

Tandridge Parish Council response to Tandridge Local Plan: Sites Consultation

December 2016

This note sets out Tandridge Parish Council's response to the Sites Consultation in respect of the Local Plan prepared by Tandridge District Council. It responds to the proposals for new and extended settlements in Blindley Heath and South Godstone. Except where highlighted below our comments apply equally to both of the proposals. Whilst only one of them is in our parish, if implemented, they would both have a significant effect on our parish and fundamentally change its character.

Tandridge Parish is different to the vast majority of parishes in Tandridge District. It is extremely rural with little in the way of businesses (other than farming and industries related to farming) and services (two pubs, no doctors, no shops, limited transport infrastructure). It is predominantly agricultural - fields for holding livestock and crop growing. General traffic is light, farm traffic is frequent and the roads through Tandridge Parish are not designed to take large volumes of vehicles. In fact, there are significant impediments (such as high hedges, low bridges, deep ditches and narrow roads) to the volume of traffic increasing. With this in mind we have focused our response on the second of the three questions that were posed by the District Council, namely "The locations for a new and extended settlement – Do you agree that the areas set out to be considered as a location for a new or extended settlement and if not why not?"

As part of the Site Consultation we understand that two sites are under consideration which could result in the construction of circa 2,000 dwellings either along the railway line roughly behind the Griffin public house, or in the Blue Anchor fields alongside the A22.

The effect of either of these developments would be to substantially increase population density to the extent that the existing infrastructure would not in any way be sufficient and would materially impact on the standard of living of the current residents. There is limited scope for development of significant local employment opportunities and therefore this would essentially become merely a commuter settlement with significant impact on the local transport infrastructure.

The most obvious way that this would manifest itself would be traffic. The local roads (including the A22) are already over-used, culminating in long traffic jams and frequent accidents. Such a substantial increase in traffic would therefore likely result in Tandridge Lane being used as an alternative. It is not fit for this purpose – nor do we think that there is the opportunity to widen it to take account of the increased volume.

Further, the closest railway stations for commuting to London are Oxted and South Godstone. Both are already extremely very busy with insufficient capacity currently – both in terms of passengers using the services and car parking with still further car parking restrictions soon to be implemented. Extensive and costly improvement works would be required for the stations to be able to cope with such an increased demand that these developments would create. It is difficult for us to see how this could be accomplished. South Godstone service is limited and, in order to improve, would need longer trains and more frequent services - a further detriment to the quality of life of residents especially those living within earshot of the railway tracks. The development at Blindley Heath would increase usage of Lingfield station, which has the same problems with lack of capacity.

Both the sites are currently extremely rural locations, which are typical of Tandridge Parish and its surround and the Green Belt. In fact Site BH 007, which is in roughly the same location as the proposal in Blindley

Heath has been discarded as an individual site on landscape grounds (whilst near the A22, it is in essence farm land). We cannot see why it would therefore be suitable as a new settlement. The site in South Godstone is similar and with no southern border we cannot see how it would not sprawl and expand further down between the A22 and Tandridge Lane with the effect of destroying an historic rural parish.

The area proposed in South Godstone sits on a bed of Wealden clay, which drains poorly and floods on a regular basis, both in the fields and across Tandridge Lane. A development of this size would significantly increase the amount of surface run off. Whilst we would hope that a developer would take this into consideration when designing the scheme, the effect of this (particularly the increase in concrete and tarmac) would be to move the problem further downstream and it is yet another reason why this is not an appropriate site for such a development.

Further, as you are no doubt aware, there is little social infrastructure in Tandridge Parish. Doctors surgeries are in Oxted, Godstone and Lingfield and these are already oversubscribed. There is little in terms of community facilities and certainly nothing that could support the needs of such a large increase in population.

With the proposed open spaces and more significantly the railway track, the new settlement at South Godstone will be separated from that already-existing, with little access under the railway. This will in no way lend itself to engendering a community spirit.

Lagham Manor to the west is a significant historic building with its associated moat and Park Pale for its historic deer park. Whilst discussion puts the development inside the Park Pale, its significance and heritage benefit will be lost by being so close to such a development. There are also areas of Ancient woodland which should be protected for the benefit of future generations and, even if not cut down, will not benefit from increased footfall affecting drainage, and increased local air pollution.

The Blindley Heath site is very close to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, with a vast amount of animal and bird life. We would like to understand how the developers would be required to protect this and to ensure that there was no detrimental impact on the site. We are also extremely concerned about the increase in run off affecting the Ray Brook flood plain, which has been known in recent years to burst its banks.

In summary, we believe that both sites are inappropriate for a new or extended settlement in the Green Belt. This is based on sound environmental and social factors. The development of either site would substantially change the nature of what is one of the areas few remaining historic rural parishes and would detrimentally impact on the quality of life of the existing residents in terms of the environment, traffic, infrastructure, transport etc. Furthermore, from our soundings, it is almost unanimously opposed by the existing residents.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with the District Council before any conclusions are reached.