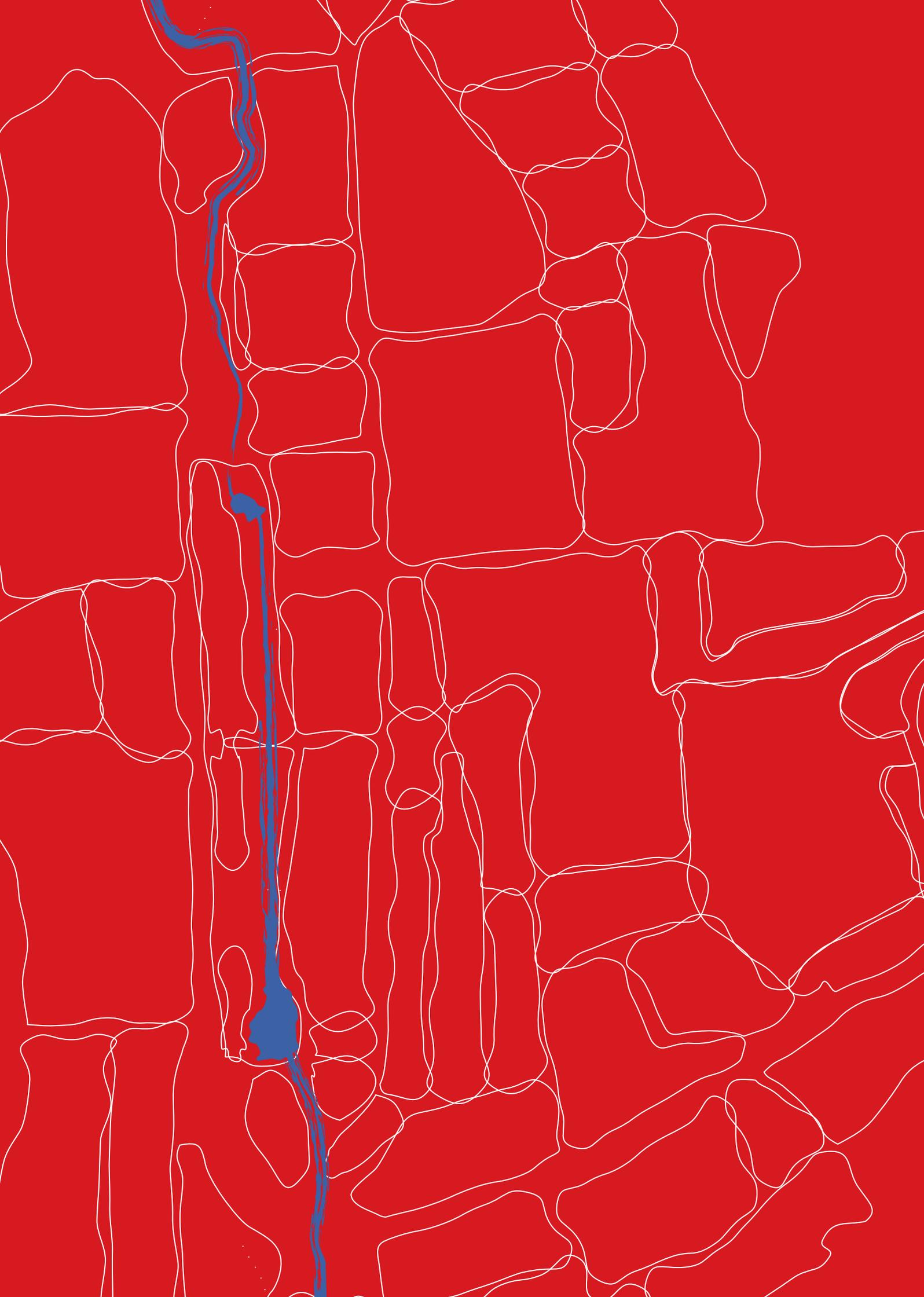




HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
**MAJOR
LAND USE
STUDY**

March 2012

**Allies and Morrison
Urban Practitioners**

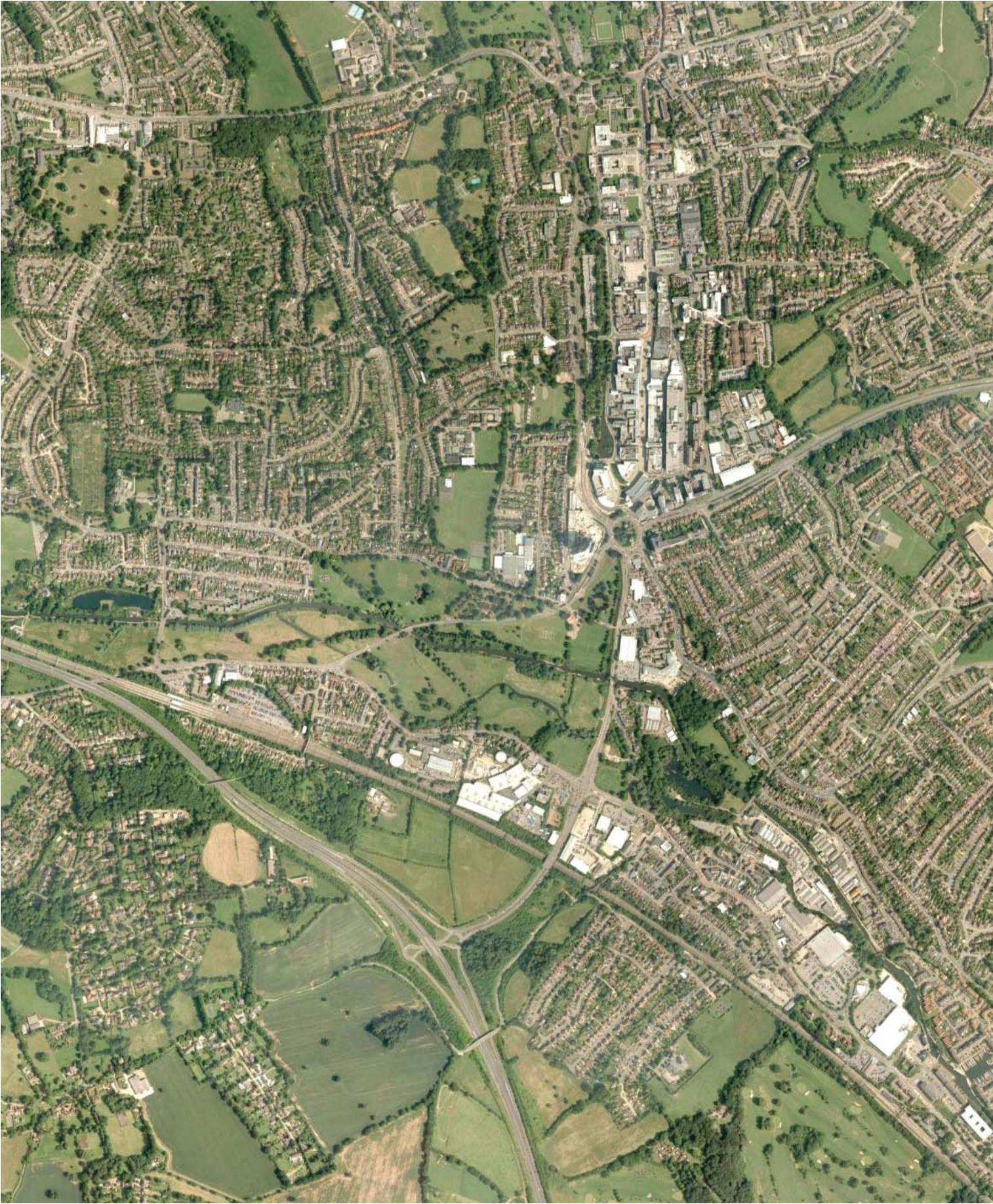


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Hemel Hempstead
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Above: Aerial view of Hemel Hempstead



1 SETTING THE SCENE

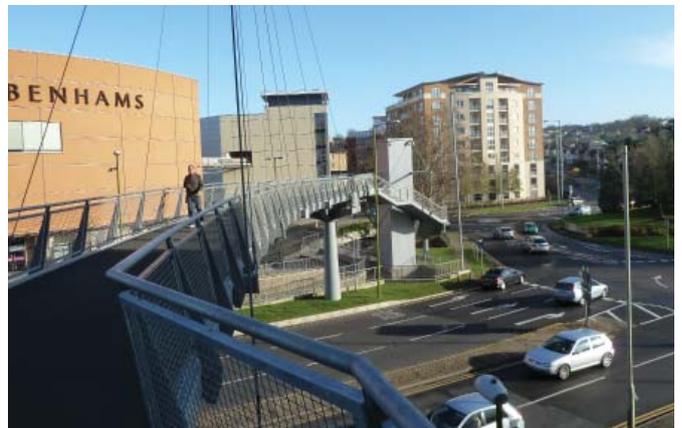
1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dacorum Borough Council (hereafter referred to as 'the Council') is committed to improving the quality and vitality of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre. The Council's aspiration is to transform Hemel Hempstead Town Centre into a vibrant place where people will want to shop, work, live, learn and visit during the day, evening and night. The regeneration of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre is vital to the overall well being of Dacorum. The Council is currently developing a Town Centre Masterplan for Hemel Hempstead which will set a new direction for the future of the Town Centre and will enable transformation and regeneration of the centre to proceed as quickly as possible.

