



# **Spatial Strategy**

**for the**

**Countryside**

**June 2009**

## 1.0 Countryside Spatial Strategy

### 1.1 Characteristics

#### 1.2 Siting & size

The countryside of Dacorum covers 178 sq kilometres and has a population of 13,265 in 5,128 households (2001 Census). 86% live in villages and hamlets, with the remainder dispersed. Nearly half live in the seven largest villages.

#### 1.3 Landscape character

Most of Dacorum lies within the Chiltern Hills, part being designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The most distinctive landscape feature is the heavily wooded Chilterns chalk escarpment and its outlier. Although it is heavily wooded, there are important areas of chalk downland e.g. at Aldbury Nowers. The majority of the Borough lies on the dip slope which is cut by the chalk streams of the Ver, Gade and Bulbourne which run in a north-west to south-east direction. Dry valleys and winterbournes further divide the area to create a varied mix of landscapes: the Bourne Gutter being the most notable. The dip slope is so gentle in places that it generally has the character of a plateau. Heavy clay soils with flints overlie the chalk.

1.4 The dominant feature is the beechwoods of Ashridge and Northchurch, Aldbury and Berkhamsted Commons. The Chilterns Beechwoods<sup>1</sup> are a Special Area of Conservation. Hanging beechwoods on upper slopes of valley sides are especially characteristic though the range of broadleaf deciduous species is being broadened through woodland management. Woods and trees feature strongly in the landscape and often penetrate the villages, blending them into the landscape. Where trees have been removed (e.g. along the West Coast Main Line) the results, especially the visual impact, can be significant.

1.5 Small areas of heathland remain on Berkhamsted Common and are a relatively rare habitat in Hertfordshire.

1.6 Key biodiversity areas support the greatest diversity of species and the greatest extent and highest quality of semi-natural habitat. There are five located wholly or partly in Dacorum:

- River Chess Valley (wetlands, grasslands, woodland and heath)
- Ashridge/Berkhamsted Common/Aldbury Common (beech woodland, heath, chalk grassland) – part is also a Special Area of Conservation.
- Tring Park/High Scrubbs (beech woodland, chalk grassland)
- Tring Reservoirs (wetlands)
- Upper Gade Valley (wetlands)

1.7 Although much of Dacorum's landscape is relatively enclosed and intimate, there are areas with larger open fields along the valley bottoms, and on the plateau to the north of Grovehill.

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<sup>1</sup> Special Areas of Conservation are protected sites designated under the European Commission Habitats Directive.

1.8 Chalk streams are a globally rare habitat. The river valley bottoms are generally flat, associated with deposits of river alluvium. Heavy seasonally waterlogged soils give rise to wetland and other associated vegetation. It is often a pastoral landscape (i.e. wet and dry meadowland; and a dense scattering of trees and areas of scrub including willow and poplar trees along the course of the river), with arable land away from the watercourse.

1.9 The Grand Union Canal follows the Gade and Bulbourne valleys before passing through Tring Gap. Along with its branches, the Aylesbury and Wendover Arms, it provides a further attractive dimension to Dacorum's countryside.

1.10 Other water features are the fishing lakes near Winkwell, and a number of ponds.

1.11 Large parts of Dacorum were also part of extensive estates with designed landscapes. Ashridge, Tring Park and Markyate Cell are designated Historic Parks and Gardens. Other significant estates are Gaddesden Place, Rossway, Beechwood Park, Haresfoot, Shendish Manor and Westbrook Hay where remnants of historic parkland can still be seen. These estates had an impact on settlements, which were often designed to house estate workers.

1.12 The landscape to the north of Tring has a different character, with Tring Reservoirs, and Boarscroft Vale which is part of the more extensive Vale of Aylesbury. There the heavy clay soils support pasture in small to medium sized fields. The area is distinguished by the relatively large number of open ditches, streams, moats and ponds. There is a pattern of clipped hedgerows with many native black poplars which are rare nationally. The landscape is generally flat and open and has views of the Chilterns escarpment. Marsworth Church is a feature to the east. The area also contains the remnants of the Aylesbury Branch railway line, Millhoppers Butterfly Reserve and the sites of mediaeval villages (Tiscott and Ardwick).

1.13 Generally, productive farmland comes right up to the settlement boundaries and there are relatively few of the problems associated with the urban fringe.

1.14 The countryside accommodates major through routes (A41 bypass), and former coaching roads (A4251, A4146, A5). Most of these head north-south. Apart from the A5, which is in the extreme north east of the Borough, east-west links tend to be on B roads – B4506 through Ashridge from Dunstable, B488 and B489 north of Tring – or the single track lanes between the plateau and valley floors. Pedestrian footways tend to be limited to main roads.

