

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. The foreground is dominated by a patchwork of green and brown fields, separated by dark lines of trees and hedgerows. A road or path runs diagonally across the middle. In the background, a small settlement with buildings and more greenery is visible. The overall scene is a typical English countryside.

fabrik

Langley Bottom Farm, Epsom

Green Belt Assessment
July 2025

Issue sheet

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Contents

1.0	Introduction and Scope	4
2.0	National Planning Policy Context	5
3.0	Methodology	9
4.0	Evidence Base	10
5.0	Site Function	11
6.0	The Proposed Development	12
7.0	Summary and Conclusion	15

Introduction and Scope

1.1 Introduction and Scope

fabrik Chartered Landscape Architects have been appointed by Fairfax Acquisitions to carry out this report, in order to consider the likely spatial and visual impacts on the openness and Purposes of the Green Belt arising as a result of the Proposed Development of the Site at Langley Bottom Farm, Epsom.

This report consists of two stages:

- Stage 1 sets out the National and local-level Green Belt policy context followed by a summary of the relevant published Epsom and Ewell Green Belt Assessment Evidence Base documents. The report then goes on to describe the character of the Site and its immediate surroundings, followed by an analysis of the role of the Site in achieving the identified function of the Green Belt in its local context. This concludes with an assessment of the Site's strategic contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024, including a judgement on whether the Site can be considered "Grey Belt".
- Stage 2 provides an assessment of the Proposed Development's potential impact on the spatial and visual aspects of openness, concluding with an assessment of the potential harms and/or benefits in relation to the Green Belt purposes as defined in NPPF para 143. It then considers whether the Proposed Development is "inappropriate" or "not inappropriate" relative to NPPF paragraphs 153 -155.

This report has been prepared in order to inform the overarching planning-led judgements relating to the question of inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the case for "Very Special Circumstances", which are to be considered on balance by the appointed Planning Consultant.

1.2 Site Location and Study Area

The location of the Site is shown at Figure 1.1 opposite.

The desktop survey carried out as part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) included the review of Ordnance Survey maps, interactive maps, aerial photography, published landscape character assessment documents, planning policy and the emerging development proposals. The extent of the Green Belt Assessment study area therefore aligns with that used for the LVIA.

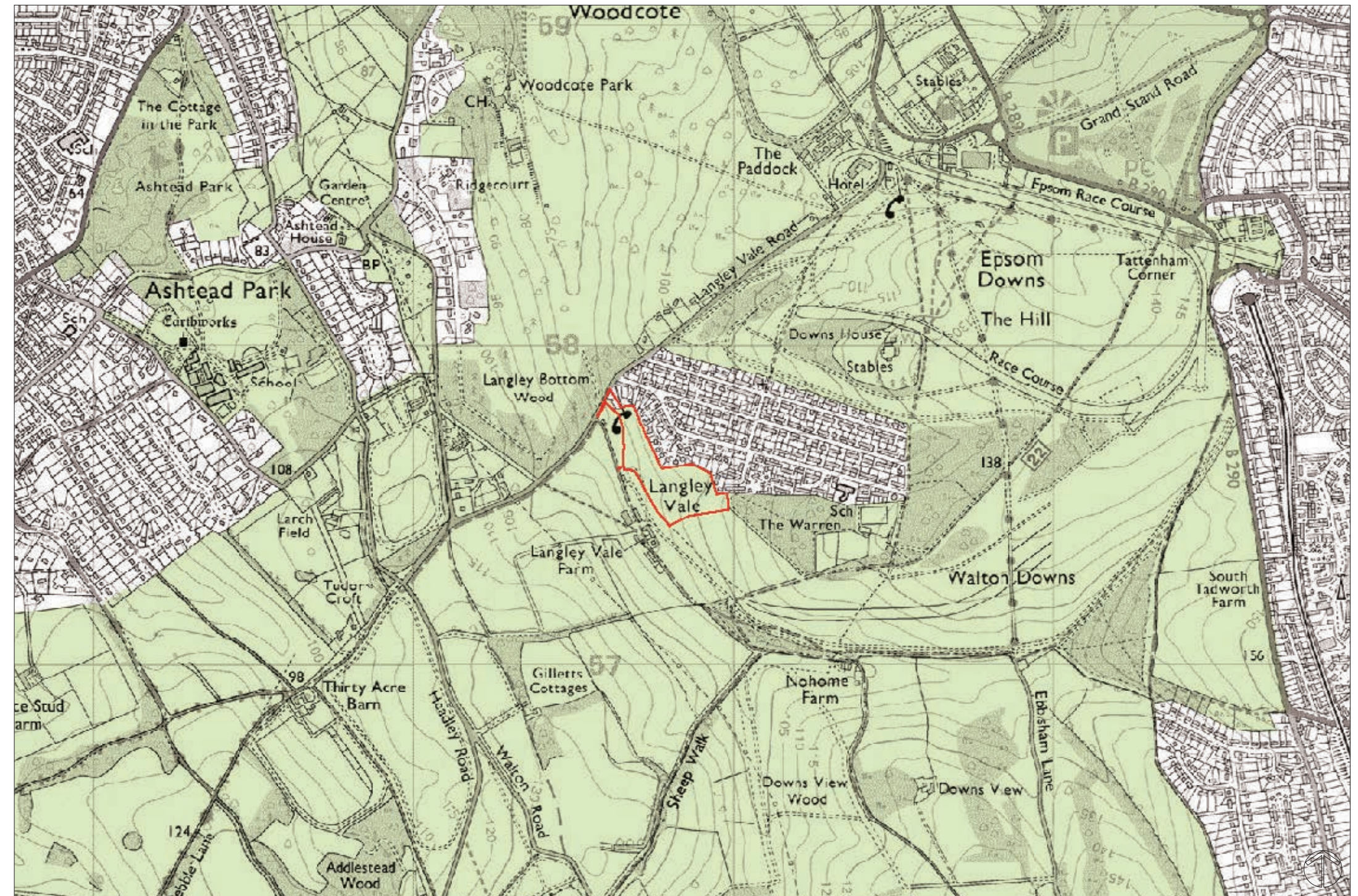


Figure 1.1 – Site location and Green Belt Assessment study area (fabrik, 2025)



Site boundary



Green Belt

2.0

National Planning Policy Context

2.1 National Planning Policy Context

2.1.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The December 2024 NPPF seeks the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The issues and policies relating to the Green Belt that are pertinent to the proposed development and this assessment are set out below.

