



# **Spatial Strategy**

## **for the town of**

### **Hemel Hempstead**

**June 2009**

## **1.0 Spatial Strategy for Hemel Hempstead**

### **1.1 Characteristics**

#### 1.2 Siting & size

Hemel Hempstead is the largest town in the Borough of Dacorum and it has a population of 82,074 with 33,397 dwellings (2001 Census). The town lies in the north London arc some 25 miles from central London and is surrounded by open countryside. Watford lies to the south and St. Albans to the east. Hemel has excellent links to London and the Midlands, via the M1 and M25 motorways and the main railway line stations in Boxmoor and Apsley. London Luton airport is also accessible via the M1 and the A41 provides good access to Watford, Berkhamsted, Tring and Aylesbury.

1.3 A mix of woodland, farmland and other uses in the Green Belt surrounds the town. The Gorhambury Estate (managed by the Crown Estate Commissioners) lies to the east of the town, the greater part of the estate and manor house lying beyond the M1. The separation of the town from small villages and settlements such as Potten End, Piccotts End and Rucklers Lane is relatively narrow and their separate identity maintained by the Green Belt.

#### 1.4 Landscape character

The Open Space Study<sup>1</sup>, the Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum<sup>2</sup> (LCA) and the Urban Nature Conservation Study for Hemel Hempstead (UNC)<sup>3</sup>, as well as the open land strategy in Policy 116 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (1991-2011), highlight the most important features of the open space, landscape character and wildlife resources in Hemel Hempstead.

1.5 Hemel Hempstead is a compact town surrounded by Green Belt and a wide range of topographies from river valleys to dry valleys cut into the slope of the Chilterns. The most distinctive features are the Gade and Bulbourne Valleys with rivers that converge at Two Waters. The town centre forms part of the Gade Valley floor and neighbourhoods are built largely to the west and east of the centre, along the sides of the Gade and Bulbourne Valleys and higher land plateaux. The water meadows of the Bulbourne Valley penetrate the town at Boxmoor, a key wildlife corridor. To the north of the town centre lies Gadebridge Park, a large park that forms a green wedge drawing the countryside into the town centre. It incorporates the former water meadows of the River Gade. The River Gade's natural course has been diverted through the town via the Water Gardens and Grand Union Canal (GUC). A flood alleviation scheme in the form of a trunk sewer diverts water from the river in Gadebridge Park and routes it to Kings Langley Lake, thereby managing

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<sup>1</sup> Open Space Study, 2008 – provides a quantitative and qualitative audit of the supply of open space in the Borough of Dacorum.

<sup>2</sup> Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum, Supplementary Planning Guidance (The Landscape Partnership Ltd, 2004) - is an evaluation of the landscape and policy guidelines for the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011.

<sup>3</sup> Urban Nature Conservation Study for Hemel Hempstead, 2006 – considers the wildlife resources within the six major settlements in the Borough of Dacorum.

water flows in the town centre and parts of Apsley and reducing flood risk. The GUC and the main railway line cut across the Bulbourne and Upper Gade Valley floors parallel to the River Bulbourne, from the west of Hemel Hempstead to the most southerly point of the town. On the edge of the settlement, to the west of the GUC and to the northeast of Gadebridge Park, the land rises steeply allowing sweeping views of the countryside.

1.6 The landscape design of Hemel Hempstead incorporates green gateways into the town. A substantial amount of open space exists amongst the residential urban area and this largely features dry valleys and open ridge lines that were left undeveloped. A considerable amount of open space is also associated with the rivers, which run like arteries through the town. Open space includes important wooded areas and allotments. Examples of important woodland are Howe Grove and Shrubhill Common Local Nature Reserves. The largest allotment in Hemel Hempstead is in Green End to the west of Hemel Hempstead. Bunkers Park is a Country Park to the southeast of Hemel Hempstead. It is an important leisure space that was given to Dacorum Borough Council by the New Towns Commission for leisure and amenity use, and for wildlife. It extends into Longdeans Nature Reserve, and provides wonderful views on the south eastern side of the town.

1.7 Some of the open space and woodland act as buffers between neighbourhoods and industrial areas, while other spaces provide a community focus as parks, leisure space and for schools. Altogether, these different forms of open space and woodland produce strategic wildlife corridors, green wedges and links to the countryside. Open spaces that provide a cohesive series of large green corridors and wedges on the western side of town include Boxmoor, Shrubhill Common, Warners End Valley, Fields End, Gadebridge and Lockers Park. On the eastern side such large spaces are more fragmented, but open spaces are interconnected. Important green corridors are the Nickey Line, the GUC and River Gade and linked spaces from Leverstock Green to the Long Deans Valley and areas of Adeyfield towards the Maylands Business Park. There is also a string of open spaces on the northern and eastern sides and ridges of the Gade. Shendish Golf Course, Hen's Head Wood, Westbrook Hay, Roughdown Common SSSI, and Sheethanger Common are important landscape features on the southern side of the town. They punctuate the landscape on the brow and southern slopes of the steeply graded, manicured bank of the Upper Gade Valley and the Bulbourne Valley.

1.8 The Nickey Line makes up a significant man-made wildlife corridor in Hemel Hempstead. It is a disused local railway line that ran from the main railway station to Harpenden until 1963. Its route through Hemel Hempstead ran via the Plough Roundabout, through the back of the Marlowes cutting through Midland Hill and Queensway, before snaking its way round to the north of Maylands Business Park. Since 1963, the town centre has had substantial redevelopment and the main section of that line remains as a green corridor for leisure purposes, starts from the corner of Midland Road and Lower Adeyfield Road. The route continues on to Maylands Business Park and Harpenden.

### 1.9 New Town History

Hemel Hempstead was developed as a New Town in the early 50's and 60's. It was one of the first New Towns that were built to provide much needed affordable housing after the Second World War: it is unusual in being built on and around the valleys. Prior to the New Town development, Hemel Hempstead consisted of a historic town centre with links to Henry VIII and three neighbourhoods or villages of Boxmoor, Apsley and Leverstock Green. The Gade Valley and Apsley were considered the main employment area with John Dickinson's Apsley Paper Mill as the dominant employer of the town. The Gade Valley had been the centre of the paper making industry in the nineteenth century: there were a number of mills in the valley (e.g. Frogmore, Apsley, Nash (Mills) and Home Park) and houses associated with the mill owners and their families locally (e.g. Shendish, Abbotts Hill, Nash House).

1.10 The original 1947 New Town masterplan was the work of Geoffrey Jellicoe, a well-respected architect and landscape designer. His design was based around a new town centre with civic buildings, a theatre and a library set amongst ornamental water gardens. A new employment area to the east of Hemel (close to main arterial road links), and a series of neighbourhoods with local centres (based on the neighbourhood principles) were built to the east and west of the new town centre. Apsley and Two Waters employment area was also a very important part of the New Town design. The historic town centre, which lies to the north of the new town centre, became known as the Old Town and was later designated a conservation area. The expansion of Hemel Hempstead and its accessibility to London and the M1, led to larger companies such as Kodak and BP relocating their head offices to the town centre and the new industrial estate at Maylands.

1.11 Since the New Town development started in the early 1950's, additional neighbourhood development has continued from the 1960's to the 1990's. The town grew from 54,000 people and 15,600 households in 1960, to 82,100 people and 33,400 households in 2001. The last 'neighbourhood' to be added was Woodhall Farm, which was a private development. Since then levels of development have been much lower but steady: they have not kept pace with locally generated housing needs. There has been firm Green Belt protection. There has also been the redevelopment of older industrial areas such as the old John Dickinson site in Apsley. Now again, growth is being directed to Hemel Hempstead through the East of England Plan.

