

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL SITE ALLOCATIONS LDD

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION

REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF NEW GOSPEL HALL TRUST

Representation ref: 6011 4/30 030/Ee1

NOTES FOR PARTICIPATION

Introductory

1. New Gospel Hall Trust have a responsibility which falls geographically into at least four local authorities, including:
 - Three Rivers DC
 - Dacorum Borough – where I appeared at Core Strategy Examination 2012
 - Watford Borough – where a trustee appeared in person
 - St Albans City – yet to publish their Core Strategy
2. The church assembly includes a significant group of residents of Hunton Bridge, Kings Langley and Abbots Langley as well as residents of north Watford and Hemel Hempstead. The Trust has a long standing need for an additional hall in 3R – north-east sector.
3. Churches are recognised by 3R Council as integral to Infrastructure – see AMR **SD28** page v.
4. The Core Strategy recognises the need for Infrastructure provision
 - **SD02** Strategic Objective S6
 - Paragraph 5.70 – page 47 – “faith facilities”
 - Page 85 – Community, Leisure & Cultural Facilities
5. The Trust’s underlying concern is the absence of any clear policy provision – site specific or otherwise to assist delivery of new faith facilities to meet both

current and foreseeable requirements during the plan period to 2026.

6. The Trust has participated in the Local Plan process and indeed is listed twice in the Statement of Consultation **SA CD7** at page 49. A number of responses from New Gospel Hall Trust are recorded including the relatively site specific response on page 85 – footnote.
7. Notwithstanding this participation, site specific proposals have invariably been met with Green Belt objections and the need to demonstrate ‘Very Special Circumstances’.
8. In the widest sense, the Trust is seeking greater clarity in policy terms to help forward their site search and to assist in further negotiations with 3R Council Officers.
9. Whilst we fully acknowledge that a faith organisation and its spatial requirements are unlikely to carry the weight of other representors including:
 - Hertfordshire County Council Education Service;
 - NHS and medical centres; or
 - Major employers such as Warner Brothers.

Nonetheless, to my clients’ regular church attendance on a daily basis is not an optional matter. Rather it is an essential part of their way of life.

10. Their local Gospel Hall requirement is for a modest hall and car park for:
 - Holy Communion and the Worship of God on Sunday AM
 - Gospel preachings typically Sunday mid afternoon
 - Prayer on a Monday evening and
 - Less frequently a Bible Reading on a Friday evening.
11. All other services are held at the larger ‘City’ hall at Blackwater Lane Leverstock Green.

Site Specific Matters

12. Station Road Kings Langley includes mixed employment and residential uses some of which are contained by identified employment and housing sites. The southern area the subject of our current representation is overwashed by Green Belt notation as is other built environment in the area including the railway station.
13. We are seeking a proposed extension to the Mixed Use Allocation to remove this from Green Belt.
14. We fully recognise that this is not a S78 appeal and the issue for this examination is limited to whether the southern leg of built development south of Home Park Industrial Estate and opposite Kings Langley Railway Station should remain designated as Green Belt.
15. We also fully recognise that it does not follow that a recommendation to redesignate this area of land will deliver a site for our client's needs as a Place of Worship. Our clients do not control land in this area and negotiations with the landowners are not currently encouraging. However, in the event that the area is redesignated our clients would be relieved of the need to establish 'Very Special Circumstances' for the local need for their faith facilities on this site or an adjoining site. Furthermore, we hope that Three Rivers Council will also have a clearer view of the needs of the Trust and will be able to work with the Trustees towards a satisfactory conclusion in this area of search.
16. The credentials of the area are set out in my Written Statement and need not be repeated.
17. Furthermore, we have set out our conclusions in the Written Statement Section 8. I respectfully ask you Sir to make the recommendation requested.

J R Shephard
29 October 2013