The Council instructed Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners (AMUP) and GL Hearn to produce a Retail Study Update report and a Major Land Use Strategy for Hemel Hempstead town centre. This report is the Major Land Use Strategy which has been informed by the earlier work of the Retail Study Update report. The Retail Study Update report refreshes the Council's Borough-wide retail study of 2009, which itself updated their 2006 study. In doing so, the study explores the capacity for new convenience and comparison retailing in the town centre. A summary of the Retail Study Update report and its findings can be found in Chapter 2.

The purpose of the Major Land Use Strategy is to:

- Inform the ongoing preparation of the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan;
- Inform the emerging Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents of the Dacorum Local Development Framework (LDF); and
- Advise the Council on a strategy for major land uses that could be accommodated in Hemel Hempstead town centre, together with their scale and potential suitable locations.



Above: The route from Hemel Hempstead railway station towards the town centre

1.2 BACKGROUND

The Major Land Use Strategy reflects on existing evidence, new analysis undertaken and commercial advice to put forward a strategy for the town centre which provides a framework for major land uses in the centre, identifies the major investment/development opportunities and provides advice on the scale of the opportunities and the locations considered suitable. This is set within the context of the vision for Hemel Hempstead as contained within the emerging Core Strategy.

Whilst the Major Land Use Strategy will not itself be subject to formal consultation, it has been informed by stakeholder engagement, particularly the Masterplan Charette in January 2012 (see section 1.2 for more information). It will form part of the evidence base and inform the Council's LDF and Town Centre Masterplan. These strategies that will both be the subject of formal stages of public consultation.

The Major Land Use Strategy cannot formally allocate any land for a particular use. Instead, it suggests how land could be better used and what uses and form of development may be appropriate. The Strategy will inform the emerging Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Document, which will allocate land for particular uses.

The Hemel 2020 Vision (2005) provided a vision and framework for the delivery of regeneration objectives and projects for Hemel Hempstead. The work has informed key strategies and plans such as the Local Development Framework. This work also contributes towards the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy - Cross Cutting Theme of rejuvenating Hemel Hempstead and also towards reducing crime and creating a safer Dacorum; creating a cleaner and healthier environment; encouraging business and local employment; meeting housing need and promoting culture, arts, leisure and tourism.

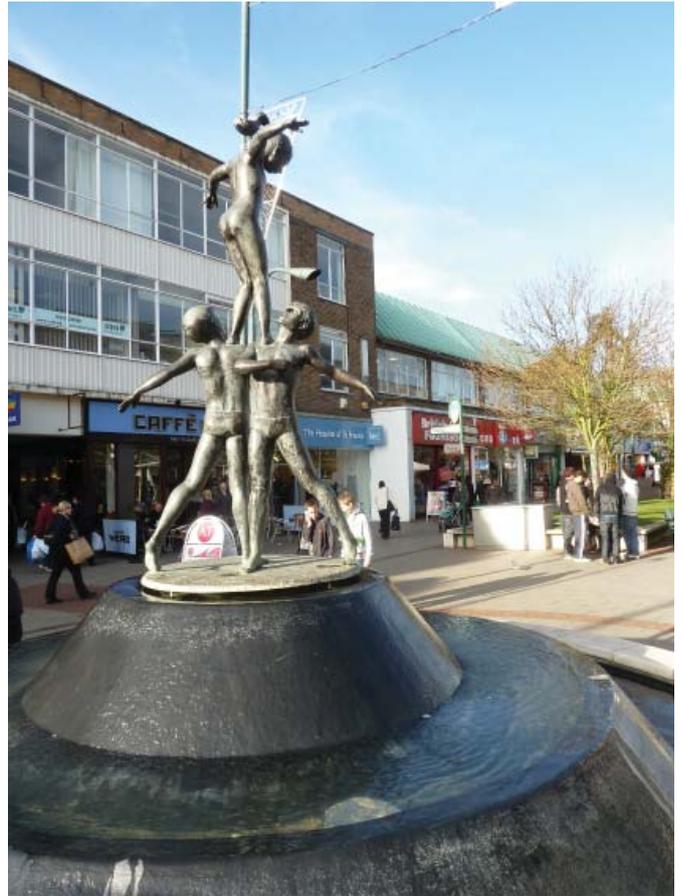
The Council is planning for the future and is progressing its Local Development Framework. A number of recent and current studies are of direct relevance to the future of Hemel Hempstead town centre which is the largest town centre in the Borough and serves as its administrative centre.

Masterplan Charette, February 2011

Supported by CABE and Inspire East, the Council facilitated a major town centre Masterplan charette in January 2011. The future of the Civic Offices were considered at this event and the car park site adjacent to the Water Gardens site was put forward as one of a number of potential locations in the town. The charette led to the preparation of a strategic land use strategy for the town centre which was to be tested through further land use studies and the preparation of a town centre Masterplan. The charette highlighted the opportunity to create a new, more focussed, cluster of civic uses in the town centre which would include replacement council offices and town centre library. The event also highlighted the important role played by the Market Square and the bus station site, recognising them as potential development opportunities at the northern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone and providing the opportunity to form part of an improved network of high quality pedestrian routes across the town.

Masterplan Charette, January 2012

Almost exactly a year later, the Council facilitated a second Masterplan charette. The event provided an opportunity for the Council to provide an update to partners and wider stakeholders on the progress made in the town centre over the previous year. Updates were provided on a series of feasibility studies undertaken by the Council which sought to understand the parameters and issues associated with the potential for redevelopment of key Council owned sites in the Gade Zone.



Above: The Riverside Shopping Centre and Marlowes retail area in the New Town

A series of facilitated workshops then focused on issues associated with major land use issues in the town centre and key transport and movement issues. The feedback from these sessions have been useful as these two workstreams have progressed.

Council Accommodation review

The Council commissioned DTZ to undertake a review of Council accommodation. The outcome of this study has directly informed the brief for the Water Gardens study and Marlowes/Library Site study (see below). Replacement Civic Offices will form part of the Public Sector Quarter (PSQ) and will require a new building of approximately 5,000m² (gross). A building of this size is also considered likely to have the potential to incorporate a replacement library for the town and other community uses. The emerging 'PSQ' concept responds to the outcomes of the town centre Charette in January 2011.

Water Gardens study

The Council commissioned Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners and The Landscape Partnership to undertake a study of the Grade II registered Water Gardens in Hemel Hempstead town centre. The study provided a considered view on the historic significance of the Gardens, originally laid out by Geoffrey Jellicoe between 1957 and 1962 as part of the new town development of Hemel Hempstead, and to inform decisions by the Council as it continues to consider the benefits of replacing its current town centre civic offices on Marlowes. Specifically, the northern end of the Water Gardens North decked car park was considered as a potential location for a new PSQ. The study explored how a new building in this sensitive location could best be accommodated and how this would impact on the registered Gardens.

Marlowes/Library Site study

The Council commissioned Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners to prepare development options for the Marlowes/Library site in the town centre. The options consider the redevelopment of the site for a Public Service Quarter (PSQ).

Emerging Friends of the Gardens

This study considers the historic significance of the Water Gardens, which are already widely recognised as a nationally important example of twentieth century landscape design. This recognition led to the Gardens being included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The Garden History Society has been instrumental in raising the profile and awareness of the Water Gardens and a friends of the garden group is currently being formed.

Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy

The Council commissioned JMP Consultants to develop an Improvement Strategy for the Marlowes Shopping Zone. The Strategy will be used to implement effective public realm interventions that will significantly enhance the public realm and streetscape, with the objectives of securing greater footfall and expenditure and adding to the diversity of uses within the town centre.

In June 2011, the Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy was approved and will kick-start the regeneration of Hemel Hempstead town centre. £460,000 of funding is in place for short to medium term improvements in the town centre. In addition, there is a £50,000 grant which will be spent through a participatory budgeting exercise working with local residents, including temporary treatment improvements to Market Square. A Steering Group has since been working with JMP Consultants to agree a delivery programme and prepare designs for those interventions identified as a priority.



Above: The area around Market Square and the Civic Offices

Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Access and Movement Study

The Council commissioned JMP Consultants to develop an Access and Movement Strategy as part of the development of the Town Centre Masterplan. The work will build upon a variety of previous studies conducted within the area, including the Hemel Hempstead Urban Transport Plan, but will focus upon producing specific strategies for vehicle movement around the town, parking, walking & cycling, and signage & navigation. Within the study, a number of key projects are currently being considered including: pedestrian movements through the Plough Roundabout; bus circulation and stop locations; key walking and cycling routes connecting the town centre to the Hospital, Railway Station and Maylands Business Park; the River Gade walking and cycling route; and connectivity between the Old Town and Gadebridge Park. The study is due for completion in March 2012.