Grey Belt

The December 2024 NPPF introduces a new concept of Grey Belt land, which is defined in the Glossary as:

"Grey belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and / or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

Footnote 7 states:

"The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 189) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change."

Section 13 - Protecting the Green Belt.

142: "The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence."

143: "Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a "to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

- d to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."

148: "Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider grey belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations. However, when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should determine whether a site's location is appropriate with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework. Strategic policy-making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary."

Proposals affecting the Green Belt

153: "When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness⁵⁵. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

Footnote 55 states: "Other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land, where development is not inappropriate".

154: "Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it

- replaces;
- e limited infilling in villages;
- f limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- h Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:
 - i) mineral extraction;
 - ii) engineering operations;
 - iii) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
 - iv) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
 - v) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
 - vi) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order."

155: "The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where:

- a) The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- b) There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed⁵⁶;
- c) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework⁵⁷; and
- d) Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below."

Footnote 56 states:

"Which, in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Tests was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years; and in the case of traveller sites means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable traveller sites assessed in line with Planning Policy for Traveller sites."

156: "Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review⁵⁸, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application⁵⁹, the following contributions ('Golden Rules') should be made:

- a affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;
- b necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and
- c the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through on site provision or through access to off site spaces."

157: "Before development plan policies for affordable housing are updated in line with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework, the affordable housing contribution required to satisfy the Golden Rules is 15 percentage points above the highest existing affordable housing requirement which would otherwise apply to the development, subject to a cap of 50%60. In the absence of a pre-existing requirement for affordable housing, a 50% affordable housing contribution should apply by default. The use of site-specific viability assessment for land within or released from the Green Belt should be subject to the approach set out in national planning practice guidance on viability."

158: "A development which complies with the Golden Rules should be given significant weight in favour of the grant of permission."

159: "The improvements to green spaces required as part of the Golden Rules should contribute positively to the landscape setting of the development, support nature recovery and meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan. Where no locally specific standards exist, development proposals should meet national standards relevant to the development

2.0

National Planning Policy Context

(these include Natural England standards on accessible green space and urban greening factor and Green Flag criteria). Where land has been identified as having particular potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies, proposals should contribute towards these outcomes."

2.1.2 Planning Practice Guidance

The NPPF is supported by the on-line resource Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The guidance on Green Belt is set out at Section ID: 64-001-20190722 (Revision date 27 February 2025).

Paragraph 002 sets out the key steps in a Green Belt Assessment, it states:

"In order to assess the Green Belt in the relevant local or strategic development area effectively, authorities will need to:

- identify the location and appropriate scale of area/s to be assessed
- evaluate the contribution each assessment area makes to Green Belt purposes (a), (b), and (d), using the criteria identified below
- consider whether applying the policies relating to the areas or assets of particular importance in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would potentially provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development of the assessment area
- identify grey belt land
- identify if the release or development of the assessment area/s would fundamentally undermine the five Green Belt purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt when considered across the area of the plan."

Paragraph 005 sets out how the contribution land makes to the relevant Green Belt purposes should be assessed:

"When making judgements as to whether land is grey belt, authorities should consider the contribution that assessment areas make to Green Belt purposes a, b, and d. Considerations for informing these judgements are set out below.

Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas. This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.

Contrib.	Illustrative features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to include all of the following features: - be adjacent or near to a large built up area - if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt)
Moderate	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land's contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to): - having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development - be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development - contain existing development - being subject to other urbanising influences
Weak or None	Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that: - are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area - are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development

Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.

Contrib.	Illustrative features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features: - forming a substantial part of a gap between towns - the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns
Moderate	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): - forming a small part of the gap between towns - being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation
Weak or None	Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that: - do not form part of a gap between towns, or - form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation

Purpose D – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns. This purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.

Contrib.	Illustrative features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features: - form part of the setting of the historic town - make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town
Moderate	Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): - being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography - containing existing development - not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town
Weak or None	Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that: - do not form part of the setting of a historic town - have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town

Paragraph 006 states how the application of footnote 7 should be considered when identifying land as grey belt:

"As defined in the NPPF, grey belt excludes land where the application of policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. In reaching this judgement, authorities should consider where areas of grey belt would be covered by or affect other designations in footnote 7. Where this is the case, it may only be possible to provisionally identify such land as grey belt in advance of more detailed specific proposals."

Making an assessment of whether land is grey belt, is discussed at Paragraph 007, which states:

" After consideration of the above criteria, any assessment area that is not judged to strongly contribute to any one of purposes a, b, or d can be identified as grey belt land, subject to the exclusion of land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

Considering the impact on the remaining Green Belt in the plan area is discussed at Paragraph 008, which states:

"How can the impact of releasing or development on the remaining Green Belt in the plan area be assessed?

A Green Belt assessment should also consider the extent to which release or development of Green Belt land (including but not limited to grey belt land) would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole.

In reaching this judgement, authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way."

Proposals on grey belt land, is discussed at Paragraph 009, which states:

"How can Green Belt assessments be used in the development management process?

An assessment of Green Belt will (alongside other considerations) inform the determination of applications which involve reaching a judgement as to whether proposals utilise grey belt land and whether development of the site would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area.

Where grey belt sites are not identified in existing plans or Green Belt assessments, it is expected that authorities should consider evidence, in light of this guidance, on:

- whether the site strongly contributes to the Green Belt purposes a, b or d; and
- whether the application of policies to areas and assets of particular importance identified in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) provide a strong reason to restrict development; and
- whether development of the site would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area, as set out in national policy and this guidance."

2.0

National Planning Policy Context

Golden Rules are discussed at Paragraph 012, which states:

"...How can major housing development on land which is released from the Green Belt through plan making, or on sites in the Green Belt, contribute to accessible green space?

The following contributions to accessible green space should be considered:

New residents and the wider public should be able to access good quality green spaces which are safe; visually stimulating and attractive; well-designed; sustainably managed and maintained; and seek to meet the needs of the communities which they serve.

