



# **ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN (2020-2036) EXAMINATION**

## **MATTER 2 – THE DUTY TO COOPERATE**

**December 2019**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by DLA Town Planning Ltd in response to the Inspector's Matters, Issues and Questions for the St Albans City and District Local Plan 2020-2036.

### Overview of DLA representations

- 1.2 DLA Town Planning is instructed by a group of around 10 landowner/developer clients with interest in a total of 16 sites across St Albans district. These sites range in size from 10 to 200 dwellings and are in a range of locations. These sites are not included within the draft Local Plan, despite being suitable and deliverable, and this reflects the fact that these sites have not been adequately assessed by the Council. The representations made by each client are similar in many respects and primarily focus on the weaknesses in the Council's chosen strategy, inadequacies in the evidence base and a lack of consistency with government guidance. This statement draws together clients' views into a combined position. The key points cut across many of the Inspectors' Matters and Issues and are summarised below for ease of reference:

- **Procedural issues** – we do not consider the draft Local Plan to be sound in terms of the way the strategy has been devised, the alternatives considered and relied upon, and the evidence that underpins both;
- **Housing provision east of Hemel Hempstead** – there is a strong argument advanced by Dacorum Borough Council, among others, that some or all of the housing proposed to the east of Hemel Hempstead should contribute to meeting Dacorum's housing need, rather St Albans' need; this raises a fundamental question as to whether this Local Plan can sustainably rely upon that housing to meet its own needs;
- **Park Street Garden Village** – this site has planning permission for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange. This is common knowledge. This permission was granted by the Secretary of State on the basis of "very special circumstances", mainly around the specific need for this use. This planning permission has now been implemented and its delivery is outside of the control of the council. On this basis, it plainly follows that it is not deliverable as a housing site and should be deleted;
- **The 'stepped' approach is flawed** – The draft Local Plan is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land due to the lack of any proposed small and medium-size site allocations. The exclusive focus on strategic sites means that a

“stepped” housing trajectory is required which defers housing delivery, contrary to government policy;

- **There is conflict with Paragraph 68 of the NPPF** – A specific conflict with government policy arises in respect of the Framework’s requirement at paragraph 68 that 10% of the housing requirement be met on sites of less than one hectare.

1.3 In view of these soundness issues, modifications are needed to the Local Plan to enable it to be found sound. It is clear that additional housing provision is needed and such provision needs to be found particularly from small and medium-sized sites. These additional allocations should be made from the following sources as a priority:

- The small scale sub-areas already identified in the Council’s Green Belt Review but not taken forward;
- Medium-sized allocations around the main towns where these relate well to the urban area and where robust new Green Belt boundaries can be identified or where brownfield opportunities exist;
- Extensions to allocations already proposed in the draft Local Plan;
- A specific allowance for Neighbourhood Plans to allocate small and medium-scale housing sites in the Green Belt.

1.4 A short postponement to the hearing sessions may be necessary while the Council compiles the list of additional sites and produces additional policy wording. However, these changes can be made in the context of the current Local Plan examination and should **not** require the withdrawal of the Plan, particularly since much of the evidence base needed already exists.



## 2.0 **MATTER 2 – THE DUTY TO COOPERATE**

- 2.1 The Main Issue identified by the Inspectors for discussion under this matter is “Whether the Council has complied with the duty to cooperate in the preparation of the Plan”.

### **Overall housing provision**

*Question 2 – Are there issues of unmet need from within neighbouring authorities? If so how are these being addressed?*

- 2.2 The issue of cross-boundary housing in South West Hertfordshire is complex and long-running. The previous draft Strategic Local Plan was withdrawn because the Council had not complied with the Duty to Cooperate (see Inspector Hogger’s decision letter at Appendix 1 to this statement, particularly paragraph 42). Since that time, meetings have taken place between the Council (SADC) and various neighbouring councils. The principle that seems to have been followed is that each Council will endeavour to meet its own housing need within its own area and this is set out broadly in the Council’s Duty to Cooperate statement (CD0280).
- 2.3 The issue of cross-boundary housing needs in relation to land East of Hemel Hempstead is a critical one in terms of the soundness of the Plan. The Inspector examining the 2013 Dacorum Core Strategy flagged up the issue of cooperation with SADC in meeting longer-term development needs through a partial review. The Inspector (the same Inspector who examined the 2016 SLP) specifically referred in his report to potential growth east of Hemel Hempstead as a way of meeting Dacorum’s housing need. This Inspector’s report is attached at Appendix 2 to this statement, see particularly paragraph 57 of the Inspector’s report and the proposed modification to paragraph 29.10 regarding the partial review of the Core Strategy, listed as MM28 at the appendix of that report.
- 2.4 The options for growth around Hemel Hempstead are illustrated by DBC’s Issues and Options consultation material from November 2017 (see Appendix 3 for details). Other than an area to the south west of the town, which suffers from vehicular access issues, the only significant area of land put forward by developers or landowners is land to the north of Hemel Hempstead. This highlights the importance of land to the east of the town in meeting longer-term growth needs.
- 2.5 In contrast, the area east of Hemel Hempstead has almost no relationship with the rest of St Albans district. The policies map clearly illustrates the peripheral nature of the sites compared with the main towns of St Albans and Harpenden, see annotated

extract at Figure 1 below. A significant proportion of the housing need being planned for in the district up to 2036 will arise from within the district itself, mainly in St Albans and Harpenden. However, rather than meeting need in these locations, the Council is proposing around half of all new allocations (and around one-third of all homes) to be accommodated on the edge of its area. This calls into question the ability of the Local Plan to meet housing need within St Albans district.

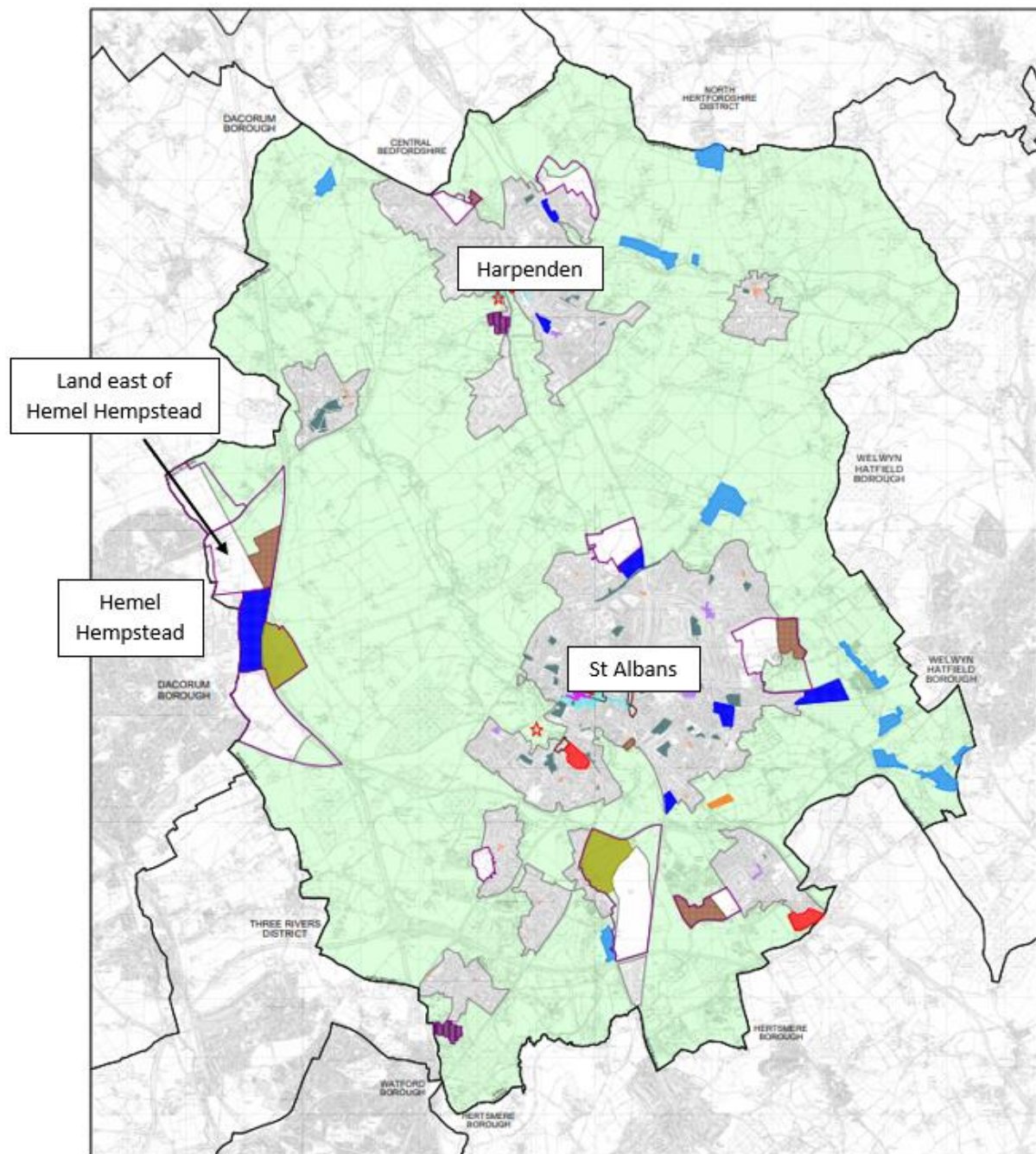


Figure 1 – Annotated draft Policies Map

- 2.6 In their 2018 pre-submission representations, Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) set out:

*“DBC and SADC are working proactively on the future planning of the proposed urban extensions at East and North Hemel Hempstead. However, an agreement has not yet been reached on how much (if any) of the proposed housing and employment development on the edge of Hemel Hempstead within St Albans District should count towards DBC’s needs. Our aim is to agree the numbers or percentages and the phasing of any contribution to our needs from the St Albans broad locations.”*

- 2.7 The representations concluded that the Duty to Cooperate had been met but that there were substantial soundness issues that still remain to be addressed.

- 2.8 SADC had been made aware, at least as early as August 2018, that DBC may not be able to accommodate its full housing need. In meeting notes included in CD028, under item 3 (update on Dacorum Local Plan) it was stated that *“DBC will find it challenging to provide the number of homes required, particularly if 1,000+ numbers per annum are required”*. These meeting notes go on to record:

*“TS [T Saunders, Dacorum Borough Council] asked if there was any scope to accommodate some of DBC’s housing or employment numbers within SADC’s boundary (at East Hemel). MM [Cllr M Maynard, St Albans City & District Council] advised that currently SADC can only accommodate its own need for housing, but that there may be some capacity to provide for Dacorum’s employment needs within East Hemel (central). These issues can be discussed further in the context of the ongoing SWHG work. JD [J Doe, Dacorum Borough Council] informed the meeting that Dacorum will be submitting a letter around allocation of some of the housing numbers and including this request within the Dacorum response to the LP consultation. JD also asked the question of what the plans from St Albans would be if the numbers are reduced and MM informed the meeting that St Albans would consider the removal of one or two of the GB sites.”*

- 2.9 The position that seems to be emerging is that the housing provision proposed in the draft Local Plan for St Albans is the maximum that can be accommodated. It is highly questionable whether the evidence base for the Local Plan supports this view. The weaknesses in the Council’s approach to site assessment and Green Belt Review nullify any ability to limit growth to that set out in the draft Local Plan.

- 2.10 Meeting notes from 22 January 2019 update the position and clarify the perceived relationship between East Hemel and the rest of the town:

*“JD said that it needs to be appreciated that in reality, East Hemel will become an organic part of Hemel Hempstead. A possible way forward may be that both Councils put before St Albans’ inspector at examination that Dacorum cannot meet its housing need but recognises that St Albans is also constrained. Both Councils are dealing with Green Belt release whilst at the same time showing the planning inspector that no stone has been left unturned in that search.”*

- 2.11 The “no stone left unturned” approach does not reflect the way SADC has approached the draft Local Plan. We are of the clear view that there is development potential that SADC has not adequately considered. As an example, Table 3 of the Council’s own SHLAA (document ref SHLAA019e) suggests that there is development potential of at least 2,925 dwellings on sites that the Council considers suitable. Yet these sites have not been explored and are not proposed for allocation. Paragraph 1.3 above highlights four key areas of potential, namely Green Belt review sites, specific allocations, extensions to Broad Locations and potential sites from Neighbourhood Plans.
- 2.12 It is a matter of fact that the land east of Hemel Hempstead falls within St Albans district and the decision to allocate the land lies with SADC. However, there are clear cross-boundary implications in doing so. It is clear that DBC’s position is that it cannot meet its housing need within Dacorum, and that is recognised by SADC. Further, the options for growth elsewhere around Hemel Hempstead and elsewhere in Dacorum Borough are limited. It is essential therefore that agreement is reached between SADC and DBC on whose housing need is being met at East Hemel Hempstead. SADC has unilaterally “claimed” all of these houses to meet its own need – a position that seems untenable.
- 2.13 We share DBC’s view that these issues are not matters of legal compliance but of soundness. The issues are therefore capable of being resolved in the context of the submitted Local Plan and do not need the draft Plan to be withdrawn. However, the consequences for the draft Local Plan are not insignificant. We have long advocated a common-sense approach whereby the housing proposed at East Hemel within St Albans district is split 50/50, with half going towards meeting St Albans housing need and half to meet Dacorum’s housing need. There is an argument that a larger portion should meet Dacorum’s need, although for pragmatic reasons it seems reasonable that SADC should see some benefit in allocating this land.

