Landscape and Site Features

The Langleybury and The Grove sites lie either side of the M25 spur, which cuts through and separates the two sites forming a barrier between them. However, the underlying character of the two sites and their physical features are broadly similar, but for clarity, the two sites are described separately below.

Langleybury

The Langleybury Estate is located on the western side of the Gade Valley. Beyond the mansion, to the east of the site, the ground level falls steeply in elevation until it reaches the Grand Union Canal in the centre of the valley.

The site is dominated by a vacant 1970's secondary school. The mansion includes a small area of parkland lawn to the north, the remains of a formal terraced garden to the east, and the remains of a walled garden to the north west of the mansion.

Within the site boundary is Home Farm, an active agricultural holding with a dairy herd and arable farming function. There is also a separate Charitable Childrens’ Farm.

The Grove

The Grove is situated within a landscaped parkland estate, incorporating outdoor recreation activities including golf and a multi-purpose sports pitch. The west of the site sits on a relatively flat plateau. The ground level to the east of the site falls steeply to the centre of the valley.

The Estate is enclosed by woodland to the south and north, and hedgerows to the east and west. There are limited views out to the nearby urban fringe of Watford from within the site.

The Grove hotel is centrally located within the site. The stables block is located to its west and the walled garden to its north.

Combination of formal garden and parkland landscape at The Grove
Aerial Photograph of Langleybury

Aerial Photograph of The Grove
Heritage Features

Langleybury mansion is Grade II* listed, dating from circa 1725 with later additions in the nineteenth century. It stands on the site of an earlier house which was present on the site since at least 1626. The stables to Langleybury mansion are Grade II listed, as well as adjacent buildings including an Aisled barn and the Old Farm Cottages. The parkland and formal garden setting of the mansion are evident although in a poor state of repair. The setting of the listed buildings on the site has been significantly impacted upon by the late 20th century school buildings and parking areas.

The Grove is a Grade II* listed building, originally built circa 1720 on the site of a medieval manor and altered by several notable architects over its lifetime including Edward Blore in 1870-75. In addition, the stable block and canal bridge are Grade II listed. The heritage value of the buildings also extends to the mansion’s formal gardens and the landscaped parkland setting and the waterwheel engine. Archaeological investigations have revealed occupation from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages. Roman and early medieval/Anglo-Saxon activity has also been found.
Current Use and Condition

The two sites are in significantly different states of repair. Langleybury mansion and parkland have been neglected and unsympathetically treated. Langleybury has not been in educational use since 1998. While parts of the mansion and school building have been used by Hertfordshire County Council as offices and have been in occasional use as a film set, the site has been largely vacant since 1998. The mansion is currently on the English Heritage buildings at risk register.

Home Farm adjacent to Langleybury mansion is in operation as a working farm. The listed buildings within Home Farm have been subject to functional alterations over time.

By contrast, The Grove provides 5 star hotel, spa, restaurant, and golf facilities as well as catering for conferencing and other events. The buildings and landscape within The Grove Estate are well maintained with full-time maintenance staff.
OBJECTIVES / USES

Development Objectives

The inter-dependant development objectives for both sites are to:

• Significantly reduce the impact of the former Langleybury School on the Green Belt openness and landscape

• Create an enduring use for Langleybury House and result in the restoration and enhancement of this heritage asset

• Enhance the tourism infrastructure which will complement and support Leavesden Studios

• Result in significant economic benefits in terms of capital investment, additional direct and indirect employment and additional supply chain benefits

• Meet identified business needs of The Grove and exploit the potential for further developing this key business and leisure attraction in the District

• Contribute to meeting housing needs, insofar as is necessary and suitable

Land Uses

At Langleybury hotel/leisure development is the preferred use, but residential use would also be appropriate. Where practical and feasible an element of housing development should complement any hotel / leisure development.

The continuation of farming and agricultural uses (including the children's farm) on the Langleybury site remains appropriate. At The Grove, hotel/leisure development is appropriate.
Introduction

Parameters for the Development Brief area have been established through consideration of the context and the site constraints, in order to provide guidance on the appropriate location for potential future development and enhancement of both Langleybury and The Grove. These constraints and the key parameters are described in more detail below.

Green Belt

Both Langleybury and The Grove are entirely located within the Green Belt. There is a general presumption against ‘inappropriate development’ within the Green Belt which should not be approved except in very special circumstances (NPPF para 87).

The construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt, although an exception to this is limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (excluding agricultural buildings) whether redundant or in continuing use, which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development (NPPF para 89).

Depending on the impact on the openness and purpose of including land in Green Belt, redevelopment of the secondary school buildings at Langleybury and limited infilling at The Grove may fall under this exception and be considered appropriate development in the Green Belt.

For development on either site where this exception would not apply, it will be necessary for any applicant to demonstrate that ‘very special circumstances’ exist to justify development in order to outweigh the ‘in principle’ Green Belt harm. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations (NPPF para 88).

TRDC consider that there is potential for a ‘very special circumstances’ case to be established, but this will need to be demonstrated by the applicant as part of any application.

In developing the proposal the scheme should seek to:

• Demolish the prominent and visually intrusive former secondary school buildings at Langleybury and replace with more sensitively sited and designed development at Langleybury and The Grove (Appendix 1 sets out details of the footprint and floorspace of the modern Langleybury School buildings currently within the Green Belt)

• Reduce the visual impact of development on the Green Belt, including through the demolition of the prominent and visually intrusive former secondary school buildings at Langleybury

• Give careful consideration to the height of development and location with regard to the landscape, topography and views within and into the Brief area

• Enhance the openness of the Green Belt through sensitive redevelopment

It is anticipated that a change in the location of some of the existing built footprint is likely to be necessary to achieve the above objectives.
Heritage

The heritage assets at Langleybury and The Grove are the two mansion houses, and their relationship to their estate grounds and formal gardens, in both cases with a secondary relationship to more functional buildings in the grounds. Langleybury is currently in a state of very poor repair with its heritage value affected by insensitive alteration and late 20th Century development. The Grove is highly maintained and has been sensitively altered to accommodate hotel usage.

Overall the layout of new development on either site should be proportionate to its scale, and should identify and maximise use of the least sensitive parts of the site, based on an understanding of potential heritage and landscape effects.

The following development parameters for development at Langleybury have been identified:

1. Alteration to the mansion - internal and external repair and alteration should protect or exploit key features of heritage value (for example the wood panelling and main staircase) and limit alteration to original fabric

2. Alteration to listed buildings (stables, aised barn and cottages) or structures which add to the heritage value and character of the site overall (e.g. other farm barns) - proposals should consider the heritage contribution of buildings as a group and how this assists in revealing heritage importance of the assets on the site

3. Development in the setting of the mansion - development should seek to be complimentary in scale to the mansion

4. Development which may affect the setting of set pieces related to the original use of the mansion and estate (such as the walled garden) - proposals should consider the condition and purpose of functional elements of the buildings on the estate and how their relationship to the heritage value of the mansion can be maintained and protected

5. Development which may affect the relationship of the heritage assets to the garden, grounds and estate - the relationship of the mansion to its formal garden and wider estate should be a key consideration in the layout of proposed development

6. Materials and quality of construction - high quality materials should be used with construction techniques appropriate to the relative value and sensitivity of the heritage asset affected. Overall a presumption for high quality materials and appearance should be used
The following specific heritage parameters for development at The Grove have been identified:

1. Alteration to the mansion - the original fabric of the mansion should be protected wherever practical in order to retain the heritage value and significance of the building.

2. Alteration to listed buildings or structures which add to the heritage value and character of the site overall - proposals should consider the relationship of the stables to the mansion and how this assists in revealing heritage importance of the assets on the site.

3. Alterations to buildings which may affect the setting of the mansion house and terraced garden - proposals should maintain the mansion’s role as the most visually prominent building on the site and its direct visual relationship with the terraced garden. Proposals should maintain the hierarchy of development on the site with the mansion house forming the focus.

4. Development which may affect the setting of secondary spaces related to the original use of the mansion and estate (such as the walled garden) - proposals should respect the character of secondary spaces by being of appropriate scale, design, materials and landscaping.

5. Development which may affect the relationship of heritage assets to the landscape - the relationship of the mansion and stables to its formal garden and wider parkland estate should be a key consideration in the design of any proposed development which would affect their setting.

6. Materials and quality of construction - materials should be complementary to the texture and palette of materials currently used on site. All new development should be of a high quality of construction and finish.

Historic plan of Langleybury (Circa 1873)
**Archaeology**

At an early stage discussions with the County Archaeological Officer should take place to establish the likelihood of the sites having any archaeological interest.

Where sufficient information suggests that the site has archaeological interest, a ‘desk-top’ assessment should be undertaken by a qualified consultant and submitted as part of any planning application. Intrusive archaeological evaluation may also be required.

