

DACORUM BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 1991-2011



***JANUARY
2000***

GREEN BELT AND SETTLEMENTS TECHNICAL REPORT



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CLARIFICATION IN PARAGRAPH 2.7.10

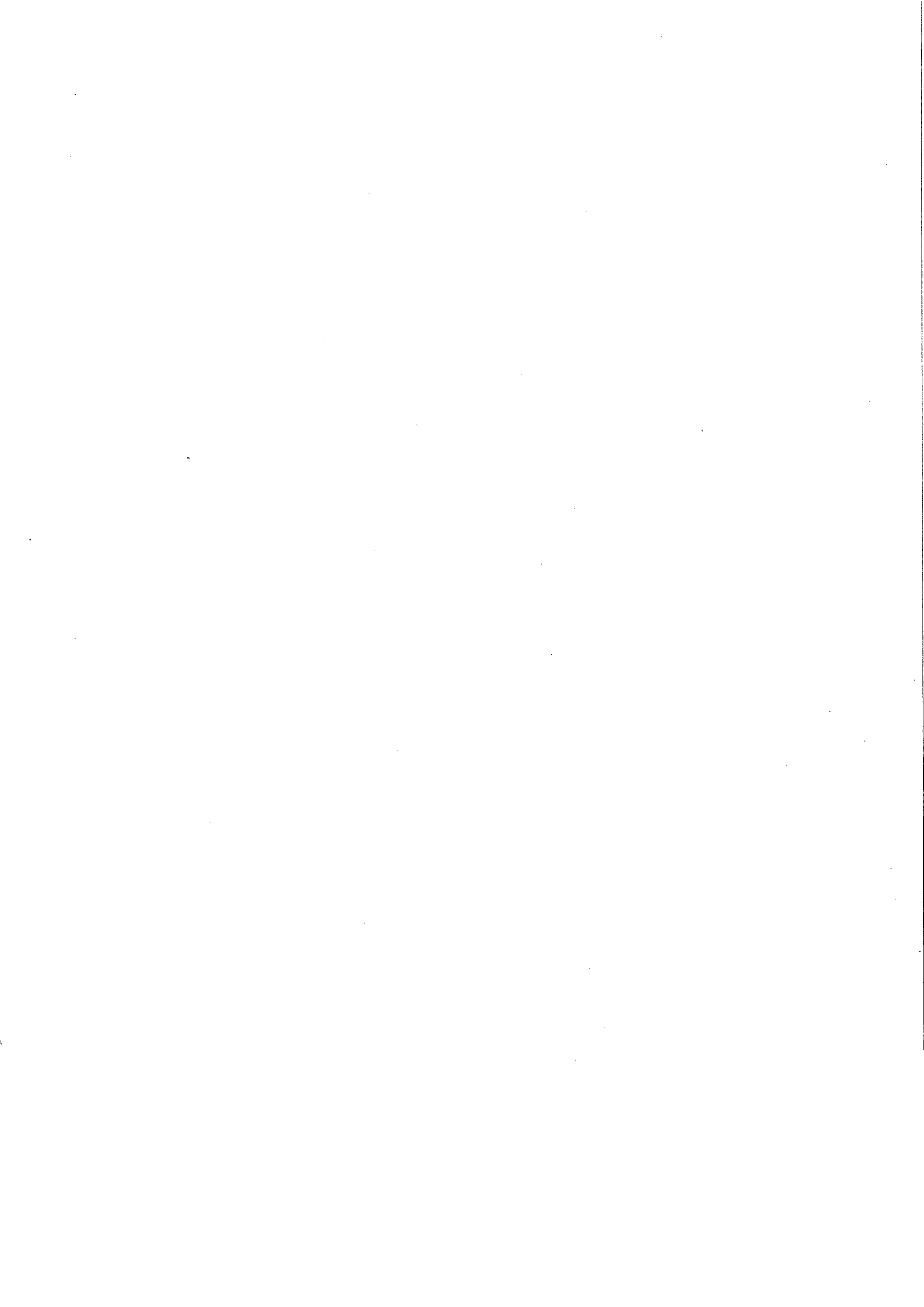
The ninth sentence should be replaced.

Old text:

Kings Langley is also a potential Policy 6 settlement, i.e. one of the 'other' settlements that may be selected in local plans for limited development.

New text

The Council has treated Kings Langley as a Policy 6 listed settlement, because it is specifically mentioned in Policy 5 as a location which could possibly accommodate a limited exclusion or exclusions from the Green Belt.



GREEN BELT AND SETTLEMENTS TECHNICAL REPORT

ERRATA

- A) Page 24, Table 1 Green Belt Releases
 - i) "TWA7 Land SW and SE of Manor Estate" should have 230 and not 260 as stated for the number of dwellings in the Deposit Draft.
 - ii) The TOTAL figure for the number of dwellings in the Deposit Draft should be 1,394 and not 1,294 as stated.
 - iii) The * indicating "including green field release at NE Hemel Hempstead" should refer to the "Total of sites at Hemel Hempstead"

- B) Page 42, Paragraph 3.6.5 refers to Appendix 1. This was mistakenly not included in the Technical Report and is now attached.

14 March 2000

Markyate - minor alterations to the settlement boundary are proposed, most notably an extension of the boundary towards Cheverals Green. Markyate has a large number of shops/services and includes industrial areas. It has long been considered that the existing restrictive policies are no longer appropriate and indeed recently some relaxation of these policies has taken place.

Chipperfield - again only minor alterations to the boundary are proposed. Scatterdells Lane and surrounding areas were also considered for identification. However these are largely spacious residential areas where any form of infilling might change the character of the area which would be inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Potten End - Only one major change to the boundary has been proposed. The boundary remains tightly drawn round the settlement. It was noted that a number of 'infill' developments have been allowed, largely on appeal and in consequence there is only limited scope for further development.

Flamstead and Wigginton - both lie within the Green Belt with only basic shops/services. Both settlements have small 'built-up' areas associated but separate from the main area - Trowley Hill Bottom and Wigginton Bottom respectively, but it is not proposed that these be included within the settlement boundary. In Flamstead it should be noted that the western boundary has been drawn around land where recently six Council houses were demolished and are due to be replaced.