Retail Study Update

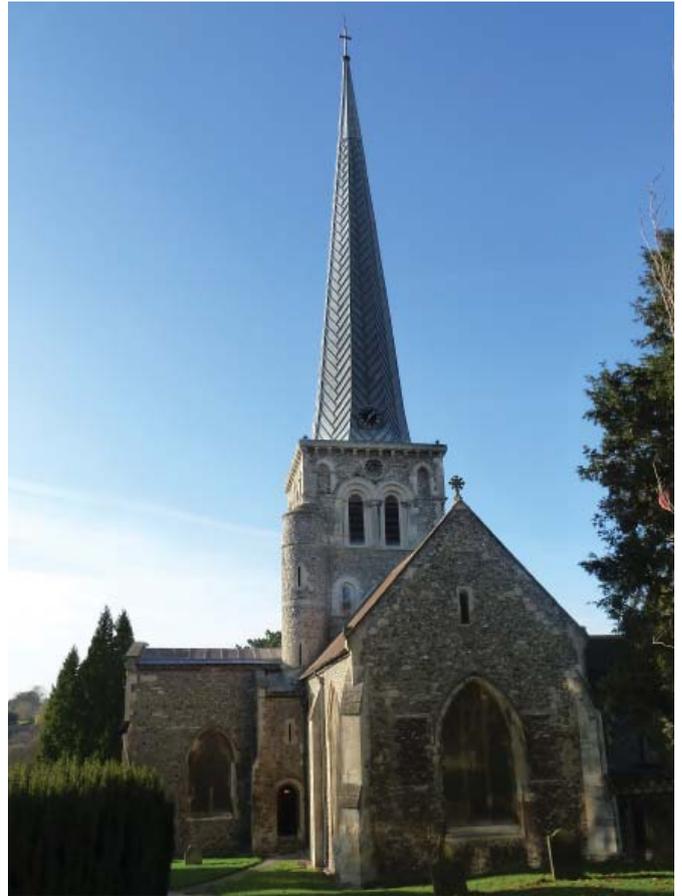
Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners and GL Hearn were commissioned by the Council to update the existing 2006 and 2009 retail study work. The principal requirement was to provide quantitative forecasts of retail capacity up to 2031 for Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring town centres, and the main out of centre locations within the Borough.

The Retail Study Update identified a need for additional convenience goods floorspace to serve Hemel Hempstead. Much of the theoretical capacity arises from the strong trading of the main out of centre stores serving the town. In adopting a sequential approach to addressing the identified need, this convenience floorspace should be directed to a central site in Hemel Hempstead town centre. This will improve the existing level of food shopping, attract more shoppers into the town centre, create potential linked trip benefits and achieve more sustainable town centre focused patterns of shopping.

The theoretical need (in 2016) is for around 2,260m² (sales) of convenience floorspace, which with some ancillary non-food floorspace would equate to a superstore of approximately 2,800m² sales or 4,300m² gross. The need increases over a longer time frame. Whilst the calculations show a theoretical capacity for additional comparison shopping to serve Hemel Hempstead over the study period, the report recommends not making any specific allocation for this floorspace over the short to medium term. There remains vacant floorspace in both the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres and it is considered that the existing floorspace is capable of trading more intensively. It is suggested that the Council monitor the take up of vacant premises and trading performance of the existing stores in the town centre and only when marked improvements are noted should the capacity and need for additional comparison shopping be revisited.

Town Centre Masterplan

The Council is currently producing a Town Centre Masterplan for Hemel Hempstead, which will set a new direction for the future of the Town Centre and will enable transformation and regeneration of the centre to proceed as quickly as possible. The Masterplan will be directly informed by the outcomes of the two Charettes and many of the studies as discussed above. The Masterplan is a key initiative which will help ensure the town centre protects its place in the retail hierarchy and supports a more sustainable form of development.

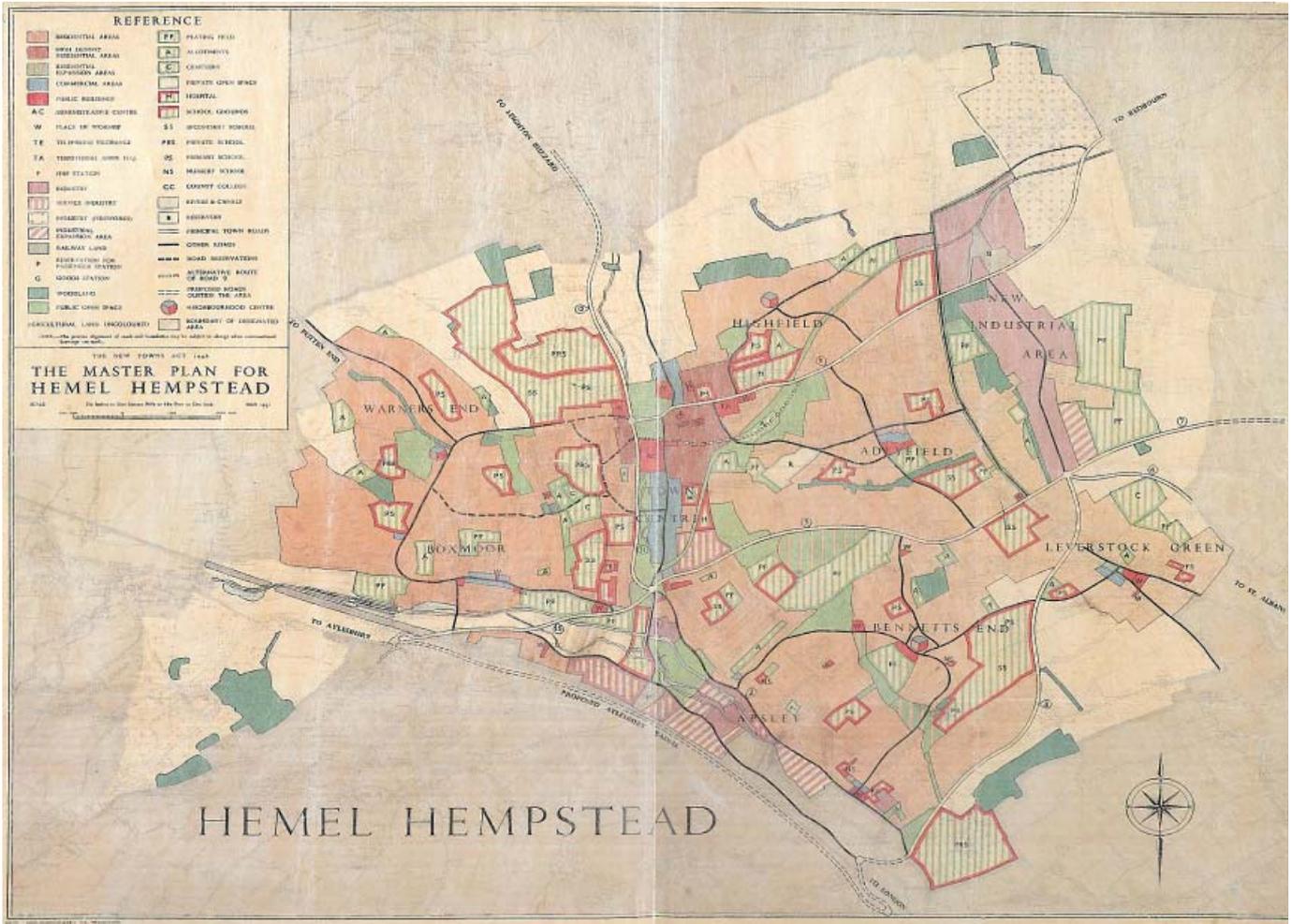


Above: The Old Town

1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

This report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2: Understanding Hemel Hempstead**
 - This section reviews the town centre in terms of its historic development, urban design quality, emerging planning policy and its Character Zones.
- **Chapter 3: Major Land Uses** – This section introduces the major land uses required under the relevant Core Strategy policy and to be considered as part of this strategy and the Town Centre Masterplan.
- **Chapter 4: Land Use Strategy** – This section sets out the key concepts for Hemel Hempstead Town Centre showing how the major land uses can be accommodated and two land use plans highlighting how this could be achieved.
- **Chapter 5: Land Uses in Apsley** – This section describes Apsley and sets out proposals for its future.
- **Chapter 6: Summary and Overview** – This section brings together the potential land uses in each to show two potential town-wide land use plans. This section includes information on likely delivery and phasing for the different land uses.



Above: 1947 Masterplan of Hemel Hempstead

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2 UNDERSTANDING HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

2.1 THE EVOLUTION OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

The start

The present town probably began during the Saxon period as a small village in a shallow chalkland valley, about a mile and a half north of the confluence of the Gade and Bulbourne rivers. The River Gade rises in the chalk of the Chiltern Hills and flows through Hemel Hempstead before reaching Rickmansworth, where it joins the River Colne.