### 1.12 Planned Regeneration

Because significant parts of the town were built and developed in a concentrated period in the 1950s, particularly the town centre, most neighbourhood centres and the heart of Maylands, they have become tired looking and not always fit for modern purposes. This prompted the Council to address regeneration of the New Town 50 years on and in response it developed the Hemel 2020 Vision (refer to paragraph 3.4). Key regeneration projects are the town centre, including the civic area and Maylands Business Park. The town centre redevelopment is known as Waterhouse Square. This includes all of the land that makes up the existing civic area and college site,

land from Coombe Street to the old market place, and the Water Gardens multi-storey car park. The new development is due to start in 2014 and will include new civic facilities, a performing arts venue, a covered bus station, residential accommodation, shops and restaurants.

The regeneration of the Maylands Business Park is guided by the Maylands Masterplan. This sets out the vision and key objectives for the area. An Area Action Plan will bring forward the Masterplan, setting out in more detail how the area should grow and change. It will also discuss options for residential development, a park and ride facility and a green energy centre.

#### 1.14 Built Character

The Urban Design Assessment for Hemel Hempstead<sup>4</sup> (UDAHH) subdivides the town into five character zones: town centre zone, inner zone, New Town neighbourhoods, Post-New Town/peripheral zone, and employment zone. The character of Hemel's neighbourhoods are primarily low-rise terraced housing and flats, however there are areas of higher density and taller buildings nearer the town centre. Recent developments in the town have provided a higher and denser built form and the town centre has accommodated much taller building. The Kodak building (Kodak's headquarters) was built in 1971 and remains the tallest building in the town centre at 20 storeys tall. Currently, the Kodak building (now known as Image) and the surrounding land is being renovated to deliver a significant amount of housing. The Plough roundabout lies next to Image and is an important highway hub in the centre of the town; it is more commonly known as the 'magic' roundabout because its design includes a series of six roundabouts around one central roundabout with two-way traffic.

1.15 Table 1 shows the key urban design principles established for each zone. The map showing the zones can be seen in the Urban Design Assessment for Hemel Hempstead at page 10. The open land structure and topography of the town are critical to this character.

**Table 1: Summary of Key Principles of Urban Design Zones**

| <b>Urban Design Zone</b> | <b>Area of Town</b>  | <b>Key Principles</b>   |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Town Centre Zone         | Along the High Street and, Marlowes to the Plough roundabout.                            | Serve civic, cultural and educational purposes. There is considerable potential to add additional residential uses to the zone. |
| Inner Zone               | East of the High Street and Marlowes, west of Leighton Buzzard Road, south of St. Albans | Provide quality medium to high density housing with potential for three storey very high-density units, with strong links       |

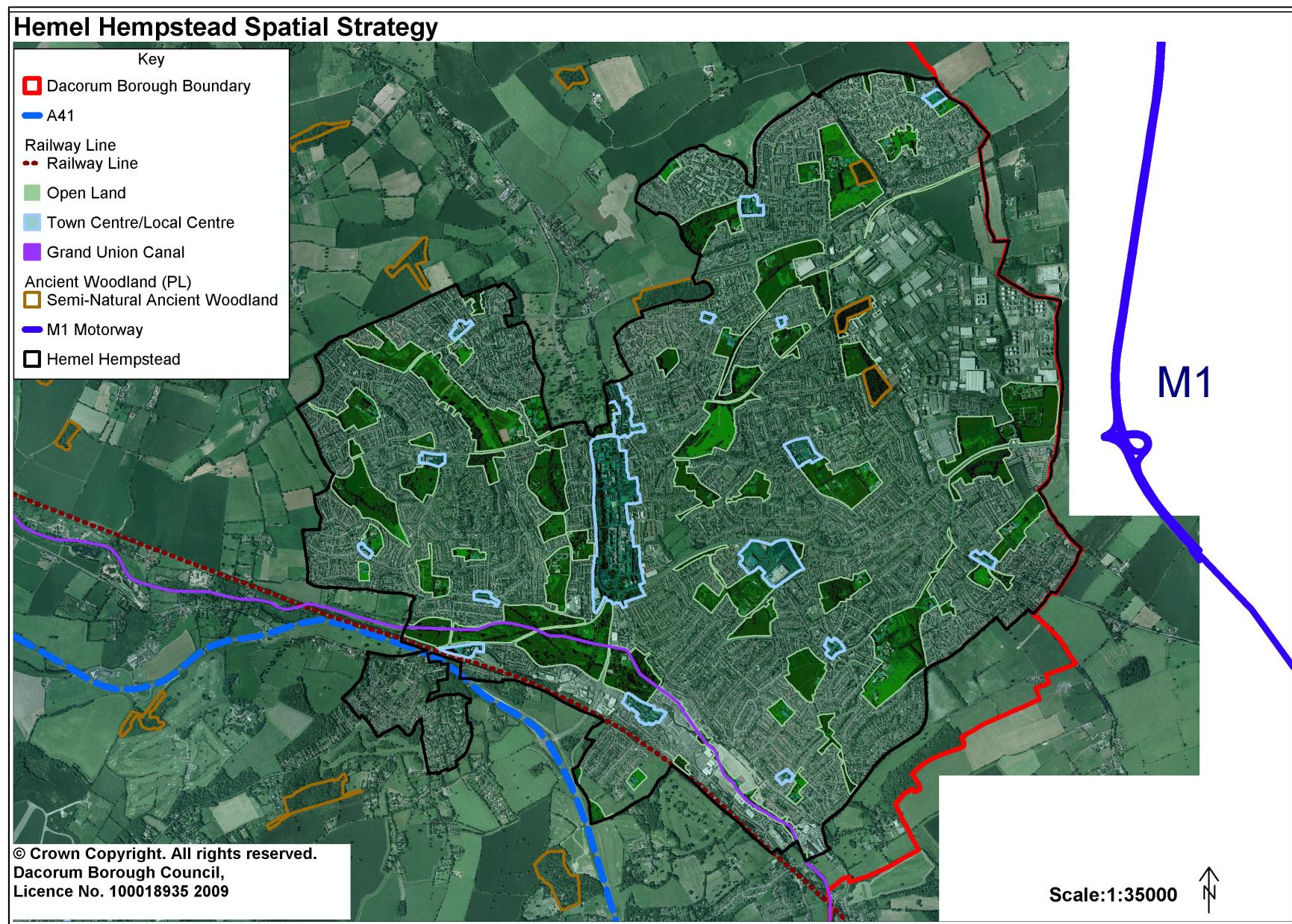
<sup>4</sup> The Urban Design Assessment for Hemel Hempstead (Urban Practitioners, 2006) provides baseline evidence, settlement principles and urban design guidelines for Hemel Hempstead.

|                                   |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
|                                   | Road, in Apsley along the London Road and in Boxmoor.      | to the town centre and the train station.  |
| New Town neighbourhoods           | The New Town neighbourhoods.                               | Contains a range of typologies with a range of densities, low to very high, integrated with local centres, open land and schools.  |
| Post-New Town and Peripheral Zone | Bunkers Park, Manor Estate, Felden and upper Boxmoor.      | Contains primarily detached housing with very low to low densities. This should accommodate low to medium densities.   |
| Employment Zone                   | This includes Maylands, Two Waters and Apsley and Paradise | Generally has buildings with a large industrial footprint. Much of Apsley is being converted to a range of other uses, and this part of the zone represents an opportunity for integrated uses with a high to very high density adjacent to the train station. |

### 1.16 Key views

The key views within Hemel Hempstead are the views of Gadebridge Park from the Old Town and the Leighton Buzzard Road, views of and within the Old Town and Boxmoor open land. Churches in Hemel such as St. Mary's Church in the Old Town and in Apsley, and St. John's Church in Boxmoor also provide key views and vistas (UDAHH, 2006). Key views of the former Kodak building include the vista from the train station, Two Waters junction and St. Albans Road. There are also long distance views out to the countryside and across valley sides because of the topography. The edge of the settlement also provides attractive views of the Gade Valley to the south of Hemel Hempstead e.g. to Shendish or from Sheethanger Common. Other significant views at the edge of the settlement include Two Waters gateway, from the A41 slip road coming into Hemel, and Marchmont Farm off the Link Road to the north of Hemel Hempstead.