Long Marston - no major changes to the existing village core boundary are proposed. The opportunity exists for only a very limited amount of infilling.

2. PROPOSED 'INFILLING' VILLAGES

Aldbury - a sizeable settlement in terms of population and size, located in the AONB. It is a pretty village, largely covered by Conservation Area designation which gives some protection from unsuitable proposals.

Wilstone - this village is similar in many respects to Long Marston in terms of population size and pattern of development and a similar policy can therefore be applied.

Bourne End and Rucklers Lane - not perhaps strictly villages in their own right, they are built-up residential areas where the possibility exists for limited infilling. There are some doubts about the suitability of Bourne End as a village where infilling is to be permitted as it has few facilities.



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1991-2011

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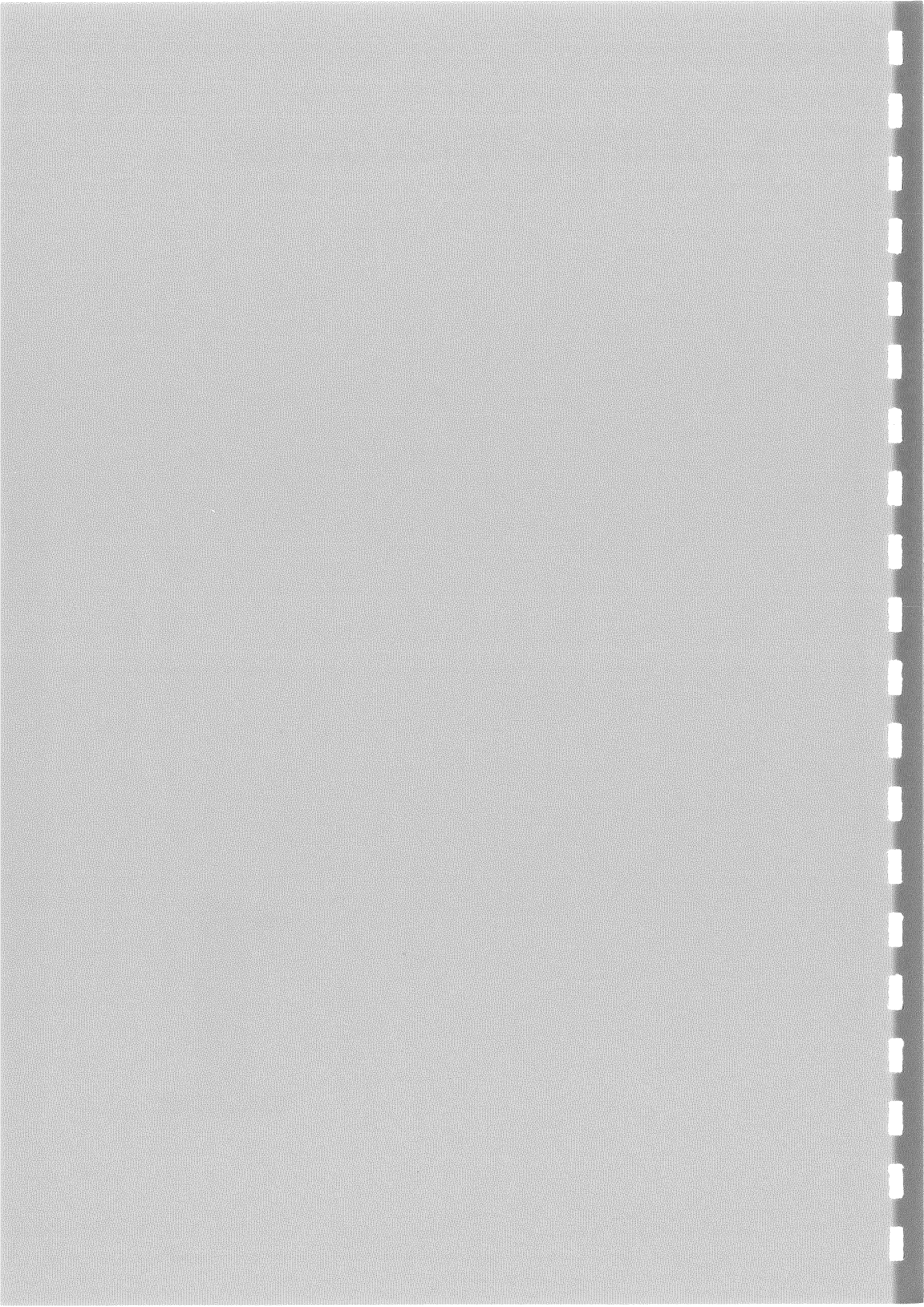
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1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Report

1.1.1 This report is one of a series which provides the technical background to the Dacorum Borough Local Plan. The purpose of the report is to explain and justify the evolution of policies relating to the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB), the rural area beyond the MGB and settlements within the Borough. It seeks to demonstrate that these policies constitute a co-ordinated approach to settlement planning in an area of growth restraint.

