

# Chaldon Village Council



## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

### 1. Overview

The Local Plan (LP) Sites Consultation paper is an extensive piece of work supported by numerous technical assessments. Tandridge District Council (TDC) is to be congratulated for the work undertaken so far to identify and assess sites across Tandridge. However, Chaldon Village Council (CVC) has a number of serious concerns regarding the overall document and the assessments for sites located in or near Chaldon.

The sites assessed as either suitable for development or requiring further evidence fall well short of the Tandridge 9400 OAN figure. We note that the yield for Category One sites, graded green, is currently only 295, with a further yield of 283 for Category Two sites graded as amber. The highest yield comes from Category Three sites, estimated at 4022. However, these are also graded amber with further investigation required for a variety of reasons. We are concerned that, in order to meet the OAN, there will be intense pressure to re-grade the majority of these amber sites as green, setting aside contrary evidence.

The LP puts forward two possible sites for extended or new settlements with a potential yield of 4000 new homes. If this option is followed, CVC expects that sufficient safeguards will be put in place to reduce the impact on local communities, the ecology and the landscape.

### 2. General Comments

CVC has a number of general concerns regarding the paper as follows:

#### 2a Technical Assessments

As with the previous LP consultation document, the link between the technical assessments and the main sites paper is difficult to follow and requires considerable effort to trawl through these documents to identify supporting evidence.

The individual site assessments do not reflect all the evidence contained in the technical assessments.

The technical assessments appear to have been written in isolation, with often conflicting conclusions. There is a clear need to bring these assessments together for each site to give a more comprehensive and accurate assessment.

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

### 2b Infrastructure Assessments

Cllr. Martin Fisher's introduction states:

"It is also an opportunity for us to deliver the infrastructure our district needs, such as roads, schools and health care facilities. Any new development will need to take this into account."

However, infrastructure does not form part of any of the assessments. The same statement is repeated in the infrastructure evidence for each site assessment; this is unacceptable. Infrastructure issues will have a major bearing on whether or not a site is developable. This is a major flaw in the site assessments and makes the conclusions unreliable.

Chaldon and the wider CR3 area have suffered from a prolonged period of over-development, poor design and a lack of supporting infrastructure. The result is an area that in places appears run down and neglected. The community is often forced to travel elsewhere for essential services, leisure and retail. There has been poor economic growth, with a lack of new businesses and local employment opportunities.

Essential services are stretched and close to breaking point. Waiting times at doctors surgeries are unacceptable. Local schools cannot offer places to local children. Retail centres have suffered from years of underinvestment and there are limited leisure and sport opportunities.

Any significant development within the CR3 area would require substantial infrastructure improvements and it is of great concern that the LP does not properly address this issue.

### 2c Ecological Assessments<sup>i</sup>

TDC's research into the distribution of priority habitats, protected species and wildlife corridors is welcomed. Our district is exceptionally rich in biodiversity and the Local Plan can only be environmentally fit-for-purpose if it considers conservation needs at a landscape-wide scale. However, the methodology raises serious concerns that important data have been excluded.

High quality biodiversity data from Chaldon were potentially available to TDC because they were submitted to the Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre (SBIC) well in advance of this consultation and yet do not appear to have been taken into account.

Tandridge is fortunate to still have many species that are listed as UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority species; these are also Species of Principle Importance under section 41 (England) of the NERC Act (2006). S41 species must be taken into consideration by a public body when performing any of its functions. Citing expediency, TDC did not include this entire list and, instead, selected a small sample of species.

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

This selection is defended on the grounds that '[these species] represent the majority of statutorily-protected species usually encountered in the District' (para 7.17). This statement is verifiably incorrect and has resulted in an unfair bias against some Chaldon sites. Of particular note:

- The inclusion of water voles *Arvicola amphibius*, which is inexplicable given that they are considered extinct throughout Surrey;
- Judging the ecological value of dry chalk hills on the presence or absence of wetland specialists, such as white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* and otters *Lutra lutra*, is fundamentally flawed. This especially applies when the priority species that are native to those hills' habitats are arbitrarily excluded;
- The exclusion of harvest mice *Micromys minutus*, which are recorded from Chaldon, and are an s41 priority species;
- The exclusion of grass snakes *Natrix natrix* and slow worms *Anguis fragilis*. Both have identical s41 status to adders *Vipera berus* and there is no logical basis to include only the latter.

