



BETCHWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Village Planning -NDP/Design Code Research

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1. Introduction

This paper provides more information to Betchworth Parish Council about the options for development of a Design Code and Neighbourhood Development Plan.

A Village Plan was researched in 2007 and published by Betchworth Parish Council in 2009 identifying potential changes for Betchworth. Following on from this, Surrey Community Action were commissioned in 2011 by MVDC to survey local housing needs. A decade has passed and new Government policy could impact Betchworth village.

- With the National Planning Framework in 2025, there is new Government policy supporting limited development on green belt and development around train stations.
- Surrey's 2050 Place Ambition sets a 30-year vision for "good growth" through improved connectivity, enhanced town place offers, maximising Strategic Opportunity Areas, and investing in natural capital. It identifies infrastructure deficits and the need for coordinated investment to unlock economic potential (Reigate is noted as a Town for considerable development & expansion).
- East Surrey County Council are currently working on a 2030 Spatial Strategy. East Surrey's spatial strategy will combine national SDS guidance with local ambitions, underpinned by the new unitary council's governance and funding arrangements, to guide land use, infrastructure, and economic development over the next decade.
- Following the approval of the third runway at Gatwick Airport, it has the capacity to go from 55million people passing through the airport terminal in 2025, to 80 million in 2035. This will increase the number of people passing through the village.

Betchworth Parish Council plan to conduct research to determine if there is a need for housing beyond or different in location or nature to that in the Mole Valley District Council 5 year plan such that a recommendation can be made for the Betchworth Parish Council to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan which recommends areas of the village for residential development to the local planning authority.

Betchworth Parish Council will also consider the creation of a Design Code for the village to enhance the existing development policies by determining the look-and-feel of future developments.

2. Existing Betchworth Planning Guidelines

Betchworth is a distinct, historic rural village and planning permissions and structural designs are bound by a tier of strict, pre-existing local requirements:

The Betchworth Conservation Area

A large section of the village falls within the protected Betchworth Conservation Area. Any development must strictly align with its traditional architectural character, which is heavily defined by 17th and 18th-century domestic buildings. Design requirements mandate:

- Traditional materials matching local historic properties (such as red clay brick, hanging tiles, and timber-framed structures).
- Low-density, discreetly sited extensions that do not disrupt the irregular, historic "string" layout of The Street.

MVDC Design Guidance for House Extensions

For residential modifications, Betchworth properties must follow MVDC's district-wide Design Guidance for House Extensions SPD. This document enforces specific parameters on:

- Daylight and sunlight limits to prevent overshadowing neighbours.
- Overbearing development restrictions to ensure modifications "respect the host or original dwelling".

Surrey Hills National Landscape (AONB)

Betchworth sits adjacent to the highly protected Betchworth Hills. Because of this, building heights, rooflines, and landscaping must be designed to completely protect the wider landscape views and prevent visual intrusion into the Surrey Hills.

3. Housing Need

Families in need of housing in Betchworth are driven by affordability pressures, an ageing population, and limited new developments due to strict Green Belt protections.

2025 Census

The 2025 census has indicated that Betchworth parish has:

- An ageing population and 18% disabled (which is the UK average)
- Mainly affluent with a small proportion of people in the village who are deprived and not fluent in English
- Those who are working either drive to work or work from home and most are in full time L1-L9 occupations
- Lots of multi-bedroom housing, more than the Mole Valley average. Flat prices have declined.

Mole Valley Local Plan

Mole Valley Local Plan 2020-2039 states Betchworth's housing needs and developer allocations as follows:

Key Housing Demands in Betchworth

- Affordable Rural Housing: Property values in Betchworth are among the highest in Surrey, meaning young families and local workers are consistently priced out. District-wide, there are roughly 680 households on the social housing register, with high demand for rural affordable options.
- Downsizing Options: There is a high localized demand for 1- and 2-bedroom bungalows or smaller apartments to allow the village's large retirement-age demographic to downsize while staying in the area.
- The Rural Exception Rule: Because Betchworth is a small village, affordable housing can bypass normal Green Belt restrictions if a local housing needs survey proves a direct necessity for people with strong family or employment connections to the parish.

