



The Dacorum Core Strategy Examination (October 2012)

On behalf of Mr A Baker (Representor ID: 498273)

Issue 13: Kings Langley

Allocation of Land for Residential Development
Land Fronting Love Lane, Kings Langley

Report of David Lane BSc (Hons), Dip TP, Dip TP, MRTPI, FRSA

DLA Ref: 11/066

September 2012

The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this proposal in this report is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of the Royal Town Planning Institute and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Report is submitted in response to the Dacorum Core Strategy Examination in October 2012 and supplements my earlier report of December 2011. In particular it addresses questions 13.1 and 13.3 in relation to development at Kings Langley, which is to be considered at the Hearing session on the 17th October 2012. The report promotes the adjustment of the Green Belt boundary to the west of Kings Langley, to allow the inclusion of Land at Love Lane within the defined settlement, with consideration to be given to its residential allocation. In these circumstances the following representations are made:

1.2 **Question 13.1 Is the vision for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact? Should there be a specific policy for the village as a whole in order to ensure that the Council's vision will be delivered?**

The definition of Kings Langley as a large village, being a sustainable and accessible location for additional residential development is supported. The provision of 110 new homes within Kings Langley is also supported. The allocation of the report site for residential development would create a more defensible Green Belt boundary reducing the pressure on the Green Belt.

1.3 **Question 13.3 Have the consequences of infill development on local infrastructure (including highways, car parking, schools and health services) been satisfactorily addressed?**

The report site represents a suitable infill site being well related to the main settlement of Kings Langley and being bounded by existing development on three sides. The report site already has main services running along Love Lane, such that the provision of new services would not be required for development on this site.

2.0 SITE & CONTEXT APPRAISAL

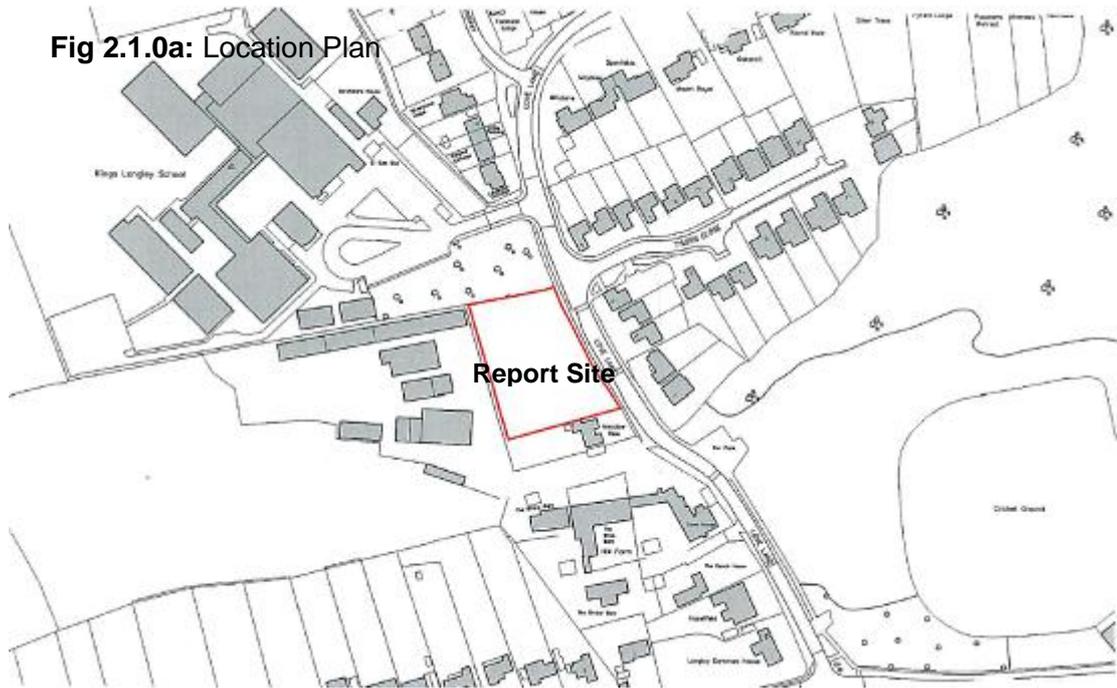
2.1.0 Location

A detailed site appraisal was set out in my earlier report of December 2011. The pertinent characteristics are noted below.