- 2.14 Following this approach would require an *additional 2,185 homes* to be allocated within St Albans district in the plan period. A more rigorous approach to the assessment of alternative sites will be needed to deliver this additional growth, as well as a more balanced strategy of small, medium and large sites.

## 3.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The area to the east of Hemel Hempstead lies within St Albans district but exhibits a far closer relationship with Hemel Hempstead than it does with the rest of St Albans district, particularly the built-up areas. Growth in this area will be an important component of future growth around Hemel Hempstead and, indeed, for the rest of Dacorum Borough. This is reinforced by the Inspector considering the previous Strategic Local Plan for St Albans in 2016 and the Dacorum Core Strategy in 2013.
- 3.2 It is clear that DBC's position is that it cannot meet its housing need within Dacorum, and that is recognised by SADC. Further, the options for growth elsewhere around Hemel Hempstead and elsewhere in Dacorum Borough are limited. It is essential therefore that agreement is reached between SADC and DBC on whose housing need is being met at East Hemel Hempstead. SADC has unilaterally "claimed" all of these houses to meet its own need – a position that seems untenable.
- 3.3 We share DBC's view that these issues are not matters of legal compliance but of soundness. The issues are therefore capable of being resolved in the context of the submitted Local Plan and do not need the draft Plan to be withdrawn.
- 3.4 At least an additional 2,185 homes need to be allocated within St Albans district in the plan period to replace those meeting housing need in Dacorum borough.

## 4.0 APPENDIX 1 – STRATEGIC LOCAL PLAN 2016 INSPECTOR’S REPORT



To: Chris Briggs  
Spatial Planning Manager  
St Albans City and District Council  
St Peters Street  
St Albans  
AL1 3JE

28<sup>th</sup> November 2016

Dear Mr Briggs

**St Albans Strategic Local Plan  
Duty to Co-operate (Issue 1)**

1. Further to the Initial Hearing Session (HS) held on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016, I set out below my conclusions with regard to the duty to co-operate (DtC).

**Preamble**

2. The Council's evidence is initially included within Core Document CD 015: the Duty to Co-operate Statement of Compliance. However, I have also taken into account the Council's Statement in response to my questions in relation to Issue 1; the Council's contributions to the debate at the HS; other written evidence such as CD011: Consultation Report – Addendum 2016 Consultation and CD016: Monitoring Report; and the further evidence submitted following the hearing. Similarly I have considered the relevant evidence in the representations made with regard to the publication draft Strategic Local Plan (SLP), the further Statements and legal opinions that have been submitted by interested parties, the points they raised at the HS and the comments they have made regarding the post-hearing submissions.
3. It has been suggested by an interested party that great weight should be attached to the fact that St Albans has a very old local plan (1994) and that every effort should be made to find the SLP sound, albeit this may require a temporary suspension of the examination in order for additional work to be undertaken. However, whilst I understand and fully support the need to secure up-to-date local plan coverage, the DtC is an 'independent' legal requirement, which either has or has not been fulfilled.
4. For the avoidance of doubt the references to 'Joint Statement' in this letter relate to the Hearing Statement submitted on behalf of Dacorum, Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Watford Councils.

**Legislative Background**

5. Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 establishes the legal duty to co-operate in relation to planning of sustainable development and stipulates that, in this case, the City and



District Council (SADC) is required to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis in any process related to the preparation of development plan documents. The Council must have regard to the activities (insofar as they relate to a strategic matter) of any relevant local planning authority, county council or other prescribed body or person. The engagement should include considering whether to consult on and prepare, and enter into and publish, agreements on joint approaches to the undertaking of a number of activities, including the preparation of development plan documents. Regard must be given to any guidance on the matter published by the Secretary of State.

6. This latter requirement is of particular relevance in this case. The legislation refers to strategic matters which are, in summary, sustainable development or the use of land that would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas. Further guidance, however, is included within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The NPPF refers to Strategic Priorities (e.g. paragraph 156) and the PPG to both Strategic Priorities (e.g. paragraph 002) and Strategic Matters (e.g. paragraph 001). Whilst such advice cannot override the statutory provisions (which refer to strategic matters), it is clear that it must be taken into account because it includes national guidance on the DtC. I have proceeded on that basis.
7. The following paragraphs summarise the published guidance which the Council are required to have regard to.
8. The NPPF<sup>1</sup> confirms that public bodies have a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those that relate to strategic priorities, such as the delivery of homes and jobs needed in an area and the provision of infrastructure, for example in relation to transport. Strategic priorities across local boundaries should be properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual local plans. The implication is that local planning authorities should, for example, work together to assess the opportunities that exist for the substantiated unmet development requirements of one local authority to be met within the area of one or more nearby local authorities. The emphasis is on diligence and collaboration.
9. Although I am primarily considering the legal duty to co-operate, it is important to record that for the SLP to be found sound (as opposed to legally compliant) it must be positively prepared and effective. This means it must be based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities and where appropriate and sustainable, on a strategy which seeks to meet unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities.
10. Further advice is included in the PPG which confirms that a proactive, ongoing and focussed approach to strategic planning and partnership working is required. Active and sustained engagement is required, evidence of co-operation must be robust and co-operation should produce effective and deliverable policies on strategic cross-boundary matters.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 178

The exchange of correspondence, conversations or consultations between authorities alone is unlikely to be sufficient.

11. I have taken into account the fact that the duty is not a duty to agree and for example, just because SADC does not agree with nearby Local Planning Authorities regarding the definition of the Housing Market Area, this does not, in itself, demonstrate that the DtC has not been met.
12. I believe that the Report to Planning Policy Committee entitled 'Review of Neighbouring/Nearby Authority Planning and Duty to Co-operate Update' (dated 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014) clearly demonstrates that the Council fully understands the responsibility it has in terms of the duty.
13. Finally I have placed significant weight on the evidence provided by SADC, the other nearby Councils and the County Council because in this case they are the main parties to which the duty applies.

### **Strategic Cross-Boundary Matters and Priorities**

14. The first sentence of paragraph 156 of the NPPF is unambiguous – local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. Paragraph 178 goes on to explain that public bodies have a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to the strategic priorities. Paragraph 179 confirms that local planning authorities should work collaboratively to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual local plans.
15. There is no clear indication in the submitted SLP as to what the strategic priorities are, particularly those with cross-boundary implications. The Council directed me, in paragraph 14 of its Statement, to the priorities that are set out on page 5 of the Duty to Co-operate Statement of Compliance (CD015). In the same document there is a relatively brief explanation of the central issues relating to the DtC (pages 11 to 19). However, CD015 was only published in August 2016, towards the end of the current phase in the plan making process.
16. The SLP includes three paragraphs relating to the sub-regional context (page 12). These include references to employment, travel, retail, leisure and environmental matters but there is no reference to housing. On page 14 (paragraph 2.18) the key issues and challenges for the District are listed (as identified in the Council's 2009 Sustainable Community Strategy) but although affordable housing is identified as a key issue, there is no reference to the need for market housing. There is a reference to the 'provision of new housing' under strategic objective 2 (page 20) and in the two paragraphs under 'Wider Spatial Planning and Duty to Co-operate' (page 25) there is a reference to fully engaging in addressing 'sub-regional and regional strategic spatial planning issues'. However, although the sub-regional context is briefly summarised, nowhere in the SLP is there a clear explanation or detailed identification of what all those sub-regional and regional issues are or how the Council has addressed them.

17. At the hearing the Council confirmed that there is no specific list of strategic cross-boundary matters or priorities in the plan but that they are nevertheless implicitly reflected in the content of the SLP. That may be the case but without a clearer indication of what the Council considers those strategic issues to be, it is uncertain how all the relevant parties could co-operate in a meaningful and constructive manner.
18. In order that effective policies on strategic cross-boundary matters and priorities can be drawn up, it is necessary first to be clear what those matters and priorities are, and in order to ensure that the plan is robust those issues should be identified at the earliest possible stage in the plan-making process.
19. Despite the lack of detailed reference in the SLP to strategic matters and priorities, there is no reason to doubt that the Council has been aware of what those priorities for the area are from the early stages of plan preparation but this is not made sufficiently clear in the SLP. It would be difficult for someone reading the SLP to draw any firm conclusions regarding strategic cross-boundary matters and priorities and in turn they would not be able to conclude whether or not those issues had been properly addressed by the Council. On the evidence submitted I am unable to conclude that cross boundary strategic matters and priorities have been afforded appropriate weight in the plan-making process in St Albans.
20. Although this matter, on its own, may not be terminal in terms of making progress on the Examination, the lack of clarity regarding this issue does not provide a secure foundation from which other matters of co-operation can be assessed. If strategic cross boundary matters and priorities are not clearly identified it is difficult to see how effective and deliverable policies to address those issues can be drawn up.

### **Processes Undertaken**

21. Although there is no specific requirement to establish a framework through which the DtC can be monitored (for example in terms of frequency of meetings, issues to be addressed, outcomes to be anticipated and bodies to be involved) a more structured approach may have assisted in demonstrating the Council's commitment to co-operation.
22. A number of local planning authorities that were represented at the Hearing confirmed that in their opinion there was no structure in place in terms of the regularity and frequency of joint meetings and that many of the meetings were 'high level' where issues were addressed in a 'broad-brush' way, indeed the Council itself described some of the meetings as being 'over-arching'.
23. Quarterly Reports are presented to the Planning Policy Committee but it is not clear from the examples provided in CD015 whether or not the recommendations were agreed and if so, what the outcomes were.

24. Although this is not a matter on which my conclusions have turned I do consider that if a more rigorous approach towards establishing the 'mechanics' of the DtC had been adopted by the Council (remembering that it is not a duty to agree), then the arguments advanced by the Council would be more persuasive.

### **The Requirements of the Duty**

#### ***Has Engagement been Constructive from the Outset?***

25. There has been engagement between St Albans Council and nearby local planning authorities, particularly in the earlier stages of plan-making, for example in relation to the 2008 Strategic Market Housing Assessment (SHMA) and employment work undertaken in 2009. Constructive engagement in more recent years appears to be less evident and it is difficult to conclude that the Council has approached cross-boundary priorities in a meaningful and positive way. SADC recognises that there are 'strong economic and spatial relationships with neighbouring towns, particularly Hemel Hempstead, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Watford and Luton'<sup>2</sup>. However, there is no persuasive evidence that the Council has pro-actively sought meaningful engagement with all of these and other nearby Local Planning Authorities. Meetings have been held and doubtless appropriate issues have been discussed but it needs to be demonstrated that cross-boundary issues, for example in terms of housing, employment and infrastructure provision, have been fully addressed and that opportunities to be constructive have been given appropriate consideration and where necessary have been acted upon. I acknowledge that there may be difficult issues to tackle but that is no reason to adopt a less than constructive approach throughout the plan-making process.

#### ***Has Engagement been Active?***

26. The Council refers to the various groups that meet on a bi-monthly basis<sup>3</sup> and it is clear that the Council has attended these meetings at both political and officer level. However, the Agendas and Minutes of those meetings that were submitted do not enable me to conclude that the Council has been sufficiently active in seeking engagement with nearby local planning authorities (for example those with which it acknowledges it has a strong economic and spatial relationship – see paragraph 25 above), with a view to quantifying and tackling cross-boundary matters and priorities, particularly (but not exclusively) in terms of housing provision.

#### ***Has Engagement been On-going?***

27. Co-operation should start with the 'initial thinking' (NPPF paragraph 181) and evidence of effective co-operation from the earliest stages up to the submission of the SLP (and beyond if necessary) should be demonstrated. It is reasonable to conclude that in order to achieve this objective, there

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<sup>2</sup> Page 4 of CD015

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 66 of Statement

should be continuing and frequent engagement, even if that engagement is only to provide an up-date on issues of strategic relevance.

28. I am satisfied that there have been opportunities for the Council to engage with nearby Councils throughout the plan-making process – whether or not those opportunities have been maximised is another issue. I am concerned, for example, that the Council did not reply to a letter requesting a meeting (dated 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016) from Three Rivers District Council (on behalf of four south-west Herts LPAs) for over 5 months, despite being sent a reminder via e-mail. The letter also includes a request for housing data to be forwarded<sup>4</sup>.
29. The Council's response<sup>5</sup> includes an apology for the delay but also refers to 'difficult dilemmas', 'past, difficult political level discussions' and 'the technical, political and practical challenges of developing a plan in St Albans'. I completely accept that plan preparation is not always straightforward but the significant delay in responding to a request for a meeting does not demonstrate that engagement has been on-going.
30. Furthermore the aforementioned response (dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2016) includes a list of 13 bullet points which summarise the 'matters we should all now be considering and crucially clarifying at a political level'. Several of the 'matters' referred to relate to the duty and in my opinion should have been addressed much earlier in the plan-making process, rather than a month before the hearing session (for example DtC outcomes not delivered; the level of cross-boundary agreement; and proposals for new joint technical work). This is another indication that engagement has not been on-going from the earliest stages in plan preparation.
31. I am told in the 'Joint Response'<sup>6</sup> that there has been a significant delay in the publication of draft Minutes of a DtC meeting held in February 2016 (for example Hertsmere received them on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016). More significantly it is confirmed that the four LPAs do not accept them 'as being a fair record of the issues raised by the four Authorities on which they sought unsuccessfully to discuss'. I acknowledge that SADC has not had the opportunity to respond to this claim but it nevertheless provides a further indication that satisfactory engagement has not been achieved.

