



CORE STRATEGY

SUMMARY of the ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER



Supporting a sustainable living, working and
leisure environment

DATE: May 2006

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW PLANNING SYSTEM

A **new planning system** has been introduced by the government which seeks to achieve a more integrated spatial approach to planning for meeting future needs with more effective community involvement throughout the process.

This document is the **Core Strategy** and is the first document in the Local Development Framework (LDF) to be prepared.

THE CORE STRATEGY

The Core Strategy sets out the framework for planning policy in Dacorum. The other development plan documents will be set within this broad framework. The **Core Strategy** focuses on the strategic pattern of development over the next 20 years, setting out the broad areas for development and the overall planning strategy. It does **not** deal with specific sites or detailed development control issues as these will be covered in other parts of the LDF i.e. the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), Development Control Policies DPD and the Action Area Plan for East Hemel Hempstead Town Gateway.

This is a preliminary stage in the process of preparing the core strategy and further consultation will be undertaken once the views from this consultation stage have been considered and preferred options identified.

You are invited in this stage of consultation to respond to the **questions** set out in the attached questionnaire. You will have an opportunity to respond to more detailed proposals in the next stage of consultation on the preferred options report.

The Core Strategy Draft Vision

The Core Strategy will set an overall vision for the LDF giving the aspirations for Dacorum over the period to 2021. The vision below has been developed following an earlier consultation process undertaken during July 2005 on the Hemel 2020 vision.

[Question 1].



Ashridge Woods

Working in partnership to:

- Establish a planning framework that ensures a high quality of life and a sustainable future for the borough, recognising that some beneficial growth of differing scales will occur in both urban and rural areas.
- Create opportunities for a vibrant and prosperous economy across the Borough, focussing on improvements to the Maylands area and re-establishing economic confidence in Hemel Hempstead.
- Seek the adequate provision of infrastructure in both urban and rural areas, promoting an integrated transport network.
- Enhance Hemel Hempstead's role as the main centre within the Borough, with a thriving sub regional business and shopping hub, improving and regenerating the town centre.

- Protect the countryside, Green Belt and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Protect and enhance areas of high landscape quality, open space and biodiversity.
- Focus on the re-use of urban sites, using high quality design, including open space provision, to create a safe, quality environment and to accommodate higher density mixed use development in the town centre and in areas of high accessibility.
- Ensure the efficient use of existing land, whilst maintaining the variety and character of the towns and villages, including their historic character.
- Promote diversity, equality of opportunity and social inclusion in order to meet the different needs within the community.
- Promote a sustainable use of natural resources.

THE DRAFT OBJECTIVES

Translating the vision into meaningful policies requires developing more detailed objectives. The following objectives have been developed following the initial consultation on the vision.

Promoting Sustainable Development and Conserving Resources

- ◆ Focus development in existing urban centres, maximising accessibility to facilities
- ◆ Ensure efficient use of urban land
- ◆ Encourage high density development, maximising the use of places with high transport accessibility
- ◆ Initiate regeneration of urban sites
- ◆ Use previously developed land for new development first
- ◆ Implement energy efficiency measures, renewable energy sources, water conservation/sustainable drainage and sustainable construction schemes
- ◆ Reduce pollution
- ◆ Reduce car use and encourage use of public transport, cycling and walking
- ◆ Conserve and enhance biodiversity
- ◆ Encourage recycling

Meeting community development needs

- ◆ Provide homes to meet local needs, including affordable housing
- ◆ Meet leisure and open space needs

- ◆ Provide community infrastructure eg. Education and health facilities
- ◆ Provide convenient transport opportunities to meet residents needs
- ◆ Provide access to goods and services

Promoting a vibrant and prosperous economy

- ◆ Balance homes and jobs
- ◆ Ensure a range of employment opportunities across the borough for different firms and businesses
- ◆ Provide a prestigious landmark employment site

Creating and conserving quality environments

- ◆ Create high quality, safe urban developments and spaces
- ◆ Enhance and protect the countryside, Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- ◆ Conserve local character and identity
- ◆ Conserve our historic and cultural heritage

[Question 2].

