



# Ashtead Independents

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## **Mole Valley Spatial Strategy – time for a rethink?**

17th February 2017 by admin

There's a new Spatial Strategy in development now that forms a foundation for a new Local Plan, which will be guided by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and South East Plans. It's inevitable that more dwellings will be required and 90% of MVDC land is categorized Green Belt or Countryside. The result could be further intensification of construction within Ashtead if the current Spatial Strategy is maintained.

Many Ashtead residents have accepted this as inevitable and a price worth paying to save the Green Belt. But already these planning applications have caused massive objections for reasons that include loss of gardens and green spaces (such as Parsons Mead) and concerns for local services such as schools, doctors, roads, drainage, water etc. The look, feel and not to mention the bio-diversity of Ashtead have been changing bit by bit.

What are there alternatives? The Government- not to mention MVDC – is struggling with this. There are some articles written by the Economist for further reading such as 'Hardly Groundbreaking' and 'The Green Belt Delusion' from Feb 11-17<sup>th</sup> edition for their comments on the White Paper. But what's your view?

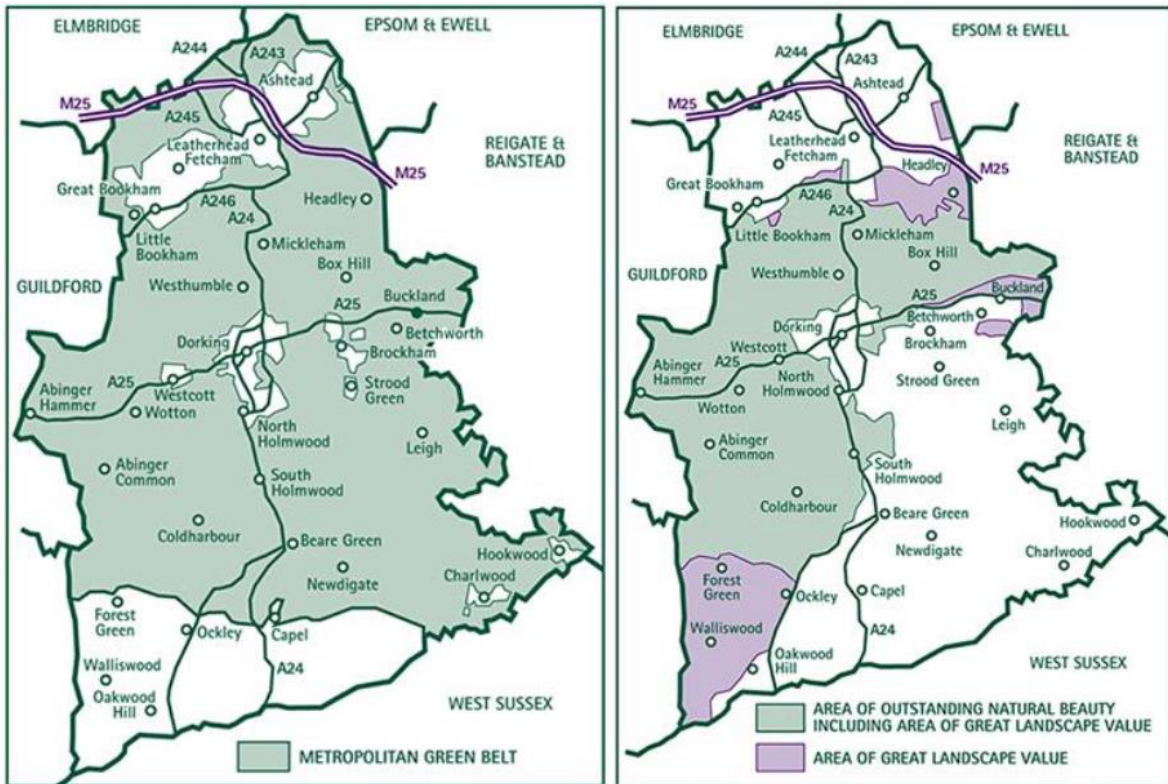
Through our own Ashtead Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), we all see that the Green Belt has enormous benefits for us all, such as preventing urban sprawl and protecting wildlife and growing food. But this argument ignores the bio-diversity and wildlife of Ashtead gardens that are grossly under-valued compared to some of the species-poor arable fields in the countryside. And by constant in-fill, Ashtead experiences its own form of urbanisation. Its time for a re-think about the balance, and for Ashtead residents to explore all options and respond to consultation on the Spatial Strategy coming later this year.

For information, here is a map of the district illustrating there is an area the size of Ashtead, Leatherhead, Bookham and Fetcham combined outside protected areas of Green Belt, areas of natural beauty and landscape value.



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Stations like Holmwood and Ockley close to the main A24 artery (down the line from Ashtead beyond Dorking) are part of the infrastructure laid down by far sighted planners decades ago, to spread the development around the district.

Would a change to the Green Belt boundary within 1 mile of Holmwood Station (Beare Green current population 1,323 versus Ashtead 14,059) provide suitable sustainable development land?



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Ockley railway station is right on the southern border of the Green Belt. Land to the South of Coles Lane lies outside the Green Belt. Would appropriate development within 1 mile of this station be sensible?

Do you think development could be considered for these or other areas – which are more or less equally suitable when compared with Ashtead? Or would you prefer that buildings in Ashtead increasingly become three or four floors, or intensify further on the ground?



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I'm not saying that these areas are suitable or not. But I want Ashtead residents to be cognisant of the fact that if the Spatial Strategy remains the same or similar as last time, then one result could be intensive construction in Ashtead if other alternatives are not found.

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