The name of the town may derive from “Haemele’s homestead”, Haemele being the name of a tribe or individual. Little is recorded about the medieval town, but at least half of it is known to have been granted to the monastic college of the Bon Hommes of Ashridge which lasted up to the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539. Hemel’s Norman church of St Mary’s was started around 1140 and is one of the oldest churches in Hertfordshire. There was a small market, which grew after the 16th century when the town received a royal charter from Henry VIII. By the mid-17th century Hemel Hempstead had become the most prosperous town in the county and was noted for its corn mills and straw plaiting.

Later growth

In the mid-18th century a turnpike road to the south of the town carried the main route from London to the Midlands. The Grand Junction Canal opened in 1804, following the line of the road. In 1837 the London – Birmingham railway was diverted from the town by local landowners and the station was built instead at Boxmoor. Later, a branch line was built by the Hemel Hempstead Railway Company, which led to the development of the Alexandra Road area of the town. The town’s main employer at this time was John Dickinson, whose paper mill at Apsley Mill in the Bulbourne Valley employed over 1000 workers, but Hemel was also beginning to be adopted by London commuters. New industries were also established and Dickinson’s Mill was later converted into a munitions factory. By the middle of the 20th century, Hemel Hempstead was practically three separate areas;

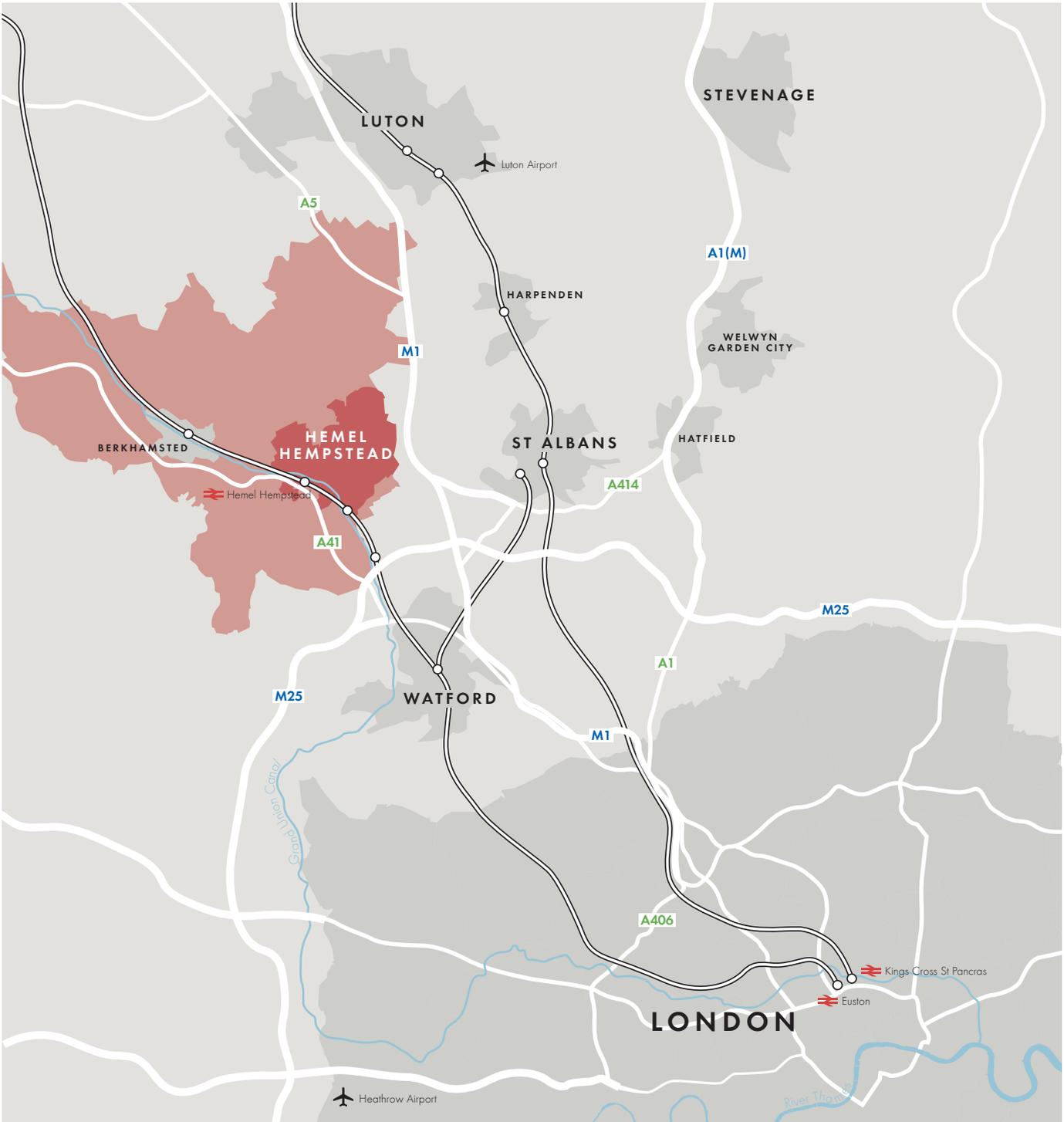
the old town to the north, the Boxmoor commuter suburb around the railway station, and the industrial development in the valley.

The New Town

After the Second World War the country faced a severe housing shortage and government responded with the New Towns programme. Hemel Hempstead, along with Crawley and Stevenage, was one of the first to be designated and was to be one of several new and expanded towns forming a ring around London. With a population of 21,000, Hemel was also the largest of the existing settlements in the first wave of new towns.

The Ministry of Town and Country Planning appointed the landscape architect Geoffrey Jellicoe as Hemel’s principal designer and the outline masterplan was published in 1947. Jellicoe’s original plan, which was subsequently modified by the Development Corporation, was based on the idea of a town in a park, with generous open spaces in and around the town centre and the residential neighbourhoods. The first areas to be built were at Adeyfields, Bennetts End and Apsley and 1,000 homes had been built by 1952. Jellicoe’s ambitious 1947 masterplan for Hemel Hempstead New Town was never to be implemented, rejected by the government as being too expensive and impractical. Jellicoe produced a second revised plan and accompanying report for the Ministry of Town & Country Planning in 1949 which was also discarded.

The structure of Jellicoe’s town centre masterplan was largely retained by the Corporation; the relocation of the main shopping area to the Marlowes, the arrangement of a central park flanked by road running north south with residential housing to the west and shops and commerce to the east are all key elements of Jellicoe’s Masterplan.



Above: 1947 Masterplan of Hemel Hempstead

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Jellicoe's plan preserved the old High Street, which is now a conservation area with a concentration of listed buildings, but extended it southwards in a line to form the Marlowes shopping centre as well as educational, civic and office buildings. Waterhouse Street ran parallel to Marlowes, providing access to the bus station and market, and beyond it Jellicoe used the course of the River Gade to provide the Water Gardens that form the western edge to the town centre.

By 1962 the masterplan was substantially complete and the Development Corporation handed over its responsibilities to the National Commission for the New Towns. Today, Hemel Hempstead rivals Watford as the largest town in Hertfordshire with a population of around 89,000 inhabitants (estimation from Hertfordshire County Council). The Marlowes Shopping Centre was built in 1990 with an indoor mall and the Riverside Shopping Centre added to the provision of shops in 2005.

Hemel today

Dacorum, situated in South West Hertfordshire, has an area of 212 square kilometres, half of which is designated as Green Belt land. The Borough includes the towns of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring, the large villages of Bovingdon, Kings Langley and Markyate, and 12 smaller settlements. It borders St Albans City and District to the east, Buckinghamshire (Chiltern and Aylesbury Vale Districts) to the west, and the Three Rivers to the south. The Borough is currently home to approximately 138,000 people, making it the largest district in Hertfordshire.