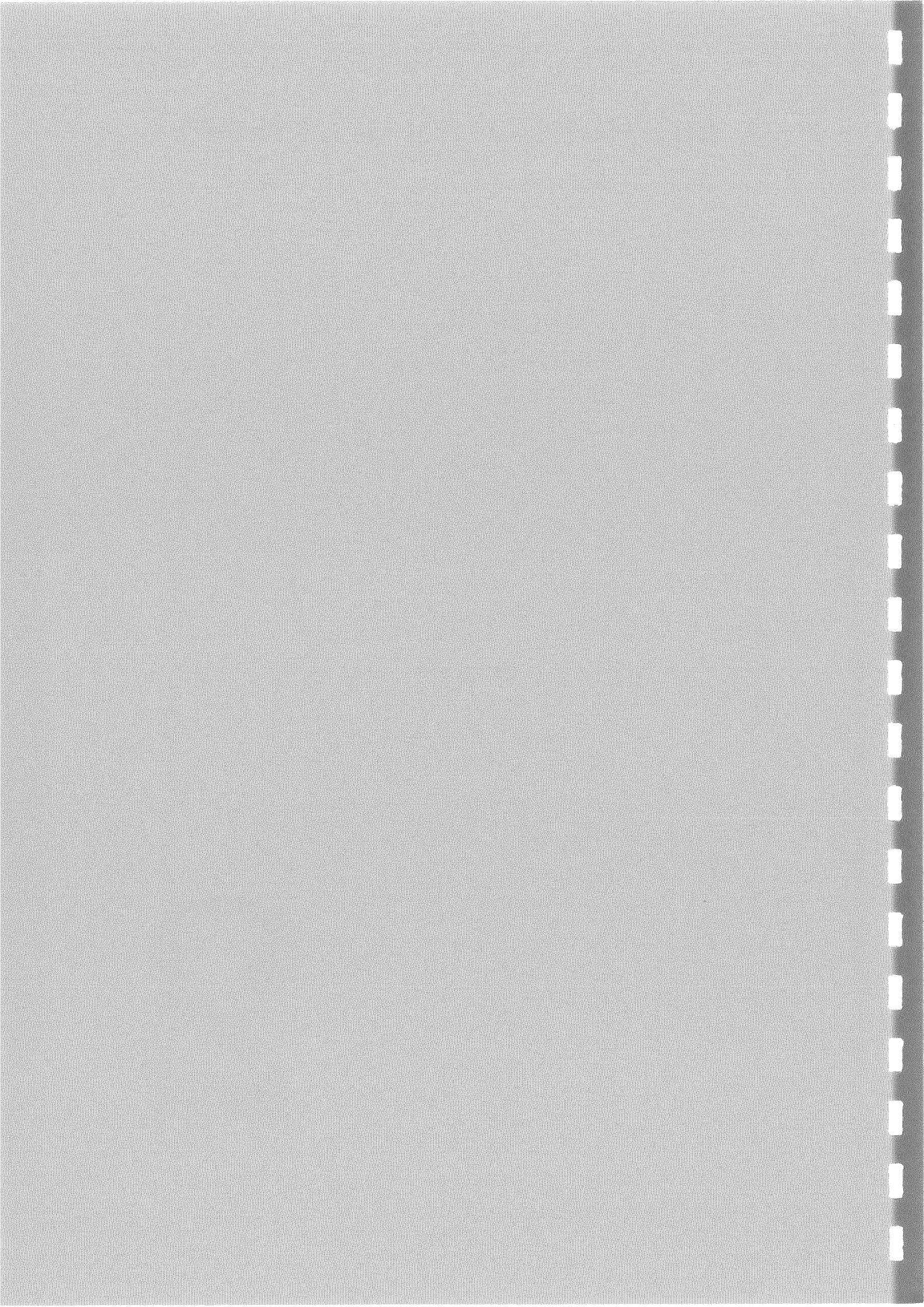
1.2 Report Structure

1.2.1 The various sections of the report contain details of government guidance and the strategic planning context, and indicate how the Borough Local Plan policies provide a satisfactory interpretation at the local level. Historical background is provided where this is important to an understanding of the current approach.

1.2.2 Cross references to other parts of this Technical Report take the form (see para 2.2.4) whereas references to or quotations from other documents appear as '(para 2.6)'.

2. METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT

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2. METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This section briefly covers the origins and evolution of the Green Belt concept. It goes on to describe the strategic planning context at the regional and county levels. Relevant Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) issues raised at past Local Plan Inquiries are then examined where they provide background to current issues. This is followed by a description and justification of the amendments to the MGB boundary in the Deposit Draft.

2.1.2 The issues covered relate to inner Green Belt boundaries around identified settlements and the outer boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt, and the South Bedfordshire Green Belt which in effect was proposed to be extended southwards on several occasions in the area round Markyate.

2.2 Government Guidance

2.2.1 Hertfordshire, because of its relatively buoyant economy and location close to London has, since the inter-war years, been subject to rapid population and employment growth. This has been caused both by the planned movement of people, mainly from London, to new employment and housing in New Towns and overspill estates, and by the voluntary movement, from London and elsewhere in the country, of people searching for better housing conditions and job opportunities. In order to control this urbanisation the Greater London Plan 1944 (The Abercrombie Plan) which was accepted by the government as establishing the guiding planning principles for the region, drew a Green Belt within which development was to be strictly controlled around London.

2.2.2 The principles behind the establishment of Green Belts were originally set down in the *Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular 42/55*. Briefly a Green Belt was to be used in order to:

- (a) check the further growth of a large built-up area;
- (b) prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
or
- (c) preserve the special character of a town.

2.2.3 Subsequent Circulars and PPG2 Green Belts (1988) reinforced and elaborated on various aspects of Green Belts:

- Circular 50/57 advised on defining Green Belt boundaries, and along with Circular 42/55 was relevant at the time of the Dacorum District Plan (adopted in January 1984)
- Circular 14/84 extended the purposes of including land in a Green Belt, adding:

- safeguarding the surrounding countryside from further encroachment; and
- assisting in urban regeneration
- Circular 12/87 provided planning guidelines for redundant hospital sites in Green Belts
- PPG2: Green Belts (1998) consolidated all the above advice providing the national policy context for the Structure Plan 1991 (CD26) and the Adopted Plan 1995 (CD39).

2.2.4 The Department of the Environment commissioned research into the effectiveness of Green Belts (1993), which resulted in the revised PPG2 (1995) (CD2). This reaffirms the Government's commitment to Green Belt policies, develops previous guidance, but also introduces a number of significant changes. A clear distinction is now made between the general intentions of Green Belt policy, the purposes of including land in the Green Belt and the objectives for land use.

2.2.5 The revised guidance confirms that Green Belts must be protected for the future and advises on defining boundaries which allow for the safeguarding of land for longer term development needs. It also maintains the presumption against inappropriate development within Green Belts, although the categories of appropriate development are refined.

2.2.6 Paragraph 1.4 explains the general intentions of Green Belt designation. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy remains to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land open. Green Belts can shape urban development patterns, help to protect the countryside and assist in moving towards more sustainable patterns of urban development.

2.2.7 The five specific purposes of the Green Belt have been slightly reworded in circulars and the previous PPG and are now:

to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;

to assist in safeguarding the surrounding countryside from encroachment;

to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;

to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (para.1.5).

2.2.8 For the first time the objectives for land included in the Green Belt are framed (in para 1.6) though the extent to which the use of land fulfils these objectives is not a material factor in the inclusion of land within a Green Belt (para 1.7).

