



# Green Space Strategy

Addendum October 2012

This addendum to the Green Space Strategy was prepared in October 2012, to update the actions relating to the Water Gardens and Gadebridge Park, to reflect the ambitions of the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan. The Green Space Strategy had considered the views of the Dacorum Chalk Rivers Restoration Strategy, which advocated restoring a more natural chalk stream through the town centre and moving the River Gade through Gadebridge Park, to the lowest point of the valley. The Dacorum Chalk River Restoration Strategy was prepared prior to the Grade II listing of the Water Gardens and the emerging vision of the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan.

The Dacorum Chalk River Restoration Strategy (Environment Agency, 2010), identifies a number of improvements for the urban section of the Upper Gade and River Bulbourne as listed below.

## **Gadebridge Park**

Restore original river channel at the low point of the valley through the park

Secure buffer zone to water course and maintain periodic vegetation clearance to channel

## **Bury Mill diversion weir and tunnel**

Install a more robust structure to prevent water going through culvert

## **Water Gardens**

Restore river channel

## **Boxmoor**

Narrow channel and introduce habitat enhancements

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) is a stakeholder to the Dacorum Chalk River Restoration Strategy as landowner of Gadebridge Park and the Water Gardens. The document is recognised by Dacorum Borough Council as a technical document to support the Green Space Strategy.

Within its responsibility for the management and maintenance of Gadebridge Park,

Dacorum Borough Council's role is to consider the function, use and value of this important green space. Restoring the original river channel at the low point of the valley through the park has implications as to space available for special events, informal amenity and recreation facilities such as the bowling green, play area and car park. In the medium term, Dacorum Borough Council has ambitions to expand the attractions within the park, in keeping with its role as the principle park of the Borough. As a result, restoring the original channel through the low point of the valley will require further testing to ensure it is a practical option.

The Water Gardens are an important historic landscape. Designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe, they are a highly significant example of post war twentieth century Modernist landscape and were placed on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest in 2010, post completion of the Dacorum Chalk Rivers Restoration Strategy. Jellicoe's concept was for the Gardens to be integrated with the retail and civic areas, and for their quality and design to add value to the experience of visiting the town centre. They function as a setting for the town centre and a green amenity space for visitors and local residents.

Dacorum Borough Council has prepared the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan to provide a framework for the town centre's regeneration over the next ten years. The report sets out an overarching vision for the town centre and recognises that it has two key heritage assets; the Old Town and the Water Gardens. The vision for the Water Gardens is restoration to reflect and reinforce their historical significance and act as a catalyst to the wider regeneration of the town centre.

Within any works to rivers and watercourses, the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) need to be considered. Adopted in 2000, the WFD established a framework of community action in the field of water policy. The directive commits member states to achieve 'good status' for all ground and surface waters (rivers, lakes, transitional waters and coastal waters) in the EU. It also introduced river basin districts, and the River Basin Management Plan for the Thames River Basin District was subsequently prepared by the Environment Agency in 2009. This classifies the upper section of the River Gade as being of moderate with the aim of achieving good ecological status by 2015.

The listing of the Water Gardens is a significant change since the Dacorum Chalk River Restoration Strategy was prepared, and as a result the approach of the Green Space Strategy in endorsing the Dacorum Chalk Rivers Restoration Strategy has been re-evaluated. In practice this means a new emphasis on retaining the physical shape and form of the Water Gardens with its distinct features of a wide water body, cascading weirs and hard edges to name a few. The importance of the Water Gardens as a designed landscape may increase in the future as there is a live application for the listing of the structures in the Water Gardens.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, Dacorum Borough Council will work towards achieving 'good ecological' status along the town centre stretch of the River Gade, within a scheme which maintains the Grade II heritage status of the Water Gardens. Dacorum Borough Council supports the naturalisation of the riverbanks to the north and the south of the Water Gardens and is working with developers to help achieve this between Combe Street and Queensway.

## **Hemel Hempstead - General**

### **4.3 Priority: Nature Conservation**

Action 7 (Dacorum Chalk River Restoration Strategy)

To work in partnership with the Environment Agency to improve the ecology and sustainability of the River Gade through Gadebridge Park, as part of a scheme which supports the recreational use and status of Gadebridge as Dacorum's principal public park.

## **Hemel Hempstead North West**

### **6.2 Priority: Improve Quality**

Action 2 (Water Gardens)

To restore the Water Gardens to reflect and reinforce their historical significance, incorporating an environmental solution to support the objectives of the Water Framework Directive, which is appropriate to its heritage listing.