Any consent subsequently granted for development will be subject to inclusion of appropriate planning conditions to cover any archaeological issue identified.

**Landscape and Visual Impact**

The zones of visual influence for both Langleybury and The Grove are substantially contained by natural landscape features. The Langleybury site, whilst more prominent in the landscape, is seen in the context of significant detracting elements from the M25 to the poor quality former school buildings on the site. The Grove is more secluded and has a higher sensitivity to change due to the relatively few negative features intruding in views across and to the hotel.

The following parameters for development at Langleybury have been identified:

- Development at Langleybury should avoid further encroachment on, or preferably remove detracting elements from views from the east of the site from within and across the Gade Valley
- Development proposals should seek to restore the site to a more natural appearance in views from the Grand Union Canal to create a softer more natural appearance on the skyline
- Development within the parkland lawn of the mansion should retain the strong connectivity of views from Langleybury Lane looking south up towards the mansion’s north façade
- Adverse visual impacts of development on Langleybury Lane should be minimised as far as possible. Potential for screening of development, for example by using the existing walled garden, should be explored as part of development proposals.

The following parameters for development at The Grove have been identified:

- The highest design quality should be employed for any proposals which may affect the setting of the mansion and views from the formal garden
- Development at The Grove site should be focussed within a defined development envelope which retains the compact cluster of built form on the site
- Associated landscape works should seek to enhance landscape features which have a visual role in the character of the site and surrounding landscape.
Landscape Design

The following key landscape elements have been identified on or adjacent to both Estates:

• Formal gardens
• Parkland estates
• Woodland groups and plantations

The following parameters have been identified for Langleybury:

• Formal gardens and lawns around the mansion should be restored and protected maintaining their relationship to the mansion
• Formal arrangements of avenues of trees should be maintained
• New landscaping should ensure the visual relationship of the mansion to the Union Canal is maintained

The following parameters have been identified for The Grove:

• Planting/alteration to the formal terraced gardens should seek to maintain or restore the relationship of the garden with the mansion house and to the hotel extension
• Any new planting within the Estate should seek to restore hedgerow where appropriate but also maintain glimpsed views across the golf course to the mansion from the south
• Existing woodland areas should be protected and enhanced through a woodland management programme

Ecology and Biodiversity

Designated wildlife sites (and any other important habitats identified) should be protected and retained as part of any development proposals.

Opportunities for the management and enhancement of habitats and biodiversity should be identified as part of any application.

Sustainability

Any development must embrace the principles of sustainable construction and design, taking into account the need to tackle climate change by reducing carbon emissions, increasing energy and water efficiency of buildings, promoting the use of renewable energy systems and using other natural resources wisely.

Core Strategy policy CP1 requires new commercial development to produce at least 25% less carbon dioxide emissions than Building Regulations Part L (2006) requirements with a minimum of 10% being provided by on-site renewable and/or low carbon energy supply systems.

Efficient use of energy and resources should be demonstrated in terms of layout, orientation and materials/construction. Where practical renewable energy systems should be retrofitted to the existing historic buildings.

The Sequential Test should be applied to steer development away from areas at risk of flooding.

Surface water drainage must be considered as part of any development and appropriate consultation with relevant statutory consultees should be undertaken. The development must be supported by a Sustainable Drainage Statement and should target full on-site attenuation where possible.
Trees

Proposals should retain trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders. Removal of trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and having due consideration to the overall landscape design proposals.

Should the loss of existing trees be justified, appropriate alternative planting should be provided on site. Any replacement planting should be in keeping with the local landscape and ecology.

All replacement planting proposals will be expected to make provision for an appropriate period of maintenance and aftercare.

As shown on the Parameter Plans, woodlands should be returned and managed appropriately.

Early consultation on the proposals with the Council’s Landscape Officer is strongly recommended.
Access and Transport

Any applicant will be required to liaise with the Highway Authority (Hertfordshire County Council) in the preparation of the proposals.

The current Langleybury mansion and secondary school access is recognised to be below the required visibility standards. As part of any scheme this junction will need to be upgraded and an appropriate solution developed which is in keeping with the character of the area. Should proposals make use of the Home Farm junction, an assessment should also be made of this junction and, if required a scheme developed to bring it up to the appropriate highway standards.

The main Grove vehicular access onto the A411 has a spacious layout with good visibility to the north and south along the A411, and a dedicated right turn lane facility is available for traffic wishing to turn right into the site from the A411.