2.2.9 The advice on defining boundaries states:

"2.6 Once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. If such an alteration is proposed the Secretary of State will wish to be satisfied that the authority has considered opportunities for development within the urban areas contained by and beyond the Green Belt. Similarly, detailed Green Belt boundaries defined in adopted local plans or earlier approved development plans should be altered only exceptionally. Detailed boundaries should not be altered or development allowed merely because the land has become derelict.

2.7 Where existing local plans are being revised and updated, existing Green Belt boundaries should not be changed unless alterations to the structure plan have been approved, or other exceptional circumstances exist, which necessitate such revisions."

2.2.10 The desired width of a Green Belt is mentioned. "Wherever practicable a Green Belt should be several miles wide, so as to ensure an appreciable open zone all around the built-up area concerned". Recognisable features, such as roads, streams, belts of trees or woodland edges should be used to define boundaries (para.2.9).

2.2.11 The need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account in drawing up Green Belt boundaries e.g. the consequences of channelling development towards urban areas inside the inner Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary (para. 2.10).

2.2.12 The emphasis on the permanence of the Green Belt is maintained (para 2.1). There is a greater emphasis on safeguarded land. Green Belt boundaries should not need to be altered at the end of each Plan period. Proposals affecting Green Belts should be related to a longer timescale than that normally adopted for other aspects of the plan. Local planning authorities should be satisfied that the Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period. To achieve this, safeguarding of land between the urban area and the Green Belt may be required to meet long-term development needs (para 2.12). Safeguarded land for anticipated development beyond the Plan period (para. 2.12) should initially be identified in structure plans. Further advice on safeguarded land is contained in Annex B, including the need to keep it free to fulfil its intended long term purpose (para. B4) and promote sustainable development by being, inter alia, well integrated with existing development (para. B3).

2.2.13 The advice on the treatment of existing villages in Green Belt (para 2.11) is covered in paragraph 3.2.4 below.

2.2.14 Paragraph 3.4 states that the construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt is inappropriate unless for the following purposes:

- agriculture and forestry;
- essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, for cemeteries, for other uses of land which do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt;
- limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings;
- limited infilling in existing villages and limited affordable housing for community needs under development plan policies which accord with PPG3;
- limited infilling or redevelopment of major existing developed sites identified in adopted local plans meeting criteria in Annex C on infilling or redevelopment.

2.2.15 The reuse of existing buildings should not prejudice the openness of the Green Belt, since the buildings are already there (para 3.7). Criteria are set out in paragraph 3.8 and include strict control over the extension of reused buildings and associated uses on the surrounding land such as car parking, storage and boundary walls or fences.

2.2.16 Annex C applies to major developed sites in the Green Belt such as factories, collieries, power stations, water and sewage treatment works, military establishments, civil airfields, hospitals and research and educational establishments. They may be in continuing use or redundant (para. C1). Local plans can identify such sites for infilling or redevelopment (para. C2). Infilling should be limited in extent and height (para. C3). Redevelopment should be the subject of a development brief, and have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt (para. C4).

2.3 Regional Planning Guidance

2.3.1 RPG9 (CD23) contains several broad objectives: economic performance; sustainable development and environmental improvement; opportunity and choice (paragraphs 1.6-1.9). The principles include making the fullest possible use of opportunities for redevelopment and recycling of urban land not just to secure development and urban regeneration, but also to improve the urban environment and reduce the need to take greenfield sites (paragraph 1.10(iv)). Firm protection of Green Belts is to be maintained and inappropriate development in the countryside resisted (paragraph 1.10(v)).

2.3.2 It confirms the guidance in PPG2 (issued in 1988) regarding the permanence of Green Belt boundaries (para. 4.18) and accepts that the scope for development in some towns will be limited to that accommodated through redevelopment and renewal (para.4.19). The latter point is particularly relevant to Tring.

2.4 County Planning Context

2.4.1 This section of the Technical Report deals with the extent of the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) and proposals to extend the South Bedfordshire Green Belt into Hertfordshire. The associated settlement policies are dealt with in Section 3.

2.4.2 When the Hertfordshire sector of the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) was originally defined in the County Development Plan 1958, the boundary ran to the south of Hemel Hempstead and Bovingdon (see Map 1) i.e. including Kings Langley, Chipperfield and Flaunden.

2.4.3 In that part of the County not within the MGB and not shown by any notation on the County Map, it was intended that existing uses should remain undisturbed.

2.4.4 The *Approved County Structure Plan (1979)* contained a limited extension to the Green Belt to cover 'those areas nearest to London which are under the heaviest pressure and where there is a risk of coalescence of settlements'. The Secretary of State considered that in general a Green Belt about 12-15 miles deep should be adequate, with limited extensions along the main radial transport corridors. He did not consider it either reasonable or necessary to extend Green Belt coverage to the whole of the rural County in order to achieve the stated purposes of a Green Belt as set out in the MHLG Circular 42/55. He further considered that the policies for agricultural priority areas, amenity corridors and villages were adequate to restrict development, in support of the County's strategy of restraint of growth, in the remainder of the rural County not included in the Green Belt (Decision letter 21 September 1979 para 3.2). The Key Diagram consequently showed a Green Belt boundary in Dacorum just to the north of Tring, Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead and Flamstead (see Map 2). This was delineated at the local level in the Dacorum District Plan (see 2.5 below).

2.4.5 The *Submitted County Structure Plan 1986 Review* proposed the extension of the Green Belt around Markyate due to concern about development pressures south west of Luton where the South Bedfordshire Green Belt was at its narrowest. Without such protection it was felt that pressures could spill over into Hertfordshire, and there would eventually be coalescence of settlements. The existence of a gap between the South Bedfordshire Green Belt and the MGB was something of an anomaly. In addition provision was made for the existing inner Green Belt boundary at Hemel Hempstead to be re-examined through the local plan process with a view to accommodating

increased housing provision (Policy 53), with a total requirement for the Borough of 8,600 dwellings.