Accessible green spaces are areas of vegetation set within a landscape or townscape, often including blue space, which are available for public use free of charge and with limited time restrictions.

Where possible access to green spaces should include safe active travel routes and should be served by public transport, which also means providing the necessary infrastructure (such as footpaths and bridleways).

Proposals should consider how the creation or enhancement of existing green spaces can contribute to the priorities for nature recovery set out within the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, providing greater benefit to nature and contributing to the delivery of wider environmental outcomes.

Where appropriate, authorities should consider the use of conditions or planning obligations. The Community Infrastructure Levy can also be used to fund improvements to existing greenspaces or the provision of new ones. Local authorities should consider arrangements for the long-term maintenance of green spaces."

Considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt, is discussed at paragraph 013 which states:

"What factors can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt?

Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal*

may be relevant, as could its volume

- the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness*
- the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation."*

Paragraph 014 sets out how harm to the Green Belt including harm to its openness should be considered if a development is not inappropriate development:

"Footnote 55 to the NPPF sets out that if development is considered to be not inappropriate development on previously developed land or grey belt, then this is excluded from the policy requirement to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt, including to its openness.

This is consistent with rulings from the courts on these matters that, where development (of any kind, now including development on grey belt or previously developed land) is not considered to be inappropriate in the Green Belt, it follows that the test of impacts to openness or to Green Belt purposes are addressed and that therefore a proposal does not have to be justified by “very special circumstances."

2.2 Local Policy Context

Epsom and Ewell Local Plan 2022-2040 Reg 19, December 2024

Policy DM15 addresses the Green Belt and states:

'1) Development in the Green Belt will be considered inappropriate, and will not be permitted unless:

a) the development itself is an exception to the definition of “inappropriate” as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework; or

b) there are very special circumstances to justify the inappropriate development.

2) Very special circumstances are circumstances where other considerations clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt as a result of the development.'

2.3 Pre-Application Consultation

As part of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA), the applicant has engaged with Officers at E&EBC in relation to the Site and emerging design proposals. Written advice was received on 2nd May 2025. In relation to Green Belt, the advice received states:

"... As a Langly Vale is a village, the site cannot strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) or (d) and falls under the definition of Grey Belt land as set out in the NPPF.

Paragraph 155 of the NPPF states that development should be regarded as not inappropriate where the development would utilise Grey Belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan; there is a demonstrable need for the type of development proposed; the development would be in a sustainable location; and where the development would meet the Golden Rules.

In considering whether the development would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan, the NPPG clarifies this as a judgement whether, or the extent to which, the development of Green Belt land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Green Belt encompasses roughly 42% of the Borough's land. Although the proposed scheme would cause some harm to openness and impact on Green Belt purpose (c) regarding assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, this would not fundamentally undermine the ability of the remaining Green Belt land across the area of the plans from meeting all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way. The proposal would therefore meet criterion (a) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing, with the Council's Annual Monitoring Report concluding a housing land supply equivalent to about 2.2 years, demonstrating a significant shortfall in future supply. Consequently, for the purposes of criterion (b) paragraph 155, there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed."

As the Proposed Development consitutes major development, criterion (d) of paragraph 155 is subject to compliance with the 'Golder Rules' set out in paragraphs 156-157 of the NPPF. The advice received states:

"The supporting statement, prepared by Boyer Planning and dated February 2025 highlights that the scheme would deliver 50% of affordable homes in a mix of rented and shared ownership, which would satisfy in order to therefore satisfy Golden Rule (a) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

Whilst the NPPF does not explicitly list what constitutes 'necessary improvements' under Golden Rule (b) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF, these are likely to include the delivery of schools, GP surgeries, transport links etc... Any future planning application of this nature would need to clearly demonstrate compliance with Golden Rule (b) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

Whilst the supporting Vision Statement, prepared by Fairfax identifies potential areas for open space, any future planning application of this nature would need to clearly demonstrate compliance with Golden Rule (c) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF.

Where it cannot be demonstrated that the scheme fully complies with 155-157 of the NPPF, the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and would be subject to paragraph 153 of the NPPF and would be necessary to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances to outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal."

3.0

Methodology

3.1

Summary of Methodology

The methodology for the Green Belt Assessment (GBA) provides an assessment of the spatial and visual aspects of openness in relation to the five purposes of the Green Belt as defined in Paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024). These are

- A to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- B to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- C to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- D to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- E to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."

Purpose D aims to "preserve the setting and special character of historic towns" by retaining the surrounding landscape or by retaining the landscape context for historic centres. The historic centres of settlements are often designated as Conservation Areas. The assessment against Purpose D will therefore be considered on a case by case basis, depending on the contextual relationship between the Site/Green Belt parcel and any designated Conservation Area or identified historic settlement centre in published documentation by the relevant Local Planning Authority and/or Historic England.

Purpose E is "to assist urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land". Previous Planning Advisory Service (PAS) guidance states that the availability of land within urban areas that could be developed would already have been factored in before identifying Green Belt land. Therefore, an assessment against this purpose would reach the same conclusion regardless of the site or Green Belt parcel. As such this Purpose is scoped out.

This GBA will therefore provide an assessment against Purposes A, B, C and D.

The assessment of the Site's contribution to Purposes A, B and D will be considered when establishing if the Site can be considered Grey Belt in line with the definition in the NPPF and the guidance set out in the latest PPG, published in February 2025.

3.2.1

Assessment Stages

This GBA is formed of two stages, which are informed by the relevant national and local policy context, as well as the published Epsom and Ewell Council Green Belt Assessment Evidence Base documents. Summaries of the above are set out in Sections 2 and 4.

Stage 1: Assessment

The Stage 1 GBA considers the existing baseline conditions of the Site and assesses its strategic contribution to the first four purposes of the Green Belt in its local context. **Table 3.1** defines the assessment criteria, which is based upon the criteria set out in the PPG on Green Belt - Paragraph 005.