**Figure 1.1 – Hemel Hempstead Context Map**



### **1.17 Leisure & sports facilities**

Hemel Hempstead's main leisure and sports facilities comprise Leisure World, Dacorum's Sports Centre, Esporta (private sports centre) and The Snow Centre. Leisure World includes a multi-screen cinema, ice-rink, ten-pin bowling and indoor multi-slide water fun park, as well as a bar and clubs. Just next door to Jarman Fields are Sportspace athletics ground and The Snow Centre, with indoor ski-slopes.

1.18 Small theatres in Boxmoor and the Old Town host concerts and plays. However there is a recognised need for a new large performing arts venue in the town centre to replace the Pavilion which was demolished in 2002 because of structural problems. This is being planned as part of the Waterhouse Square project. Local community centres provide an alternative venue for events, cultural activities, community gatherings and keep fit classes. Other leisure opportunities include golfing at two golf courses, walking and boating along the GUC, and walking in the countryside that surrounds the town. Gadebridge Park, Bunkers Park, Northridge Park and Boxmoor are other outside spaces that are well used.

### **1.19 Local business**

The key areas of employment in Hemel Hempstead are based in the centre of the town and to the east and the south of the town. Hemel Hempstead has a pedestrianised town centre, which includes the Marlowes Shopping Centre and a recent addition, called the Riverside Shopping Centre; this sits in-between the 'magic' roundabout and Marlowes Shopping Centre. Riverside comprises restaurants, a department store and other retail stores. North of the pedestrianised zone is a supermarket and discount food store: further north is the existing civic zone and a range of businesses from the service sector. Beyond the Marlowes, lies the Old Town, which is full of historic character with many small independent businesses, cafes and restaurants. In addition, to the town centre functions, Hemel Hempstead has a number of local centres within its New Town neighbourhoods and some additional local centres in Apsley, Boxmoor and Leverstock Green. Local centres provide a range of local shops, services and facilities.

1.20 Maylands Business Park generates the largest amount of business other than the town centre and it is the largest area of employment land in the East of England. It provides around 16,500 jobs and 67% of commuting to the town is to this location. Other employment areas include Two Waters and Apsley (including Nash Mills) and Paradise. Apsley's employment area still plays a vital employment role to local business. There are 'out of centre retail locations' on the edge of Apsley, in Two Waters and on part of the old John Dickinson employment site that was redeveloped in the late 1990's. A large supermarket was part of this redevelopment. Another large supermarket is situated next to Leisure World at Jarman Fields (east of the town centre).

1.21 Hemel Hempstead is currently seeking Fairtrade Town status, which is achieved by demonstrating that Fairtrade produce is readily available to buy, eat and drink in a number of shops, cafes and restaurants.

## 1.22 Social & Community

The main social and community functions in the town (other than community centres/halls mentioned under leisure facilities) include facilities related to health, education and religion. To the east of the town centre lies Hemel Hempstead Hospital, which has recently been downgraded, with A&E services moving to Watford. The changes provide an opportunity to consolidate the Hospital buildings while leaving land for redevelopment. There is also the possibility of resiting the general hospital (with an Urgent Care Centre and GP led service facilities) in Maylands Business Park. Hemel Hempstead also has a Health Centre in the town centre and a range of doctor's surgeries in local neighbourhoods and the town centre. A new health centre is also planned for Apsley local centre, which will involve the resiting of Lincoln House surgery as part of a new health facility on London Road.

1.23 Hemel Hempstead has a range of independent schools, faith schools and state schools. Some of these schools provide extended activities outside of school hours for children and adults, such as language classes. The Dacorum Campus of West Herts College offers A levels and higher education courses and is planning for the redevelopment of the campus in the town centre. A variety of faith facilities are situated around the town including a mosque. Some smaller religious groups share premises with other faith groups and use community centre facilities for faith meetings. A multi-cultural faith centre or Ceremonies of Life Centre is also sought.

## **2.0 The Vision for Hemel Hempstead**

### **Vision**

Hemel Hempstead will embrace new development and aim to promote pride of place, taking forward the 1947 Hemel Hempstead New Town Development Corporation motto 'Greater, Richer, More Beautiful' into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Its long-term strategy to 2031 as a Key Centre for Development and Change will be to deliver a minimum of 6,500 new dwellings (between 2006 and 2031). Hemel Hempstead will provide a better quality of life and prosperity for its residents and business community. This will be achieved by delivering a greater range of high quality housing to suit long-term need, whilst regenerating and growing Maylands Business Park through the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan and the town centre through development of Waterhouse Square. The Old Town will be conserved and connections to it strengthened. Improved leisure services and facilities will include a key performing arts venue in the Waterhouse Square development, improved accessibility to the Nickey Line green corridor, the enhanced setting of the River Gade, a new urban park and strengthened links between the new urban park and Gadebridge Park. Additional business and leisure activities are to be encouraged in the town centre, employment areas and the main out of centre retail locations. Cohesive communities will be promoted in the town's neighbourhoods. There will be improved public transport links between Maylands Business Park, the town centre and the main railway station in Hemel Hempstead and a new covered bus station in the town centre. Key development schemes will contain renewable generation technologies in line with the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM (BRE: Environmental Assessment Method) for non-residential development to provide exemplars for other schemes to follow.

### **Question 1 (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with the vision for Hemel Hempstead?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, what should be different? (Please see questionnaire)**

## **3.0 The Issues and Opportunities**

### ***East of England Plan***

3.1 The East of England Plan (EoE Plan) provides the context for our local planning policies. The published version (May 2008) sets a clear direction by identifying Hemel Hempstead as a Key Centre for Development and Change (KCDC). The town is therefore the focus for housing and employment growth in Dacorum.

The policies which require a review of the strategic Green Belt boundaries at Hemel Hempstead to enable us to deliver a minimum of 17,000 homes in the Borough between 2006 and 2031 have been set aside, although are subject to review (see below).

Hertfordshire County Council and St Albans City and District Council recently challenged the East of England Plan in the High Court. The reasons for this challenge were that substantial housing growth at Hemel Hempstead (as set out in Policy LA2) was introduced at too late a stage in the plan making process to allow a full environmental assessment of this location to be made against other options. The judge agreed with these concerns and has announced his intention to delete those parts of the plan that relate to strategic housing growth in the Green Belt at Hemel Hempstead. It is not yet known whether the Government will appeal against this decision. As a result of the judge's decision we are not consulting on large scale growth and new neighbourhood scale development.