- 2.4.6 At the Examination in Public of the 1986 Review, Dacorum supported the Green Belt proposal around Markyate, and further proposed the inclusion of Little Gaddesden and Great Gaddesden and Aldbury to completely remove the perceived anomaly in Green Belt coverage.
- 2.4.7 The EIP Panel did not believe that the arguments in favour of extending the Green Belt around Markyate were particularly strong. "Nevertheless this gap in the Green Belt is anomalous and since this situation is not paralleled elsewhere in the County, we see no reason to recommend modifying the submitted policy in this respect" (Report of Panel, para 2.33). The Secretary of State considered that no convincing evidence had been put forward to demonstrate that the proposed extension satisfied any one of the criteria in Circular 42/55. Although the status of the area might be seen as an anomaly, this did not justify inclusion in the MGB, particularly as it was partly in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which afforded further protection (Decision letter 9 May 1988 para 3.24).
- 2.4.8 With regard to the Gaddesdens and Aldbury, he agreed with the Panel that there was no evidence of development pressure, or that the policies relating to development within the AONB would not provide the necessary protection. He therefore rejected the proposal to extend the Green Belt in this area (ibid para 3.25).
- 2.4.9 With regard to the increased housing requirement and re-examination of the inner Green Belt boundary at Hemel Hempstead, although no specific location was mentioned in the Structure Plan, it emerged at the EIP that *Bunkers Lane* was the main site being considered. This site had been favoured by the Inspector at the second District Plan Inquiry, but the recommendation was rejected by the Borough Council in the light of its more detailed studies of alternative sites (see paras. 2.5.21-2.5.24 below).
- 2.4.10 The Secretary of State accepted that there was a continuing demand for housing growth in the town and that any land on the edge of the town which was removed from the Green Belt would be readily developed for housing. However, the function of the Green Belt was to prevent the continued outward spread of urban areas, and the fact that there was pressure for development did not constitute the exceptional circumstances which warranted altering the Green Belt. He therefore deleted the Hemel Hempstead proposal from the plan, and reduced the housing requirement to 6,800 dwellings as recommended by the Panel (Decision letter para 5.14). This reinforced the Dacorum District Plan decision regarding *Bunkers Lane*. The site is allocated as open space within the Green Belt in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan.
- 2.4.11 In 1990, as part of its roll forward of the 1986 Review up to 2001, the County Council put forward alterations to the general extent of the Green Belt in some locations including Markyate again.

2.4.12 The Panel reporting on the Examination in Public in July 1991 was unable to reconcile the proposal to extend the Green Belt in the area of Markyate with related proposals for substantial development adjoining the village. It accepted that the absence of Green Belt here was anomalous; but concluded that the proposed improvements to the A5 and uncertainty over local infrastructure requirements indicated there was a need for a co-ordinated strategy for the area; and consequently the Panel recommended that existing policies would be adequate until a more fundamental review of the Structure Plan.

2.4.13 In approving the Structure Plan 1991, the Secretary of State for the Environment (SoE) deleted reference to the proposed extension of the Green Belt in the area of Markyate. In considering this and other boundary changes, the SoE was not satisfied that a case for exceptional circumstance was made to justify alteration of the boundary. He also took account of the County Council's commitment to a more fundamental review of the Green Belt following the approval of the Alterations (para 3.7 in his letter dated 23 June 1992 contained in the Explanatory Memorandum to the Structure Plan).

2.4.14 The Structure Plan 1991 (CD26) did not recommend any review of inner Green Belt boundaries (except at Stevenage and Baldock in the context of policy 53). The Explanatory Memorandum stated:

"7.2.8 The inner boundaries of the Green Belt around most of the towns and larger settlements enclosed by it have already been defined in statutory approved and adopted District Local Plans. In defining these boundaries, regard was generally had to the degree of long term expansion of each built up area acceptable in the context of the stated purpose of the Green Belt.

7.2.9 the Government's policy is that once the general extent of Green Belts have been approved in Structure Plans and their detailed boundaries identified in Local Plans, they should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. In approving the Structure Plan Review, the Secretary of State could find no justification for a general review of Green Belt boundaries which would not be in direct conflict with that policy. He did accept that there might be individual cases where some minor adjustment could make a boundary better related to long term permanence, but said that these were not appropriate for identification in a Structure Plan."

2.4.15 The SPR: 1996 (CD29) was approved in July 1996. With regard to the Green Belt (Policy 4) it proposed an extension of the Green Belt in the Markyate area, bounded by the existing Green Belt to the east, the boundary of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the west and the County boundary to the north, in order to contain urban development, minimise coalescence between Luton and settlements in Hertfordshire and to aid the regeneration of Luton and Dunstable.

- 2.4.16 The inner Green Belt boundary round Hemel Hempstead would also be reviewed to allow limited expansion of the town in line with Policy 7, which identified Hemel Hempstead for a strategic housing allocation of 1,000 dwellings. These could be spread between several locations around the town.
- 2.4.17 The Examination in Public took place during March 1997 and the Panel reported in June 1997. With regard to the Markyate extension (Issue 9) the Panel agreed that the Green Belt boundary in the area was anomalous. It was an area liable to be affected by growth pressures, and the boundary was not of the width which under the terms of PPG2 would be expected for the purpose of containing urban growth. The Panel did not consider Markyate an appropriate place for significant expansion. It considered that given the likelihood of intensifying development pressures, the narrowness of the Green Belt in the area and the arbitrary nature of the boundary a sufficient case had been made in the light of the criterion of exceptional circumstances for the extension proposed (SPR: Panel Report (CD30), paragraphs 9.48-9.51).
- 2.4.18 Regarding the proposals for the expansion of Hemel Hempstead (Issue 6), the Panel's assessment was that there was the potential to site in the order of 1,200/1,300 dwellings acceptably in or on the outskirts of Hemel Hempstead. This did not take into account any opportunities at Berkhamsted and Kings Langley. The debate was informed by the Borough Council's work on the Local Development Strategy. Green Belt releases were likely to be required at West Hemel Hempstead, Apsley (Manor Estate) and Leverstock Green. The Borough Council's suggested sites adjoining Leverstock Green but in St Albans District were rejected though the smaller parcel at Westwick Farm was retained (paragraph 6.14). It would also be unacceptable to accommodate all the required residential development at the North East Hemel Hempstead key employment site (not in the Green Belt) as it would be necessary to find an alternative Green Belt location for employment purposes (paragraph 6.13). However land for around 200 dwellings at the northern end of the site would enable the retention of the majority of the site for employment (paragraph 6.17). The potential for 250 dwellings at the Manor Estate appeared realistic despite access and landscape constraints. It would appear as a natural extension of existing built development in the area (paragraph 6.15). The Panel also considered the site capacity at West Hemel Hempstead to have been underestimated (paragraph 6.19). It also considered that the Borough had taken an overly cautious view of the scope for regeneration and the use of surplus employment land (paragraphs 6.21-6.22). The Commission for the New Town's suggested site north of Breakspear Way on the Lucas sports fields and the caravan park considered to be more appropriately considered in the Local Plan Review but could have some potential (paragraph 6.20).
- 2.4.19 Policy 5 of the Structure Plan 1998 (CD32) refers to the extension of the Green Belt in the Markyate area "bounded by the existing Green Belt to the east, the Chilterns AONB to the west and the County boundary to the north" (see Map 2). The extension is justified as

