

BUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Buckland Parish Council (“BPC”) response to Mole Valley District Council (“MVDC”) Draft proposal for Modest Expansion of Existing Villages

On 29th August 2018, having met with the Planning Policy team at Pippbrook, BPC issued a parish update to highlight the MVDC draft proposal for Buckland and a BPC additional proposal. BPC provided links to relevant information sources and displayed key information on the Parish Council noticeboard for the benefit of any residents without internet access.

The BPC update included the following statement: “at this stage the proposals remain subject to change and are being presented for review; in advance of a more formal public consultation that will take place “in due course” – possibly early next year.”

BPC invited residents to contribute their views and, when BPC met, on Monday 10th September 2018, the meeting commenced at 7.30pm, half an hour earlier than usual to allow additional time to consider this topic in Open Forum.

Feedback to the MVDC draft proposal to define a village boundary that is broadly within the currently defined and long-established Conservation Area has prompted a small number of concerns that BPC suggests can be addressed as follows:

- (i) BPC has annotated the draft proposal map to reflect a suggestion for the limit of the boundary be aligned to correspond to the curtilage of The White House and to exclude the area of land that is in separate ownership and forms part of fields used for grazing horses. It is suggested this change would properly acknowledge Vine Cottage as being the last in a short chain of properties immediately alongside Old Road and be more consistent with the route of boundaries drawn within land owned by Buckland Court, Holly Lodge and Oaklands;
- (ii) taking into account the low density of housing on adjacent plots BPC questions whether a projected capacity of 2 would be more realistic for plot 18-BU-009;
- (iii) during the meeting held on 29th August 2018 an additional piece of land, within the Buckland Conservation Area was considered. The Buckland Estate has since agreed to a BPC suggestion to annotate the draft proposal to include this area of otherwise redundant land and to suggest a potential capacity of 1 dwelling.

Concern has been expressed that if MVDC rejects the BPC proposal to define two boundaries and struggles, during the term of the new local plan, to deliver enough new homes, across the district, to satisfy government targets, that speculative proposals could increase and that such development could harm the character of the village. BPC believes that whilst there are opportunities in the village for new homes to be built without detriment to the character of the village (including its Conservation Area) or causing any harm to the Green Belt, that new homes are likely to be more easily delivered within the proposed second “Buckland East” boundary.

Feedback from owners of residential properties sited within the proposed Buckland East boundary and to the west of Squires Garden Centre has been both positive and constructive. When BPC met with MVDC it was noted that land submitted by Buckland Estates in response to the MVDC Call for Sites that is within the proposed Buckland East boundary offers easier development options than the sites included in the MVDC Draft Proposal.

Several residents living in dwellings located to the east of Squires Garden Centre on the former Shagbrook Estate, expressed concern that a “second boundary” in the east of Buckland would risk “opening the floodgates” to large scale development on previously undeveloped Green Belt land. BPC has drawn upon the MVDC published statements to emphasise the modest scale of development being considered by this MVDC workstream and reminded residents that the MVDC draft proposal does not suggest any part of Buckland should be inset from the Green Belt. One Shagbrook resident expressed an interest in seeing policies adopted to allow more new homes to be built to the east of both the currently proposed boundaries.

BPC confirms, as stated during the recent meeting with MVDC, that feedback from the local community, feedback that has been consistent over the last 7 years, is that new build properties in Buckland should focus on modestly sized dwellings with no more than 3 bedrooms to target downsizers and people moving up from smaller starter homes.

BPC appreciates the opportunity this informal consultation has given Buckland’s residents to engage in this process and gain a better understanding of planning policy and its application in Mole Valley as MVDC develops its new Local Plan in advance of the more formal public consultation to follow next year.