Apsley Lock, Hemel Hempstead



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Integrating sustainability principles into the Local Development Framework documents and ensuring their implementation will be challenging. The Core Strategy will set out key principles and an overall approach to development that will be reflected in the other Development Plan Documents. The key features to include in the Core Strategy policies are considered to be the matters listed under A below. **[Questions 3 and 4]**

A

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Increasing the use of renewable energy sources, reducing energy use and improving energy efficiency
- Improving air quality and reducing pollution
- Minimising contamination
- Protecting groundwater from pollution and over-abstraction
- Decreasing noise and light pollution
- Protecting the wider countryside in its own right and reducing the impact of development on it
- Protecting and enhancing wildlife, habitats and biodiversity
- Improving the built and natural environment
- Minimising flood risk and promoting the use of sustainable drainage systems to manage run-off
- Minimising waste
- Avoid sterilisation of minerals resources
- Promoting appropriate development locations
- Design developments to reduce crime



Good design is a key element in achieving sustainable development. Achieving high quality design will contribute towards achieving wider regeneration, sustainability, resource and economic objectives. The approach should seek to retain and enhance

the best elements of the existing environment and ensure that new development is attractive and well designed. The following principles are suggested under B below as being important to include in an urban design policy. **[Question 5]**.

B

- Achieving, reinforcing or improving character, coherence and identity
- Achieving continuity and enclosure (in respect of building lines and layout)
- Maintaining and creating open space and greening the environment
- Creating safe, popular, well used places offering variety and choice
- Making the most effective use of resources, eg. including use of local materials and building methods and detailing
- Complementing an area's character, having regard to the historic environment, structure, existing layout, orientation, views, building line, density of existing development and reinforcing a sense of place
- Providing appropriate off-street parking
- The scale, height and massing of the new development in relation to the adjoining buildings, topography, general heights in the area, views, vistas and landmarks;
- The site's land form and character when the new development is being laid out i.e. the development should take note of the shape of the landscape, preserve natural features and take account of the local ecology;
- An attempt to integrate the new development into the landscape (or townscape) to reduce its impact on nature and reinforce local distinctiveness i.e. using structure planting, shelter belts, green wedges, green corridors, common local species in planting.



Tring Park

SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The strategy for development in Dacorum is guided by both national and regional planning guidance.

Settlements in Dacorum vary in size and character. Hemel Hempstead is the largest settlement and has the greatest range of facilities and services. It has a number of major redevelopment and regeneration opportunities providing the potential to accommodate a significant proportion of future development within the developed area.

Any opportunities at Berkhamsted and Tring will be smaller scale but again based around redevelopment opportunities that may emerge. Other settlements in the Borough may contain other redevelopment opportunities, but these will be small scale and meet local needs.

A strategy is proposed to focus development at Hemel Hempstead, with much smaller levels of development taking place at the other settlements. Two possible options **[Question 6]** being considered are to:-

1. Concentrate the majority of development at Hemel Hempstead, reducing the role of Berkhamsted and Tring and share the remainder out amongst the other settlements depending upon opportunities arising and size and attributes of the settlement, including the availability and range of services and facilities.
2. Maintain the existing settlement hierarchy in the Local Plan, directing development to Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring. Limited development opportunities to be accommodated at Bovingdon, Kings Langley and Markyate and small scale development at Chipperfield, Flamstead, Potten End, Wigginton, Aldbury, Long Marston and Wilstone.

The provision of sufficient jobs to meet needs is a delicate balance, with complex commuting patterns to take into account. The

outcome of the Buncefield inquiry may impact on the provision of employment opportunities but at this point in time the implications are unknown.

Options are to: **[Question 7]**

1. Support the key centre role of Hemel Hempstead by retaining the key employment site at Three Cherry Trees Lane or an alternative and review its designation for specialised technological uses and retain a spread of employment opportunities throughout Hemel Hempstead.
2. Support the retention of designated employment areas in all main settlements to provide a balance and spread of opportunities and consider if employment sites outside Hemel Hempstead should be expanded to improve the jobs/homes balance.

The Urban Capacity Study indicates there is substantial capacity for new housing within the existing urban centres and settlements of the Borough. Together with the greenfield sites already identified in the adopted Local Plan, up to 7,100 dwellings should be able to be accommodated without the need for further encroachment into the Green Belt. To avoid further Green Belt losses, options **[Questions 8 and 9]** are to:

1. Maximise the urban capacity within each of the settlements and hold back the greenfield sites identified for development in the current Local Plan as far as possible.
2. Try to balance development by encouraging and supporting the development of urban capacity but also bringing forward the greenfield sites alongside this to keep a stream of sites coming forward for development and provide a variety of benefits for the settlements in which they are located.
3. Consider additional greenfield sites within the settlements, before any Green Belt release. For example, should the Three Cherry Trees Lane or ex Lucas site on Breakspear Way be reconsidered for additional housing (subject to findings from the Buncefield

inquiry) instead of seeking to maximise urban capacity in the Borough's smaller

settlements?