Local Plan Site Allocations

To meet localized housing targets without disrupting the Surrey Hills National Landscape, the Mole Valley District Council designated two small-scale, specific site allocations within Betchworth for development:

- Development Site DS6: Land to the Rear of Bumblebee Cottage. (7 dwellings behind Bumblebee cottage along the school footpath)
- Development Site DS7: Land at The Evergreens, Reigate Road (3 additional traveller pitches).

Strict Affordable Delivery Mandates

For any larger developments or windfall sites that come forward in the area, the new Local Plan requires a minimum of 40% affordable housing contribution on-site. Furthermore, because Betchworth has an "Inset Village" layout wrapped in Green Belt, any new housing must meet net-zero carbon standards and contribute directly to the infrastructure needs of the immediate community.

Assessing Betchworth's Housing Needs

In our last Village Plan, in 2007, the Surrey Community Action organisation gathered information to provide a housing needs assessment report.

They can complete this 'Housing Needs Survey' for us again. SCA asks residents about their current housing situation and their future need for housing (in the next 5 years). A questionnaire will be sent to residents in the Parish (it can also be sent to residents who would like to return to live in the Parish in the next 5 years). Residents will be given the choice of a paper-based questionnaire and the opportunity to respond electronically (through Survey Monkey). The Survey would run for 1 month.

SCA would also research key secondary data on the local market context and relative affordability, including current local Parish housing figures. There is likely to be a level

of 'hidden need' in the Parish that may be captured by a Housing Needs Survey. The Housing Needs Survey has a shelf life of 5 years.

Example of a recent report:

<https://www.micklehamparishcouncil.gov.uk/community/mickleham-parish-council-7875/housing-needs-survey/>

The Survey creation, analysis and report writing including meeting and travel expenses would be met by Mole Valley District Council. The Parish Council would need to pay for printing and postage.

Item	Total cost
Printing and stationary costs	
Survey Preparation costs	
Survey creation, analysis & report writing	
Meetings & travel expenses	
TOTAL £	
Cost of outward Postage (0.88)	
Cost of reply to Postage	
TOTAL £	

Poland Trust – Affordable Housing

Martin Smith advised:

- We be proactive in forming a plan for our next affordable housing
- A charitable trust (with trustees who are the right fit) manage the unit development and process of who lives in the housing. Betchworth United Charities are positive to a discussion on being the trust for Betchworth for the next affordable housing unit. If no trust owns the unit, then a local business provider will be assigned e.g. Clarion who own Atkinson House.
- Land is donated and then owned by the trust. The land may come as part of the next village housing development or on a separate parcel of land donated by a land owner. Strong letter of support from the local parish Council and planning permission would be by 'rural exception site'.
- Having a design code is very important to ensure that the site fits well in the local community.

- Poland Trust paid £50k extra to have local design additions such as matching roof tiles, coloured windows and bricks.
- Consideration was made to flooding in the area and the road has a reservoir under it which slowly leaks out water
- houses must be durable, and very insulated - as residents can't afford big heating bills
- design to look like local barns / local farmhouses or like the Coombe mining houses.
- A courtyard helps with socialisation of residents and sense of community.
- (ACRE) Surrey Community Action did a needs assessment for MVDC and identified a number of people who have a housing need.
- At Poland Trust, they had a selection process for choosing residents:
 - Level 1 need on the MVDC housing list
 - only people who had a local connection to Betchworth or Brockham could apply to ensure that the residents fit well into the local community e.g.
 - lived in betchworth/brockham for 5 years
 - lived there for 10 years but then moved away due to cost
 - work in the village
 - carer in the village
 - Not to have a known ASB / criminal background
- MVDC have an affordable housing grant - £60k per house from recent housing development
- They employ a full time warden employee
- all houses/flats are rented out 60% market rate
- Register with Alms – an alms house helps people in need - more than a charity does
- Doesn't recommend shared equity /ownership due to price of local houses. He suggests we charge social rent with focus on keyworkers e.g. teachers at local school