The surveys also included a desk-based assessment of protected sites and s41 habitats. In addition, the sites were subject to an ecological walkover between April and June 2016. While this approach has produced some important data, the results must be considered incomplete due to the arbitrary exclusion of some habitats and species.

At no point does the report consider the value of sites for fungi. This is despite the UK having an international responsibility for the conservation of grassland fungi (CHEGD species), the past failure of Natural England to conserve fungi-rich grasslands – which they acknowledge and have sought to remedy – and the recognised disconnect between species richness of plants and fungi.

A site with low plant diversity may be very important for fungi. It is simply not possible to dismiss a grassland as being of 'low ecological value' based upon the species richness of plants. However, this approach appears to have been used in Tandridge.

A walk-over survey in spring will result in poor fungi data, because many species fruit in the autumn. This includes waxcaps (*Hygrocybe* sp.) which are important indicator species of ancient grassland.

It is also noted that consideration of the invertebrate diversity of sites has been largely overlooked.

### 2d Sustainability Appraisal

The sustainability appraisal grid appears to have little bearing on the overall site assessments and some of the appraisals are incorrect. We will comment on the SA for each Chaldon site. The SA is there to ensure that developments are sustainable

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

but often the assessments do not match the evidence. For example, no site within Chaldon should be given a ++Green for transport.

### 2e Green Belt Assessment

CVC fully supports the assessment that the entire Green Belt (GB) within Chaldon serves at least one of the purposes as designated in the NPPF. We therefore expect that, as a result of this assessment, there will be no development on GB land within Chaldon and the wider CR3 area, other than on sites that fully meet the exceptional circumstance test set out in the NPPF.

### 2f HELAA

CVC is concerned that sites CAT 039 and CAT042 are still included in the list of HELAA sites that are deliverable and developable (Appendix 3). These sites have been graded red and ruled out from further consideration. Maintaining these sites in Appendix 3 has created a deep suspicion within the community that the sites will still be developed outside the Local Plan process.

In Cllr Fisher's introduction, he makes a clear statement that he wants the people of Tandridge to shape and influence the place where they live, work and visit. He is therefore making a very clear statement that the Local Plan will be the mechanism that will control all development within Tandridge. If sites have been removed from further consideration from the Local Plan, they must also be removed from HELAA Appendix 3. To maintain them in the list of Deliverable and Developable Sites creates a suspicion of duplicity and will encourage landowners and developers to submit speculative planning applications.

They should therefore be moved to the Unavailable and Unsuitable Sites (Appendix 4) at the next HELAA review.

### 2g Flood Risk Assessment

The serious flooding in June this year demands far greater flood risk assessment than currently contained in the paper. The Atkins Report and the recent Sec 19 investigation into the flooding in Caterham both provided clear evidence of the failure of the current drainage system. A number of homes were also flooded in Chaldon, with the drains failing to cope with surface water. Roffes Lane, Chaldon suffered serious flooding. Development on sites close to Roffes Lane would significantly raise the risk of flooding without major and costly improvements to the sustainable drainage system.

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

### 3. Local Plan Site Assessments Sites Located in Chaldon

#### 3a CAT 042 Land east of Roffes Lane.

CVC fully supports the grading of this site as red and its removal from further consideration through the Local Plan process and that it would not be subject to the exceptional circumstance test. However, the assessment could be stronger and we offer the following information regarding the site:

#### Ecology

This tract of land is one of the most important sites for biodiversity in Chaldon, home to numerous UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) priority species and other species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

The report states that the grassland in this site is not of exceptional ecological value. This is strongly disputed. The field is described as improved grassland, which is a simplification of the history of the site. It was originally part of Caterham Common. Parts were used by Caterham Golf Course in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but have had many decades of relatively little landscaping disturbance. Ancient grassland indicators such as meadow anthills are present in the north-west corner.

