



Established in 1929

STRATEGIC PLANNING GROUP

A Special Report to Members



Keeping
The Green Belt
Buckled up

□ *The equivalent of a small city has been put up on Britain's Green belt, a report claimed last week. You remember how we laughed when John Prescott said, "The green belt is a Labour achievement – and we're going to build on it"? Now it looks as if the joke's on us: it was more of a policy statement.*

The Sunday Times, May 11, 2008

How Green will be our Valley?

The present government declared that it wants 3M homes built by 2020. With this in mind, all local councils set about trying to work out how many of these they could accommodate in their areas. Surrey County Council came up with a figure they felt could be accommodated in the County over the period. Mole Valley and other councils in the county were given their allocation from this total, and started making plans. Then, along came the un-elected South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA), who upped the figures for the counties in their area. After a deal of 'dickering', councils revised their previously allocated numbers to meet these new targets. In Mole Valley, it appeared that, although difficult, the new allocations could just about be met, and accordingly, revised their figures for the up-coming Local Development Framework (LDF) that will replace the existing Local

Plan, required by the government from all councils in England and Wales. Later, an independent Planning Inspectorate Panel recommended an increase of 10% in Surrey, pushing the Mole Valley figures from 171 a year to 188. However, that's not the end of the story. In the Autumn, the government could quite easily increase these numbers yet again. With this in mind, MVDC's Planning Policy Team have included designated Metropolitan Green belt, AGLV and AONB areas in their list of potential sites for new housing – some of which are illustrated on the following pages. MVDC have told us that this is required for the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), but that these areas will be used as 'Last Resort' building land. However reassuring that may sound, we shall remain opposed to using *any* of these designated sites for housing.

It is part of the Society's Constitution to be apolitical, but when it comes to planning future housing requirements in Mole Valley – especially in Dorking and the rural villages – it is impossible to divorce politics from our preservation aims.

The Society's Response

As many of you will be aware, the Society's Strategic Planning Group have been consultees of MVDC since the start of the deliberations

about the LDF. We have written many informed papers in answer to all of the Planning Consultation Documents issued by Mole Valley, some of which we have reported to members from time to time via the Newsletter and the Local Press.

On the whole we have been in tune with most of the proposals made by the Policy Team, and it was hoped that we could eventually agree with MVDC in a 'Statement of Common Ground' before the completed LDF goes for approval to the Inspectorate.

Although we wish to co-operate, unless we can see that our concerns are being met at the next stage of the Consultation, we may still have to oppose at the LDF Enquiry.

The Curates Egg

Much of what is planned in this latest consultation, the Society agrees with, but there are parts with which we are at odds, making the consultation somewhat of a 'Curates Egg. To arrive at some of their recommendations, MVDC have had to navigate around established Green Belt and AGLV policies designated by both government and SCC.

Our credentials

Firstly let us identify our expert in Planning matters: Derek Rowbotham who has compiled the Society's response to the 'Revised Preferred Options for the LDF

Core Strategy' Consultation. He has the Diploma of Town Planning; is a retired Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and was, for many years, an HM Inspector of Planning. With this background, you can be assured of his credentials to respond to the MVDC Consultation document, and in a position to be able to criticise some of the contentious issues in it. He also co-ordinates the Society's Strategic Planning Group, headed by Martin Wedgwood along with Planning Chairman Hank Etheridge, and Richard Ingle who has had a wide background in Local Government and Planning.

Areas at risk

Dorking is surrounded by a 'Green Girdle': it is possible to walk the whole perimeter of the town in beautiful surroundings that include wooded areas and green, open spaces in the green belt, AGLV's and AONB's

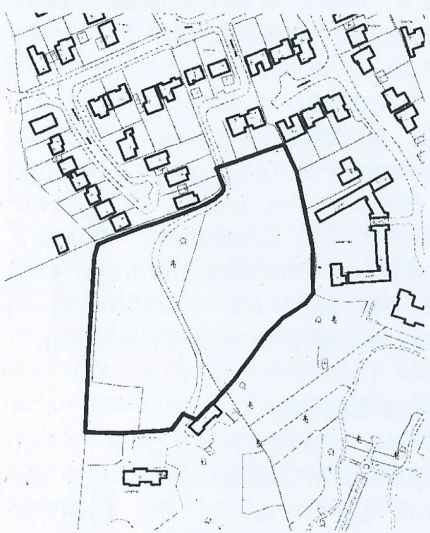
To bulge out the boundaries of Dorking on its SW & NE edges would mean invading some of these designated sites, affecting views from Ranmore and extending to the east below Box Hill will permanently damage the views from the Viewpoint – a major tourist attraction, some of whom will shop in Dorking.

Out of the 307 units planned for Dorking, 95 are in the green belt and 90 on land designated as AGLV's and/or AONB's, totalling

over 60% of the listed sites. Beare Green have been allocated 20 units in the green belt, Capel 10, Mickleham 9 and Newdgate 13.

