Above and right:

View looking down Arbour lane off the A4110. Kingsleane is situated to the left hand side of the lane, hidden from view by the mature hedgerow. This mature species-rich hedgerow will remain undisturbed, therefore the greenfield gap between Kingsleane and West Town will remain as existing

- The layout of the scheme has been designed with the bulk of the development located away from the road and hedgerows with a wildlife corridor located between the Arbour Lane and development. This, together with the fact that the level of the road is much lower than the site is a further aid in minimising any visual impact.
- A green area has been created to the east of the site which will be a focal point for the residents and also visually attractive when entering the site and viewed from the entrance. This will provide a safe and secure area for people using the green space as it is overlooked by all the properties. Further tree planting will provide additional screening of the site and, more importantly, provide an additional new habitat environment.
- The housing association aims to use sustainable materials, rainwater butts, incorporate a design layout to utilise natural elements and expects to exceed the requirements of Building Regulations by constructing well-insulated properties.
- The housing association will enter into a 'Heads of Terms – Proposed Planning Obligation Agreement Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990'. Refer to the Planning Obligation Agreement Heads of Terms Statement which accompanies this planning submission.
- The proposal will be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes Standard (min level 3) with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, allowing better adaptation to climate change and reducing the impact on the environment overall. It will also aim to provide lower running costs, improved comfort and satisfaction to the occupiers and will reduce the environmental footprint of the house.

- All properties will be built to Lifetime Homes Standards enabling occupiers to remain in the property for the duration of their lifetime. This is achieved by the incorporation of 16 design features that together create a flexible blueprint for accessible and adaptable housing in any setting. The Lifetime Homes concept increases choice, independence and longevity of tenure, vital to individual and community wellbeing.
- The design is of high quality and is not considered to materially damage the character of the Conservation Area.
- The proposed layout has been designed to compliment the houses in Kingsleane by following the scale and character of Kingsleane with a similar traditional appearance.

Left & below:
Photographs showing the successful scheme of rented accommodation at Kingsleane. The proposed development will be of similar size, character and appearance.

- Secure cycle storage will be provided in rear garden sheds to encourage healthy living lifestyles.
- A Secured by Design application has been submitted to the Architectural Police Liaison Officer and all properties will be certified to conform to Secure by Design Standards.
- Sensitive landscaping will be incorporated in the scheme. However, the existing natural landscaping, for example the mature hedgerows, already provides natural screening and care will be taken not to distract from this rural scene.

For a full discussion on the design and landscaping aspects of the application, refer to the Design and Access Statement and the Biodiversity and Survey Statement which is submitted with this planning application.

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For a full discussion on the design and landscaping aspects of the application, refer to the Design and Access Statement and the Biodiversity and Survey Statement which is submitted with this planning application.

4. Consultation with the Residents of Kingsland

The landowners firmly believe that in order for villages such as Kingsland to remain sustainable, it is important for developers to consult with the residents to ascertain what the villagers' needs are in relation to housing and facilities within their community. In the summer of 2006, the landowners produced a letter outlining their intentions regarding this proposal and delivered it to all the properties in the village which outlined the proposed scheme and the housing association involved. It not only gave the residents an opportunity to return a slip with their requirements on, it also gave them an opportunity to put forward any objections or support for the scheme. No letters of objection were received. Refer to Appendix C of the Consultation Statement for a copy of the letter.

The proposed scheme has been designed to take account of the information available in the current Housing Needs Survey dated March 2006 and the information received from the residents' responses to the landowners' letter. It also takes account of the information received from the Affordable Housing Consultation Meeting held on the 3rd October, 2007 which was organised by Herefordshire Council's Strategic Housing Dept and Elgar Housing Association. This meeting proved successful with attendees at the meeting supportive of the scheme – an important factor to note is that **no** objections to the location of the proposed development were received. Additional requests for housing were received at this meeting from people who worked in the village but who are unable to live in the village due to a lack of suitable housing.

In addition, the landowners visited the residents of Kingsleane, the nearest neighbours, and showed them the site plan and explained the scheme to each of them. All the residents were very supportive of the scheme and two of the households expressed an interest in moving into the shared ownership housing in an attempt to get on the property ladder and a relative of one of the residents also expressed a keen interest in a shared ownership property. The residents of Kingsleane were visited by a Housing Officer from Kemble Housing (their own housing association) to ensure that the residents were happy with the proposed scheme.

For a full discussion on consultation with the residents of Kingsland, refer to the Consultation Statement submitted with this planning application.

5. Support for the Scheme

Herefordshire Council's Enabling Team is supporting the application to build ten affordable dwellings on land adjoining Kingsleane. Other relevant supporting factors of the scheme are as follows:

- The proposal does meet the criteria for Policy H10 in that it **does** adjoin the established settlement of Kingsleane.
- During the public enquiry meeting for the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan, the Inspector clearly stated that this affordable housing development could be facilitated through the application of Policy H10.
- During the above public enquiry meeting, the landowners brought up the issue of whether there would be a problem in locating this proposed development of a mix of rented and shared ownership housing on land adjoining a previous rural exception scheme. This did not appear to be a concern to the inspector and, indeed, no such concern was mentioned in his report. The Herefordshire Council's representative at the meeting was asked if he foresaw a problem with this to which he replied 'no'.
- The Affordable Housing Consultation Meeting held recently proved successful with attendees supportive of the scheme – an important factor to note is that **no** objections to the location of the scheme were received.
- The occupiers of the adjoining Kingsleane housing have been consulted individually by the landowners and by their own Housing Association (Kemble Housing) and are supportive of the scheme.
- The land adjacent to Kingsleane proved to be the most popular site with the community of Kingsland during the Parish Plan consultation process. The Parish Plan Committee were advised by the Herefordshire Council's Parish Plan Co-ordinator that a 'Planning for Real' exercise was an accepted and adequate means of consultation with the Community.
- Moreover, the site is well located in the village and has excellent pedestrian access to all local facilities (refer to pages 7-9). Homepoint advertised a recent vacancy at Kingsleane as being 'close to the centre of the village'

6. The Site in Relation to the Village & All Its Facilities

Leominster District Local Plan describes the centre of the village as the cross-roads (i.e. Corners Inn) where the C1039 Class III road cuts across the B4360 which is close to the proposed site. Local residents made it clear during the consultation period of the preparation of the Kingsland Parish Plan that they consider this site to be the most popular location for housing. The fact that all the facilities available within the village can be accessed safely by walking will, no doubt, have been an important factor in coming to the conclusion that this is an excellent location for a scheme such as this. There is also a level footpath from this site which serves all the village facilities. Homepoint advertised a recent vacancy at Kingsleane as being 'close to the centre of the village (refer to the location map on page 8).

The following table shows the approximate times of walking distances from the proposed development site to the various community facilities available in Kingsland which confirms this site is in an excellent location to build the affordable housing scheme.

Location	Time (approx)
Village Hall & Recreation Area (including large playing field with goal posts; tennis courts and basket ball hoops).	2.5 minutes
Recycling Centre (in the village hall car park adjacent to Kingsleane)	2.5 minutes
Primary School (rear entrance via the village hall car park)	3 minutes
Nursery School (held in the village hall)	3 minutes
Playgroup (held in the village hall)	3 minutes
Bowling Club (rear entrance via the village hall car park)	3 minutes
Corners Inn (public house)	4 minutes
Doctor's Surgery	5 minutes
Primary School (front entrance)	6 minutes
Bowling Club (front entrance)	6 minutes
Post Office/Shop	8 minutes
Angel Inn (public house)	8 minutes
Millennium Green Conservation Area	8 minutes
Church (using route through village)	9 minutes
Church (using public footpath by Birch Walk Avenue adjacent to Kingsleane)	5 minutes

The site is so well located to all the village facilities that they are all within easy walking distance via level footpaths. In fact, as the school, nursery and playgroup are located only a couple of minutes from the site, it will be far quicker to walk the children to school rather than secure them in cars (especially as new more stringent regulations require that older children are also restrained in car seats, etc). Concern regarding congestion in the village has resurfaced yet again especially in the vicinity of the doctors surgery. It is important to note that this proposal will not add to that problem as the surgery is only a short walk away via a level footpath nor will it add to the general congestion in the village.

NW08/1915/F

Map showing close proximity of site to all village facilities (incl. the approximate walking times to each facility). (For a larger version of this plan, refer to the drawing package submitted separately). Note – plan not to scale.

NW08/1915/F

7. Community Facility - The Coronation Hall

The village hall is thought of as being at the heart of the Kingsland community and is situated almost across the road from Kingsleane. The indoor and outdoor facilities are well supported and include the following:

Nursery School
Under 5s Group
Guides
Youth Club
Annual Flower Show
Parties
School Productions
School Fete
School Sport's Day
School Christmas Party
Tennis Courts and Basketball Hoop
Playing fields with goal posts
Weekly Bingo Session

Weekly Keep Fit Session
Kingsland Amateur Theatrical Society
Arts Alive Theatre Production
Computer Course held in car park
Hereford College Learning Bus in car park
Women's Institute
Fireman's Fun Day
Flicks in the Sticks
Fundraising Events
Inter-village rounders games
Wedding Receptions
After Wedding Parties
Recreation Area includes playing field and tennis courts

Recreational area, including the tennis courts, which is well supported by local children/youths/adults. This also shows the rear entrance path to the primary school.

The village recycling centre is conveniently located within the village hall (Coronation Hall) car park which is almost adjacent to Kingsleane which will encourage residents to recycle their bottles, clothes, paper, etc. Funds raised via the recycling facility goes towards the upkeep of the village hall facilities.