The lack of recent disturbance is borne out by the presence of at least four species of waxcap (*Hygrocybe* sp.). Waxcaps can take decades to recolonise a disturbed site.

The report carries a clear bias towards flora. There is no mention of fungi, and yet it is an established fact that plant diversity is not an indicator of fungus diversity. This is a flawed approach that has resulted in the loss of many important British fungi sites, and it is disappointing that TDC have utilised it.

High levels of grazing, while not always advantageous to flora, result in a low sward ideal for grassland fungi. The presence of horses also supports various species of dung fungi, including snowy inkcaps *Coprinus niveus*.

Surrey Moth Group surveyed the site in summer 2016 and described it as having a good assemblage of species. It is noted that TDC's ecological survey does not consider invertebrate diversity at all.

Nearly 50 species of birds have been recorded, including 16 species which are either UK BAP priorities or have been red or amber-listed by the RSPB.

Bat activity over the site is very high. Common pipistrelles are abundant and there are records of brown long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus* and serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* in the vicinity of Roffes Lane.

Badgers are present on the site.

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

There have been several reported sightings of grass snakes and one unconfirmed report of an adder.

The presence of carnivorous species, which also include weasel *Mustela nivalis*, red fox *Vulpes vulpes*, tawny owl *Strix aluco* and four species of raptor, strongly suggest that the site has sufficient populations of prey species to support a complex ecological community.

It is therefore not accepted that the grassland areas of CAT042 are ecologically suitable for development.

### Flood Risk

The Flood Risk evidence is weak. The tract of land plays an important role in absorbing surface water that would otherwise run into Roffes Lane. This road quickly turns into a stream during any heavy rain. During the June storm, it became a raging torrent that resulted in a number of homes being flooded. Any form of development on this site would seriously add to the already high risk of flooding.

### Cultural Heritage

The cultural heritage of this site has also been underplayed. This piece of land was part of the Manor of Caterham and remained in Caterham Parish until 2000 when the boundary between Chaldon and Caterham was moved to the east of Roffes Lane. Until 1540 the land was probably owned by Waltham Abbey but after the dissolution of the monasteries the abbot's manor passed through several ownerships.

The Rowed family owned many of the local estates including Caterham Court and the land is shown clearly on Caterham's earliest map, the Rowed Map of 1736. During the 18th century the estates passed to Thomas Clark as Lord of the Manor of Caterham. The shape of the fields, known as Heathfields, can still be seen on present day maps. The fields were probably used for arable crops such as wheat, oats and barley.

By 1837 the lordship of the manor had passed to Charles Day. The 1837 Tithe Map for Caterham shows Lot 239 as New Field and Lot 240 as Heathfield. Both were owned by Charles Day and tenanted by William Stanford, who grew arable crops.

In 1882 the area escaped a wild scheme to extend the railway from Coulsdon through to an isolated spot on Willey Heath (near the reservoir on Stanstead Road).

By 1901 the fields were on the market as part of the final 72 acres of the Caterham Court Park Estate and again in 1904 as part of the sale of the main house and gardens. They were described as having important frontage to Stanstead Road, Willey Road and Holliday Bottom (Roffes Lane). In both years the land was promoted as being suitable for development.

A local man, Hugh Mitchell, bought most of the land in 1926 to construct a golf course. This had its heyday in the 1930s but suffered decline during WW2. Between 1946 and

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

1950 various schemes were proposed for housing but all were firmly refused by Caterham & Warlingham Urban District Council. In 1951 the Golf Course was put up for auction with the Council reserving 6.45 acres as a compulsory acquisition for allotments. Caterham School bought 8.25 acres to extend their playing fields.

The remainder went into private ownership as it is today. Since WW2 the fields have always been used as a thoroughfare and for quiet recreation. They remain an historic reminder of the Caterham Court Estate, providing glimpses of the isolation of Willey Heath and Caterham Common and an important buffer between the built-up areas of Caterham and Chaldon.

### Open Space

Although privately owned the site has been used for many years by the public. The field is known locally as the 'sledging field'; this activity is popular in winter. It is also extremely popular with local dog-walkers, who have been using it for at least 60 years. Some families bring small children to play in the field's natural environment. Local wildlife-watchers also visit to observe and photograph the field's birds, mammals and rare fungi. The field is therefore of special importance to the local community and this should be reflected in the site assessment.

