



Dacorum Borough Council

Local Planning Framework

DACORUM CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Statement by Dacorum Borough Council

Issue 15: Markyate

September 2012

Purpose of this statement

The purpose of this statement is to summarise the Council's position regarding the following issues raised by the Inspector in advance of their discussion at the public hearing sessions.

To avoid repetition this statement includes cross references to appropriate technical work and includes relevant extracts as appendices.

Matters raised by Inspector

- 15.1 Is the policy for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact? What is the timetable for the submission of a planning application?
- 15.2 Is the identification of the Hicks Road Industrial Estate as a General Employment Area (para. 12.1) appropriate and justified?
- 15.3 Are there adequate measures in place to secure the retention of existing Hicks Road businesses, albeit in different premises?
- 15.4 Should there be a policy for the village as a whole in order to ensure the Council's vision will be delivered?

Dacorum Borough Council's Response

15.1 Is the policy for growth and change in this area appropriate and justified, including in relation to national guidance and local needs, and in terms of economic, social and environmental impact? What is the timetable for the submission of a planning application?

15.1.1 In order to ensure preparation of a distinctive planning framework that reflects the needs and priorities of different communities, the Council has prepared an overarching Core Strategy with spatially distinctive strategies for each place within the district. This includes Markyate.

National guidance

15.1.2 Achieving sustainable development is the Government's stated purpose for the planning system (paragraph 6 in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF: Examination Document REG15): it is elaborated in sections 1-13 of the NPPF.

15.1.3 There are 3 aspects to sustainable development – i.e. an economic role, a social role and an environmental role. These roles are interlinked and should not be taken in isolation (NPPF paragraphs 7 and 8). Economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly (NPPF paragraph 8).

15.1.4 Paragraph 9 (NPPF) summarises what pursuing sustainable development involves: i.e.

“...seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to):

- *making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages;*
- *moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature;*

- *replacing poor design with better design;*
- *improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure; and*
- *widening the choice of high quality homes.*

15.1.5 Plans (and decisions) need to:

“... take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.” (Para. 10 NPPF). Furthermore, “Local plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the visions and aspirations of local communities.” (para. 150 NPPF)

15.1.6 The Council concludes that:

- a) the purpose of the Core Strategy and place strategies is to ensure that new development is sustainable;
- b) the Core Strategy should guide development to sustainable locations;
- c) development should support the achievement of the objectives and factors listed above;
- d) the appropriate balance between these factors may vary from place to place, due to their particular characteristics and their current and intended role within the Borough; and
- e) due consideration should be given to local community aspirations.

15.1.7 These principles underpin and are articulated in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy (Examination Document SUB1). The Council has looked at the role of each place within this context and outlined what it considers to be the most appropriate strategy.

15.1.8 The settlement hierarchy for the Borough and descriptions in Table 1 (Core Strategy page 54) is based on the function and character of each place. It also reflects the potential scale of change which each settlement (and the countryside) can reasonably absorb without undue detriment (see question 2.1 in Issue Paper 2: The Distribution of Development (Settlement Hierarchy) and the Green Belt).

15.1.9 Table 1 identifies Markyate as a large village. Large villages are ‘Areas of Limited Opportunity.’ It has an important role in meeting local housing needs, jobs and services, both for residents and adjoining rural communities. The general approach is to support development that enables the population to remain stable, unless a small element of growth is required to meet community needs. The broad approach to development set out within the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 (Evidence Document OT1) remains appropriate.

Local Considerations

15.1.10 The Borough’s needs and those of places within it have been considered through

the creation of a substantial evidence base. This comprises technical studies, the results of public consultation and testing through the sustainability appraisal process: among other things they address the matters listed in paragraph 9 of the NPPF (see paragraph 15.1.4 above).