4. Why Create?

Reasons to invest in a neighbourhood plan:

- being able to understand the needs of residents and to provide the required evidence, the Neighbourhood Plan has had a material impact on getting hostile planning applications refused both at committee and at appeal.
- every resident will have opportunities to formally contribute to the plan, via public consultation activities, giving their ideas and shaping what we want our parish to look like in the future.
- if there is any development within the Plan Area, the parish councils receive 25% of all Community infrastructure Levies.
- neighbourhood plans need to be up to date in terms of national and local planning policies.
- enables communities to specify how they wish their village development to mitigate climate change and maximise nature recovery

- Provides much more legal strength, such that planning officers must review planning applications against our NDP.
- Scope to include a village highways development plan and plans to provide required amenities
- The Government have released a National Planning Framework which states that development on Green Belt is allowed if it is close to a train station or part of strategic towns (which Reigate is one of). With the pressure from government to build, an NDP would enable us to shape any development in our village on our terms.

Reasons to invest in a Design Code:

Planning design code is created to establish clear, measurable rules for physical development to ensure that new building projects deliver high-quality, sustainable, and cohesive places and removes subjectivity from the local planning process.

- **Creates Certainty:** Provides clear, binary rules ("yes, it complies" or "no, it does not") so developers know exactly what standards are expected before they submit plans.
- **Speeds Up Planning:** Streamlines the application process and reduces resource-heavy negotiations by removing guesswork, often unlocking fast-track approvals for compliant projects.
- **Protects Local Character:** Ensures that new developments reflect the distinct identity, heritage, and architectural vernacular of the specific surrounding area.
- **Empowers Communities:** Involves local residents from the early stages, ensuring new growth legally aligns with the community's vision for green spaces, biodiversity, and public infrastructure.
- **The Design Code must ensure that the Village Design doesn't overlap or conflict with Surrey's Strategic Plan.** Our village has a lot of important history and ecology which we should want to keep. The Design Code would allow us to specify the look and feel of development of our village so that each area remains true to its history.

5. Estimated Costs

When I Googled NDPs it estimated £20k to create an NDP and £5k to create a design code and timeline would take at least a year. CIL money can't be used to create an NDP.

To note that Westcott village have shown that this can be significantly reduced if a local working group complete the work. Any costs incurred would be for specific item consultancy only.

If a consultant/firm wrote the whole plan, the cost would be significantly higher, as evidenced by Salfords Parish Council approach.

6. Examples

Westcott Village Association - 2nd Neighbourhood Development Plan

Funding

- Government grant availability: No known external funding is available to support the NDP process.
- Consultant hiring: WVA engaged an experienced NDP consultant to gain momentum and overcome limited internal knowledge.
- Referendum timeline: initial discussions in late 2024, Mole Valley DC approval to go ahead early 2025, plan completed early 2026. The specialist was hired to help the group stick to their preferred referendum date May 2026 to coincide with local elections.
- Total budget: Consultant fees combined with communications printing costs exceeded £REDACTED.

The MVDC Approvals Process

- Local authority support: MVDC has provided exceptional assistance throughout the project. A council officer named Duncan provided highly efficient document turnaround times.
 - Regional activity: MVDC is currently managing concurrent NDP discussions with Bookham, Hookwood, and one other council.
 - Final stage: The process concludes with a simple Yes/No village referendum funded entirely by Mole Valley.
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Governance & Working Group Structure

- They formed an independent NDP working group (Westcott Village Forum as they don't have a Parish Council yet) instead of keeping the project inside the WVA. The group includes some WVA trustees alongside community volunteers. This structure spreads the workload and boosts plan credibility. A non-WVA trustee chairs the working group.
- Consultant was James Garside james.garside@jamesgarsideplanning.co.uk He wrote up the planning documentation into the required format, advised on planning and advised on policy writing.