Table 3.1: Assessment criteria for Contribution to Purposes A-D

Green Belt Purpose	Assessment of Contribution Criteria	
A To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Strong	The Site is likely to be free of existing development, and lacks physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. Likely to include all of the following features: - be adjacent or near to a large built up area. - if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt).
	Moderate	The Site is likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but includes one or more feature that weaken the land's contribution to this Purpose a) such as (but not limited to): - having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. - be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development. - contain existing development. - being subject to other urbanising influences.
	Weak or None	The Site: - is not adjacent to or near to a large built up area. - is adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development.
B: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Strong	The Site is likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features: - forming a substantial part of a gap between towns. - the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns.
	Moderate	The Site is likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): - forming a small part of the gap between towns. - being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation.
	Weak or None	The Site: - does not form part of a gap between towns, or - forms part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation.
C: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Strong	The Site is likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features: - has characteristics of rural landscapes / countryside. - is disassociated from urbanising influences.
	Moderate	The Site is likely to exhibit the characteristics of countryside and a sense of rurality, but there is association with urbanising influences.
	Weak or None	The Site has a limited sense of rurality, displaying few countryside characteristics. The Site is well associated with urbanising influences.
D: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Strong	The Site is likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features: - form part of the setting of the historic town. - make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town.
	Moderate	The Site is likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): - being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography. - containing existing development. - not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town.
	Weak or None	The Site: - does not form part of the setting of a historic town. - has no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town.

3.0

Methodology

Stage 2 Assessment

The Stage 2 GBA considers the impact of the Proposed Development on the existing baseline conditions of the Site and its strategic contribution to the first four purposes of the Green Belt in its local context. **Table 3.2** defines the assessment criteria.

Table 3.2: Assessment criteria for Harm of Proposed Development in relation to Purposes A-D

Green Belt Purpose	Assessment of Harm Criteria	
A To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Considerable	The Proposed Development would result in an extensive expansion of the large-built up area, in an illogical way. The Proposed Development is not contained by robust physical features that would form a defensible boundary to restrict further sprawl.
	Modest	The Proposed Development would result in expansion of the large-built up area that is predominantly logical; and / or partially contained by robust physical features, that would form a defensible boundary to restrict further sprawl.
	Limited or None	The Proposed Development would result in logical expansion of the large-built up area, and which is well contained by durable physical features that would form a defensible boundary to restrict further sprawl; or is not near a large-built up area.
B To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Considerable	The Proposed Development would lead to the merging of two (or more) towns, and the loss of distinct and separate identities.
	Modest	The Proposed Development would lead to some reduction in the separation of two (or more) towns and some loss of distinct and separate identities.
	Limited or None	The Proposed Development would lead to a small reduction in the separation of two (or more) towns, with little to no harm to their distinct and separate identities.
C To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Considerable	The Proposed Development would result in advancement of urban characteristics beyond logical or acceptable limits or into a landscape that displays many of the characteristics of countryside and/or has a limited association with urbanising influences.
	Modest	The Proposed Development would result in some advancement of urban characteristics into a landscape that displays some of the characteristics of countryside and/or has some association with urbanising influences. The advancement is of reasonable scale relative to the settlement and does not extend beyond logical or acceptable limits.
	Limited or None	The Proposed Development would result in a small, or no, advancement of urban characteristics within a logical and acceptable limit, into a landscape that has associations with urbanising influences.
D To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Considerable	The Site has a strong association with a historic town. The Proposed Development would substantially alter the special character of a historic town.
	Modest	The Site has some association with a historic town. The Proposed Development is separated from historic aspects of the town, and / or is sensitive to the special character of a historic town.
	Limited or None	The Site does not form part of the setting of a historic town. The Proposed Development is of an appropriate scale, so as to be visually and physically detached from the historic aspects of the town.

3.2.2 Assessment of Impacts on Openness

The term ‘openness’ is not defined within the NPPF or PPG. The guidance on Green Belt is set out at Section ID: 64-001-20190722 (Revision date 27 February 2025). Paragraph 013 quoted on page 11 covers the factors that can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt.

In Green Belt terms, the concept of ‘openness’ relates to the absence of built development (which includes both buildings and hard surfacing) and is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects.

The consideration of spatial and visual impact on openness is based on our understanding of the Site, its context and the parameters of the Proposed Development. The judgements made in the Green Belt Assessment are informed by the findings of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, which has been prepared in accordance with the ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (third edition) by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (Routledge, 2013).

In the interpretation of the term ‘openness’ relevant case law, which deals with the concept of openness is therefore a material consideration. The Euro Garages High Court judgement (2018)EWHC 1753 (Admin Objection by EA dated 21/05/19) is helpful in clarifying the meaning of openness and states that:

“Openness” is not a defined term but, in my view, it is clear in this context that it is openness of the Green Belt that must be considered not the Site as such. That is not merely the wording of the paragraph but must be the case because any infill would, almost by definition, have an impact on the openness of a site.”

The matter of harm to openness through changes of use and increased activity relative to Paragraph 154/155 (December 2023 NPPF) was considered in the Appeal Decision (4th January 2024) for Land south of Glory Hill Lane, Holtspur, Beaconsfield (Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/W/23/3326343). The relevant paragraphs from the Decision Notice are:

11 *"Openness has both spatial and visual aspects. The proposal would introduce built volume to the site which would impact on Green Belt openness in spatial terms. I note the concerns raised from local residents regarding the effects of the proposal on Green Belt openness. However, through the exception provided by paragraph 154b, the Framework does not preclude all built development within the Green Belt. It is therefore a matter of planning judgement as to whether the proposal would preserve Green Belt openness."*

17 *"At present, the site is vacant. The proposed use would*

increase activity on the site, through users of the pitches, and increased vehicle movements, which would be visible from certain public vantage points, namely from the proposed access. This increase in activity would be as a consequence of the material change of use of the land. In providing an exception for material changes of use, paragraph 155 of the Framework makes explicit reference to uses for outdoor sport, and it is therefore logical to conclude that changes in activity levels do not conflict with the Framework."

4.0

Evidence Base

4.1

Epsom and Ewell Green Belt Study Update 2024

The Green Belt Study Update 2024 predates the December 2024 NPPF which introduces the concept of 'grey belt'. As such, it is our opinion that the Study is now outdated.