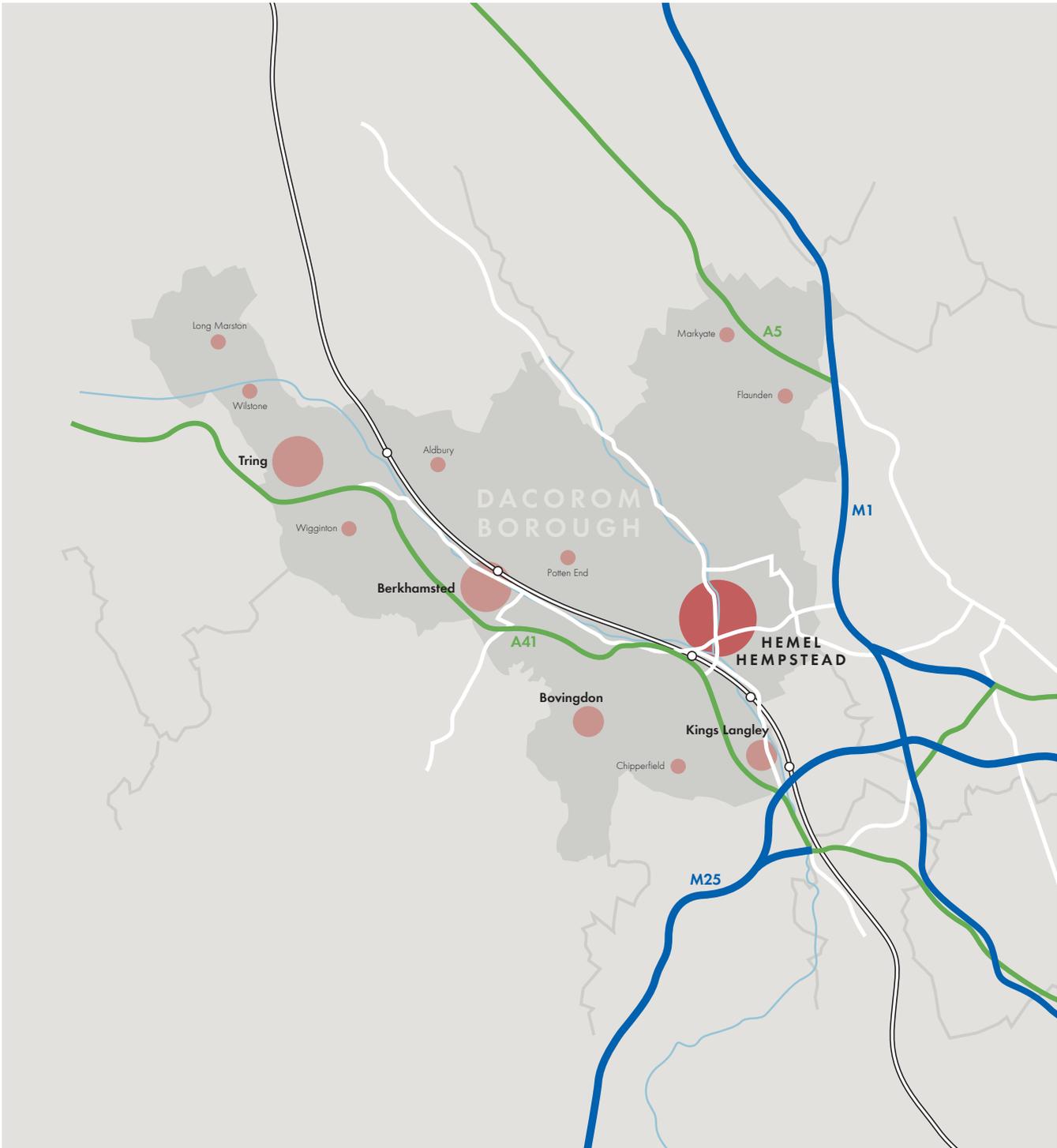
Hemel Hempstead's proximity to the M25, M1, London, and the airports at Heathrow, Luton and to a lesser extent Stansted, is a key factor in the local economy – historically it attracted national players, such as Kodak who located their headquarters in the town centre (the Kodak tower has recently been converted to flats). Hemel Hempstead train station is located approximately 1.5km from the southern end of

the town centre. Buses run from the train station to the town centre approximately every seven minutes and the pleasant walk between the two takes around twenty minutes through the town moor.

Hemel Hempstead is situated approximately 25 miles from central London and is the largest town in the Borough. It was identified as one of the key centres for development and change in the East of England Plan - along with Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, Watford and Luton. While regional governance is no longer what it was, the significance of Hemel as a regional urban growth centre remains clear.

Hemel Hempstead is the principal retail destination within the Borough. The larger towns of Milton Keynes and Watford are Hemel Hempstead's main competitors. Dacorum's market towns and small villages play an important retail role, especially in terms of convenience goods and provide a greater range of specialist, independent shops. The primary shopping area is focused along the Marlowes which includes the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres.

Other than the town centre, the focus for employment in the Borough is Maylands Business Park. This is the largest business park in the eastern region and lies to the east of the town centre. Through the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan, there are plans to rejuvenate the Maylands Business Area as a sub-regional business centre to deliver a first choice employment location with some residential development, leisure space, a green energy centre and improved connections to the town centre and railway station.



Above: 1947 Masterplan of Hemel Hempstead

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The main leisure and sports facilities comprise Leisure World, Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre, Esporta which are located at Jarman Park, an out of town leisure and retail park located on the St Albans Road (A414).

Jarman Park is an important facility of the community and is Hemel Hempstead's main leisure and sports facility. It includes a multi-screen cinema, ice-rink, ten-pin bowling and indoor multi-slide water fun park, as well as a bar and clubs, however the bowling and nightclubs are currently closed.

Next door to Jarman Park are Sportspace athletics ground and The Snow Centre, with indoor ski-slopes. The area also includes a large Tesco supermarket. An extreme sports facility has recently been approved to add to the attractions at Jarman's Park and there is an aspiration to attract other leisure and adventure sports facilities along with hotels and ancillary retail uses.

When Jarman Park first opened it was at the forefront of a new wave of commercial leisure parks which arrived at a time when 'town centre first' planning policy was still to be fully introduced and largescale multiplex cinemas were seen as difficult to accommodate within town centres. Whilst elements of Leisure World, particularly the cinema, remain well used, the complex is now in need of improvement.

The owners of Leisure World has recently submitted a planning application for the conversion of the nightclubs and swimming pool into family restaurants, potentially with the inclusion of a new bowling operator and a health & fitness facility. Whilst this does have the potential to provide competition to the town centre, this is an established out-of-town leisure location and could be considered to attract a different type of visit than the town centre.

Jarman Park is designated as an out-of-centre retail and leisure location in the Core Strategy, where significant new retail development above that already permitted will be resisted. The Core Strategy recognises that the role of the area should remain complementary to the role of the town centre and continue to support the retail hierarchy through the sequential approach.

To the south of the town centre is Apsley, classified as a local centre with a neighbourhood shopping function in the Core Strategy. Two Waters and Apsley contain out of centre retailing, including a large Sainsbury's, and a wide range of business opportunities and employment. More information on Apsley can be found in Chapter 5.



Above: Plan of Hemel Hempstead showing the railway station, Apsley, Jarman Park and Maylands Business Park in relation to the town centre

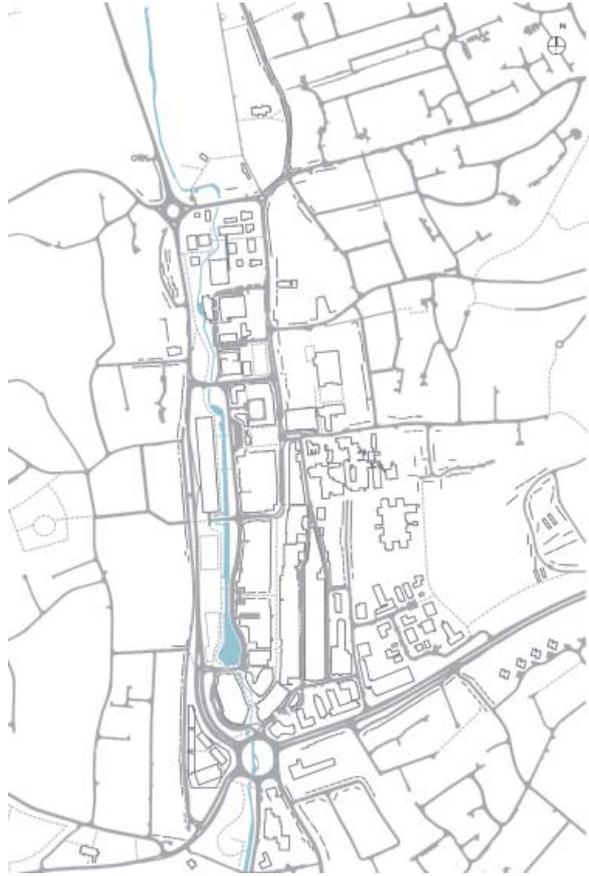
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Above: Aerial photograph of Hemel Hempstead town centre
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Above: Paths in the town centre



Above: Edges in the town centre



Above: Positive edges in the town centre



Above: Negative edges in the town centre

2.2 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

One of the most effective ways of analysing towns and cities is to find out how easy it is to understand a place and to navigate through it. Kevin Lynch, a famous American urban planner, wrote *The Image of the City*, which was a study on how users perceive and organise spatial information as they navigate through places. Lynch reported that users understand their surroundings in consistent and predictable ways, forming mental maps with the following five elements:

1. **Paths** - the streets, roads, paths in which people travel;
2. **Edges** - boundaries such as buildings, walls, fences, trees etc;
3. **Districts** - relatively large sections of towns and cities which have a specific character;
4. **Nodes** - focal points and intersections; and
5. **Landmarks** - objects, such as buildings, which serve as external reference points and help people orientate themselves.

These five elements in Hemel Hempstead town centre are discussed below, followed by the remaining urban design analysis for the town centre.

Paths

The paths through the town centre are shown on the opposite plan (top left). The grey lines show the main routes, generally open for all users, and the grey dashed lines show the pedestrian only routes.

The layout of the New Town street network and the buildings which surrounded them created an enclosed town centre environment, with the dominant movement encouraged to be north-south along the Marlowes.