### ***Has Engagement been Collaborative?***

32. The Council needs to demonstrate that it has worked with the relevant bodies in a co-operative and positive manner. The correspondence I refer to in the section above demonstrates that there has been a lack of meaningful collaboration. The Joint Statement (paragraphs 3.3 to 3.6) provides examples of invitations to St Albans to participate but there appears to have been a reluctance to accept and contribute to the debate. As already stated, there is no obligation on the Council to agree with its neighbours but without even entering fully into the debate, it is difficult to conclude that there has been collaboration.

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix 10 of Joint Statement

<sup>5</sup> Appendix 11 of Joint Statement

<sup>6</sup> Ref: 872722-2

### ***Has Every Effort been made to Secure the Necessary Co-operation?***

33. The Council needs to demonstrate that no stone has been left unturned in the pursuit of co-operation. Active and sustained engagement should be the objective. However, there is little evidence that a rigorous approach has been adopted by the Council. The evidence provided, for example in the appendices to the Joint Statement, set out some of the efforts made across Hertfordshire to secure co-operation. However, it appears to me that SADC has not made every effort to become fully involved in the processes, to engage fully and to explain to other nearby LPAs its approach towards, for example, housing and employment provision and the related evidence on which the Council relies. The references to 'watching briefs'<sup>7</sup> and 'general liaison'<sup>8</sup> do not instil confidence that every effort has been made.

34. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) prepared by the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP) (May 2013). Its purpose is to 'provide a framework through which HIPP members will commit to engaging constructively, actively and on an on-going basis with each other ...'. Among the stated objectives are (and I summarise):

- To provide the opportunity to work collaboratively across local boundaries on issues of broader strategic importance;
- To facilitate the achievement of a broad, co-ordinated but consistent approach to strategic spatial planning;
- To facilitate joint working on strategic issues which affect more than one local authority area; and
- To ensure that policies prepared by each local authority are, where appropriate, informed by the views of other local authorities in Hertfordshire.

35. These are appropriate objectives to establish but there is little evidence that SADC has made the necessary effort to ensure that they are satisfactorily achieved. The aim is to encourage continuous partnership working on issues that go beyond a single local planning authority's area.

36. As I confirm in paragraph 25 I am aware that there has been a relatively high level of co-operation and joint work undertaken in Hertfordshire in the past. However, any momentum that may have been generated at that time appears to have dissipated and it cannot be concluded that SADC has made every effort secure co-operation throughout the entire plan-making process to-date.

### ***Has Engagement been Diligent?***

37. In order to demonstrate diligence it is reasonable to conclude that the Council's approach should have been careful, thorough and with

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<sup>7</sup> For example in paragraph 5.1 of the Report to Planning Policy Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014 (see CD015)

<sup>8</sup> For example in Table 1 of CD015

commitment. However, no in-depth analysis of the issues facing the local planning authorities in the area appears to have been undertaken by St Albans and no robust assessment of how those issues should be addressed has been prepared. The level of diligence, particularly in terms of seeking engagement, has not been high.

### ***Is the Evidence Robust?***

38. Whilst I understand the need to strike an appropriate balance in the submission of evidence, I would not describe the Council's submissions as comprehensive and, drawing together all the threads in the previous paragraphs, it can be concluded that the evidence of co-operation on cross-boundary matters and priorities is not robust.

### ***Has Engagement been of Mutual Benefit (the broad outcomes)?***

39. Taking all factors into account the answer to this question must be no, especially as there are objections to the approach of St Albans City and District from several nearby local planning authorities. Mutual benefit, in terms of strategic matters and priorities, does not appear to have been at the top of the list for the Council. As I have intimated elsewhere, it may not be possible to achieve a high level of mutual benefit and as I have already made very clear, there is no requirement for Councils to agree. However, if that is the case then robust evidence has to be available to demonstrate that at least the achievement of mutual benefit has been sought.

40. The 2013 MoU establishes the objectives for co-operation and makes it clear that if requested an LPA will meet with and discuss any issues raised by one or more of the other HIPP local authorities and take into account any views expressed. On the evidence submitted I am unable to conclude that St Albans City and District Council has given sufficient weight to enacting the approach embodied in the MoU and that consequently any engagement that has occurred has not been of mutual benefit.

### **Planning Topics**

41. Concerns have been raised by interested parties regarding co-operation in relation to a number of planning topics, including housing, transport, gypsies and travellers, employment, the provision of infrastructure and the green belt. Although in the view of some respondents the level of co-operation regarding the consideration of these issues falls well short of what might be expected, I would have been content to address many of the concerns raised in subsequent hearing sessions which would have considered matters of soundness. I am therefore restricting my comments in this regard to only one issue that has clear DtC implications.

42. I share the concerns of Dacorum Borough Council regarding the role that land to the east of Hemel Hempstead could play in terms of housing provision. Policy SLP 13(a) states that the urban extension of Hemel Hempstead would 'meet the needs of the St Albans housing market area'. Paragraph 4.5 of the SLP confirms that 'development needs arising in the

District can readily be met in this location'. This may be an appropriate approach to take but the Report into the Dacorum Core Strategy<sup>9</sup> refers to meeting that Borough's housing needs 'including in neighbouring Local Planning Authority areas' (e.g. in St Albans). At the very least I would have expected a much clearer process for the consideration of the role of this land. At the end of the day the Council's decision to allocate all the land to meet the needs of St Albans may well be justified but in order to reach that conclusion there needs to have been a proper consideration of all the issues by all the interested parties and there is no substantive evidence that the appropriate level of collaboration and engagement on this matter has been sought or achieved.

43. Although this by itself is not a matter on which my decision has turned, it adds weight to my overall conclusion and is a further indication that the level of co-operation falls short of what is expected.

### **The Effectiveness of the Strategic Local Plan (in relation to soundness)**

44. To be effective the SLP must be based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities (for example housing provision). I understand the conclusions that the Council has drawn with regard to accommodating additional growth but those findings do not appear to be based on collaborative working or effective co-operation with other bodies. It may be that the Council's conclusions are correct, for example in terms of housing numbers and the definition of the Housing Market Area, but on the evidence before me I am unable to confirm that St Albans City and District Council has given adequate consideration to helping meet the development needs of other nearby local planning authorities. In these circumstances the plan would not be effective and therefore it could not be found to be sound.

### **Conclusion and the Way Forward**

45. I have taken into account all the relevant representations (including those in support of the Council for example from the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Home Builders Federation). However, the evidence submitted clearly demonstrates to me that the duty has not been met by St Albans City and District. A small number of nearby Councils consider that the duty has been met but there is no opportunity for a Council to be selective over which of its 'neighbours' it co-operates with.
46. The evidence does not enable me to conclude that prior to the submission of the SLP, St Albans City and District Council gave satisfactory consideration to identifying, addressing and seeking co-operation with regard to strategic cross-boundary matters and priorities. The legal requirements, as expanded upon in paragraphs 178 to 181 of the National Planning Policy Framework and in the Planning Practice Guidance, have not been fulfilled and therefore **it is with regret that I must conclude that the Duty to Co-operate has not been met.** As the Plan has not been based on effective joint working on strategic matters and priorities

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<sup>9</sup> Appendix 1 of Joint Statement



and because currently there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the SLP has been positively prepared, there is also the significant risk that the Plan could be found to be not sound.

47. It must be emphasised that this does not mean that St Albans City and District should be expected to accommodate additional growth – that is not necessarily the case. What it does mean is that the Council should give detailed and rigorous consideration to strategic cross-boundary matters and priorities and draw robust conclusions with regards to whether or not any of those priorities could be delivered in a sustainable way within the District, bearing in mind the environmental and other constraints that exist.
48. I understand that this is not the conclusion that the Council would have wanted and that there may be consequences in terms of the Council's housing land supply and the adoption of an up-to-date Development Plan. Nevertheless these factors cannot outweigh the legal requirement for the Council to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis with those bodies (as appropriate) identified in the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (as amended).
49. Under the circumstances this leaves two options. Firstly the Council could decide to receive my Report, however, given my findings I would have to recommend non-adoption of the SLP. Alternatively the Council may choose to withdraw the SLP under S22 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). In any event I would advise the Council to undertake a more rigorous assessment of cross-boundary matters and priorities, particularly in conjunction with nearby LPAs and the County Council, draw justified conclusions and in so-doing ensure that it meets the requirements of the Duty to Co-operate. Any necessary consultation should be undertaken and a revised Plan re-submitted as soon as possible.
50. Although I have not tested the evidence (and it has no bearing on my conclusions with regard to the DtC) I would remind the Council about my initial pre-hearing concerns regarding the soundness of the SLP which I outlined in my letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016 entitled 'Preliminary Concerns of the Inspector'.

Yours sincerely

*David Hogger*

Inspector

## 4.0 APPENDIX 2 – DACORUM CORE STRATEGY 2013 INSPECTOR’S REPORT



The Planning  
Inspectorate

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# Report to Dacorum Borough Council

**by David Hogger BA MSc MRTPI MCIHT**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government**

**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

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PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004 (AS AMENDED)

SECTION 20

## **REPORT ON THE EXAMINATION INTO THE DACORUM CORE STRATEGY**

Document submitted for examination on 22 June 2012

Examination hearings held between 9 October and 18 October 2012

File Ref: PINS/A1910/429/4

## Abbreviations Used in this Report

AMR	Annual Monitoring Report
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BP	Borough Portrait examination document*
CLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
CS	Core Strategy
DMDPD	Development Management DPD
DPD	Development Plan Document
ED	Employment/Economic Development examination document*
HG	Housing examination document*
LDS	Local Development Scheme
LP	Local Plan
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MM	Main Modification
MP	Masterplan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
RS	Regional Strategy
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAD	Site Allocations examination document*
SC	Social/Community examination document*
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SUB	Submission examination document*

\* To be found in the Council's Evidence Base

## **Non-Technical Summary**

This report concludes that the Dacorum Core Strategy provides an appropriate basis for the planning of the Borough providing a number of modifications are made to the Plan. The Council has specifically requested that I recommend any modifications necessary to enable it to adopt the Plan. All the modifications were proposed by the LPA, and I have recommended their inclusion after full consideration of the representations from other parties on the issues raised.

The modifications can be summarised as follows:

- A commitment to undertake a partial review of the Core Strategy to be adopted by 2017/18;
- The insertion of a model policy on the presumption in favour of sustainable development and confirmation of the objective to minimise impacts on biodiversity;
- Clarification regarding the phasing and delivery of housing, including the release of local allocations;
- Clarification on affordable housing requirements and the provision of gypsy and traveller pitches;
- Reference to be made to the provision of non B class employment uses and clarification regarding office floorspace provision, phasing, review and management;
- The provision of clearer advice on potential new uses in the Gade Zone and the Marlowes Shopping Zone and on social infrastructure provision in general;
- The acknowledgement that heritage assets should be conserved;
- Strengthening the approach towards the management of car parking provision;
- Clarification regarding sustainability offsetting; and
- Clarification regarding small scale development in the Green Belt and in the countryside.

## Introduction

1. This report contains my assessment of the Dacorum Core Strategy (CS) in terms of Section 20(5) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). It considers first whether the Plan's preparation has complied with the duty to co-operate, in recognition that there is no scope to remedy any failure in this regard. It then considers whether the Plan is sound and whether it is compliant with the legal requirements. The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 182) advises that to be sound, a Local Plan should be positively prepared; justified; effective and consistent with national policy.
2. The starting point for the examination is the assumption that the local authority has submitted what it considers to be a sound plan. The basis for my examination is the Pre-Submission CS dated October 2011.
3. My report deals with the main modifications that are needed to make the Plan sound and legally compliant and they are identified in bold in the report (**MM**). In accordance with section 20(7C) of the 2004 Act the Council requested that I should make any modifications needed to rectify matters that make the Plan unsound/not legally compliant and thus incapable of being adopted. These main modifications are set out in the Appendix.
4. The main modifications that go to soundness have been subject to public consultation and, where necessary, Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and I have taken the consultation responses into account in writing this report (for example see conclusion on Issue 1), as well as the Council's proposed minor amendments to the MMs following consultation.

### *Public Consultation*

5. Concern was expressed regarding the public consultation that was undertaken by the Council, particularly with regard to sites in Hemel Hempstead. However, the requirements of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) have been met and the level and nature of the consultation undertaken was appropriate.