The Site forms parcel P03 within the Study - 'Land to the southwest of Langley Vale'.

The Study scores each parcel of land based on its level of contribution towards the Green Belt purposes (excluding purposes D & E). Out of a possible score of 9, parcel P03 has an overall score of 5, demonstrating that it generally makes a lower contribution to the Green Belt purposes than other parcels.

The Study considers the Site performs 'moderately' against purposes A & C but has a limited impact on purpose B.

Epsom and Ewell Green Belt Study 2024	
Land north of Langley Bottom Farm P03	
NPPF Purposes of the Green Belt	Score
A. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	2
B. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	1
C. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	2
Overall Score	5

The adjacent table includes the detailed description of the Site as included at page 73 of the The Green Belt Study Update 2024. fabrik commentary is provided in response to those descriptions provided.

Epsom and Ewell Green Belt Study 2024 - Land north of Langley Bottom Farm P03		fabrik commentary
P03 Typology	P03 description	
landscape character and relationship with the wider area	<i>'The site is located within the National Character Area 129, Thames Basin Heaths and under the county-wide character assessment UE3: Epsom Downs. Some key characteristics of the area as a whole is sloping landform, open, exposed fields, a growing sense of remoteness to the south.</i> <i>Land use is agricultural, transitioning to the wider open countryside. It also adjoins the southern settlement edge of Langley Vale. The landform forms a side of a valley, descending from 125m to 85m AOD, the lowest part along Langley Vale Road. There are bridleways to the west and southern edge of the site and paths within the woodlands (The Warren). The area has routes which connect Headley / Walton-on-the- Hill / Epsom Downs.</i> <i>This parcel falls within an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). The designation extends south beyond the borough boundary. The eastern edge adjoins ancient woodland.'</i>	The local landscape has intervisibility with the settlement of Langley Vale, and as such, the landscape character is influenced by the built form and associated infrastructure in the prominent topographical position.
Readily recognisable physical features which are likely to be permanent	<i>'The site abuts the settlement boundary of Langley Vale which has a has clear and regular boundary. The southeastern tip would follow the strong ancient woodland line.</i> <i>The southern boundary of the site does not follow a readily recognisable physical boundary, appears to be the centre point of the large field. The western boundary follows an access road/path running parallel to Ebbisham Lane but does not follow any physical boundary on the northern part of this edge.</i> <i>The site does not currently follow a recognisable physical boundary to the south or west and therefore it would need to be achieved through the creation of new edges/boundaries through design, potentially compromising the integrity of the boundary here.'</i>	The southern boundary of the Site aligns with proposals for the allowed adjacent scheme at Langley Bottom Farmyard, which includes an attenuation basin to the immediate southwest of the Parcel P03 - the Site. Opportunities arise to extend the woodland habitat of The Warren - classified as Ancient Woodland, at the Site's eastern boundary. The provision of additional woodland would create habitat connectivity and enhancements, pertinent to the local landscape typology.
Views	<i>'There are views of the site from the southern edge of the Langley Vale Village settlement, specifically views from the curtilage of Grosvenor Road, Millers Copse and Langley Close.</i> <i>There are views of the valley side and bottom from bridleways and footpaths that form the edge to this parcel, some of these are elevated viewpoints across the Langley Bottom Farm stead towards the countryside beyond.'</i>	As demonstrated within the associated Landscape Representations, views of the Site are limited to the immediate setting and local landscape. From the majority of locations where the Site is apparent, it is viewed within the context of the adjacent settlement of Langley Vale.
Visual Sensitivity	<i>'The site is highly sensitive due to its location and the setting it provides to both the Epsom Downs Racecourse and Langley Vale settlement.</i> <i>It also forms part of a transitional landscape, one side of a valley which leads into the wider countryside beyond. Elevated views from the northern edge from the edge of the woodlands and from various parts of the village (e.g. Langley Close). The site is rare and quite tranquil in the context of the wider borough as part of the Epsom Downs area.</i> <i>There are longer distance views of this parcel from the Epsom Downs Racecourse and from a bridleway on elevated ground to the north and south of the site.</i> <i>The site is of high landscape and visual sensitivity. This is comprised of the combined effects of this transitional landscape the amenity and sensitive nature of the viewpoints, some of which are medium to longer distance and the site forms the foreground to these views. The site is rare in the context of the wider borough as part of the Epsom Downs area and would not be readily substitutable.'</i>	Whilst it is acknowledge that the Site is apparent from receptors with a medium to high sensitivity, the LVIA demonstrated that the Site experiences a localised visual envelope, where the character and amenity of views of the Site are informed by the adjacent existing dwellings.
Conclusion	<i>'Landscape and visual sensitivity are high and there is a high overall sensitivity to development where the impact on openness considered to be high.</i> <i>The existing urban edge is rounded off and clearly delineated. The proposed site boundaries do not follow a recognisable feature that is likely to be permanent and is considered to be weak and would extend the urban edge in awkward manner. Therefore, the overall integrity of the Green Belt in this location would be considered compromised should the site be released from the Green Belt.'</i>	The Site is small scale when considering the context of the wider Borough's Green Belt extent. The existing settlement edge of Langley Vale comprises of rear garden boundaries, intermittent planting and trees within rear gardens and is situated within a prominent topographical position. Opportunities arise to provide an enhanced southwestern settlement edge, with homes that front the northeast facing hillside to the south, and which are contained by definitive boundaries which include SuDS features, new woodland planting and PRow / access road to the consented scheme at Langley Bottom Farm.

5.0

Site Function

5.1

Spatial Openness

The Site comprises a small area of open land, on part of the slopes of the associated south facing hillside. It is abutted by residential built development to the north, which comprises part of the settlement edge of Langley Vale; Public Right of Way, access track and (to be constructed) attenuation basin associated with the allowed scheme at Langley Bottom Farmyard; Langley Vale Road to the west; and open countryside to the east.

The landform continues to rise to the north, beyond the Site, where a localised ridgeline forms a skyline feature. Langley Vale is situated in this prominent topographical location. Beyond the valley bottom to the south of the Site, the landform rises southwards, with a north facing hillside that truncates views out of the Site to the wider landscape beyond.

