

2. LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT AT NORTH EAST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

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1. STRATEGIC BACKGROUND

Policy Context

1.1 The policy statement covers an area of mainly undeveloped land to the north of Three Cherry Trees Lane, on the north eastern side of Hemel Hempstead, extending to approximately 41 ha in area. The policy statement is a response to the provisions of the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review (1991-2011) which requires the identification of a key employment site on the majority of the land (Policy 15) but also accepts the principle of some housing development as part of the strategic housing allocation at Hemel Hempstead (Policy 8) and the general housing provision requirement for the Borough of Dacorum (Policy 9).

1.2 In respect of the need for a key employment site on the land, the draft Explanatory Memorandum to the Structure Plan Review (1991-2011) states:

“An important element in the economic development strategy for the County is to ensure that the most effective use is made of the major development opportunities which have arisen. These ‘key sites’ require co-ordinated action from the County and District Councils, the landowners and others, to resolve access and infrastructure problems, to ensure satisfactory planning guidelines are in place and to market the opportunities to investors, developers and employers. The sites at Three Cherry Trees Lane, Hemel Hempstead and at the M25/A10 in Broxbourne represent the only significant green field allocations, and are identified in the relevant Local Plans to form a long term reserve for the needs of firms concerned with specialised technological activities or other activities which are in the national or regional interest. In accordance with Policy 14, uses, other than employment, may be appropriate on key sites as part of an employment led mixed development package. This is likely to be more appropriate on the larger key sites. It is a matter for Local Plans to specify the area.”

1.3 Policy 15 in the Structure Plan states:

POLICY 15: KEY EMPLOYMENT SITES

Key sites have been identified to play a major long-term role in the Hertfordshire economy, where employment generating activities will be encouraged and where co-ordinated activity and investment programmes are required to realise their full potential. The County Council may from time to time identify further key sites on these criteria. The following are identified as key sites on the Key Diagram:

...Three Cherry Trees Lane, Hemel Hempstead...

The land at Three Cherry Trees Lane, Hemel Hempstead...has been identified where priority will be given to specialised technological activities or other activities which are in the national or regional interest.

- 1.4 It is clear that the land performs an important strategic role for new employment development. It is the largest greenfield employment site in west Hertfordshire and presents an important opportunity for new investment that will contribute to the evolution of the 'knowledge economy' in the county and the implementation of the County Council's Bright Green Industrial Strategy. It is for this reason that priority is to be given to development supporting 'specialised technological activities'. The site is therefore not to be regarded as generally available for industrial and storage and distribution uses or for the establishment of freestanding offices. Further information on the control of uses is provided below.
- 1.5 The scope given for activities which are in the national or regional interest, requires that an unusual or special need is demonstrated.

Involvement of Other Parties

- 1.6 The policy statement has been the subject of joint discussions between Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Hertfordshire County Council (as both Planning and Highway Authority) and the landowners. It is intended to lead to the preparation of a masterplan and planning briefs, and thereby involve these parties in further joint working.

2. AREA COVERED AND CROSS BOUNDARY ISSUES

Scope of the Policy Statement

- 2.1 The land referred to in the policy statement is shown on Plan 1. It lies partly in Dacorum Borough and partly in St Albans City and District.

Dacorum Borough Local Plan

- 2.2 Policy 35 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 states that land is allocated for a new General Employment Area at North East Hemel Hempstead, in which priority will be given to development for specialised technological activities and other activities which are in the national or regional interest. A definition of these terms is provided within the supporting text.

