

4. Challenges

- 4.1. As the borough portrait outlines, Dacorum is an attractive borough, with a largely affluent, healthy and mobile population. However, this generally positive picture hides some significant challenges.
- 4.2. The core challenge is to provide balanced and sustainable growth. In the shorter term this will assist recovery from the national economic recession.

Challenge 1 - Balanced and sustainable growth

New jobs ought to give residents a choice of working close to where they live. These jobs will need to be in a range of different sectors to suit differing skill levels, but focus upon those sectors where there is predicted to be the largest rise in future demand.

Locally generated housing needs ought to be accommodated. A view will need to be taken regarding how much in-migration should be accommodated. The right type of housing should be provided in the right locations, taking into account changes in the population structure. The borough's high average house prices should be compensated for by a rise in the number of new affordable homes, catering for a range of different needs.

By carefully considering the location of homes, jobs and essential services, travel demand can be managed, congestion and pollution eased and all residents given better access to the places where they work, shop and spend leisure time. This can also help to reduce the predicted growth in traffic on the M1 and other heavily congested routes through central Hertfordshire.

The approach to new development and growth must recognise the borough's environment and countryside, and therefore it is appropriate to exercise some restraint.

- 4.3. There are also more specific challenges that relate to the borough's economic health, the well being of its residents and the future of its environment:

Challenge 2 - Strengthening the role of Maylands Business Park

- 4.4. Maylands Business Park is the largest in the borough and also of sub-regional importance. Its success is critical to the wider economic prosperity of the borough and beyond. The need for a strong regeneration focus was given added impetus by the Buncefield explosion in December 2005. The development of The Gateway as a green business park will assist with long-term recovery and provide skilled jobs. The

area currently suffers from a lack of services and facilities accessible to its daytime population. Proposals for the Heart of Maylands will be critical in filling this gap and help improve the attractiveness of the areas to employers and employees alike.

Challenge 3 - Regenerating Hemel Hempstead town centre

- 4.5. The range of shops and facilities offered by Hemel Hempstead town centre has already been improved through the Riverside development. However, further improvements to both the retail offer and quality of the overall environment must be made if the town is to compete with larger sub-regional centres across the borough boundary. Central to this regeneration is the provision of new homes and high quality office space, both of which will increase footfall. A range of leisure and community facilities will be available to local residents.

Challenge 4 - Strong, inclusive communities

- 4.6. The impact of new development upon community cohesion and local character must be carefully considered. In particular it must contribute fully to infrastructure needs and not result in undue pressures upon local schools, health facilities and other key services and facilities. Where possible it should help increase the range of social, leisure and cultural facilities, which are currently quite low for the size of the population. Inequalities, whether based on race, gender, religion or income, must be reduced.

Challenge 5 - A resilient natural environment

- 4.7. The combined effects of climate change, population growth and development needs will increase pressures on the natural environment. These impacts must be reduced through the prudent use of natural resources, encouraging renewable energy production, the effective disposal of waste, the sustainable design of new development and careful land management.

Challenge 6 - A high quality and sustainable built environment

- 4.8. Development must celebrate and reinforce local distinctiveness - reinforcing the good qualities and reducing or removing the bad. It must recognise that what is appropriate in one location cannot necessarily be replicated elsewhere, in order to retain the individual identities of each place. Development must also help to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, through sustainable design and construction and reducing the need to travel, particularly by car.