Recreation of the historic Langleybury mansion access from the A41 is likely to have impacts on the highway and lead to significant tree loss, as a result it is unlikely to be acceptable.

Any application should be supported by a Transport Assessment, which in particular assesses the potential impact on the operation of the existing access junctions and the local highway network.

It is likely that the key junctions that will require consideration will include:

- the vehicular accesses from the Langleybury Estates and Home Farm sites onto Langleybury Lane
- Langleybury Lane / Old House Lane priority junction
- Langleybury Lane / A41 Watford Road / Bridge Road signalised crossroad junction
- Langleybury Lane / Grove Mill Lane / Fir Tree Hill priority junction
- A411 Hempstead Road / Grove Mill Lane priority junction
- the vehicular accesses from The Grove onto the A411 Hempstead Road and Grove Mill Lane
- the Hunton Bridge Roundabout

Applicants should work together with the local highway authority and other stakeholders on proposed improvements to the accessibility of the site(s) and proposed development(s) by all forms of transport. This should include considering at an early stage the potential for contributing to the delivery of measures including the following specific transport improvements with regard to assessment of the transport implications of development proposal(s) and the requirements of the community infrastructure levy.

- Improvements to pedestrian, cycle and horse links along Grove Mill Lane, including a link to Whippendell Woods and existing routes to Watford
- Delivery of a cycle route crossing the A41 to link with Gypsy Lane
- Delivery of a cycle route link to Grand Union Canal close to Bridge Road bridge crossing
- Delivery of a cycle route between Abbots Langley and Croxley Green via Gypsy Lane and the Canal
- Delivery of a cycle route between Whippendell Woods, Hunton Bridge and Leavesden Country Park
- Delivery of links between existing bridleways and The Grove
- Improvements to cycle links to Watford Town Centre, Cassiobury Park, Whippendell Woods, the area around The Grove and linking to Hunton Bridge, possibly via Grove Mill Lane, Langleybury Lane and the Langleybury site
- Improvements to surface and safety of existing track along Langleybury Lane
- Improvements to the Grand Union Canal towpath
- Addressing parking concerns at the east of Langleybury Lane associated with St Paul’s School
- Improvements to bus stop facilities at Hunton Bridge
- Improvements to pavements along Old Mill Lane.
SITE CONSTRAINTS AND PARAMETERS

Constraints for the Development Brief area have been identified through the analysis of both sites.
The Grove Constraints Plan
The parameter plans indicate where the parameters set out in the previous section apply within the Development Brief area.

Langleybury Development Parameters Plan
The Grove Development Parameters Plan

- Development Brief area
- Maintain formal garden/listed building setting
- Woodland Management Area
- Improve hedgerow quality
- Maintain listed Mansion
- Maintain listed building
- Secondary heritage spaces
- Potential extension/enhancement zone
- Least visually sensitive area of site
- Least heritage sensitive area of site

Overview Map
INDICATIVE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Indicative Development Concept

The previous sections of the brief have set out the policy background, assessed the context of the Langleybury and The Grove sites, identified objectives for the sites and highlighted constraints and key parameters which will need to be addressed as part of any development proposals.

In response to this assessment of the sites, TRDC invited RTL as the major landowner to produce indicative proposals for Langleybury and The Grove, identifying potential types of development and suitable areas for any such development.

These indicative proposals have been refined following public consultation and in relation to Langleybury, the Health Complex area has been reduced at the request of Members’. These indicative proposals are just one potential way of responding to the Brief. They are not fixed and may be subject to change. The brief area at Langleybury includes land in different ownerships. The indicative development concept sets out a long term vision for development of the site and may depend on acquisition of land not currently owned by RTL. However, should RTL or another party wish to take these or any other proposals forward, TRDC will work with the applicant to develop the proposals in line with the parameters established in this Brief.

At Langleybury, RTL proposes to transform the Estate into a 21st century hotel and health complex, built around wellbeing and lifestyle experiences and incorporating a working organic farm.

The organic farm would be a key focus of the guests’ wellbeing and lifestyle experience along with providing both Langleybury and The Grove with sustainable organic produce. It would also offer the opportunity for hotel guests and day visitors to explore and better understand how food is produced and cooked, thereby creating both an educational and recreational experience. As part of this wellbeing and lifestyle experience, the development would also include a health farm which would provide spa treatments along with more holistic health treatments such as meditation.

