



# **Spatial Strategy**

**for the Town of**

**Kings Langley**

**June 2009**

## 1.0 Spatial Strategy for Kings Langley

### 1.1 Characteristics

#### 1.2 Siting & size

Kings Langley is a compact village which straddles the south eastern edge of the Borough with a settlement population of approximately 4,900. It lies approximately 20 miles (30km) north west of London, 3 miles south east of Hemel Hempstead and 5 miles from Watford. The village has links to London and the north west via the A41 road and the west coast mainline railway; there is a railway station on the outskirts of the town to the south east. The village also has good links to the M25.

#### 1.3 Landscape character

Kings Langley lies on the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills and within the Upper Gade Valley<sup>1</sup>. The High Street runs along the western side of the valley floor, with land sloping steeply to the west up to the Sarratt Plateau. The valley floor contains the Grand Union Canal and River Gade; land in arable and pastoral uses rise steeply to the east. Kings Langley Common provides an area of open space and woodland on the western slope of the valley. The land surrounding Kings Langley is Green Belt countryside and the Hertfordshire Way footpath runs through it to the south west of the village from east to west, crossing the A41 and the canal.

1.4 The Grand Union Canal and River Gade combine throughout most of the valley, and there are two separate waterbodies on the outskirts of the village; one an angling lake, and the other, Kings Langley Lake, a spring-fed former gravel pit. The Canal provides the main green corridor within the village, while Tom's Lane and Chipperfield Road provide corridors from the village to the countryside.

#### 1.5 History and Built character

Kings Langley has a rich history dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, with royal connections in the form of the Royal Palace and Deer Park established during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively; the remains of the Palace are still present to the west of the village. The historic core of the village remains intact despite significant development over the years. There are a number of important listed buildings along the High Street which give the village a distinct character and attractive appearance. The Grand Union Canal reached Kings Langley late in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and was followed by the railway line forty years later. Both brought significant trade and a number of buildings, including the iconic Ovaltine Factory. The residential areas of Kings Langley are concentrated around the pattern of roads from the High Street up the valley to the west, and to the east of the High Street down to the Canal and beyond to the Railway line. Different residential areas are characteristic of

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<sup>1</sup> The Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum, Supplementary Planning Guidance (The Landscape Partnership Ltd, 2004) is an evaluation of the landscape and policy guidelines for the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011.

different architectural periods, with those closest to the High Street and up the valley side to the west being the oldest. The village has a clear boundary to the east of the railway line.

1.6 The Kings Langley Urban Design Assessment<sup>2</sup>, January 2006, identifies a number of urban design zones within the village; the village centre zone; the inner zone; the semi-rural zone; and the peripheral zone. Table 1 shows the key principles established for each zone. The map showing the zones can be seen in the Urban Design Assessment for Kings Langley at page 6.

**Table 1: Summary of Key Principles of Urban Design Zones**

<b>Urban Design Zone</b>	<b>Area of village</b>	<b>Key Principles</b>
Village Centre Zone	Along the High Street from Common Lane to Great park.	Protect the historic character and maintain a mix of uses that encourages activity, and promote accessibility.
Inner Zone	The residential area to the east of the High Street down to the Canal.	Provide low-rise medium to high density housing with strong links to the village centre and the train station.
Semi-rural Zone	The residential area to the south of the Common and west of the High Street (i.e. Great Park, Langley Hill and Vicarage Lane).	Provide low-rise low to medium density housing which accentuates the existing street structure and landscape.
Peripheral Zone	The residential area to the north of the Common, i.e. Conisiton Road, Belham Road and Osbourne Avenue.	Provide low-rise low to medium density housing that acts as a transition between the village and the countryside.

### 1.7 Key views

The key view corridors within Kings Langley are those looking across the Gade Valley; down Common Lane, Vicarage Lane and Langley Hill; and the view along the Grand Union Canal. The main gateways into Kings Langley are at either end of the High Street marking entry to the village; a further key gateway is at the junction of Water Lane and Waterside which marks entry to the village and the canal towpath.