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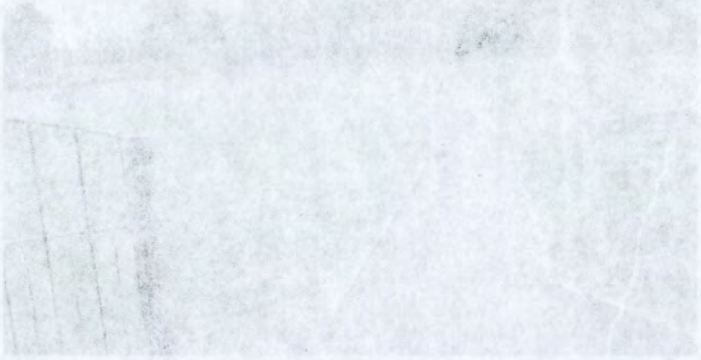

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8. Education - Kingsland C E Primary School

Kingsland Primary School has been consulted in order to ascertain whether there would be sufficient capacity in the school to cater for any children who are likely to live in the proposed development. The school has confirmed that, as a voluntary aided school, it is keen to welcome new families into Kingsland School. It also confirmed the intake of new pupils into the reception class in September 2007 was below capacity, and that there are also vacancies in other classrooms. Comments from the school include the following:

'Kingsland is an idyllic village. Plans to develop affordable housing in Kingsland would be to the benefit of all. At present, the school has parents who themselves grew up in the village but cannot afford to live in it, yet they continue to send their pupils to Kingsland C E Primary School, even though it involves travelling. From an ecological perspective it would make sense to reduce car journeys. The school has recently drawn up a Travel Plan (refer to Appendix B for a full copy), *that is included with this letter, families are encouraged to cut down on journeys that involve car travel as much as possible. This is a national agenda.'*

'From a social perspective also, more affordable housing in the village would assure that Kingsland remains a thriving and sustainable village community. We really enjoy working as a school as part of the whole community: for example, we have links with the church, with the Parish Council, with local businesses, with Luctonians sports club and with the Red Cross. More elderly members of the village enjoy coming into school, for example: to hear children read, to share life stories as part of history topic work or to listen to a play or concert. A village needs a healthy cross-section of age groups; learning from each other is key to people feeling valued and leads to a positive future, in which we learn from experience and appreciate the needs of a younger generation.'

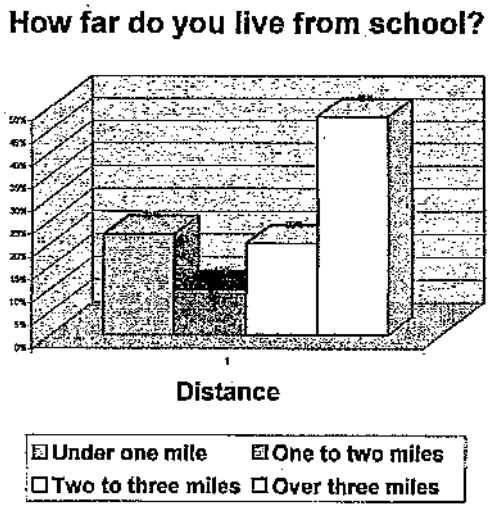
'As Headteacher of Kingsland CE Primary School, speaking on behalf of staff and governors, we would welcome new affordable housing in the village, for the benefit of all.'

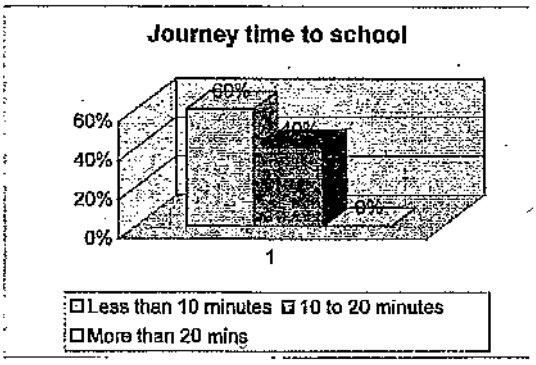
A summary of the school's transport and road safety problems are as follows:
The school is located in a rural area and many children at the school live a distance too far to walk or cycle, 68% of children live over 2 miles away (Travel survey Autumn 06). There is a high dependence on the use of motorised vehicles. The school is situated on the B4360 which runs through the centre of the linear village. Many of the houses approaching the school have no off-street parking therefore the road approaching the school has many parked vehicles which add to the congestion. The road adjacent to the school only has a pavement running along one side. The yellow lines outside school are sometimes parked on by parents and staff that can cause problems for the school bus and kids' club minibus. Bus trips returning at the end of the school day have sometimes had to park in the middle of the road blocking the flow of traffic in one direction due to people incorrectly parking outside school. There is general perception that people speed through the village. The Parish Council are using SID (speed indicator device) to try and control and monitor speed. Refer to Appendix B for a full copy of Kingsland Travel Plan.

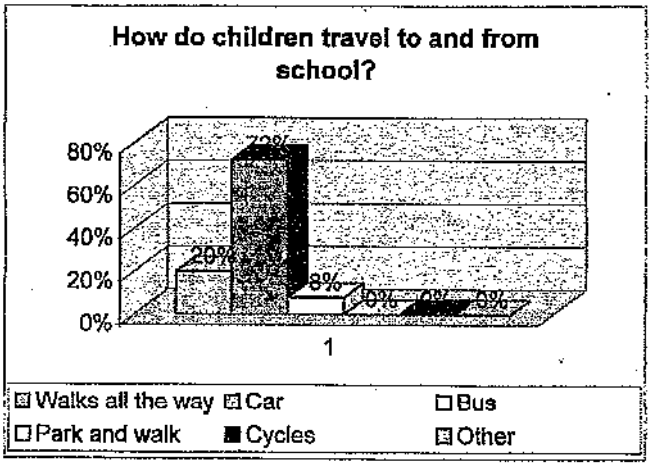
The government is encouraging sustainable development such as this proposal in rural areas such as Kingsland to ensure facilities such as schools, post offices, shops, etc. are viable and are essential in maintaining existing thriving communities. It would appear that the local authority is working against these government guidelines by focusing on reviewing school provision in the county with a view to reducing capacities and proposals to close schools resulted in the recent uproar and protests by parents and communities alike. This proposed action by the local authority must not be allowed to happen as villages need facilities such as schools to sustain these thriving communities.

Travel Survey results completed by 52 families. (See appendix 2 for complete results)

This data shows that 78% of families live too far to walk or cycle to school.

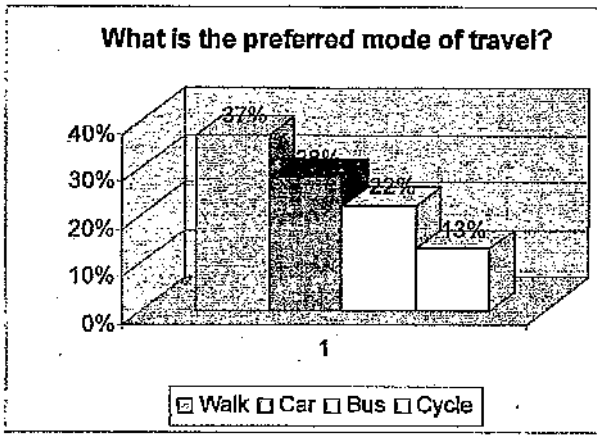






The study of the data clearly shows the dominance of cars in getting children to and from school.
When considered in conjunction with the graphs above, it is obvious that the car is the prime choice of travel out of necessity.

Compared with what actually happens, this data shows a clear desire for more participation in walking, cycling and use of the bus.



9. Kingsland Fire Brigade

Kingsland is very fortunate in that it has a fire station situated in the village (opposite the proposed development). Hereford & Worcester Fire Brigade are currently advertising for retained firefighters in Kingsland and rely on fit and able local personnel to be on call as retained fire-fighting personnel. The Housing Needs Study and Parish Plan have identified that the parish has a higher percentage of people over 60 than does the county as a whole and forms a third of the population of Kingsland. This could present difficulties in recruiting suitable fire-fighting personnel. I understand that there is a firefighter currently wishing to remain in this village where he grew up, but is unable to find suitable accommodation.

I understand that there are currently firemen who are available during the day who work in the village but are unavailable in the evening as they live outside the village. As older firefighters retire, it is vitally important that the Fire Brigade are able to recruit suitable personnel to man the station. Unless housing projects such as this development are allowed to be built in Kingsland, it will not be possible to recruit the necessary retained fire-fighters and this facility could be lost and lives within this part of the county could be put at risk.

10. Special Ancient Monument & Listed Building

With regard to the material considerations of the site, the site is situated within Kingsland Conservation Area. Kingsland House is the nearest listed building which is located to the south-east of the site and is extremely well screened by mature trees and shrubbery. The proposal will not have any adverse impact on the house nor will its setting be materially affected. In 1992, English Heritage were consulted by Herefordshire Council when the planning application for the Kingsleane development was approved but they had *'no significant comments to make'*. Beyond Kingsland House is Kingsland Castle, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The site is recorded as a site of archaeological importance on the County Sites and Monuments Record held by the Local Authority. However, in 1992, prior to Kingsleane being constructed, an archaeological survey was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit - (Report No. 222). The results of the evaluation also indicated that no medieval remains or archaeological remains of other period survive on the site. For a copy of the Archaeological Report and location of trenches, refer to Appendix B of the Archaeological Statement which is submitted in support of this planning application. Herefordshire Council's Archaeological Advisor, Mr Julian Cotton, has also confirmed that he has no objections to the proposals (for a copy of his comments, refer to Appendix C of the Archaeology Statement which also accompanies this planning application

The photograph on the right confirms that it will not be possible to view the proposed development from the SAM (Kingsland Castle) and vice-versa as the area is completely screened by the mature trees and hedging in the garden of Kingsland House. It is also screened by the houses of Birch Walk Avenue and the existing Kingsleane development.