St Albans City and District Council

- 2.3 As far as land outside the Borough is concerned this statement represents the Council's view as to the necessary requirements for a satisfactory comprehensive development which will allow for proper access and layout arrangements and ensure the creation of a long term and readily defensible Green Belt inner boundary to the west of the line of Cherry Tree Lane.
- 2.4 St Albans City and District Council's District Local Plan Review (adopted November 1994) proposes designation of part of their district affected by the former County Structure Plan Policy 74, (and hence this Policy Statement) as

land for employment development. The relevant part of the Plan is reproduced below:

**POLICY 26:
LAND FOR EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT AT
NORTH EAST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD**

Land at North East Hemel Hempstead, shown in Figure 7 and the Proposals Map (*Sheet 4*), is identified as a long term reserve for a high standard landscaped development to make provision for employment needs beyond the present Plan period. Priority will be given to specialised technological activities or other activities which are in the national or regional interest. Development proposals should take account of the following points:

(i) Phasing

The release and development of the land should take place in a phased manner as part of a comprehensive scheme for Area 2 identified by the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (*shown in Figure 7*). Release of the land will be permitted only after monitoring of the needs of types of employment activity appropriate to the land has shown it to be necessary;

(ii) Interim use of the land

In the meantime only such development will be permitted on the land as would be appropriate in the nearby Green Belt;

(iii) Access

Access to the land will be via Area 2 within Dacorum Borough. No access will be permitted to or from Cherry Tree Lane. Development may take place only when the necessary highway improvements in north east Hemel Hempstead are completed or provided for within a reasonable timescale;

(iv) Landscaping

A high standard of landscaping is required including a substantial landscape barrier along the eastern edge of the site, to protect the visual and rural amenity of the land to the east of Cherry Tree Lane;

(v) Planning Brief

Development should be in accordance with a joint planning brief to be prepared with Dacorum Borough Council and in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council. The brief will propose a comprehensive approach to the development of the site, including details in respect of types of use, infrastructure, design, landscaping, access and controls over activities on the land."

3. PURPOSE OF POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 The policy statement provides an overall framework for development within the Plan period.
- 3.2 Specific land allocations for this Plan period are contained in Section 4: 'Housing' and Section 5: 'Employment' in Part 3 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011.
- 3.3 The Policy statement sets out the Council's more detailed requirements to achieve a comprehensive and co-ordinated development which will meet identified county and local needs.

4. DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

- 4.1 The development requirements written below apply solely to land within the Borough of Dacorum (shown on Plan 1).

The Land in General

1. The allocation of land is intended to meet employment and housing needs over the course of the Plan period. Two separate areas are allocated for these uses as Proposal Sites E4 and H18 respectively. The land has important links to a further housing proposal site to the north, identified as Site H41.

The following mix of land uses across the site is suggested as a basis for further detailed discussion:

TABLE 1

	Dacorum		St Albans		Totals	
	<i>Ha</i>	%	<i>Ha</i>	%	<i>Ha</i>	%
Employment	16.6	100	4.3	100	20.9	100
Comprising:-						
• STAs	10.0	60	4.3	100	14.3	68
• Non-STAs	6.6	40	0.0	0.0	6.6	32
Housing	12.9	-	0.0	-	12.9	-
Other	6.1	-	1.0	-	7.1	-
Totals	35.6	-	5.3	-	40.9	-

2. **Proper comprehensive planning and control requires that the potential development area is dealt with in two parts as shown on Plan 2, in order to provide a clear division between housing and employment land uses. Employment Site E4 is made up of two clearly distinct parts, divided by a central wooded belt which forms a strong physical and visual barrier on the ground.**
3. **Land will only be available for development if local highway infrastructure constraints are overcome. Requirements to achieve this are detailed below in Section 5 of this policy statement.**

Employment Land Allocation

4. **The land use mix suggested in Table 1 above provides a total area of 14.3 hectares for STAs. This means that the area of STAs will comprise at least 65% of the total area for employment. It provides for various other employment, housing and incidental uses which will help to secure the necessary commercial viability for the scheme to proceed.**

The following Use Classes will be permitted on the site:

- **B1 (business use) which meets the general definition of STAs (given under Policy 35 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011) may be acceptable but, if they do not meet this definition, they should be located on the non-STA parts of the site.**
- **B1(b) high technology uses and B1(c) light industrial uses may be acceptable if they are located on the non-STA parts of the site and are compatible with the main STA uses.**

Provision must also be made for

- **STA small firms on the STA parts of the site. These should comprise at least 10% of the total STA floorspace in units of less than 235sqm.**
 - **a hotel with conference facilities to serve the business tourism needs of the area.**
5. **The development must be designed in such a way as to take account of, and respect: (a) existing landscape features, particularly wooded areas and hedgerows; (b) the position of the land at the urban edge and close to established residential areas and proposed housing development on Sites H18 and H41 (see Plan 3).**

6. Throughout the site, a high standard of building design, layout and landscaping will be expected to create an industrial area of high visual and environmental quality.