East-west connections through the town centre are relatively poor and restricted, in part due to the Marlowes Shopping Centre and multi-storey car park to the east of Marlowes, and the Water Gardens and Leighton Buzzard Road to the west, which forms a particularly strong barrier to movement, with multiple

lanes of traffic significantly restricting pedestrian movement. This is also, in part, caused by the topography of the area, with the town centre sitting in the valley surrounded by hills. These barriers have effectively created an elongated north-south pedestrian channel, rather than a more connected network of paths. A bridge has been installed to link the former Kodak building development to the town centre, which replaces the underpasses previously found under the Plough roundabout.

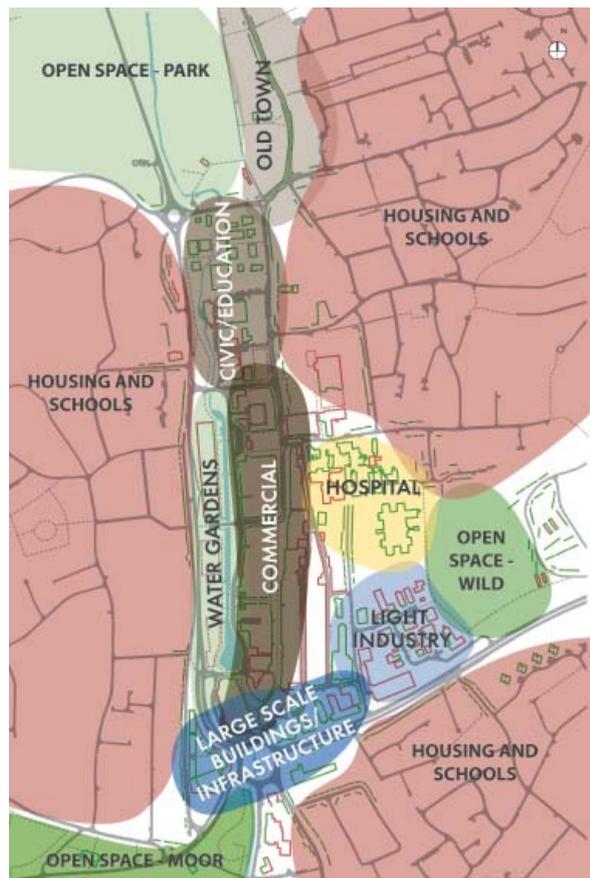
Edges

The predominant edges are shown on the opposite plan (top right). The Old Town shows clear, well defined edges along the High Street and the northern end of Marlowes. The edges of the civic and educational buildings fail to define the paths in the area as the buildings generally sit in space rather than define it. The edges have then been split to show positive edges (bottom left), which provide a positive aspect to the town centre and generally consists of active fronts, doors and windows, and negative edges (bottom right), which generally consist of blank walls, a lack of natural surveillance and other unattractive features. The majority of the edges along the Marlowes provide a positive aspect to the town centre in terms of active frontages (irrespective of their architectural quality), whereas the paths to the east show more negative aspects along King Harry Street and Wolsey Road and in part along Waterhouse Street and the decked car park adjacent to the Water Gardens.

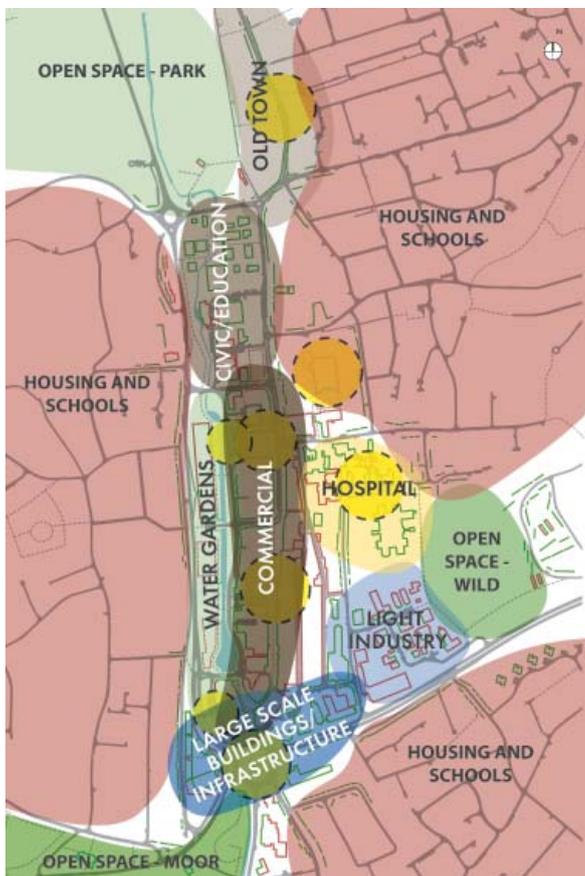
The edges of the buildings are clearly shown in the figure ground plan (top left, p22), which shows the current urban grain of the town centre. The plan shows a fine grain of development in the Old Town, clearly defining the High Street, whereas the commercial core of the town centre shows a coarser grain, particularly the three blocks which make up the Riverside Shopping Centre. The plan also clearly highlights the relatively large footprints of the civic and education buildings surrounded by space.



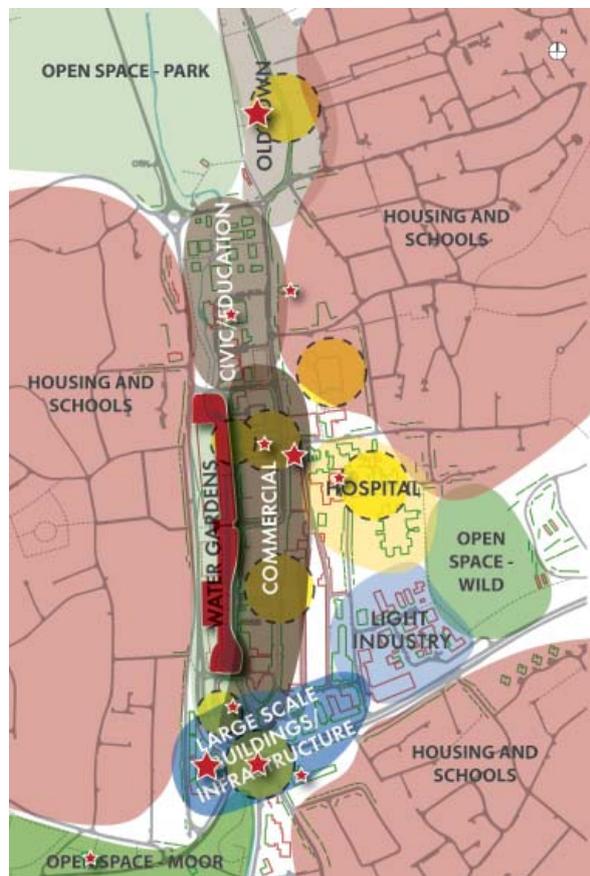
Above: Figure ground plan of the town centre



Above: Districts of the town centre



Above: Nodes within the town centre (yellow circles)



Above: Landmarks in the town centre (red stars and filled area)

Districts

Hemel Hempstead town centre is effectively made up of a number of districts which offer a clear identity and character. These consist of the Old Town, the civic and educational area of West Herts College and the public sector uses, the main retail area along Marlowes, the Hospital area, the light industrial area of Paradise, the Water Gardens and the large scale buildings and infrastructure around Plough Roundabout. Similar 'Character Zone' areas have been identified through the Core Strategy. Surrounding the town centre are clear areas of open space, with Gadebridge park to the north, Paradise fields to the east and the town moor/Two Waters to the south.

Nodes

The town centre consists of a number of focal points, intersections and strategic spots with a specific character with a feeling of entering, which are both positive and negative. These consist of the Old Town, Market Square and the bus station, Asda, the hospital, the main retail area along Marlowes and the Plough Roundabout.

Landmarks

The town centre lies in the river valley, forming a focal point for views from the valley sides, which helps to explain the elongated north-south alignment. St Mary's Church and the Kodak tower are the main landmarks in the area and form important orientation points at either end of the town centre. Other, more secondary, landmarks in the town centre consist of the Carey Baptist Church and St John Church, the Civic Offices, Hamilton House (a nine storey office building on the corner of Marlowes and Hillfield Road), and the telephone exchange and Debenhams buildings adjacent to the Plough roundabout.

Access

Hemel Hempstead train station is located to the south west of the town centre, approximately 1.5km from the Riverside Shopping Centre. There is a frequent bus service every seven minutes from the station to the town centre or it takes around twenty minutes to walk through the town moor.

The town centre is very well served by buses, with around 40 bus services calling or terminating at Hemel Bus Station, located on Waterhouse Street adjacent to and in between the Water Gardens and Market Square. The local bus network operates on a loop around Waterhouse Street, Combe Street, Marlowes and Bridge Street, with 15 bus stops located on the loop providing excellent access in the heart of the town centre. A further two bus stops are located at the southern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone on Waterhouse Street near to the Riverside Shopping Centre, whilst modern bus stop facilities in the form of a super stop are provided at the Riverside Shopping Centre for terminating services.