View towards Kingsleane & the proposed development from the Motte & Bailey Mound. This photograph shows how well screened the SAM is from the proposed development.

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11. Conservation

The boundary of the Conservation Area was drawn to reflect the impression of a village in a country setting and the site forms part of that setting. Local planning authorities pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area in exercising their powers. Planning policy states that development which would adversely affect Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings should not normally be allowed and this point is one which is of considerable importance in determining this application.

By its nature, as a new development on a previously undeveloped site, the proposal (like the majority of planning applications that hava previously been granted planning permission in Kingsland and elsewhere in the county) may not be considered to either enhance or preserve the character of the Conservation Area. The question that arises is to what degree, if at all, the development will have a detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the area.

The existing development of Kingsleane was sympathetically designed and is appropriate for the character of the village. In fact, many people are surprised to learn that Kingsleane is actually social housing and not open market housing as the site is so well maintained and has matured to form a visually pleasing area of character. The proposed scheme is also attractively designed to compliment the dwellings of Kingsleane by following the scale and character of the properties, together with a traditional appearance.

The bulk of the development is located away from the road and this, together with the fact that the level of the Arbour Lane road is much lower than the site, is a further aid in minimising any visual impact. This proposal will not significantly increase the overall scale and impact on the built form. On plan it may well give the impression that the proposed development may link Kingsleane with the fire station. However, in actual visual terms, this will not be the case due to the fact that the mature hedgerow frontage of the proposed site will remain undisturbed (refer to photographs on page 4).

The proposed site forms a natural expansion of the existing built form in that it actually shares the same entrance as Kingsleane and many locals have made the comment that it forms a natural 'phase 2' to Kingsleane. Kingsleane is linked to the centre of the village (ie the crossroads – as defined in the Leominster District Local Plan) via the existing 'built form' of the village, namely, Birch Walk Avenue, the village hall, nos. 1, 2 & 3 Park Terrace and Park House which is next to the crossroads. In fact, Herefordshire Council made the statement that the original Kingsleane development was seen as acceptable as a rural exception site because of its relationship with the group of seven houses on the corner of the lane and this site also forms part of that relationship.

The 'smaller node of Kingsleane' also includes a further five houses at Birch Walk Avenue. The proposed scheme does not encroach into the open countryside (as suggested by the Consultee in the Pre-Planning application) as West Town, which includes over thirty dwellings, is situated to the west of the site and this number will increase significantly as planning approval has been given recently for the conversion of the Showers Farm buildings in the West Town area into dwellings. To the south of the site is the fire station and pasture land.

The proposed development is, in theory, an extension of Kingsleane, and will not affect the 'apparent' distinctive and separate character and the whole a distinctly rural openness nor will it significantly reduce the separation between West Town and Kingsleane as the frontage of Arbour Lane i.e. the mature hedgerow will remain undisturbed and this hedgerow will screen the properties, thus, the visual appearance of the greenfield gap between Kingsleane and West Town will remain as existing. The proposed site is located well within the curtilage of the village envelope (refer to page 8 for locations of the village envelope and, in line with Herefordshire Council's UDP stipulation, is located so that *'it will not place additional financial burdens upon households occupying the scheme through isolation or increased costs in gaining access to local services and facilities such as schools and employment.'*

The mature hedgerow forming the frontage of the site lining the Arbour Lane will remain unchanged in order to preserve the green break in this area of the village having taken into account the impact removing such a mature hedgerow would have on the wildlife in the area. This will avoid an excessive urban character and preserve the appearance of the conservation area. When approaching the site from the village centre, the new development

is also well screened by mature hedgerows and the dwellings of Kingsleane. Therefore, the proposal will not have a detrimental affect on the character or appearance of the conservation area unlike the Croftmead development which was granted planning approval last year. The Croftmead development most certainly will have a detrimental affect on the conservation area and the village as a whole, with the destruction of the whole hedgerow fronting the development which was the only remaining 'green' space between the 'old' Monument Inn and the Post Office. Even Herefordshire Council's own Landscape and Biodiversity Team Leader voiced concerns regarding the Croftmead development.

Within the proposed development at Kingsleane, a green area has been incorporated into the design of the scheme which will be a focal point for the residents and will also provide a visually attractive feature when entering the site. This will be a safe and secure area for people using this space as it is overlooked by all the properties. Further tree planting throughout the site will provide additional screening of the site and, more importantly, provide an additional new habitat environment. A wildlife strip is also located between the open space and the Arbour Lane (fronting the site) which will incorporate a small woodland habitat.

The applicants believe that the hedgerows to the northern and southern boundaries are the most important visual and ecologicel characteristic of this area and the layout of the proposed scheme has been designed to reflect this fact. It is proposed to retain the existing hedgerows on the northern and southern boundaries by sharing the existing entrance to Kingsleane. A minimal amount of young hedgerow to the eastern boundary will be removed to allow the roadway into the site from the adjoining Kingsleane development and the layout will take the form of a 'cul-de-sac. Although Kingsland is, historically, a linear village, cul-de-sacs are a common characteristic in the village and the following are cul-de-sac developments in Kingsland:

Highfield Close	Tudor Place	Croase, North Road	Church Green
Boarsfield	Lugg Green	St. Michael's Close	
Orchard Close	Birch Walk Avenue	Kingsleane	

For further discussions on conservation issues refer to the Biodiversity and Survey Statement which accompanies this planning application submission.

12. Ecology

There will be a small loss of floristic value by approving this proposal but the site in question is not a public amenity and is not accessible to the general public and it is not visible from the public highway. A recent ecological survey of the field emphasized the fact that the meadow is not one of the best examples of lowland hay meadows in the county and with regard to its typicalness, the assessor believes that it is fair to say that unimproved lowland hay meadows are not unusual. The report also stated that '*it is difficult to determine whether or not the site is more natural than any other habitats as almost all habitats within the agricultural landscape are semi-natural, created through a combination of both natural and anthropogenic processes.*'

A Brief Summarisation of the Ecological Survey Assessment carried out in June, 2007:
A copy of the full Ecological Assessment Survey is available in Appendix B of the Biodiversity and Survey Statement together with a comprehensive ecological discussion which is submitted with this application.

1. The site is probably only an average size for a traditional unimproved meadow.

2. With regard to diversity, a total 58 species were recorded, however, a number of these are not typical meadow species and are not particularly indicative of habitat quality. Approximately only 38 of those found are characteristic of neutral meadow species and of these less than 10 are indicative of low – intermediate fertility soils. There is no guidance of whether this number is highly diverse or not although some meadows in Herefordshire reportedly support more than 100 plant species.

3. At a species level, none of the plants found on site are included on Herefordshire Rare Plants register (Herefordshire Botanical Society, 2007). Furthermore none of the species are recognised as rare within the UK. In the publication 'Plants of Herefordshire' (Whitehead, 1976), the following species are recognised as being either frequent or very common in lowland hay meadows with intermediate – low fertility: knapweed,

pignut, rough hawkbit and zig-zag clover. No plants on site are identified within Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981.

4. With regard to naturalness, the site is entirely semi-natural, occurring as a consequence of anthropogenic activities. It is difficult to determine whether or not the site is more natural than any other habitats as almost all habitats within the agricultural landscape are semi-natural, created through a combination of both natural and anthropogenic processes.

5. Without available information on the area and the distribution of unimproved lowland meadows in Herefordshire it is difficult to adequately assess the rarity of this habitat within the county. *(Note: the landowners believe that there are over fifty unimproved hay meadows in the area which have been farmed in exactly the same manner as this particular site. However, these have never been ecologically assessed).*

6. With regard to its typicalness, the assessor believes that it is fair to say that unimproved lowland hay meadows are not unusual, although it is difficult to assess the rarity & relative botanical interest of this habitat within the county without assessing all the other unimproved hay meadows in the county. However, as stated in the Herefordshire BAP, the best of these meadows contain over 100 plant species in a few hectares', many of which are likely to be restricted to this type of habitat. At this site the meadow species composition is just short of 40, with the other species on the list having a closer association with either poached ground or hedgerows. Those species that are unlikely to be found in agriculturally improved or even poor semi-improved neutral grasslands are less than 10. The assessor, therefore, is of the assumption that the meadow is not one of the best examples of lowland hay meadows in the county.

7. The site's intrinsic appeal is likely to be subjective and therefore difficult to determine as there is no public access on site.

8. The site is isolated from other recognised Special Wildlife Sites or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's). The nearest recognised Special Wildlife Site meadow occurs approximately 2km away.

9. The recent history of the site would suggest sympathetic and traditional management.

10. It is not possible to fully determine whether or not the meadow should remain a Special Wildlife Site as the criteria is not robust, being at best subjecting and containing little information, for example, on the number of notable species required.

11. The assessor confirms that the southern and northern hedgerows are species-rich. *(Note: It is the applicants' intention to retain these hedgerows as part of the development.)*

In view of the high quality design of the dwellings and layout of the site, the specific intention of retaining the greenfield gap along the Arbour Lane and with the mature hedgerow along the southern boundary remaining undisturbed, it is not considered significantly detrimental to the character of the area. When weighed against the need to provide affordable housing to meet the local need as identified in the Housing Needs Survey dated March 2006, it is not considered to be sufficiently harmful to warrant refusal.