- 2.1.1 The Report Site is located on the western edge of the large village of Kings Langley, on the western side of Love Lane, opposite the junction with Tylers Close. The site is located some 800m to the west of the A4251 High Street and the commercial centre of the village. Location plan attached as Appendix 1



Fig 2.1.0a: Location Plan



2.2.0 Report Site



Fig 2.2.0: Aerial View of the Report Site from the north

2.2.1 This comprises an essentially rectangular site of some 0.28 ha, having a frontage of approximately 60m onto the western side of Love Lane and a depth of around 45m. The site comprises open grassland and is flat, having been used as a paddock. Services are available in Love Lane.

2.2.2 The Love Lane frontage is demarcated by a post and rail fence and an existing centrally located gated access. The site is well screened and contained on the other 3 sides, with a mature tree line to the northern side boundary, abutting the grounds of Kings Langley Secondary School; a 2m

high hedge extending along the rear western boundary, separating the Site from the new adjacent development of 3 detached houses; with a further hedge to the common flank boundary with the bungalow, Meadow View, which fronts onto Love Lane to the south.

Fig 2.2.1: Report Site viewed from Love Lane to the south



Fig 2.2.1a: Report Site viewed from Love Lane to the north



2.3.0 Local Services

Kings Langley comprises a large village, with a population of over 5,000 (2001 Census) with an excellent range of shops and services centred on the High Street. It also includes a substantial, modern industrial estate.

2.5.0 Accessibility

The application site is highly accessible by a variety of modes of transport as set out below.

2.5.1 Road Network

Kings Langley is well connected to the road network, with Junction 20 of the M25 located to the south of the village and with Junctions 21 and 21A to the north-east thereof affording access to the M1. The village is also well related to the neighbouring towns of Hemel Hempstead and Watford.

2.5.2 Public Transport

Kings Langley is well served by local bus and rail services as set out in turn below.

2.5.3 Bus Services

The nearest bus stops to the Report Site are located just 60m to the north, adjacent to the Secondary School, albeit these only provide access to school day services from the surrounding villages and towns first thing in the morning, with a return service at the end of the school day.

2.5.4 Within 800m of the site are the bus stops to both sides of High Street, adjacent to the junction with Vicarage Lane and which provides access to a number of daily services.

2.5.5 Rail Services

Located 2.3km to the south-east of the report Site, Kings Langley Railway Station is located on the West Coast Main Line, thus providing access to Watford Junction and London Euston to the south and Hemel Hempstead, Milton Keynes, Birmingham International Airport and Birmingham New Street Stations to the north.