Technical studies

15.1.11 Technical studies form an important part of the Council's evidence base. They look at the Borough both as a whole and specific places within it. For all technical work carried out until July 2009 (Guide to the Evidence Base: Examination Document OT4), the conclusions were broken down into key place-based recommendations to assist the formulation of the individual Place Strategies.

15.1.12 The approach to homes and jobs within Markyate has been informed by:

- Housing assessments (e.g. Examination Documents HG9, HG14 and HG16)
- Employment space studies (e.g. Examination Documents ED1, ED8 and ED12)
- Retail studies (e.g. Examination Documents ED2 and ED6)
- Work associated with Strategic Site SS2 (Hicks Road) (Examination Documents SS2 and SS3).

15.1.13 For Markyate, key recommendations are as follows:

Employment – The employment provision in Markyate is focussed on the Hicks Road General Employment Area, which consists generally of 1950s and 1960s offices and industrial and storage units. The northern part of the site has potential for redevelopment for alternative uses, but the southern part should be retained in employment use. Options for replacement employment land are a new greenfield site at Markyate, new premises on the southern part of the Hicks Road site and sites closer to Junction 9 of the M1.

Retail - The latest retail assessment does not contain any recommendations for local centres such as Markyate. It is appropriate however that the current local shopping and service function of the village is maintained and enhanced. The Hicks Road Masterplan Update (Examination Document SS2) identifies the potential to include small scale retail uses in redevelopment proposals for the site.

Housing – The starting point has been to retain the village's population at approximately its current base, and then consider what additional provision should be made. The Council has taken also into account Markyate's role in the settlement hierarchy, future urban capacity, and the impact of development on its character, setting and infrastructure. Local objectives for housing have been set to reflect these conclusions, indicating an expected delivery of around 200 new homes between 2006 and 2031.

The need for the outward expansion of the village has been considered and realistic options for this expansion weighed up through consultation on the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (Examination Documents SA1 and SA5). Ten sites in Markyate parish were assessed, but only Hicks Road was taken forward for further consideration in the Assessment of Potential Local Allocations and Strategic Sites (Examination Document HG15) and through the Sustainability Appraisal work on the Core Strategy (Examination Document CS19). The other sites were not considered further for a number of reasons, including harm to the Green Belt and/or the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, landscape impact and unsustainable location.

Policy CS19: Affordable Housing sets a lower threshold for on-site delivery of affordable homes than in Hemel Hempstead, to reflect local conditions (see response to Issue 7: question 7.2).

Environmental – Key documents include the Urban Nature Conservation Study (Examination Document EN3), the Urban Design Assessment (incorporating updates) (Examination Document BP5), the Open Space Study (Examination Document EN6), and Green Space Strategy and Green Infrastructure work (resp. Examination Documents EN12 and EN10). Advice has also been received from experts, including English Heritage, the Council's ecological adviser from the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre and the County Archaeologist. This advice has helped identify the urban structure of the village articulated on the Markyate Vision Diagram (Core Strategy Figure 27) and reflected in the Place Strategy. This structure includes urban and strategic wildlife corridors, open land, green gateways and urban design zones. The River Ver (a chalk stream) runs through the village.

Infrastructure – Through technical work (especially the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update – Examination Document ID5) and consultation, relevant thresholds for new infrastructure and the capacity of existing infrastructure, including schools (especially primary schools), road network, leisure and community uses and utilities infrastructure have been considered. Consideration has also been given as to whether there should be any 'jumps' in thresholds e.g. what infrastructure is needed to accommodate different scales of development. In particular, primary school planning has been a useful check on the scale of new development. No 'showstoppers' have been identified in relation to the level of growth planned for the village. Table 3.3 in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update shows that there is no need to expand Markyate Primary School or build a new primary school. There is no secondary school in Markyate. Table 3.5 estimates that the pupil yield arising in secondary schools from the housing planned in Markyate by the Core Strategy will be 0.2 forms of entry. This table indicates that because many pupils from Markyate travel to Harpenden secondary schools, contributions may be required to extend schools there. The level of development proposed for the village in the Core Strategy is accepted by the County Council in terms of service issues.

