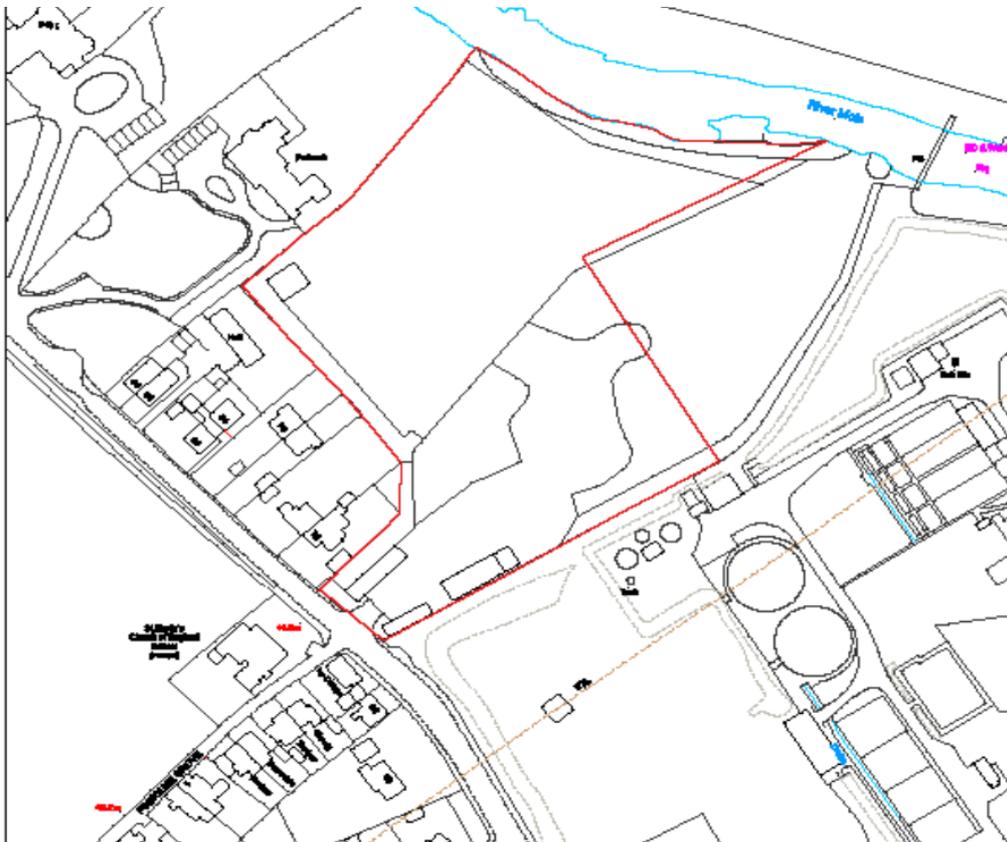


PROPOSED SALE OF THE DEPOT AND ADJOINING FIELD, PIXHAM



Mole Valley District Council want to auction these areas. They plan to market them as separate lots to sell at the same time, in June, to the highest bidder(s) and will set a reserve of £500,000. If The Depot doesn't reach the reserve they won't auction the field.

The Depot is directly opposite Old Pixham School: the field is to the north and the area west of the red line belongs to Thames Water, separated from the river and the Treatment Works by a wide bank.



The proposed sale will be considered at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting on Tuesday March 7th; if passed, the proposal will go to the MVDC Cabinet meeting on March 21st for approval. That allows them 3 months for marketing which will be widespread; they have some London auction houses in mind.

MVDC own both sites: The Depot (1.6 acres) is brownfield, licensed for light industrial use, not housing. The adjoining field (2 acres) is unused at present despite the wish of a local resident to graze sheep on it. There are 2 tenants at The Depot, Land Skills and ATS. We were assured that there is little chance of housing on either site as the process to change designation is complicated. There are obvious restrictions because of their closeness to the AONB, view from Box Hill etc.

The tenants have contracts which provide for 6 months' notice from either side.