3.0 EXISTING LOCAL PLAN DESIGNATION

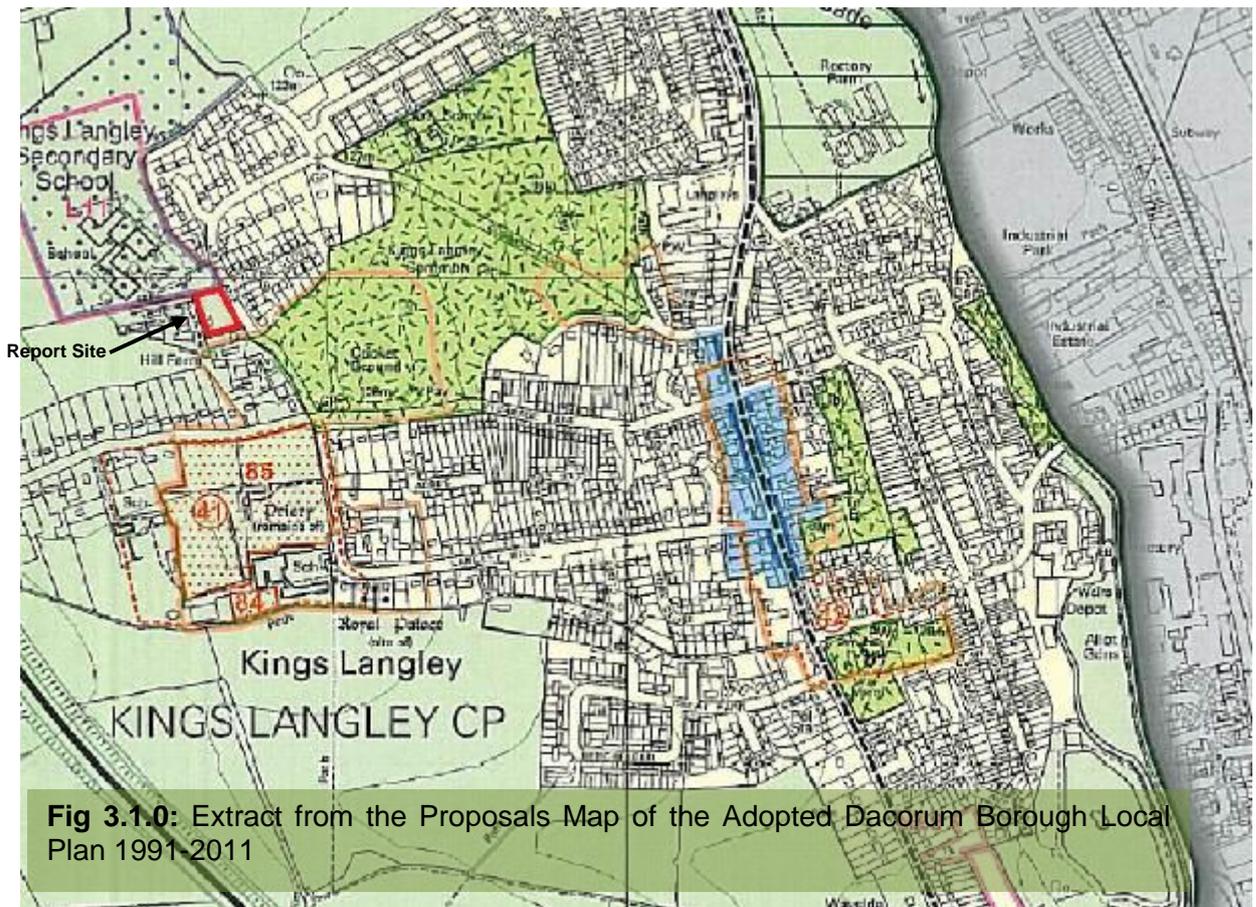


Fig 3.1.0: Extract from the Proposals Map of the Adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011

NOTATION

- Borough Boundary
- Limit of Proposals Map Sheet
- POLICY AREAS**
- Town
- Large Village
- The Green Belt
- Major Developed Site in the Green Belt
- Small Village in the Green Belt
- The Rural Area
- Small Village in the Rural Area
- Residential Area within a Town or Large Village
- General Employment Area
- Town Centre / Local Centre
- Open Land
- Employment Area in the Green Belt
- Conversion of Employment Land to Housing and other uses

SHOPPING AREA IN A TOWN CENTRE

- Main Shopping Frontage
- Mixed Frontage
- Shopping Area in a Local Centre
- Main Out of Centre Retail Location
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Site of Special Scientific Interest and/or Nature Reserve A1
- Conservation Area B1
- Park or Garden of Special Historic Interest
- Scheduled Ancient Monument 11
- Area of Archaeological Significance 70
- Area covered by an Article 4 Direction 1
- Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site

3.1.0 **Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011(Adopted April 2004)**

The Proposals Map of the Adopted Local Plan (See Fig 3.1.0 above), shows the Report Site within the Green Belt, abutting the defined western settlement boundary of Kings Langley, and which is identified as a 'Large Village.'

3.1.1. To the north of the Report Site, the houses to the eastern side of Love Lane/ Barnsway are included within the settlement boundary and identified as a residential area. The Secondary School site immediately to the north of the Site is excluded from the Green Belt, being identified as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt.

3.1.2 Thereafter to the south, the settlement boundary follows the line of the western side of the highway to Love Lane, such that as well as the Report Site, the adjacent bungalow (Meadow View); the southern section of the former Hill Farm farmstead including the farmhouse; and the 2 detached dwellings beyond (Hazelfield and Langley Common House) are all outside the urban area.