### *Sustainable Development*

6. There is a requirement for local plans to reflect the national policy in favour of sustainable development. To this end it is recommended that a new policy be included in section 7 of the CS, which confirms the Council's positive approach towards sustainable development [**MM1**].

## Assessment of Duty to Co-operate

7. Section s20(5)(c) of the 2004 Act requires that I consider whether the Council complied with any duty imposed on them by section 33A of the 2004 Act in relation to the Plan's preparation. It is a requirement that the Council engages constructively, actively and on an on-going basis with neighbouring local planning authorities, the County Council and a range of other organisations.

8. The Council submitted a statement<sup>1</sup> which summarises the actions that were taken during the preparation of the CS and confirms that co-operation will continue through the delivery and review of the CS. Concern was raised regarding the co-operation between the Councils of Dacorum and the City and District of St Albans, particularly with regard to land to the east of Hemel Hempstead. However, confirmation was received from both Dacorum and St Albans Councils that the commitment to co-operate is genuine and this is emphasised in the Council's response to my Supplementary Question dated 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013, regarding the proposed timetable. I am also mindful that there has been no objection from neighbouring authorities concerning the overall level of development proposed. Overall I am satisfied that the duty to co-operate has been met. The issue therefore becomes whether or not that co-operation has led to the most appropriate strategy being proposed and that is discussed in the following sections.

## Assessment of Soundness

### Preamble

#### *Regional Planning Policy*

9. The East of England Plan (the Regional Strategy) was revoked on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2013 and it is therefore not part of the statutory Development Plan, although I have had regard to the evidence that supported it.

### Main Issues

10. There are two significant constraints to development in Dacorum Borough, namely the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Metropolitan Green Belt. It is against this background and having taken into account all the representations, written evidence and the discussions that took place at the examination hearings, as well as the site visits that I undertook, that I have identified eight main issues.

### Issue 1 – Is the overall provision for housing justified and appropriate?

#### *Housing Needs and Supply*

11. Paragraph 159 of the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should identify the scale and mix of housing that meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change. This is against the background of boosting significantly the supply of housing and meeting the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area (subject to compliance with other policies in the NPPF)<sup>2</sup>. The Council correctly acknowledges that the national population and

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<sup>1</sup> SUB8

<sup>2</sup> NPPF paragraph 47

household projections 'are reasonable measures for assessing demand'<sup>3</sup>.

12. The Council's approach was to undertake consultation (in 2006) on four growth scenarios for the Borough up to 2021 (ranging from 420 to 666 dwellings a year). Consideration was also given by the LPA to accommodating a higher level of growth, for example in the November 2006 document on Growth at Hemel Hempstead<sup>4</sup>. However, the Draft Core Strategy for Consultation (2010)<sup>5</sup> only considered two options up to 2031: 370 and 430 dwellings a year and did not put forward an option that would more fully address housing need.
13. The Council stated that in its view the objectively assessed need for housing up to 2031 is the 11,320 dwellings as set out in table 8 of the CS, although the target in policy CS17 is for 10,750 dwellings (430 a year). The difference is primarily accounted for by the inclusion of a windfall element in the 11,320 figure (for the first ten years following adoption of the CS) and this has been adequately justified by the Council. Six projections are set out in HG16<sup>6</sup> and all but one indicate a requirement for a higher number of dwellings than is proposed by the Council. The CLG (2008 based) projection is for 13,457 dwellings over the plan period and the Council do refer elsewhere to planning for about 13,500 dwellings (540 a year) if full projected demand is to be met<sup>7</sup>. The Council takes comfort from the fact that the CS housing target of 10,750 dwellings 'is at least within the range set by these figures' but the selected figure does not represent the full need for housing but rather it is the amount of housing the Council considers could be satisfactorily accommodated in the Borough over the plan period, having taken into account constraints such as the green belt and AONB.
14. Projections should not necessarily be seen as inviolate and, in particular, levels of future in-migration and household size can be difficult to assess. Nevertheless there is no substantive evidence that would lead me to conclude that the starting point should not have been the CLG (2008 based) projection of 13,457 dwellings, as implicitly accepted by the Council in paragraph 3.21 of HG16. This figure provides an appropriate foundation for the initial assessment of housing provision which would then lead to the consideration of any impediments to meeting that need in a sustainable way. The 2011 based household interim projections to 2021 were published on 9 April 2013 and are therefore not part of the evidence base. It is worth recording, however, that they are very similar to the 2008 based figures<sup>8</sup>.

### *Housing Trajectory*

15. It is a requirement of the NPPF that a five year supply of housing plus 5% can be demonstrated and this can be achieved<sup>9</sup>, based on the target of 430 dwellings/annum as currently set out in the CS. On this basis I am satisfied

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<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 3.21 of HG16

<sup>4</sup> CS5

<sup>5</sup> CS16

<sup>6</sup> Table 3.1

<sup>7</sup> Paragraph 3.5 of HG16

<sup>8</sup> Table 406 accompanying Household Statistical Releases dated 26 November 2010 and 9 April 2013

<sup>9</sup> 2010/2011 AMR – BP2



that the housing trajectory (as up-dated in the January 2013 Minor Modifications document) represents an accurate reflection of likely development rates for the short to medium term, especially when taking into account past completion rates and the pool of outstanding commitments.

#### *Phasing, Delivery and Management of Development*

16. The Council has explained the role of strategic sites and local allocations<sup>10</sup> and the terminology used is not a matter of soundness. The Council's approach has been satisfactorily justified in the context within which the plan has been prepared. However, in order to ensure that the CS is effective it is recommended that policy CS3 be amended to establish the timing of the delivery of the local allocations and also to refer to the mechanism through which the release date of a local allocation may be brought forward **[MM3]**. MM3 makes it clear that the release of local allocations would be brought forward if required to maintain a five year housing land supply and the Council will take action based on the findings of the AMR. In these circumstances housing supply would not be held back. The proposed phasing is adequately reflected in the Housing Trajectory. In order to provide advice on how development would be facilitated and managed throughout the plan period additional supporting text is recommended which would provide clarity and ensure effectiveness **[MM2]**.
17. In order to further clarify the Council's approach towards the management, phasing and release of housing sites, additional text and an amendment to policy CS17 are required to ensure that the CS is effective. **MM12** and **MM14** are therefore recommended in the interests of soundness.
18. The CS must be effective and justified and the Council's approach to the release of development sites over the plan period should be clear. To provide this clarity the insertion of a new paragraph on this matter is recommended **[MM13]**.

#### *The Green Belt*

19. Paragraph 8.28 of the CS (as proposed to be amended) confirms that a strategic review of green belt boundaries was not required by the RS. Nevertheless some 'small-scale releases' (i.e. local allocations) are proposed by the Council. The NPPF confirms that great weight should continue to be attached to the protection of the green belt and it is clear that boundaries should be established in the local plan<sup>11</sup>. However, at the time a local plan is being prepared or reviewed consideration should be given to the boundaries, so that they are capable of enduring beyond the plan period. Among the considerations to be addressed are the level of consistency between the green belt and meeting requirements for sustainable development; whether or not the five purposes of the green belt are being fulfilled; the need to identify safeguarded land; and the need to be confident that the boundaries will not have to be altered at the end of the plan period.
20. The Council's most recent consideration of the green belt was not a comprehensive assessment, encompassing all the elements referred to above

<sup>10</sup> Response to Inspector's question 2A (during the hearing sessions)

<sup>11</sup> Paragraph 83 of NPPF

but was part of a wider assessment of potential sites<sup>12</sup>, which considered a range of issues, including infrastructure capacity, transport and accessibility, economic development opportunities and conformity to established New Town principles. The 'Assessment of Alternative Growth Scenarios for Hemel Hempstead' is accurately described as a 'politically neutral assessment of options'. However, at no stage is the assessment balanced against the need to accommodate somewhere in the region of 13,500 dwellings. Similarly there has been no detailed reconsideration of all the 17 potential development sites on the edge of the Hemel Hempstead that were considered in 2006<sup>13</sup> (the 'blue blobs'), although it is acknowledged that some have been re-assessed.

21. In order to make the greatest contribution to meeting objectively assessed housing need as referred to above, the Council has confirmed that it is undertaking a rigorous and comprehensive review of the green belt in order to ensure that a justifiable balance between meeting housing need and protecting the green belt can be secured. Without such comprehensive evidence a robust conclusion on the potential for the identification of additional housing sites, either for the medium/long term (as potential sites within the urban areas decrease) or for beyond the plan period, can not be satisfactorily drawn.
22. In order to reflect advice in paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF it is recommended that the Council's position with regard to the re-use of existing buildings and the redevelopment of previously developed land in the green belt is clarified **[MM4]**.

#### *Conclusion on Issue 1*

23. Paragraph 3.50 of HG16 encapsulates the Council's position in that it recognises that difficult decisions would have to be made if housing need was to be met more fully, with consequences for the settlement strategy and/or an acceptance by a neighbouring local authority that it could accommodate some of Dacorum's growth.
24. Using the CLG projection of 13,457 dwellings and the Council's target of 11,320 dwellings, there would currently be a shortfall in supply over the plan period of just over 2,130 dwellings or 85 a year (15%). The divergence between the figures is not overwhelming but there is insufficient evidence to enable me to conclude that at least a proportion of that shortfall could not be satisfactorily accommodated. For example the evidence is not sufficiently conclusive with regard to the role that Hemel Hempstead in particular could play in accommodating a higher level of growth.
25. According to the Council's up-dated trajectory, with the exception of 2017/2018, the shortfall in supply (when measured against the figure of 540 dwellings a year) would not become significant until 2024/2025. Against this shortfall in meeting housing need over the plan period, I have balanced the potential for sustainable growth over the short to medium term and I conclude that over this period there is potential for land supply to meet a level of demand that broadly matches the 2008 projected household growth. In any event the adoption of the CS (incorporating the partial review) is timetabled for September 2017, so any potential shortfalls could be addressed in a timely

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<sup>12</sup> HG10 and HG15

<sup>13</sup> CS5

fashion.

26. NPPF paragraph 48 advises that an allowance for windfall sites may be made in certain circumstances. The Council did not include a windfall element in the figures in policy CS17 (for the first 10 years following adoption of the CS). There is no reason to conclude that windfall development will not continue to occur, thus strengthening the conclusion that the CS provides a sound basis for the growth of the Borough in the short to medium term.
27. In order that the concerns identified above will be fully addressed it is recommended that a section be included in the CS entitled 'Future Partial Review' **[MM28]**. This confirms that the Council is committed to a partial review of the CS, to be adopted by 2017/18. This will identify the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing, assess whether or not those needs can be met (including in neighbouring local planning authority areas) and if not draw robust conclusions as to where the balance between meeting full needs and the other NPPF sustainability considerations should lie. As part of this work it is agreed by the Council that a review of the green belt should be undertaken, including the potential for the identification of safeguarded land and I am told that this work has already commenced.
28. I have attached great weight to the guidance on soundness in the NPPF but paragraph 13 confirms that it is guidance and not statute. I have also balanced the advice that decisions need to take local circumstances into account (paragraph 10) and that it is highly desirable that local planning authorities have an up-to-date plan in place (paragraph 12). Weighing all these elements in the balance I am satisfied that the shortcomings in the submitted document are not of such significance to justify finding the document as a whole not sound. The issues can best be addressed through the preparation of an early review because in the short to medium term the Core Strategy will provide a sound basis on which planning decisions can be taken.
29. A number of respondents to the MM consultation raised concerns regarding the appropriateness of relying on an early review of the CS as a means of securing a sound document. In other circumstances I may well have attached more weight to these concerns but at Dacorum there are two important factors. First the housing shortfall is about 15% and, more importantly, there would be a general over-supply of housing in the short to medium term, especially over the next three years (as identified in the up-dated Trajectory). This over-supply would broadly be the equivalent to meeting the annualised CLG projection figure of 538 dwellings. The Review of the CS would therefore deal primarily with the likely shortfall towards the end of the plan period and as such the current CS housing target would be interim in nature. In order to further encourage housing delivery the overall total currently being proposed by the Council should be seen as a minimum provision, pending the outcome of the review, although this should not be interpreted as a justification for speculative proposals in the green belt prior to the conclusion of the current partial review of the CS.
30. The approach encapsulated in MM28 is pragmatic, rational and justified. The alternative would be to find the document not sound and in those circumstances the Council would in effect be starting the process again which

would take time and may threaten the level of house building that is anticipated in the next few years. This approach is compatible with the Government's overall aims of securing an increase in housing supply and would broadly meet the objectives of the NPPF and in that respect the plan as modified would be sound.

31. The Council has confirmed that work has already commenced on the partial review, for example in relation to the green belt, and that it proposes to eventually combine the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations DPD and the Development Management Policies DPD into a single local plan. This approach should ensure that a comprehensive framework will be in place to boost further the supply of housing and secure sustainable economic growth, particularly towards the latter part of the plan period.
32. I conclude that, subject to the recommended modifications, the Council's overall approach to housing provision is sound.