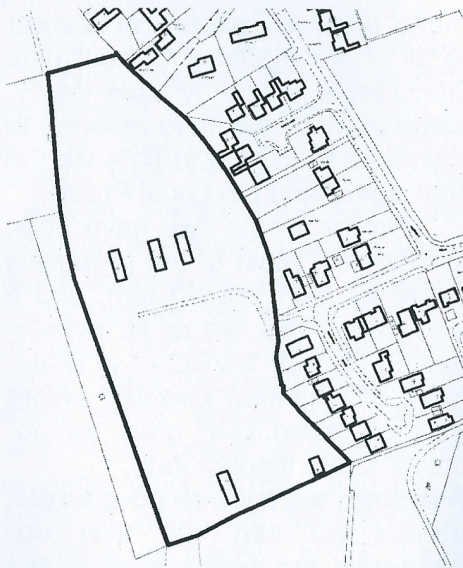
NOT ALL SAME SCALE

Marley Mead:



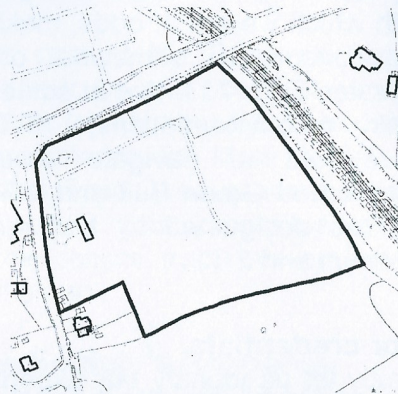
In selecting Marley Mead (0.36 hectares) and combining it with Chennels Nursery, MVDC have included Green Belt land that is also classified as both AGLV and AONB. For this reason alone, the Society think this site should be removed from the list of identified sites. This site also presents major access problems. Traffic to or from Marley Mead or Chennels Nursery would have to use Ridgeway Road, either at its eastern end where it joins Flint Hill, or on its western end where it joins Coldharbour Lane.

Chennels Nursery



Area: 2.7 hectares, in the Green Belt and an AGLV & AONB, this site would abut Marley Mead and include all the access problems of that site.

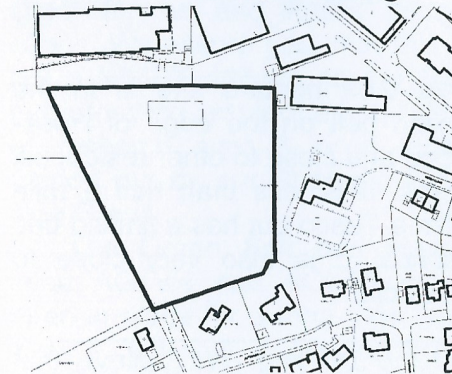
Chalcraft Nurseries



Situated on the Reigate Road below Box Hill, this proposed site of 2.65 hectares, is within the

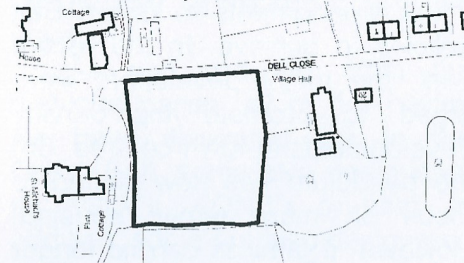
green belt and a designated AGLV. Although lying behind Leslie Road, because it is on higher ground, it would be a more prominent feature of the critical view southward from Box Hill. If chosen, it would have access problems.

Nutcombe Lane, Dorking



Off the Westcott Road, the site is open land, 1.25 hectares in area and in the Green Belt.

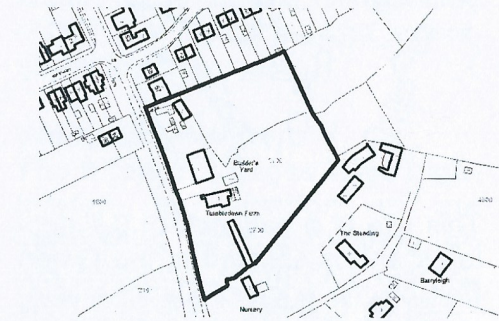
Dell Close, Mickleham



This site of 0.43 hectares is in the Green Belt and an AGLV & AONB. It lies close to the Village Hall in the Village and is only half a mile

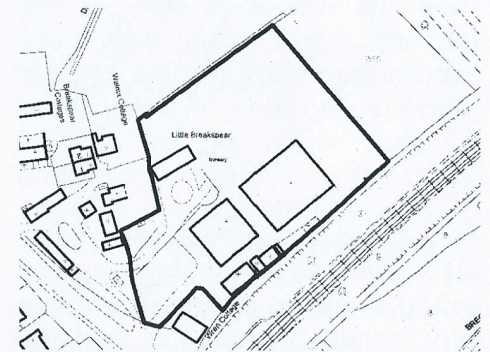
from the Mole Gap to the Reigate escarpment.