HOUSING

There are no currently approved housing requirements beyond 2011. Overall capacity is assessed as 7,100 dwellings. The Council has accepted that the continuation of about the current annual level of housing development would be reasonable. The majority of the housing development is expected to be located in and around Hemel Hempstead.

The range of potential housing growth Dacorum could be asked to accommodate is considered to be :- **[Question 10]**

Scenario	Potential Number of Dwellings
A (based on RSS14 proposed level)	6,300
B (urban capacity plus identified greenfield sites)	7,062 (rounded to 7,100)
C (level proposed in original version of the RSS14)	8,200
D (highest suggested level of development by objectors to the regional plan)	10,000

The Core Strategy should adopt a sequential approach in identifying housing sites. This means giving priority to housing sites within the urban areas and previously developed land.



Housing development at Oldhouse Road, Hemel Hempstead

65% of the identifiable urban capacity is considered to be within Hemel Hempstead (14% in Berkhamsted and 6% in Tring). Other settlements would contribute small amounts of urban capacity over time. Major development opportunities in Hemel Hempstead at the Civic Zone and the Kodak tower complex provide good sources for accommodating further housing growth **[Questions 11 and 12]** .

At least some of the greenfield sites identified in the Local Plan will need to come forward to ensure the housing land supply.

Two possible urban greenfield sites could be considered for potential future housing

development. Both of the sites are located on the eastern side of Hemel Hempstead and are subject to the outcome of the Buncefield Inquiry. It may not prove possible to take these sites forward but early consideration of their potential is important. The two sites are at Three Cherry Trees Lane and off Breakspear Way.

Using urban land efficiently is encouraged. In 2004 the figure achieved was 91%. Many planning applications now coming forward, particularly in Hemel Hempstead, are for higher density development (above 50 dwellings per hectare). A background report on density shows that in Dacorum since 2001 overall density is rising though this is mainly focused in Hemel Hempstead. **[Questions 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18]**.

Type of new housing

The Housing Needs Study, 2003 identified the need to develop a balanced housing stock, with more accommodation suitable for smaller households in both the private and affordable sectors. An assessment of the accommodation needs of gypsies and travellers in south and west Hertfordshire has been completed. It concludes that further accommodation will be needed in Dacorum.

The Core Strategy will also have to set a target for the level of affordable housing to

be achieved over the plan period to 2021. Different sites can meet a range of differing types and levels of affordable housing and we will need to weigh up which types of site will best meet these needs.

The main settlements in Dacorum are Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring,

Bovingdon, Kings Langley and Markyate. The current approach defines areas within the towns and villages as locations suitable, in principle, for different types of development e.g. housing, employment and open land.

[Questions 19, 20, 21 and 22].

EMPLOYMENT

Sufficient land is available to meet the Borough's employment needs but there is not a significant excess. This indicates that the existing employment land supply should largely be protected. The employment land supply comprises of the General Employment Areas, Employment Proposal Sites, land within the town and local centres and two employment areas in the Green Belt.

Outside of the protected employment land supply there are other pockets of employment, both within the residential areas of the towns and in the rural areas. Many are gradually being redeveloped for other purposes, usually housing but those located in more rural locations, provide important local employment opportunities.

Dacorum has an enviable position in Hertfordshire of having a high proportion of people who both live and work within the Borough. This has significant sustainability benefits and it is considered desirable to seek to retain this position.

The Hemel 2020 vision seeks to bring forward a number of regeneration projects to regenerate the town and enhance the quality of life. New proposals for the redevelopment of the Civic Centre, development of

masterplans for the town centre, Civic Zone, Maylands business area and East Hemel Hempstead, together with proposals for refurbishment of the former Kodak building will play a major role in the town's renaissance. **[Questions 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27].**



Artists impression of the new Civic Zone

Live/Work Schemes.

Live/Work is a form of mixed-use development that combines business and domestic functions within a self-contained unit. Live/Work units could potentially form an important seed-bed for the establishment of new businesses and as such have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the future economic prosperity of the Borough. **[Question 28].**

RETAILING

The Council expects that most retail growth will be directed to Hemel Hempstead. There is greater potential for growth in Hemel Hempstead town centre given its size and regeneration potential, than the smaller town centres of Berkhamsted and Tring.



*New Riverside shopping development,
Hemel Hempstead*

There may be some limited opportunities for new shopping development outside of the town centres e.g. the Local Plan identifies an undeveloped site at Jarman Fields in Hemel Hempstead. Regeneration of the Maylands business area could also offer an important opportunity to create a local shopping and service centre to meet the needs of businesses and the working population.

