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This document has been published with assistance from Ralph Trustees Ltd.
INTRODUCTION

This Development Brief for the Langleybury and The Grove Estates has been prepared by Three Rivers District Council (TRDC), working with the current landowners, Ralph Trustees Limited (RTL) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

Background

In the early 1990’s HCC identified the Langleybury School (mansion and modern secondary school buildings) on the Langleybury Estate for disposal. In response to this TRDC produced in 1995 a Planning Brief for the estate which set out future development guidelines.

Following a number of disposal attempts by HCC, RTL the owners of The Grove purchased part of the Langleybury Estate (mansion and secondary school) in 2007.

Development Brief Area

The Development Brief Area is formed by the Langleybury Estate, comprising of the mansion, secondary school, Home Farm, Charitable Childrens’ Farm and associated agricultural fields and The Grove Estate, limited to the area bounded by Grove Mill Lane and Langleybury Lane.

The Brief area is in the freehold ownership of HCC and RTL. Part of the Langleybury site is currently tenanted.

Why is the Development Brief being prepared?

As set out in the TRDC and RTL Agreed Statement to the Core Strategy Examination, 23 May 2011, the future restoration and enhancement of the Langleybury Estate is best linked to the use and operation of The Grove, given the similar planning considerations, landownership, physical proximity and potential functional synergy between the two Estates.

As a result, TRDC are preparing this Development Brief to guide the future development potential of both sites, on an inter-dependant basis.

Purpose and Status of the Development Brief

The purpose of the Development Brief is to:

• Inform the potential allocation of both sites within the TRDC Site Allocations document; and
• Set out the guidelines / parameters for future proposed development.

This Development Brief will be used as an evidence base document in relation to the TRDC Site Allocations document and will be a material planning consideration when determining any future planning application(s) on the sites.

Consultation

Consultation on a draft brief took place between 23 January and 2 April 2012. The responses received to this consultation have informed the final brief which was adopted by the Council as a material consideration for development management purposes on 25 June 2012.
Development Brief Structure

The structure of the Development Brief is as follows:

• Section 2 - Provides a summary of the relevant planning policy
• Section 3 - Describes the sites and their context
• Section 4 - Sets out the development objectives and acceptable uses
• Section 5 - Sets out development guidelines/parameters
• Section 6 - Outlines the site constraints and development parameters
• Section 7 - Outlines RTL’s indicative development concept
• Section 8 - Sets out the planning application, consultation and delivery requirements
POLICY BACKGROUND


Both the Langleybury Estate and The Grove are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, Chilterns Landscape Area, and Central River Valley Landscape Area. In addition, part of The Grove has been designated as a ‘local wildlife site’ and identified as an ‘area liable to flooding’. Part of The Grove estate is also located within the Grove Mill conservation area.

Development proposals will be assessed against the Development Plan, with particular attention drawn to policies in the following table.

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Table 1: Policy Context

Policies in the emerging Development Management and Site Allocations documents, other Local Plan policies and TRDC supplementary planning guidance may apply depending on the eventual nature and form of the development.

National planning policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Good Practice Guidance on Planning for Tourism are also material.

This Development Brief supersedes the 1995 Langleybury School Planning Brief produced for the site.
THE SITES AND THEIR CONTEXT

Socio-Economic Context

The surrounding residential areas are characterised by low unemployment levels and above average earnings. The nearest large commercial centre is Watford which is the key economic focus of the area.

The Grove is a significant economic asset to the local area and the region providing:

• Substantial supplier spends year-on-year
• Significant business and recreation services to the local community
• A stable source of local employment for over 400 permanent staff and 200 seasonal staff, 70% of whom live in the local area

In terms of non-quantifiable economic contributions, The Grove plays an important role promoting the local area and region on an international stage by attracting leading international organisations such as Google, Deutsche Bank, HSBC and Warner Bros., as well as providing a base for the England football team and visiting NFL Super League teams, before games at Wembley.
Movement and Access

Vehicular access for Langleybury (mansion and secondary school) is currently taken from a priority junction on the western border of the site off Langleybury Lane. A separate priority junction immediately to the south of the above access provides access to Home Farm.

The main vehicular access for The Grove is taken from a priority junction on the eastern border of the site off the A411 Hempstead Road. A secondary access is located on Grove Mill Lane for service vehicles, staff and regular users of the spa and golf course.

Both sites have access to bus services (No. 318, 319, 500/501, and 550) providing access throughout Watford and the local area, as well as destinations further afield.

The closest railway station to Langleybury is Kings Langley located approximately 2.2km to the north of the site. The closest railway station to The Grove is Watford Junction, located approximately 3.2 km to the south east of the site. The stations are not within easy walking distance of either site. Cycle parking facilities are available at both stations.

An off-road cycle route is provided along the Grand Union Canal which flows parallel to the route of the A41 Watford Road and the A411 Hempstead Road. This provides safe cycle access to Kings Langley and Hemel Hempstead to the north and west Watford and Croxley Green to the south.

Development Brief Area context: showing close relationship to Watford and Abbots Langley
Movement and Access around the Development Brief Area
Physical Context

Langleybury and The Grove were originally manor houses located in prominent positions in the Chiltern landscape on the plateau edge overlooking the steep-sided Gade valley. The River Gade and Grand Union Canal run through the centre of the Valley, providing a distinctive feature of the landscape and flood zones 3b, 3a and 2 extend into the brief area.

Langleybury overlies Groundwater Source Protection Zone 2, and The Grove overlies Groundwater Source Protection Zones 1 and 2.

Landcover is a mix of farmland and parkland with woodland plantations and the more recent introduction of recreational uses including golf and playing fields. The landscape as a whole is contained both by the valley itself and by woodland, which generally follows the boundary of the parkland Estates.

Urban fringe sits on the valley sides to the south and east and includes housing and large industrial buildings, most notably Leavesden Studios.

The M25 and the A41 are significant detracting features within the landscape particularly where they cross the Grand Union Canal. These have a more significant impact on the landscape of Langleybury than The Grove. To the west of The Grove the landscape is influenced by industrial quarrying activity with regular activity from quarry vehicles on surrounding country lanes.

Ecology and Biodiversity

There are no designated wildlife sites within the Langleybury site, although the Grand Union Canal at the south east boundary of the site is designated as a local wildlife site (83/045). The Environment Agency have identified land at the south east of the Langleybury site adjacent to the Canal as potentially appropriate for the creation of a wet woodland which would increase priority habitat in the area. This is shown on the Langleybury constraints plan.

There are two designated local wildlife sites within The Grove site at Heath Wood (83/015/01) and Air Raid Shelter (83/015/02). The Grand Union Canal wildlife site (83/045) follows the eastern boundary of the site. Whippendell Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest is adjacent to the southern boundary of the site.

The River Gade / Grand Union Canal corridor is identified as a key Green Infrastructure asset and priority for conservation and enhancement in the District.

Landscape Character and Zone of Visual Influence

The zones of visual influence for both Langleybury and The Grove are contained by natural landscape features.

The Langleybury site, whilst more prominent in the landscape is seen in the context of significant detracting elements from external major infrastructure to the poor quality, large scale school buildings on the site.

The Grove is more secluded but also has a higher sensitivity to change due to the relatively few negative features intruding in views across and to the hotel.
Visual Analysis

Landscape Character Types:
1. Parkland & formal
2. Woodland
3. Suburban development
4. Historic village
5. Farm
6. Urban fringe open field
7. Major infrastructure/ quarry

Langleybury ZV1
Langleybury Mansion & Stables
The Grove ZV1
The Grove Mansion & Stables

Site survey undertaken on 1 March 2011

Development Brief area physical features