As a result of the prevailing topographical and vegetated context, the Site represents a relatively discrete parcel of land within the wider Green Belt context.

5.2

Visual Openness

The Site experiences a localised visual envelope, with views limited to those from existing dwellings to the north, from Langley Vale Road to the west and from the PRoW within proximity to the south and southeast.

Views are generally filtered or open and not especially extensive from public or private locations. The undulating topography has the effect of limiting the extent of the visual envelope, and providing landform and dwellings as skyline features. Furthermore, the layering of vegetation provides filtering and a sense of enclosure.

In terms of visual openness, rather than being a high functioning extensive part of the Green Belt which contributes highly towards the main function of keeping land 'permanently open', and whilst the agricultural land use of the Site results in an open landscape, overall, the Site, small in scale is enclosed by rising landform and woodland, influenced by existing adjacent residential built form and urbanising elements. The Site is seen by relatively few receptors in close proximity to it. Furthermore, in terms of links to the wider Green Belt, the visual linkage to the wider countryside is limited by the undulating topography locally - to the south. It's sense of openness is therefore limited to a localised geographic area

Table 5.1 Performance against Purposes		
Green Belt Purpose	fabrik assessment of contribution	Contribution
A: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	The Site is small in scale and situated immediately adjacent to part of the village of Langley Vale - a settlement which is not defined as a 'large built-up area', Whilst the Site is open and undeveloped, it is of a small scale and contained within the immediate context by topography and settlement. There is little to no defensible boundary adjacent to the settlement edge at the Site's northern boundary. There is clear potential for a new defensible boundary to be established within the Site to prevent unrestricted sprawl. The Site on its own therefore makes no contribution to this strategic purpose.	None
B: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	The Site forms a very small part of a wide area of Green Belt between Epsom to the north and Dorking to the south, with Ashtead to the west and Tadworth to the east. Epsom and Dorking are considered to be towns. Furthermore, there is no intervisibility between the Site and any other adjacent settlement beyond Langley Vale, which is an urbanising feature within the locality. The Site therefore makes a Weak contribution to this purpose.	Weak
C: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Whilst the Site contains open land with an absence of built development and is characterised by a sense of rurality, the Site is small in scale and experiences urbanising influences from the dwellings at the southern edge of Langley Vale to the immediate north. The Site therefore makes a Moderate contribution to this purpose.	Moderate
D: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The Site does not form part of the setting of a historic town. As such makes no contribution to this purpose.	None

5.3

Performance against Purposes

Table 5.1 above sets out the fabrik assessment of the Site and its strategic contribution to the first four purposes of the Green Belt in its local context. Purpose E is not assessed as the Site is not brown field. Our findings conclude that the Site does not perform strongly against the relevant Green Belt purposes A, B, C and D. This aligns with Epsom and Ewell's 2024 Study findings - where the Site scores 5 out of a possible score of 9, demonstrating that in the Council's view it generally makes a lower contribution to the Green Belt purposes than other parcels.

5.4

Assessment against "Grey Belt" definition

The December 2024 NPPF defines Grey Belt land as: "*Grey belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and / or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.*"

The NPPF is supported by the on-line resource Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The guidance on assessing Grey Belt land is set out at Section ID: 64-001-20190722 (Revision date 27 February 2025) Paragraphs 005 - 009.

fabrik's assessment of the Site's contribution to the Green Belt purposes is set out in **Table 5.1** opposite. The assessment of Purposes A, B and D in relation to the definition of Grey Belt land identified the following:

- Purpose A: No Contribution
- Purpose B: Weak Contribution
- Purpose D: No Contribution

The Site therefore *"does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143"*.

5.5 Footnote 7 Test

Before concluding that the Site meets the definition of Grey Belt, it is necessary to confirm whether the Site is "*land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.*"

Footnote 7 states: "*The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 189) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.*"

In this respect, the Site is not:

- A habitats site or a SSSI (it does contain a Local Wildlife Site which is a non-statutory designation);
- Local Green Space;
- A National Landscape;
- A National Park or defined as Heritage Coast;

and the Site does not

- Contain designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interests).

Whilst lying within an Area of Great Landscape Value, this is a local designation and is not included within the criteria listed above. It is considered therefore that the Site is Grey Belt in accordance with the definition within the December 2024 NPPF.

As a consequence, NPPF Paragraph 155 and the four criterion set out in points A-D must therefore be used to determine if the Proposed Development should be considered inappropriate or not. This is considered in detail at Section 6.

6.0

The Proposed Development

6.1 Opportunities for Mitigation

The following mitigation measures, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, have been incorporated into the Proposed Development to reduce harm to Green Belt function:

Retention and Enhancement of High-Value Landscape Features

- Retain and protect the Ancient Woodland edge as a key landscape and ecological asset. Establish a minimum 15m buffer to Ancient Woodland, enhanced with ecologically appropriate native woodland edge planting to strengthen habitat continuity and visual screening.

Strengthening Green Infrastructure and Landscape Integration

- Deliver a significant area of connected green infrastructure to the southeast of the site to:
 - Reinforce the Epsom Downs Character Area (UE3) wooded landscape setting.
 - Extend woodland character southward, helping reduce visual impact and soften the development edge.

Visual Containment and Sensitive Layout

- Locate development parcels sensitively, well-integrated with the existing settlement edge to reduce perceived sprawl and maintain Green Belt openness.
- Introduce setbacks from Langley Vale Road to preserve the sense of openness in the northern Site area, reinforcing the Green Belt purpose of checking unrestricted sprawl.

Edge Treatment and Visual Screening

- Apply additional woodland planting adjacent to the Ancient Woodland and PRoW to:
 - Enhance visual containment from nearby landscape receptors.
 - Create a layered landscape buffer that integrates development into the setting.

Scale and Form of Development

- Restrict buildings to domestic scale (maximum 2 storeys) and avoid development on high ground, therefore:
 - Minimising visibility from surrounding countryside.
 - Maintaining the modest scale consistent with Langley Vale's character

Provision of Accessible Green Infrastructure and Recreation Opportunities

- Design the southeast green infrastructure zone to offer public access, recreation, and informal open space, fostering community engagement and aligning with Green Belt objectives of providing access to the countryside.