The Barker Review highlights the case for increased social housing to meet society's needs and the Government now accepts that there is a case for increased investment in social housing. The Government wants local authorities to provide affordable housing for key workers. The Government realises that the country is in the throes of a housing crisis and is introducing new reforms in an attempt to address the major imbalance of housing stock currently available in the country. It also realises the serious short term and long term consequences of not providing sufficient affordable housing throughout the country. The Government's objective now is to '. . . *encourage all landowners in rural areas to give serious consideration to releasing land for affordable housing to ensure that local key workers will have an opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live.*'

With the scale of the current economic crisis beginning to unfold across the country, it is expected that this could have a catastrophic effect on the housing market imposing an even greater burden on an already inadequate supply of affordable housing not only in the county but nationwide. To exacerbate the housing situation further, it is forecast that the credit crunch will force many households to default on mortgage payments and with banks

and building societies withdrawing mortgage products, it is even more difficult for people to get on the property ladder. In addition to this, it is also likely that developers will now landbank sites already granted planning permission for open market housing (including the mandatory affordable housing element of the scheme) until such time that the housing market picks up. Therefore, it is vital that rural exception sites such as the proposed development is granted planning approval to provide much needed housing when the demand is backed up by current Housing Needs Studies. The proposal is not dependent on a larger mixed use development.

For a full discussion on ecological issues refer to the Biodiversity and Survey Statement submitted with this planning application.

13. The Site in Relation to the Settlement Boundary

It is commonly thought that the use of settlement boundaries protects the countryside from unnecessary development and prevents ribbon development. However, the use of boundaries has led to criticism that they result in 'cramming' of settlements as every area of available land competes for development resulting in a potential reduction in landscape quality and character of that settlement. If any more development is allowed within the settlement boundary of Kingsland, there is serious concern that this will have a detrimental effect on the landscape quality & character of the village (i.e. Croftmead & Stoneleigh developments).

It is stated in the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan – Deposit Draft Background Paper September 2002 that criteria based on those within the adopted local plans have been devised. The criteria is similar to those used historically but will standardise the justification across the county for settlement boundary lines being in certain places. The criteria used to re-evaluate settlement boundaries within the UDP include:

'Lines of Communications – The boundaries trace the edge of the built up area, therefore excluding roads, paths, railways and other lines of communication.'
'Physical Features – Wherever possible the ***boundaries follow physical features, buildings,*** *fields boundaries or curtilages';*
'Recent Development – Where appropriate existing settlement boundaries have been **updated to reflect any new developments which may have occurred recently.'**

However, it would appear that Herefordshire Council did not follow their own guidelines in using the above criteria to re-evaluate settlement boundaries within the UDP as the settlement boundary in the current UDP was not updated to reflect the following criteria:

- *'Lines of Communications* – previously, the boundary traced the edge of Birch Walk Avenue as this was on the edge of the built up area. In the current UDP, Herefordshire Council should have extended the boundary to include Kingsleane which was built in 1992
- *'Physical Features'* i.e. the boundary was not updated to follow physical features of the Kingsleane buildings
- *'Recent Development'* i.e. the boundary was not updated to include Kingsleane in 1992 – classed as a new development since the previous UDP

The fact that Herefordshire Council omitted to update the settlement boundary in Kingsland to include Kingsleane is a very contentious issue as this omission is now being made an issue by Herefordshire Council as they are saying that the proposed development does not adjoin the established settlement and is removed from the main built form and settlement boundary. However, the definition of Policy H10 advises that affordable housing may be permitted on land within or adjoining an established rural settlement which would not normally be released for development provided that: . . . (criteria 1-7 are met). The definition of Policy H10 in the current UDP does not mention settlement boundary and as Kingsleane has been in existence for fifteen years there can be no denying that it is an 'established settlement' and very much a part of the Kingsland community. Herefordshire Council cannot ignore the existence of Kingsleane.

The principle of development in question is: Does the proposed site meet the requirements for Policy H10? The answer is **yes it does**. The overriding fact is that this proposal does adjoin an established rural settlement and

meets the required criteria 1-7 and, therefore, qualifies as a rural exception scheme under Policy H10 of the UDP.

Included within the Glossary of the current UDP the definition for 'Rural Exception Housing' is – 'Affordable housing provided to meet local needs in perpetuity, built on small sites within **or adjoining existing villages** on land that would not normally gain planning permission'. This site lies well within the curtilage of the village – please refer to Inset Map 20A on page 8.

14. Highways

In order to protect the mature hedgerow and retain the 'green break' in the Arbour Lane, the layout of the proposed scheme has been designed to share the existing road and entrance to Kingsleane.

Although the existing Kingsleane road is not adopted, the Highways Department have commented that they believe the access is suitable for intensification and that it could be amended to an adoptable standard and that they would adopt it. They have recommended that this is built to at least a shared surface standard.

Kingsleane currently has a convenient route via internal pathways to a point to the east of the existing site. The Highways Department have expressed concern that this route may not be as suitable for the new dwellings as the existing residents may not want too much foot traffic passing through their site. They suggest that a sensible solution would be to provide a footway from the access, going round the corner, and extending at least to where the current footpath meets the carriageway. This could be incorporated as part of the design, however, there is already a footpath on the opposite side of the road which will link the new development with all the facilities in the village.

The Highways Engineer goes on to say that '*This would also be the start of a pedestrian link past the fire station onwards to the A4110, providing a link between the village centre (shop, school, hall, pubs, doctor, etc) and the houses on the A4110, including the likely development at Showers Farm* (this site has now been granted planning permission.

15. Statutory Services

Water/Sewerage

In the past, concern has been expressed about the foul and surface water drainage system in Kingsland. The Parish Council arranged for representatives from Welsh Water to attend a meeting in March 2007 to discuss various issues surrounding the foul and surface water system.

Welsh Water representatives confirmed that the problems experienced in the Longford area of the village which is located approximately one mile away from the proposed site in an easterly direction is due to grease, etc blocking the pipework. In order to deal with the problem, Welsh Water are putting in place a maintenance agreement whereby they will jet the pipework from one end of the village to the other on a six monthly basis. Welsh Water also confirmed that there IS sufficient capacity in the system to accommodate further development in the village. It is also proposed to incorporate rainwater butts and a soakaway system as part of the new development. Foul drainage will discharge into the existing foul drainage scheme and storm water from the highway will discharge into the existing storm drainage system.

Gas/Electricity/BT

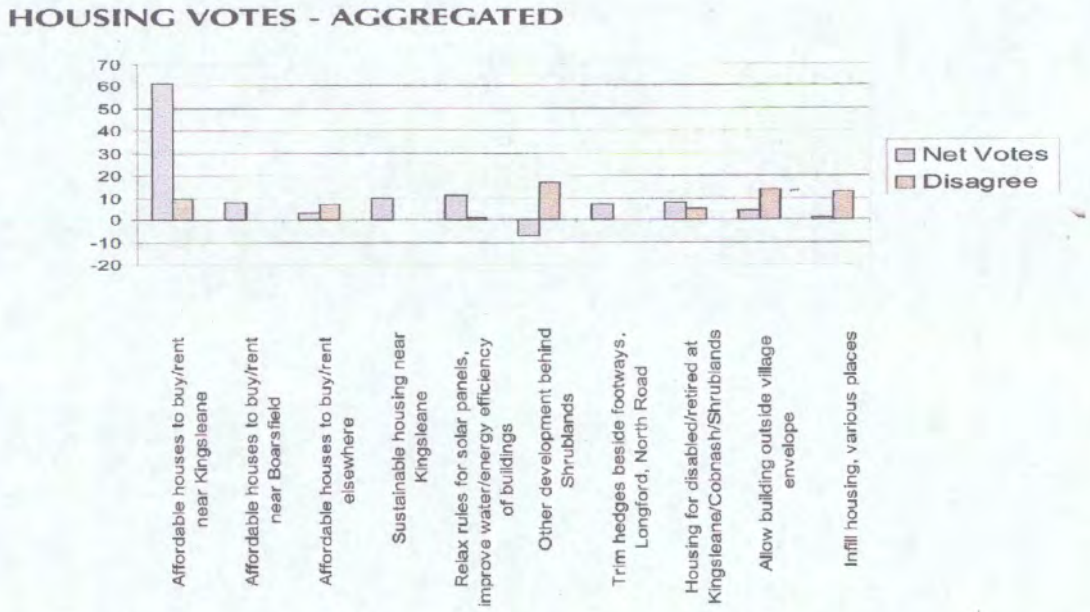
Gas, Electricity and British Telecom services are conveniently located for the proposed development. Kingsland also has access to Broadband services. For location of existing services, refer to the Utilities Statement accompanying the planning submission.

Air Source Heat Pumping System

It is proposed to install an air source heat pump heating system in the properties. This system is highly efficient and, together with well insulated properties will ensure that the properties are economical to run and contribute to the reduction in CO_2 emissions.

16. Extracts From Kingsland Parish Plan

Housing Issues:
During the consultation process of the Parish Plan a large number of residents expressed the opinion that smaller houses for young local families to buy/rent are required in the village in order to maintain a sustainable community. Also of great importance is affordable, sustainable housing/housing for the elderly and disabled housing, etc. The chart below is taken from the information provided during the 'Planning for Real' consultation exercise.



The Parish Plan Committee were advised by the local authority's Parish Plan Co-ordinator that a 'Planning for Real' exercise was an accepted and adequate means of consultation with the Community. What is important to bear in mind is that the above chart reflects the opinion of the community as the 'Planning for Real' consultation exercise was well attended. One of the main issues raised during the exercise was 'affordable housing' and this was recorded by a number of people who made comments. For a Summary of the Parish Plan, please refer to Appendix C. A copy of the full Kingsland Parish Plan is available on the internet.

