

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (MOLE VALLEY)****DATE: 24 FEBRUARY 2021****LEAD OFFICER: JESS LEE, PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE OFFICER****SUBJECT: QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC****DIVISION: ALL****1. Question submitted by Cllr Roger Adams**

Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) has managed and supported the activities of the Norbury Park Sawmill since 2002 when it was included as part of the overall Agreement with Surrey County Council to manage the land and properties which formed their countryside estate. In 2020, SWT reached a new amended Agreement with SCC in which SWT agreed to temporarily continue to manage the business of the Sawmill for SCC whilst they assessed options for the Sawmill. However, the business is considered to be unsustainable and is slated for closure on 31st March 2021 or shortly thereafter.

I understand that this is the last remaining working wood mill and workshop left in the country, taking English native trees to produce hand built unique outdoor furniture; amongst its dedicated customers are the Royal Parks and Wildlife Trusts. Furthermore, it provides employment for highly skilled craftsmen. It is considered by the wider community to be an important Surrey asset.

What options have SCC assessed to enable the sawmill to continue its operations and what steps are SCC taking to ensure its continuation?

Response:

The detailed analysis and outcomes for each of the options considered is commercial in confidence and were included in part 2 of the officer decision. Evidence was gathered by officers and verified and developed by external independent experts.

Option 4 was the proposed option, providing greatest value for money and future opportunities for the site including rural crafts and industries. A version of Option 2 can be considered as part of Option 4 and could include a CIC being established by another organisation.

Factors taken into consideration when evaluating were current contract arrangements, investment needed, planning conditions, environmental considerations, economic and social potential plus added value and fit with SCC corporate objectives.

O1.	Do Nothing - SWT continue to manage the operations
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O2.	Sell the Sawmill business to another operator and provide a lease over the whole site
O3.	Close the Sawmill and take no further action
O4.	Close the sawmill and develop the site for visitor services and courses, local wood processing for rural crafts and woodland management, in keeping with Norbury Park.
O5.	To transfer the sawmill into SCC ownership either within the service or as a wholly owned subsidiary

2. Question submitted by Julia Dickinson

According to our LEP (Coast to Capital), Gatwick Airport is “one of the most important parts of our regional economy”, so it has recently submitted the ‘Gatwick Freeport’ bid. Gatwick Airport’s footprint includes land in Mole Valley, and the jobs of many residents are dependent on its recovery. Could the relevant officers who are responsible for Economic Development and Planning please explain on how this Freeport will help Mole Valley’s economy, and how are the economic development and planning teams at Surrey CC and Mole Valley working together to maximise the benefits.

Response:

Free ports are areas designated by government with little or no tax with the aim of encouraging economic activity. While located geographically within a country, they essentially exist outside its borders for tax purposes. Companies operating within free ports can benefit from deferring the payment of taxes until their products are moved elsewhere, or can avoid them altogether if they bring in goods to store or manufacture on site before exporting them again.

The three main objectives of the government’s Freeport policy, as stated in the [bidding prospectus](#), are:

- ‘Establish Freeports as national hubs for global trade and investment across the UK’
- ‘Promote regeneration and job creation’
- ‘Create hotbeds for innovation’

The proposed Gatwick Freeport boundary does not include Mole Valley but the view of Coast to Capital is that a successful Freeport would have ‘significant spill-over

effects' across the wider regional economy. As stated in Coast to Capital's [press release](#), the LEP expects Freeport status to help safeguard and create new jobs and unlock infrastructure upgrades that would benefit the wider region.

Mole Valley District Council has asked Coast to Capital to provide information on the potential implications for Mole Valley if the Gatwick Freeport bid were to be successful. This information on the benefits for the wider region, including Mole Valley, is likely to be available towards the end of February.

Whilst Mole Valley and Surrey County Council (along with the other Surrey Districts and Boroughs), are reviewing and refocusing their inward investment activity, it is not yet clear whether or not it will be possible to take advantage of any Freeport status at Gatwick.

3. Question submitted by Peter Seaward

Can the Local Committee provide reassurance that new housing developments in Mole Valley and neighbouring boroughs are being taken into account when future school places are being considered? And also confirm that there will be a clearer picture of this for residents later this year, on completion of various studies?

Response:

The Surrey County Council Education Place Planning (EPP) team is working closely with colleagues at Mole Valley District Council in relation to the Mole Valley Draft Local Plan.

The EPP team receive housing permissions and trajectories from the District and Borough councils in April each year (with updates requested every October), which are then combined with birth and pupil movement trends in specialist demographic forecasting software called 'Edge-ucate'. This creates pupil projections, in a variety of different formats.

The pupil yield from the Draft Local Plan is not yet included in the return from Mole Valley. Colleagues at Mole Valley have been in contact again this month as part of a review of the proposed sites to be taken forward to the submission stage of the Local Plan. There will be further discussion on any potential impact to the education infrastructure across the area.

However, until there is more detail on confirmed sites and phasing of developments the forecasts cannot reflect any potential pupil yield from housing.

Consideration must also be given to further housing proposed in the neighbouring borough of Guildford, in particular at Effingham and Wisley, and how this might impact on pupil movement trends.

It is worth noting that the birth rate has decreased by 14% in Mole Valley since 2012 creating capacity in our primary schools. Peaks and troughs are expected as the higher cohorts from the primary sector transition to secondary provision with a general decline expected in the long term.

All of the above will be closely monitored over the next six months and it is hoped that more information will be available in the Autumn.

4. Question submitted by Cllr Caroline Salmon

Surrey has removed trees that are purported to have Ash Dieback along the A24. Ash Dieback is notoriously difficult to diagnose without seeing spots on the leaves or loss of canopy, but no trees were marked for felling in my ward.

