



DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Hemel Hempstead Civic Zone
DEVELOPMENT BRIEF
Supplementary Planning Document**



November 2005

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Adopted November 2005

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	The Site	7
3	Planning Policy Context	16
4	Development Guidelines	21
5	Urban Design Considerations	26
6	Sustainability	40
7	Implementation and Planning Application Procedure	41
8	Summary	45

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Useful Contacts	47
Appendix 2 – Further Reading	48
Appendix 3 – Planning Policy	49
Appendix 4 – Sustainability Checklist	54
Appendix 5 – Hemel Hempstead Regeneration Town Centre Vision	58

Note:

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Maps not to scale.

1 Introduction

Purpose of Brief

- 1.1 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (Development Brief) has been prepared by Donaldsons (with Urban Design advice from Jon Rowland Urban Design) on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council to provide guidance on the broad policy, development and design framework for the Civic Zone of Hemel Hempstead. The SPD has been prepared to help inform and guide prospective developers on the potential opportunity to comprehensively expand and redevelop Hemel Hempstead's civic core and to re-anchor the town centre. Development proposals within the area covered by the SPD (see figure 1) will be considered against, amongst other things, the principles established within this SPD.
- 1.2 The Council's Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Strategy contained within the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (1991 - 2011) Adopted April 2004 sets out overarching guidance for the whole town centre area. This SPD has been prepared to supplement the Town Centre Strategy, providing a greater level of detail. The Development Brief Area (DBA) falls within two of the Town Centre Strategy Zones; Zone 2 – Civic Educational and Professional, Housing and Zone 3 – Market Area. The strategy identifies that the redevelopment of Zone 2 could provide opportunities for a great emphasis on housing as well as being ideally suited for development which will encourage a lunchtime and evening economy. Within Zone 3 it has been identified that if the market area were to be relocated closer to

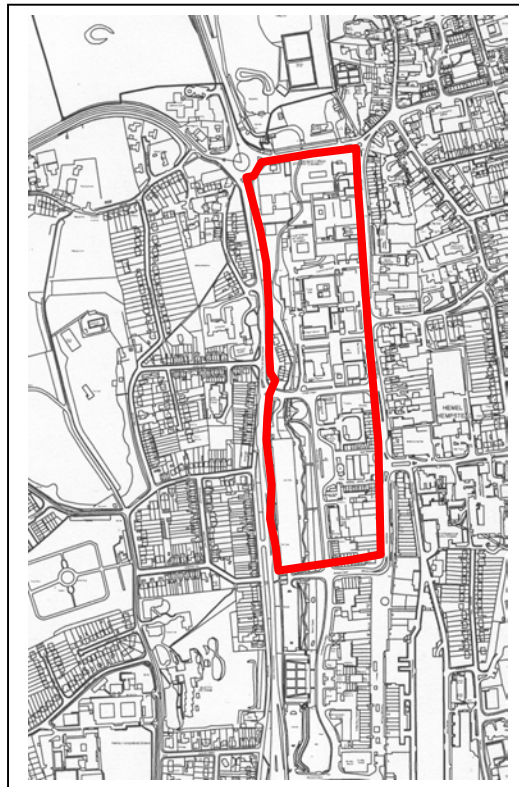


Figure 1: The area covered by the Development Brief

the town centre, this would provide the opportunity to create a modern transport interchange.

- 1.3 The document has been the subject of comprehensive consultation with stakeholders, statutory consultees and local residents. Following on from the consultation the document was revised to take into account various comments made as part of the consultation. A detailed review of the consultation is provided in the consultation report, which is available from the Council.
- 1.4 A Sustainability Appraisal accompanies the SPD and was also the subject of public consultation. Copies of this document also available from the Council.
- 1.5 The adopted SPD will be a material consideration in the preparation of a masterplan and subsequent planning applications for the site.
- 1.6 The Council will work with public and private stakeholders and the community in order to establish a masterplan for the area. The Council will resist major planning applications before this has been prepared if it is considered that they conflict with the SPD and / or may compromise the delivery of key objectives. It is the Council's intention that a masterplan for the area will be in place by the end of 2006.

The Site

- 1.7 The site is shown at Figure 1 and totals approximately 5.8 hectares (14.4 acres). The potential development area forms a strategic and integral part of the Town Centre, with good access, public transport links and highway infrastructure. The area provides a valuable and unique opportunity to create a high quality, civic led, mixed use development to help strengthen Hemel Hempstead's Town Centre.