Figure 6.1 – Green Belt mitigation opportunities (fabrik, 2025)

6.0

The Proposed Development

6.2

NPPF Para 156: "Golden Rules"

As set out in Section 2.1.1, NPPF Para 156 sets out three "Golden Rules" that "sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application" should contribute to. Golden Rules A and B are covered by the Planning Statement submitted as part of the application material.

Golden Rule C requires "the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces."

The NPPF is supported by the online resource Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The guidance on Golden Rules is set out at Section ID: 64-001-20190722 (Revision date 27 February 2025) Paragraph 012 covered in Section 2.1.2 of this GBA.

The Proposed Development will meet Green Belt Golden Rule C by delivering a substantial area of publicly accessible green infrastructure to the southeast of the site, designed in line with the Epsom Downs Character Area (UE3). This green space will include new woodland planting and open areas that reflect the local landscape character while offering opportunities for informal recreation and nature connection. Located within a short walking distance of all new dwellings, this green space will be directly accessible from the development and will link to the wider PRoW and Bridleway network, enhancing local connectivity and encouraging walking and outdoor activity. The layout ensures that part of the Site is retained as open space, with additional planting reinforcing a positive, accessible transition between the new homes and the adjacent countryside and racecourse gallops.

6.3

Impact on Physical Openness

The Proposed Development will result in a physical loss of openness due to the introduction of built form that includes new homes and associated infrastructure, within a currently undeveloped portion of the Green Belt.

However, this loss is concentrated in a discrete and small part of the wider Green Belt, immediately adjacent to the existing built-up edge of Langley Vale at Roseberry Road, and does not intrude into the lower slopes or valley floor, which will remain undeveloped and functionally open.

The layout has been informed by topography, avoiding development on the most elevated land, and reserving the

lower southern part of the site for sustainable drainage (SuDS), open space, and continued equestrian use. This allows for the retention of spatial openness in the landscape setting south of the development.

Furthermore, the proposal incorporates substantial green infrastructure and landscape buffers, which help to soften the transition between the settlement edge and the countryside, and mitigate the extent of physical encroachment into the Green Belt.

6.4

Impact on Visual Openness

Development of the Site would result in the loss of visual openness to a discrete and small part of the Green Belt, which has a limited contribution to the strategic function of openness.

The topographical containment of the Site, together with existing woodland, hedgerows, and built form to the north, limits long-range visibility and prevents the development from being visually prominent across the wider landscape.

Setbacks from Langley Vale Road and additional woodland planting along key edges will reduce the prominence of built form in views beyond the Site. This visual buffering contributes to maintaining the perceptual sense of openness in the wider area, even with some built form introduced.

6.5

Assessment of potential harm to Green Belt purposes

Table 6.1 sets out the assessment of the proposed development of the Site for residential development (assumed limited to 'up to two storeys') and its level of harm in relation to the first four purposes of the Green Belt.

Table 6.1: Assessment of the harm arising from the Proposed Development against Purposes A-D

Green Belt Purpose	fabrik Assessment	Harm
A: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Langley Vale is not a large built-up area. Furthermore, development of the Site would represent a logical expansion to the village, with open space, sustainable drainage and structural planting creating a clear and distinct vegetated boundary which has the ability to restrict further sprawl. Therefore, development of the Site would result in no harm to Purpose A.	None
B: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	There is no intervisibility between the Site and any adjacent settlement beyond Langley Vale, namely Epsom to the north, Dorking to the south, Ashtead to the west and Tadworth to the east. Development of the Site would not therefore result in coalescence - the physical or visual linking of two towns. Furthermore, development of the Site would not harm the distinct and separate identity of Langley Vale and these other settlements within the Green Belt. Therefore, development of the Site would result in no harm to Purpose B.	None
C: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Development of the Site would result in a small advancement of urban characteristics within a logical and acceptable limit when considering the historic settlement pattern of Langley Vale with C20th development on the rising landform of the Espom Downs, (in which the Site forms a small part), and the settlement pattern in the south of Langley Vale where homes extend to the northern limits of woodland at The Warren. Furthermore, the small advancement of urban characteristics would be received within a landscape that has associations with urbanising influences - those being dwellings and rear gardens at Beaconsfield Road, Millers Copse, Langley Close and The Hayes (which are apparent from the entirety of the Site) and Langley Vale Road to the west. Therefore, development of the Site would result in Limited harm to Purpose C.	Limited
D: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The Site does not form part of the setting of a historic town. Therefore, development of the Site would result in no harm to Purpose D.	None

6.0

The Proposed Development

6.6

Assessment against Paragraph 155 (a)

Given the assessment of the Site's performance against the 5 NPPF purposes as set out in Table 5.1 in Section 5.2 and the conclusion that the Site is considered to be Grey Belt as set out in Section 4.4. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF and the four criterion set out in points A-D must therefore be used to determine if the Proposed Development should be considered inappropriate or not. Criteria A is of relevance to this GBA. Full consideration of Paragraph 155 points B - C is set out within the submitted Planning Statement as part of the planning application material.

The relevant parts of Para 155 for this GBA are quoted below:

155: "The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where:

a) The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

Point A of Para 155 can be split into two parts. As stated in Section 5.4, this GBA has already identified the Site as Grey Belt. Therefore the below analysis focuses on whether the Proposed Development would "fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan".

The Site's relationship to the extent of Green Belt within Epsom and Ewell Borough is illustrated on Figure 6.2 to the right.

Assessment of the Purposes (taken together)

The assessment of harm on the purposes of the Green Belt at the site level as a result of the Proposed Development are set out in Section 6.5, Table 6.1 and summarised below:

- A: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas - None
- B: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another- None
- C: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment- Limited
- D: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns - None
- E: To assist urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land - N/A

At the Borough scale and with the Proposed Development in place, the remaining Green Belt land is considered to retain the distinct and separate identities of the Large Built-Up Areas and settlements identified on Figure 6.2. In relation to Purpose C, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) identifies Epsom and Ewell Borough consisting of a total area of 3,410 ha with 1,560 ha of Green Belt, equating to 45.8% of the Borough designated as Green Belt. The introduction of circa 3.7ha of residential area within the Proposed Development into a total Green Belt area across the Borough of 1,560 ha equates to a 0.24% change. The Proposed Development is therefore considered to cause Limited Harm to Purpose C and the overall function of the Green Belt in preventing encroachment to the countryside is therefore retained.