The focus of this consultation is on a lower level of growth and change needed to accommodate at least 6,500<sup>5</sup> new homes in the town (2006-2031). This may still require some small-scale sites in the Green Belt, but these will be considered if necessary at a later date.

It is important to be aware that the issue of strategic growth at Hemel Hempstead may be reintroduced either as a result of an appeal or in the review of the East of England Plan. Work on this review is already underway, with consultation scheduled for September.

Other relevant policies in the EoE Plan relate to employment provision and transport. Policy E3 states that employment land reviews should identify sufficient land to meet the needs of the business expected to assist regeneration and ensure growth. Hemel Hempstead is noted as a Regional Transport Node in Policy T5. As such it has a priority to facilitate movement between Regional Transport Nodes (e.g. Luton/Dunstable, Watford and St. Albans) and access to London, as well as improve interchange facilities between the nodes.

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<sup>5</sup> This estimate is based on the assumption that the Local Plan target of 360 new homes each year will be carried forward.

## **Dacorum Borough Local Plan**

3.2 The development we know we need to deliver should help regenerate the town by bringing social, physical and economic changes. The existing Local Plan<sup>6</sup> provides a starting point for considering how to take this level of development forward, but it needs adaptation. The Local Plan aims to provide for commercial and industrial development and new homes, while respecting environmental objectives; using developed areas in the most efficient way, while making them more attractive; conserving both cultural heritage and natural resources; and minimising the need to travel.

## **Hemel 2020 Vision**

3.5 The Core Strategy of the LDF must follow national and regional policies. It incorporates the strategies of the Hemel 2020 Vision and Maylands Masterplan; and takes on board key issues identified from a variety of technical studies and consultation. The Core Strategy will include policies to realise the ambitions of the Hemel 2020 Vision and will move forward identified challenges and opportunities for change from 2020 up to 2031.

3.6 The needs of New Towns are recognised in the EoE Plan Policy SS3 with growth directed largely to New Towns to stimulate regeneration. The Hemel Hempstead 2020 Vision provides a framework for the delivery of five key regeneration objectives and projects for Hemel Hempstead. A sixth objective was added in 2008, after the Hemel 2020 Vision was updated to reflect the implications of the EoE Plan's growth agenda. The objectives are as follows:

1. **Waterhouse Square** - regeneration of the northern section of the town centre and the Water Gardens multi-storey car park, to provide additional shopping facilities, a new civic 'heart,' performing arts venue, bus station, multi-cultural centre, offices, homes and a new college facility.
2. **Wider town centre** – it will deal with issue of redeveloping Hospital land at Hillfield Road and dilapidated buildings along the Marlowes. Consideration will also be given to providing an exciting and thriving town centre, with additional open space and links to the Nickey Line.
3. **Maylands** - to rejuvenate the Maylands Business Area to achieve a vibrant, dynamic and premier business-led community and first choice investment location with some residential development, leisure space and a Green Energy Centre.
4. **Neighbourhood Centres** – to regenerate, reinvigorate and green the neighbourhood local centres.
5. **Green spaces** - the main priorities are to improve the networks of open spaces, create a new Urban Park in the south of Hemel Hempstead and

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<sup>6</sup> Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 – contains policies for guiding development. It was written in accordance with PPG12 and other Government policy statements, Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) and the Hertfordshire County Structure Review (1991-2011).

extend Bunkers Park. The Urban Park aims to enhance the main green entrance point at Two Waters and the gateway corridor from Two Waters to the Plough roundabout. Other priorities will be to improve the green space enclosed by Two Waters Road, Durrants Hill Road and Lawn Lane in Apsley, provide continuous green links throughout the town and enhance the green spaces in Boxmoor including Heath Park and the GUC. Bunkers Park should be extended with additional sport pitches.

6. ***Growth of Hemel Hempstead*** – to respond to the designation of the town as a ‘Key Centre for Development and Change’ and the need to provide significant numbers of new homes, jobs and associated facilities.

## **Key Issues**

3.7 A list of the key issues for the town is provided below.

### **Figure 3.1 – Key Issues for Hemel Hempstead**

#### **Housing**

- Shortage of affordable housing

#### **Economic Prosperity**

- Regeneration and expansion of Maylands (part of HH2020 vision)
- The future prospects of Buncefield
- Regeneration of the town centre (part of HH2020 vision)

#### **Transport**

- Public transport improvements and state of highways
- Sustainable access to services and facilities
- Traffic congestion
- Interchange facilities in the town centre (part of HH2020 vision)
- Connecting the Old Town to the town centre (part of HH2020 vision)

#### **Other Infrastructure**

- A new Borough Park/Urban Park (part of HH2020 vision)
- The need for new schools
- Town stadium
- Burial space
- Deficit of 6 hectares leisure space
- New Hospital (and range of services it contains) (part of HH2020 vision)
- Performing Arts Venue (part of HH2020 vision)
- Additional cultural and community facilities (part of HH2020 vision)
- Additional sports facilities (part of HH2020 vision)

#### **Existing Assets**

- Protect and enhance existing greenspace and wildlife
- Protecting and enhancing the Old Town
- Improving and greening local centres (part of HH2020 vision)

#### **Urban Design**

- Pride and image of the town (part of HH2020 vision)
- Improving green corridors through the town centre (part of HH2020 vision)

## **Question 2 (Hemel)**

**Are there any additional key issues we should be considering?**

**Yes/No**

**Please list. (Please see questionnaire)**

### ***Addressing the Issues***

3.8 The affordable housing shortage is a Borough-wide issue (refer to 'Themes' section of the main Core Strategy consultation paper). The provision of affordable housing is closely related to the delivery of housing overall.

3.7 Taking into account potential levels of development in other settlements, Hemel Hempstead must deliver around 6,500 homes to achieve the minimum level of housing over the period 2006-2031. The level of new housing at Hemel Hempstead should be sufficient to accommodate the natural population and household growth of the town. The Housing Land Availability Paper<sup>7</sup> and the Population: Background Note for the Core Strategy<sup>8</sup> explain the methods we have used to calculate the land availability and the levels of growth and population assumptions that have been made. We have concluded that there should be sufficient capacity to deliver more than 6,500 dwellings within the town. We will therefore only need to consider whether small Green Belt releases are required in the light of future conclusions on housing potential from other settlements and the need to maintain a contingency in the overall housing land supply.

The regeneration issues will be tackled through the Hemel 2020 Vision and the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan. Issues related to transport will be directed to the Highway Authority and opportunities to improve the situation will be considered through town centre regeneration, the Hemel Hempstead Urban Transport Plan and action following Hemel Hempstead transport modelling.

The issues under the 'Other Infrastructure' list are partly the ambitions of the Hemel 2020 Vision. With regards to the issue of a new hospital, the West Hertfordshire NHS Trust is planning a new local community hospital for Hemel Hempstead, with A&E services at Watford. It will be sited either on its current site in a consolidated footprint, or in the Maylands Business Park. The services provided will include an Urgent Care Centre and GP led services. The need for any new schools will be planned with the help of the County Council. The town stadium/leisure complex is subject to a feasibility study, which looks at the deliverability and viability of a facility in the town. This will

<sup>7</sup> Housing Land Availability Paper – set out the Council's housing land availability position based on a robust methodology

<sup>8</sup> Population: Background Note for the Core Strategy – this gives information on population assumptions and calculations used in the Core Strategy.