Key Objectives

- 1.8 The Council considers it important that the SPD establishes key objectives for the DBA. These objectives should be considered by developers and landowners when preparing detailed schemes for the site. The objectives for the DBA are to:

- Be planned and developed as a comprehensive scheme, albeit with phased implementation
- Contribute towards the overall achievement of the Town Centre's regeneration and enhancement
- Be developed to its optimum potential
- Accommodate new or enhanced activities
- Promote a more sustainable Town Centre
- Create a new civic focus to re-anchor the town centre
- Improve east to west and north to south pedestrian movement
- Place greater emphasis on the watercourse
- Create a better fusion between the Old and New Towns
- Introduce new landmarks into the town centre

- Place greater emphasis on existing features such as the watercourse and public open / green spaces such as the Water Gardens and Gadebridge Park

1.9 The Council's Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Strategy identifies that:

“Future development of the Town Centre will build on assets of good accessibility, an attractive environment and a loyal customer base in order to create a prosperous Town Centre which offers convenience and a rewarding experience for the local community and its visitors.”

1.10 This statement is therefore key to the Council objectives for achieving a successful and well used Civic Zone. In order to achieve the Council's objective of an attractive centre in which to live, work and shop the Council needs to optimise the opportunities for improvement. The purpose of this SPD therefore is to ensure that those opportunities can be brought forward in a coherent and planned fashion.

Vision

1.11 The Council's vision for the DBA is to create an enhanced part of the Town Centre which: -

- Accommodates a mixed use development including civic, residential and retail uses in order to strengthen the overall vitality and viability of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre;
- Creates a more cohesive development which acts as a transition to improve the linkages and footfall between the prime shopping area, and the rest of the Town Centre;
- Provides a high quality mix of uses, to the highest design quality, accentuated by feature buildings at a key gateway to the Town Centre;
- Respects the character and setting of the area surrounding the site;
- Enhances the street scene by facilitating pedestrianisation, traffic calming or other measures to reduce the impact of vehicles where this can be complemented by sustainable alternative measures to maintain/improve accessibility;
- Enhances public transport accessibility;
- Incorporates sufficient and appropriate access, servicing and car parking;
- Brings forward significant residential development including an appropriate level of affordable and key worker housing (residential development to be part of mixed use schemes where appropriate);
- Accommodates retail uses to meet retail projected needs;
- Improves east to west and north to south pedestrian movements through improved links to the Marlowes, Gadebridge Park, Water Gardens and Hemel Hempstead Old Town;
- Take opportunities to address wider traffic circulation to improve Town Centre functioning;
- Give improved priority to pedestrians, cyclists and passenger transport; improve highway urban design; and enhance traffic flows;
- Reinstates the Chalkstream and enhance its biodiversity and amenity value;

- Create a new civic focus with a possible new Performance and Conference Centre which links with and supports commercial activities;
- Achieve the highest quality development with a clear and effective urban design;
- Create a more cohesive development which acts as a transition to improve the linkages and pedestrian movement;
- Enhances the street scene by facilitating pedestrianisation, traffic calming or other measures to maintain/improve accessibility;
- Incorporates sufficient and appropriate access, servicing and car parking;
- Enhances and maximises well designed, high quality public open / green space;
- Contributes to the long term management and maintenance of the town centre as a whole; and
- Makes the most efficient use of land, buildings, energy, water and waste.

Key Urban Design Considerations

1.12 There are a number of issues and themes that the Council believes any development proposal for the site will need to address. These are:

- Creating a sense of place and character in urban design terms, through features, views, vistas etc which complements the distinctive character of the new town
- Improving legibility between the old and new town
- Providing a high quality public realm
- Allowing for a high degree of permeability across the site to allow for access and movement
- Providing a mix of uses and diversity that complements rather than competes with existing businesses in the town centre
- Provision of high quality and safe public spaces and routes
- Creating an overall high quality development, making effective use of land whilst respecting important features and the character and scale of adjacent areas

1.13 This list is by no means exhaustive and further key urban design consideration may need to be satisfied at the point of any future planning applications. These points are expanded in Section 5.

Further Reading and Contacts

1.14 Appendix 1 contains a list of useful contacts for developers when preparing proposals for the DBA.

1.15 Appendix 2 goes on to provide a list of further reading, which will supplement the information and guidance contained within this SPD.