Actions proposed as a result of the Parish Plan were to work with housing associations to develop a share/buy scheme and for the Parish Council to commission a Housing Needs Analysis. Herefordshire Council carried out a Housing Needs Survey dated March 2006 and the landowners arranged for Elgar Housing Association to attend a parish council meeting to discuss housing issues in the autumn of 2006. Herefordshire Council's Enabling Team did a 'talk' for the Parish Council and also undertook an Affordable Housing Open Consultation Meeting for the village – both in October 2007. In addition to this, the landowners delivered a letter to every household in the village to ascertain the present need for housing and this also gave the residents an opportunity to voice their opinions on the proposed development prior to submitting the planning application. Refer to Appendix C in the Consultation Statement for a copy of the letter.

Transport Issues:
Another issue that was highlighted during the consultation process of the Parish Plan is traffic problems within the village. Concern was expressed about cars parking along the main street causing much congestion through the main thoroughfare of the village. The need to curb the speed of vehicles, including tractors, through the village and other areas of Kingsland was also a big concern. In response to this, the Parish Council has purchased a Speed Indicator Device in an attempt to deal with the issue of speeding in the parish.

It is important to note that the proposed development on the land adjoining Kingsleane will not add to the congestion through the main thoroughfare of the village as any traffic from the site will travel away from the centre of the village and not through it. Nor will it add to the traffic problems being encountered between the Corners Inn and Kingsland Medical Centre. The scheme will provide secure cycle parking in sheds within the curtilage of each property to encourage people to cycle.

In April 2008, it was brought to the attention of the Parish Council that residents' driveways are being blocked by cars parking between the Corners Inn and the Boarsfield estate. In the April edition of the village newsletter, the Chairman commented as follows: '*The road junction by the Kingsland Medical Centre and North Road has become extremely congested of late, as people use it as an overflow parking area when visiting the doctor.*

17. Extracts From Kingsland Parish Housing Needs Study, March 2006

A Housing Needs Study was undertaken by Herefordshire Council's Strategic Housing Service dated March 2006. The study states that 225 questionnaires were returned from 434 households giving a good response rate of 52%. Extracts from the Housing Needs Study for Kingsland are as follows:

'The census results show that this parish has a higher proportion of people over 60 than does the county as a whole – over 60's form a third of the population of Kingsland, whereas they form a quarter of Herefordshire's population overall. (For England and Wales as a whole, the percentage is 21%). Also striking is the fact that Kingsland has a low proportion of the 25-29 age group: 2% in 2001 as compared to 5% for Herefordshire.'

Table 1: Age profile of residents in households who responded to the housing needs survey

Age bands	0 - 15	16 - 24	25 - 29	30 - 44	45 - 59	60+	Total
2005 Housing Needs Survey (numbers)	61	25	12	55	128	191	472[1]
Population (2001 census – numbers)	153	64	19	156	258	333	983
2005 Housing Needs Survey (%)	13%	5%	3%	12%	27%	40%	100%
Population (2001 census – %)	16%	7%	2%	16%	26%	34%	100%[2]

'Table 1 (above) shows that the people aged over 60 are over-represented in the study sample. People aged 30-44 are the most under represented, but the age group below this, those aged 25-29, are well represented and this is the age group where new households are probably most likely to form.'

Table 2: Housing Tenure

	Number found in survey[1]	% found in survey[2]	% in this parish (2001 Census)
Owner occupied (no mortgage)	131	58%	54%
Owner occupied (with a mortgage)	56	25%	25%
Rented from a private landlord	18	8%	10%
Rented from a Housing Association	14	6%	5%
Tied accommodation	3	1%	5%
Shared ownership	2	1%	1%

[1] This is the total number of people who gave their age – differs from total people captured by the survey given above under "Response Rate"
[2] The sum to 100% appears incorrect, but this is due to rounding
[3] 1 respondent did not state their tenure

'Table 2 (above) shows the responses to question 1 asking about the tenure of the current household. The results are compared with data from the 2001 census. The census figures show that the parish has a low proportion of homes for rent from a Housing Association – 5% compared to 15% in the county as a whole.'

The proportion of housing association rented/shared ownership properties does seem very low for a 'main village' of this size and this is confirmed in Table 2 above.

Council Tax Banding

The proportions of the different Council Tax bands found among respondents is very close to the proportions in the parish as a whole. This indicates that the survey has reached a good cross section of households in terms of their dwelling size.

Table 3: Council Tax Bands - % of properties in each band

Council Tax Band	Housing Needs Survey	Council Tax Register
A	3%	6%
B	7%	7%
C	13%	12%
D	24%	22%
E	26%	28%
F, G or H	27%	25%

Table 3 compares the proportion of property in different bands found from the survey against the known proportion in the parish. It is noticeable that Kingsland has a higher proportion of larger properties than the county as a whole, with a quarter of dwellings banded as Band F or above, and only a quarter banded below band D.'

Residents' views about potential development

'The table below shows that the majority of respondents (58%) were in favour of more housing provision in the parish. This is in line with the Parish Plan Summary of Key Findings which includes: "Great support for more properties being available for local people; young, families and elderly" under the heading "Some of the things you said".

Table 7: Responses to question 8a

	Yes	No	Don't know or not answered
In general, would you like to see more housing provided in the parish?	130 *(58%)*	50 *(22%)*	45 *(20%)*

'Those who answered "Yes" to question 8a above, were then asked their opinion as to the type of additional accommodation required – the responses are shown in Table 8 below.'

Table 8: Responses to "What additional accommodation is required"

Type of Home *multiple responses were permitted*	Number of respondents in favour of more of this type	% of all the survey respondents (225)
Affordable homes to rent or buy	96	43%
Homes for couples / small families	75	33%
Homes for single people	34	15%
Sheltered housing	38	17%
Homes for people with disabilities	17	8%
Homes to buy on the open market	18	8%
Homes for retired people	33	15%
Homes for larger families	12	5%
Executive homes for people to rent or buy	9	4%
Other	9	4%

Analysis of Housing Need

'The responses were examined in order to pick out those households who had identified a likely specific housing need in the next 5 years. 57 households, 25% of responses, were identified as having a need. This results in 68 households likely to want alternative accommodation in the next 5 years (One existing household can generate more than one future household).'

'The survey found 16 households who would be likely to require affordable housing in Kingsland parish during the next 5 years. 8 of these would be interested in renting from a Housing Association (of which 5 are interested in other options as well whether private renting, shared ownership or purchase) and the other 8 have only ticked shared ownership or discounted purchase. There are a further 2 emergent and 1 returning households who indicate that they would wish to purchase a property in the parish and who would appear to be unable to afford property at market prices. However, these households have not ticked any of the "affordable options" so we cannot be sure that they would be interested in any possible affordable provision.'

Current Housing Association Rented Stock

According the Housing Needs Survey, the current total stock of Housing Association rented property in this parish is as follows:

General Needs:
4 x one-bed flat
3 x two-bed house
12 x 3 bed house

For Older People:
2 x one-bed bungalow for over 55's
2 x two-bed bungalow for over 55's
(all 4 above with care alarm but no warden)

This does appear to be very low when considering the size and population of the village which is classed as a *'main settlement'* in the Herefordshire UDP. For a complete copy of the Housing Needs Study for Kingsland dated March 2006, please refer to www.herefordshire.gov.uk.

ADDITIONAL NOTE:

During the Affordable Housing Consultation Meeting held in October 2007, the number of households requiring affordable housing increased from 16 to 19. This is as a result of people attending the meeting requiring accommodation due to the fact that they work in the village but are unable to find suitable affordable housing in the village. Therefore, they have not been accounted for in the Housing Needs Survey dated 2006.

18. Policies Relating to Housing

According to the Herefordshire UDP, one of the aims and objectives of the UDP is to *'fulfil the requirements for additional dwellings to satisfy local household growth, including those needing affordable housing, as well as migration into Herefordshire in accordance with the policies of the Regional Spatial Strategy.'* More specific objectives include the need *'to ensure that the additional provision offers a mix and range of housing types to meet the variety of needs and requirements in any area, including affordable housing.'*

Para 5.5.14 of the UDP states that *'In addition to the provision of affordable housing to be sought on allocated and windfall sites under Plan policies, there will remain a need to provide for additional land to be released for affordable housing to help meet local needs in the rural areas. The following policy makes it possible for limited additional land to be made available, in rural areas on sites which would not otherwise be released for housing, in order to provide affordable housing to meet local needs in perpetuity.'*

POLICY H10 IS IN FORCE TO ENABLE THE DELIVERY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES SUCH AS THIS PROPOSAL AS IT WILL MEET LOCAL NEEDS IN PERPETUITY.

Para 5.5.15 of the UDP states that 'To qualify as a rural exception scheme the proposals need to demonstrate that a local need for affordable housing exists in the parish, in terms of the local need criteria set out in para 5.5.5 and that a proposal is located within or adjacent to an established rural settlement.'

THE PROPOSED SCHEME WILL MEET THE LOCAL HOUSING NEED IDENTIFIED IN HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S HOUSING NEEDS STUDY DATED MARCH 2006 AND DURING THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPEN CONSULTATION MEETING. THIS PROPOSAL IS SUPPORTED BY HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S OWN HOUSING NEEDS & DEVELOPMENT DEPT (STRATEGIC HOUSING). THE SITE ALSO ADJOINS AN ESTABLISHED RURAL SETTLEMENT, NAMELY, KINGSLEANE WHICH IS NEAR THE CENTRE OF THE VILLAGE.