### Sustainability Appraisal

The SA is inaccurate as follows:

#### Transport:

The Green ++ grading is baffling. Chaldon has very limited public transport. The nearest railway station to this site is 2 miles away with very limited commuter parking. Bus services are limited to one per hour during the weekday and a highly-restricted service at weekends. The access road to this site is Roffes Lane, a narrow country lane with only a short stretch of pavement at the northern section. The southern section is very narrow, single track; the northern section is restricted by parked vehicles, making the passage of larger vehicles extremely difficult, as witnessed by the current problems caused by a minor development.

#### Flood Risk

As detailed above. This should be graded at – red.

#### Biodiversity

As detailed above. This should be graded at - - red

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

### **3b CAT 039 Surrey National Golf Course (SNGC)**

CVC fully supports the grading of this site as red, not subject to the exceptional circumstance test, and its removal from further consideration through the local plan process.

#### St Lawrence's Hospital Former Burial Ground

We are concerned that TDC has continued to fail to recognise that part of this site is the historically important St Lawrence's Hospital Former Burial Ground, which has been owned and managed by CVC since 3 October 2011. The title (SY668541) includes the access footpath from Green Lane. During the Regulation 18 consultation, Chaldon Village Council and local residents informed TDC that their map of SNGC was inaccurate. Specifically, the New St Lawrence's Burial Ground and the access path are **not** part of CAT039.

It is unacceptable that TDC has not corrected this error in their site maps. It is also unfortunate that the ecologist commissioned to survey CAT039 was misadvised by TDC's maps and consequently surveyed the burial ground along with the SNGC site, without any consultation with or permission from Chaldon Village Council.

The field surrounding and occupied by the burial ground was in the ownership of the Metropolitan Asylum Board by 1893 and farmed to serve the needs of the asylum and later the hospital.

Burials started on the 1.3 acre site in 1916 and continued until 1964; some 3600 persons are buried there. 171.84 acres of the surrounding land, specifically excluding the Burial Ground and the track from Green Lane, and with a covenant to protect a 20ft boundary strip, was offered for sale in 1973. The farmland became the golf course. The freehold title (title absolute) of the Burial Ground and track was transferred to Chaldon Village Council in 2011.

The site is managed in line with environmental, historical, ecological and spiritual considerations with the involvement of local residents and this oasis would be threatened by any development at SNGC.

#### SNGC site

The assessment of the Golf Club site could be stronger and we offer the following information regarding the site:

#### Ecology

The ecologist was requested by SNGC to limit surveys to the public footpaths. However, other data from within the golf course itself do exist and were provided to SBIC some months ago. TDC does not appear to have taken these data into account.

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

The list of protected / priority species noted within 1km of CAT039 is incomplete and gives a misleading impression of the biodiversity value of the site. Of particular concern:

- Hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* are present in Happy Valley SSSI, including recorded within a few hundred metres of SNGC;
- In September 2016, hazel dormice were confirmed to be present within CAT039 (location available to TDC on request);
- UK BAP priority bird species recorded on CAT039 include yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*, linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*;
- Migratory birds such as redwings *Turdus iliacus* and house martins *Delichon urbicum* utilise the site seasonally;
- A woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* – a species Red-listed by the RSPB - was sighted in autumn 2016;
- Grass snakes and slow worms have been recorded and there are unconfirmed reports of adders;
- Tawny owls *Strix aluco* are abundant and diurnal birds of prey are commonly sighted;
- Common pipistrelle bats *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* have been recorded widely on the site and it should be noted that serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* and noctule *Nyctalus noctula* are subject to annual monitoring in Happy Valley SSSI;
- Roman snails *Helix pomatia*, while not a UK BAP species, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981);
- Badgers *Meles meles* are present and evidence of this was provided to TDC during the Regulation 18 consultation;
- Common toads *Bufo bufo*, a UK BAP priority species, breed on the site;
- Four species of waxcap *Hygrocybe* sp. were recorded on the western side of CAT039 during autumn 2016, a strong indicator that some of the site escaped serious disturbance during the construction of the golf course.