In addition the hotel and health complex would be likely to include facilities typically associated with hotel development, for example a swimming pool, restaurant(s), hotel lounge areas etc. An element of residential development at Langleybury is also envisaged in response to the Council’s aspirations.

RTL have made it clear that the existing Children’s Farm should be included as part of this wider farming vision within the Langleybury Estate.

At The Grove, RTL propose a series of extensions to the existing building and an element of new build. These enhancements are driven by the operational needs of the current hotel.
A41

Remove school and hardstanding
Refurbish/re-use listed Mansion
New wing to listed Mansion
Listed buildings brought into operational use
Potential sites for new buildings

Overview Map

Langleybury Indicative Development Concept
The Grove Indicative Development Concept
DELIVERY

Application Scope

Any planning application and/or listed building consent application should be submitted in accordance with the information requirements set out in the Council’s adopted validation checklist.

In addition to standard national requirements, which consists of a completed application form, location plan, appropriate drawings and Design and Access Statement, it is likely that any planning application will need to be accompanied by a number of specialist reports covering:

- Planning Statement
- Historic Environment Statement / Archaeological Assessment
- Landscape
- Tree Survey and Report
- Biodiversity Survey and Report
- Flood Risk Assessment (Sustainable Drainage)
- Lighting Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- Travel Plan
- Energy and Sustainability Statement
- Summary Statement

Depending on the scope of any planning application, there may also be a requirement for Groundwater Assessment, a Preliminary Risk Assessment for development on areas which may be affected by contamination and/or a landscape/biodiversity management plan.

As part of pre-application discussions, TRDC would wish to engage with the prospective applicant to agree the scope of any application submission. TRDC will work with the applicant to agree which of these reports could either form an integral part of the Design and Access Statement or be appended to it.

EIA Screening

It is recommended that a screening opinion is obtained at an early stage from TRDC to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

Any screening request submitted to TRDC should be accompanied by, as a minimum, a plan to identify the site, a brief description of the nature and purpose of the development and of its possible effects on the environment. Other information considered relevant to determining the screening opinion may be provided.
Pre-Application Public Consultation

In addition to TRDC the following bodies should be consulted as part of the pre-application consultation process:

- Abbots Langley Parish Council
- Sarratt Parish Council
- English Heritage
- Highway Authority (Hertfordshire County Council)
- Hertfordshire County Council (Planning and Archaeology)
- Hertfordshire County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority)
- Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre
- Watford Borough Council
- Local Economic Partnership
- Highways Agency
- Natural England
- Relevant Statutory Undertakers
- St Paul’s School
- British Waterways

As part of the pre-application process TRDC will expect the prospective applicant to work with the Council to identify other local groups who should be consulted on the proposals.

Pre-application consultation should be carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out in the adopted TRDC Statement of Community Involvement, July 2006.

Phasing

TRDC recognise that a phased approach to development will be required, with development at The Grove coming first and the redevelopment of Langleybury following. A Heritage Management Plan will be required through a legal obligation to ensure that the appropriate repair and maintenance of Langleybury Mansion is secured as part of the first phase of any major development, without pre-empting an appropriate restoration scheme associated with its reuse.

The timing and extent of the demolition of the modern school buildings at Langleybury will also need to be addressed as part of any planning application submission.
APPENDIX 1

Langleybury Modern Secondary School Buildings

Footprint – 4,901 sqm
Floorspace – 6,807 sqm
Volume – 22,975 m3
Hardstanding – 6,833 sqm

Source: RTL survey data
Three River District Council Contact

Development Plans Service
Email: TRLDF@threerivers.gov.uk
Tel: 01923 776611

Other Key Contacts

Abbots Langley Parish Council
Langley Road, Abbots Langley, Herts, WD5 0EJ
Tel: 01923 265139

Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, Herts, SG13 8DQ
Tel: 0300 123 4047

Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre
Environment, County Hall Hertford, SG13 8DN
Tel: 01992 555220

Sarratt Parish Council
Village Hall, The Green Sarratt, Herts, WD3 6AT
Tel: 01923 262025

Watford Borough Council
Planning, Watford Borough Council, Town Hall, Watford, WD17 3EX
Tel: 01923 226400

Highway Authority (Hertfordshire County Council)
Highway, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, Herts, SG13 8DQ
Tel: 0300 123 4047

Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership
Hertfordshire Forward, County Hall, Pegs Lane, Hertford, Herts SG13 8DQ
Tel: 01923 471555