Para 5.5.5 of the UDP states *'An affordable local housing need will be taken to exist when an individual is unable to compete on the open housing market and can clearly fulfil one or more of the following aspects of need within a parish:*

- *existing residents needing separate accommodation in the parish, such as those leaving tied accommodation or newly emergent households*
- *people whose work provides important services to the parish and need to live closer to the local community*
- *people who are not necessarily resident but have long standing links with the local community (older paople needing to move back to a village for support)*
- *people with the offer of a job in the locality who cannot take it up due to the lack of affordable housing within the County'*

EACH OCCUPIER WILL FULFIL ONE OR MORE OF THE ABOVE ASPECTS OF NEED WITHIN THE PARISH AS STATED IN PARA 5.5.5.

Para 5.5.18 of the UDP states *'Exception schemes need to take full account of environmental considerations, including design, siting and materials, and avoid sensitive locations where development would not be permitted for reasons of landscape or visual impact. Similarly a site's location should not place additional financial burdens upon households occupying the scheme through isolation or increased costs in gaining access to local services and facilities such as schools and employment.'*

KINGSLAND IS SITUATED WITHIN A CONSERVATION AREA. AS SUCH, ANY LOCATION IN KINGSLAND COULD BE CONSIDERED AS A 'SENSITIVE LOCATION'. FOR EXAMPLE

THE GRANTING OF PLANNING PERMISSION FOR FIFTEEN DWELLINGS AT CROFTMEAD - This site is located on the only remaining 'green space' between the Monument and the Post Office which has a considerable visual impact as one approaches the village centre from the west. It provides relief in the otherwise built up frontage of North Road and currently contributes to the rural character and is an important element within an attractive street scene. By developing the Croftmead site, this developer intends removing the mature hedgerows and trees thus destroying a very attractive and much enjoyed street scene. The housing on this site will now dominate the street scene in the North Road area.

HOWEVER, IN CONTRAST, THE KINGSLEANE PROPOSAL WILL HAVE VERY LITTLE VISUAL IMPACT ON THE CONSERVATION AREA. THE SITE LAYOUT IS SUCH THAT THE BULK OF THE DEVELOPMENT IS AWAY FROM THE SOUTHERN BOUNDARY (FRONTAGE OF SITE) AND THE GREENFIELD GAP BETWEEN KINGSLEANE AND WEST TOWN WILL REMAIN AS EXISTING AS THE MATURE HEDGEROWS WILL REMAIN UNDISTURBED AND PROVIDE PERFECT NATURAL SCREENING OF THE SITE. THE SITE'S LOCATION IS CENTRAL TO ALL VILLAGE FACILITIES WHICH WILL ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO WALK INSTEAD OF USING A CAR. THIS SITE IS IDEALLY LOCATED TO BUS LINKS TO OTHER AREAS, THEREFORE, THIS PROPOSAL WILL NOT PLACE ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL BURDENS UPON HOUSEHOLDS OCCUPYING THE SCHEME.



Photos showing the mature hedgerow which currently forms part of the important street scene in the Conservation Area which is to be destroyed as part of the proposed Croftmead development.

Even Herefordshire Council's own Landscape and Biodiversity Team Leader voiced concerns regarding the Croftmead Development with comments which included the following:
'...that the roadside hedgerows and trees are a very important landscape feature in the Kingsland Conservation Area because of their amenity value, rural character and because they provide relief within an otherwise built up frontage. Also, *'In my view the loss of the roadside hedgerows and trees will have a detrimental effect on the Kingsland Conservation Area.'*
She also said 'In conclusion, I regret that I could not support the proposal as it stands . . ..'

Para 5.5.20 of the UDP states 'Arrangements will need to be undertaken to ensure that the benefits of affordable housing will be enjoyed in perpetuity by subsequent occupants in local need as well as by the initial occupiers.'

THE PLANNING OBLIGATION AGREEMENT HEADS OF TERMS WILL BE COMPLETED BY ELGAR HOUSING ASSOCIATION (REFER TO PLANNING OBLIGATION AGREEMENT HEADS FO TERMS SECTION THAT ACCOMPANIES THE PLANNING SUBMISSION). THIS WILL ENSURE THAT THE BENEFITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING WILL BE ENJOYED IN PERPETUITY BY SUBSEQUENT OCCUPANTS IN LOCAL NEED AS WELL AS BY THE INITIAL OCCUPIERS.

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POLICY H10 OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE UDP

The proposal meets **ALL** the criteria of Policy H10 which advises that affordable housing may be permitted on land within or adjoining an established rural settlement which would not normally be released for development provided that ... (criteria 1-7 are met). Kingsleane is very much an established rural settlement having been built fifteen years ago and it certainly adds to the character of the village. The proposal is best described as a 'phase 2' of Kingsleane and meets the necessary criteria 1-7. It is a very contentious issue as to why Herefordshire Council did not follow their own criteria for re-evaluating settlement boundaries when compiling the current UDP as it clearly states that the re-evaluation should take account of any new developments since the previous plan.

The proposal is put forward under Policy H10 as a result of the discussion with the Inspector during the UDP Consultation Meeting and based on the comments in his subsequent report. The discussion at the meeting **specifically** referred to the proposed site i.e. *'between Kingsleane and Harbour House'*. The Inspector's recommendations in the Report also **specifically** refer to the land *'between Kingsleane and Harbour House'* and he points out in para 5.40.63 '. . . ***In this regard, the development could be facilitated through an allocation in the Plan or through the application of Policy H10*** *(Rural exception sites). Either way I would expect an up-to-date affordable housing needs survey to have been carried out. . . .'* A current Housing Needs Survey has now been undertaken which supports the application (refer to page 19 for further information or a complete copy is available in the Affordable Statement which accompanies this planning application).

In para 5.40.65 the Inspector comments that *'The development in the vicinity of Kingsleane is more peripheral'*. This does tend to be the case with Rural Exception Schemes as housing associations are unable to compete with developers for sites within settlement areas. He goes on to say *'In particular, the objection site represents a significant Greenfield gap along the frontage of the road at this point'*. The landowners have taken the Inspector's comments into account and the scheme has been designed to share the existing entrance to Kingsleane, allowing the mature hedgerow fronting the road to remain undisturbed and the character of the Arbour Lane will remain unchanged. Whether walking or driving down Arbour Lane it will not be possible to view the housing from the road until passing the actual entrance to the site.

In para 5.40.66, commenting **specifically** on the land *'between Kingsleane and Harbour House'*, the Inspector points out that *'In the circumstances that I have described, I consider that there is inadequate justification for an extension of the village boundary to encompass all or part of the objection site. In addition, local affordable housing needs, quantified through an up-to-date survey, could be met on a rural exception site without a specific allocation or adjustment of the settlement boundary.'* As the landowners had clarified at the beginning of the meeting that it was their intention to build affordable housing on this site, the Inspector pointed out that there is no need to include this area in the settlement boundary as this development could be facilitated through the application of Policy H10. The Herefordshire Council representative at the meeting did not put forward any argument why this could not be facilitated as suggested by the Inspector and if Herefordshire Council did have any concerns they should have discussed them at this meeting with the Inspector. A current Housing Needs Survey has now been undertaken which supports the application and already has the support of Herefordshire Council's Enabling Team.

THE PROPOSED SITE IS LOCATED ON LAND ADJOINING THE ESTABLISHED RURAL SETTLEMENT OF KINGSLEANE (BUILT IN 1992) AND THE BUILT-UP FORM OF THE VILLAGE. HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL HAS MADE THE STATEMENT THAT THE ORIGINAL KINGSLEANE DEVELOPMENT WAS ACCEPTABLE AS A RURAL EXCEPTION SITE BECAUSE OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GROUP OF SEVEN HOUSES ON THE CORNER OF THE LANE AND AS THIS ADJOINS KINGSLEANE, THIS SITE WILL ALSO FORM PART OF THAT RELATIONSHIP. AN UP-TO-DATE HOUSING NEEDS STUDY (2006) PROVES A 'NEED' FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING & THE SCHEME IS SUPPORTED BY HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC HOUSING TEAM. THE PROPOSED SCHEME MEETS THE CRITERIA OF POLICY H10 - ITEMS 1-6 (ITEM 7 N/A) AS FOLLOWS:

1. **The scheme will contribute to meeting a proven genuine and quantifiable local need for affordable housing as ascertained from an up-to-date local affordable housing needs survey.**

An up-to-date Housing Need Survey was undertaken by Herefordshire Council dated March 2006 which identified a need for 16 dwellings. In addition to this, as a consultation process with the village, the landowners delivered a letter to each property in the village outlining their intentions to apply for planning permission to

construct affordable housing on the proposed site. This gave the residents an opportunity to inform the applicants of any present housing need and also whether any residents had any comments to make about the proposed scheme. As a result of the response received and also the results of the 'Parish Plan' showing the land adjacent to Kingsleane being the most popular location for siting such housing (as voted by the community), the landowners felt justified in pursuing the scheme as a Rural Exception Scheme under Policy H10. Refer to Appendix C for a copy of the consultation letter. In October 2007, Herefordshire Council's Housing Needs and Development Team, in conjunction with Elgar Housing Association held an Affordable Housing Open Consultation meeting in Kingsland which proved successful in identifying further local need for affordable housing required by persons working in the village but who are unable to find suitable affordable housing in the village.

2. **It is evident that local housing conditions could not otherwise satisfy the need.**
It has been identified in the Housing Needs Survey dated March 2006 that Kingsland has a higher proportion of larger properties than the county as a whole, with a quarter of dwellings banded as band F or above, and only a quarter banded below band D. Kingsland has a reputation of being a village with a high percentage of elderly residents, many of whom have retired here from outside the county. The price of property in Kingsland is prohibitively expensive and young people, including key workers, do not have the salaries to afford to get on the property ladder in Kingsland.

