

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Plans submitted for enhanced college, community facilities and new homes

Brooklands College and Cala Homes have submitted a planning application to Elmbridge Borough Council seeking permission to comprehensively upgrade the Brooklands College campus in Weybridge. If approved, the scheme will invest £45 million into the College and deliver new homes including 128 affordable homes for local families and a wide range of community benefits including a new Sports Centre, a community hub and public access to 12 hectares of woodland.

The scheme will:

- **Upgrade the teaching facilities** to create a college of the future that will inspire students and support their learning and skills and enable the college to better serve the needs of the local community;
- Deliver much needed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision within a **new purpose-built SEND facility**;
- Deliver a **new sports centre and community space** for the use of the College and the wider local community;
- Generate revenue for the college to **pay off substantial debt** owed to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in order to secure the college's long-term future;
- Refurbish and **renew the site's significant listed mansion building**, returning it to its historic residential use and securing its maintenance and upkeep for the future;
- **Provide 320 new homes** of which 40% will be affordable homes providing a mix of rented housing, shared ownership and discounted first homes;
- **Open up 12 hectares of woodland** for newly accessible public use.

The College offers a wide range of courses notably in STEM (Science, technology Engineering and Maths) including engineering, construction, and healthcare – which makes an essential contribution to the local Weybridge economy.

It provides the local community access to specialist training and vocational learning, alternative education for 14–16-year-olds and specialist provision for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The College has strong links with local schools and is also renowned for its high-quality provision, helping students with disabilities or special learning needs realise their full potential.

Christine Ricketts, the Principal of the College, said:

*“These plans are absolutely essential to securing the future of the College. Not only will they put the College on a stable, financial footing; they will upgrade our teaching buildings and provide us with a state-of-the-art campus to provide the highest standards of training and vocational learning.*

*“Brooklands has a rich history and I’m proud that these plans will cherish and enhance its unique heritage.”*

The scheme has evolved over the last year and significant changes have been made in response to feedback from those at the college, neighbouring residents and the wider Weybridge community. The changes include:

- Demolishing unsightly buildings that have been built next to the Mansion and replacing them with smaller buildings, sited further away, to improve the heritage setting of this listed building.
- Increasing the provision on site for local students requiring a high level of Special Education Needs, supported with funds from Surrey County Council.
- Altering the main access to the college so it is more in keeping with the area and proposed architecture of the northern area of the site.
- Reducing the number of homes from 350 to 320.
- Removing initial plans for a care home on the site.
- Introducing significantly more variation in the style, design and range of homes.
- Maximising development on the previously developed, brownfield parts of the site and doing everything we can to limit development on the greener areas.
- Improving site security and East-West access across the site.
- Reopening pedestrian access across the railway bridge giving residents living south of the railway better access to Brooklands College and Heathside School.
- Agreeing fencing specifications to the West of the development with Lockestone Close residents.

John Richards, Land & Planning Director at Cala Homes, added:

*“We have had extensive consultation with the local community. The feedback has helped inform our plans. We have also developed our plans with a comprehensive look at the cumulative impact of other foreseeable development projects in the area. We have made several changes to our plans so that the project better represents the needs of the wider Weybridge community.*

*“This scheme also makes a significant contribution to the community – in not only securing the future of the local college but in providing over 100 much needed affordable homes, delivering a new Sports Centre for the community and opening a 12-hectare woodland for public use.”*

*Why is this development needed?*

The College has faced major financial challenges in recent years, following an investigation into subcontracting that uncovered a debt of £25m that is due to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). A new leadership team is now in place and has worked up this development plan which will repay the debt, thereby safeguarding the future of the college so it can continue to serve the needs of the community and the local economy into the future.

The College has recently agreed a repayment plan for the debt with the ESFA. This formal agreement confirms the ESFA's support for the college whilst the transformational re-development is progressed. The agreement allows sufficient time (three years) to secure a planning approval and provides assurance to students considering enrolment at the college. The college re-development scheme seeks the minimum amount of residential development necessary to fund both the transformation of the college and the repayment of the debt.

Without the sale of the excess land for residential development, the college would be in an insolvent position, which could result in its forced closure and the land sold to a developer.

More information about the plans is available at [www.brooklandsgrove.co.uk](http://www.brooklandsgrove.co.uk).

**ENDS**

### **Media Contact**

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **About Brooklands College**

Brooklands College is a Further Education college based on three campuses in Surrey, one in Weybridge and the other two in Ashford. We are proud to be an important and successful provider of vocational training, Further and Higher Education and Apprenticeships.

More than 3,000 students choose to study at the College each year either to start or enhance their careers, through the acquisition of skills and knowledge in a vocational context

or to broaden their skills and knowledge for their own professional development. Courses range from entry to degree level.

### **About Cala Homes**

Cala Homes has a rich and extensive history of delivering homes which we are proud to build, and communities in which our customers love to live in. Cala specialise in delivering new places and spaces of the highest quality and usability, knitting seamlessly into existing communities.