1.15 There are still pockets of derelict land associated with Bovingdon Airfield.

1.16 Visual intrusion occurs in route corridors - A4146 between Hemel Hempstead and Water End, A5 west of Junction 9, and the A41 Service Area and Bourne End Mills. Light pollution and traffic and aircraft noise are further

issues. The National Air Traffic Service proposed changes to aircraft routes that would have resulted in more aircraft flying over the Chilterns at lower levels, marring its tranquillity: a revised scheme will be put forward later in 2009.

### 1.17 Built Character

The most notable feature of the vernacular buildings of the Chilterns is the consistent use of materials with flints often combined with brick. This is a feature of both buildings and boundary walls. Chilterns farmsteads are characterised by large timber framed barns, typically clad with horizontal weather boarding and gable walls constructed out of brick and flint. Most have been converted to other uses.

1.18 The character of the settlements is as follows:

**Aldbury** is a quintessential nucleated scarp foot village with central village pond, green and stocks. It was already an ancient settlement at the time of the Domesday Book. Narrow hedged lanes and hollow tracks from the escarpment penetrate the settlement which was part of the Ashridge Estate. There is a large area of allotments, open space and a community orchard hidden behind Trooper Road.

**Wigginton** is probably the highest village in the Chilterns, situated above Tring Park. Many of the houses were built by the Rothschilds in 10 years around the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Flamstead** dates back to Saxon times and overlooks the Ver valley. It was a very small village until 1965 when four small estates were built. The village centre has changed little however and still retains its character with attractive half timbered and flint cottages.

**Potten End** is located in the high tract of land that separates the Gade and Bulbourne valleys. It is a more recent village which grew up in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century on the edge of Berkhamsted Common. The church is Victorian, and most of the houses and cottages are even later. It has an attractive village green and pond.

**Chipperfield** was originally an outlying settlement of Kings Langley on the boundary of the domain of the Royal palace, and situated at a crossroads. It is quite loose-knit with fields coming right into the settlement providing an agricultural setting for the adjoining housing. Chipperfield Common is a major feature.

**Little Gaddesden** is a long straggling settlement on the east side of Nettleden Road with an attractive linear green. It may originally have been a plague village, as the church is on the edge of the settlement. It is an Ashridge estate village.

**Great Gaddesden** is a small nucleated settlement in the Gade Valley. The picturesque cluster of church, farm, school and cottages is adjoined by an unsympathetic former Council estate. It was an estate village of the Halsey family who still live at Gaddesden Place.

**Gaddesden Row** is an unusual settlement largely comprising a series of isolated farms and cottages ranged along a 2 mile long ridgetop road with the

hamlet of Jockey End at its northern end. Despite its scattered nature, it seems to have been populated since the Stone Age.

**Flaunden** originated as a retirement village for workers on the local estates of Lord Chesham of Latimer House. The only additions since then have been a village hall and half a dozen council houses. It has a quiet atmosphere with the original brick and flintstone cottages radiating out from the central crossroads ('Crossways').

**Piccotts End** is a medieval hamlet in the Gade Valley. It includes several medieval cottages and a number of Georgian and Regency villas, including the Marchmont Arms, and a converted water mill.

**Wilstone** is a compact village close to Tring Reservoirs. Although the area was settled for many hundreds of years, the main growth occurred at the time of the construction of the Grand Union Canal.