Tumbledown Farm, Wheeler's Lane Brockham



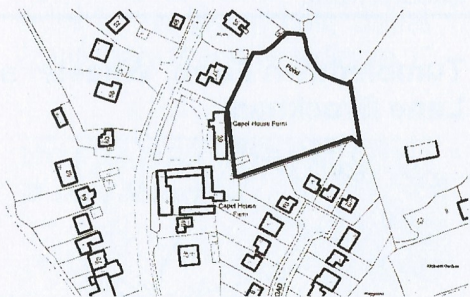
0.9 hectares, on the edge of the Village and in the Green Belt.

Godwin's Nursery, Beare Green



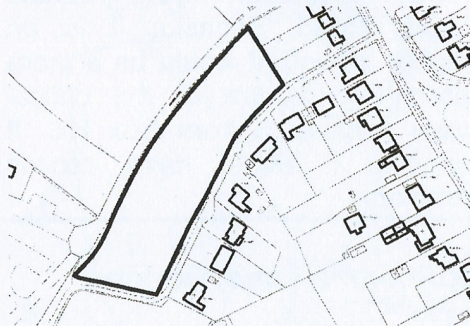
This 1.04 hectare site lies on the edge of the Village, and is in the Green Belt. It is separated from the main settlement by a railroad track. Beare Green has been identified as a Rural Community with limited services.

Capel House farm, Capel



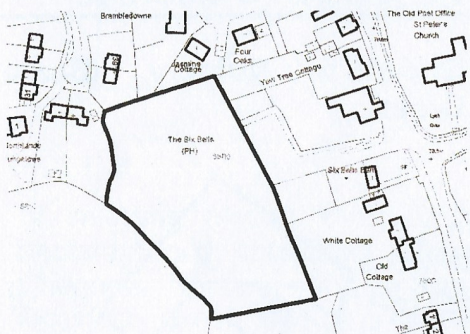
This site is a paddock of 0.4 hectares and is situated in the Green Belt on the edge of Capel adjoining an established residential area.

Kennels Lane, Hookwood



This 0.69 hectare site is in the Green belt on the edge of Hookwood and close to other residential areas. It is less than half a mile from a Tesco but has a limited bus service. It is also very close to Gatwick.

Six Bells pub, Newdigate



This site in the Green Belt adjoins an established residential area and is 0.67 hectares in size. There is a very limited bus service, and the nearest station is Holmwood.

Some consequences

The Society predicts that there will be all sorts of problems with infrastructure in trying to shoehorn in housing into the surrounding areas

fringing Dorking. We believe that the sites we have pinpointed conflict with every possible measure of sustainability. They don't meet designations to protect the beauty and Landscape value of our area, and indeed, some would require major amendments to Green Belt policies to achieve. In the recent past, the major developers were urged to promote high-density developments in town centres. But the pendulum has now shifted to focus on more family housing. However, if families can no longer afford to buy these homes, the sites in the Green Belt noted in these pages may be spared but don't take it for granted.

Conclusions

It is your Society's contention that there are still areas in Dorking, the settlements and villages in our area that are not in the Green Belt, AGLV's or AONB's in which new housing can be accommodated over the required time span. This means that our unique townscape and beautiful countryside will stay intact for us and future generations. We assure you, that this is not a NIMBY attitude on our part but rather the result of a great deal of research over 3 or 4 years carried out by our Strategic Planning Group.

The Green Belt and associated AGLV's and AONB's have been in place for a long time, and it is a fact that it covers three-quarters of the District and, probably, a much greater area in the surrounding hinterland. All of these designated areas have, up until now, prevented the sprawl of the town and preserved the natural beauty and landscape quality we enjoy.

As you can see from the previous pages, all of the places we have illustrated are in the Green Belt, some also designated as AGLV's, AONB's or both. In addition, some are also designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

In most of our responses to the on-going LDF consultation, the Society have made strong arguments about access difficulties,

lack of appropriate infrastructure and services, all of which cannot be covered by Section 106 contributions from developers. We think that building houses outside the urban fringe in the surrounding countryside is, to a large extent, unsustainable.

We need your help

The foregoing pages have highlighted the situation we are combating, and depending on the outcome of further discussion with Mole Valley, it is likely that we may have to give evidence at the Inspector's Enquiry opposing the invasion of designated areas around the fringes of Dorking. To do this, we need your help.

We would, therefore, ask you to write to your local councillor and pass this pamphlet around among your neighbours and friends to see if they would join us in this major task by becoming members of the Society. The membership form is on our website: www.ddps.org.uk or you can call Peter Parkin on 01306 881111. He will send you whatever you require.