Despite these data limitations, the report still found enough evidence to advise that 43.16 ha are either ecologically sensitive or ecologically unsuitable for development. This equates to nearly 59% of the site. It is difficult to balance this with TDC's categorisation of CAT039 as 'majority ecologically suitable' for development.

The report further states that the loss of large areas of open grassland would be a negative impact, and that these areas could relatively easily be restored to semi-improved calcareous or neutral status grasslands – habitats of enormous biodiversity value. That is, large areas of SNGC have the potential to become s41 priority habitats, should there be a future change in management regime.

The NPPF states that planning policies should promote the preservation, *restoration and re-creation* of priority habitats (para. 117; *italics added*). Housing development

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

would permanently destroy this potential future opportunity for real enhancement of Tandridge's biodiversity.

It is therefore disputed that any of CAT039 should be classed as 'ecologically suitable'.

### Sustainability Appraisal

The SA is inaccurate as follows:

#### Transport:

The Green ++ grading is baffling. Chaldon has very limited public transport. The nearest railway station to this site is 2 miles away with very limited commuter parking. Bus services are limited to one per hour during the weekday and a highly restricted service at weekends. The grading for this site should be - red

#### Flood Risk

As detailed above. This should be graded at – red.

#### Biodiversity

As detailed above. This should be graded at - - red

### **3c CAT 019 Caterham Reservoir Stanstead Road**

CVC is concerned that this site, which is located within Green Belt that has been assessed as effectively serving the purposes for that designation, is still being considered for development. The exceptional circumstance test would only permit limited development on this site. CVC would wish to be actively involved in the further assessment of this site.

### **3d CAT 063 Land at Chaldon Common Road**

CVC is concerned at the grading of this site as amber. CVC argues there is clear landscape and ecology evidence (see below) to rule this out from further consideration. The assessment could be stronger and we offer the following information regarding the site:

#### Ecology

The land is of very high environmental value. It is situated within a 'green corridor' that stretches from Coulsdon in the north through to Outwood and into the Weald. This corridor provides connectivity between numerous Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

and two Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Designating this site as a Local Green Space would help prevent fragmentation of the corridor and the enormous consequent impact on biodiversity across a wide stretch of Tandridge.

Several species of conservation concern are present. UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species include common toads *Bufo bufo*, bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, and hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus*. The latter has become very rare in Chaldon and so is of particular interest. Other mammals include roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*, red fox *Vulpes vulpes*, stoat *Mustela erminea*, and bats (not identified to species). Birds are abundant, including tawny owls *Strix aluco* and several species of raptor. Swifts *Apus apus* (Amber-listed by the RSPB) and two species of woodpecker are often seen. Woodcock (Red-listed by the RSPB) have been recorded close to the LGS' proposed boundaries. Additionally, Defra's Magic Map service indicates that the fields lie within the range of internationally-declining lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*.

There is no public access to the fields and consequently it is difficult to ascertain their fungus, invertebrate and flora diversity. However, given that the sward is kept low by sheep grazing and also taking into account the age of the fields, it is very likely that they host waxcaps (*Hygrocybe sp.*) and other fungi of conservation importance.

### Landscape Evidence

We strongly dispute that development on this land would not have an adverse impact on the setting of the landscape. The site is within 100 metres of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and forms part of the Surrey Hills Area of Great Landscape Value, the AONB's buffer zone. Its scenic value is unique because it offers a spectacular northward vista that can be enjoyed from Willey Farm Lane. This view extends to the City of London; for example, the London Eye is discernable. The Chiltern Hills are also visible. While the CR3 area offers other viewpoints, they are usually south-facing (for example, Quarry Hangers and the Caterham Viewpoint both look over the Weald). Nowhere else locally offers such a dramatic visual contrast between the natural beauty of the Surrey Hills and the human landscape of the City of London's famous buildings.

### Flood Risk

The site is close to Roffes Lane which is prone to serious flooding from surface water during a heavy rainfall. Surface water from the site would run towards Willey Farm Lane and then onto Roffes Lane. Any substantial development on this site would exasperate this flooding. We would therefore argue that there is a high risk of surface water flooding.