The Local Plan identifies a shopping hierarchy consisting of the town centres and local centres, supported by a range of out of centre facilities. The hierarchy provides for a spread of shopping areas and indicates the appropriate scale of development to be directed there. A shopping location like Jarman Fields contains a range of facilities that may justify it being included in the retail hierarchy in its own right.

The majority of retail warehouses and retail parks (e.g. Apsley Mills Retail Park) are in Hemel Hempstead outside of defined centres. The Council has maintained a tight control over their expansion by controlling the type of goods sold there.

Losses of employment land to retail uses in General Employment Areas needs careful control to avoid diverting trade away from existing centres.

[Questions 29, 30, 31,32 and 33].

Mix of Uses in Town Centres

Government guidance seeks to promote mixed use schemes as an important element of sustainable development, encouraging diversification within centres for offices, eating and drinking establishments, residential, cultural and leisure facilities etc. An appropriate balance needs to be struck between different uses to maintain vitality.

Offices benefit town centres by broadening their economic base and through workers using the many shops, services and other facilities available there. **[Question 34].**

Options being considered are:

1. Giving greater flexibility to non-shop uses.
2. Encouraging more mixed-use development schemes.
3. Protecting office uses in town centres.

The Future Role of Local Centres

These centres vary from small local parades of shops to larger shopping centres, such as the New Town neighbourhood centres of Adeyfield . These centres are home to other commercial uses which can widen the appeal of a local centre and help support shops there. A balance needs to be made, between ensuring these centres continue to provide for a basic range of goods and services, and maintaining an attractive centre based on a mix of uses.

The Core Strategy will need to consider the most appropriate role of the local centres.

[Question 35].

TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Congestion is a key transport priority and concern. Car ownership rates in Dacorum are high at 1.37 cars per household, contributing to congestion. **[Question 36]**. A number of measures are needed including the following: -

- Focus development on town and local centres to enable needs to be met locally and reduce the need to travel by car
- Provide new and improved public transport and use bus priority measures on key routes, e.g. park and ride
- Improve cycle and pedestrian facilities including access to town centres, local centres and major traffic generators
- Improve road infrastructure to relieve congestion without attracting more traffic
- Require Green Travel Plans for smaller facilities as well as major traffic generators



Parking

Parking is a significant public issue. Conflicts arise between residents and



commuters parking in residential areas and badly or inconsiderately parked vehicles. Older residential areas lack off street parking, except in

unpopular garage courts.

The introduction of hard standing in front gardens and verges has visual and environmental implications. Government advice is to minimise the quantity of car parking to encourage use of alternative modes.

The general approach to parking across the Borough is a strategic issue that needs to be addressed in the Core Strategy.

[Questions 37 and 38]. To be considered is whether there is scope to:

- Reduce car parking standards across the board and identify locations for car-free developments
- Reduce car parking standards in accessible areas only

Accessibility

Accessibility means being able to reach key services at reasonable cost. **[Question 39]**. Attempting to improve accessibility means we should consider the following options:-

- Encourage high density development near appropriate passenger transport interchanges.
- Ensure low cost and affordable housing is located close to basic amenities
- Encourage provision of live-work units
- Develop Cycle and Pedestrian Route Network and Improvement Strategies
- Consider accessibility for all sections of the community including the disabled

Infrastructure – Utilities

Government guidance emphasises that existing and planned physical infrastructure including utilities such as water and sewerage, electricity and gas, passenger transport, cycle and pedestrian routes must be able to accommodate the needs of any new development. **[Question 40]**.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Overall Provision of Community Facilities

The provision of social and community facilities are essential to create and maintain a balanced community. The term 'Community Facilities' covers a range of different facilities across the Borough, such as education, health, worship, child care, residential care, open space. **[Questions 41,42 and 43]**.

Increasing population trends will lead to an increased demand for community facilities such as education and health facilities. Community facilities should be located within easy reach of those who need them. This means locating facilities in existing town and local centres or within easy reach of good public transport or within walking or cycling distance. As well as providing new facilities it is important to protect existing community facilities from competing land uses such as housing.

Education Provision

Many schools are currently operating with surplus capacity. Therefore, no significant problems are expected in accommodating the school needs associated with much of the anticipated additional growth in the Borough. Exceptions include secondary school capacity in the Tring area and primary school capacity in Apsley/Nash Mills. **[Questions 44, 45, 46 and 47]**.

Pressures to extend other schools are likely to result from Childcare demands through 'Extended School' rather than educational needs. This may mean pressures to extend educational facilities within the Green Belt and Rural Area, which may conflict with Open Space and Green Belt designations.