Hemel Hempstead town centre is easily accessed by car and has a good level of car parking facilities, with six car parks in very close proximity to the town centre.



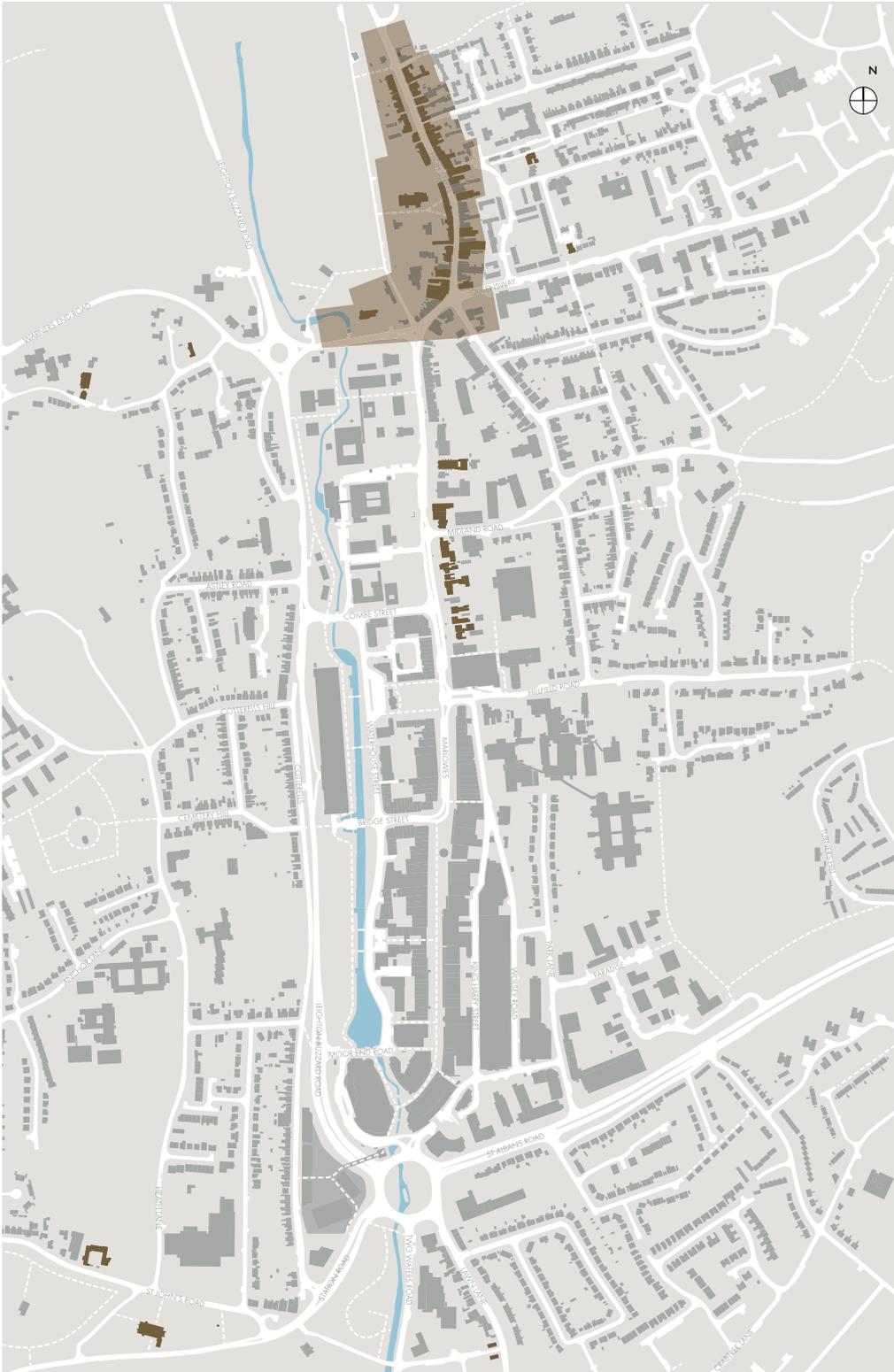
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Above: Plan showing bus routes (red and blue lines), bus stops (red squares), bus station/super stop (yellow areas), car parks and the one way system around Wolsey Road and Park Lane



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Above: Plan showing the topography of the area and how the town centre sits in the valley floor



Above: Plan showing the conservation area in the Old Town (light brown area) and listed buildings (dark brown buildings)

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Land uses

Hemel Hempstead town centre is dominated by comparison goods shops. The comparison offer is reasonably strong with better quality retailers located in the Riverside Shopping Centre and the Marlowes Shopping Centre, although there is a lack of aspirational fashion brands. The Marlowes (shopping street) is of poorer quality with a significant number of discount stores, betting shops, charity shops and amusement arcades. The major comparison retailers located within the new town centre include Debenhams, TK Maxx, HMV, H&M, Next, Primark, Marks & Spencers and New Look. Beyond Bridge Street, the primary frontage ends and the shops become more service orientated and more secondary in nature.

There are also a significant proportion of services which include banks/building societies, travel agents and betting shops. Although the centre is primarily made up of comparison goods shops, there is convenience shopping provision comprising Asda, Iceland (located to the east of the Marlowes) and a small Tesco Express which is located on the Marlowes. In addition to this there is a smaller convenience supermarket located on the Marlowes called the Mosaic Supermarket. With regards to evening activity there are only three bars/pubs towards the northern end of the Marlowes and a couple of restaurants at the southern end which are part of the Riverside Shopping Centre.

In addition to the main retail area focused upon the Marlowes, the Old Town makes up further secondary retail offer. However, the Old Town is separated from the new town and consists mainly of service uses such as restaurants/cafes/takeaways, pubs and estate agents with a small comparison shopping offer.

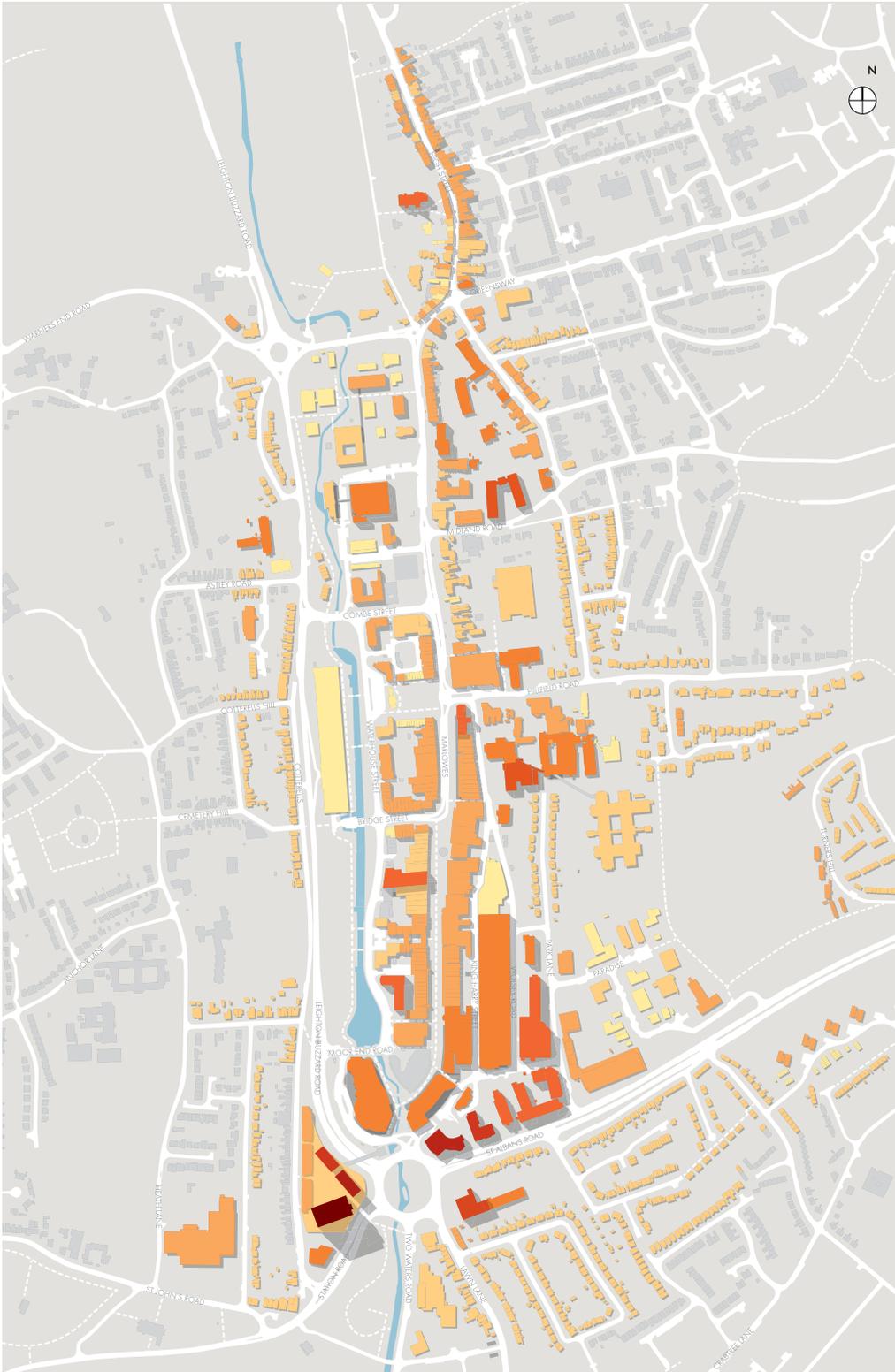
In between the Old Town and New Town lies office, civic and educational uses, including West Herts College, the Civic Offices, Library and Police Station.

