

Providing Homes and Community Services

Strategic Objectives

- To provide a mix of new homes to meet the needs of the population.
- To provide for a full range of social, leisure and community facilities and services.

14. Providing Homes

- 14.1 Decent homes are fundamental to people's wellbeing and quality of life, and the foundation for achieving balanced and sustainable communities. Sufficient homes should be available for all sectors in the community, including the travelling community. Their design should help support the move towards a low carbon future and adaptation to climate change. Homes should be served by appropriate facilities and services.
- 14.2 The existing stock of housing is generally of good quality and there are very low levels of vacancy. Owner-occupied housing predominates, though there is also a large proportion of Council owned housing in comparison to other districts in the county. This reflects Hemel Hempstead's New Town legacy. The borough has a mix of house types that includes a large proportion of terraced housing, modest levels of detached properties, and lower proportions of flats and semi-detached properties relative to adjoining districts.
- 14.3 House prices are high due to the borough's proximity to London and its attractive local environment. House prices are high relative to incomes¹, meaning that many local people find it difficult to access suitable accommodation. Most new completions are for open market housing, and levels of housing need within the borough continue to exceed the supply of affordable housing, particularly for first-time buyers. The economic downturn did not significantly affect market affordability.
- 14.4 The supply of affordable housing has been growing over the last few years, but the amount and proportion in relation to the total housing supply has remained low. The existing supply of affordable homes has also been affected by the Right to Buy, leading to a continuing reduction in stock available to those in housing need, although take up of this scheme has declined in recent years.
- 14.5 The borough's population is changing with growing numbers of elderly residents forecast as a result of increased life expectancy. While this will add to the number of one person households and the population in communal homes, there is also evidence of an increase in the number of young children and more sharing. The past long term trend of declining household size has slowed significantly.
- 14.6 The potential supply of housing has been assessed through the South West Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and subsequent updates. The Council has reviewed the SHLAA in consultation with the development sector, firstly through the Housing Land Availability Papers, and through annual monitoring of sites. It shows there is significant housing potential in the borough and illustrates where sites are expected to come forward for development. Urban capacity (that is sites within the existing settlement boundaries) is important to supply, but its potential contribution reduces later in the plan period.
- 14.7 Demand and need for housing has been assessed through the London Commuter Belt (West) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2010 (covering six Hertfordshire authorities, including Dacorum). The SHMA provides information on the type and tenure of housing required to meet need and market demand across different housing markets. The housing market areas are defined, with Dacorum

¹ The ratio of house prices to earnings was nearly 9:1 in 2011 (i.e. at the lower quartile level recorded in ONS Neighbourhood Statistics, Housing, 2012)

chiefly affected by the Hemel Hempstead sub market that partly overlaps into the adjoining districts of St Albans and Watford. The northern fringes of the borough fall into the St Albans and Luton sub markets, whereas the southern tip falls within the Watford sub market.

- 14.8 The impact of affordable housing and other planning obligations on the viability of development schemes has been analysed through the Affordable Housing and Section 106 Viability Study (November 2009). The analysis has helped to set targets and thresholds in relation to the delivery of affordable housing.

Housing Supply

- 14.9 The housing target in Policy CS17 sets a level of housing which the Council expects to achieve and exceed. The target alone suggests 10,750 new homes will be provided over the plan period. The housing trajectory in Appendix 2 shows when this provision is likely to be made.
- 14.10 The elements of the prospective housing supply comprise completions (to date), various commitments and local allocations (see Table 7). The Council's policy and actions will be aimed at delivering those commitments.
- 14.11 The retention of existing residential sites and accommodation is a cornerstone of the housing supply and a basis for the net increase in homes.

Table 7: Prospective Housing Supply 2006 – 2031

Element of Supply	Included in the Target (Policy CS17)	Included in the Distribution (Table 8)
1. Completions	✓	✓
2. Commitments		
(a) Defined urban sites*	✓	✓
(b) Defined locations in Hemel Hempstead**	✓	✓
(c) Rural housing sites (Policy CS20)	✓	✓
(d) Gypsy and traveller pitches (Policy CS22)	✓	
(e) Windfall		
(i) For 10 years ***		✓
(ii) After the first 10 years	✓	✓
3. Local Allocations (Table 9)	✓	✓

* They include the strategic sites in Table 9.

** The town centre and East Hemel Hempstead are key regeneration areas, for which a target has been set in addition to existing defined sites and completions.