Health Facilities

The only hospital in the Borough is located in Hemel Hempstead. The land surrounding the premises is reserved in the current Local

Plan for its expansion and associated staff accommodation. The Hospital is however changing its function and now proposes to downsize over the next 10 years. This may result in increased pressure to allow the land designated for Hospital expansion to come forward for other uses. **[Question 48]**.

Overall Provision of Leisure Facilities

The central questions for the Core Strategy are twofold:

1. Whether there should be broad guidance on the amount and location of leisure facilities.
2. Whether there are any facilities of town or borough wide importance that should be identified eg. a performing arts venue is proposed for the Civic Zone in Hemel Hempstead and a town stadium has previously been suggested for Hemel Hempstead and may be worthy of support. **[Questions 49 and 50]**.

Protection and Enhancement of Open Space

Open space in Dacorum includes a very wide range of different types of green space in both the towns and rural area, such as parks, allotments, natural habitats, recreation grounds, playing fields, burial grounds, woodlands, farmland, amenity space and children's play areas. Competing land uses within the borough means that there are various pressures to build on undeveloped open land, highlighting a need to protect and improve our open space areas and consider whether there should be additional provision.

The Council requires that for new large housing developments provision is made for new or extended public open. The Council is also seeking to rectify existing deficiencies. In many cases, this is impractical due to the built up nature of our urban environment and the difficulty in creating or identifying new areas of public open space. It is therefore important that Open Land is retained. **[Questions 51,52 and 53]**.

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

Managing the Countryside

The countryside is used and managed by people for working and for recreation. Key management principles include:

- sensitive development based on landscape character assessments and understanding
- sustainability in the use of soils and water
- enhancement and enrichment rather than degradation
- supporting a variety of natural habitats
- appreciation of historic character. **[Question 54].**

Protecting the most important assets and resources

Management invariably means change. However there are particularly important assets and resources, which should simply be retained. These include, the natural flood plain and chalk streams; Grade 2 agricultural land; designated sites of



Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead

geological or nature conservation value eg. the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Nature Reserves and Regionally Important Geological Sites; ancient semi-

natural woodland; the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; historic landscape features – for example parkland and scheduled ancient monuments; and the Grand Union Canal **[Question 55].**



The Lock, Berkhamsted

Enhancing Biodiversity

The Dacorum Urban Nature Conservation Study has identified a complex resource of ecologically valuable sites, stepping stones, corridors and green wedges through each settlement. The number of currently designated sites and Wildlife Sites within settlements is limited. The study recommends these are supplemented by the protection of locally valuable wildspace (old hedgerows/tree lines, water courses, woods and open space) and the maintenance of links to open countryside.

The ecological networks and processes in the countryside support the more common biodiversity and species seen within the towns and large villages. The Urban Nature Conservation Study recommends a strategic approach in the countryside based on the consolidation of the High Biodiversity Areas; enhancement of particular corridors (e.g. river valleys); and the provision of new habitat in deficient areas.

[Questions 56 and 57].

MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Monitoring

Developing an effective monitoring framework with a clear set of aims, objectives and targets is fundamental to the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Annual Monitoring Report will monitor how the Core Strategy is performing in terms of delivering key objectives. **[Question 58].**

Implementation

The Council has powers in relation to the use of land and buildings eg. It determines development proposals and controls planning permissions via conditions. A specific policy would set out a clear integrated, and consistent approach to implementation. It could cover:

- The importance of partnership working to deliver development.
- Better co-ordination and links to spending programmes and the provision of infrastructure and facilities.
- The achievement of key strategic or local policy objectives, including sustainable development.
- Identifying the scale of infrastructure and service needs and likely development contributions.
- The need to phase development and identify land reserves.
- The appropriate use of planning conditions, legal agreements and

supplementary planning guidance and advice.

- Promoting land assembly, and if necessarily using compulsory purchase powers to achieve this.

[Questions 59 and 60].

Planning Obligations

A planning obligation is a legally binding contract between a local authority and a developer and/or landowner. It is a mechanism used to deal with the adverse effects of a planning application and is intended to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. Planning obligations are an important means of ensuring development is accompanied by necessary infrastructure and other social and community facilities, either directly or through contributions towards this, for the benefit of the whole community. The Council proposes to use planning obligations for:

1. Community Facilities, Health and Safety
2. Education, facilities and support
3. Community Safety
4. Affordable Housing
5. Transport and access
6. Habitat creation and landscaping
7. Open space (including facilities in the space and play space)

Contributions must be directly related to the development and cannot be sought as a form of tax. **[Questions 61 and 62].**

