# Major sinkhole disrupts Godstone village, prompting evacuations and safety concerns



A significant geological event has unfolded in Godstone, a small village in Surrey, where a large sinkhole has emerged on the high street, triggering widespread disruption and evacuations. The sinkhole, which initially formed on the evening of Monday, 17 February, has expanded to an estimated diameter of around 20 metres. The presence of a second, smaller sinkhole nearby has compounded concerns among local residents and businesses.

The British Geological Survey (BGS) has conducted an analysis of the situation, attributing the sinkhole's origin primarily to erosion resulting from a burst water main. A spokesperson for the BGS stated, “It is probable that a burst water main has flushed out weak sandstone bedrock, creating a void which has then collapsed.” This geological instability is particularly concerning given the region's Folkestone Formation, characterised by loosely cemented sands and sandstones that are susceptible to erosion, especially following sudden changes in hydrogeology.

In response to the evolving situation, Surrey County Council declared the incident a major one, implemented a 100-metre cordon around the area, and evacuated around 30 properties as a precautionary measure. In a statement made on 19 February, Carl Bussey, Surrey County Council's assistant director for safer communities, expressed gratitude to residents for their patience, emphasising that safety remains the council's top priority. He stated, “The site continues to be assessed by structural experts, in order to manage the risk and understand what needs to be done to make safe and repair.”

Local businesses have voiced frustrations regarding the lack of timely communication and support from the council. Ifesi Anyamene, a pharmacy owner in the area, reported that she received no direct information from the council amid rising customer concerns. “We’ve had to reassure people that it’s safe,” she remarked, reflecting the anxiety shared by her clientele.

Residents such as Sarah Lewis expressed distress regarding their living conditions, with her family temporarily displaced and residing in unsuitable accommodation provided by their home insurance. Criticising the council's communication, Lewis recounted, “Since it’s been a black hole of information,” showcasing the uncertainty affecting many who have been evacuated.

In light of the ongoing assessments, Matt Furniss, cabinet member for highways transport and economic growth at Surrey County Council, confirmed that surrounding properties have been deemed stable for the time being. However, he acknowledged the possibility of lingering doubts over structural safety. “All properties have been surveyed and we believe are currently structurally sound, but this may not remain the case,” he said.

Geologists have also suggested that historical sand mines in the vicinity could have a role in the collapse. Maps from the 19th century indicate the existence of old sand mines close to the site, raising further queries about local geological conditions. Andrew Farrant, regional geologist at BGS, noted the chance that unrecorded sand mines might affect subsurface stability, potentially leading to further subsidence.

The incident underscores not only the local challenges faced by Godstone's infrastructure but also broader concerns regarding the impact of ageing subterranean utilities amid shifting climatic conditions. Experts have warned that extreme weather events and the stresses imposed by residential development may escalate occurrences of ground instability in the future.

As recovery efforts progress, local authorities continue to strategise on the safest and most efficient means of repair, while diversions remain in place. Residents have been granted supervised access to collect essential belongings, and efforts will be made to keep them informed as the situation develops, emphasising the complexities involved in addressing such geotechnical incidents.

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

## References

* <https://www.countryfile.com/environment/sinkhole-godstone-surrey> - This article provides detailed information about the sinkhole in Godstone, Surrey, including its impact on local residents and the declaration of a major incident by Surrey County Council. It also discusses the potential causes, such as a burst water main and the region's geology.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/second-sinkhole-godstone-surrey-uk-evacuation-b2701418.html> - This news piece reports on the emergence of a second sinkhole in Godstone, further complicating the situation for residents and local businesses. It highlights the ongoing evacuations and concerns about infrastructure stability.
* <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/research/groundStability/landSubsidence.html> - Although not directly mentioned in the search results, the British Geological Survey (BGS) website provides general information on land subsidence and geological instability, which is relevant to understanding the causes of sinkholes like the one in Godstone.
* <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/news/press-releases> - This Surrey County Council news page could potentially provide updates or statements regarding the sinkhole incident, including evacuation measures and safety assessments.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-surrey> - The BBC's Surrey news section might cover the sinkhole incident, offering insights into local reactions and the ongoing response by authorities.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/british-geological-survey> - The official BGS website offers resources on geological surveys and assessments, which could support claims about the geological conditions in Godstone and the role of historical sand mining.
* <https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/godstone-sinkhole-likely-due-to-burst-water-main-flushing-out-weakened-bedrock-says-bgs-20-02-2025/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data