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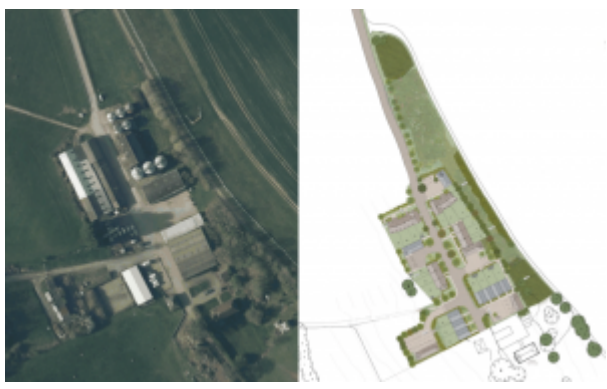
Did the Inspector get to the Bottom of this?

31 July 2022



Langley Bottom Farm in Epsom is to become a small housing estate following the decision of Planning Inspector **D Hartley** dated 14th July 2022. Overturning a refusal of the **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** and against overwhelming objections of the public in the 168 recorded submissions the Inspector allowed the appeal of **Fairfax Properties**, despite the location being in **Green Belt land**.

The Inspector made the following controversial observations:

“One of the purposes of Green Belt is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The site includes a number of existing buildings and areas of hardstanding. The latter has the continued potential to be used for the parking of vehicles. Overall, and taking into account the existing use, characteristics and extent of development on the site, I am satisfied that subject to the imposition of planning conditions the proposal would not lead to countryside encroachment and hence there would be no conflict with this Green Belt purpose.”

Concerning **local facilities** for the future occupants he stated “Langley Vale is within reasonable walking and cycling distance of the appeal site. It contains a limited number of facilities and amenities such as the ‘Park and Shop’ petrol filling station convenience store, ‘The Shop on the Corner’, garage, village hall, pre-school and primary school. I acknowledge the Council’s comment that ‘The Shop on the Corner’ appears to have ceased trading. There is of course some possibility that the property could be used again as a shop but, in any event, ‘The Park and Shop’ does provide some food and drink provision albeit that I acknowledge that it would likely only be used on the basis of day to day ‘topping up’.”

On **public transport, walking and cycling** he observed with optimism: “The site is located in close proximity to bus stops within Langley Vale and includes bus service E5 every two hours to Epsom (Monday to Saturday) and school service 618 (Monday to Friday). Furthermore, three mainline railway stations are located nearby (Epsom, Epsom Downs and Tattenham Corner) providing commuting services to London and access to destinations further afield. There is also bus service 408 from Epsom to Cobham and stopping at Leatherhead and which runs Monday to Friday calling at Langley Vale once a day. I acknowledge that services are not very frequent but nevertheless I find that some of the proposed residents would use them on occasion. The evidence is that the site is served well by a number of public footpath and cycle routes where some limited opportunities would be available, primarily in the day time and when there is no inclement weather. These could be used to visit services and amenities both locally and further afield.”

The Inspector did observe that **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council** had allowed arguably unauthorised uses of the land to continue unchallenged for so many years that the “developed uses” became lawful. The claims of threats to the Green Belt were thereby undermined.

40% of the houses are to be “affordable”. Time will tell how affordable they will be.

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