



KINGS LANGLEY & DISTRICT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting – Chairman’s Report – April 2018

Welcome to the KL&DRA AGM. My name is Gary Ansell and I am acting Chairman of the Association and I have lived in Kings Langley for twenty five years.

A little bit of history related to the Association. Prior to tonight it may surprise some of you that the last time I prepared such a report for the Association was over 20 years ago at the time of the last DBC Local Plan. At that time, the Association was instrumental in getting the Rectory Farm site removed from the then proposed sites for development.

Boy, have things of changed! The most significant change being communication channels. Back then, all communications were by printed means – letter, poster, newsletter or telephone. The speed and pace of information being passed around was dictated by those methods. Now one of our challenges is the sheer speed and variety of how we communicate. The Association still recognises the need for paper communications as a number of our residents, particularly the elderly, do not all have access to the Internet and email. This time round we’ve also embraced electronic media, but more about how we’ve covered that later.

Until October last year, the Association had laid dormant, there being no major Green Belt development proposals to fight. We first heard about the new DBC Local Plan Consultation and the new threats at a Kings Langley Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 17th October. It was then that three members of the original KL&DRA, Vall Lee, Ann Johnson and myself decided to reawaken the dormant Association.

The first KL&DRA meeting was held on the 23rd October and we were fortunate to get a good team together, who also brought with them some super skills that enabled us to:

- create a new identity for the KL&DRA – distinct green lettering along with our own logo
- set up a Facebook page and website – greenbelt matters
- designed and produced posters, leaflets and banners

- made a great video (which you can still view on the website)

We have published information sheets regarding the Local Plan and informed a wider audience around the district of the Parish Meeting that helped get around 800 people at Kings Langley Senior School on a truly miserable winter evening. We have worked with the Parish Council since then, including a joint newsletter.

The biggest challenge we faced was to commission a professional response to the DBC's Local Issues and Options paper. Whilst it was essential to encourage as many residents as possible to respond individually – in part, aided by the postcards and information we produced - we knew that a detailed technical response from a professional planning consultant and a planning solicitor was the right thing to do. (The Association had commissioned something similar 20 years ago in response to the previous draft Local Plan.) We also encouraged writing to Hertfordshire County Council specifically about Wayside Farm.

A lot of frantic activity enabled us to get as much information as possible to our chosen professionals, Vail Williams with respect to planning consultancy and Shakespeare Martineau with respect to legal consultancy, resulting in a 34 page document covering our objections to the proposals for the 4 village sites and over 30 alternative suggestions to building on Kings Langley's Green Belt. Although a number of the committee were involved in this, I would particularly like to thank Patricia Wheway who covered the lion's share of the information collation and liaison with the professionals. Without her assistance we would not have achieved such an excellent submission in the short time available.

Whilst on the subject of 'Thank You,' there are a number of other people who I wish to thank for their sterling efforts:

- Lydia Berman for all the creative and digital media work she produced in terms of designing our Associations Identity, our electronic and printed communications, and setting up our website and Facebook pages;
- Vall Lee for organising the timely distribution of newsletters and other communications all-round the village and surrounding district, and for helping with fund raising;
- Eric Martin for stepping in as Treasurer and sorting out both our historical and present day finances;
- Annie Martin for keeping the village's non-computer users in touch with the Association and the challenge's facing our village Green Belt locations;
- Samantha Pilling for arranging the wonderful video in support of our cause and at no cost to the Association;
- Glenda Seal for looking after our membership lists;
- Cheryl Hall for her liaison work with Kings Langley Matters;
- Alan Johnson and Mark Rogers for Parish Council liaison. I should point out that as Parish Councillors Alan & Mark are not members of the Committee or the Association

but do provide us with a valuable link with what's going on at the Parish Council;

- Stewart Mitchell and Jeremy Wilkins for organising some of our printing at zero cost;
- And finally a big thank you to our secretary Ann Johnson who somehow manages to keep notes and records of everything Association related, has a memory I could only wish for, can read a hundred emails at the same time and constantly keeps me from losing the plot!

None of what the Association has achieved would have been possible without the generous support of our supporters and members who through their generous donations have funded our work. Our thanks to all of you here and many who are not for their support. Our Treasurer Eric has more detail on the Association's finances in his report.

Regarding the organisation of the Association, tonight's AGM will formally elect the committee and enable us to vote on a new constitution which has been updated to meet today's requirements rather than those of twenty years ago. Now, like then we remain a non-sectarian Association, independent of any political party and solely concerned with protecting and advancing the general interests and environment of the residents of Kings Langley and the surrounding district.

The Association recently became a member of the CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England as our objectives fall in line with theirs and the CPRE are a very useful source of information in respect of protecting the Green Belt.

So what's happening in the next seven months? It may seem quiet, but there is a lot going on and a lot still to prepare for.

DBC are working through the huge number of responses they had to the Local Plan Consultation and will need to consider these carefully. They will then make their proposals as to where they think development is best placed throughout the borough and publish the next iteration of the plan in late autumn at the earliest. In the interim, we are keeping an eye on current planning applications, e.g. the likely proposal for 120 houses on Rectory Farm which will include Brownfield and Green Belt development. We await the application, but already have a great deal of information on Rectory Farm to support a quick response.

We continue to maintain pressure on DBC by regularly seeking responses on, for example, the need to consult with neighbouring boroughs about their house building plans and the Government's continued opposition to Green Belt development in all but the most exceptional circumstances. We will continue to challenge DBC and seek answers to our legitimate concerns, not least to remind them that we are not going away.

A big challenge for us is to keep the village fired up and remind people that the danger of development swamping our village has not gone away. We recently met with Herts County Councillor Richard Roberts and it is good to know that he too shares our concerns and is aware of our feelings regarding the potential loss of the green belt and possible inappropriate development that could erode our village's character.

Whilst we have a decent bank balance, we will continue to fund raise so we have as good a

contingency as we can to fight future green belt protection battles.

We will also be publishing further newsletters and banners over the coming months to maintain that all important awareness within the village and surrounding areas and ensuring everyone has a clear understanding of the threat of development at the time of publication.

I think that just about covers everything. There are copies available of the key points I have covered and if anyone has any questions I will be happy to take them now or under any other business.

Gary Ansell, Acting Chairman, KINGS LANGLEY & DISTRICT RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION, April 2018