3.1.3 The southern section of the former Hill Farm and the Cricket ground directly opposite are included with a Conservation Area. The latter is also identified as 'Open Land'.

3.1.4 The village heart, to the east of the Report Site and centred on High Street, is identified as a Local Centre.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1.0 Report Site

Representations were made to the 1991 Dacorum Borough Local Plan Deposit Draft, promoting the inclusion of the Report Site within the defined urban area of Kings Langley, the Green Belt boundary at that time being identical to that now identified in the adopted Local Plan as set out in Section 3 above.

4.1.1 An extract from the Inspectors Report following the Local Plan Inquiry relating to the proposed changes is included as Appendix 3 and which recommended that no changes be made. The salient sections are reproduced below:

“3.1.53 In my view, this forms a logical and clearly defined limit to the built-up area of Kings Langley and provides a firm and defensible long-term Green Belt boundary which has endured for some considerable time. In its present undeveloped condition, the site makes a significant contribution to the mainly open and semi-rural character of this side of Love Lane, particularly when seen along with the spacious entrance and car park of the adjoining school. In a local context, the land also helps to prevent the outward expansion of Kings Langley beyond its present well-defined limits, safeguarding the surrounding countryside from further encroachment and performing an important Green Belt function.

3.1.54 I acknowledge, as does the Council, that the site is virtually surrounded by some form of development. However, the cul-de-sac opposite (Tylers Close) is clearly within the confines of the existing village and most of the buildings to the south and west are of agricultural origin and use, normally accepted within the Green Belt. The complex of school buildings are set in extensive grounds, have a landscaped frontage to Love Lane and do not in my view detract from the semi-rural appearance of this locality.....

3.1.57 In this instance, the release of this small plot of land would clearly breach a long established and well defined edge to the urban area of Kings Langley and set an undesirable precedent for the release

of other land in this locality, further encroaching into the surrounding countryside. There have been no physical changes in the land around the site since the previous planning appeal in 1978 or since the Green Belt boundary was confirmed in the adopted District Plan. Consequently, I can find no exceptional reasons which would justify an amendment at this time."

4.2.0 Hill Farm Barn

The recent planning history of this site, which abuts the Report Site to the west and extends southwards beyond the bungalow at 'Meadow View', having a frontage onto Love Lane, is a strong material consideration in the context of the Core Strategy Examination. I will consider each part of this former farmstead below.

4.2.1 Land South of Meadow View

There are a number of permissions/consents relating to this part of the site, granted since 2006. Planning permission, listed building consent and Conservation Area Consent have been granted to demolish existing barns and convert existing structures (i.e. the brick, milling and timber barns) to form 3 new dwellings and ancillary accommodation and to extend and refurbish both of the existing dwellings (The Coach House and Farmhouse itself). This part of the site thus now contains 4 dwellings, one of the approved dwellings, being used as ancillary accommodation to the converted brick barn.

4.2.2 Land to the West of the Report Site

Planning permission was granted in 2010 for the demolition of the existing agricultural buildings located to the west of the Report Site and the erection of 3 substantial detached dwellings with associated garaging, stabling and parking. This permission has been partly implemented. The approved site layout drawing and elevational drawings for each of the approved houses are attached as Appendix 4.

5.0 REPRESENTATIONS

5.1.0 Representations are made in relation to questions 13.1 and 13.3 of the Inspector's issues and questions for the Examination. Taking each in turn below.

5.2.0 **Question 13.1 Is the vision for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact? Should there be a specific policy for the village as a whole in order to ensure that the Council's vision will be delivered?**

5.2.1 The provision of new homes within Kings Langley is supported but consideration should also be given to delivering these on suitable sites on the edge of the settlement boundary. It is considered that there is scope to amend the western settlement boundary of Kings Langley, which would result in a more defensible and rational Green Belt boundary. This would reduce pressure on the Green Belt and make use of sustainable and accessible sites that it is no longer necessary to keep permanently open.