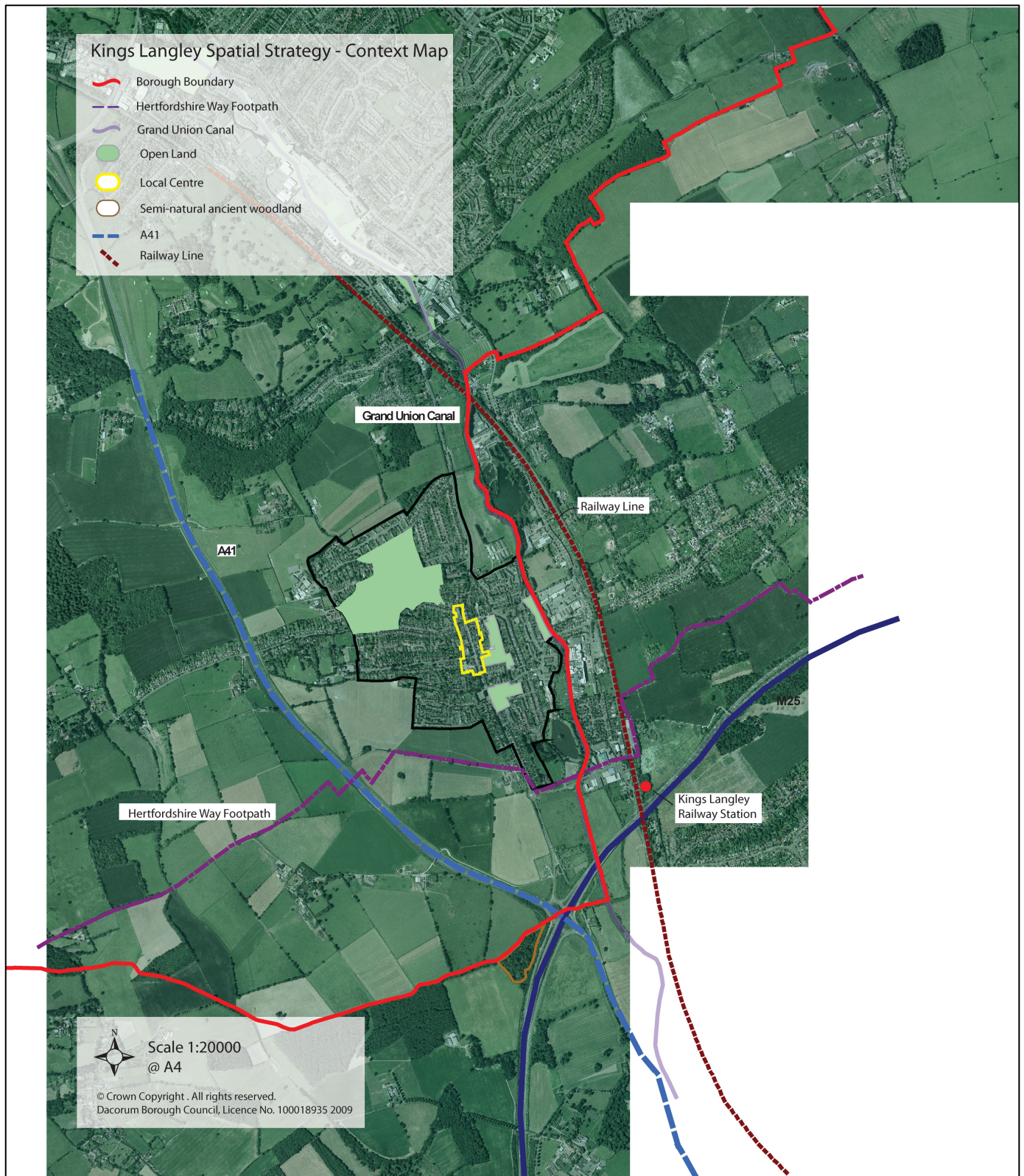
### 1.8 Leisure & sports facilities

Kings Langley has an overall shortage of indoor and outdoor sports facilities although it does have a football club, a cricket club, a bowling green and a swimming club. The football pitches are located to the north of the village on the open land between Kings Langley and Apsley; and the cricket pitch is located on Kings Langley Common. The bowling green is located just off the

<sup>2</sup> The Urban Design Assessment for Kings Langley (Urban Practitioners, 2006) provides baseline evidence, settlement principles and urban design guidelines for Kings Langley.

High Street to the east, while the swimming club meet at Kings Langley School. As well as sport, Kings Langley has a strong village community and a number of clubs and societies; the village has a community centre, which is well used.