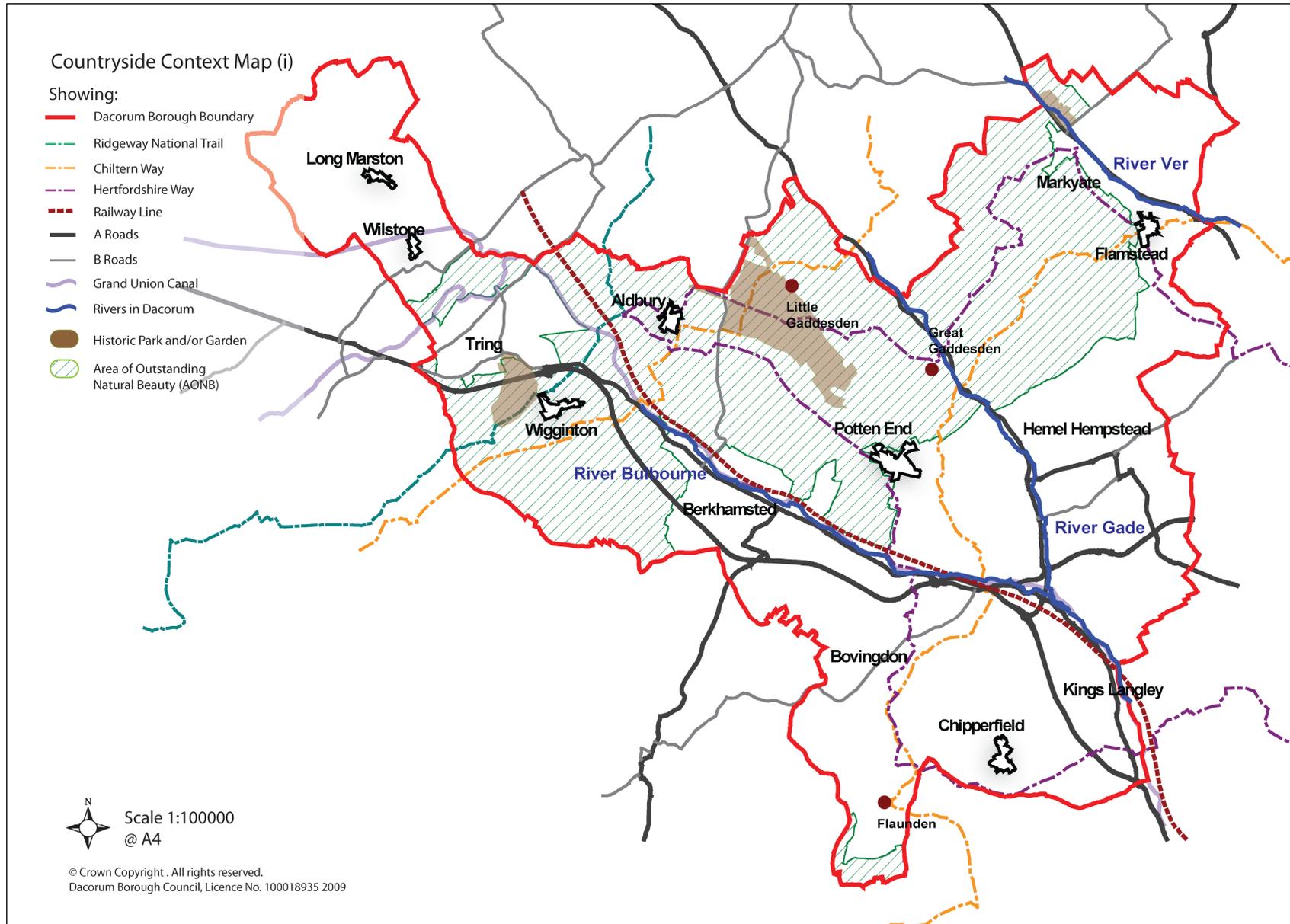
**Long Marston** is a crossroads village on the claylands of Boarscroft Vale with a medieval church tower.

1.19 All the above (except Gaddesden Row and Wigginton) are protected by conservation areas. Other rural settlements with conservation areas are Dudswell, Frithsden, Nettleden, Piccotts End, Ringshall, Water End and Winkwell.