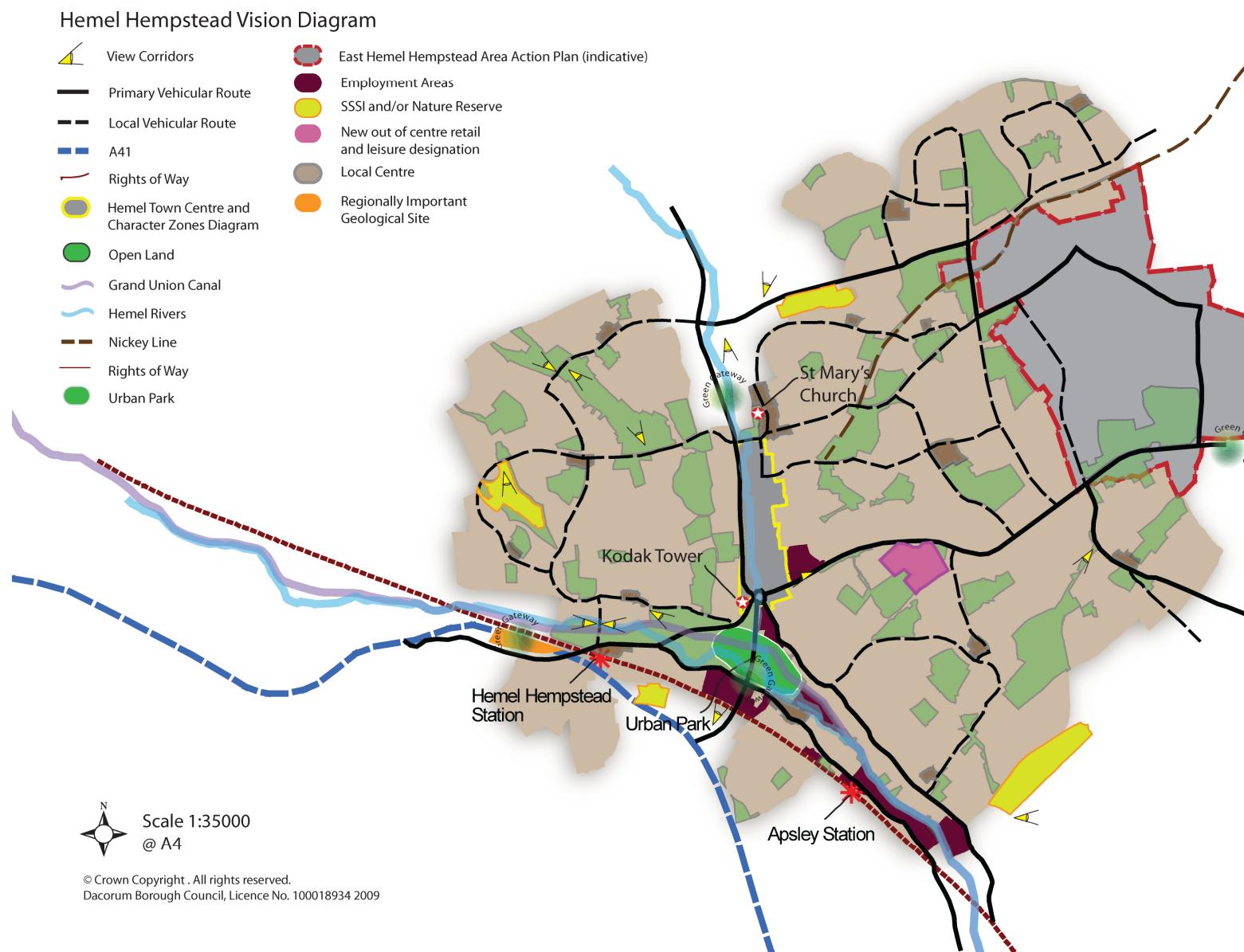
help meet the current leisure space deficit in the town. There is a clear need for future burial space and the Council is exploring options to meet this need.

Issues under ‘Existing Assets’ are being addressed through the Council’s Green Space Strategy, the Hemel 2020 Vision and town centre policies set out in Section 4 of this document. Future development will also seek the protection and enhancement of existing greenspaces and wildlife through the development of sustainable homes and communities, and with the help of developer contributions.

Urban design issues are being considered through regeneration of the town centre and Maylands and green ‘corridor’ improvements addressed by the Council’s Green Space Strategy). The recommendations of the Urban Design Assessment (paragraphs 1.14 – 1.16) will be brought forward.

Key issues that are community related will be addressed jointly through the Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework (LDF).

**Figure 3.2 – Hemel Hempstead Vision Diagram**



## **4.0 Hemel Hempstead Town Centre**

4.1 Hemel Hempstead town centre is a major priority and focus of the Hemel 2020 Vision (as shown in Figure 3.1) and the Spatial Strategy for Hemel Hempstead. The regeneration of the civic area at Waterhouse Square and the wider town centre are a necessary step in delivering a more connected centre, with a better range of land uses in a growing New Town. There is also a need to plan for the reorganisation and reduction of services at the Hemel Hempstead General Hospital. The town as a whole is also to be the focus for new housing and ongoing economic regeneration.

4.2 Conversely, some areas in the town are less buoyant and need to be addressed. Some of our communities have particularly significant needs such as additional public space; this is to be partly addressed by the new urban park initiative. There are other parts of the central area which, while not failing, have their own specific community issues and needs.

4.3 The Hemel Hempstead Urban Design Assessment (HHUDA) has helped us to identify that the town centre also has some unique inherent characteristics that should be safeguarded and enhanced. This includes the River Gade chalk stream running through the town centre, the Water Gardens in the heart of the town centre and the historic old town contrasting with the 1950's/current town centre.

4.4 HHUDA and other technical work have also helped us to understand the wider role and structure of the town centre as:

- the principal shopping area of the town and the borough;
- a significant place for employment;
- an important place for recreation; and
- a significant transport hub.

4.5 It is important that future changes are set within this wider context for the town centre. In light of these studies, a strategy for the future of the town centre area has been prepared. This has been broken down into:

- a) a vision for the town centre;
- b) spatial principles;
- c) a masterplan; and
- d) a policy approach.

### **a) Town centre vision**

#### **Hemel Hempstead town centre vision**

The town centre aim is to be a memorable place where people will want to live, work, learn, visit and enjoy. To achieve this a range of uses including retail, office, leisure cultural facilities and ancillary residential uses will be promoted. It will be an integrated, well connected, vibrant mixed use heart for the town of Hemel Hempstead and the Borough of Dacorum and it will be a safe, inclusive and accessible place for all. The town centre will have a distinctive identity based upon its New Town history with a legible and attractive physical environment with outstanding architecture that makes maximum use of its pedestrian connections and environmental assets.

Our priority will be to integrate the Old Town with the rest of the town centre and restore a more natural character to the River Gade. The land uses of the town centre will incorporate a blend of social, cultural, economic and residential types that both respond to and reinforce the town of Hemel Hempstead as a whole, and are adaptable over the longer term. A town wide public transport system will link the Old Town, the town centre and Riverside shopping centre and public transport accessibility will be improved with a new central bus station in the town centre.

### **Question 3 (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with the vision for Hemel Hempstead town centre?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, what should be different? (Please see questionnaire)**

#### **b) Spatial layout**

(i) Hemel Hempstead Town Centre extends for over a mile from the Plough ("Magic") roundabout in the south to Queensway, on the edge of Gadebridge Park, and the Old Town in the north. It is bounded on the west side by Leighton Buzzard Road and housing areas beyond and, on the east side, by the sloping valley side which rises steeply, in part to the hospital in Hillfield Road.