5.2.2 As set out in my earlier report of December 2011, Policy CS2 Priority B should allow for the limited outward expansion of settlements such as Kings Langley where this will provide a more defensible Green Belt boundary. I consider that circumstances exist that justifies alterations to the existing settlement boundary of Kings Langley to include the report site within the urban area. These are: -

- 1) The strength of the existing Green Belt Boundary.
- 2) There would be no harm to the purposes of including land in Green Belts.

5.3.0 **Circumstance No 1. The strength of the existing boundary**

I do not consider the existing western boundary to be particularly strong. As mentioned in detail in my earlier report of December 2011, since the previous Inspector's conclusions during the 1991 Local Plan Inquiry, the context of the report site and this part of Kings Langley has changed as set out below.

- 1) To the south of the report site, the southern section of the former Hill Farm farmstead fronting onto Love Lane now comprises 4 dwellings.
- 2) The western section of the farmstead, abutting the rear boundary of the report site, is being redeveloped with three two storey detached houses.

5.3.1 As a consequence of the above development, the previously identified semi-rural character has been replaced by a suburban residential feel, such that the report site appears isolated in the streetscene. Therefore, the variation of the existing settlement boundary would provide a more defensible and permanent border using recognisable and demarcated boundaries as illustrated below. The area proposed to be included in the settlement boundary, which includes the report site, is hatched red.

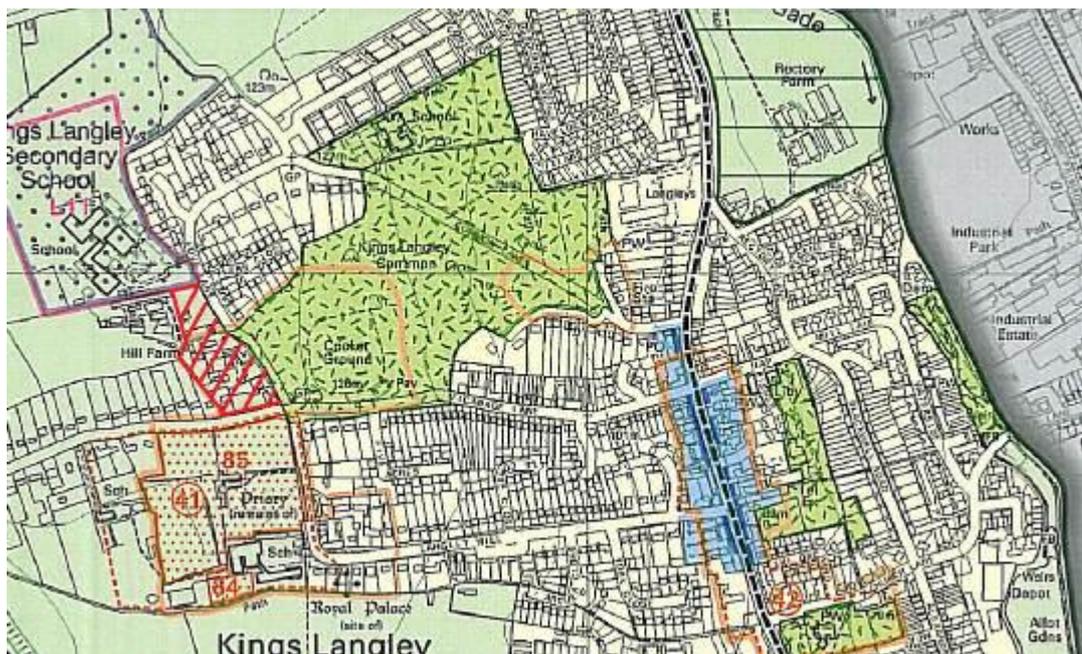


Fig 6.0: Annotated extract from the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011

5.4.0 Circumstance No 2. There would be no harm to the purposes of including land in Green Belts

The proposed boundary adjustment would **not** harm any of the relevant purposes of including land in a Green Belt identified at paragraph 80 of the NPPF. I say this for the following reasons: -

- 1) The built development adjoining the report site and the spread of development to the north would preclude the unrestricted spread of the built up area of Kings Langley.
- 2) The wider band of open countryside to the west would be saved from encroachment.
- 3) The spread of existing development would prevent the coalescence of Kings Langley and Chipperfield to the west.

