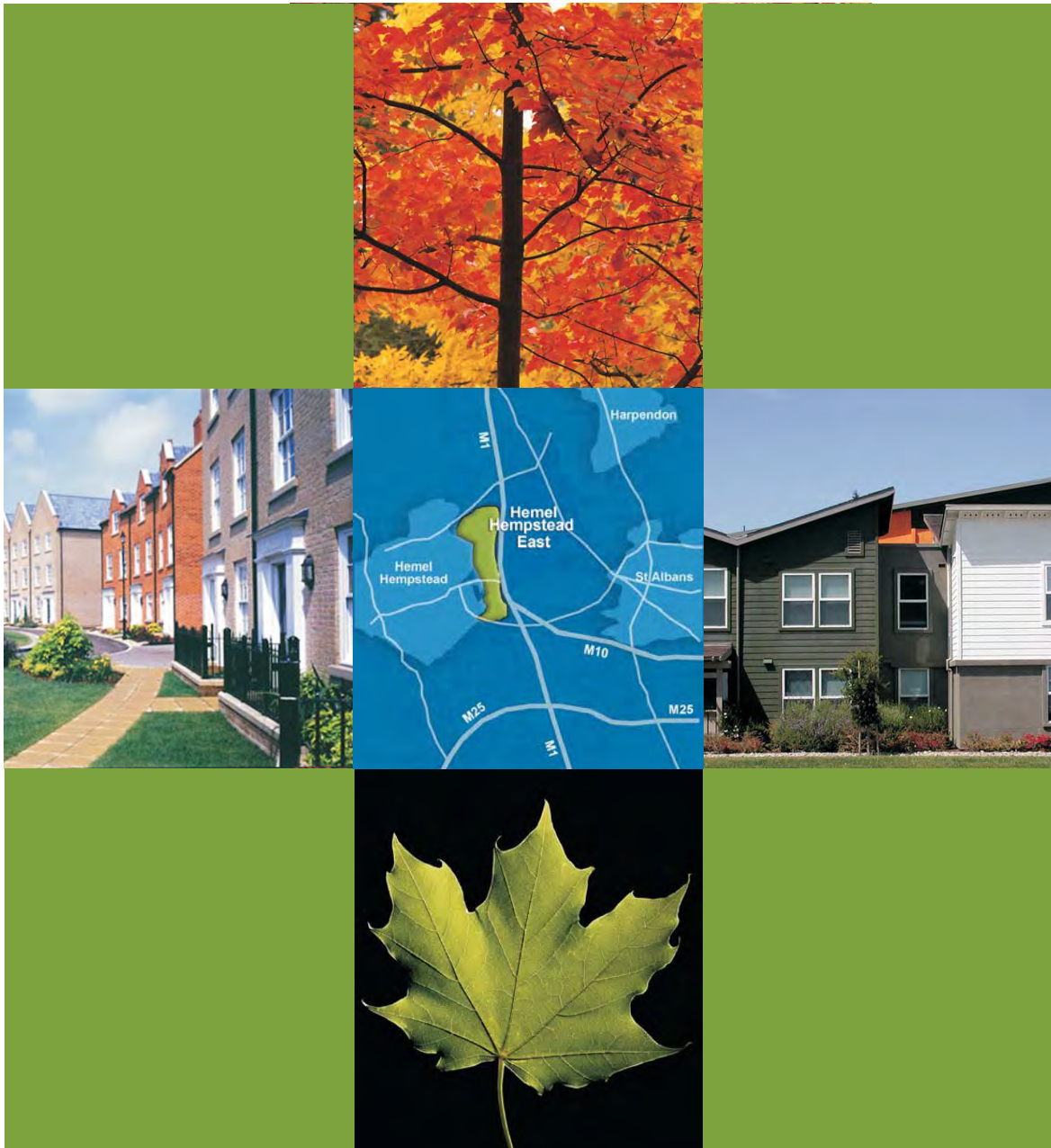


Part E Conclusions and Next Steps



Contents

1.	Establishing a Sound Platform for the Gorhambury Concept	1
1.1	Meeting Regional and Local Objectives	1
1.2	Addressing Key Issues and Opportunities	1
1.3	Securing a Sustainable Development	3
1.4	The Crown Estate - A Valuable Development Partner	4
2.	Overview of the Proposals	5
3.	The Case for Development at Hemel Hempstead East	7
4.	Next Steps	9
4.1	East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan	9
4.2	Stakeholder and Public Involvement	9
5.	Contacts	11



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1. Establishing a Sound Platform for the Gorhambury Concept

1.1 Meeting Regional and Local Objectives

Part A of this document sought to demonstrate Gorhambury's potential as a location for major housing and smaller scale employment development along with community facilities and services. It showed how Hemel Hempstead has evolved as a town, how it has accommodated growth in the past, and how it has the potential to grow in the future. New neighbourhoods would be based on a similar neighbourhood concept to that which much of the town's original growth was based on, whilst considering lessons learnt from elements of this concept that were not successful in the past. Part A also showed how the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy support the location as an area in which significant new development could take place to support strategic planning and economic objectives. This Part also showed how local housing objectives and pressures could be met through new development at Gorhambury.