(ii) The structure of the town centre is also defined by the road network, which enables through traffic to bypass the centre and vehicles requiring access to car parks and premises to circulate around the centre.

(iii) The town centre has developed a number of distinct character zones, which have predominant land use characteristics or common themes in how they are used:

- *The Old Town* was the commercial centre of Hemel Hempstead prior to the town's designation as a New Town and, while the economic strength of the area has declined, its character suggests an opportunity for quality specialist shops as well as local services for residents within the immediate catchment. Based around High Street and Queensway, the quality of the built environment in this zone is recognised in its designation as a conservation area, containing buildings of special architectural or historic importance; St Mary's Church is a notable landmark. The evening economy in the area is a feature of the commercial activity.
- *Waterhouse Square* development is based on the demands of the civic, educational and professional population; notable features are the Dacorum Civic Centre, West Herts College and the River Gade. The Council has already adopted a supplementary planning document to guide redevelopment in this area.

- *The Hospital Zone* encompasses the service areas to the east of the Marlowes, residential properties in Maynard Road, industrial properties in Paradise and the existing General Hospital to the south of Hillfield Road (which the health authority plans to reorganise and contract).
- *Original Marlowes Zone* contains listed villas that provide services for the town, a doctor's surgery and Asda and Iceland foodstores.
- *The Marlowes Shopping Zone* is the prime retail pitch and has consolidated around the Marlowes pedestrian area and in the Marlowes Centre. The present pedestrian environment is now showing signs of deterioration.
- *The Plough Zone* is an important gateway to the Town Centre and has recently been enhanced by the Riverside retail, leisure and residential development; the opening of the River Gade to provide a riverside walk; new views; and the redevelopment of the Kodak building into flats, offices and shops.

(iv) The River Gade, its banks and environs are a major asset to the Town Centre, and also contribute to the wider environmental strategy of maintaining the river valley through the town as open land.

(v) Accessibility to the town centre remains one of its assets, however, there is still a need to maintain and improve pedestrian routes to and within the town centre from adjoining residential areas, car parks and bus stopping points. Improved cycle routes also have a role to play. The linearity of the town centre remains a deterrent to true inter relationship in use of the various zones.

### c) Masterplan

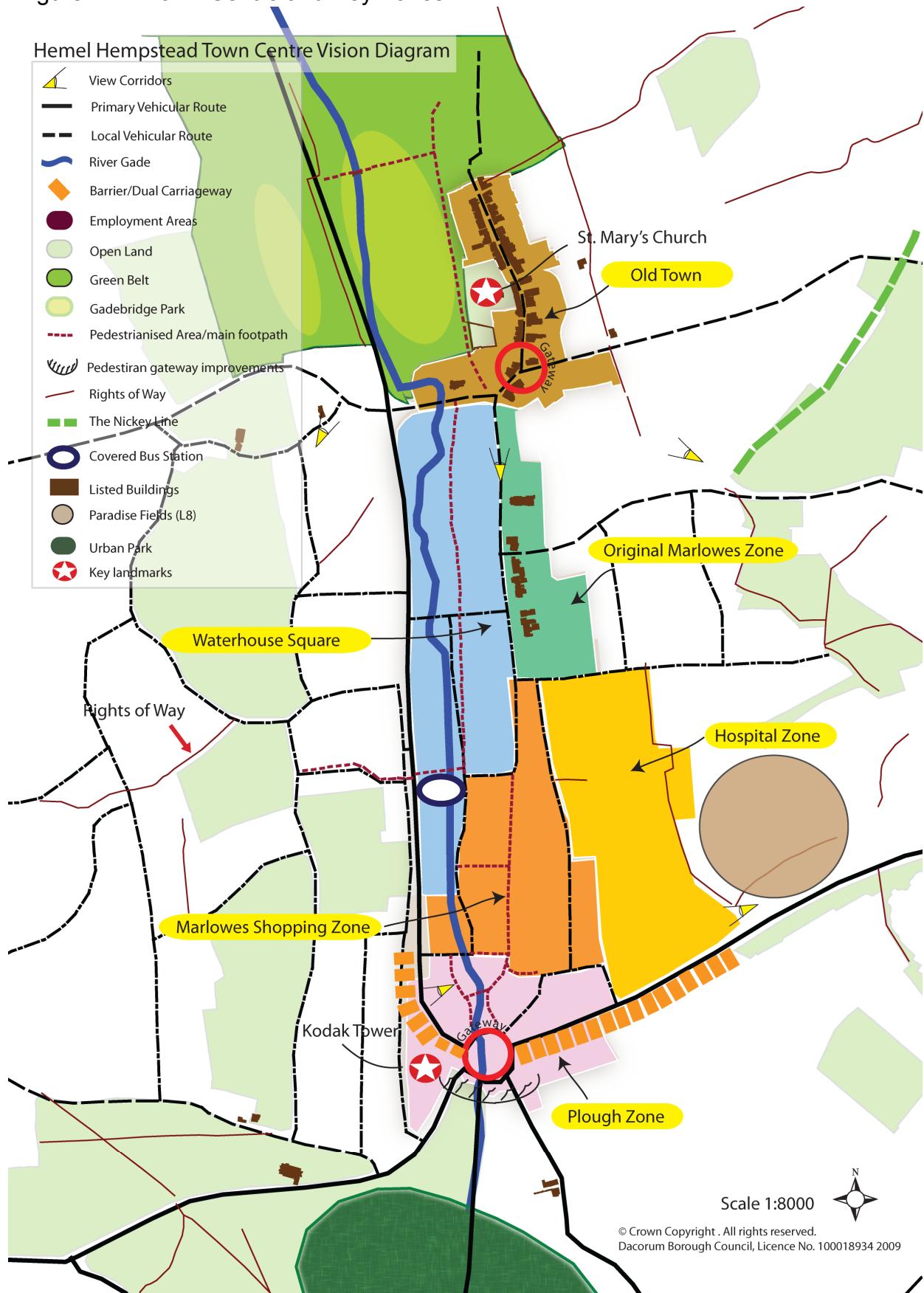
(i) In response to these principles a town centre Masterplan is being drawn up<sup>9</sup> focusing on two areas of anticipated greatest change and activity, and one area meriting greatest control in the central area of the town. The aim of this work is to ensure that the anticipated changes can be achieved as part of a strategy that co-ordinates opportunities and provides clear guidance for future investment and infrastructure, development of sites and regeneration of areas. The town centre as a whole within the selected areas of the town centre are illustrated in Figure 4.1 Character Zones Diagram.

(ii) We have assumed the regeneration of the town centre will include improved leisure, civic, health and educational facilities, new employment opportunities and around 2,400 dwellings to be developed between 2006 and 2031.

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<sup>9</sup> Currently programmed for adoption in March 2012; see the provisional programme of the Council's Local Development Scheme at <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/LDSTimetableNov08.pdf>

Figure 4.1 - Town Centre and Key Zones



#### d) Policy Approach

(i) Suggested Policy X sets out the objectives for the town centre as a whole that we want to achieve. Policy Y sets out what we want to achieve in selected areas of the town centre and the different uses in the character zones. We recognise that the aspirations for the town centre set out in these two policies will take time to deliver and they will be allocated in various phases up to 2031. It is essential that as development opportunities arise they contribute towards achieving the overall objectives set out in Suggested Policies X and Y.

#### Policy X: Town Centre Spatial Principles

Within Hemel Hempstead town centre all development should contribute towards achieving the following:

(i) *Focus* – Make the town centre the focus for retail activity and other town centre uses including leisure, office, hotels and arts/entertainment through mixed-use development, incorporating residential development where appropriate.