**Figure 1.1 – Kings Langley Context Map**



### 1.9 Open Space and Wildlife sites

Kings Langley has a good provision of open space in the form of allotments, the Common, outdoor sports facilities, the churchyard and cemetery, school playing fields and the canal corridor and lakes. The Urban and Nature Conservation Study (UNCS)<sup>3</sup> identifies key wildlife spaces and corridors within the urban area. The study highlights the Common, The Priory, the Canal corridor (including the two lakes and surrounding areas of grassland), the gardens along Chipperfield Road and areas of grassland, woodland and scrub in and around the village as areas of high wildlife value.

### 1.10 Local business

Kings Langley has a vibrant village centre concentrated along the historic High Street with many shops and other services, as well as a few pubs and restaurants. There are a range of shops with some everyday convenience shops alongside some more specialist shops such as the antiques shop. The village shops provide for most day to day needs and are well used by both the local residents and passers by. Kings Langley also has three designated employment sites, made up of six estates, and although these are in the Three Rivers part of Kings Langley, they are considered important to the character of the village and local economy. The employment areas are good to average quality and are used for a mixture of warehousing, offices and light industrial units. They benefit from excellent transport links and also include the construction and engineering campus of West Herts College.

### 1.11 Cross Boundary Village

The village of Kings Langley straddles the borough boundary, which runs along the Canal; the part of the village to the east of the Canal is within Three Rivers District. It is important for us, as planners, to think of the village as a whole settlement rather than in two parts. We want to work closely with Three Rivers District Council to ensure that we have a consistent approach to the village.

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<sup>3</sup> Urban Nature Conservation Study for Tring, 2006 – considers the wildlife resources within the six major settlements in the Borough of Dacorum.

## 2.0 The vision for Kings Langley

Kings Langley will remain a vibrant compact village, delivering a high quality of life for local residents and businesses. Its long-term strategy to 2031 will emphasise the conservation of the natural, historic and built heritage of the village, particularly in the context of its setting in the Gade Valley, the Grand Union Canal and village centre. Limited growth will help support vitality of the village. Development will be sympathetic to local character and will be used to secure a high level of affordable, sustainable housing and improvements to outdoor leisure space. The local centre will remain the heart of the village and continue to deliver a range of local shops, services and facilities. Support will be given to local businesses, schools and community facilities, and important wildlife and biodiversity resources will be protected. The vision will have regard to the Three Rivers District Council Core Strategy.

### Question 1 (Kings Langley)

**Do you agree with the vision for Kings Langley?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, what should be different? (Please see questionnaire)**

## 3.0 The Issues and Opportunities

3.1 The East of England Plan (EoEP) sets out key strategies for development that need to be addressed by the spatial strategy for Kings Langley. The Plan gives limited guidance for the approach to development in large villages; consideration should be given to the potential of the village to accommodate an appropriate scale of development in relation to local housing and employment needs. Development should be sympathetic to local character and provide an appropriate level of affordable housing. Public transport, cycling and walking should be promoted in order to improve accessibility to services. The natural, historic and built environment should be conserved and enhanced and all important aspects of the Countryside and the environment should be protected.

3.2 The options for development are limited by the character and capacity of the village, and therefore only a level of housing growth that maintains the current population is considered appropriate (Population: Background Note for the Core Strategy<sup>4</sup>). This would provide some opportunities for small-scale development, including the provision of local affordable housing.

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<sup>4</sup> Information on population assumptions and calculations is given in the Population Background Note for the Core Strategy.

3.3 The main issues identified for Kings Langley from technical studies and consultation are:

#### **Key Issues**

- Need for more affordable housing and a greater range of housing;
- Capacity and threshold issues at Kings Langley Secondary and Primary Schools;
- The need to avoid coalescence with other settlements;
- Future of Sunderland Yard and other employment areas; i.e. whether they should be retained as local employment land or developed for residential use;
- Traffic Congestion and parking along and around the High Street;
- Retention of the character of the village, in particular the historic core and the protection of historic buildings;
- Protection of areas of wildlife value;
- Support for to local businesses to maintain the vitality and vibrancy of the local centre;
- Shortage of outdoor sports facilities;
- Need to improve the frequency and routing of bus services;
- Relatively poor condition of public footpaths, the canal towpath and pedestrian signage.

#### **Question 2 (Kings Langley)**

**Are there any additional major issues we should be considering?**

**Yes/No**

**If yes, please list. (Please see questionnaire)**

3.4 The need to develop a spatial strategy for Kings Langley presents an opportunity to try and overcome some of the above issues.