Part A set out the emerging regional context for the review of Green Belt boundaries at Hemel Hempstead which recognises that the town is very constrained by the Green Belt. It set out the results of an assessment of the Green Belt land at Gorhambury. This demonstrated that the site contributes little to the purposes and objectives of the Green Belt as set out in PPG2 and that due to the location and relatively well contained and enclosed character of the site it is considered suitable for development. This suggests that in the context of RSS14 for the East of England, the proposed new Green Belt boundary along the M1 would provide a long term robust boundary which would not need to be reviewed until 2031. This would ensure that the town can expand as necessary in a sustainable way, and would avoid development being pushed beyond the Green Belt boundary resulting in more travel by private car or over development in the urban area resulting in pressure on facilities and a lowering of quality of life.

1.2 Addressing Key Issues and Opportunities

Part B sought to consider the evidence, in terms of a baseline, key issues and opportunities, which needs to be considered in examining Gorhambury as a potential location for major new development. The review of employment and socio-economic evidence has shown that the location has the potential for development across a full range of business uses and could create synergy through a link-up with the existing Maylands development.

Part B also considered the need for community facilities arising from a major development of the type envisaged at Gorhambury, and examined the scope for strategic provision of new facilities currently needed in Hemel Hempstead. The review showed that the development will require comprehensive provision of a range of local facilities, which could be accommodated within the development. This is a key advantage of developing a site this size as it provides an opportunity to provide such facilities for new and existing residents and those working in the



area. In addition, there may be potential to locate a much needed town stadium within the Gateway area to the east of the town. This would assist in regenerating the area, improving the image of the town, and also in increasing local pride in the town.

A review of the landscape considerations affecting the potential for development at Gorhambury identified a range of opportunities and constraints within which any new development should be planned. It identified opportunities for advanced planting in addition to that already undertaken by The Crown Estate to assist in setting a more established landscape framework and in screening negative visual elements such as the M1 in advance of development. Whilst there is more transport work to do, the review of transport demonstrated how the concept for Gorhambury could be implemented in such a way as to meet regional and local transport objectives. It sets out an initial assessment of the impacts of the proposed development, but recognises that these are effectively 'worst case' impacts as they do not take into account the significant opportunities that exist to incorporate sustainable transport measures in a development of this scale, as set out in Part D.

Part B also reviewed the important historic environment context of the Gorhambury area. It highlighted the positive challenges of development in the location and highlighted the benefits of taking a proactive approach to identifying and managing the archaeological and historic environment heritage at the location, using this as a positive tool for the engagement of the local community and ensuring that development and heritage work together.

The Ecological review in Part B showed the value of the arable farmland which forms the majority of the Gorhambury estate to be of negligible importance in nature conservation terms. Where there are a number of habitats, these are capable of retention, and there is good scope to create new habitats to improve the ecology of the site as part of its development.

Part B also set out the considerations for the management and provision of key utilities and infrastructure. It demonstrated how development at Gorhambury would be undertaken with regard to existing utilities infrastructure at the location. It identified that water resources are scarce in the Gorhambury and wider East of England area and therefore demand management measures will be important. A range of options relating to water conservation measures that could be incorporated at Gorhambury is set out in Part C.

The public access and informal recreation considerations showed how opportunities exist to enhance provision as part of development at Gorhambury and identified ways of examining this further. This includes opportunities to extend existing and create new footpaths, including circular routes and links between settlements to the east of the M1.

An assessment of noise and air quality has been undertaken previously and will need to be updated once more recent data is available. The original assessment advises on the distances that residential areas should be located from the M1 and A414. It also shows that due to the scale of the proposed development at Gorhambury there is opportunity to design landscape buffers and stand off zones into the proposals at an early stage.

Finally, the review of baseline, opportunities and constraints addressed how development could be undertaken with in the constraints of the new HSE Consultation Distance around the Buncefield Oil Depot. This showed that the



scale of the proposed development is such that the majority of the development proposed is a significant distance from the Oil Depot and consultation zone. More appropriate land uses are proposed within and on the edge of the consultation zone.