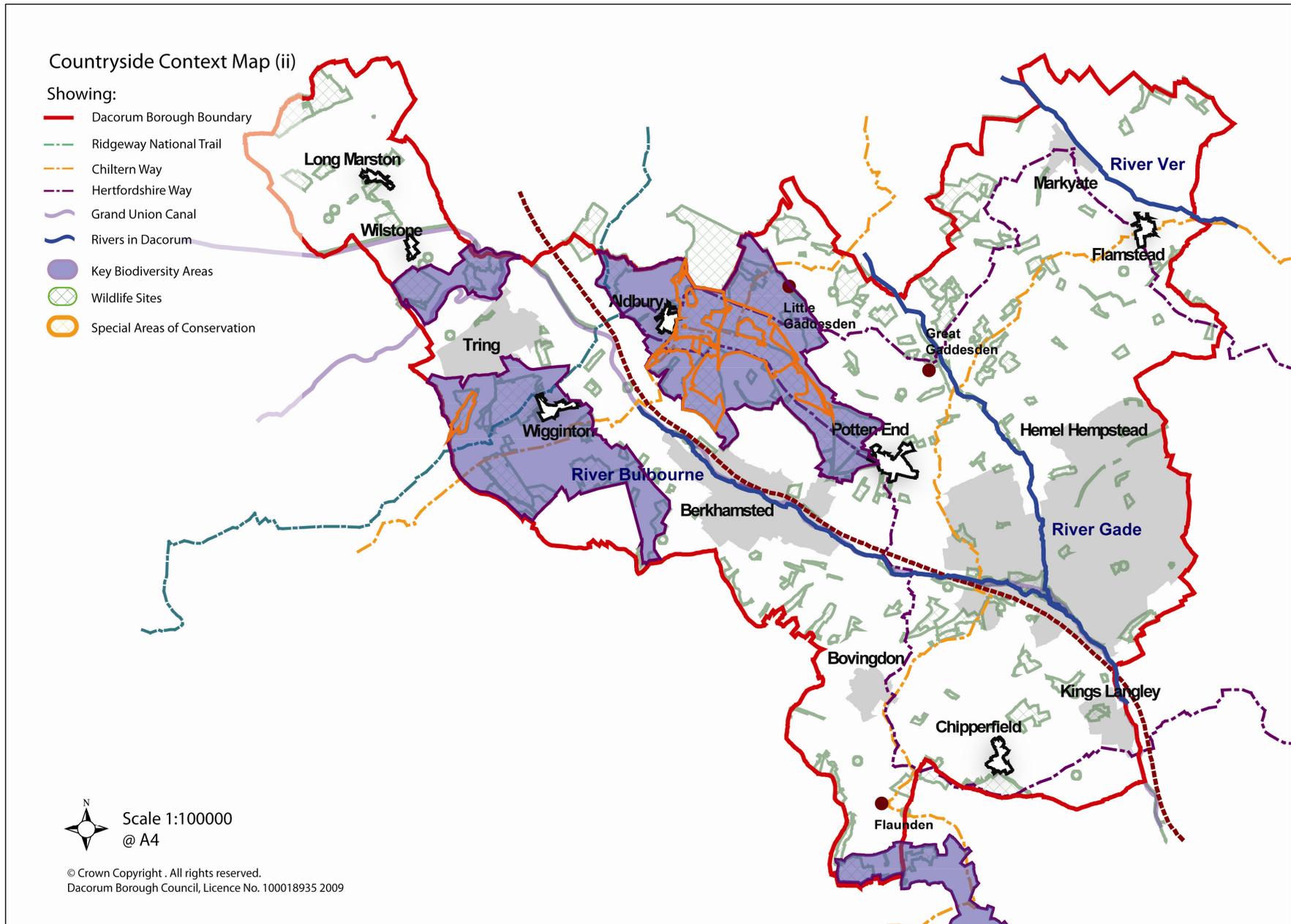
#### 1.20 Key views

The main panoramic views are from the Chilterns scarp, with views of the scarp from the surrounding lowlands. Much of the countryside is surprisingly enclosed and secluded. However views from the upper valley sides can be attractive, for example from Briden's Camp and Dodds Lane along the Gade valley, and across the Ver valley from Chad Lane. The Ridgeway National Trail bridge that crosses the A41 also provides spectacular views. There are attractive sequential views along the main valleys, and side roads such as Nettleden Road.

**Figure 1.1 – Countryside Context Map (i)**



**Figure 1.2 – Countryside Context Map (ii)**



### 1.21 Leisure & sports facilities

The countryside contains a diverse range of leisure and sports opportunities. All of the villages and several of the hamlets have recreation grounds with football pitches, children's play facilities, cricket pitches and sometimes bowling greens or tennis courts, though there is a quantitative shortage of open space at Aldbury, Flamstead and Flaunden.

1.22 More extensive leisure uses are catered for with golf courses at Ashridge, Stocks, Berkhamsted and Little Hay; paintballing at Coleshill Wood ; Chiltern Young Riders motocross at Little Dickshill Wood; model aircraft flying (Chesham Model Flying Club) at Newground Road/Beggars Lane; banger racing at Bovingdon Airfield; Broomhills Shooting Ground and the adjoining Dirt Drifters. There are riding schools at Hastoe Hill, Kings Langley, Fletcher Way, Gaddesden Place Riding for the Disabled Centre – Bridens Camp, Stag End Equestrian Centre, Hill Green Farm (Wigginton). The Walter Swinburn Racing Stables are located at Pendley Farm and Grove Farm near Aldbury.

1.23 The Grand Union Canal caters for boaters and anglers, and the towpath is well used by walkers and cyclists.

1.24 There is an extensive rights of way network (over 360 miles), with publicised routes – Chilterns Country walks, Markyate Health Walks, and circular walks based on the Grand Union Canal. The Chiltern Way loops across Dacorum, and the Hertfordshire Way passes through much of the Borough. The Countryside Management Service publishes leaflets on signed leisure cycling routes. A Chilterns Cycling Route is also proposed by the Chilterns Conservation Board and the Cyclists' Touring Club.

1.25 Dacorum also contains nearly 800 hectares of Open Access Land, most of which consists of commons.

1.26 In addition to sports facilities, there is Pendley Theatre near Tring, and Champneys health and beauty clinic near Wigginton.

### 1.27 Local businesses

Agriculture is the most extensive business in terms of land use. It has changed significantly in the last 20 years: there are only 4-5 dairy farms now compared with 60-70 as recently as twenty years ago.

1.28 The small family farm is declining, and a smaller number of farmers now manage a greater acreage over several holdings. An associated trend is for the farmhouse and a relatively small surrounding acreage to be bought separately and used as pony pasture, keeping a limited number of animals and/or poultry (by "hobby farmers"), and using buildings for business purposes.

1.29 Most agriculture is arable – wheat, barley and rape, with some livestock farming (sheep and beef cattle). Sheep have a role in grazing chalk grassland.

Soils are relatively poor except to the north of Hemel Hempstead and east of Tring. Horse paddocks are common near settlements.