3.5 We must consider what level of additional housing development should be accommodated in Kings Langley up to 2031. Additional housing development is key to maintaining a vibrant village; it helps attract new people into the village and also helps to accommodate the existing population in the context of the projected falling household size. Additional housing also provides an opportunity to address some of the issues identified above such as the delivery of affordable housing and outdoor sports facilities.

3.6 A key constraint to housing growth in Kings Langley is the capacity of the existing infrastructure; in particular that of the primary school. We have been in discussions with Herts County Council regarding the primary school, which is currently operating at almost full capacity.



3.7 Over the past 3-4 years, the Ovaltine development, which is within the Three Rivers part of Kings Langley, has brought a significant number of dwellings (367) to the village. The Three Rivers Core Strategy Preferred Options Document also proposes three sites for 220 new dwellings in Kings Langley. A key issue for consideration is where the children from the proposed new residential development in the Three Rivers part of Kings Langley will go to primary school. Hitherto, (as for the Ovaltine Development) it has been assumed that pupils will attend schools at Bedmond or Abbots Langley in Three Rivers District. The implications would be different if they went to Kings Langley Primary. We are in continuing discussions with Herts County Council and Three Rivers District Council regarding this issue, and the current public consultation will help.

3.8 Whilst we would wish to achieve a joined up planning approach with Three Rivers District Council, we can only plan for the Dacorum part of the village. We suggest that the Dacorum part of Kings Langley should accommodate modest levels of new housing of around 150 dwellings over the period 2006 to 2031. This will allow the population to remain approximately as it is now, as the average household size is projected to fall.

### **Question 3 (Kings Langley)**

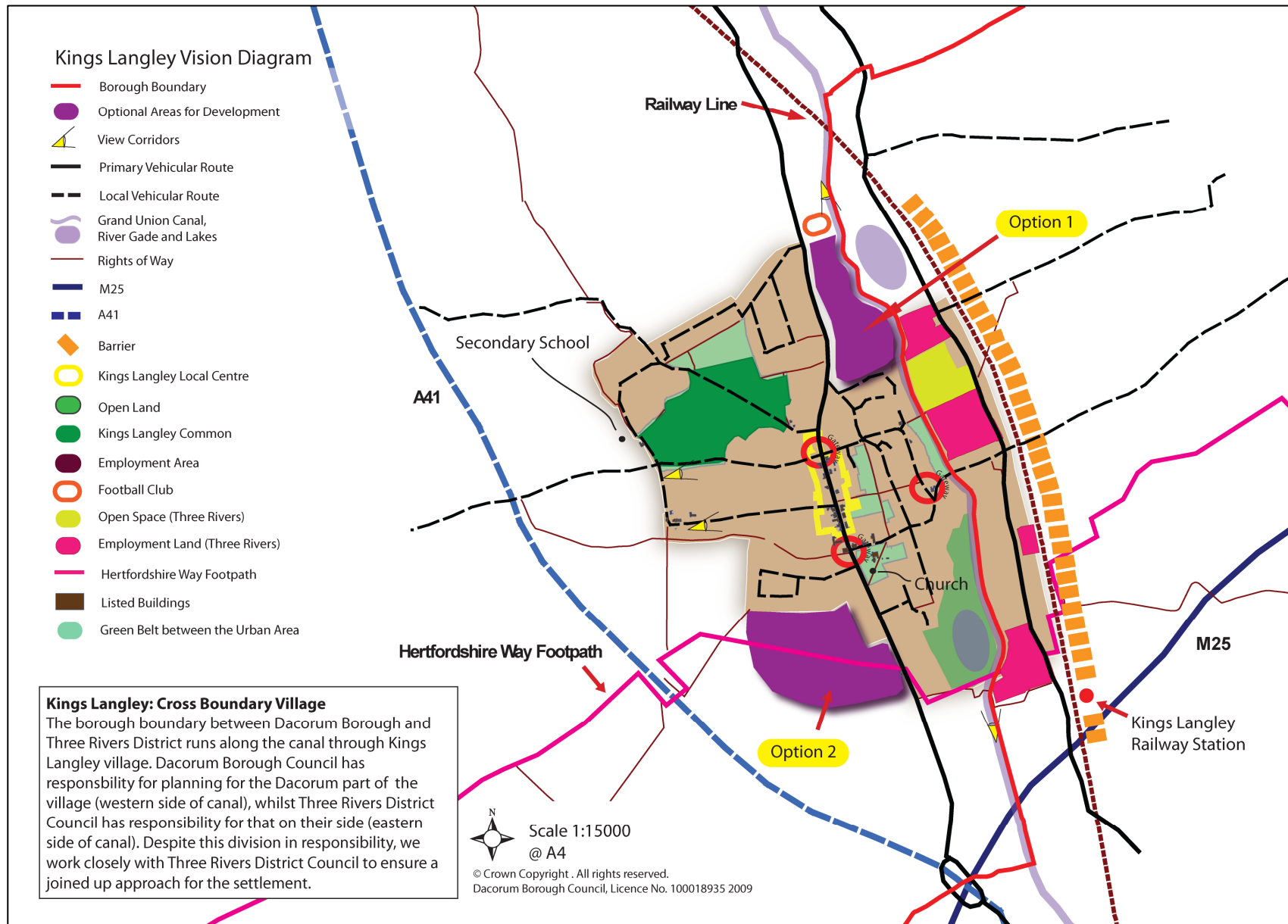
**Do you agree with this level of growth?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, what should it be? (Please see questionnaire)**