*** That is from the date of adoption of the Core Strategy.

- 14.12 Windfalls (i.e. previously unidentified sites which usually provide fewer than five dwellings each) will inevitably occur and are an element of supply. No allowance has been made for windfall for the first ten years in setting the target for housing. It means that there is leeway to exceed the target by up to about 6%.
- 14.13 The Council expects delivery to be around the total shown by Table 8. Delivery will be phased so that the development of housing sites can be co-ordinated with associated infrastructure and services. Local allocations will be delivered from 2021.
- 14.14 The Council will maintain a continuous 5-year² and 15-year rolling housing land supply. However supply needs to be managed in order to conserve land and make the most effective use of it. The broad approach to phasing is set out in Policy CS2, with more detailed requirements in the Site Allocations DPD. Housing supply will be expressed in terms of five year phases in the Site Allocations DPD. The programme will be monitored and managed in collaboration with landowners/developers and registered (housing) providers to encourage delivery. Most development will be regulated by market mechanisms, any specific infrastructure issues, the views of landowners on delivery and the resources available to builders/ providers and users/purchasers. This approach applies throughout the plan period, and even though supply is not open-ended it also applies afterwards: it is anticipated there will continue to be some housing needs which should be met after 2031. A regular supply of housing land will help promote activity in the construction industry, which is an important part of the local economy.
- 14.15 Should supply fall significantly below expectations, the Council will take action to stimulate supply. The Council will consider the options that may be available at the time: e.g. release of its own land and/or investment in specific infrastructure to unblock a site. The management of local allocations, including possible release of a site earlier than intended, will build some flexibility into the housing programme (Policy CS3). Such circumstances and decisions will be reported through the Annual Monitoring Report.
- 14.16 The choice of housing target, with its likely delivery level, takes a balanced approach to housing. The Council has considered:
- the amount needed to meet forecast household growth in the borough;
 - the ability to deliver a sufficient, flexible and steady housing supply;
 - the opportunities to ensure a mix of housing (both in terms of tenure and type);
 - local needs and opportunities, and potential benefits;
 - the timing of key infrastructure to support new housing;
 - the balance between jobs and homes;
 - the support to the local economy and achievement of regeneration targets;
 - the effect of new developments (i.e. the land used);
 - the relationship to environmental constraints and impact upon the character of particular settlements; and
 - the desire to protect the countryside.
- 14.17 Should major new development proposals arise (i.e. over and above those set out within the adopted local plan), the Council will consider whether phasing is appropriate. This consideration will take the overall housing supply into account and

² This will include any additional percentage figure required by national policy.

in particular its delivery and its management: the factors in paragraph 14.16 above will be relevant.

14.18 The broad distribution of new housing is guided by the settlement hierarchy (Policy CS1). Hemel Hempstead will continue to be the focus for higher levels of growth. Development in the remaining towns and larger villages will be geared towards meeting their locally generated needs. There will be limited opportunities in the smaller villages, although rural housing sites (Policy CS20) are encouraged.

14.19 Opportunities for using previously developed land in urban areas will be optimised. However these alone will not maintain a sufficient and steady supply of housing over the lifetime of the plan. Some contribution from greenfield land is planned for within the urban areas and through extensions to some settlements (referred to as local allocations). The development of these local allocations will require changes to the Green Belt boundary.

14.20 Table 8 summarises the prospective distribution of housing. This provides a yardstick against which to judge the delivery of new housing and its distribution.

Table 8: Prospective Distribution of Housing 2006-2031

Place	Number of Dwellings indicated in each Local Objective
Hemel Hempstead	8,800
- <i>Town Centre</i>	1,800
- <i>East Hemel</i>	1,000
- <i>Rest of Town</i>	6,000
Berkhamsted	1,180
Tring	480
Bovingdon	130
Kings Langley	110
Markyate	200
Countryside	420
Total	11,320

14.21 Important housing sites include:

- strategic sites defined within the Core Strategy; and
- local allocations

Table 9 gives the location and estimated number of new homes for each site. Site requirements are set out with the relevant place strategy.