1.30 Farm shops serve as a useful source of provisions and provide additional income for the farmer. Examples are Rumlbers Farm Shop, Water End Road, Potten End, and Meads Farm Shop, Wilstone which is now producing Chiltern Cold Pressed extra virgin rapeseed oil. Tring Farmers Market takes place fortnightly.

1.31 Bovington Brickworks is Hertfordshire's last remaining brickworks. Part of Clarks Chalk Pit near Pitstone lies within Dacorum and produces agricultural lime.

1.32 Two locations are currently identified as Employment Areas in the Green Belt -Bovington Brickworks and Bourne End Mills. The former includes the brickworks, a builders' merchant, and car showrooms. The latter was based on a former sawmills, has been home to a variety of businesses, and is currently subject to business redevelopment proposals.

1.33 There are a number of garden centres – Leighton Buzzard Road, Tower Hill, Bulbourne Road –and are several nurseries south of Bovington (Water Lane, Long Lane, Flaunden Lane), and at Tinkers Lane Wigginton. Majestic Trees at Chequer Meadow is a major supplier of semi-mature containerised trees.

1.34 Several complexes of farm buildings have been converted to business use -Binghams Park Farm Business Centre, and Whitehouse Farm Business Centre and Home Farm Business Centre, both on the Gaddesden Estate. Other significant business uses have developed on the site of former canal wharfs at Dixon's Gap, and Beggars Lane.

1.35 Apart from Ashridge, only a limited number of woodlands are managed or maintained for timber production or access.

1.36 Children's nurseries are also appearing in the countryside on the edge of towns – e.g. Broadway Farm, Kingsway on London Road, Binghams Park Farm, and Darley Ash Farm on the edge of Bovington.

#### 1.37 Visitor Accommodation

A range of visitor accommodation is available including hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation.

1.38 On the Grand Union Canal there is a marina at Cow Roast and a boatyard and layby at Winkwell. Boaters using the canal support local shops and pubs.

#### 1.39 Other businesses in the countryside

Grass Roots PLC (a performance improvement company) headquarters are located at Pendley. There are three private schools based on former estates – Beechwood Hay, Haresfoot, Westbrook Hay. Other youth related provision

includes Phasels Wood Scout Camp and Activity Centre and Felden Lodge Conference and Training Centre, owned and operated by the Boys Brigade. The Amaravati Buddhist Monastery near Great Gaddesden is a unique feature. Robin Hood House in Little Gaddesden is the only care home in the countryside. Bushwood Antiques Stags End uses a former indoor equestrian centre and two adjacent barns have been converted to showrooms. LK Interiors are located in the converted Ebenezer Chapel, Bradden Lane. Ashridge Management College occupies the former mansion on the Ashridge Estate.

1.40 Homeworking is proportionally more significant in the countryside than in the urban areas.

#### 1.41 Social & Community

The key villages generally have village halls, historic churches (sometimes several denominations are served) and a wide range of local clubs and societies. They are well provided with primary schools, but children have to travel for their secondary education. The population is also dependent on towns for health facilities. Potten End and Little Gaddesden have sheltered housing accommodation. The mobile library visits either weekly or fortnightly.

#### 1.42 Utilities

The countryside is often seen as a resource for the settlements, including where minerals are, where some of our waste might need to be buried and where some utilities infrastructure is (and will need to be) located. Sewage works are either on the edge of town (Tringford Road, Tring, Bullbeggars Lane, Berkhamsted) or more scattered around the countryside (e.g. at Windmill Road, near Markyate, and Shantock Lane). There are pumping stations (Friars Wash, Little Tring), and covered reservoirs (Bourne End Lane, Berkhamsted Road). There is an electricity substation west of Leighton Buzzard Road and pylons cross the areas between Hemel Hempstead and Potten End, Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted, south-east of Flamstead and Markyate and south of Flaunden. Some sections impinge on the Chilterns AONB.

### **Questions 1 (Countryside)**

**Paragraphs 1.15, 1.16 and 1.42 refer to some despoiled areas in the countryside that require improvement. Are there any other areas you wish to draw to our attention?**

**Yes/No**

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

## **2.0 The Vision for the Countryside**

### **Vision**

Dacorum's countryside will be sustainable, attractive and accessible, producing high quality food and biomass, rich in wildlife and with thriving villages. Its woodlands will be well managed to provide wood fuel, whilst being accessible to the public and resilient to climate change. The quality and flow of chalk streams will have improved, and brown trout reintroduced. Most countryside visitors will arrive by public transport or bicycle. The best and most distinctive features will be protected, and visually intrusive areas improved. A limited amount of new housing to support the rural workforce and meet local needs will be encouraged.