3.9 Evidence from our housing studies suggests that approximately 70 new dwellings can be accommodated within the urban area of Kings Langley. However, this is not enough housing to address the shortfall in affordable housing in Kings Langley or to provide additional outdoor sports facilities from developer contributions. The amount of additional housing required on greenfield land in Kings Langley to maintain a steady population up to 2031 is around 80 dwellings.

**Figure 3.1 – Kings Langley Vision Diagram**



## 4.0 Development Options

Development Option	Pros	Cons
<b>Option 1</b> <b>Rectory Farm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to provide significant levels of affordable housing;</li> <li>• Removal of unattractive buildings;</li> <li>• Opportunity to secure additional leisure space on adjacent land (including land for the football club which has planning permission);</li> <li>• Site has clear boundaries to East and West to contain development;</li> <li>• Good accessibility to local shops and services and bus routes;</li> <li>• Closer to the schools;</li> <li>• Achieve proposed level of greenfield housing development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quite a distance from the railway station, though fairly direct;</li> <li>• Reduction of an important gap between Hemel Hempstead and Kings Langley;</li> <li>• Would bring development close to Canal Corridor leading to possible erosion of character and of important wildlife corridor;</li> <li>• Part of site lies within Floodplain 3.</li> </ul>
<b>Option 2</b> <b>Wayside and Broadfield Farms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to provide significant levels of affordable housing;</li> <li>• Opportunity to secure additional open/leisure space with development;</li> <li>• Good accessibility to local shops and services and bus routes;</li> <li>• Within easy walking distance of the railway station;</li> <li>• Part of site already contains a significant number of buildings;</li> <li>• Could achieve more than the proposed level of greenfield housing development in the long run;</li> <li>• Land is owned by Hertfordshire County Council so it may be easier to manage development;</li> <li>• Direct access from main road.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive open valley side location;</li> <li>• Potential topographical issues with the site;</li> <li>• Grade II listed building on site (Cedar Lodge);</li> <li>• No physical constraints to the South and West of the site to contain development;</li> </ul>

**Question 4a (Kings Langley)**

**Do you prefer Option 1?**

**Yes/No**

**If yes, please give your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 4b (Kings Langley)**

**Do you prefer Option 2?**

**Yes/No**

**If yes, please give your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

## **5.0 Spatial strategy themes**

5.1 The spatial strategy for Kings Langley and the other towns, large villages and the countryside in the Borough is presented around four themes:

- a) looking after the environment;
- b) social and personal welfare;
- c) economic prosperity; and
- d) location and access.

### **a) Looking after the Environment**

(i) Small-scale growth at Kings Langley presents some challenges, yet provides us with the opportunity to conserve and enhance the environment of the village. The scale of growth will be such that the compactness of the village will be maintained and coalescence with other settlements will be avoided. It is important that growth does not interfere with the key views and gateways into the village, and where possible enhances the setting of the village within the Upper Gade Valley.

(ii) Kings Langley has three conservation areas which together cover the village centre and church, parts of the common including the cricket pitch and a number of listed buildings. The design of future developments must relate well to the existing conservation area, listed buildings and local distinctiveness of Kings Langley in order to retain the character of the historic, built and natural environment. New development should fit in with the key principles of the Urban Design Assessment, outlined in Table 1, and retain the open land structure of the village.