Part B concluded that no major constraints to development have been identified, and a number of opportunities have been identified which offer potential enhancement to the existing environment. The evidence base set out in this Part should be used by the local authorities in making decisions on the most appropriate direction for growth at Hemel Hempstead.

1.3 **Securing a Sustainable Development**

Part C explored how the proposed development at Gorhambury can create a highly sustainable mixed use extension to Hemel Hempstead, which assists in the town's wider regeneration. It identified a number of opportunities to reduce energy use, water use and the production of waste through the implementation of some key approaches.

Firstly, it demonstrated the potential for the residential element of the development to be zero-carbon. There are a number of ways to achieve this and Part C examined how further exploration of the options could be undertaken. At this stage it was concluded that a strategy based on large scale wind and biomass CHP is likely to be one of the most sensible options to achieving a zero carbon development.

Secondly, the development could incorporate significant measures to reduce water consumption and manage drainage in more sustainable ways. This is identified as being particularly important given the scarce water resources in the Gorhambury and East of England area. Measures relating to technologies that will be evolving over the development period are set out along with measures to offset new demand by reducing water consumption in surrounding areas. The latter is likely to be required if the development is to work towards being water neutral.

Thirdly, resource efficiency and waste reduction principles were considered. The implications for the development in terms of waste storage and recycling facilities were considered, starting with reduction of waste at design and construction stage, through to minimising the production of waste and maximising recycling when the site is occupied, to ensuring through design and materials specification that the buildings are easy to dismantle and recycle at the end of their life.

Fourthly, Part C considered how the development could perform so as to be 'climate proofed'. This focused on improving the climate change resilience of existing and new homes and other buildings. It also considered development principles including the opportunity to incorporate self-build options within the proposed development.

Part C demonstrated The Crown Estate's commitment to work with key stakeholders and local people on the formulation of proposals for a sustainable and climate-proofed development at Gorhambury.



1.4 The Crown Estate - A Valuable Development Partner

The Crown Estate's core values are commercialism, integrity and stewardship. The Crown Estate's commitment to stewardship means pursuing good environmental practice, making sure that its activities in the communities in which it operates are handled sensitively, and taking a sustainable long term view in its actions.

The Crown Estate as the single landowner in the Gorhambury Concept area will be a valuable development partner. The Crown Estate has worked with Dacorum Borough Council, St. Albans District Council and English Partnerships on the preparation of development briefs for sites in Hemel Hempstead and welcomes joint working with key partners and stakeholders.



2. Overview of the Proposals

The content of this document demonstrates how development of The Crown Estate's land to the east of Hemel Hempstead is the most sustainable option for growth of the town, providing up to 6,000-7,000 new dwellings and other uses to assist Dacorum Borough Council in meeting its regional housing and employment requirements and to assist in the regeneration of the town.

The historical context of growth of the town has been used to inform the Concept for the proposed development. The focus has been on how Hemel Hempstead as a town can grow in a sustainable way rather than just looking at growth of the eastern part of the town in isolation.

The document has explored how the proposed mixed use development can push the boundaries of sustainability to create a highly sustainable mixed use urban extension that responds to climate change, focussing on key issues such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions, and reducing waste arisings and water use.

The baseline work sets out the evidence base for the Dacorum and St. Albans Local Development Frameworks. It demonstrates that land to the east of the town is the most sensible direction for growth. The Green Belt at this location does not contribute significantly to the purposes of Green Belt land, and the location of the M1 provides a long term defensible new Green Belt boundary. There are no major environmental constraints to development to the east of the town. For instance, there are no statutory sites of nature conservation value and the majority of the land is of negligible nature conservation importance. The land is not within an area at risk of fluvial or tidal flooding and there are opportunities for incorporation of SUDs and creation of additional wetlands/water storage areas to ensure that water surface runoff from the site to adjacent land is managed and minimised.

The Crown Estate also owns land to the east of the M1. This is not proposed for development, but does provide an opportunity if needed, to be used as a resource for the new development, for instance through use for storage wetlands and as a recreational resource to benefit new and existing residents in the town. Other benefits would include provision of key community facilities and services, and provision of new infrastructure, all of which would prove difficult to provide associated with small scale piecemeal development throughout the town. Such small scale development will simply put pressure on existing infrastructure.

An assessment of the historic environment in the area indicates that this scale of development can be achieved without significant adverse effects on the immediate historic environment, and that there is a significant opportunity to generate public participation in the wider historic environment and to manage the historic environment in a sustainable way.

With regard to physical constraints which will affect the layout of the proposed development, there is a high voltage overhead line which will require careful planning and design around in this area, but which in itself is not a constraint to development. The pipelines that run through parts of the site are not a major constraint to development, although built development cannot take place over these pipelines as easement distances need to be



protected. It may be possible that key sections of pipeline can be diverted onto other Crown Estate land in order to assist planning of the site.