follows (paragraph 113): “This will contain any development at Markyate, minimise coalescence between Luton and settlements in Hertfordshire, and aid regeneration of Luton and Dunstable. The AONB provides protection for the area further west.” The policy allows Local Plans to list Green Belt settlements where infilling will be permitted and recognises the reuse of existing buildings, though the acceptability will have to be considered in the light of the guidance in PPG2 and other relevant policies. Priorities for the use of land in the Green Belt reflect those in paragraph 1.6 of PPG2 with the addition of supporting the objectives of Watling Chase Community Forest (this does not affect Dacorum).

- 2.4.20 The policy also allows for reviews of Green Belt boundaries around towns for limited peripheral development. Towns are listed in Policy 6 and include Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring. Minor adjustments may also be considered to secure more sustainable patterns of development in these settlements. Limited peripheral development would only be acceptable where planned regeneration opportunities have fully been explored; demonstrable sustainability benefits to the town are provided; and where the development is planned in the context of the town as a whole (Policy 7). Individual adjustments linked to Policies 6 and 7 will need to be justified by reference to the criterion of exceptional circumstances.
- 2.4.21 Policy 5 also recognises exclusions from the Green Belt to allow for strategic housing development under Policy 8. The exclusions in Dacorum should be on the periphery of Hemel Hempstead, subject to possible limited exclusions at Berkhamsted and Kings Langley. Coalescence with Redbourn, Potten End and other nearby settlements should be avoided. Policy 8 states that the 1,000 dwellings are to be provided at more than one location on the town periphery including land at North East Hemel Hempstead which is not in the Green Belt.
- 2.4.22 Safeguarded land released from the Green Belt but not required for development during the period of the local plan can be referred to as “safeguarded land” or as an “area of special restraint”.

2.5 Dacorum District Plan

- 2.5.1 The DDP 1984 (CD36) defined the detailed inner and outer boundaries of the Metropolitan Green Belt in accordance with the County Structure Plan (1979) and the relevant advice in Government Circulars 42/55 and 50/57. Inner boundaries were drawn to exclude Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring, Kings Langley and Bovingdon from the MGB, following closely existing built-up areas, since the District Plan suggested that there was little need for further land outside urban areas and specified settlements to be developed in the Plan period (para 2.6).

- 2.5.2 Some sites which are proposed for housing development and removal from the Green Belt in the Deposit Draft (CD46) have been put forward in the past, as have additional sites suggested by objectors. This section of the Technical Report provides relevant details of sites considered at the District Local Plan Inquiries.
- 2.5.3 An important input to the First Local Plan Inquiry in 1982 was the Joint Statement agreed between the District Council and the Department of the Environment with reference to limiting growth in Tring, Berkhamsted, Bovingdon and Kings Langley as they would have reached the desirable limits of development. This was summarised in the Inspector's Report 1981 (CD34), paragraph 20. The Joint Statement suggested agreed modifications to the Written Statement regarding the development context of Berkhamsted, Tring, Bovingdon and Kings Langley. The Inspector accepted the addition of text reflecting that whilst the provision of land to meet housing and employment needs in the period to 1986 was largely based on outstanding planning permissions, beyond that period it was intended to limit growth in the above settlements (which by then would have reached the desirable limits of development) and in the rural areas. The additional text was as follows:

“(a) Tring

Tring has spread to its readily definable geographical limits formed by Icknield Way in the north, by high quality agricultural land and the Pendley Estate to the east, the edge of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the south and landscape features to the west. These limits should not be breached by extension of the built-up area. Further development would be liable to put a strain on existing services.

(b) Berkhamsted

Berkhamsted is a valley town which in recent years has expanded up the slopes of the Bulbourne Valley. For primarily visual reasons the skylines of the valley sides should be maintained, and this can only be achieved by resisting further spread of the built-up area. Expansion of the town eastwards or westwards along the valley floor is opposed in order to prevent coalescence with the neighbouring settlements of Bourne End and Dudswell.

(c) Bovingdon

The Plan defines the boundary at the confines of existing development. In order to protect the character of the village and avoid a strain on services, the village should not be allowed to expand beyond its existing limits.

(d) **Kings Langley**

The village of Kings Langley is only one mile from the southern edge of Hemel Hempstead and, in order to prevent urban coalescence and retain a rural zone around the settlement, the existing limits of development should be maintained".