## **Issue 2 – the Council's approach to Affordable Housing and meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers**

### *Affordable housing*

33. It is clear that the Council is taking measures to secure an improved supply of affordable housing and it is estimated that about 3,900 affordable dwellings will be delivered over the plan period through the application of the 35% target in policy CS19. The Housing Needs and Market Assessment Update<sup>14</sup> (2012) concludes that the need before new delivery is at least 730 affordable dwellings a year. This equates to a need for about 13,870 such units over the next 19 years. There is therefore a mismatch between supply and need. It would not be realistic to expect all such need to be met but the review of the CS should enable a better match between supply and need to be achieved, thus meeting more fully a key corporate and planning priority of the Council.
34. Although the measures being taken by the Council to boost supply are to be welcomed they will not be sufficient on their own and the Council will fall well short of meeting the full objectively assessed needs for affordable housing<sup>15</sup>. In order to achieve a closer match between supply and need, the potential for a higher level of overall residential growth should be pursued. This finding adds weight to the conclusion on Issue 1. In order to provide flexibility (thus ensuring effectiveness) and to clarify the Council's strategy with regard to the level, mix and tenure of affordable homes provision, it is recommended that the wording of policy CS19 is amended **[MM15]**.

### *Gypsies and Travellers*

35. The CS establishes the broad approach to accommodating the needs of the gypsy and traveller communities in the Borough. Criteria are set out in policy CS22 against which the suitability of sites can be assessed. The identification and provision of sites will be progressed through the Site Allocations DPD,

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<sup>14</sup> HG17 – paragraph 7.5.8

<sup>15</sup> Paragraph 47 of NPPF

which will be based on a new assessment of the needs of the travelling community<sup>16</sup>. The DPD is currently scheduled for adoption in 2015. The Council is proposing a change to policy CS22 which would introduce a reference to the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (which will establish the target for new pitches) and this is required in the interests of soundness **[MM16]**. The Council's approach will thus accord with the advice in 'Planning Policy for Traveller Sites' (March 2012).

### *Conclusion on Issue 2*

36. I conclude that, subject to the recommended MM, the Council's approach to affordable housing provision and meeting the needs of gypsies and travellers is sound.

### **Issue 3 - is the settlement hierarchy and distribution of development across the Borough justified?**

37. The Council's approach to the settlement hierarchy is long-standing and it is at Hemel Hempstead that growth will be focussed. This accords with the former RS which identifies Hemel Hempstead as a key centre for development and change. Bearing in mind the sustainability credentials of the town there is no reason to conclude that the role of Hemel Hempstead in accommodating a high proportion of the Borough's growth should be changed.
38. Berkhamsted and Tring are more traditional market towns where the scale of growth has been less than at Hemel Hempstead. The level of services and facilities is lower than at Hemel and although there will remain a need to provide additional housing elsewhere the Council's approach of focussing growth on Hemel Hempstead is justified.
39. It was suggested by some representors that the distribution of development across the Borough should more accurately reflect household projections for individual settlements. The Council recognises the role that the market towns and large villages can play in meeting housing and employment needs and there is no reason to conclude that the contribution they could make to meeting needs will not be re-assessed as part of the forthcoming partial review of the plan. However, it must be remembered that many of these settlements are more constrained than Hemel Hempstead, for example by the Chilterns AONB (which should be afforded the highest status of protection) and therefore more weight should be attached to securing sustainable growth in the Borough's main town.
40. A number of other locations for development outside the towns and large villages were suggested by interested parties, for example at Wilstone, but such sites are not strategic in nature and could more appropriately be considered during the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD, which is scheduled to be adopted in 2015.
41. I conclude that the Council's approach to the settlement hierarchy and

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<sup>16</sup> Dacorum Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council Traveller Needs Assessment (January 2013)

distribution of development across the Borough is sound.

#### **Issue 4 – whether the plan makes sound provision for employment and retail growth**

42. Significant additional office floorspace is proposed in the Borough, with the emphasis correctly being placed on Hemel Hempstead as the most appropriate and sustainable location for such growth. Specific allocations will be addressed primarily through the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan (AAP) and the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan. This approach is consistent with the findings of the Employment Land Update 2011<sup>17</sup>.
43. Policy CS15 refers to a target of at least 131,000 sqm of office floorspace but there is no explanation of how this figure is derived. Consequently it is recommended that an additional paragraph be added to the supporting text which confirms the source of the figure and emphasises the role of monitoring and managing office development **[MM9]**. In this way this element of the CS will be justified.
44. Concern was expressed regarding the level of flexibility in the Council's approach to employment provision, particularly bearing in mind the current economic climate. Accordingly it is recommended that the wording in policy CS15 (in relation to the 131,000 sqm target referred to above) is relaxed in the interests of effectiveness **[MM10]**. The Council has also confirmed that it recognises the importance of enabling the provision of a range of employment opportunities in the Borough and consequently it is recommended that specific reference is made to the importance of non B class jobs to the local economy **[MM8]**. These modifications will ensure that the CS makes sound provision for employment growth.
45. In terms of retail provision the Council's strategy for strengthening this sector of the economy lacked sufficient justification, consequently a summary of the Council's approach to this matter should be included in the supporting text **[MM11]**.
46. On the fourth issue I conclude that, subject to the recommended modifications, the Council's approach to employment and retail growth provision is sound.

#### **Issue 5 – does the plan make appropriate provision for sport, recreation and other community facilities and services?**

47. The NPPF<sup>18</sup> requires planning policies to be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities. The Council cite a number of key documents which provide the evidence on which its approach is based, for example the Sports Policy Statement and Action

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<sup>17</sup> ED12

<sup>18</sup> Paragraph 73

Plan<sup>19</sup> and the Sports Facilities Audit 2011<sup>20</sup>. However, the accuracy of the evidence was questioned, in particular with regard to an under-estimate of playing numbers and the demand for sporting facilities in Tring and an over-estimate of the existing sporting facilities in the town.

48. The Council acknowledges that there is a need to up-date the evidence base on leisure and recreation and has confirmed that this is being done as part of the forthcoming Site Allocations DPD. In order that the NPPF advice is properly reflected in the CS a new paragraph is required which clearly establishes the Council's approach to the matter **[MM17]**.
49. In terms of community infrastructure it is recommended that a greater level of flexibility be introduced into policy CS23 in order that the most appropriate strategy, in relation to the dual use of facilities, is being promoted by the Council **[MM18]**.
50. Subject to the modifications recommended the CS makes appropriate provision for sport, recreation and other community facilities and services and in that respect is sound.

#### **Issue 6 – is the approach to sustainable development justified, in particular regarding car parking provision and the protection of heritage assets?**

##### *Overall approach*

51. The approach to sustainable design is set out in policy CS29. This provides a list of sustainability criteria to be met and for certain types of development establishes the requirement for a Sustainability Statement to be prepared. In order to ensure consistency with national policy it is recommended that a new criterion on the protection of biodiversity is added to the policy **[MM21]**. This approach reflects the advice in the NPPF on delivering sustainable development and is sound.
52. Policy CS30 refers to the Sustainability Offset Fund but does not refer to how any contribution to the fund would be determined. Consequently it is recommended that the policy and its supporting text be amended to establish more clearly the Council's approach to sustainability offsetting **[MM20 and MM22]**.

##### *Car parking*

53. One of the ways in which sustainable transport objectives can be achieved is through the appropriate management of car parking provision. To that end it is recommended that the CS identifies this measure as a specific tool in the achievement of sustainable travel and the reduction of emissions **[MM6 and MM7]**. The recommended modifications will ensure that in this respect the CS is sound.

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<sup>19</sup> SC7

<sup>20</sup> SC6

### *Heritage Assets*

54. The NPPF states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance<sup>21</sup>. In order to reflect this advice and in the interests of soundness, it is recommended that two new paragraphs on the matter be included in the CS **[MM19 and MM27]**.
55. I conclude that with the recommended modifications the Council's approach to sustainable development is sound.

### **Issue 7 – do the place strategies provide a clear indication of what is proposed in the identified settlements and what development is appropriate in the countryside?**

#### *Hemel Hempstead*

56. The key role of Hemel Hempstead in supporting growth in the Borough, particularly in terms of housing, employment and retail, is based on appropriate evidence and is justified. Consideration has been given to the implications of growth on the existing infrastructure, including transport and schools, and there is no substantive evidence that would lead me to conclude that the proposed development cannot be satisfactorily assimilated into the town. More detail on infrastructure provision will be included in the Site Allocations DPD and the East Hemel Hempstead AAP but on the evidence provided the likelihood of any 'show-stoppers' is minimal.
57. A number of sites were considered for housing development<sup>22</sup>, although it should be noted that this most recent assessment did not include any land outside the Borough boundary (e.g. land between the town and the M1 which is within St Albans City and District). However, an earlier assessment in 2009<sup>23</sup> did consider an eastern growth scenario and concluded that if significant expansion of Hemel Hempstead is required 'this should be taken forward in the form of the eastern growth option'. This would require the co-operation of St Albans City and District Council but it is not a 'new' concept and it would appear that a significant assessment of this option has been undertaken in the past, upon which further consideration could be based.
58. In terms of employment provision, the Maylands Business Park will remain the main employment area for the town and there is sufficient flexibility in the CS to ensure that there should be no policy impediments to economic growth in Hemel Hempstead. Similarly the regeneration of the town centre is an important objective for the Council and this will be further progressed by way of the Town Centre Masterplan<sup>24</sup>.
59. In order to ensure that the CS reflects the most appropriate strategy for the town and accords with the draft Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan it is recommended that there should be greater clarity with regard to the

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<sup>21</sup> Paragraph 126

<sup>22</sup> Assessment of Potential Local Allocations and Strategic Sites (2012) – HG15

<sup>23</sup> Assessment of Alternative Growth Scenarios for Hemel Hempstead – HG10

<sup>24</sup> MP4



potential for the 'Gade Zone' to accommodate a wider range of land uses and improvements to accessibility **[MM23]**. Similarly a reference to a new food store in the town centre should be included in policy CS33 **[MM24]**.

### *Berkhamsted*

60. Berkhamsted is a relatively small market town which enjoys an attractive setting, parts of which are in the AONB. Modest growth is proposed for the town and whilst concerns were raised regarding the implications of growth on highway safety and car parking in the town centre, the Council is committed to supporting the Highway Authority in the preparation of an Urban Transport Plan for the town which will seek to address these issues. The Highway Authority raised no objections to the level of development proposed.
61. It is appropriate and sustainable that Berkhamsted should shoulder some of the growth in the Borough but this has to be balanced against the need to protect the town's historic character and setting. A number of potential housing sites were put forward by representors in both Berkhamsted and in neighbouring Northchurch but I am satisfied that, in the current circumstances, the Council's approach is justified.
62. The protection of the historic environment is an important objective and there are the remains of a late saxon/medieval town at Berkhamsted. In order to reflect the need to protect sites of archaeological importance **MM25** is recommended.

### *Tring*

63. Tring is a smaller market town than Berkhamsted and is surrounded by the Chilterns AONB. A comparatively low level of growth is proposed but this is commensurate with the character of the town and its attractive setting. A number of alternative or additional housing sites were put forward by interested parties but I am satisfied that, in the current circumstances, the Council's approach is justified.
64. The local allocation at Icknield Way (west of Tring) would be delivered by way of the Site Allocations DPD and it is confirmed in the Statement of Common Ground<sup>25</sup> that the Landscape Development Principles Plan will inform the Masterplan for the site, which itself will be subject to public consultation. Proposal LA5 refers to 'around' 150 new homes and there would be no development on the Chilterns AONB itself. Whilst it will be important to ensure that the setting of the AONB is afforded appropriate protection, there is no reason to conclude that this cannot be satisfactorily achieved, primarily through the Masterplan process.

### *Kings Langley, Bovington, Markyate and the Countryside*

65. No specific allocations are proposed for Kings Langley, which is a large village. A site fronting Love Lane (outside the settlement boundary) was put forward by a representor as a potential development site but it would only accommodate a very small number of dwellings and could not be considered to be of strategic importance. However, there may be an opportunity to

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<sup>25</sup> SG3

reconsider the settlement boundary (and hence the site) as part of the green belt review.

66. There are sites of archaeological importance in the Kings Langley area and it is important that they are afforded appropriate protection. Consequently it is recommended that the Council's approach to such sites is clarified in the CS **[MM26]**.
67. In Bovingdon a single site for about 60 dwellings is proposed. A number of alternative sites were assessed in the village and there is little to differentiate between some of the potential sites. However, the local allocation at Chesham Road/Molyneaux Avenue is supported by the Parish Council and, on balance, by local residents. Although concerns were expressed by representors regarding the ability of the site to satisfactorily accommodate the housing and open space, the Council is confident that the proposed uses could be comfortably provided and there was no substantive evidence to conclusively demonstrate otherwise. In any event the forthcoming review of the green belt will enable the Council to reconsider whether or not there are any other opportunities in the village for longer term growth.
68. In Markyate a redevelopment proposal will accommodate about 90 dwellings and some employment floorspace and planning permission has already been granted for an element of residential and employment development. Concerns were expressed by interested parties regarding the principles of the redevelopment but these do not go to soundness and in any event the Council is proposing a number of minor changes to clarify the position.
69. In order that the Council's strategy with regard to small scale development in the countryside is clearly reflected in the CS, it is recommended that policy CS7 be amended **[MM5]**.
70. I am satisfied that with the recommended modifications the Council's approach to place strategies and towards development in the countryside is sound.