Community Surveys & Engagement

- WVA Survey:

- First NDP survey was paper-based with door-to-door knocking (achieved a ~90% response rate).
- Recent survey was online-only (achieved a lower 30–40% response rate).
- [6.-Survey-Summary.pdf](#)
- Housing Needs Survey: Funded and completed by a local charity.
- Sub-Groups: The working group split into three sub-groups to manage the long process:
 - Policies Group: Focused on updating policies from the original plan.
 - Communications Group: Responsible for running events such as open forums and village fair stalls. Robust, widely proven consultation is vital for approval.
 - Survey Group: developing and implementing the questionnaire

Scope & Regulations

- Broad Scope: The plan can cover housing, transport, traffic congestion, buses, footpaths, and local amenities etc etc
- Legal Alignment: No policies can contradict the Mole Valley District Council (MVDC) Local Plan.
- Impact: Once adopted, the NDP carries significant weight when responding to local planning applications.

Next Steps & Key Contacts

- Information review: Examine the extensive NDP reference materials published on the WVA website.
- Follow-up contacts: Initiate contact with the WVA Chair and James Lee (Surveyor).

Salfords

Their village Clerk explained they are using a consultant **Steve Tilbury** and firm **Feria Urbanism** to complete the work for their design code and then an NDP to follow. It will cost an estimated £REDACTED to complete the design code. An initial consultation meeting with Steve Tilbury is £REDACTED.

Stoke Hammond & Westbury

They have completed their NDP which contains a design code. We can use it to help us and its available online.

Capel

The original NDP was approved in 2016 and ended this year. The revision was necessary to take it through to 2039 and needed to include the Mole Valley Local Plan and NPPF.

The cost of the original plan was extremely high (approx. £20,000) and very time consuming. A team of 3 councillors worked on the plan with advisers from each ward; Beare Green, Coldharbour and Capel. It also needed a Housing Needs Assessment and had assistance from Surrey Community Action.

The revision was easier and far less costly. The team started the revision in January 2026 and have just managed to have the document assessed by Mole Valley.

Others

Historic England and Town Country Planning Association has examples of NDPs we can use as templates.

7. Council Decision

- Does Betchworth Parish Council want to do a NDP or a Design Code?
 - Recommendation from MVDC is to start an NDP as the process is the same for both. We can then choose based on the survey results.
- Do we want to kick off a Housing Survey to understand need?
 - Recommendation from MVDC is that we will need both a Housing Survey and a local survey.
- Do we want to form a working group to start work on the NDP & local survey?
- Do we want to start engaging Surrey Council Highways department to start work on the Neighbourhood Transport Plan?

8. Next Steps

- Betchworth Parish Council decides to proceed.
- Complete a MVDC Neighbourhood Planning Regulations form.
- Form a working group
- Kick off a housing needs survey
- Complete a local survey
- Bring a report to Council for the high level plan of the NDP development.

9. Appendix: Village Survey Objectives

- Gather views from parishioners on ways to improve Betchworth as place to live and visit
- List desirable improvements to parish amenities, roads and the wider environment
- Understand Parishioner views / needs under the following topics:
 - village population characteristics and predicted demand to understand needs of particular groups of people

- which roads to consider for improvement in next 5 years
- if there is a need for housing beyond or different in location or nature to that in the MVDC 5 year plan
- developments including size, type and appearance
- amenities to be recommended for upgrade over the next 5 years
- identify problems with accessing a green space or problems such as pollution which can be noted and recommended for action
- identify where nature requires protection and recommendations for protection measures
- assess the current population of the village and identify recommendations for new events
- identify the village historic buildings / features in need of restoration / repair
- A report to be created capturing the views of the survey and including recommendations for the village over the next 5 years
- Parishioners to view draft report before Council approve it.
- Where the Parish Council decides, projects can be taken forward with support from County Council, where appropriate.