- 2.5.4 As Tring, Kings Langley, Bovington and Berkhamsted had already reached the limits of desirable development they were only likely to make a small contribution to long term needs through redevelopment within existing built-up areas. If the District was to accommodate development after 1991 other than by redevelopment at higher densities, conversions, and unidentified small sites and 'opportunity' sites it was likely to be mainly in Hemel Hempstead (Inspector's Report 1981 (CD34) para 25 iii-v).
- 2.5.5 *Land between Le Chalet and 1 Hunters Close, Long Lane, Bovington.* The site had been developed as an RAF Officers Mess during the Second World War. It was covered by the remains of the war time buildings and hence unsuitable for agricultural use. It had residential development on two sides and the landowner argued it should therefore be excluded from the Green Belt (Inspector's Report 1981 (CD34) para 74).
- 2.5.6 The District Council stated that the site had been de facto subject to Green Belt policies in the County Development Plan and Hertfordshire 1981. The County Structure Plan (1979) had extended the Green Belt to include Bovington. Limited provision for housing development was made within the confines of the village which negated any need for development outside it. Policy 15A in the submitted County Structure Plan Alterations No.1 stated that in specified settlements (of which Bovington was one) 'development will be contained within the confines of existing development and will be limited to ensure the permanence of their boundaries within the MGB and the maintenance and enhancement of their character'. The 'confines of existing development' had been defined for Bovington in the District Plan, and the Long Lane area, including the objection site, was confirmed as being in the Green Belt (ibid para 75).
- 2.5.7 The Inspector was unable to accept the principle that because an area of land in the countryside was derelict, it therefore carried a clear presumption that it should be developed for housing and excluded from the Green Belt and associated policies (ibid para 77). He did however consider that if it was found that a small new site was required for prison officers' housing, and having regard to the quite special nature of that need, the site may be considered for this purpose without harming the planning policies (ibid para 81) but considered no modification should be made to the Plan. The Council accepted the recommendation.

- 2.5.8 *Land at the rear of Green Lane/Austins Mead, Bovingdon.* Wimpey Homes Holding Ltd proposed the removal of the main part of this site from the Green Belt. They considered that the Green Belt boundary had been drawn too tightly and failed to make provision for possible growth which should (according to the Submitted Structure Plan Alterations) be concentrated in towns and specified settlements like Bovingdon (Inspector's Report 1981 (CD34) para 83).
- 2.5.9 The District Council reiterated that the 'confines of existing development' had been defined for Bovingdon. Whilst part of the site had been included in the defined area of the specified settlement, the remainder was in the Green Belt to protect the village's rural setting and to prevent encroachment into the countryside. There was already an adequate supply of housing land in the district (ibid para 84).
- 2.5.10 The Inspector concluded that although overlooked by housing, the Green Belt part of the site was clearly part of the countryside surrounding Bovingdon (ibid para 85). Although the site was probably physically capable of development, that argument could be made for other sites in Green Belt settlements and he was not recommending an overall review of Green Belt boundaries (ibid paras 86-88). There was no evidence of a local need for 150 houses in the foreseeable future and the scale of such a large estate would have an unacceptable social impact and harm Bovingdon's character. He recommended no modification to the Plan and this was accepted by the Council.
- 2.5.11 *Rucklers Lane, Kings Langley.* The brief objection to the inclusion of Rucklers Lane in the Green Belt stated that it did not fulfil any useful Green Belt function, was predominantly residential in character and a revised boundary should be drawn where the road lost its residential nature (Inspector's Report 1981 (CD34) para 186).
- 2.5.12 The Council argued that if Rucklers Lane was excluded from the Green Belt it would lead to development pressure which would tend towards a coalescence of Hemel Hempstead and Kings Langley. It was inevitable that some villages and small built-up areas should be within the Green Belt (ibid para 187).
- 2.5.13 The Inspector concluded that the same objections would be raised for many areas and the cumulative effect could seriously jeopardise the approved restraint policies of the County Structure Plan (ibid para 189) and recommended no modification to the Plan. This was accepted by the Council.
- 2.5.14 Smaller sites where amendments to Green Belt boundaries were sought and rejected included:
- (a) land adjacent to 'Whitelea', Stoney Lane, Bovingdon;
 - (b) land at Northchurch Common, Berkhamsted.

The Council agreed a minor amendment to the Green Belt boundary at Bovingdon Grange, Green Lane, Bovingdon prior to the Inquiry.

- 2.5.15 On 27 January and 1 February 1982 the Council's Joint Policy and Development Control Committee met to consider and agree amendments to the Dacorum District Plan. The Plan had an end date of 1986, and the Inspector's recommendation to extend the Plan period from 1986 to 1991 was accepted as it would aid long term planning and maintenance of an adequate supply of industrial and housing land.
- 2.5.16 Additional land to accommodate some 600 dwellings was required to meet needs to 1991 and a report setting out the options was also considered (see Map 3). The sites were examined in terms of physical characteristics, services (roads and drainage), community facilities (schools, shops) and other general factors.
- 2.5.17 The preferred option which emerged was for development of Fields End School (70 dwellings), Bourne Valley School (160 dwellings) and 34 acres of the Fields End Farm site (370 dwellings). Both schools were surplus to HCC requirements, and although in the Green Belt, the Fields End site was considered visually unobtrusive.
- 2.5.18 The rejected sites included the remainder of the 53 acre Fields End Farm site (in order to reduce the land required from the urban fringe), Bunkers Lane (mainly because the capacity of the existing road system was a serious constraint, necessitating extensive measures), Grovehill (a visually attractive and prominent site) and Westwick Farm (access again a serious constraint, necessitating upgrading of adjoining lanes).
- 2.5.19 The Council was concerned over the scale of development at Fields End, but recognised that if development there was restricted, the dwellings would have to be accommodated on one of the alternative sites. The Council considered that these had greater problems and constraints than Fields End. As the necessary school facilities could be provided and development could be held below the 500 ft contour and suitably landscaped to reduce the impact on Potten End, the Fields End Farm site was preferred.
- 2.5.20 A second Public Local Inquiry was held between 20-23 July 1982 to consider objections to the modified Plan. Most of the objections related to the new residential allocations at Fields End School, Bourne Valley School and Fields End Farm. The last of these is relevant to the current proposal for West Hemel Hempstead.
- 2.5.21 *Fields End Farm.* The site had always been outside the designated area of the New Town though it had been identified for expansion in the initial planning phase. The Green Belt boundary was defined so as to give a sharp break between the urban area and the countryside. Objectors argued that the proposed development would lead to the coalescence of Hemel Hempstead and Potten End: cross-town movements from the site would increase traffic congestion, other sites, e.g. Three Cherry Trees Lane or Bunkers

Lane, and were suitable alternatives, and schools and drainage facilities would be inadequate (Inspector's Report 1982 (CD35) paras 44-53).