A major problem in the village is the shortage of properties available for rent and any that are rentable, do not tend to become available as there are no suitable shared equity/open market houses to move up the property market into. The Housing Needs Survey identified that there are currently only 19 general needs housing association rented stock available and 4 of these ere one-bed flats. There are currently only 4 bungalows available for older people. The only dwellings with quite a high turnover are the one-bedroom flats at Kingsleane and one would expect a high turnover of this type of property. A recent vacancy for a 3 bedroom house at Kingsleane, via Homepoint received 17 responses.

The lack of available housing has a critical effect on emergent households who are forced out of the village. This issue has been confirmed in the Headteacher's letter which states *'At present, the school has parents who themselves grew up in the village but cannot afford to live in it, yet they continue to send their pupils to Kingsland CE Primary School, even though it involves travelling. From an ecological perspective it would make sense to reduce car journeys.'*

Difficulties also arise when families split up and one partner is forced to move out of the area as there are no suitable properties available in the village. This incurs additional travelling for parents in transporting the children from one parent to the other.

There were over twenty properties for rent at Boarsfield, however, a large proportion of these have been sold under the 'Right to Buy' Scheme. There are a number of private properties for rent but the rents can be high and the properties can sometimes be in poor condition. Some tenants from private rented properties are too scared to ask for repairs to be carried out in case rents are raised to cover the repair costs or that they will be asked to move out of the property and, with no other suitable accommodation in the village, will have to move out of the village causing disruption to their children who may have to change schools.

3. **The proposed scheme will respect both the character and size of the settlement concerned and the identified scale of need.**

The proposed scheme is for 10 nos. dwellings with a mixture of rented/shared ownership properties which will complement the adjoining properties at Kingsleane. The design of the properties is such that the dwellings will meet the standard set out in the Code for Sustainable Homes (min level 3), 'Lifetime Homes' and 'Secured by Design' standards which will be suitable for the occupiers' lifetimes (refer to Design and Access Statement for an in-depth discussion). Refer to the Design and Access Statement for an in-depth discussion.

The 'smaller node of Kingsleane' also includes the housing at Birch Walk Avenue. The site will not encroach into the countryside as the site does not project any further in a southerly direction than the present Kingsleane development and to the west is West Town which includes over thirty dwellings and this number is increasing significantly as planning approval has been granted for the conversion of the Showers Farm into dwellings. Construction is now underway.

It is believed that the scheme will respect both the character and size of the settlement concerned and the identified scale of need. The proposal has taken into account the comments made by the Ecological Surveyor and the UDP Inspector of the Public Enquiry Consultation Meeting regarding the mature hedgerows to the north and south of the site and both of these will remain undisturbed. The bulk of the development is located away from the road and this, together with the fact that the level of the Arbour Lane road is much lower than the site, is a further aid in minimising any visual impact. This proposal will not significantly increase the overall scale and impact on the built form. On plan it may well give the impression that the proposed development may link Kingsleane with the fire station. However, in visual terms, this will not be the case due to the fact that the mature hedgerow frontage of the proposed site will remain undisturbed and the majority of the houses will be positioned away from the road. This issue is discussed in more detail in the Biodiversity and Survey Statement.

The proposed site does form a natural expansion of the existing built form in that it actually shares the same entrance as the adjoining Kingsleane. The site is linked to the centre of the village (ie the crossroads – as defined in the Leominster District Local Plan) via the existing 'built form' of the village i.e. Kingsleane, Birch Walk Avenue, the village hall, nos. 1, 2 & 3 Park Terrace and Park House which is next to the crossroads. In fact, Herefordshire Council made the statement that the original Kingsleane development was seen as acceptable as a rural exception site because of its relationship with the group of seven houses on the corner of the lane (which are located within the settlement boundary) and as this site adjoins Kingsleane, this site also forms part of that relationship.

4. **It is expected that arrangements will be made to ensure that the benefits of affordable housing will be enjoyed in perpetuity by subsequent occupants in local need as well as by the initial occupiers.**

   Elgar Housing Association will enter into a 'Heads of Terms – Proposed Planning Obligation Agreement Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990'. For a copy of this document refer to the Planning Obligation Agreement Heads of Terms Statement which accompanies this planning submission

5. **The site's location affords excellent access to facilities and public transport.**

   The site is perfectly located to access all the facilities within the village by walking. Please refer to page 7 of this Planning Statement for epproximate 'walking' times to each of the facilities and pages 8 & 9 for location plans which shows how well placed the proposed site is in relation to pedestrian access to all the village facilities.

   The site is well served by public transport in the form of buses. A bus service to Hereford Sixth Form College, Hereford Art College and Holme Lacy Agricultural College passes the site. For Ludlow Sixth Form College students, or residents who work in Ludlow a bus service from Kingsland links with the Leominster to Ludlow bus and train service. Other local bus services through Kingsland link with Leominster, Ludlow, Hereford, Kington, Presteigne, Shobdon and Leintwardine. The main bus stop is located at the nearby Corners Inn. A limited bus service is available from Leominster to Birmingham and a railway service from Leominster has links with a countrywide network.

6. **The proposal <u>does not</u> involve a mixed development consisting of open market housing to offset the lower return on affordable housing on the same site.**

   The scheme will be for much needed rented and shared ownership dwellings only, as identified in the Housing Needs Survey dated March 2006 and in line with the consensus of residents' opinion highlighted in the Parish Plan, who favoured this site for rented/shared ownership housing.

7. **Item 7 is not applicable.**

<u>PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 1</u>

PPS 1 recommends that contributions should be made to cutting carbon emissions. It is difficult to understand how the current planning policy preference to use developer contributions in lieu of Policy H10 – Rural Exception Sites will help reduce the carbon footprint of villages. However, this could be achieved if local authorities used Policy H10 to meet the local needs of the county.

Kingsland Housing Needs Survey identified that 68 households are likely to need alternative accommodation over the next five years. This suggests a major imbalance of housing mix in the village. Many residents, the elderly in particular, wish to downsize from large family homes with large gardens into smaller properties within the village. However, this type of property is not available to them and they are forced to remain in unsuitable housing or move out of the village cutting ties with family & friends at a time when they need them most. Instead they have to pay to heat unused rooms in their large homes which is a waste of energy consumption and the majority are also unable to maintain the large gardens.

Local authorities continue to allow the construction of large luxury housing in villages when this type of property is not required. In order to reduce carbon footprints, planning policies need to be changed to force developers to prove that there is a need for the type of housing they intend building, regardless of whether the site is within the settlement boundary. In order to reduce carbon footprints, it is essential that there is a more efficient use of existing housing stock in villages with local authorities ensuring that developers build the types of properties that are 'needed' in the communities.

By allowing proposals such as the Croftmead development in Kingsland to build ten luxury houses in order to 'qualify' for the five affordable houses this will, unnecessarily, increase the village's carbon footprint considerably and still, this will not meet the affordable need of the required 16 dwellings identified in the Housing Needs Survey.

In February 2005, the Chairman of the Parish Council made the following comment in the Parish Newsletter *"In the* (Kingsland parish) *plan that many of us have been involved with over the last 18 months, a great deal of comment has been made on the housing needs of Kingsland. Without exception, smaller scale, affordable housing has topped every survey! As a community should our needs and views not be taken into account?"* John Pudge, Chairman KPC.

PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 3

PPS3 sets out the Government's strategic housing policy objectives. **Its key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live**. To achieve this, the Government is seeking:

- To achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, both affordable and market housing, to address the requirements of the community.
- To widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing, in particular those who are vulnerable or in need.
- To improve affordability across the housing market, by increasing the supply of housing.
- To create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural.

These housing policy objectives provide the context for planning for housing through development plans and planning decisions. The specific outcomes that the planning system should deliver are:

- High quality housing that is well-designed and built to a high standard.
- A mix of housing, both market and affordable, particularly in terms of tenure and price, to support a wide variety of households in all areas, both urban and rural.
- A sufficient quantity of housing taking into account need and demand and seeking to improve choice.
- Housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.
- A flexible, responsive supply of land - managed in a way that makes efficient and effective use of land, including re-use of previously-developed land, where appropriate.

As part of this PPS3 encourages local planning authorities to create and maintain sustainable rural communities by:

- Providing a mix of housing, both market and affordable, particularly in terms of tenure and price, to support a wide variety of households in all areas, both urban and rural;
- Setting lower site-size thresholds (than the indicative national minimum threshold of 15) above which affordable housing can be sought where economically viable and practicable;

- Setting different proportions of affordable housing to be sought, for different site size thresholds in the plan area, where viable and practicable;

Using the rural exceptions site policy to allocate or release small sites solely for affordable housing, within and adjoining small rural communities, which may otherwise be subject to policies of restraint, and would not otherwise be released for housing. Such sites should be used to provide affordable housing to meet local community needs in perpetuity.

Surely, the proposed site is the perfect example of meeting PPS3.

POLICY NC4

Policy NC4 has been discussed in more detail in the Biodiversity and Survey Statement (including Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy's Ecological Assessment).

The proposed site has incorrectly been included in Appendix B of the UDP (Section 39 Sites). The Agreement expired in February 2003 and should not have been included in this Appendix as it is an inaccurate statement and may mislead the public and committee members when making a decision on this application. Herefordshire Council were well aware this agreement had expired as it was pointed out to them during the consultation period and should not have been included it within the current UDP.

NC4 states *'Developments which could directly or indirectly adversely affect a Special Wildlife Site, Site of Importance to Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserve, a Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site or a site subject to an agreement under Section 39 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site.'*

In view of the high quality of design of the dwellings and layout of the site and the retention of the greenfield gap along the Arbour Lane the proposal is not considered significantly detrimental to the character of the area. When weighed against the need to provide desperately needed affordable housing specifically to meet the local need, as identified in the Housing Needs Survey dated march 2006, it is not considered sufficiently harmful to warrant refusal.