(ii) *Sense of place* – Provision of a firm place-making and urban design framework and by means of:

- individual developments contributing to a coherent and recognisably distinctive sense of place for the town centre as a whole and enhancing the distinct identity of each character zone
- the implementation of an integrated movement and streetscape design strategy throughout the key pedestrian zones along the Marlowes to the Old Town and alongside the River Gade
- the joining up of the different zones of the town centre with common design themes to avoid segregation whilst ensuring they retain their distinct character

(iii) *Integrated Transport* - Secure changes to the road network, location of car parks traffic management and public transport systems. These changes will seek to assist in delivering reduced reliance on the private motor car; improved pedestrian integration, cycle and bus priority; and help to deliver a high quality interchange facility at the railway station and the town centre.

(iv) *Environment* - Realise opportunities to enhance the environment and public realm including:

- creating a riverside walk to link Heath Park and Gadebridge Park and a network of new urban open spaces including a new town square
- create gateways to the town centre through the use of buildings, landscape and public art
- providing high quality streets and public realm through a co-ordinated movement and streetscape design strategy for pedestrians and vehicles that maximise views and vistas of key buildings, public art and green spaces
- incorporating sustainable building and layout principles including water and energy conservation measures, renewable energy generation and sustainable urban drainage systems

**Question 4a (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with all of the spatial principles in Policy X?**

**Yes/No**

**Question 4b (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with part (i)?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 4c (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with part (ii)?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 4d (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with part (iii)?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 4e (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with part (iv)?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

## **Policy Y: Town Centre Character Zones**

Within the following six Character Zones, development is expected to achieve the following:

### **Waterhouse Square (by 2021):**

- *Integration* - Ensure that as Waterhouse Square is developed it integrates with the overall town centre, including improved north/south and east/west pedestrian and cycle links and a network of new urban open spaces
- *Open Space* - Provision of a new public square in the central part of the Waterhouse Square area to create a new focus for the town centre
- *The River Gade* - Opening up of the River Gade to re-establish and enhance its biodiversity value and provide continuous public access along it that links to Gadebridge Park and Heath Park
- *Economic and social regeneration* - Regeneration of employment areas to provide homes; reproviding the civic offices, performing arts venue, an integrated bus terminal, library and West Herts College as part of a new cultural focus; complemented by the provision of locally relevant economic and community facilities
- *Vista* - Enhance the environmental quality of the formal vista of St Mary's Church in the Old Town

### **Old Town (by 2021):**

- *Integration* - as development opportunities arise integration with the overall town centre should be achieved, including improved north/south pedestrian and cycle links
- *Economic regeneration* - Enhance the environmental quality of the Old Town
- *Character* – ensure the distinctive character and sense of place of the Old Town is maintained and enhanced

### **Hospital Zone (by 2031):**

- *Health* – health uses may not be retained in this zone if the new local community Hospital is resited at Maylands Business Park, and the surgery is resited to Apsley as part of the new health facility on London Road
- *Residential* - new homes will be provided in this zone
- *Core Business* - Retain a core of business and health uses (doctor's surgery with or without a local Hospital) in the zone through redevelopment of industrial and hospital sites
- *Open Space* - Provision of new green open space to make up for existing deficiencies
- *Access* - opening up access to the zone including provision of pedestrian and cycle access

### **Original Marlowes Zone (by 2031):**

- *Economic and social regeneration* - Regeneration of southern commercial area and car park to provide additional housing complemented by the provision of locally relevant economic and community facilities e.g. professional services, offices and health facilities
- *Villas* - Ensure the distinctive character of the surviving listed buildings is maintained and their surroundings enhanced through further development
- *Integration* - as development opportunities arise such as Waterhouse Square, integration with the overall town centre should be achieved, including improved north/south pedestrian and cycle links

### **Marlowes Shopping Zone (by 2031):**

- *Pedestrianised Area Integration* – Improve the pedestrian streetscape including the ramped area and integrate with the streetscape design for the town centre
- *Shopping Centre* – retain and enhance the core shopping facility for the town centre
- *Economic and Social Regeneration* – Regeneration of the original New Town buildings and the ramped area to provide a more integrated ‘High Street’, together with a core mix of uses to attract vitality to the heart of the town day and night

### **Plough Zone (by 2021):**

- *Vehicular Gateway* - enhance the Plough roundabout gateway and the vehicular route approaching the gateway
- *Pedestrian Gateway Integration* - integrate and enhance pedestrian access and streetscape into the gateway area, especially to pedestrian links converging at the Plough roundabout
- *River Gade* – integrate the riverside walkway approach to Boxmoor Open Space through the Urban Park project

### **Question 5a (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with all of Policy Y?**

**Yes/No**

### **Question 5b (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with the aims for the Waterhouse Square zone?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 5c (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with the aims for the Old Town zone?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 5d (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with the aims for the Hospital zone?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 5e (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with the aims for the original Marlowes zones?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 5f (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with the aims for the Marlowes Shopping zone?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 5g (Hemel)**

**Do you agree with the aims for the Plough zone?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons why. (Please see questionnaire)**

## **5.0 Spatial Strategy themes**

The Spatial Strategy themes for Hemel Hempstead guide how we would make improvements to the town.

### **5.1 Looking after the Environment**

- (i) The Core Strategy will aim to deliver the Hemel 2020 Vision and regeneration aspirations of the town up to 2031. The regeneration of Waterhouse Square and the rejuvenation of Maylands Business Park will provide an important opportunity for the town to take a prestigious lead towards a greener future. The Maylands Green Energy Centre intends to generate heat and power for the business area and potentially new residential neighbourhoods, as well as providing education about green energy use. The Council intends the Waterhouse Square development to include Combined Heat and Power and some Zero Carbon buildings. New development must reduce carbon emissions in line with the Code for Sustainable Homes, relevant Government Policies and the renewable energy policies in the Core Strategy.
- (ii) The urban park project will be delivered to enhance the Two Waters green gateway to the town centre and green corridor along the valleys.
- (iii) The Old Town is a conservation area and includes historic buildings such as St. Mary's Church, the Old Town Hall, the covered market and many important listed buildings. Gadebridge Park and the Bury along Queensway have historic links to Henry VIII. The design of future development must relate sensitively to the existing conservation area, buildings and views of key buildings in the Old Town.
- (iv) The technical studies mentioned in Section 1 provide the Council with guidance for its policies relating to the open space, nature conservation and urban design of the town. Following consideration of, and consultation on the key findings and conclusions of the studies, the Council intends to follow much of their guidance. A new Borough Park, additional leisure space and better connected green spaces will be pursued as will the protection and enhancement of existing open space.
- (v) Wildlife corridors and current views of open space and the countryside should be protected in development design. Therefore, any development in the town will be expected to maintain existing key views, provide additional open space and fit with the open land structure (and Green Space Strategy) of the town.