In summary, in relation to the NPPF Para 155 (a) test, some localised and Site level harms are identified to Purpose C as described, however when considered across the area of the plan and in combination with the lack of harm to Purposes A, B and D, it is considered that the Proposed Development can be accommodated without fundamentally undermining the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

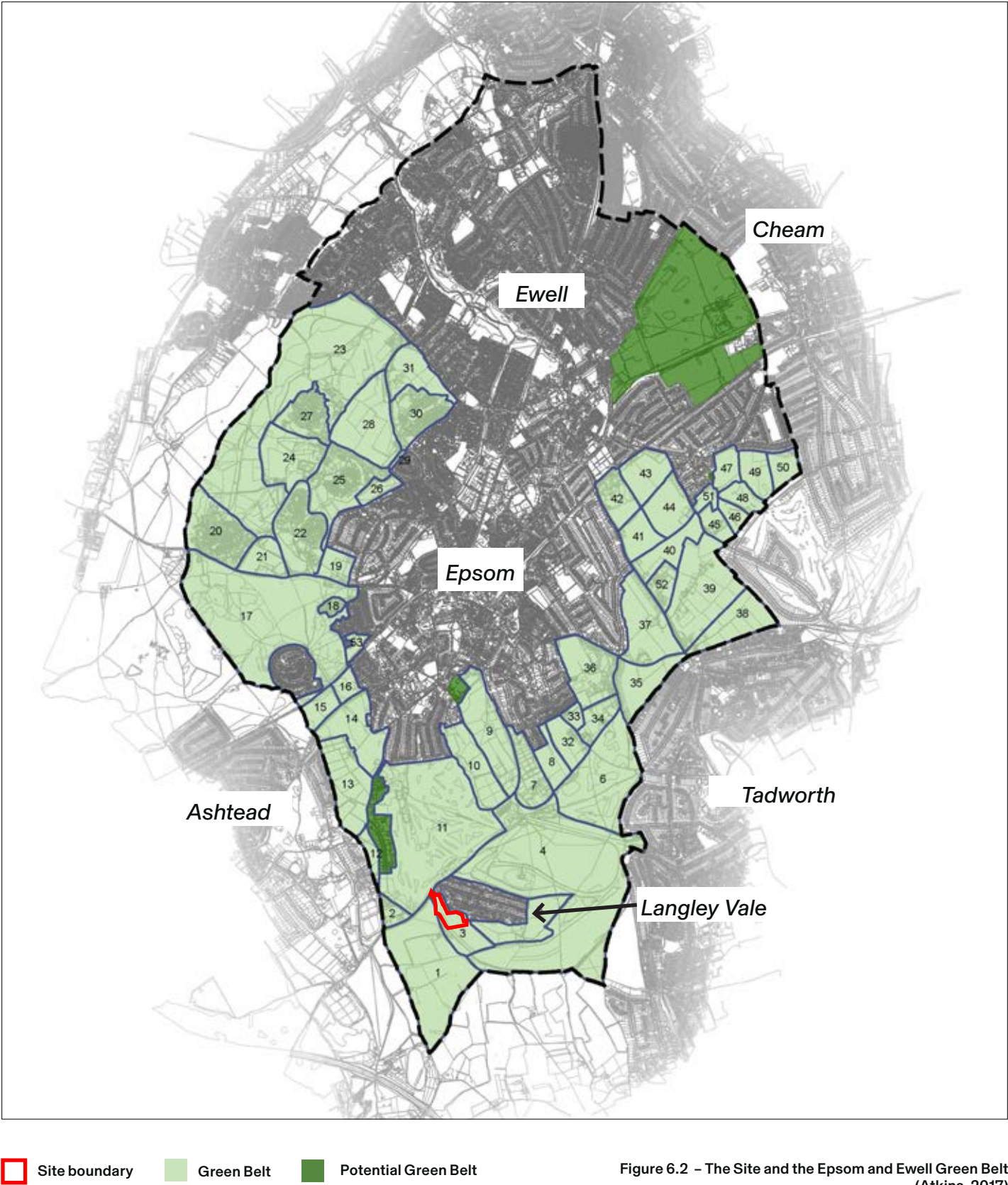


Figure 6.2 – The Site and the Epsom and Ewell Green Belt (Atkins, 2017)

7.0

Summary and Conclusion

The Site comprises a relatively small and enclosed area of open land situated on a south-facing hillside on the settlement edge of Langley Vale. Views of the Site are experienced primarily from local receptors, with wider visibility constrained by landform and vegetative screening.

Overall, the Site performs weakly against the Green Belt purposes A and B, and its contribution is consistent with the Council's own 2024 assessment which identifies it as making a generally lower contribution in comparison with other Green Belt parcels. The Site is assessed as making a Moderate contribution to purpose C, as whilst the Site contains open land with an absence of built development and is characterised by a sense of rurality, the Site is small in scale and experiences urbanising influences from the dwellings at the southern edge of Langley Vale to the immediate north. The Site makes no contribution to purpose D.

Based on its weak contribution to Purposes A, B, and D of the Green Belt, the Site aligns with the definition of 'Grey Belt' land as set out in the December 2024 NPPF and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance. This classification provides a further policy basis for considering the Site suitable for development without undermining the strategic role of the wider Green Belt.

The Proposed Development will cause some harm to the Green Belt by reducing both physical and visual openness in a localised area. However, this harm is constrained by the Site's discrete and enclosed nature and its proximity to existing development. Proposed green infrastructure and planting further reduce the development's visual impact and help integrate it into the landscape setting. Resultingly, the Proposed Development will lead to no harm on purposes A and B, and only Limited harm on purpose C. In relation to the NPPF Para 155 (a) test, when considered across the area of the plan and in combination with the lack of harm to Purposes A, B and D, it is considered that the Proposed Development can be accommodated within fundamentally undermining the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

The Proposed Development therefore achieves a balanced approach that minimises encroachment while also delivering local benefits and respecting the Site's landscape context.

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