then we say the infrastructure will support that regardless," Cllr Stephen Hives said. "So I'm a bit confused: is there a danger to welfare or not?"

Planning officers insisted the scheme still passes the required "sequential test" — which means no safer, alternative sites are reasonably available — and that the approved drainage strategy will prevent increased flood risk.

"In practical terms it will make no difference to this development," an officer told the committee. "The drainage strategy already approved is sufficient even with the updated flood risk."

The development does not fall within the newly created "Grey Belt" category introduced in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), but it was judged to still harm the Surrey Hills National Landscape.

With no new highways flooding issues identified and no change to the approved drainage plan, officers confirmed the project remains compliant with planning rules. Plans to redevelop the police HQ and build a new access road was unanimously approved.

Mount Browne has been the headquarters of Surrey Police for more than 70 years. The current campus contains a large number of buildings which have been constructed mainly on a piecemeal basis and are judged no longer fit for purpose.

Emily Dalton

Proposed Redevelopment of Mount Browne, Surrey Police's HQ. (Credit: Surrey Police)