5.5.0 Conclusion

In the above circumstances, it is considered that a revision to Policy CS2 Priority B to allow for the limited expansion of settlements where this would provide a more defensible boundary is considered to be appropriate. I have demonstrated above that the variation of the existing settlement boundary of Kings Langley would result in a more defensible Green Belt boundary. Furthermore, the report site represents a suitable location for development given that the context of the site has changed in recent years.

5.6.0 Question 13.3 Have the consequences of infill development on local infrastructure (including highways, car parking, schools and health services) been satisfactorily addressed?

5.5.1 Whilst I appreciate that the report site is outside of the defined settlement boundary of Kings Langley, it is considered to constitute an infill site. The report site is adjoined on three sides by existing development and thus does **not** constitute a detached or isolated location. As a result there are already mains services running along Love Lane so that any development on the report site could connect to the existing services. Therefore, the provision of new services would not be required. This is a distinct advantage for this site and further demonstrates the suitability of the report site for development.

5.5.2 Small scale development on infill sites such as this will support the existing services and infrastructure, which Kings Langley has in abundance as set out in Section 2.0 above. This is in compliance with paragraph 55 of the NPPF, which advises that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. If improvement to the existing infrastructure and services is required to accommodate additional development, then this could be secured through financial contributions by way of a condition attached to any planning permission. The alternative to infill development would be an urban extension or new settlement that would clearly have a greater impact on existing infrastructure and services.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This Report is submitted in response to the Dacorum Core Strategy Examination in October 2012. In particular it addresses questions 13.1 and 13.3 in relation to development at Kings Langley, which is to be considered at the Hearing session on the 17th October 2012.

6.2 **Question 13.1 The vision for growth and change in Kings Langley**

The provision of new homes in Kings Langley is supported but consideration should also be given to delivering these on suitable sites on the edge of the settlement boundary. It is considered that Policy CS2 Priority B should allow for the limited outward expansion of settlements such as Kings Langley where this will provide a more defensible Green Belt boundary.

6.3 This report demonstrates that two circumstances exist that justifies alterations to the existing settlement boundary of Kings Langley to include the report site within the urban area. These are: -

- 1) The strength of the existing Green Belt Boundary.
- 2) There would be no harm to the purposes of including land in Green Belts.

6.4 The context of the report site has changed in recent years, such that it is now bounded by residential development on 3 sides and it is not necessary to keep it permanently open.

6.5 **Question 13.3 Consequences of infill development on local infrastructure**

The report site already has existing mains services running along Love Lane. Therefore, any development on the site would support the existing infrastructure.

7.0 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix 1 Location Plan
- 7.2 Appendix 2 Aerial View of Report Site and Surrounding Area.
- 7.3 Appendix 3 Extract from Local Plan Inspectors Report 1991.
- 7.4 Appendix 4 Approved site layout drawings for land to the east of the report site (LPA Ref: 4/01937/09)