Housing Land Allocation

7. To assist in meeting the Borough's housing land needs over the plan period, an area of 12.9 ha has been identified on the northern part of the land for residential development, i.e. Housing Proposal Site H18. The planning requirements for this site are set out in the Schedule of Housing Proposal Sites.

Site Access

8. Provision should be made for a new site access road from the A414 to the south within the cost of the overall development plan after a minimum amount of STA, non-STA and residential development has been implemented (in accordance with the requirements of a Traffic Impact Assessment).

Comprehensive Development Proposals

9. Permission will only be granted for a comprehensively planned development on the basis of a master plan approach which covers the employment and housing sites together. The master plan should be prepared on a collaborative basis by the landowners/developers and the Council, St Albans City and District Council and Hertfordshire County Council. It will be used to guide the form of subsequent development proposals for the site, and as such planning applications should be based on it and conform to the requirements it establishes.
10. From the development framework established through the master plan, developers will be expected to present detailed planning briefs to guide development on each of the two sites. These briefs must be available with outline planning applications, and will be referred to in planning conditions and agreements. The briefs should specify:
 - (a) development phasing;
 - (b) infrastructure provision, particularly road, drainage and water supply proposals (on and off site in relation to phasing);
 - (c) a landscape framework reflecting the visual and ecological qualities of the land and noting features retained and new proposals;
 - (d) internal road layout, design and landscaping;

- (e) **footpath/cycle way links;**
- (f) **land use, building layout and design framework including development densities and height limits (number of storeys);**
- (g) **building design philosophy and standards;**
- (h) **parking requirements;**
- (i) **landscape design philosophy and standards (including street furniture, advertisements/signs, fencing and lighting);**
- (j) **proposals for archaeological evaluation and for mitigating the impact of development on archaeology;**
- (k) **other aspects of the development framework in accordance with the detailed guidelines set out in section 5 below; and**
- (l) **the development relationship between Proposal Sites E4 and H18, and of employment development within Site E4 as it relates to the central wooded belt and other important natural features.**

5. DETAILED GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KEY EMPLOYMENT SITE.

- 5.1 Site H18 is solely within Dacorum, but the Key Employment Site (of which Site E4 forms the majority of) lies partly in Dacorum and partly in St Albans District. The planning of part of the Key Employment Site is therefore the direct responsibility of St Albans City and District Council.
- 5.2 In order to encourage a comprehensive approach to the development of the whole of the key employment site, the Borough Council presents its view below. This is intended to be an input to the preparation of a more detailed master plan through discussion and assist the preparation of development briefs.
- (a) In the early stages of development, buildings will be firstly encouraged at locations adjacent to the two roundabout entrances to the site and along the central spine road, to assist in achieving an attractive layout and appearance.
 - (b) The primary use of the site is for specialised technological activities (STAs) or activities in the national and regional interest. The definition of STA's is provided in the supporting text to Local Plan Policy 35. A proportion of the site is available for non-STA uses (B1

b and c) which are compatible with the STA uses within the scheme. These will be ancillary to or associated with the main STA uses.

