

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

Following feedback from residents of the village, members of Brockham Parish Council have met and discussed the proposed sites for development in Brockham and Strood Green. The following criteria were considered to assess the suitability and impact on the village:

- Flooding i.e. actual proven risk with up to date EA assessment
- Access - effect of increased traffic to surrounding houses, roads and traffic flow; access to site and any safety considerations
- Visual impact on the surrounding countryside
- Impact on local amenities (schools, doctors etc)
- Residents views and feedback
- Wildlife corridor and greenbelt designations

The Parish Council is supportive and recognises the need for more housing in the village, especially affordable homes, but it is generally felt that the proposed numbers are too high and that there are other potential areas that have been overlooked, which in the near to medium future may offer suitable alternatives.

It should be noted that Brockham is a rural village in green belt surroundings and is valued by many visitors for its views and footpaths. Also, the village has been the victim of severe flooding events in 1968, 2001 and worst of all in 2013/14 when over 90 properties were affected by groundwater flooding and Tanners Brook, a tributary of the River Mole, burst its banks. The layer of impervious brick earth located in the southern part of Brockham and Strood Green has much to do with this.

It was agreed that Strood Green is to remain a separate village with its own boundary.

The below comments on the suggested sites to be included in the Modest Expansion of Rural Villages are as follows and in numerical order.

18-BR-001 – Former Sewage Works – Has planning permission already for one house. A planning application for 4/5 houses was turned down last year but it was indicated that this could be reconsidered under the Local Plan. The Parish Council had previously supported this application for no more than 5 houses.

18-BR-004 – Tanners Meadow – This is the worst site, as per our agreed criteria, due to serious flooding concerns, backed up with evidence as well as problems with access, and safety, not to mention sewage capacity being nearly reached already. It is important to note that flooding in Strood Green is very much a man-made phenomenon following the development of the old Silver Mist site – run-off from this built-up area must flow somewhere, and it pools into Tanners Meadow. If further concrete and tarmac is laid on the meadow worse flooding will result. This was the source of much of the flooding in 2013/14 and where water draining into Tanners Brook flooded homes a mile away. The Parish Council does not support development here.

18-BR-005 - Wheelers Lane – This site is not far from the inundation of flood water that came across the fields and into Oakdene Road during Christmas 2013. A satisfactory FRA (flood risk assessment) would need to be carried out in advance to assess the suitability of development here. However, the field is distinctly higher than the road and surrounding areas and has never held water after heavy rain, so research is required to assess potential run-off from new hard areas. Access is reasonably

straight forward, apart from the need for care when leaving due to reduced sight to the left (north). Walking distance to school in Brockham. A small development may be considered.

18-BR-07- on the path to allotments - Deemed suitable for 2 to 3 semi-detached affordable homes. Access is reasonable, but parking may be limited, including current neighbours, since they park in front of the small site at times. Walking distance to school in Brockham.

18-BR-008 – The Bungalow, Kiln Lane – There has been a suggestion that a soil survey should be carried out on this site prior to plans being made. A previous application for up to 45 houses to be built here was turned down on appeal in 2013. This was on the grounds of it being an inappropriate development in the green belt therefore causing harm to the character and appeal of the area. Objectors included the National Trust whose own land borders the site. Speculative building by developers would not be acceptable although considerations here in the future could include low rise housing (such as bungalows) due to the lie of the land. Access safety should be reviewed as visibility up and down Kiln Lane can be tricky from this site. It is important to preserve the rural aesthetic which could be threatened by solid infilling, maintain a wildlife corridor to preserve the connections between surrounding pieces of land and protect the view from the Big Field could by use of planting for screening. Rather than presenting a detailed plan and then asking for comments, it is suggested that any would-be developer consult on what is needed first and then present a site plan with attention to local comments, ideas and feedback.

The Parish Council noted the village already has busy traffic, full schools and doctor's surgery, which means only small scale developments should be considered and approved. Any development should be of limited quantities (preferably 10 or less) or small plots as in fill, which is of smaller affordable types to medium size homes in limited quantities that fit in with existing houses where possible - not new housing estates of 20 plus.

The Parish Council are actively seeking to reduce the problematic flooding potential in the village. In addition, plans are in progress to alleviate traffic congestion and introduce road calming schemes.

There is little doubt that Brockham and Strood Green would benefit from carefully situated modest developments with a proportion of bungalows for downsizers and affordable dwellings. These are what we believe the village needs and what speculative developers rarely provide. Affordable dwellings on speculative developments can only be asked for as a small part of a larger number of market dwellings. Developers are often reluctant to provide bungalows because of their demanding footprint in terms of the land required to build them.

The Parish Council would like to add that there are some development sites in the village that may come forward eventually and we are certainly aware of one which is advancing in conception and appears to be of modest size and likely to offer housing for local people. Its situation could be debatable, but it would probably count in the Future Mole Valley proposal as a windfall site, supposing that a planning application is successful.

The Parish Council would welcome the chance to consult the community on other sites and work with planners to come up with the best options.

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