Table 9: Strategic Sites and Local Allocations

Place	Location	Number of Homes
Strategic Sites		
Berkhamsted	Durrants Lane / Shootersway	180
Markyate	Hicks Road	90
<i>Sub-total</i>		<i>270</i>
Local Allocations		
Hemel Hempstead	Marchmont Farm	300
	Old Town	80
	West Hemel Hempstead	up to 900
Berkhamsted	Hanburys, Shootersway	60
Tring	Icknield Way, west of Tring	150
Bovingdon	Chesham Road / Molyneaux Avenue	60
<i>Sub-total</i>		<i>1,550</i>

14.22 Local allocations fulfil a number of purposes:

- they extend the character and nature of housing supply, particularly for family housing;
- they will provide affordable housing locally;
- they can be planned in line with infrastructure capacity, particularly primary schools;
- they can be used to address local infrastructure deficits;
- they will also help maintain local population and the viability of settlements away from Hemel Hempstead.

14.23 Many housing sites will be allocated through the Site Allocations DPD, and a few in the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan. Site boundaries, the phasing and mix of housing and other uses, and other specific conditions will be set out. Fuller detail on the local allocations will also be given in the Site Allocations DPD.

POLICY CS17: New Housing

An average of 430 net additional dwellings will be provided each year (between 2006 and 2031).

The new housing will be phased over the plan period and a five year supply of housing maintained.

Existing housing land and dwellings will normally be retained.

Monitoring:

Indicator(s)	Target(s)
Net additional dwellings per year and over the plan period	430 net additional dwellings per year
Land available – for 5 years ahead and	-

15 years ahead	
Proportion of new dwellings on greenfield sites	40% or less

Delivery will be achieved by:

- identifying housing allocations, their planning requirements and expected phasing in the Site Allocations DPD and East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan;
- preparing master plans for important sites;
- implementing the Council's Housing Strategy;
- monitoring of development progress in the Annual Monitoring Report;
- working with developers and landowners, and other partners such as the County Council and registered providers; and
- using the Council's resources in co-ordination with investment plans of key organisations such as the Homes and Communities Agency.

Housing Mix

- 14.24 New homes should match the needs of the community in terms of its size, type and affordability. Ideally they should also be adaptable and accessible to all occupiers. Planning for a mix of housing types is very important.
- 14.25 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) recognised a need for supported housing for vulnerable groups across south and west Hertfordshire (i.e. London Commuter Belt (West)). With an ageing population, special attention must be given to the needs of elderly people. Hertfordshire County Council (Health and Community Services) aims to provide sufficient support for elderly people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible i.e. through aids and adaptations in the home, and/or support from a care worker/personal assistant. This will affect the overall demand for specialist and sheltered elderly persons' accommodation.
- 14.26 The County Council has indicated that there will be accommodation needs for people in younger age groups, particularly for supported housing (e.g. special needs housing, short term hostels, and individual flats) and for independent living. Specific requirements have been identified for Extra Care ('flexicare') housing places, people with learning disabilities and mental health issues, and residential care (mainly private beds). The Council will permit appropriate schemes for new accommodation. It will expect applicants to liaise with the relevant sponsoring and support agencies.
- 14.27 The SHMA's projection of household types to 2021 indicated a requirement for a mix of properties by size and tenure. This varies between tenure with more 3-bed properties being required in market housing, and more 1-bed homes being needed for social renting. Future housing market assessments and needs surveys will help update and refine information on housing mix.
- 14.28 The Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will provide a broad indication of priorities and will be used to guide decisions on the housing mix. Individual cases will be affected by the mix of affordable housing needed, as well as site and design considerations.

14.29 Housing should be designed to a life-time homes standard, i.e. it is built with accessibility and adaptability in mind. This means that the home should be flexible to the changing needs of the occupiers (be they elderly, disabled or not), and can be adapted at minimal cost and disruption to them. This approach accords with Policy CS29: Sustainable Design and Construction.

14.30 There may be a small role for live-work units, depending on demand. They can provide an opportunity for households to combine home and work within the same premises, and reduce the need to travel for the occupiers. Such units are often attractive to office-based businesses such as media, design, IT and consultancy.

POLICY CS18: Mix of Housing

New housing development will provide a choice of homes. This will comprise:

- (a) a range of housing types, sizes and tenure;**
- (b) housing for those with special needs; and**
- (c) affordable housing in accordance with Policy CS19.**

Decisions on the appropriate type of mix of homes within development proposals will be guided by strategic housing market assessments and housing needs surveys, and informed by other housing market intelligence and site-specific considerations.

Monitoring:

Indicator(s)	Target(s)
Size of new dwellings completed, by number of bedrooms	-

Delivery will be achieved by:

- allocating housing sites and targets for affordable housing through the Site Allocations DPD and East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan;
- policies in the Development Management DPD;
- guidance in Supplementary Planning Documents, including the Affordable Housing SPD;
- implementing the Council's Housing Strategy; and
- working in partnership with developers, the parish councils, local communities, landowners, developers, the County Council, and registered providers.