15.1.14 The recommendations of all this technical work has been taken into account when developing the Markyate Place Strategy – both in the formulation of the vision, the setting of local objectives and the approach to growth and change.

Consultation

15.1.15 Consultation has been carried out with residents and stakeholders during the preparation of the Core Strategy. A full summary of the consultation processes, the results received and how this consultation has resulted in changes to the Core Strategy (up to the stage of Pre-Submission) is set out in the Report of Consultation (Examination Document SUB6). Key elements have been:

(a) *Place Workshops* (see Volume 3 of Report of Consultation – refer to section 1).

15.1.16 This involved local councillors and representatives from a wide range of local businesses, residents and other organisations. A range of questions were asked in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour, leisure and recreation, transportation, the environment, housing, employment, population, development options and design/character of the village.

15.1.17 The top five priorities identified for the village through this workshop were:

- Improve health provision
- Improve safety in the High Street
- Improve local roads
- Parking – either more or better enforcement
- Public transport.

(b) *Emerging Core Strategy* (see Volume 4 of Report of Consultation).

15.1.18 The Emerging Core Strategy (Examination Document CS8) contained draft settlement strategies for each place, with background context covering siting and size, landscape and built character, key views, leisure, sports and community facilities, and local business. The evidence base was summarised and presented by place at this stage to inform the consultation. Two options were put forward regarding the redevelopment of the Hicks Road General Employment Area:

- Option 1: 40-60 dwellings, consolidated employment uses, shops and a doctors' surgery
- Option 2: 100 dwellings and shops and services. Relocation of employment uses to the southern edge of the village.

15.1.19 The public response to the Emerging Core Strategy showed high support for the main proposals:

- Over 80% supported the vision and spatial strategy for Markyate.
- 87% agreed with Hicks Road coming forward for redevelopment to accommodate the majority of the village's future needs. Option 1 for the redevelopment of Hicks Road received nearly twice as much support as Option 2.

(c) Consultation Draft (see Volume 6 of the Report of Consultation)

15.1.20 In this version of the plan, feedback was sought on the proposed Markyate Place Strategy, including proposals for around 190 homes between 2006 and 2031. A mixed use redevelopment was proposed at Hicks Road (Strategic Site SS2) for various uses including business and industrial/warehousing units and up to 80 homes. A new employment area on the southern edge of the village was not proposed.

15.1.21 In particular, the role of this consultation was to gain feedback on draft proposals for site SS2 and highlight any specific issues that had become apparent for that settlement and what alternative options were for tackling these issues.

15.1.22 Few responses were received about Markyate. However, of those who did respond, some felt that the Hicks Road site did not need any retail or industrial uses and that the focus of planning should be the High Street.

(d) Citizen's Panel

15.1.23 Views from residents were separately sought through the Council's Citizens Panel. This helped to ensure that the views and aspirations of a representative range of people from all parts of the borough were considered.

15.1.24 This consultation highlighted a high level of support for the general approach to Markyate.

Sustainability Appraisal

15.1.25 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) has considered the issue of the distribution of growth (see response to Issue 2) and also considered each individual place strategy against a series of sustainability criteria (which were agreed following consultation with key bodies). The full assessments are contained in Examination Document SUB3 and the assessment of the Markyate Place Strategy can be found in paragraph 6.7.6 and Appendix F. Key conclusions are as follows:

- As a result of the proposed level of housing growth, a number of adverse and uncertain effects (but no very adverse effects) have been identified.
- Positive effects have been forecast against the majority of the social and economic objectives. Delivery of the spatial strategy and redeveloping the Hicks Road site should make the village a more attractive place to live and work by providing a range of services, employment and housing.

Conclusions

15.1.26 Markyate is a large village with over 2,700 people. It has some distinctive features which the Council intends to support. In particular, Markyate's historic

character should be preserved and where possible enhanced. The High Street forms part of Watling Street (Roman road) and the village evolved as a stagecoach stop on the route between London and the Midlands. The village centre is designated as a Conservation Area and there are many listed buildings.