The proximity of the Buncefield Oil Depot should not be used as a reason to prevent development in this area. The area is in need of regeneration, and the extent of The Crown Estate's land ownership is such that the proposed development can take into account the HSE's consultation zone around Buncefield, including the new consultation zone which will come into effect in Summer 2008.



3. The Case for Development at Hemel Hempstead East

This document has set out the key physical, social and environmental issues relating to the land to the east of Hemel Hempstead and has gone on to show how this land could be developed as a sustainable mixed use urban extension to Hemel Hempstead, setting out different options that could be incorporated to ensure that the development is as sustainable as possible and is 'climate proofed'.

Assuming that the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to Draft RSS14 are carried forward into the final Plan, Dacorum Borough Council will need to find land for significant growth. An assessment of the local housing context demonstrates that Dacorum will need to identify greenfield sites in order to meet this need for growth. There are a number of reasons why The Crown Estate considers that this growth should be to the east of the town:

- This is one of the few locations around the town that offers a logical and robust, long term new Green Belt boundary. There is sufficient land between the edge of the built up area and the M1 to allow for growth needs up to 2021 and beyond within a clear new Green Belt boundary.
- Residential development and small scale mixed use development here would assist in balancing out the land uses in the eastern part of the town, as this part of the town is currently dominated by employment uses and is in need of regeneration. The proposed development at Gorhambury would act as a catalyst to regeneration of the town in employment and social terms. It also provides an opportunity to create a new Hemel Gateway between the M1 and the Maylands Gateway area. Along with a new town stadium this could provide a new entrance to the town, offering an opportunity to improve the image of the town significantly.
- There are clear advantages to extending the town in a single direction rather than developing in a piecemeal way around the town or on brownfield sites throughout the town. A sustainable extension to the town offers clear advantages in planning the future growth of the town and in ensuring that the development is of sufficient scale to ensure that major infrastructure can be planned appropriately and that this also provides a benefit to existing residents and people working in the area.
- With regard to alternative development locations, the land to the east of the town offers the best balance of opportunity, variety and flexibility and the impact of developing here on this scale offers significant advantages in terms of infrastructure provision, quality of life and impact on the environment.



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4. Next Steps

The Crown Estate has set out the case for development at Gorhambury/Hemel Hempstead East. It believes that developing this area of land between the town and the M1 is the most sustainable option for growth of the town and will assist in the regeneration of the whole town. The Crown Estate would like to see an urban extension to the east of the town identified as the Preferred Option in the Dacorum and St. Albans Core Strategy Development Plan Document for consultation and subsequently identified in the adopted Core Strategy.

If the site is identified at the Core Strategy Preferred Options stage, The Crown Estate welcomes working with the local authorities, the County Council, key stakeholders and the public in developing the proposals further. It is likely that if Hemel Hempstead East was identified as the direction for growth in the Core Strategy then this would be carried forward through development of the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan as set out below.

4.1 East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan

Dacorum Borough Council and St. Albans District Council have identified preparation of an East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan (AAP) in their Local Development Schemes. This will set out the spatial strategy for the eastern part of the town, as the area is subject to economic change, expansion, possible housing growth and potential relocation of uses from within the town. If the Core Strategy identifies Hemel Hempstead East as the direction for growth of the town, this will be included in the Area Action Plan. The Crown Estate welcomes key involvement in the preparation of this AAP and joint working with the local authorities and other key stakeholders. This supporting information document would form part of the baseline work for preparation of the AAP.

Depending on the scale of development identified in the AAP, it is likely that more detailed development briefs would need to be prepared for different phases of the development. These would then be followed by planning applications and relevant technical/supporting information at the appropriate stage.

4.2 Stakeholder and Public Involvement

Stakeholder and public involvement will be key to development of the proposals for eastern Hemel Hempstead. Public consultation has not yet taken place as the proposals do not have any status at this stage. Once there is more certainty, for instance identification in the Core Strategy Preferred Options document and inclusion in the AAP then consultation will take place through the LDF system. Work on the AAP would form the basis for formal involvement and consultation. The Crown Estate places great emphasis on stakeholder and public involvement and the proposals offer considerable flexibility at this stage.

The Crown Estate welcomes the opportunity to discuss the content of this document and the potential for taking these proposals forward with Dacorum Borough Council, St. Albans District Council, Hertfordshire County Council and other interested parties.



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5. Contacts

This document has been prepared by Entec UK Ltd. on behalf of The Crown Estate. Key contact details are set out below:

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