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Peter Seaward – Chairman.

Tree Felling Lower Road Recreation Ground

Some of you might have noticed some tree felling taking place on the southern side of the Lower Road Recreation Ground. This land is part of an area known as Bookham Fields and spreads from the edge of the recreation ground to the A246 south, The Lorne in the east to Rectory Lane in the west. This land has 4 or 5 owners.

At a recent BRA event David Harper, who is the Mole Valley Councillor responsible for strategic development, outlined the way the new Mole Valley Local Plan was headed. David's slides can be seen at the BRA website in the Bookham Question Time report. Across the District, MVDC must build, according to Government, up to 450 homes per annum. That is up from the 188 in the last plan.

Over the next fifteen years some 4,100 houses can be built within the existing areas on brown field sites or by extensions of various kinds, greater density housing, taller buildings and so on. This will leave 2,500 dwellings to be built elsewhere. The present broad strategy by MVDC, according to David Harper, is some modest expansion of the villages in the south, the possibility of larger extensions to one or two as yet unspecified villages in the south, and with the rest having to be built on green field sites in the built-up areas of Dorking, Leatherhead, Fetcham, Ashted and Bookham.

In Bookham we know from work on the Neighbourhood Development Plan that Bookham Fields, Preston Farm (land behind Little Bookham Street) and some other sites were identified and put to MVDC by a variety of developers. For the new plan MVDC asked again for people who wished to propose similar areas to put them forward for consideration.

MVDC councillors and the BRA were approached by a firm called TFP who said they represented developers who wished to develop Bookham Fields. These approaches were simply acknowledged.

The trees being felled are in an area belonging to one of the owners of a parcel of land in Bookham Fields.

MVDC have made no decision about what areas of greenfield they may release but it is reasonable to assume that Bookham Fields maybe an area under consideration.

Mole Valley has difficulties in that it no longer has what is known as a "five-year land supply" which it is required to have under Government rules. With or without this supply a developer could challenge MVDC refusal to build on an area such as Bookham Fields and could go to an independent Inspector for a decision. Similar cases have occurred in other Local Authority districts in Surrey. The important point is that without a five-year land supply, experience shows that such appeals by developers have a very high chance of succeeding.

Presently there are some 100 dwellings completed, under construction or in the planning stage in Bookham. This annual figure has increased over the past years without any planned or additional infrastructure of any kind.

Before any further development, especially of a large scale, our infrastructure needs should be assessed, solutions proposed and implemented. Until this is done any further development should be delayed.

This briefing is to make sure that you have as much information as we, in the BRA, can glean and would try and persuade you to keep in touch with the local plan as it evolves within MVDC.

For more information please see the MVDC website:

- <http://futuremolevalley.org/more-detail/>
- <https://www.molevalley.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=33905>

As we gather more information, we will circulate it as quickly as we can.

This is not a rallying call to action... yet. However, please be ready to lobby the Council and your local Councillors to make sure we get a fair deal for Bookham.