15.1.27 Another notable feature is Markyate's location in the attractive countryside of the Ver Valley. Most of the countryside surrounding Markyate lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

15.1.28 The village is largely residential in character. There is a small local centre in the High Street, although the number of shops and pubs has declined over the years. Hicks Road General Employment Area provides the main focus of employment, but this site is in urgent need of regeneration. The village's urban structure, character and biodiversity are recognised in the Vision Diagram (Core Strategy Figure 27).

15.1.29 The scope for large-scale change within Markyate is generally limited – the general trend is for small scale redevelopment and conversions to residential use and only a modest change in retail development is anticipated. Most change will be focussed on Hicks Road and guided by a master plan (Examination Document SS2).

15.1.30 The key issue has been how far the village should accommodate growth and change. Within the village envelope, Hicks Road has been identified as the major opportunity for change. Redevelopment of this site has the potential to bring improved facilities to the village and secure a major environmental enhancement.

15.1.31 Consideration has also been given to the possibility of outward expansion of the village, either for housing development or to provide a new employment site for firms relocating from Hicks Road. However, outward expansion was rejected for a number of reasons, including harm to the Green Belt and/or the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, landscape impact and unsustainable location. Furthermore, Markyate is poorly placed for major expansion, as local facilities and services are limited, nearby towns are some distance away and bus services are infrequent.

15.1.32 Seen within this context, it is considered that the approach set out within the Markyate Place Strategy is both appropriate and justified.

Hicks Road planning application

15.1.33 Full planning permission for the redevelopment of the majority of the Hicks Road site was granted in July 2012 (planning application ref: 4/01173/11/MFA). Permission has been granted for:

“Comprehensive redevelopment to provide a range of 75 residential dwellings; new class B1, B2 and B8 accommodation (including the retention of two light industrial buildings within Sharose Court); a new surgery/health centre; 3 commercial units (for Class A1/A2/A3/A4 and B1 use); creation of a public square, associated landscaping; formation of new access roads and provision

of 197 car parking spaces (amended scheme)."

15.1.34 The Planning Statement accompanying the application (Examination Document SS3) contains a full explanation of the proposed development and includes a proposed site plan. Paragraph 1.6 in this document states that Zog Brownfield Ventures (ZBV) is the majority landowner within the Hicks Road Industrial Estate and is keen to forward the renewal/redevelopment of the site. To deliver a comprehensive solution, the application also encompassed the Markyate Surgery and the Hicks road car park (which is owned by the Borough Council).

15.1.35 Further information on planning permission 4/01173/11/MFA is given below:

- The proposed housing consists of 58 houses and 17 flats.
- 2,186 sq. metres (gross internal) of B1/B2/B8 floorspace is proposed, including retained units at Sharose Court.
- It is envisaged that the commercial units (244 sq. metres) will be attractive to restaurants, cafes and small boutique style shops.
- The proposed surgery/health centre (344 sq. metres) is nearly twice the size of the existing doctor's surgery on the site.
- The existing public car park will be replaced by a new car park with the same number of spaces (33).
- Most of the River Ver through the site will be de-culverted.
- Traffic lights will be introduced at the Hicks Road/A5 junction.

15.1.36 The proposals contained in permission 4/01173/11/MFA meet nearly all the planning principles for Strategic Site SS2, as set out on pages 203 and 204 of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy.

15.1.37 Paragraphs 3.72-3.76 in the Planning Statement (SS3) refer to the following parts of Strategic Site SS2, which are outside the planning application boundary:

- The northern part of the employment area. The Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application showed two indicative redevelopment options for this land. One option is for a 60 bed care home (as proposed in the Core Strategy) and the other is for 13 houses.
- 123-131 High Street (Harts Motors), situated on the corner of Hicks Road and High Street. Planning permission was granted in 2001 for 9 dwellings and offices, but has not been implemented.
- JC Windows (on Hicks Road, between 123-131 High Street and the application site). There is potential for two houses on this site.