Appendix 1: Location Plan



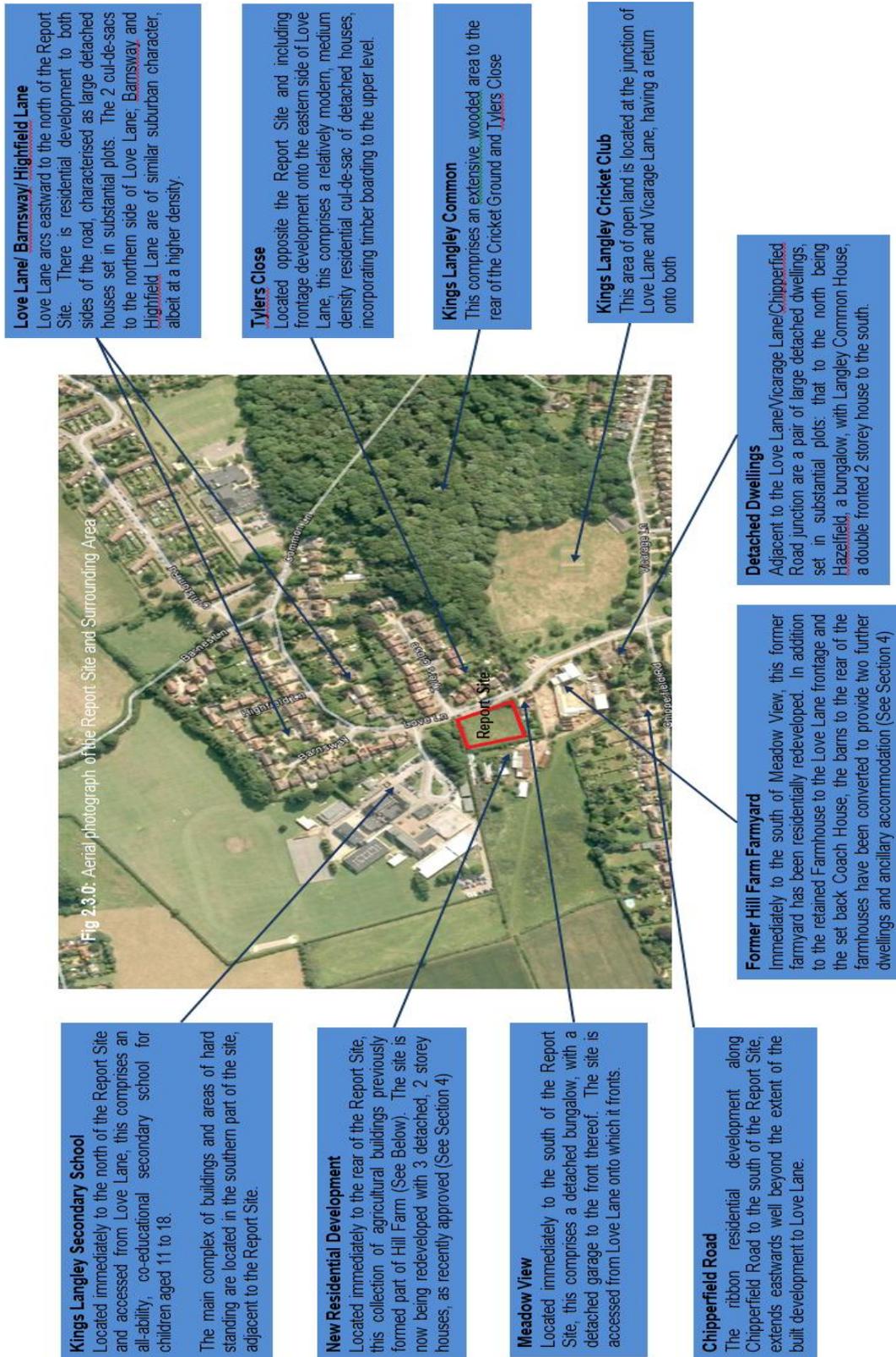
Site Area: 2818.5 m²
LL/11/P01

Wakelin Associates Architects

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Appendix 2: Aerial view of site and surrounding area



Appendix 3: Extract from the Inspectors Report following the 1991 Local Plan Inquiry

KINGS LANGLEY

Local context

3.149 Kings Langley is one of the Borough's "large" villages, excluded from the Green Belt and with limited development opportunities. Under the terms of Structure and Local Plan policies, new development is permitted if it is compatible with the character of the settlement and with the maintenance of Green Belt boundaries. The Green Belt in this area was originally established in 1958, but detailed boundaries around Kings Langley were not finally approved until the 1970s. At the time of the District Plan, it was considered that the existing limits of development should be maintained in order to prevent urban coalescence (particularly with Hemel Hempstead) and to retain a rural zone around the settlement. The Council has reviewed the Green Belt boundaries and proposed only one minor change (a more extensive change involving the ribbon of houses along Watford Road being dropped after the Consultation Draft). The Council argues that the Green Belt around the settlement serves all the five functions normally expected of it.

3.150 The role of the Green Belt in this locality in checking the outward spread of Kings Langley, safeguarding the surrounding countryside from further encroachment, preserving its "village" character and identity and preventing its merging with Hemel Hempstead and other scattered developments along the Gade valley is well established. In my view, these remain important principles when considering future development opportunities and possible amendments to the Green Belt. I also note that locally there is strong support for the protection of the Green Belt and some concern about development pressures in the Gade valley.