Whilst the PRA Committee recognises the Council's right to sell their property for the best possible price, we are concerned for several reasons:

- i) The speed of the process: the Committee was informed on 23rd February.
- ii) The lack of consultation with directly affected local residents, the Pixham community and some stakeholders.
- iii) The fact that, at auction, the two areas will go to the highest bidder irrespective of their development plans or whether they are speculators and will sell them on. Community interests will be ignored.
- iv) If The Depot fails to reach the reserve price, the field will also be withdrawn.
- v) The lack of safeguards for the tenants; their contract allows a 6 month notice period.
- vi) The lack of attention to biodiversity of the field, despite previous statements by MVDC.
- vii) The briefing document given to members of the Scrutiny Committee which we feel should contain more information.
- viii) The lack of time for any community plans to develop.
- ix) Many other aspects of the sale based on our reactions to the briefing document (see the ACTION section for more info here).

The briefing document is [HERE](#):

[item-4-sale-pixham-lane-depot0.pdf \(molevalley.gov.uk\)](https://molevalley.gov.uk/item-4-sale-pixham-lane-depot0.pdf)

Councillors have received a confidential document on the sale and the public will be excluded for most (if not all) of the Scrutiny Committee's discussion.

What have we done so far?

i) The PRA committee wrote to all Mole Valley councillors asking them to defer discussion to give more time for local consultation.

ii) We met Council Officers twice and expressed our views that this was far too hasty, there had been no consultation with residents, and the proposal to sell to the highest bidder lacked any safeguards other than those established by the planning system.

iii) We wrote again to the Council Officers to comment on the briefing given to the Scrutiny Committee and also to each member of the Committee, asking them to defer discussion. Copies of the letters available from chairpra@yahoo.com

iv) PRA Chair Pat Smith plus a small group of residents directly affected met Cllrs Hazel Watson and Elsie Rosam re the Scrutiny Committee meeting on Friday March 3rd. We expressed our concerns to them. Hazel has arranged to speak at the Scrutiny meeting.

ACTION YOU CAN TAKE:

i) **This weekend / Monday:** Please email all members of the Scrutiny Committee: the more who do this, the more they will listen.

Ask them to defer discussion until the next Scrutiny meeting. This will delay the sale until, possibly September / October which is still within the financial year.

Points we are raising are:

i) MVDC has not allowed enough time for consultation with residents and for them to come up with their own plans for the site.

ii) According to Scrutiny Committee's briefing papers, Thames Water as major stakeholders have not yet been consulted.

iii) Deferring discussion to the next meeting would mean a sale date around September / October - still well within the financial year.

iv) The briefing document to the Scrutiny Committee fails to include many relevant details, eg the biodiversity of the field.

We would like MVDC to reveal the contents of their report on the field and to clarify whether they plan to organise a wildlife survey before sale. Bats are frequent visitors to the area and it is a haven for wildlife.

- v) The only **access** that Thames Water have to the land they own at the rear of The Depot is through the Depot. This needs to be resolved before the land is sold.
- a) The briefing does not mention the very limited access to the field.
- vi) From various omissions in the briefing report, we are deeply concerned that any **marketing of the site** will fail to consider such aspects as biodiversity / imposing a TPO / the fact that much of it is Category 2 flood plain.
- vii) a) The **proposed method of sale**, ie auction to the highest bidder, allows no flexibility and to us is inappropriate. This is a location central to Pixham, opposite Old Pixham School and we feel sale should be by tender, with appropriate measures taken to ensure that community values are considered.
- b) The proposal to remove the field from auction if The Depot does not meet its reserve price means that any moves by local residents to purchase the field will be made pointless.

Scrutiny Committee members are below: if you'd like to phone them, their numbers are on the MVDC website.

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AND FINALLY:

We'd love to hear your thoughts on how the areas could be used for benefit of the local community.

A small orchard of indigenous fruit-trees / grazing / playgroup / forest school / nature walks / artisan workshops / Men's Shed / skills tuition / link with Patchworking etc. Discussion has only just started.

Have a look at the WhatsApp group: **Keep the Depot** and of course you're free to contact any member of the PRA Committee or respond via this website.

We'll keep you posted.

Anyone got a spare £500,000+?