15.1.38 Paragraph 3.5 in the Planning Statement states that the current planning application is intended to lead the regeneration of site SS2 as a whole and enable these additional land parcels to be potentially developed as later phases.

15.1.39 It seems very likely that the rest of SS2 will come forward for development in the short to medium term. Indeed, a pre-application scheme for 15 dwellings on the Hart Motors site was submitted in 2011. It is known that the owner of the northern part of the employment area also wishes to redevelop his land. Once permission 4/01173/11/MFA is implemented, it may stimulate further interest/development of the wider site.

15.2 Is the identification of the Hicks Road Industrial Estate as a General Employment Area (para 12.1) appropriate and justified?

15.2.1 The Hicks Road Industrial Estate is currently designated as a General Employment Area (GEA) in Policy 31 of the adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan (Examination Document OT1). This designation is appropriate and justified given the size of the site (3 hectares) and its industrial character. Sentence 3 in paragraph 12.1 of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy states that the GEAs are located across the three towns, with one in Markyate.

15.2.2 However, the Core Strategy's proposals for Hicks Road (Strategic Site SS2) will result in a considerable reduction in the area used for B Class uses on the site. It is therefore appropriate that the Council reviews the site's designation through the Site Allocations DPD. This will consider whether GEA designation should be (a) removed or (b) retained, but covering a smaller part of the site.

15.2.3 In view of the above, the Council has proposed a minor change (MC20) to sentence 3 of paragraph 12.1 of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy (see Part 2 of Examination Document SUB5). It is now proposed that this sentence should state: *"The principal GEAs are located in the three towns."*

15.3 Are there adequate measures in place to secure the retention of existing Hicks Road businesses, albeit in different premises?

15.3.1 From the outset in its negotiations with the landowners, the Council has sought to retain as much employment on the site as is practically possible, while still allowing the opportunity for other development to come forward. The Council has had to weigh the loss of some employment space against the benefits a mixed use redevelopment scheme can bring. Principle 3 for Strategic Site SS2 (Core Strategy page 203) states that new commercial units on the site should, where possible, enable existing tenants to remain on site. There will also be opportunities for other forms of employment through the proposed retail units and potentially in the future with the care home.

15.3.2 The Hicks Road Masterplan (Examination Document SS2) includes the following description of the existing industrial estate at paragraph 3.1:

"The estate currently includes a mix of industrial units, warehouses, workshops, a depot and office space (providing c. 11,500 sq.m.)."

*“Whilst some buildings on site are relatively new (including Sharose Court) others are poor quality, inefficient and lacking in modern services and amenities. As a result ZBV * has been finding it increasingly difficult to let floorspace within these buildings, despite continual marketing and proximity to A5 and village centre.”*

“...a number of the buildings on site are utilitarian / functional in appearance and hence visually detract from the wider village.”

* ZBV – see paragraph 15.1.26 above.

15.3.3 Paragraph 5.2 in the masterplan looks in more detail at employment considerations and existing tenants. This paragraph indicates that:

“Employment density is very low at the site with currently only c. 40 people employed from Markyate and the surrounding areas. Approximately half of the employment is currently within Sharose Court, leaving relatively few employees on the majority of the site.”

15.3.4 Paragraph 5.2 concludes by stating that:

“ZBV and their agents (Brasier Freeth) are continuing to engage with the existing tenants at the site to ascertain their future needs and options for accommodating these requirements within the redevelopment (where possible).”

15.3.5 Further relevant material can be found in the Planning Statement accompanying planning application 4/01173/11/MFA for the redevelopment of most of the Hicks Road site (Examination Document SS3). Paragraph 3.10 in this document confirms that there are only about 40 employees on the existing industrial estate, based on surveys in 2008 and 2010. The following explanation is given:

“This relatively low employment density is a function of the poor and inefficient state of the existing buildings and the nature of the existing uses (many of which employ a low number of people).”