### **Issue 8 – is the plan capable of being satisfactorily monitored?**

71. Monitoring will be carried out annually through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and a number of mechanisms are available to the Council to ensure that this can be successfully achieved<sup>26</sup>. The Council is proposing a number of minor amendments to the monitoring indicators which will aid clarity and effectiveness and I am satisfied that the CS will be effective.
72. The CS is capable of being satisfactorily monitored and in that respect is sound.

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<sup>26</sup> Paragraph 17.3.7 of Council's Statement on Issue 17

## Other Matters

### *Infrastructure*

73. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update<sup>27</sup> concludes that the development proposed in the CS can be satisfactorily supported by the necessary infrastructure and no substantive evidence was submitted to demonstrate otherwise. The Council will monitor the delivery of infrastructure and any key changes to the Council's approach that are required will be identified in the Annual Monitoring Report. In addition further work will be undertaken, for example as part of the Site Allocations DPD, and if necessary as part of the forthcoming partial review. In particular transport, education and sewerage and waste water treatment are areas where it may be necessary to undertake further analysis and assessment.

### *Canal Moorings*

74. Saved policies 83 and 84 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan support the continued use of the Grand Union Canal and enable the provision of additional small scale moorings in appropriate locations, including in the green belt. The Council is proposing to review its policy approach to the matter in the forthcoming Development Management DPD (DMDPD).
75. It was suggested by an interested party that it may be better not to refer to canal moorings at all in the CS but to defer full consideration of the issue to a later document by which time a more comprehensive review of the matter could have been undertaken. However, the Council is seeking to provide the hook in the CS from which the more detailed concerns can be addressed in the DMDPD. The Canal and Rivers Trust voiced no concerns regarding the Council's approach and minor changes to the text of the CS are proposed by the Council which will provide further clarity. I consider that the CS is not the vehicle for assessing and seeking to accommodate more fully the mooring needs of boat users. This is best achieved through the DMDPD which can be based on a more robust analysis of the matter. In the meantime the saved policies are in place and I am satisfied that the Council's approach to the issue is sound.

### *Human Rights*

76. The issue of human rights was raised by a representor and I have taken it into account in my examination of the CS but it does not outweigh my conclusions on the planning issues.

## Assessment of Legal Compliance

77. My examination of the compliance of the Plan with the legal requirements is summarised in the table below. I conclude that the Plan meets them all.

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<sup>27</sup> ID5 (June 2012)

<b>LEGAL REQUIREMENTS</b>	
Local Development Scheme (LDS)	The Core Strategy is identified within the approved LDS (May 2009) which sets out an expected adoption date of July 2011. However, the latest Annual Monitoring Report (December 2011) gives a submission date of April 2012. The actual submission was in June 2012, the delay being caused by additional consultation being undertaken on a small number of 'omissions' and the need to consider the implications of the NPPF. The small slippage is acceptable in the circumstances and the content and timing are broadly compliant with the LDS.
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and relevant regulations	The SCI was adopted in June 2006 and consultation has been compliant with the requirements therein, including the consultation on the post-submission proposed 'main modification' changes (MM)
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)	SA has been carried out and is adequate.
Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	The Habitats Regulations HRA has been carried out and is adequate.
National Policy	The Core Strategy complies with national policy except where indicated and modifications are recommended.
Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)	Satisfactory regard has been paid to the SCS.
2004 Act (as amended) and 2012 Regulations.	The Core Strategy complies with the Act and the Regulations.

## Overall Conclusion and Recommendation

78. **The Plan has a number of deficiencies in relation to soundness and/or legal compliance for the reasons set out above which mean that I recommend non-adoption of it as submitted, in accordance with Section 20(7A) of the Act. These deficiencies have been explored in the main issues set out above.**
79. **The Council has requested that I recommend main modifications to make the Plan sound and/or legally compliant and capable of adoption. I conclude that with the recommended main modifications set out in the Appendix the Dacorum Core Strategy satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework.**

*David Hogger*

Inspector

This report is accompanied by the Appendix containing the Main Modifications

## Appendix - Main Modifications (28)

The modifications below are expressed in the conventional form of ~~strike through~~ for deletions and underlining for additions of text.

The page numbers and paragraph numbering below refer to the submission Core Strategy, and do not take account of the deletion or addition of text.

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
MM1	New policy in Section 7	<p><b><u>POLICY NP1: Supporting Development</u></b></p> <p><u>The Council will take a positive approach to the consideration of development proposals, reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council will work proactively with applicants to find solutions for development proposals that help to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in Dacorum.</u></p> <p><u>Proposals which accord with the development plan will be brought forward and approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise.</u></p> <p><u>If the development plan contains no policy relevant to the consideration of a planning application or policies are out of date, the Council will grant permission unless</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>• policies in the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>1</sup>, or</u></li> <li><u>• other material circumstances indicate otherwise.</u></li> </ul> <p><sup>1</sup> <u>This element of the policy means that planning permission can be refused if:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>- there are specific policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which indicate development should be restricted, or</u></li> <li><u>- there are adverse impacts which would demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole.</u></li> </ul>
MM2	8.16	<p><i>New paragraph after 8.16</i></p> <p><u>Development will be facilitated and managed throughout the plan period. The Council will monitor that programme, collaborating with landowners/developers and registered (housing) providers to encourage delivery. Most development will be regulated by market mechanisms, infrastructure needs, the views of landowners on delivery and the resources available to builders/providers and users/purchasers. The Council will use its powers to facilitate development, through:</u></p>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>positive and sensitive negotiation;</u></li> <li>• <u>the use of briefs or master plans on more complex sites;</u></li> <li>• <u>co-operation with infrastructure providers; and</u></li> <li>• <u>where appropriate and possible, 'pump priming' measures.</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Local allocations will be held back to encourage urban sites to come forward earlier, to retain countryside for longer and to ensure an appropriate contribution to land supply in the later part of the plan period.</u></p>
MM3	CS3	<p><b><u>Local allocations will be delivered from 2021. Those required in the plan period are listed in Table 9: they will be held in reserve and managed as countryside<sup>13</sup> until needed for development.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>The release date for each development will be set out in the Site Allocations DPD and be guided by:</u></b></p> <p><b><u>(a) the availability of infrastructure in the settlement;</u></b></p> <p><b><u>(b) the relative need for development at that settlement; and</u></b></p> <p><b><u>(c) the benefits it would bring to the settlement. ; and</u></b></p> <p><b><u>(d) the intended release date set out in the Site Allocations DPD.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>The release date of any local allocation may be brought forward in order to maintain a five year housing land supply.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>The Council will take this decision through its Annual Monitoring Report process.</u></b></p>
MM4	CS5	<p><b><u>The strict application of Council will apply national Green Belt policy which permits appropriate development will be used to protect the openness and character of the Green Belt, local distinctiveness and the physical separation of settlements.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>There will be no general review of the Green Belt boundary, although local allocations (under Policies CS2 and CS3) will be permitted.</u></b></p> <p><u>Within the Green Belt, small-scale development will be permitted: i.e.</u></p> <p>(a) <u>building for the uses defined as appropriate in national policy;</u></p> <p>(b) <u>for the replacement of existing buildings for the same use; existing houses (on a like for like basis); and</u></p> <p>(c) <u>for limited extensions to existing buildings;</u></p> <p>(d) <u>the appropriate reuse of permanent, substantial buildings; and</u></p> <p>(e) <u>the redevelopment of previously developed sites<sup>14</sup>, including major developed sites which will be defined on the Proposals Map</u></p>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<p>provided that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <del>there is</del> <u>it has</u> no significant impact on the character and appearance of the countryside; and</li> <li>ii. <del>if relevant, the development will</del> <u>it supports</u> the rural economy and maintenance of the wider countryside.</li> </ul> <p><u>Further guidance will be provided.</u></p> <p><del>No general review of the Green belt boundary is proposed, although local allocations (under Policies CS2 and CS3) will be permitted).</del></p> <p>Development within selected small villages in the Green Belt will be permitted in accordance with Policy CS6.</p> <p><del>Proposals for designated Major Developed Sites will be determined in the context of national Green Belt policy.</del></p> <p>Footnote: <sup>14</sup> Excluding temporary buildings</p>
MM5	CS7	<p><b>Within the Rural Area, the following uses are acceptable:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) agriculture;</li> <li>(b) forestry;</li> <li>(c) mineral extraction;</li> <li>(d) countryside recreation uses;</li> <li>(e) social, community and leisure uses;</li> <li>(f) essential utility services; and</li> <li>(g) uses associated with a farm diversification project, which can be demonstrated to be necessary for the continuing viability of the farm business and consistent with the principles of sustainable development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Small-scale development will be permitted: <u>i.e.</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>for the above uses;</b></li> <li>ii. <b><u>for the replacement of existing buildings for the same use; houses (on a like for like basis); and</u></b></li> <li>iii. <b><u>for limited extensions to existing buildings;</u></b></li> <li>iv. <b><u>the appropriate reuse of permanent, substantial buildings; and</u></b></li> <li>v. <b><u>the redevelopment of previously developed sites<sup>15</sup></u></b></li> </ul> <p><u>provided that:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <u>it has no significant impact on the character and appearance of the countryside; and</u></li> <li>ii. <u>it supports the rural economy and maintenance of the wider countryside.</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Further guidance will be provided.</u></p>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<p><b>Small-scale development for housing, employment and other purposes will be permitted at Aldbury, Long Marston and Wilstone, provided that it complies with Policy CS1: Distribution of Development, and Policy CS2 Selection of Development Sites.</b></p> <p><b>Footnote: <sup>15</sup> Excluding temporary buildings</b></p>
MM6	9.3	<p>National policy is no longer aimed at catering for the unrestrained growth of road traffic. Travel demand needs to be managed in a way that is more sustainable and delivers carbon reductions. This approach includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reducing the need to travel (by both car and non-car mode);</li> <li>• managing existing road capacity;</li> <li>• carefully locating development so that it is accessible to all users;</li> <li>• <u>managing public parking both on street and off the street;</u></li> <li>• controlling and managing new car parking spaces;</li> <li>• encouraging fewer car journeys;</li> <li>• promoting non-car travel; and</li> <li>• implementing Green Travel Plans.</li> </ul>
MM7	9.8	<p>The impact of any development, either alone or cumulatively with other proposals, must be addressed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing new and improving existing pedestrian and cycle routes;</li> <li>• contributions towards strategic transport improvements;</li> <li>• implementing local highway works;</li> <li>• <u>managing car parking provision according to location and use;</u></li> <li>• minimising private car parking through the availability of car clubs and pool cars; or</li> <li>• developing car free developments in the borough's most accessible locations.</li> </ul>
MM8	11.3	<p><i>New paragraph following 11.3</i></p> <p><u>Around 60% of the estimated employment growth is in non-B class uses, such as hotels and catering, construction, education, healthcare, retailing and leisure. Appropriate allocations for non-B class uses will therefore be included in the Site Allocations and East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan Development Plan Documents (DPDs). The Council will monitor the effectiveness of the Core Strategy's policies in supporting the growth of such jobs.</u></p>
MM9	12.5	<p><i>New paragraph following 12.5</i></p> <p><u>It is recommended in the Employment Land Update 2011 that the Council should adopt the figure of 131,000 sq. metres of net additional floorspace as a land provision target for the Core Strategy. However, this report stated that planning policy should allow for the possibility the forecast demand may not materialise.</u></p>



Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<u>Therefore, it advised that office development should be phased over the plan period; targets and allocations should be reviewed regularly in the light of actual take-up, market conditions and the latest economic forecasts; and there may be managed release of office sites which are no longer attractive, viable or suitable for offices.</u>
MM10	CS15	<p><i>Second paragraph</i></p> <p><b><u>Provision will be made to meet a long term target of at least 131,000 sq m (net) additional office floorspace. There will be no net loss of industry, storage and distribution floorspace over the plan period. The area will be managed so that between 2006 and 2031:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><u>a target of around 131,000 sq m (net) additional office floorspace can be met: and</u></b></li> <li><b><u>the stock of floorspace for industry, storage and distribution remains broadly unchanged.</u></b></li> </ul>
MM11	CS16	<p><i>New paragraph at the beginning</i></p> <p><b><u>The main retail hierarchy of town centres and local centres (listed in Table 5) will be strengthened by encouraging appropriate new retail development and retaining sufficient existing shops in these centres.</u></b></p>
MM12	14.14	<u>The Council will maintain a continuous 5-year<sup>1</sup> 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. Action may be required to influence factors governing supply in the light of progress. This will be reported through the Annual Monitoring Report.</u>
MM13	14.15	<u>Delivery will be phased so that the development of housing sites can be co-ordinated with associated infrastructure and services. The broad approach to phasing is set out in Policy CS2, with more detailed requirements in the Site Allocations DPD. The management of local allocations will build some flexibility into the housing programme (Policy CS3). However should supply fall significantly below expectations, the Council will take action to stimulate supply. The Council will consider the options that may</u>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		be available at that 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.
MM14	CS17	<p>An average of 430 net additional dwellings will be provided each year (between 2006 and 2031).</p> <p>The new housing <u>will be phased over the plan period and a five year supply of housing maintained.</u> <del>is planned to come forward in phases. Should housing completions fall below 15% of the housing trajectory at any time and review of the deliverability of planned sites indicates that the housing trajectory is unlikely to be recovered over the next 5 years, the Council will take action to increase the supply of deliverable housing sites.</del></p> <p>Existing housing land and dwellings will normally be retained.</p>
MM15	CS19	<p><b>Affordable homes will be provided:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on sites of a minimum size 0.3ha or 10 dwellings (and larger) in Hemel Hempstead; and</li> <li>• elsewhere, on sites of a minimum size of 0.16ha or 5 dwellings (and larger).</li> </ul> <p>A financial contribution will be sought in lieu of affordable housing on sites which fall below these thresholds.</p> <p>35% of the new dwellings should be affordable homes. Higher levels <u>may</u> <del>will be</del> sought on sites which are specified <u>by the Council</u> in a development plan document, provided development would be viable and need is evident. <u>On rural housing sites 100% of all new homes will be affordable on rural housing sites (Policy CS20) will normally be affordable (Policy CS20).</u></p> <p>A minimum of 75% of the affordable housing units provided should be for rent.</p> <p>Judgements about the level, <del>and</del> <u>mix and tenure</u> of affordable homes will have regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the Council's Housing Strategy, <u>identified housing need</u> and other <u>relevant</u> evidence (see Policy CS18);</li> <li>(b) the potential to enlarge the site;</li> <li>(c) the overall viability of the scheme and any</li> </ul>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<p>abnormal costs; and</p> <p>(d) <del>more detailed guidance in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document arrangements to ensure that the benefit of all affordable housing units passes from the initial occupiers of the property to successive occupiers</del></p> <p><del>Arrangements will be made to ensure that the benefit of all affordable housing units will pass from the initial occupiers of the property to successive occupiers.</del></p> <p><u>Further, detailed guidance is provided in the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.</u></p>
MM16	CS22	<p><u>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.</u></p> <p>New sites will be:</p> <p>(a) distributed in a dispersed pattern around settlements;</p> <p>(b) located close to facilities;</p> <p>(c) of varying sizes, not normally exceeding a site capacity of 15 pitches;</p> <p>(d) planned to allow for part occupation initially, allowing subsequent growth to full site capacity; and</p> <p>(e) designed to a high standard with:</p> <p>(i) an open frontage similar to other forms of housing; and</p> <p>(ii) landscaping or other physical features to provide an appropriate setting and relationship to existing residential areas.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Any new transit pitches should also:</p> <p>(a) achieve good access to the M1 or A41 main roads; and</p> <p>(b) minimise potential disturbance to adjoining occupiers.</p>
MM17	15.3	<p><i>New paragraph after 15.3</i></p> <p><u>The Government asks councils to plan positively for the provision and use of shared space and social infrastructure (facilities and</u></p>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<p>services). The Council will therefore be guided by the relevant infrastructure providers for some types of facility and for others will undertake its own assessment (e.g. for leisure). Up to date information will help determine future provision and opportunities. Particular importance is attached to the delivery of school places and health services. Linking planning policy with infrastructure capacity and spending will help resources to be more effectively deployed and thus support healthy, inclusive communities. Effective use of facilities is important. The retention of existing facilities, whether in their present use or a suitable alternative, is encouraged. New facilities should be capable of dual use and multipurpose use where reasonable. Multipurpose use can more readily be achieved in buildings and leisure space, but is not always possible (for example, in some single faith buildings).</p>
MM18	CS23	<p><b>Social infrastructure providing services and facilities to the community will be encouraged.</b></p> <p><b>New infrastructure will be:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>be located to aid accessibility; and</b></li> <li>• <b><u>provide for designed to allow for different activities</u></b> <b><del>the multifunctional use of space.</del></b></li> </ul> <p><b>The dual use of new and existing facilities will be <del>promoted</del> encouraged wherever possible.</b></p> <p><b>The provision of new school facilities will be supported on Open Land and in defined zones in the Green Belt. Zones will be defined in the Green Belt where there is clear evidence of need: the effect of new building and activity on the <u>Green Belt countryside</u> must, however, be minimised.</b></p> <p><b>Existing social infrastructure will be protected unless appropriate alternative provision is made, or satisfactory evidence is provided to prove the facility is no longer viable. The re-use of a building for an alternative social or community service or facility is preferred.</b></p> <p><b>All new development will be expected to contribute towards the provision of social infrastructure. For larger developments this may include land and/or buildings.</b></p>
MM19	17.2	<p><i>New paragraph after 17.2</i></p> <p><u>All heritage assets are important and should be conserved. The weight given to the specific form of protection or conservation will vary according to the importance of that asset.</u></p>
MM20	18.23	<p>Developers will be expected to complete a Sustainability Statement and carbon compliance check <del>online for in support of</del> their proposals. <u>When the appropriate carbon reductions would not be delivered on site, appropriate compensation will be sought. This will be in the form of sustainability offsetting measures. What will constitute appropriate offsetting measures is expected to evolve over the plan period: Government regulation and policy</u></p>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<p><del>will guide what measures may be feasible. Payments will also be required into to a Sustainability Offset Fund when the appropriate carbon reductions have not been delivered on-site. The Council will provide further guidance on offsetting, keeping its approach up-to-date. Offsetting may involve a direct contribution on another site (e.g. through tree planting). It may involve a contribution to a Sustainability Offset Fund, perhaps via the community infrastructure levy. The Council may be able to add other resources to the Sustainability Offset Fund. The fund will can then be used to support initiatives that help measures which reduce carbon emissions in the existing building stock, fix or absorb carbon (for example, by planting trees) and support on and off-site renewable energy supply and efficiency measures. Tree planting and other 'greening' initiatives will help to enhance biodiversity, improve quality of life and wellbeing and reduce 'heat stress' in built up areas. the urban environment.</del></p>
MM21	CS29	<p><b>New development will comply with the highest standards of sustainable design and construction possible. The following principles should normally be satisfied:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>(a) Use building materials and timber from verified sustainable sources;</b></li> <li><b>(b) Minimise water consumption during construction;</b></li> <li><b>(c) Recycle and reduce construction waste which may otherwise go to landfill.</b></li> <li><b>(d) Provide an adequate means of water supply, surface water and foul drainage;</b></li> <li><b>(e) Plan to limit residential indoor water consumption to 105 litres per person per day until national statutory guidance supersedes this advice;</b></li> <li><b>(f) <u>Plan to minimise carbon dioxide emissions; Comply with CO<sub>2</sub> reductions as per Table 11;</u></b></li> <li><b>(g) Maximise the energy efficiency performance of the building fabric, in accordance with the energy hierarchy set out in Figure 16;</b></li> <li><b>(h) Incorporate at least one new tree per dwelling/per 100sqm (for non residential developments) on-site;</b></li> <li><b>(i) <u>Minimise impacts on biodiversity and incorporate positive measures to support wildlife;</u></b></li> <li><b>(j) Minimise impermeable surfaces around the curtilage of buildings and in new street design;</b></li> <li><b>(k) Incorporate permeable and lighter coloured surfaces within urban areas; and</b></li> <li><b>(l) Provide on-site recycling facilities for waste.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Buildings will be designed to have a long life and adaptable internal layout. Applicants will therefore need to explain how:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>(a) they have considered the whole life cycle of the building and how the materials could be recycled at the end of the building's life; and</b></li> <li><b>(b) their design has been 'future proofed' to enable retrofitting to meet tighter energy efficiency standards and connection to decentralised community heating systems.</b></li> </ul>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<p>For specified types of development applicants should provide a Sustainability Statement.</p> <p><u>Where new development cannot meet on-site energy or tree planting requirements, the applicant will be expected to make an appropriate financial contribution towards sustainability offsetting if at all possible (see policy CS30).</u></p> <p><del>The principles in this policy may be relaxed if the</del> <u>If a scheme would be unviable or there is not a technically feasible approach, the principles in this policy may be relaxed.</u> <del>Where new development cannot meet on-site energy or tree canopy requirements, the applicant will be expected to make an appropriate financial contribution towards the Sustainability Offset Fund.</del></p>
MM22	CS30	<p><del>Sustainability Offset Fund Offsetting</del></p> <p><u>The contribution of development towards sustainability offsetting measures will be determined in accordance with prevailing regulation and planning policy. Offsetting may include off-site work and planting, and contributions to a Sustainability Offset Fund.</u></p> <p><u>Details on the Council's approach to sustainability offsetting, including the operation of the Sustainability Offset Fund, will be set out in further guidance.</u></p> <p><del>The Sustainability Offset Fund will be used to fund and help deliver:</del></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>• energy and water efficiency improvements in the borough's existing housing and public building stock;</del></li> <li><del>• on-site and appropriate off-site renewable energy supply systems; and</del></li> <li><del>• new tree planting and habitat improvements.</del></li> </ul> <p><del>Details regarding the operation of the Sustainability Offset Fund will be set out in further guidance.</del></p>
MM23	Fig 17	<p><b><i>The Gade Zone</i></b> – includes the north western section of the town centre from Queensway to <u>the Market Square</u>. <del>Gombe Street</del> Notable features include the River Gade and the Marlowes Methodist Church. This zone holds significant regeneration opportunities, primarily for educational, civic, residential and, community, <u>leisure and cultural, business and retail uses (including a foodstore)</u>, along with opportunities for decentralised heating systems or Combined Heat and Power (CHP). <u>There are opportunities for better design, improvements to the building fascias of the listed buildings and the creation of a riverside walk and cycleway.</u></p>
MM24	CS33	<i>Second paragraph</i>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
		<p>The principles guiding development are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) secure additional retail stores in the Marlowes Shopping Zone <u>and a new food store</u>;</li> <li>(b) deliver a mix of uses to support the prime retail function;</li> <li>(c) encourage an attractive evening economy along Waterhouse Street;</li> <li>(d) deliver a range of new homes;</li> <li>(e) create new offices;</li> <li>(f) deliver new leisure, education and cultural facilities, including a primary school and library;</li> <li>(g) keep a public sector presence;</li> <li>(h) restore the Water Gardens, and retain and create other public spaces;</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. movement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) secure an integrated public transport hub and circulation within the centre;</li> <li>(b) provide better east-west links, particularly for pedestrians;</li> <li>(c) continue the riverside walk from the Plough Zone to Gadebridge Park;</li> <li>(d) improve cycling provision;</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) emphasise pedestrian movement gateways through bold building design, height and landscaping;</li> <li>(b) provide active frontages;</li> <li>(c) apply a co-ordinated approach to building and streetscape design;</li> <li>(d) use high quality materials and public art to complement the existing palette of materials and features;</li> <li>(e) restore artwork and create new complementary pieces of art; and</li> <li>(f) deliver district heating and additional large-scale / high capacity renewable energy generation technologies.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
MM25	21.12	<p><u>Berkhamsted contains the remains of a late saxon/medieval town. Its archaeological interest is potentially of national importance and will be a constraint on the extent and layout of new development. The castle was the site of the surrender of the Anglo-Saxon army to William the Conqueror in 1066. The castle is an important landmark and significant historical asset, whose position and heritage will be protected. Visitors to the site will be encouraged to make use of public transport access.</u></p>
MM26	Sec 23	<p><i>New paragraph after 23.6:</i>  <u>The remains of a medieval royal palace and Dominican priory lie on Langley Hill. These sites are nationally important. The archaeological interest associated with this area will be protected, constraining the extent and design of new development.</u></p>

Ref	Policy/ Paragraph	Main Modification
MM27	26.14	<p><i>New paragraph after 26.14</i></p> <p><u>The countryside has been subject to human activity from prehistory to modern times. There are numerous areas with existing or high potential for heritage assets. Some are of national importance and require particular protection. All heritage assets affected by development should be subject to assessment and appropriate mitigation measures. Some rural practices, such as bio-fuel production and forestry, can damage archaeological features and their impact may therefore merit careful consideration.</u></p>
MM28	New sub-section in Section 29	<p><b><u>Review</u></b></p> <p><u>29.7 A proactive monitoring system will help the Council review its planning policies and keep them up-to-date, identifying potential adjustments to policies if appropriate and/or other necessary action.</u></p> <p><u>29.8 The Council is committed to a partial review of the Core Strategy at a reasonably early stage (i.e. after completion of the Site Allocations and Development Management DPDs). The purpose of the review is to reconsider housing need and investigate ways of meeting that need more fully.</u></p> <p><u>29.9 The Localism Act 2011 places a “duty to co-operate” on local authorities and other specified organisations. Dacorum’s local planning framework should therefore be based on joint working and co-operation with neighbouring authorities to address larger than local issues. The obligation stretches from plan-making to implementation, and will be explained in successive Annual Monitoring Reports. The partial review of the Core Strategy will be undertaken in co-operation with neighbouring authorities, taking account of their progress with development plan documents. The Council will aim to adopt the review by 2017/18.</u></p> <p><u>29.10 Through the partial review, the Council will assess:</u></p> <p><u>(a) household projections;</u></p> <p><u>(b) the role and function of the Green Belt affecting Dacorum, including long term boundaries and the potential to identify safeguarded land beyond 2031; and more significantly,</u></p> <p><u>(c) the role that effective co-operation with local planning authorities could play in meeting any housing needs arising from Dacorum. This element will include St Albans district and relevant areas lying beyond the Green Belt.</u></p> <p><u>The outcome of the review cannot be prejudged.</u></p>