### Sustainability Appraisal

The SA is inaccurate as follows:

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

### Transport:

The Green ++ grading is baffling. Chaldon has very limited public transport. The nearest railway station to this site is 2 miles away with very limited commuter parking. Bus services are limited to one per hour during the weekday and a highly-restricted service at weekends. Chaldon Common Road is a narrow road without pavements. The surface condition is very poor and there is evidence of subsidence along its entire length. In its current state this road would not be able to accommodate this increase in traffic of an additional 120 homes.

### Flood Risk

As detailed above. This should be graded at – red.

## Local Plan Site Assessments Sites Located outside Chaldon

### **3e CAT077 Heath Road, Caterham**

This site is located close to the border of Chaldon and Caterham on the Hill. Chaldon would be adversely impacted by development on this site and we are concerned that the assessment is weak in a number of areas.

### Ecology

We cannot agree that the site should not be subject to ecological assessment. The site, although cultivated, clearly has an ecological value and there is evidence of biodiversity, including protected species such as slow worm and common lizards *Zootoca vivipara*. The site links other important green spaces including a site of great landscape value. CVC strongly argues that a full ecological assessment is needed at this site.

### Flood Risk

The site is to the east of Roffes Lane and is at a considerably higher elevation. Roffes Lane is subjected to regular flooding during heavy rainfall. The recent flash flooding caused a number of homes in Roffes Lane to be inundated when the drainage system was unable to cope with the high volume of surface water. Should this site be developed, then there is a high risk that substantial surface water would flow towards Roffes Lane exacerbating the problem. Homes located in Sunny Rise would be at a severe risk of flooding. CVC therefore challenges the flood risk evidence contained in the assessment. We do not agree that there is a very low risk of surface water flooding and suggest that further evidence is needed.

# Chaldon Village Council

## Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation

### Contamination

CVC is aware that this site was previously used as a landfill and may be contaminated. There is no evidence of this in the site assessment.

### Open Space

The site is currently used as allotments. CVC is aware that these allotments are very well utilised by local people, with a current waiting list. The proximity to nearby homes allows people to walk to the allotment and that makes the site highly accessible to all, including the young, elderly and infirm.

At our visit to the site, it was clear that the allotments generate a great community spirit and support social cohesion. Allotment holders of all ages and background intermix at the site. The site is therefore of special value to the local community and its future as allotments should be secured.

### Sustainability Appraisal

The SA is inaccurate as follows:

#### Transport:

The Green ++ grading is too high. This site has very limited public transport. The nearest railway station to this site is 1 1/2 miles away with very minimal commuter parking. Bus services are limited to one per hour during the week and a highly-restricted service at weekends.

#### Flood Risk

As detailed above. This should be graded at – red.

## **4 Conclusions**

CVC welcomes and supports the conclusions of the Green Belt Assessment and the confirmation that in and around Chaldon it fully serves the purposes set out in the NPPF.

Of particular concern is the total lack of any infrastructure assessments. The absence of adequate infrastructure should be one of the key considerations in determining the suitability of a site for development. It is no longer acceptable for TDC to argue that infrastructure will follow development. The severe budgetary constraints on Surrey County Council will mean that for the foreseeable future they will not be in a position to deliver the necessary infrastructure improvements. It is therefore essential that TDC

# **Chaldon Village Council**

## **Submission to the Tandridge District Council Local Plan Sites Consultation**

fully consider infrastructure and the provision of essential services at the time of planning decisions.

Chaldon is a rural settlement with very little infrastructure. Residents largely accept this as a consequence of living in the heart of a beautiful landscape. The removal of the two major sites (CAT 039 and CAT 042) from further consideration will be a great relief to our community. However, the inclusion of a further site at Chaldon Common Road (CAT 063), with a potential yield of 120 units, has raised further concerns. We ask that the further assessments of this site are completed expeditiously and that CVC is fully engaged in that process.

**Chaldon Village Council**  
**16/12/16**

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<sup>i</sup> The Ecology sections are written for the purposes of this response to the Tandridge Local Plan Sites Consultation only and should not be copied or quoted out of context but may be referenced.

END