LAND AT LOVE LANE, KINGS LANGLEY

Objection: 283 Clients of Birkett Westthorp & Long

3.151 This objector seeks the exclusion of this 0.27ha site from the Green Belt, suggesting a minor amendment to the boundary also excluding Hill Farm and the adjoining properties.

Main considerations and Inspector's conclusions

3.152 This site is a small paddock lying on the western side of Love Lane, bounded by Hill Farm to the south, its poultry sheds and farm buildings to the west, with Kings Langley school to the north. The current Green Belt boundary runs along the western side of Love Lane and around the houses in Barnsway and Highfields.

3.153 In my view, this forms a logical and clearly defined limit to the built-up area of Kings Langley and provides a firm and defensible long-term Green Belt boundary which has endured for some considerable time. In its present undeveloped condition, the site makes a significant contribution to the mainly open and semi-rural character of this side of Love Lane, particularly when seen along with the spacious entrance and car park of the adjoining school. In a local context, the land also helps to prevent the outward expansion of Kings Langley beyond its present well-defined limits, safeguarding the surrounding countryside from further encroachment and performing an important Green Belt function.

3.154 I acknowledge, as does the Council, that the site is virtually surrounded by some form of development. However, the cul-de-sac opposite is clearly within the confines of the existing village and most of the buildings to the south and west are of agricultural origin and use, normally accepted within the Green Belt. The complex of school buildings are set in extensive grounds, have a landscaped frontage to Love Lane and do not in my view detract from the semi-rural appearance of this locality.

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1.155 I realise that since the Green Belt was defined, some infill development has taken place within the ribbon of houses along Chipperfield Road and elsewhere, but most of this dates from the 1960s when planning policies were not quite so strict and the school itself dates back to the late 1950s. Moreover, in terms of housing provision, the strategic requirements of the Structure Plan can be met and there is no pressing need to develop this site. In a Green Belt area close to the main towns, there is inevitably likely to be some measure of unsatisfied housing demand, but this is not in itself a reason to release land which has properly been included in the Green Belt.

1.156 In my view, none of the alternative Green Belt boundaries suggested would be as clearly defined or defensible in the longer term as that now existing. Most would surround buildings or follow property boundaries and would encompass substantial areas of land and buildings, including the ribbon development along Chipperfield Road up to the A41 by-pass. Such radical and wide-ranging changes cannot be justified on the strength of this objection. The more modest amendment suggested would create an insecure long-term boundary and merely create pressure for the development of other areas of land further to the west.

1.157 In this instance, the release of this small plot of land would clearly breach a long-established and well defined edge to the urban area of Kings Langley and set an undesirable precedent for the release of other land in this locality, further encroaching into the surrounding countryside. There have been no physical changes in and around the site since the previous planning appeal in 1978 or since the Green Belt boundary was confirmed in the adopted District Plan. Consequently, I can find no exceptional reasons which would justify an amendment at this time.

Recommendation

1.158 I RECOMMEND that no changes be made in respect of this objection.

LAND AT THE REAR OF STATION FOOTPATH & WATFORD ROAD, INCLUDING TROUT LAKE, KINGS LANGLEY

Objections: 170 J H Property Advisory Group
178-9 Aitchisons for Finlinson Group/Gade Investments Ltd

1.159 These objections seek the removal from the Green Belt of an area of land on the southern fringe of Kings Langley, bounded by Watford Road, Home Park link road and the Grand Union Canal. (170) seeks a hotel allocation on the Trout Lake part of the site, whilst (178) suggests the whole area should be designated as an "Area of Special Restraint", its future use to be considered at a later review of the plan. Associated objections (169/171) & (179) concerning residential land supply and hotel provision are dealt with in later sections of my report.

Main considerations and Inspector's conclusions

1.160 This area consists of an old gravel pit now used for fishing (Trout Lake) and an associated bungalow, Council-owned open space adjoining a partly wooded and undeveloped area, allotments, parking and tipped areas, together with a ribbon of houses and bungalows along Watford Road and Station Footpath. To the north-west and east lies the main built-up area of Kings Langley, being separated by the canal and this wedge of land. To the south is a new road linking the A41 with Station Road, beyond which is open countryside crossed by the M25 motorway.