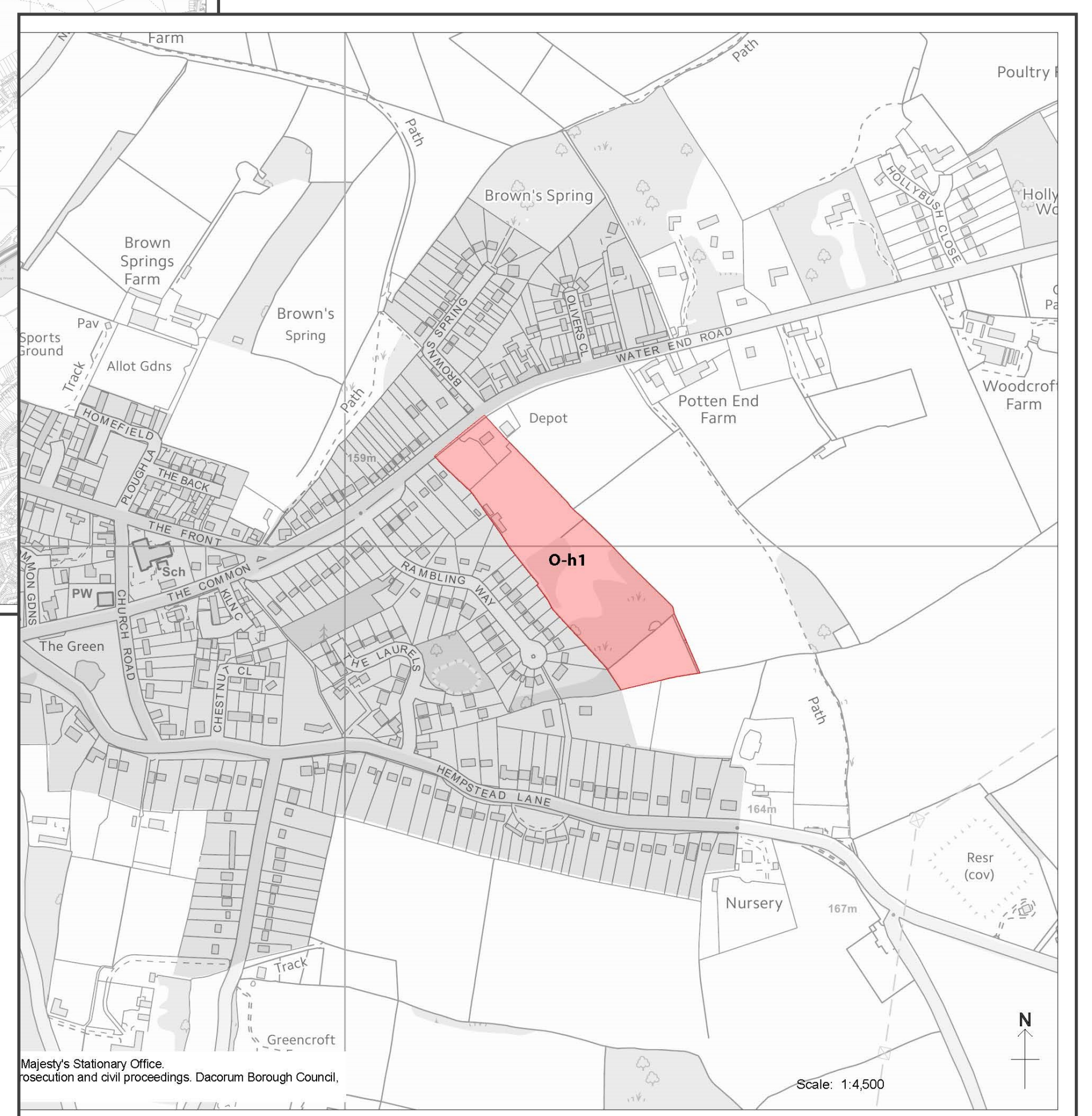
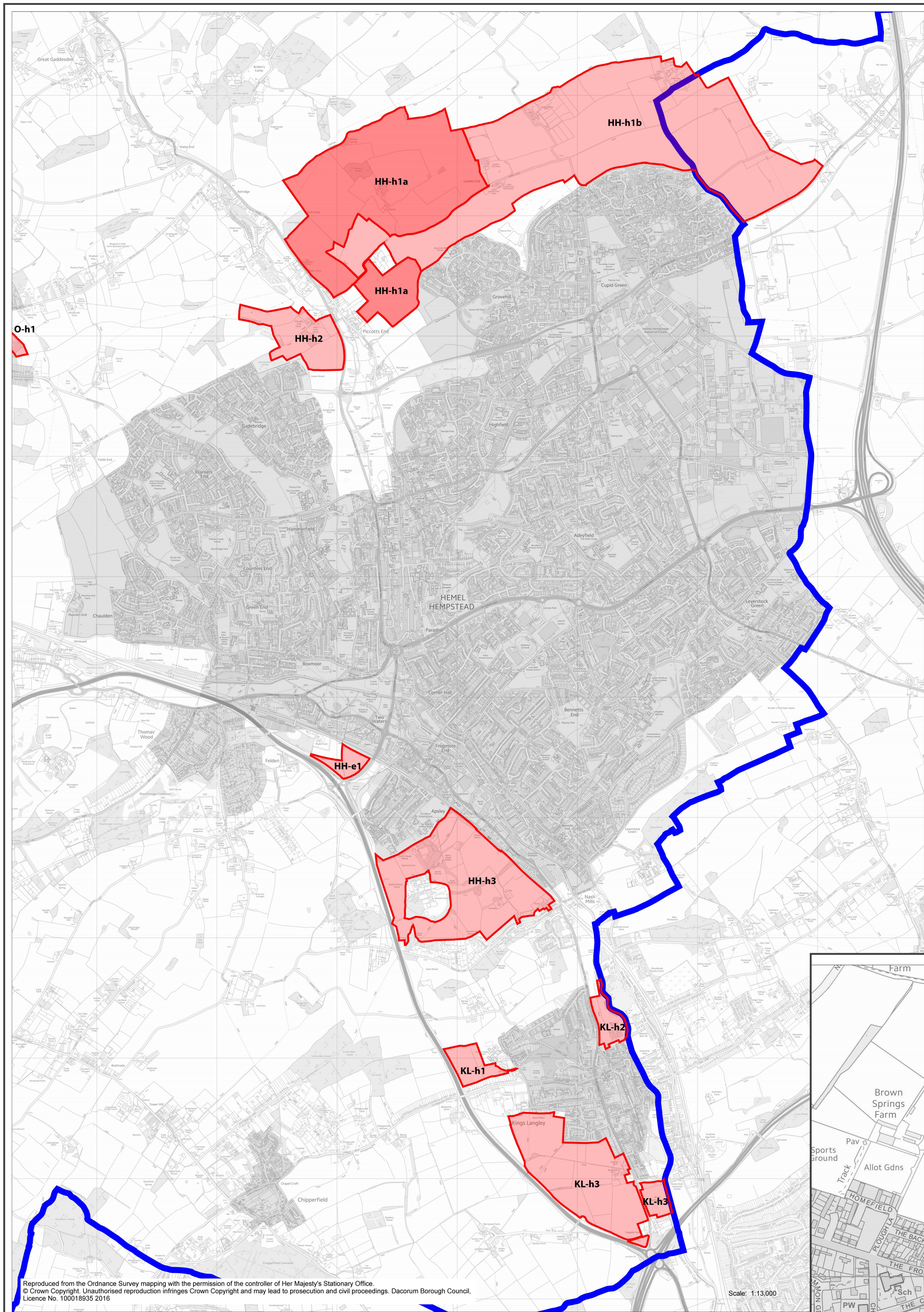
## 5.0 APPENDIX 3 – DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL 2017 CONSULTATION





# What key site options are we considering in Hemel Hempstead?

The location of the sites put forward by landowners around **Hemel Hempstead** and surrounding area are shown in more detail on the maps below:



St Albans City and District Council are also looking at the potential of land to the east of Hemel Hempstead (which lies within their district) to provide new homes, employment land and associated uses. This is a matter that St Albans will be considering further through their own new Local Plan, although we will be liaising closely with them, as what happens on this land will obviously have a big impact upon our residents.





# What key site options are we considering in Hemel Hempstead?

The location of the sites put forward by landowners around **Hemel Hempstead** and surrounding area are shown in more detail on the adjoining maps:

Hemel Hempstead	Site address	Estimated site capacity	Other potential infrastructure provision
HH-h1a	North Hemel Hempstead (Phase 1)	1,750-2,250 homes, depending on the extent of the land.	Potential to also deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>40% affordable housing.</li><li>First phase of a new northern relief road for the town, to connect the Leighton Buzzard Road with Redbourn Road.</li><li>First phase of a new country park for the town.</li><li>Local play space.</li><li>New secondary school and primary schools.</li><li>Local shopping facilities/local centre/community centre.</li><li>Accommodation for new healthcare facilities i.e. GP surgery.</li><li>Contributions towards wider infrastructure improvements for the town.</li></ul>
HH-h1b	North Hemel Hempstead (Phases 1 and 2)	Around 4,500 homes (some of which would be within St Albans City and District).	Potential to also deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>40% affordable housing.</li><li>New northern relief road for the town, to connect the Leighton Buzzard Road with Redbourn Road.</li><li>New country park for the town.</li><li>Local play space.</li><li>New secondary school and primary schools.</li><li>Local shopping facilities/local centre/community centre.</li><li>Small-scale employment uses in a new local centre.</li><li>Accommodation for new healthcare facilities i.e. GP surgery.</li><li>Contributions towards wider infrastructure improvements for the town.</li></ul>
HH-h2	North of Gadebridge (Land at Piccotts End)	Around 440 homes.	Potential to also deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>40% affordable housing.</li><li>Open space.</li><li>Contributions towards primary and secondary schools.</li><li>Contributions towards wider infrastructure improvements for the town – including the regeneration of Rossgate local centre.</li></ul>
HH-h3	Land at Shendish, London Road	Mixed use, including up to 900 homes.	Potential to also deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>40% affordable housing.</li><li>Open space.</li><li>Cycle and footpath links.</li><li>New employment space.</li><li>New primary school and contributions towards new secondary school.</li><li>Contributions towards wider infrastructure improvements for the town.</li></ul>
HH-e1	Land east of A41 at Felden	Employment (around 5 hectares)	Land for employment uses and supporting infrastructure.
Kings Langley	Site address	Estimated site capacity	Other potential infrastructure provision
KL-h1	Land at Hill Farm, Love Lane	150-300 homes.	Potential to also deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>40% affordable housing.</li><li>Open space.</li><li>Contributions towards wider infrastructure improvements for the village.</li></ul>
KL-h2	Land at Rectory Farm, Hempstead Road	To be confirmed. Estimated to be around 80 homes.	Potential to also deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>40% affordable housing.</li><li>Open space.</li><li>Contributions towards wider infrastructure improvements for the village.</li></ul>
KL-h3	Land to the east of A41 and Wayside Farm, Watford Road	Potential for mixed housing and employment uses. Housing capacity to be confirmed, but maximum of around 1,000 homes if the whole site is built-out, or around 300 if part of the site is used for employment uses.	Potential to also deliver (depending on the extent of site and mix of uses): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>40% affordable housing.</li><li>New primary school.</li><li>Improved footpath links.</li><li>Off-site road improvements.</li><li>Informal recreation and open space as part of community benefits, such as a small park or allotments.</li><li>Contributions towards wider infrastructure improvements for the village.</li><li>Up to 18 hectares of land set aside for employment use in the longer term i.e. post 2036. This land would continue to be farmed in the mean-time.</li></ul>
Potten End	Site address	Estimated site capacity	Other potential infrastructure provision
O-h1	Land at Old Kiln Meadow, Water End Road, Potten End	45-49 homes.	Potential to also deliver: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>40% affordable homes.</li><li>Local playspace.</li><li>Contributions towards wider infrastructure improvements for the village.</li></ul>

These sites could provide a range of new homes and other supporting infrastructure, as summarised above. In some cases there is the potential for adjacent sites to merge together to form larger sites, or for only a small part of a large site to be chosen for development. In the case of north Hemel Hempstead, there is the potential for some land to be set aside for development in the longer-term i.e. post 2036.

We would like your feedback on these sites and to know if there are any alternative options you think we should consider.

The Council has **not made any decisions on whether or not any of the above sites should be included within the new Local Plan**. We will take this decision only when we have considered the views given through this consultation, talked further with infrastructure providers and landowners, and also carried out further technical work.