- 2.5.22 The District Council recounted the Green Belt history of the site. It had been white land subject to Green Belt policy outside the New Town designated area until the County Structure Plan (1979). The Key Diagram from that plan showed Hemel Hempstead to be surrounded by Green Belt, with the exact boundary left to be defined in a local plan. The extension to the plan period from 1986 to 1991 and the unsuitability of previously identified housing sites led to a requirement for new sites to be found in Hemel Hempstead, as the other settlements were reaching their acceptable limits of development. The Council argued that the proposal amounted to a 'rounding off' of the urban area. It would not significantly reduce the existing belt of countryside between Hemel Hempstead and Potten End, and visual intrusion would be minimised. Services and access were satisfactory (ibid paras 56-69).
- 2.5.23 The Inspector shared the objectors' concern about changes to the Green Belt status of the site. It had been treated as if it was part of the Green Belt for 25 years whereas the land at Bunkers Lane had only been designated Green Belt by the Council in approving the District Plan less than two years previously. He attached great importance to the fact that as originally approved the MGB extended to the southern boundary of Hemel Hempstead and the Bunkers Lane land was excluded from the Green Belt. He also noted the recommendation of the Inspector at the first Inquiry regarding Bunkers Lane (ibid para 70). Although the extent of the proposed development at Fields End Farm would balance that on the opposite side of Boxted Lane, he considered that it went beyond the normal considerations of rounding off. The site was also exposed from certain directions (ibid para 72). He recommended that the proposal be deleted and that the possibility of using other sites within the designated area be re-examined (ibid para 74).
- 2.5.24 The proposed Modifications were published as the "Modifications II" document. Despite the reservations expressed by the Inspector, the Council retained the Fields End Farm site after a re-examination of alternative possible housing areas in and around Hemel Hempstead, particularly because unlike the alternative sites examined there were no major land use or physical constraints to development of the land in question. Bunkers Lane therefore remained in the Green Belt. The Plan was adopted on 25 January 1984.
- 2.5.25 The Fields End Farm site has since been developed for housing, with a wide tree belt on the northern edge extending to Pouchen End Lane. The Fields End School and Bourne Valley School sites have also been developed.

2.6 Dacorum Borough Local Plan

2.6.1 The Deposit Draft of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan which went forward to the 1992 Inquiry had a timescale of 1981-1996. In the meantime, the Structure Plan Alterations 1991 had been approved with an end date of 2001. Rather than adopt the Borough Plan and review it immediately, the Council decided to roll it forward to 1986 to 2001. A second Local Plan Inquiry was held in 1994 and the Plan was adopted on 12 April 1995. The Dacorum Borough Local Plan Alterations 1996 (adopted on 3 June 1998) had no bearing on Green Belt policy, though appropriate uses are identified for the sites associated with Bovingdon Airfield.

2.6.2 Since the Structure Plan housing requirements could be comfortably achieved within the existing urban areas, there was no need for a major review of Green Belt boundaries. However, the Council scrutinised boundaries around the towns and settlements excluded from the Green Belt to see if there was good reason for making minor alterations to remove anomalies and to better secure the permanence of the Green Belt.

2.6.3 At the Consultation Draft stage of the Adopted Plan 1995, the following sites relevant to the current Deposit Draft were proposed for exclusion from the Green Belt.

- r/o 'Balcary' and 'Woodrising', Shootersway, Berkhamsted – to rationalise the Green Belt boundary, in association with the proposed addition to the Green Belt at the adjoining property 'Blegberry'.
- Watford Road, Kings Langley – another long established residential area where it was desirable to create a clear distinction between town and country, and provide a boundary better related to long term permanence.

Other sites were Chipperfield Road, Bovingdon; Prison Officers' Housing, The Mount Youth Custody Centre, Bovingdon; Haulage Yard, R/O Alexandra Road, Kings Langley – already developed.

2.6.4 The following sites were proposed to be added to the Green Belt:

- r/o 'Blegberry', Shootersway, Berkhamsted – to rationalise the Green Belt boundary, in association with the proposed exclusion from the Green Belt at 'Balcary' and 'Woodrising'.
- "Grovefield" and "Brambles End", Berkhamsted Common – because of concern that the Green Belt boundary was wrongly drawn and further development at the urban fringe would damage the environment and visual amenity at the interface between town and countryside.

Other sites were Berkhamsted Castle and the low density residential area north of Brownlow Road, Berkhamsted; part of field, Redbourn

Road, Hemel Hempstead; vacant land north of Polehanger Lane, Hemel Hempstead; and low density residential area in Cow Lane, Tring from "Laneside" to Cow Lane Farm.

2.6.5 An area north of Flamstead (comprising the Recreation Ground and the field to the north) was inadvertently omitted from the Green Belt and included in the Rural Area in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan. The area is now part of the Green Belt extension around Markyate.

2.6.6 Of the proposed exclusions, only the Prison Officers' housing and haulage yard sites went forward to the Deposit Draft stage. All of the additions went forward and land rear of 7-9 Meadway, Berkhamsted was added to the list in response to a representation.

2.6.7 In the *Deposit Draft* of the Adopted Plan 1995, as a result of the further consideration engendered by public consultation, it was decided to revert to the original Green Belt boundary in the following cases:

- r/o 'Blegberry' (addition) and 'Balcary' and 'Woodrising' (exclusion) Shootersway, Berkhamsted – because the proposed exclusion from the Green Belt would allow an increased area for development which would damage the rural character in this vicinity.
- Watford Road, Kings Langley – because the land to the rear of the houses was considered to be an important area of the Green Belt forming a buffer between the main part of Kings Langley and nearby development.

2.6.8 Two further sites were identified for inclusion in the Green Belt:

- Land between Icknield Way and Aylesbury Road, Tring – designated Green Belt in the Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan (1990); transferred to Dacorum on 1 April 1991.
- Land r/o 7 and 9 Meadway, Berkhamsted – because of the need to prevent the extension of built development on Ivy House Lane. Although the land was part of long gardens there were identifiable hedges within the site which could be used as the new boundary.

The Council abandoned the latter site prior to the Local Plan Inquiry because development had been allowed on the site and adjoining land as the result of an appeal. The former was taken through to adoption.

2.6.9 At the Local Plan Inquiry 1992, objectors' proposals to remove land from the Green Belt were rejected by the Inspector for the following reasons:

1. Land at Hanbury's, Shootersway, Berkhamsted. The site is in a prominent ridgetop location. It contributes to the open character of Green Belt, and provides a buffer to the bypass. A visual link to