### **Question 2 (Countryside)**

**Do you agree with the vision for the countryside?**

**Yes/No**

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

### 3.0 The Issues and Opportunities

3.1 The East of England Plan (EoEP) indicates what we should address in the spatial strategy for the countryside. Policy SS4 states that for other rural settlements, planning should seek to support the needs of agriculture, secure small scale local employment opportunities, improve public transport access to bigger centres, provide housing for the full range of local needs, and support the sustainability of local services (para. 3.18). New development should be directed to locations where it will have the greatest benefits for rural sustainability (para. 3.20).

3.2 The countryside is an area of development restraint. In the past it has been protected for its own sake, but for a “living countryside” there is a need to sustain land management and support people living in the villages with an appropriate range of services and access to nearby towns. The options for development are limited due to the character and size of the villages, and therefore only a level of housing growth that maintains their current population or possibly accommodates natural change are considered appropriate.

3.3 There is a wide range of business uses in the countryside. Some of these could be equally well located in the towns and do not provide employment for village residents. The infrastructure for agriculture and forestry is lacking in the Borough and indeed the County, with livestock markets, abattoirs and grain stores located at substantial distances adding to transport costs.

3.4 Recent changes in farming practice have impacts on wildlife and the countryside. Set-aside was intended to lead to a decline in cereal production rather than environmental benefits, and a replacement scheme is under consideration. Approximately half of Dacorum’s countryside is in some form of Environmental Stewardship<sup>2</sup>. There has been a shift from spring to autumn sown cereals which affects nesting birds. The ecological principle of relying on natural predators and the use of rotational farming with fallow land has been replaced by precision applications of pesticides and herbicides. Farmers appear to be caught in the middle being encouraged to produce quality food ever more efficiently while at the same time being blamed for the state of the countryside.

3.5 Whilst there has been some increase in length of hedgerows, physical quality and plant diversity are more important. Neglect has led to hedgerows changing into lines of trees and the development of gaps. Such lack of management is due to high labour costs, loss of traditional skills and decline in hedge function as a stock-proof barrier.

3.6 The rise of “horseculture” is a major concern due to the impact on the landscape and biodiversity through erosion, visual intrusion and the effect on unimproved grassland. Whilst the keeping of horses in the countryside is

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<sup>2</sup> Environmental Stewardship is an agri-environment scheme run by Natural England that provides funding to farmers and other land managers who deliver effective environmental management on their land. It is intended to build on the recognised success of the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme and the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

appropriate, there are some areas where there is an over-concentration. Pressure arises for construction of maneges and often for lighting. Stable blocks could potentially come forward for alternative use in future when the equestrian use is no longer required.

3.7 The existing Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Dacorum are generally in good or favourable recovering condition. The current conservation and management measures are working and should be maintained and extended. However, problems associated with climate change need to be recognised. These are likely to affect the Chilterns beechwoods.

3.8 The rivers in the Borough are currently in moderate condition in terms of their ecological status. According to the Water Framework Directive they should be in “Good” condition by 2015, though there is scope for an extended deadline.

3.9 The potential for “green tourism” in the Chilterns has recently been recognised by the Chilterns Conservation Board and the National Trust. The landscape is best appreciated on foot or by bike. There is a market for sustainably built accommodation, and use of local produce. Ashridge in particular attracts many visitors, but access by car is high, calling into question the need to promote transport alternatives. As the urban population grows, pressures on access to the countryside and key attractions such as Ashridge will increase. Existing attractions in other parts of the countryside could be better signposted and accessibility improved.

3.10 Delivery of further services and facilities for children, young people and the elderly is more difficult to fund from new development in the countryside. Although there is a need for elderly persons’ accommodation, this may be insufficient in a single location to create a viable unit.

3.11 The main concerns are to maintain the existing settlements, support farming and forestry, and protect, enhance and improve the landscape. A list of issues facing the countryside is set out below.

#### **Key Issues**

- Protection and enhancement of landscape and biodiversity (especially the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, river valleys and urban fringe)
- Effects of climate change on wildlife
- Affordable housing for local people
- Retention of community infrastructure/facilities for young and elderly
- Accessibility to services and facilities
- Support for farmers and rural businesses
- Ensuring farm diversification contributes to land management/maintaining agriculture
- Location of new infrastructure to support green tourism
- Traffic on lanes

