# Community bowling club faces threat from proposed health hub



A significant development proposal is threatening the long-established Walton-on-Thames Bowling Club, which has been a community fixture since its establishment in 1922. The club is now at risk as Elmbridge Borough Council engages in discussions with the local NHS team about selling part of Elm Grove recreational land to create a new health hub intended to replace Walton-on-Thames Community Hospital.

The proposed health hub is aimed at providing a wide range of health services, including GP services, maternity care, mental health provisions, dermatology, and rehabilitation, with the goal of better catering to a growing population in Walton-on-Thames. Mike Rollings, leader of the council, stated, "This hub would offer much-needed GP services, maternity services, mental health provision, dermatology specialists, rehabilitation and many other preventative and well-being services and will future-proof those services for a growing population."

Michael Atkinson, treasurer of Walton Bowling Club, expressed his deep concern over the potential loss of the club, which plays a vital role in the local community’s social fabric. “It would be an awful shame to wipe away all of that history,” he said, referring to the bowling club’s rich heritage. Atkinson highlighted the club's active role in local society, with 150 fixtures and numerous community events scheduled throughout the year. He noted the club's recent growth in membership, with a notable 46 per cent increase last year, and emphasised the club's diverse demographic, which serves both young and older residents.

Despite previous assurances from the council regarding the construction of a new bowling green for the Elm Grove group, this commitment appears to have changed. Atkinson fears that if the club is displaced, it will face closure given the lack of suitable alternative sites within Elmbridge. He pointedly compared the situation to that of major football clubs, remarking, “You wouldn't ask Manchester United or Manchester City to merge.”

Amidst these discussions, some members of the community have raised alarms about the potential repercussions of demolishing a functioning hospital, suggesting that the site could be more effectively utilised for health services rather than housing. Councillor Gregor Macgregor commented on the precarious state of the proposal, stating, “There is a risk the development won’t happen and we will end up without a bowls club and without a health hub.” He highlighted the challenging economic climate that could affect any investment in the project, though he also acknowledged the potential benefits of the proposed health hub.

The council is currently working with the bowling club to find a resolution to the situation, which has been subjected to public consultation. A decision on whether to proceed with the development will be made at a Cabinet meeting scheduled for April 30. A spokesperson from North West Surrey Alliance underscored their commitment, stating that Surrey Heartlands NHS and Elmbridge Borough Council are exploring the site as a viable option for a community health facility aimed at integrating health services and enhancing local healthcare outcomes.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/news/2025/shaping-elm-grove> - Corroborates the ongoing discussions between Elmbridge Borough Council and community groups like Walton-on-Thames Bowling Club regarding the development of Elm Grove. It highlights the council's commitment to supporting the bowling club while exploring options for a new health hub.
* <https://www.elmbridge.gov.uk/news/2025/shaping-elm-grove-have-your-say-emerging-proposals> - Provides details on the emerging proposals for Elm Grove, including the potential for a neighbourhood Health Hub or housing development, which would impact the bowling club. It outlines the public engagement process and the council's consideration of community feedback.
* <https://www.waltonbowlingclub.org.uk> - Confirms the existence and activities of Walton-on-Thames Bowling Club, which, as mentioned, has been a community fixture since 1922. The club offers various services and events, highlighting its role in local society.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/about-nhs/nhs-providers/local-nhs-sites/surrey-heartlands-integrated-care-system/> - Supports the integration of health services within the Surrey Heartlands NHS, which is aligned with the proposal to establish a community health facility at Elm Grove. However, direct confirmation would require specific reference to Elm Grove plans on the NHS site.
* <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/report-a-concern/public-consultation> - Indicates Surrey County Council's involvement in public consultations, which is consistent with the broader context of community engagement around the Elm Grove development. However, this does not directly address the specific proposal.