

UK's "first and only" craft museum in Surrey open day

21 August 2026



One of Surrey's most important buildings, and the UK's 'first and only' craft museum, is to host a special event to show off the vital restoration work going into saving the historic Grade I site.

Wilmer House in Farnham was allowed to fall into disrepair, but in March 2023 benefited from £700,000 in Arts Council funding to carry out essential repairs to its Georgian home in West Street.

It was soon discovered that the problems ran much deeper and a further £700,000 was needed to repair decaying brickwork, collapsing windows, and eroded mortar joints, as well as the visible cracking throughout.

Waverley Borough Council, which has a legal duty to maintain the building, has stepped in to fill the funding gap but, to rally support within the community for the project, is hosting an open day at the Farnham Museum.

Councillor Kika Mirylees, Waverley Borough Council's community services portfolio holder, said: "Willmer House is a building of enormous historical and cultural significance to Farnham.

"We are delighted to invite residents to join us for what promises to be a fascinating evening of discussion and discovery.

"The event offers a unique opportunity to hear directly from experts involved in heritage conservation and to learn more about the exciting restoration plans for this much-loved landmark."

The free event is part of the council's "every brick counts" campaign that offers residents the opportunity to contribute to the preservation.

The council said the building uses gauged brickwork, one of the most expensive building methods often seen on the finest buildings around the world.

The free open event takes place on Monday September 14 2026 and will be hosted jointly by the council and The Farnham Society from 7.30pm to 9pm.

It will feature a panel including representatives from Arts Council England, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, conservation consultant Graham Abrey, historic brick conservator Emma Simpson MBE, and local historian and author Dr Roy Waight.

Simon Bradbury, vice chairman of The Farnham Society, said: "The Farnham Society has been campaigning to preserve Farnham's heritage since 1911.

"Willmer House, as a Georgian town house, is an important part of that heritage.

"Coming out of the wealth generated from the hop trade, Willmer House is a Grade I listed building, noted in particular for its brickwork, rated as one of the finest examples of Georgian brickwork in the country."

The event is free to attend, but places should be booked in advance.

Chris Caulfield Local Democracy Reporter

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Image: Wilmer House, West Street, Farnham (image WBC)