Many of these trees acted as screens against, light and particle pollution and as a bit of a barrier against noise.

However, a number of houses which previously benefitted from such screening are now exposed.

Considering we are being told we need more trees; can Surrey Highways confirm:

Why the trees are being felled on mass, as resistance is being found in larger trees but they are all being felled without any apparent individual arboreal selection.

How much more tree felling is proposed and where?

What Hedge or Tree screening might be planted to provide appropriate replacement barriers against noise, light and particulate pollution?

When might such replacement be done?

Response:

At the time of publishing, it wasn't possible to provide a comprehensive response to this question. Work will continue on the response and be provided in writing to the questioner outside the meeting.

5. Question submitted by Cllr Elizabeth Daly

How many Bookham secondary students currently attend (a) Howard of Effingham school and (b) all other schools, and how is it estimated these numbers will change if:

- (i) the size of the school increases to 2000;
- (ii) an additional 295 homes are built in Effingham;
- (iii) an additional 405 homes are built in Effingham?

Response:

In response to points A and B please see the table below:

School name	Number of Bookham residents on roll (October 2020 census)
Howard of Effingham School	527
Cobham Free School	Under 5
Three Rivers Academy	Under 5
Therfield School	29
The Ashcombe School	7
St Peter's Catholic School	Under 5
Rosebery School	Under 5
Royal Alexandra and Albert School	Under 5

In line with the Data Protection Act 1998, the term “under 5 pupils” has been used to protect any possible identification.

In response to point (i) the proposed increase of the Howard of Effingham School has not been included in the forecasts and would not be included until the change to the Published Admissions Number had been consulted upon. Generally, any change to the admissions of a school can alter the pattern of provision within the local area; but the extent of this is difficult to determine as it will inevitably alter the current pupil movement trends. For example, given the Howard of Effingham’s reputation as an outstanding oversubscribed school, it is likely that any expansion would also attract applications from students who may not currently be in the maintained school system and who would otherwise attend an independent provision.

In response to points (ii) and (iii), any new housing could have an impact on the local school provision as new homes can encourage families to move either into or within the area. The potential pupil yield from any development will depend on two factors: the number of homes being built and the number of bedrooms those new homes will have. The housing trajectories provided to SCC from Guildford Borough Council in April 2020 included the 295 homes proposed at the Howard of Effingham site as well as other proposed developments in the area. The pupil yield from these developments is factored into our place planning forecasts and shows a slight increase in the numbers of children expecting to attend secondary school in the area. Should any additional proposed housing come forward, these will be consulted upon with us by Guildford Borough Council and will be factored into the forecasts for 2021 onwards.

6. Question submitted by Cllr Paul Kennedy

It is good news that Surrey County Council are planning to consult in Spring 2021, having taken over most of the management of Norbury Park at the end of March 2020.

ITEM 4a

During the last year, what consultation has taken place with local residents, MVDC councillors and community groups including the Norbury Park consultative group,, especially over performance issues and decisions already made such as the closure of the sawmill?

Response:

No formal consultation has taken place with stakeholders since Surrey County Council have taken on the site in August 2020 (contract completion). This is due to new staff needing to be recruited and mobilised, on site, handover meetings with SWT and COVID restrictions.

Initial informal discussions were held with tenants, residents and parish councillors in the summer of 2020. Feedback indicated the liaison group for Norbury Park had become too large (with a focus beyond Norbury Park including other sites on the estate) and should be more focused on the Park.

An Engagement Officer was recruited within the team to manage engagement with stakeholders across the whole estate and to propose a new structure for regular liaison. The post holder began in November and was redeployed to support the vaccine programme in January. She is due back in post in May and will be prioritising the resurrection of local liaison methods. In the meantime, the Operational team are working with the Corporate Communications Team to provide initial communications to local users and stakeholders.

7. Question submitted by Cllr Paul Kennedy

This puddle on the footpath between Mole Road and Cannon Way in Fetcham has been an almost permanent feature for many years. Surrey Highways have informed me that it does not meet the intervention criteria in their Highways Safety Matrix.

Will Surrey Highways permit any other agencies or residential groups to fix this, and if so what would be the estimated cost?

Response:

The puddle referred to is localised ponding of water. As noted, there is no defect on this section of the path that would meet the intervention criteria set out Surrey's Highways Safety Matrix.

Our records show that there was flooding on the path in the past but this was due to a blocked Thames carrier, an issue that has now been resolved. There are no previous reports of flooding in the vicinity of the current puddle or that the path is inaccessible due to water ponding. Therefore, Surrey has no plans to carry out resurfacing of this path at the current time as it does not prioritise for funding.

Any work on the public highway has to be carried out by a contractor that has the necessary public liability insurance

Anyone wishing to work on the public highway must have the following:

- the appropriate road opening license from Surrey. It is a criminal offence to carry out works on the public highway without a valid license.

- suitable valid accreditation under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA) for the type of work they are carrying out and be on the Street Works Qualifications Register
- £2 million public liability insurance
- a permit for road space from Surrey's Street Works Team
- a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order if the highway is to be closed for the duration of the works

Due to the above requirements, an application from a Parish or District Council to carry out works on the path may be considered. Under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, the Parish or District Council would take on the duties of the client, which includes the appointment of a competent contractor. The cost of the works would be quoted by the contractor and depend on the extent of the works being carried out and their schedule of rates.

More information can be found on Surrey's website - www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/permits-and-licences/road-opening

Alternatively, if others wish to fund works to the path where water currently ponds, a price from Surrey's term contractor could be provided and the funding transferred to Surrey before works commence.

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