

LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO MOLE VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCILS DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR MODEST EXPANSION OF EXISTING VILLAGES

The Leigh parish councillors and a good number of villagers met in an open meeting to discuss the sites that have been proposed under the Modest Expansion of Existing Villages part of the Mole Valley local plan. An online survey has also been carried-out - results for this can be provided. Overall, while the parish is not averse to a development in line with the published guidelines but there is very little support for the developments proposed and there are some major concerns in general - among them:

Boundary Changes

There was a strong objection to the proposed boundary changes in the draft proposal provided. It was not clear as to why these were being proposed and clearly any development resulting from such changes would be from backfill development not infilling.

Infrastructure

It is well understood in Leigh that there is one fundamental infrastructural issue that needs to be enhanced before any housing development can take place. The drainage and sewerage facilities are at their limits, to the extent that fundamental defects cause properties to flood and sewage to escape into gardens and roads. Without improvements to the drainage in the village, any further development is likely to cause problems, this is borne-out by the recent planning application refusal for a fairly modest development. Anything like those tabled could cause major issues. There are also concerns expressed about traffic and parking, particularly in the vicinity of the school.

Infill vs Backfill

One of the key points raised in the meeting concerned the sizes and layout of each of the plots. Those present understood the words from the Future Mole Valley web site that explains "*Villages with defined boundaries are capable of accommodating 'infilling' development without detriment to their character or causing harm to the Green Belt and countryside. 'Infilling' is defined as the development of a small gap within an otherwise continuous built-up frontage, or the small-scale redevelopment of existing properties within such a frontage.*" None of the proposals appeared to conform to this guideline which caused great concern. There was more acceptance for development in line with the built street frontage, but development that did not meet the infilling rule was not considered appropriate in Leigh.

Size of Development

Prior to the meeting, Parish Councillors met with the three landowners and discovered that two of the proposals bore little resemblance to the landowners own understanding of their submissions. In both cases the plot outlined is significantly larger than expected.

Allocation

It was understood that the village should expect a 5-10% increase under the plan but the proposal is in excess of that.

Property Size

It was clear that there is little appetite for larger properties. One reason is the desire to see the age profile of the village fall with any new development.

Questions

There were some questions that nobody present could answer, including:

It wasn't clear what the proposed mix of ownership types is. There is a clear desire to see some affordable properties included in the plan.

- Are there other development proposals outside the settlement area?
- Can we suggest alternative/better sites?
- The absence of information about where and which strategic sites are being considered for larger developments remains a major concern. It is very difficult to comment on plans for Leigh without this context.

Full details of the meeting, including other questions, can be found in the attachment.

Dated: 27th December 2018
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LEIGH PARISH COUNCIL – PUBLIC MEETING

TO CONSIDER THE MOLE VALLEY RURAL HOUSING PROPOSALS

A record of the public meeting, held by Leigh Parish Council on Monday 22nd October at 7:30 pm at Leigh Cricket Club Pavilion.

Attendees

35 residents attended.

Parish Cllrs Kinloch, Cambra, Ames, Tomkins, Wilkinson and Everitt were present
District Cllr C Osborne-Patterson was also present as was the Parish Clerk L Mann.

Apologies – District Cllr M Huggins

The following documents were referred to and available to view:

- Overview of the Future Mole Valley Local Housing Plan
- A map of proposed sites and the number of dwellings
- Leigh village Conservation Area Map
- The profile of the village as per the Census 2011
- Leigh village feedback survey October 2018

Residents arrived and were given refreshments.

Cllr Wilkinson welcomed everyone and gave a brief introduction to the structure and aims of the meeting. He then gave an overview of the Future Mole Valley Local Housing Plan. Residents were given the opportunity to look at and react to information provided on the tables and display boards. Residents were sat around tables to allow for open discussion.

After 30 minutes of small group discussion Councillor Cambra asked for a comment from each table until all the points had been covered in the room. The following is a summary of this feedback and questions. Where the Parish Council could provide insight, they did (*In italics*):

1. Infill versus backfill. These sites are not infill on street scenes they are backfill sites in the main.
2. This whole rural extension is based on the three sites. What is the bigger picture in the area? These sites are not considering strategic sites or traveller sites. *These are both key areas being addressed by MV too. We should ask the questions.*
3. What other sites were put forward within the curtilage? We don't know what else was considered – either not viable or discounted. *At the initial meeting earlier in the year, those whose land was being put forward had not been consulted directly.*
4. Infrastructure is not coping as is: Sewage, parking, more cars, electricity supply (particularly Dawes Green issues).
5. There is a need for housing but arguably modest ones not 5 bed houses.
6. The total proposed number of houses (35) is too many. What is the proposed mix of houses? What type of ownership?
7. In favour of new houses – as it may increase the chances of a shop in the village. *This has been asked previously at Parish Council meeting with Mole Valley. This will not happen at this level of development.*
8. Increase in traffic. The roads are already busy, especially Tapners Road. There should be some form of traffic calming infrastructure. *Agree that all the rural parishes are suffering with heavy and fast traffic. Again, there is unlikely to be investment in this area for the level of dwellings.*
9. Approximate number of dwellings between Dawes Green and Leigh is around 120 units, 5-10% is not 30 to 35 houses as has been proposed.
10. For some, the pace of development is important but not as important as the volume of houses.
11. Leigh has many older residents it would be of benefit to have more younger residents and families to create a more balanced community. We should accelerate not hold back from development.

30/10/2018

12. Where the developments proposed are outside the settlement area, does the parish not have control to say no? *According to Guy Davies at MV, doing nothing is not an option.*
13. What about the Conservation Area Boundary? *The Conservation area will not change, the Priests House site is within the Conservation Area and would have to adopt the rules surrounding development there. Planning applications still have to be applied for in the normal routes.*
14. What about better sites? Can they be put forward? *It is possible Mole Valley have discounted them for whatever reason but yes sites could be suggested. Arguably there are better sites.*
15. Feelings of concern surrounding the village boundary line. Are they just freeing up future areas for development? Why are they changing them - For what reason? Any potential development would be back-fill not infill. *This needs to be asked.*
16. It would be good for the people moving in to the new houses to be either younger or downsizers. Ideally under 4 bedrooms, maybe 2-3 bedroom units. *Type and size of units is very important and will form the Parish Councils draft response to the first proposal. This is why resident views are important via the survey.*
17. Those coming in on affordable housing may after a while look to move on but have to move out of the area as they grow out of the houses.
18. Minimum of two parking spaces for a two-bed house as parking is such an issue, particularly on Tapners Road.
19. When the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) gets paid, it goes into a central fund to be reinvested into the area. *Leigh village should get this.*
20. Should the Parish Council not communicate with the other local parishes in an attempt to have more influence over where the sites go – divide and conquer? *Many parishes are being hit with considerably bigger sites this routes may not benefit.*
21. If all these sites went ahead this is a 30% increase in houses, with no benefit to the current infrastructure. Any development should not be at the cost of the village.
22. The bus service is poor. There should be more regular buses and also ideally a bus into Reigate.

Those present were reminder of the importance of filling in the village housing survey either online or by hand and sending to the Parish Clerk by the end of October. The Parish Council aim was to get their response in to Mole Valley by the end of November.

Everyone was thanked for their time. There being no other business the meeting was closed at 9:10pm.