15.3.6 The Planning Statement estimates (paragraph 3.11) that the redevelopment scheme is likely to result in an increase in employment on the site:

“It is anticipated that the revised development could generate approximately 90 full time equivalent jobs (including both new employment opportunities and those retained on site within Sharose Court and the Markyate Surgery.”

15.3.7 Existing tenants are considered in paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13 of the Planning Statement. Paragraph 3.12 repeats the point made in paragraph 15.3.4 above, whilst paragraph 3.13 adds that:

“Furthermore, in addition to the proposed premises on Sharose Court

which have been designed specifically to cater to the existing tenants who wish to be accommodated on-site. The revised scheme now includes a replacement MOT (B2 unit), situated on the corner of Hicks Road and the A5. This unit has also been designed in consultation with existing tenants to ensure that the unit can cater to their operation requirements."

15.3.8 The South West Herts Employment Land Update (Examination Document ED 8) considers employment land in Markyate (see paragraphs 4.53-4.58). Paragraph 4.57 mentions the possibility of firms from Markyate relocating to sites closer to M1 Junction 9, including the Calaflow site. The Calaflow site is a previously developed Green Belt site, located next to the Waggon and Horses public house at Flamstead about 1.5 miles south east of Markyate.

15.3.9 Planning permission (ref. 4/02349/08/MFA) has been granted for the redevelopment of the Calaflow site and construction has commenced. The scheme involves seven industrial units for B1 B2 and B8 uses, comprising 2,170 sq. metres of floorspace. Each unit is less than 235 sq. metres, in order to provide suitable modern accommodation for small firms in accordance with Policy 36 in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 (Examination Document OT 1). These units may be suitable for some of the firms currently located at Hicks Road.

15.3.10 Paragraphs 15.3.2-15.3.9 above show that:

- The existing premises at Hicks Road are mainly of a poor quality, vacancy rates are high and employment levels are very low.
- The redevelopment proposals are likely to result in an increase in jobs on the site.
- A replacement MOT facility is included in the redevelopment scheme to meet the needs of the existing operator and some other firms currently at Hicks Road may choose to move into the retained Sharose Court units or the proposed new units.
- The new development at the Calaflow site may meet the needs of some firms currently based at Hicks Road.

15.3.11 It is concluded that adequate measures are in place to secure the retention of existing Hicks Road businesses, albeit in different premises. However, as the land at Hicks Road and the Calaflow site are in private ownership, the Council cannot guarantee any particular firm will move into the new premises. Much will depend on the goodwill and co-operation between the landowners and the existing tenants.

15.4 Should there be a policy for the village as a whole in order to ensure the Council's vision will be delivered?

15.4.1 This is not considered to be necessary. The Markyate Place Strategy contains a

vision, followed by a series of objectives – both those common to all places and specific local objectives for Markyate, and a strategy for the village.

15.4.2 The Place Strategy is intended to explain what the Council will do to achieve the vision and objectives. This is supported through policies in the ‘theme’ sections of the Core Strategy and will be further supported by the other documents that will comprise the Local Planning Framework e.g. specific site allocations. The Place Strategy is the one location where the policy main threads for Markyate are brought together, and was considered beneficial to local communities in understanding how the planning framework related to the village.

15.4.3 It is unnecessary to have a separate policy. Separate policies are only contained for the two ‘Key Regeneration Areas’ within the Borough, which are both located at Hemel Hempstead (see Key Diagram, Map 1 of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy). These policies act as a framework to guide significant levels of growth and change in these locations and provide a clear context for the associated master plans.

15.4.4 What may however be helpful is for the Council to explain the above approach more clearly in section 19, which provides an introduction to the place strategies. This would be the best place to articulate the approach which is common to all place strategies.