(iii) The canal is another important part of the natural and historic environment of Kings Langley; it also forms part of a key view corridor, and therefore future development must also relate well to the canal corridor. The state of repair of the canal towpath has been brought to our attention through consultation; there may be scope for environmental improvements to be made to the towpath, or contributions made towards them, with new housing development.

(iv) Kings Langley village has a relatively high provision of informal open space and a number of sites of high wildlife/biodiversity value; these contribute to the character of the village and will be protected, and where possible enhanced. The village has a shortage of outdoor leisure space, and there may be potential to provide some with future development.

(v) Climate change is a global concern and it is becoming increasingly important for all communities to try to adapt and lessen their impact on the environment. Kings Langley is fortunate in that one of the global leaders in renewable energy development (Renewable Energy Systems) has its head office on the edge of the village (within Three Rivers District). The village has an opportunity to draw on this expertise and embrace the challenges laid out by climate change. New developments will be expected to be built to high, sustainable standards.

#### **Questions 5 (Kings Langley)**

**Should a key emphasis of the Spatial Strategy be to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment of Kings Langley?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, what should be different? (Please see questionnaire)**

#### **(b) Social & personal welfare**

(i) Kings Langley will deliver some small-scale additional housing. The amount it will deliver is based largely on its character, size, setting and the capacity of its infrastructure. The level of housing to be delivered at Kings Langley is discussed above in paragraphs 3.5-3.9, and the locational options are discussed section 4.0.

(ii) Our technical studies and consultation with the local community identify a shortfall in the provision of affordable housing in the village and remedying this is a key priority for the spatial strategy. Future housing developments, especially of larger sites, will be expected to provide a significant proportion of affordable housing.

(iii) The County Council is advising on the capacity of the primary school and that of local roads. The primary school is the significant determinant of how much growth the village can accommodate.

(iv) Kings Langley Secondary School is designated as a Major Development Site (MDS) in the Green Belt which means that an allowance is made for limited infill development within the site. We will continue to support the school by maintaining this designation, and support improvements promoted by HCC through their Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

**Question 6 (Kings Langley)**

**Do you agree that new housing developments should provide a significant level of affordable housing?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

**(c) Economic prosperity**

(i) Kings Langley has a vibrant village centre, and the spatial strategy will aim to maintain this vibrancy through policies that protect the shopping and service function of the High Street.

(ii) Whilst the Dacorum part of Kings Langley does not contain any designated employment sites there are a number of local employers, including those located at Sunderland Yard and just off the Nap. Both sites have been suggested to us as potential sites for future housing development, and it is likely that the Ex Kings Langley Building Supplies site will come forward for residential development before 2031. Development of these sites for housing would mean that a lower level of new housing would need to be accommodated on greenfield sites. However, it would also lead to a loss of small-scale local employment sites would mean that retention of employment sites in Three Rivers becomes more important.

**Question 7a (Kings Langley)**

**Should Sunderland Yard be retained as a local employment site?**

**Yes/No**

**If yes, please give your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 7b (Kings Langley)**

**Should Sunderland Yard be retained for residential development?**

**Yes/No**

**If yes, please give your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

**(d) Location & access**

(i) Kings Langley has excellent transport links with the railway and its proximity to the M25 and A41; this is a major draw for people wanting to live in the village. Better pedestrian links and signage to and from the station would improve it and the village's accessibility.

(ii) Concerns about high levels of traffic through the village along the High Street have been raised in previous consultation with the local community, as has the desire for more off-street parking. We believe that both these are signs, at least in part, of a successful village and are not easily tackled. The High Street in particular has benefited from a parking enhancement.

(iii) Better signage and pedestrian links are required in and around the village, particularly to the canal; these would increase its accessibility and promote its leisure use.

**Questions 8 (Kings Langley)**

**When future housing development comes forward, we may have to choose between the delivery of affordable housing, towpath improvements, additional outdoor leisure space, or sustainable buildings. Do you think we should prioritise between these objectives?**

**Yes/No**

**If so, please use the comments box to rank them in order of your preference (1 being most preferable and 4 being least preferable). Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 9 (Kings Langley)**

**The spatial strategy for Kings Langley to 2031 is presented in Section 5. Overall, do you agree with the strategy?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 10 (Kings Langley)**

**Do you have any other concerns or comments regarding the spatial strategy for Kings Langley?**

**Yes/No**

**If yes, please add them here. (Please see questionnaire)**