#### **Question 6 (Hemel)**

**Is there anything else that should be incorporated into the looking after the environment theme for Hemel Hempstead?**

**Yes/No**

**If so, please list. (Please see questionnaire)**

## **5.2 Social & personal welfare**

- (i) Hemel Hempstead will have a substantial amount of new housing within and around existing neighbourhoods. It will include about 2,400 new homes in the town centre and 500 within the Maylands Business Park. Key sites (which are already identified) will be used in the east and north-east of the town, at Nash Mills and adjoining the Manor Estate. The new housing will provide a mix of housing types and tenures suited to the needs of the market. Improvements will be made to existing local centres.
- (ii) In order to deliver more community services and facilities for children, young people and the elderly, new community facilities (of which day care provision is a key component) are intended for large scale development in the town centre and Maylands. Developer contributions from all new developments will assist in the funding of this provision. Existing community buildings, which provide an invaluable benefit to the communities, will be retained (even though there are some funding issues).
- (iii) A new local Hospital with an Urgent Care Centre and GP led services will be developed in the town centre or in Maylands Business Park. A new health centre is planned for Apsley and additional surgeries, as well as extension (or replacement) of some existing surgeries, will be needed to accommodate the new residential development. Other health services and facilities such as dentists will need to be considered alongside new development.
- (iv) The County Council is advising on the capacity of existing primary and secondary schools. Some are sited close to options being considered for housing development. Improvements to existing schools will be considered as well as the provision of new schools to accommodate growth in the town. Pending further advice from the County Council, we consider that 4 new forms of entry will be required by 2031 (and perhaps more).
- (v) A new performing arts venue will be built as part of the Waterhouse Square development along with a multicultural centre, new civic buildings, a riverside walk alongside the River Gade and a new public square. Development in the Hospital Zone will also provide additional open space. New community facilities will include opportunities for cultural and/or faith meeting places.
- (vi) A town stadium could provide an inspirational focus for our sports needs as a large town. It may also provide a range of sporting opportunities to address the shortage of formal leisure space. Consultants PMP have advised that a modest stadium would be viable and recommend locations on the eastern side of the town close to the A414 and M1<sup>10</sup>. A building for extreme sports is another leisure opportunity that the Council aspires to deliver.
- (vii) Developing pride of place is a key aspiration, which the Core Strategy will support. As key to our vision, Hemel Hempstead will embrace new development, lead in 'green development', deliver aspirational community facilities and enhance our environment to promote pride of place to deliver a 'Greater, Richer, More Beautiful' town.

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<sup>10</sup> Town Stadium Complex at Hemel hempstead: Phase 1 Feasibility Study.

### **Question 7 (Hemel)**

**Do you support a viable town stadium complex?**

**Yes/No**

**If no, please give your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

### **Question 8 (Hemel)**

**Is there anything else in addition to that outlined that should be incorporated into the social and personal welfare theme for Hemel Hempstead?**

**Yes/No**

**If so, please list. (Please see questionnaire)**

## **5.3 Economic prosperity**

(i) Hemel Hempstead will lead the Borough, as a sustainable hub with a balance of new homes and expanding employment opportunities in the town centre and Maylands Business Park, together with an integrated transport network.

(ii) The spread of employment areas at Maylands Business Park, Paradise and areas in Two Waters and Apsley will help to provide local opportunities for residents and therefore more sustainable opportunities for employment. The growth of Hemel Hempstead over the next 20 years ensures this land will be needed for a variety of employment uses.

(iii) The economic prosperity of the town depends on the regeneration and expansion of Maylands Business Park. We envisage Maylands, and East Hemel Hempstead more widely, becoming a beacon for the town; a town where businesses flourish and where people will aspire to live. In order to achieve this we need to plan comprehensively for the area, setting down detailed guidance on how the area should change and grow. This is why we are producing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for East Hemel Hempstead. As well as bringing forward the Maylands Masterplan (which sets the tone for regeneration), the AAP will discuss a variety of measures to secure Maylands' role as a first choice investment location. This includes the promotion of Maylands Gateway (currently subject to a Development Brief), a Green Energy Centre, and a sustainable transport network with park and ride. To achieve this we will need to look at the area holistically and collaborate with key organisations. Similarly, we will need to work closely with our neighbours (St. Albans District) as a modest extension of Maylands into St. Albans District will be required if the regeneration of Maylands is to succeed. Reports commissioned from specialist consultants suggest the most appropriate location for both the

green energy centre and the town stadium is on land to the east of the existing Maylands Business Park. You have told us in the previous consultation that the area would be appropriate for longer term employment purposes when needed.

(iv) Hemel Hempstead town centre regeneration will create defined yet integrated character zones, which will accommodate different uses and employment opportunities:

- the Plough Zone and Marlowes Shopping Zone will both be a hub for retail shopping and the Plough zone will also provide leisure opportunities with a selection of restaurants and a hotel;
- the Hospital Zone will allow for a greater mix of employment and residential uses as well as health facilities;
- Waterhouse Square will provide civic, leisure, educational, employment uses and a bus station;
- The Original Marlowes Zone will continue offering relevant business services and provide additional residential and community uses; and
- The Old Town will continue offering a variety of independent businesses, restaurants, public houses and cafes.

(v) The Core Strategy, Issues and Options Paper 2006 identifies a shopping hierarchy consisting of the town centres and local centres, supported by a range of out of centre facilities. Both the Core Strategy, Issues and Options Paper and the Dacorum Retail & Leisure Study (DRLS)[9] identified that the current roles played by each of the centres should be reflected in their retail designation. Work on the DRLS revealed that Jarman Fields Local Centre was clearly functioning as an out of centre food superstore and retail/leisure park. The study concluded that Jarman Fields would be suitable for an intensification of retail use later in the plan period. Consequently, we recommend Jarman Fields should be redesignated from a local centre to an out of centre retail location. However, because the location includes significant leisure uses and Leisure World may well be remodelled, the out of centre designation should incorporate leisure uses as well.

(vi) Local centres in the town will be refurbished and landscaped in pursuance of the Hemel 2020 Vision to improve existing neighbourhood facilities.

(vii) The role of the main out of town centres – i.e. Jarman Park and in Two Waters and Apsley – will be recognised. They are important to the economic prosperity of Hemel Hempstead, as they offer additional opportunities for employment and retail custom.

### **Question 9 (Hemel)**

**Should Jarman Fields be redesignated as an out of centre retail and leisure designation?**

**Yes/No**

**If no, please list your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

### **5.4 Location & access**

(i) Access to services and facilities in the town will be improved with the development of a new integrated covered bus station in the town centre and enhancements to Hemel Hempstead railway station, as a key gateway of the town. A park and ride facility with improved bus services is also planned in Maylands Business Park. These major improvements to public transport services will be managed to provide an integrated network of facilities between Maylands Business Park, the town centre and the railway station for the community.

(ii) Hemel Hempstead Urban Transport Plan has identified some key areas that require improvements. These include improving the state of the highways and reducing traffic congestion. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) are developing a transport model for the town that will identify current issues and forecast the impact of development on the town's road network over the period to 2031. The Borough Council are working with HCC on this model to identify particular problems and potential solutions. Initial results from the transport modelling work suggest that new development within the town (up to 2031) will produce additional traffic demand which will affect the operation of the existing road network. Key problem areas identified are east-west movements along the A414 Breakspear Way / St Albans Road corridor and also the A4147 / Redbourn Road corridor. The modelling work has identified a number of infrastructure upgrades which are required to improve junctions along these routes and has confirmed the need for the North East Relief Road (a series of road improvements set out in the existing Local Plan) to be fully implemented.

### **Questions 10 (Hemel)**

**The Spatial Strategy themes for Hemel Hempstead to 2031 are presented in Section 5. Overall, do you support this approach?**

**Yes/No**

**If not, please give your reasons. (Please see questionnaire)**

**Question 11 (Hemel)**

Do you have any other concerns or comments regarding the spatial strategy for Hemel Hempstead?

Yes/No

If yes, please add them here. (Please see questionnaire)