Affordable Housing

14.31 Affordable housing is subsidised. It comprises:

- social rented;
- affordable rented; and
- intermediate housing (shared ownership and intermediate rented).

It excludes all market housing.

- 14.32 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment estimated that there would be a significant requirement for social rented housing in Dacorum between 2007 and 2021 (3,100 homes) to achieve a balanced housing supply by 2021. This represented nearly 40% of the housing requirement of 7,800 that the SHMA estimated for all homes over the same period. No specific requirement was identified for intermediate housing. There are a large number of residents on the Council's Housing Register and lengthy waiting times for accommodation. The full affordable housing requirement over the plan period (2006-2031) will be reviewed from time to time, but is expected to be high. While such a level of provision is unlikely to be deliverable, the aim should still be to maximise the provision of affordable housing within the overall housing supply³. A target of 35% (for affordable housing) is realistic and achievable, when compared with past achievement, economic conditions and costs associated with new building. The level and mix of housing will be updated through housing needs surveys.
- 14.33 In some areas it will be reasonable to exceed the normal level for affordable housing. Land values vary and so does viability. The opportunity to provide affordable housing is lower outside Hemel Hempstead, because there are fewer sites available. The most should be made of these sites. Supplementary work may well justify higher levels of affordable housing, and this would be specified, normally in the Site Allocations DPD.
- 14.34 There may also be genuine circumstances where a lower level of affordable housing is appropriate, e.g. because of viability, site characteristics and abnormal costs. This would need to be justified in each case. The viability of a scheme will be tested on the basis of an open book financial appraisal, considering the residual value of the land and the profitability of the scheme.
- 14.35 Affordable housing should be provided on the application site. However, where this is not feasible, off-site provision or a financial contribution will be accepted instead.
- 14.36 Intermediate housing is considered to be part of a balanced mix of affordable housing over the plan period and will be sought where it is justified by local circumstances.
- 14.37 Homes will be provided in the villages to enable people who are in housing need to stay locally and maintain their local connections with family and work. This in turn will help support the viability of rural services and amenities. Development opportunities will largely be on sites within and adjacent to the selected small villages identified in the settlement hierarchy. Villages are normally able to absorb modest, well-planned schemes without significant harm to their character or the setting of the countryside.
- 14.38 Detailed guidance on viability, commuted payments, eligibility criteria for the occupation of affordable housing and other matters will be provided in supplementary guidance and advice.

³ Based on the housing supply information in Table 8, it is estimated that approximately 3,900 affordable homes will be delivered over the plan period.

POLICY CS19: Affordable Housing

Affordable homes will be provided:

- on sites of a minimum size 0.3ha or 10 dwellings (and larger) in Hemel Hempstead; and
- elsewhere, on sites of a minimum size of 0.16ha or 5 dwellings (and larger).

A financial contribution will be sought in lieu of affordable housing on sites which fall below these thresholds.

35% of the new dwellings should be affordable homes. Higher levels may be sought on sites which are specified by the Council in a development plan document, provided development would be viable and need is evident. On rural housing sites 100% of all new homes will normally be affordable (Policy CS20).

A minimum of 75% of the affordable housing units provided should be for rent.

Judgements about the level, mix and tenure of affordable homes will have regard to:

- (a) the Council's Housing Strategy, identified housing need and other relevant evidence (see Policy CS18);
- (b) the potential to enlarge the site;
- (c) the overall viability of the scheme and any abnormal costs; and
- (d) arrangements to ensure that the benefit of all affordable housing units passes from the initial occupiers of the property to successive occupiers

Further, detailed guidance is provided in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.

POLICY CS20: Rural Sites for Affordable Homes

Small-scale schemes for local affordable homes will be promoted in and adjoining selected small villages in the countryside (see Policies CS6 and CS7), and exceptionally elsewhere with the support of the local Parish Council.

Development will only be permitted if:

- (a) it meets an identified local need for affordable housing;
- (b) the housing is for people who have a strong local connection with the village or parish through work, residence or family; and
- (c) the scheme is of a scale and design that respects the character, setting and form of the village and surrounding countryside.

Any site on the edge of a village must represent a logical extension to it.