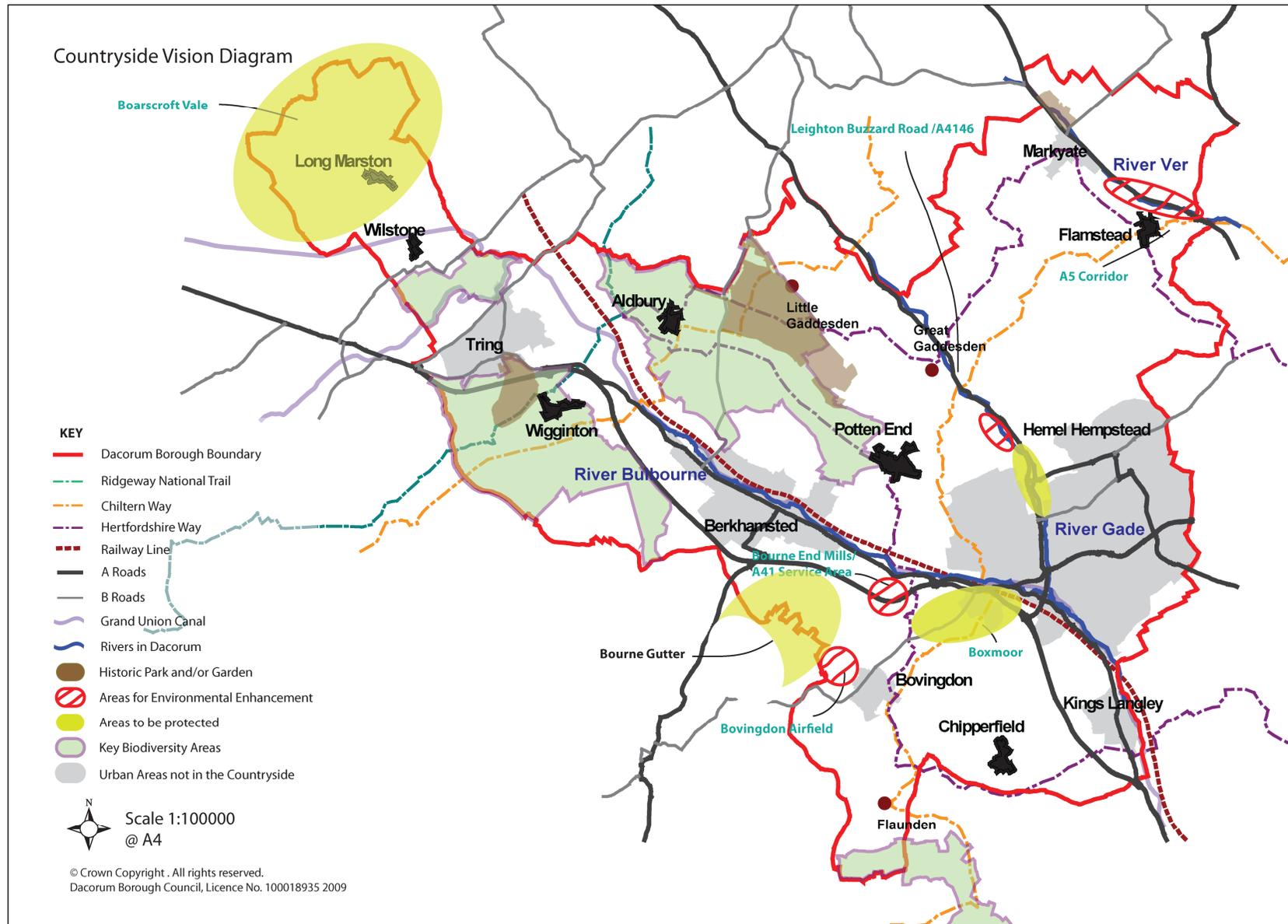
**Questions 3 (Countryside)**

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

**Yes/No**

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

**Figure 3.1 – Countryside Vision Diagram**



## 4.0 Level of Housing

4.1 The population living in the countryside would normally be expected to grow by around 2,000 people to 2031 (this assumes zero net migration). We would not normally provide for this level of growth in the countryside because we would have to accommodate over 1,000 dwellings in the villages (and accept the environmental impact). We suggest less housing and put forward the following choices:

Option 1: 389 dwellings (2006 - 2031)

This is the level we estimate can be accommodated through small levels of infilling and changes of use. It would also mean that we would work with the relevant Parish Council's to identify a few rural exception sites to provide around 105 units of local affordable housing. Option 1 is a continuation of current policies.

Option 2: 567 dwellings (2006 – 2031)

This level would enable the current level of population to be maintained (compensating for the decline in average household size). This would better help to maintain local services. We would of course need to identify more rural exception sites for local affordable housing, currently estimated at 283 dwellings.

4.2 For either option, new housing would be spread among existing small villages, particularly Long Marston, Wilstone, Aldbury, Wigginton, Flamstead, Potten End and Chipperfield.

### Question 4a (Countryside)

**Do you prefer Option 1?**

**Yes/No**

**Please state your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

### Question 4b (Countryside)

**Do you prefer Option 2?**

**Yes/No**

**Please state your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

## **5.0 Spatial strategy themes**

5.1 The spatial strategy 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) The prime features for conservation, protection and enhancement (which include the key biodiversity areas listed in paragraph 1.6) are the Chilterns Escarpment, the Chilterns beechwoods, Ashridge, Tring Park, Tring Reservoirs, Boarscroft Vale and the chalk stream habitats. To fully protect these areas, it will not be sufficient to protect only the designated areas - buffer zones will be identified around them. Comprehensive plans such as the Chilterns Management Plan and the Ashridge Action Plan will be supported. Views from, as well as into the sites, are significant. Linkages between identified county Wildlife Sites will also need to be strengthened. We will support countryside management initiatives and programmes to achieve this.