- (c) Hotel and conference facilities to serve the needs of the business community are appropriate uses, and could be located at one of the roundabout junction 'entrances' to the site.
- (d) The development will generate significant new traffic flows which must be planned for on the highway network, not only in North East Hemel Hempstead area (to facilitate the 'North East Relief Road' around the town) are either completed or provided for with realistic prospects of completion within a reasonable timescale (see Plan 4):
 - the provision of a new 7.3m single carriageway with dedicated off carriageway pedestrian and cycleway facilities between the access to Punchbowl Park, along an improved Punchbowl Lane to the junction of Three Cherry Trees Lane with Boundary Way. This will include the amendment of the existing junction of Buncfield Lane with Three Cherry Trees Lane. An alternative would be improvements to Three Cherry Trees Lane and Cherry Trees Lane to provide a 7.3m single carriageway with dedicated off carriageway pedestrian and cycleway facilities; - *Scheme T7 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
 - the provision of a new four arm roundabout at the junction of Three Cherry Trees Lane and Boundary Way to provide access to the site and associated widening of Three Cherry Trees Lane to the junction of Swallowdale Lane to provide a 7.3m carriageway with dedicated off carriageway pedestrian and cycle facilities; - *Scheme T7 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
 - the conversion of the junction of Three Cherry Trees Lane and Swallowdale Lane to a roundabout; - *Scheme T5 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
 - the provision of dedicated off carriageway pedestrian and cycleway facilities along Swallowdale Lane between the junctions with Three Cherry Trees Lane and Maylands Avenue; - *Scheme T5 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
 - the improvement of the junction of Swallowdale Lane and Maylands Avenue; - *Scheme T5 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
 - the provision of dedicated off carriageway pedestrian and cycleway facilities along Swallowdale Lane between the junctions with Maylands Avenue and Queensway; - *Scheme T6 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*

- the improvement of the junction of Swallowdale Lane and Queensway; - *Scheme T5 (part) and Scheme T6 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
- the provision of dedicated off carriageway pedestrian and cycleway facilities along Redbourn Road between the junctions with Queensway and the East/West Link Road; - *Scheme T6 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
- the improvement of the junction of Redbourn Road and the East/West Link Road; - *Scheme T6 (part) in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
- the improvement of the junction of Green Lane and the A414 Breakspear Way; - *Scheme T4 in the Schedule of Transport Proposal Sites and Schemes.*
- the provision of dedicated pedestrian and cycleway facilities to improve access to and within the sites consistent with the Local Plan Review and Transportation Plan aims and objectives
- the provision of passenger transport and infrastructure, both on and off site, and subsidies for fares and services to improve access to and within the sites consistent with the Local Plan Review and Transportation Plan aims and objectives, and
- the completion and implementation of a Green Travel Plan in line with County Council guidance to encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport to access the site.

Proposals to bring forward these road schemes at the developers expense, in a phased programme linked to the development of the site, would be favourably considered by the planning highway authorities.

- (e) Development of the site as a whole must make provision for good accessibility by means other than private motorised vehicles. As such, a new transport accessibility node should be established on the site allowing easy access by foot, cycle and passenger transport. Proposals will be considered against the provisions of policies in Section 7: Transport in Part 3 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan. Specifically, development proposals should include the following:
- (i) design and layout features to allow easy access by, and facilities for passenger transport;
 - (ii) the creation of pedestrian and cycle links through the site - these should where possible, be separated from the highway carrying vehicular traffic; they should be wide, open, well landscaped and

illuminated by public lighting, and should relate well to the disposition of buildings on the site to provide direct, attractive connections between key areas and buildings;

- (iii) cycle routes connecting to the Hemel Hempstead cycle route network, in particular the Nicky Line to the north and Buncefield Lane to the south.
 - (iv) pedestrian routes connecting the new employment area to residential development to be provided on Site H18 and linking Site H41; and
 - (v) the layout and design of sites for new employment buildings must take into account car parking provision compatible with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Accessibility Zones for the Application of Car Parking Standards'.
- (f) Development should respect and retain the main areas of existing vegetation shown on plan 3 and minimise any impact on the surrounding countryside. The creation of a substantial landscape buffer along the western side of Cherry Tree Lane, to form a new, defensible Green Belt boundary, will be required. A heavily landscaped buffer should be provided on the northern and western boundaries of the site where it adjoins Site H18. This should comprise semi-mature and mature broad-leaved native trees to act as a clear long term screen and division between the two land uses. As a guide, the buffer should be approximately 30 m wide. Effective landscape improvements to the setting of the balancing tank should be carried out through new tree planting along the northern boundary of the site.