Careful consideration has been given to its overall appearance ensuring that it harmonises with the scale and character of the surrounding properties and is compatible with the character of the surrounding area.

The design of the layout enhances the architectural details of the scheme with its minimal amount of roadway and parking areas, the positioning of the bulk of the housing away from the frontage of the site, and an open space which is both functional and attractive is such that it will retain the rural character of the street scene of the Arbour Lane. As you will see from the street scene in the Plans, Photos and Montages Section which accompanies the planning application, the properties will not be visible from the Arbour Lane unless you are directly opposite the entrance, and even then, with the sympathetic soft landscaping proposed, the housing will be screened from the lane.

COMMUNITIES & LOCAL GOVERNMENT: DELIVERING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

This policy objective outlines the Governments aims for affordable housing as follows:

The Government is committed to improving access for all to decent accommodation at an affordable price. It recognises that key to making this happen in rural communities are the rural communities themselves: landowners must make land available; local planning authorities must make full use of the powers at their disposal; local people must support appropriate development.

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BARKER REVIEW

The Barker review recommended that there should be an increase in the provision of social rented housing to deal primarily with two factors: the growth in need for social housing and the consequence of the loss of stock through the Right to Buy. The government has said that social housing will be a priority in the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review.

Kate Barker's report made it clear the Government needed to do more to increase the supply of affordable and sustainable homes. The Government accepts the need for increased investment in social housing, and is determined to provide more affordable housing, especially for key workers, and young families.

The report concluded that the supply of new homes consistently lags behind demand and that the numbers of houses built in Britain must rise substantially if we are to reduce house price inflation and increase the number of affordable homes for people wishing to buy and rent.

The Barker Review shows that in order to deliver long-term stability the current level of house building will not suffice and a substantial increase in housing supply is required. The Barker Review shows how house price inflation has made home ownership in the private sector increasingly unaffordable for many groups in the population, particular for first-time buyers, with knock-on impacts on rent levels in the private sector and on demand for social housing, which already outstrips supply. This diminishing 'market affordability' has a direct impact on social exclusion and on the housing opportunities available to young people and others.

The Affordable Rural Housing Commission (ARHC) suggests that a supply of sites at a price that makes it viable to provide affordable housing is essential if more affordable homes are to be provided in rural areas. The ARHC recommended that there was further investigation of a range of measures that would encourage public and private sites to come forward for affordable housing development. **Government investment and effective planning policies will have absolutely no impact unless suitable land is released. The Government is keen to make the provision of land as easy as possible.**

SURELY THIS PLANNING APPLICATION WILL HELP THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES FOR DELIVERING AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR KEY WORKERS AND YOUNG FAMILIES IN RURAL AREAS SUCH AS KINGSLAND.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR HEREFORDSHIRE

The following is noted in The Community Strategy for Herefordshire *"A Sustainable Future for the County" - Herefordshire Community Strategy's One Vision:*

'Herefordshire will be a place where people, organisations and businesses working together within an outstanding natural environment will bring about sustainable prosperity and well being for all'.

'People are active in their communities and ***fewer are disadvantaged***

- *Perceptions of ease of access to key services – in particular: doctor, local hospital, library, sports/leisure centre and cultural/recreational facilities.*
- *Perceptions of factors affecting quality of life – in particular: activities for teenagers,* ***affordable decent housing****, job prospects, crime, traffic congestion and wage levels and local cost of living.'*

IF THIS IS HEREFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY'S STRATEGY THEN PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUCH AS THIS PROPOSAL MUST BE GRANTED IF THE VISION IS TO BE ACHIEVED.

19. Consideration of Alternative Sites

It has taken approximately four years to get this application to the planning submission stage. This site is available to be sold to Elgar Housing Association immediately. Elgar Housing Association is able to access funding to develop the site and the Housing Needs Survey dated March 2006 confirms that there is a local need for affordable housing in the village. Another important factor is that Herefordshire Council's own Housing Needs & Development Team (Strategic Housing) also supports this proposal. An Affordable Housing Consultation Meeting in the village hall has been held by Herefordshire Council and Elgar Housing Association and this proved successful – not one objection was received regarding the location of the scheme. This site was also the most popular location for this type of housing when the Kingsland Parish Plan Consultation Weekend took place – a copy of the Parish Plan is available on the internet – for a summary of the Plan – refer to Appendix D in the Consultation Statement). Even if HLAA manage to identify sites with potential, these sites may not be available for affordable housing. This will cause a further unnecessary delay in implementing this much needed affordable housing when people are already waiting for this type of accommodation in the village. Another important factor is that this site will not add any further traffic congestion within the village which is considered an important factor by the residents of Kingsland.

During the pre-planning consultation process, the Planning Officer expressed the expectation that alternative options be scoped in Kingsland. The following are alternative sites that have been considered and, subsequently, rejected as unsuitable:

Elgar Housing Association gave a talk about the possibility of affordable housing in Kingsland at a Parish Council Meeting in the autumn of 2006. They suggested that if the Parish Council were aware of any alternative sites available for affordable housing schemes for consideration that they should forward them on to Elgar Housing Association. It is now almost two years since that meeting and no other alternative sites have been identified as available and put forward. The Kingsleane site is available for development and could be developed as soon as planning consent is granted.

Also, during the consultation process for Kingsland Parish Plan, the land adjacent to Kingsleane proved the most popular location for housing by the residents.

Land Between Shrublands Corner (Longford) and the Post Office

This site is a particularly sensitive site and any development here will have a devastating visual impact on the approach to the village from the east as this is the only 'green break' between Shrublands Corner (Longford area) and the Post Office. Any housing here would dominate the street scene and turn what is currently a rural landscape into a 'built up' urban frontage which would have a detrimental effect on the character of the village.

Any further development in the area will add to the existing congestion problems in the main thoroughfare through the village already highlighted in both the Parish Plan and Kingsland School Travel Plan. According to Leominster District Local Plan, this area to the east along Longford has been left undeveloped to retain the village's historic character. It states: *'The open fields to the east of Fairfield Cottage provides substantial gaps along the southern frontage of Longford and maintain the rural character of the village upon its eastern approach despite development opposite. They are excluded from the settlement boundary to retain this character.'*

Another factor why this site is not suitable as an affordable housing site is due to its poor relationship with the centre of the village (The Comers Inn) and its distance from the village hall & recreational area which is the hub of the village. One of the fields in this area of the village is also an unimproved hay meadow.

Land Adjacent to Boarsfield (either side of the C1039 Class III Road)

Development in either of these areas would extend the village in a northerly direction. With their low hedges, any new development here will dominate the landscape and have a detrimental effect on this approach to the village. Any new development involving travelling along the narrow C1039 Yarpole Road should be avoided due to serious traffic issues as follows:

- The junction at the Corners Inn crossroads is extremely dangerous. When approaching the junction from the Yarpole direction (C1039), it is necessary to use a visibility mirror on the opposite side of the road to check whether any vehicles are approaching from North Road. This is particularly dangerous as it is extremely difficult to see cyclists approaching from North Road (see photos on pages 32-34).
- Due to the narrowness of this road, residents without incurtilage parking are known to park on the pavements in certain areas to avoid their cars being damaged by large vehicles (tractors accessing one of the larger farms in the village). Again, this is a danger to pedestrians who need to use the pavement.
- One of the two largest potato/arable farms in the village is situated about half a mile along the C1039. The volume of heavy traffic this generates, including large tractors and trailers, articulated lorries, etc., makes it a particularly hazardous road to travel on – especially during the farm's busy periods. It is dangerous for both vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians (see photos on pages 32-33).
- The Doctor's surgery is also located near the crossroads on the C1039 and patients often park on the narrow road causing further congestion in this area during surgery hours. In April 2008, it was brought to the attention of the Parish Council that residents' driveways are being blocked by parked cars between the Corners Inn and the Boarsfield estate. In the April edition of the village newsletter, the Chairman commented as follows: '*The road junction by the Kingsland Medical Centre and North Road has become extremely congested of late, as people use it as an overflow parking area when visiting the doctor.*' (see to photos on pages 32-34)
- The Oaker Wood Outdoor Activity Centre is also located along the narrow C1039 and this also generates a lot of additional traffic.
- This road also serves the chicken farm at Yarpole and articulated lorries serving the farm have to use this narrow road and dangerous junction to reach the farm.
- The Corners Inn is located on the junction. The pub has constructed holiday accommodation in the car park and parking is extremely limited. During busy periods, customers park along the C1039 and also along the main village thoroughfare. This coupled with the parking from the residential properties along the C1039, and the overspill parking from the Doctors surgery makes it a very congested and dangerous road to negotiate.
- The brewery delivery lorry also has to manoeuvre between the car park and the narrow C1039 when delivering goods to the Corners Inn (see photo on 34).
- Developing on land adjacent to Boarsfield would also add to the existing congestion through the main thoroughfare of Kingsland which has already been highlighted as a major concern of the residents in the Parish Plan and also identified as a major problem in the School Travel Plan.
- Historical records also show that these areas could potentially be archaeologically sensitive areas as there are remains of Kingsland canal in the vicinity.

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The above photograph shows the dangerous visibility at the junction of the crossroads at the C1039 and the B4360. In order to negotiate this crossroads it is necessary to use the visibility mirror. This is the view in the direction of North Road when the car is at the junction

The following photographs show that during busy times, cars park on all approaches to the dangerous crossroads causing obstructions to visibility. Cars also park on the pavements to avoid being damaged

Left: *photograph also shows the familiar scene of cars parking between the crossroads and the post office.*