Monitoring:

Indicator(s)	Target(s)
Number of new affordable homes	35% of all new dwellings
Tenure of new affordable homes	A minimum 75% of the affordable units to be for rent
Number of affordable homes delivered through rural housing schemes	-

Delivery will be achieved by:

- allocating housing sites and targets for affordable housing through the Site Allocations DPD and East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan;
- policies in the Development Management DPD;
- guidance in supplementary documents, including the Affordable Housing SPD which will consider dwelling mix, tenure and the formula for calculating financial contributions;
- implementing the Council's Housing Strategy; and
- working in partnership with developers, the parish councils, local communities, landowners, developers, the County Council, and registered providers.

Travelling Communities

14.39 Three travelling communities live in and visit Dacorum:

- people living in caravans: i.e.
 - Gypsies and Travellers; and
 - travelling showpeople
- people living in boats on the Grand Union Canal.

14.40 Their needs can be met by retaining existing accommodation and providing new sites.

Gypsies and Travellers

14.41 The need for more, residential pitches was shown in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for South and West Herts (2005), and more pitches are recommended in the longer term to address natural growth. The Council will periodically reassess need and the occupation of sites. It will then use the most up to date assessment as the basis for a rolling target of provision. The need for new pitches is difficult to estimate accurately, principally because of the nomadic lifestyle of the communities themselves: it is difficult to identify all sources of need and there is a danger of double-counting individual requirements across districts. A monitoring

target for the provision of new pitches is given below Policy CS22 for the plan period. Actual provision may vary from this as needs assessments are updated.

- 14.42 New pitches will provide a more settled base for Gypsies and Travellers, giving them better access to health and education services, and employment.
- 14.43 A small number of transit pitches should be provided across Hertfordshire, and local authorities, including Dacorum Council, will work together to determine their distribution.
- 14.44 The Council intends that the needs of Gypsies and Travellers should be progressively met and that all sites should be located, designed and managed on the basis of fairness, integration and sustainability: i.e.
- (a) fairness to both the Gypsy and Traveller community and the settled community;
 - (b) to achieve acceptance by the two communities of each other, social coherence and a wider, shared sense of place and community; and
 - (c) proximity to services, social inclusion, protection of heritage and important environmental features and conservation of natural resources.
- 14.45 The Council will collaborate with other agencies, such as the County Council, Police and community support groups, and site owners/managers to assist the assimilation of residents on new sites with the settled community nearby.

Travelling Showpeople

- 14.46 Initial provision for travelling showpeople is directed towards Broxbourne and East Herts. The Hertfordshire local authorities will work together to determine the distribution of the longer term growth. There is little demand within Dacorum itself, and more opportunity to accommodate plots within other areas of Hertfordshire.

Boats

- 14.47 Demand for residential and visitor moorings has followed supply. Opportunities for the construction of new residential and visitor mooring basins in the Dacorum section of the canal will be very limited. However through the gradual improvement of online moorings and adjoining facilities in settlements along the canal, more provision will be made for visitors.

POLICY CS21: Existing Accommodation for Travelling Communities

Existing pitches, plots and mooring basins will be safeguarded from alternative development unless:

- (a) a satisfactory replacement is provided; or**
- (b) there is no further need for the facility.**

POLICY CS22: New Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers

The target for new pitches will be set according to the most recent Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment agreed by the Council. The target will be progressively met through the provision and management of new sites.

New sites will be:

- (a) distributed in a dispersed pattern around settlements;
- (b) located close to facilities;
- (c) of varying sizes, not normally exceeding a site capacity of 15 pitches;
- (d) planned to allow for part occupation initially, allowing subsequent growth to full site capacity; and
- (e) designed to a high standard with:
 - (i) an open frontage similar to other forms of housing; and
 - (ii) landscaping or other physical features to provide an appropriate setting and relationship to existing residential areas.

Priority will be given to the provision of sites which are defined on the Proposals Map. If other proposals come forward, they will be judged on the basis of the need for that provision.

Any new transit pitches should also:

- (a) achieve good access to the M1 or A41 main roads; and
- (b) minimise potential disturbance to adjoining occupiers.

Monitoring:

Indicators	Targets
Number of new pitches (net)	A minimum of 17
Number of new plots (net)	0

Delivery will be achieved:

For Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople:

- by the identification of sites in the Site Allocations DPD;
- by provision of sites through multi-agency partnership (including the Local Strategic Partnership), and through the Council's Housing Strategy and take up of available Government grants; and
- by private owners, registered providers or a local authority managing sites [relevant Government advice applying to design and management].

For Canal Moorings:

- by development management and collaboration with the Canal and River Trust.

