

Ashtead Neighbourhood Forum

Ashtead Community Vision – working towards a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)
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Ashtead residents' chance to offer their views on future of Green Belt

Ashtead residents are invited to comment on their Neighbourhood Forum's thoughts on the review of the Green Belt which surrounds the village.

In the largest consultation exercise since the Forum was created in February, members of the Forum will be distributing this newsletter, updating the website and holding an open morning so that residents of the village will have a chance to review the Green Belt work undertaken on behalf of the Forum by Ashtead Community Vision (ACV).

That work consists of a report – which went to a recent meeting of the Forum – and was approved in advance of the consultation exercise.

The Forum's report

The report, which is on the website and also at Ashtead Library, describes how the Green Belt has been divided into different "broad areas" – manageable chunks that could be studied in more detail. In particular, each of the ten broad areas around Ashtead have been considered to see how each functions in terms of 'merging', 'encroachment' and 'setting and character'. The report then scores each broad area as 'minimal', 'moderate' or 'significant'. ACV also applied nine sustainability criteria to add to its views on merging, encroaching and setting/character. Of course, it is this detailed assessment which makes the Forum's report so comprehensive. It is the thoroughness of the work undertaken by ACV which ensures the final version is robust enough to properly inform MVDC's decision making



about the Green Belt and any future enquiry concerning potential development challenges in the Green Belt.

Conclusions

So what were the report's conclusions and what is the Forum proposing to Ashtead residents? Generally speaking, given that central and local government Green Belt policy works against new development in Green Belt land, Ashtead was always going to be constrained in terms of recommending significant alterations to the boundary. However two broad areas have been identified which may offer some scope for change. One of the areas consists of three elements: J1, J2 and J3 (marked on the map above). J1, off Pleasure Pit Lane and J3, which straddles Farm Lane, have been identified as areas where the Green Belt Boundary could be changed. The second area, Ermyrn Way Fields (West), may also offer some scope for

development. It has limited landscape significance and abuts the M25 motorway. It is also intensively farmed agricultural land with little bio-diversity.

However, the report makes it clear that there are some significant hurdles to be cleared by any developer particularly given the richness of ancient and bio-diverse boundaries which define the area to the north.

Feedback

Now residents are being called upon to look at the detail of the report and express their views via the on-line survey on the AVC website at: www.ashteadcommunityvision.org.uk These views will be taken into account before the report is submitted to MVDC for consideration as part of its Green Belt Boundary Review. Also, residents are invited to attend a meeting at the Peace Memorial Hall on the morning of Saturday, 18th January at 10.30am.

MVDC CALLS THE SHOTS ON GREEN BELT

In what is something of a U-turn the Government has decreed that only district councils such as MVDC are able to make changes to Green Belt boundaries.

Until recently, it had been said that Neighbourhood Forums would play the deciding hand in any review to Green Belt policy. However, following discussions between central and local government, ministers have decided that district councils

should remain the final arbiter of Green Belt policy. For some Forum members, the move is seen as undermining the authority they felt they had when they embarked on Neighbourhood Planning.

Following discussion on the issue, the Forum agreed that it should continue with its work in reflecting the views of Ashted residents on matters concerning the future development of the village.

Ashted NDP delayed by Government rethink – but work carries on

One of the consequence of the Government's U-turn on who calls the shots on Green Belt policy is that the Ashted Forum cannot complete its work until MVDC has implemented its work on the Green Belt in Mole Valley. Essentially this pushes back the Forum's timetable by two years so that completion of the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan cannot be undertaken until late 2015.

Ashted Neighbourhood Forum backs opposition to allotments

The Ashted Neighbourhood Forum has formally agreed to oppose any move of allotments from Leatherhead to the Green Belt area which sits between the M25 motorway and housing at the lower end of Barnett Wood Lane – a field known locally as the 'Pony Field'.

However, it was noted that the use of land as allotments does not, in itself, require planning permission. However, permission would be needed for associated built development, such as creating vehicular access/car parking or erecting buildings.



The Forum's view was that putting allotments on the Pony Field site would urbanise the space and undermine the land's role in acting as a Green and pleasant 'gateway' into Ashted Village. So the Forum decided it would act as a focus of opposition to any proposal to move the Leatherhead allotments to this part of Ashted – a view which is reflected in the Forum's Green Belt Boundary report.

Buried Saxons contribute to Ashted's heritage



Intensive agriculture may neutralise biodiversity to the south east of Ashted, but the area contains outstanding examples of ancient bio-diverse boundaries and even the remains of Anglo-Saxon criminals, executed and buried in the area.

Forum – New members welcome

Ashted Neighbourhood Forum welcomes any resident who would like to join. The Forum is particularly keen to attract younger members to ensure their generation is properly represented.

Please contact Andy Ellis at:-
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