(ii) Additional tree and hedge planting along the major transport corridors will help to mitigate noise and visual intrusion. Environmental enhancement will be promoted where we are able.

(iii) The village and hamlet conservation areas include their nucleus of historic buildings. Several of them have a unity resulting from their background as estate villages and this traditional layout and design will be supported. The design of any future developments must relate sensitively to the existing conservation area and listed buildings. All conservation areas (and listed buildings) will be the subject of detailed supplementary advice – a programme for the preparation of this is separately underway.

(iv) The impact of “horseyculture” on the landscape should be mitigated in sensitive areas, especially the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Chilterns Conservation Board are working on a good practice note.

(v) For agriculture we will support initiatives to extend the area in Environmental Stewardship. Demand for higher standards of animal welfare and food safety and the implications of the resultant development on the countryside will be taken into account.

(vi) Initiatives to extend woodland cover and promote sustainable management will be supported.

### **Question 5 (Countryside)**

**Should the key emphasis of the spatial strategy be to protect and enhance the built, historic and environmental assets of the countryside?**

**Yes/No**

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

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

(i) Some small-scale housing and employment space will be provided to meet local needs only. The precise level of housing development will be based on an individual village's identified need, character, size and setting. New employment opportunities will be limited but will arise through conversion of rural buildings and appropriate farm diversification.

(ii) The level of growth in villages will not have a significant impact on demand for school places and all existing village schools should be retained .

(iii) There is a clear need to retain village shops, pubs and post offices, churches and meeting places and open space. We will support the initiatives of the local communities, often with the Hertfordshire Community Development Agency, to maintain these and other basic services and facilities.

(v) Provision will be made for further sports facilities and accessible open space where shortages have been identified.

#### **c) Economic prosperity**

(i) To ensure a prosperous countryside, the needs of farmers and farm/woodland managers are paramount. Projects that will help them and the active conservation of the countryside will be supported. This may include development of the potential to contribute to growing renewable energy sources through wood fuel and biofuel.

(ii) New businesses in the countryside will be expected to contribute to local services, employ local people and benefit the rural environment.

(iii) Maximum use should be made of external grants. An important example is the Chilterns LEADER project which aims to restore productive uses of woodland, improve farm economics, develop environmentally sustainable tourism and heritage conservation, and meet the challenges of climate change and rural community development

#### **Question 6 (Countryside)**

Paragraphs 1.14 - 1.16, 1.32 - 1.39 and 1.42 in the context indicate the extent to which the countryside has been infiltrated by "non-rural" uses. This might suggest further employment uses should be deterred. Do you think there is a need for further local job growth in the countryside and its villages?

Yes/No

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

#### **Question 7 (Countryside)**

Have you any other suggestions as to how the economic prosperity of the countryside can be improved and local services supported?

Yes/No

If so, what do you suggest? (Please see questionnaire)

#### **d) Location & access**

(i) The longstanding policy of directing main traffic flows to primary routes and away from rural routes should be maintained, but may require strengthening by improved signage. We will support local highway authority initiatives to manage the use of rural lanes and control traffic speeds.

(ii) Tring Station is envisaged as a transport gateway to the Chilterns and the existing building is due for replacement.

(iii) The attractive villages, especially Chipperfield and Aldbury, and the Ashridge estate draw large numbers of visitors who contribute to the local economy, but who also cause problems in terms of congestion and litter. Schemes such as the Ashridge Cycling Strategy are supported, along with leisure cycling and walking leaflets. Links to public transport will be strengthened where possible.

(iv) Bus services in rural areas are not well patronised, but are crucial for those without access to a car to enable sustainable access to market towns and urban areas. There may be potential for demand responsive transport and community-based transport initiatives will be investigated. Increased and enhanced availability and use of communications technology could reduce dependency on transport, especially car use.

(v) Cycling and walking in the countryside tend to be for leisure purposes, although cycle links between the main towns could be improved by shared use of footpaths or the Grand Union Canal towpath (as it has been improved between Leighton Buzzard and Milton Keynes). Route 57 of the National Cycle Network will cross the southern part of the Borough, and is supported in principle, although the route has not been finalised.

(vi) Safe links between sections of public footpaths and bridleways should be a priority and can be implemented through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (part of the Local Transport Plan).

**Questions 8 (Countryside)**

**Do you have any other concerns regarding the strategy for the countryside to 2031?**

**Yes/No**

**If so, please explain. (Please see questionnaire)**