Larger scale office uses are located at the southern end of the town centre, east of the Riverside Shopping Centre. Further east is Paradise light industrial area which contains the Royal Mail depot site now subject to redevelopment proposals. To the north of Paradise and south of Hillfield Road is Hemel Hempstead General Hospital.

Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

There is only one Conservation Area in Hemel Hempstead, which includes the Old Town centre and part of Gadebridge Park. The old heart of Hemel Hempstead became a Conservation Area in 1968 and was one of the first to be designated in Hertfordshire. The boundary is tightly drawn around the medieval town and takes in the High Street, the parish church and the Charter Tower. The High Street is also an area of archeological significance. Most of Hemel Hempstead's listed buildings are concentrated within the short span of the High Street and their group value is considerable. The Church of St Mary is the oldest, most prominent and important building, listed Grade I.

There are very few listed buildings in Hemel Hempstead outside the Old Town. Of these the most prominent are the cluster of 19th century villas along Marlowes, opposite the Civic Centre.



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Above: Plan showing building heights in the town centre - the darker the orange/red, the taller the building

Building heights

The building heights in Hemel Hempstead town centre vary widely along its length. The Old Town Centre is defined by high quality predominantly two and three-storey buildings, with a significant three-storey listed building that acts as a gateway to the High Street.

South of the Old Town, the area is defined by modernist civic buildings on the western side, ranging in heights from one to four storeys. The eastern side of the street is predominantly two and three-storey buildings, including several listed villa's.

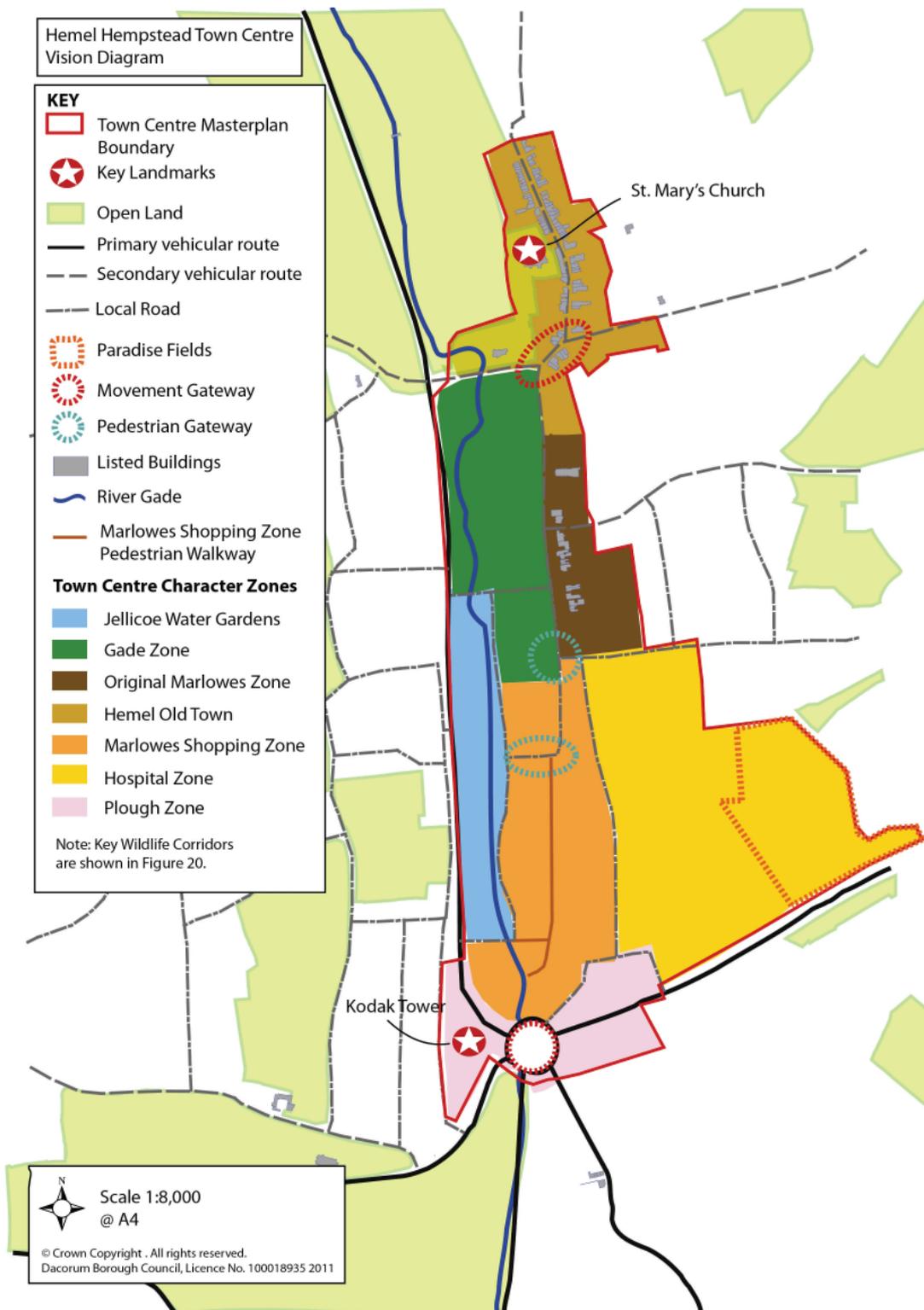
The area around Market Square is almost entirely three-storey buildings with the exception of the buildings fronting the square north and south of single storey and Hamilton House, a nine storey 1970s office building on the corner of Marlowes and Hillfield Road.

The Marlowes pedestrianised shopping area is a mix of two to five-storey buildings of variable quality, with building heights rising towards the southern end. The Riverside Shopping Centre and adjacent new residential blocks rise up to eight storeys and the recently refurbished Kodak Tower of 20 storeys acts as the major landmark in the area. The residential dwellings surrounding the town centre are predominantly two and three storey buildings.

St Mary's Church and the Kodak Buildings are the critical orientation points at the scale of the entire town of Hemel Hempstead, creating clear poles marking the two ends of the town centre and the Gade Valley floor. The spire of St Mary's Church, located in the Old Town, acts as the major northern landmark and can be seen from many different places, including from the Marlowes and from the Victorian residential areas to the east.

Hemel Hempstead's major roads were designed to promote views of the Kodak Building, promoting the modernist conception of high-rise buildings floating in the landscape. Key views to the Kodak Building include the vista from the train station and Station Road, and when travelling west along St Albans Road.

Adjacent to those two landmarks, are the critical gateway junctions - the Plough Roundabout (sometimes referred to as the magic roundabout) and the intersection of Queensway, the Marlowes and the High Street.



Above: Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Vision Diagram

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2.3 PLANNING POLICY REVIEW

Dacorum Core Strategy

The Council is in the process of preparing a new 'Local Development Framework' (LDF) for the Borough. This will replace the existing Local Plan that was adopted in 2004. The Core Strategy is the central document in the Local Development Framework and its role is to establish the overall pattern of development within the borough over the next 20 years.

A strategic objective of the Core Strategy is to promote Hemel Hempstead as the focus of the Borough for homes, jobs and strategic services, reinforcing the role of the neighbourhoods in the town. There are a range of relevant policies relating to the distribution of development and the selection of development sites – all of which promote Hemel Hempstead as the town's most sequentially preferable location for new retail, economic and housing development. This approach is set within a strong policy framework which seeks to protect the countryside and landscape setting of the Boroughs towns. Principles relating to design quality and the quality of the public realm are also established at this strategic policy level.

The Core Strategy puts forward Place Strategies for the key settlements in the Borough. A detailed Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead is outlined which includes vision statements for both the town and the town centre. The vision for Hemel Hempstead town centre is:

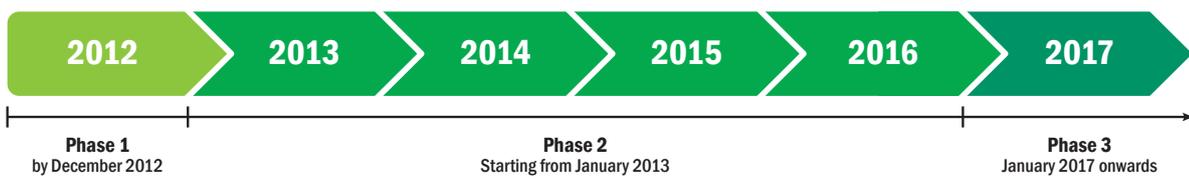
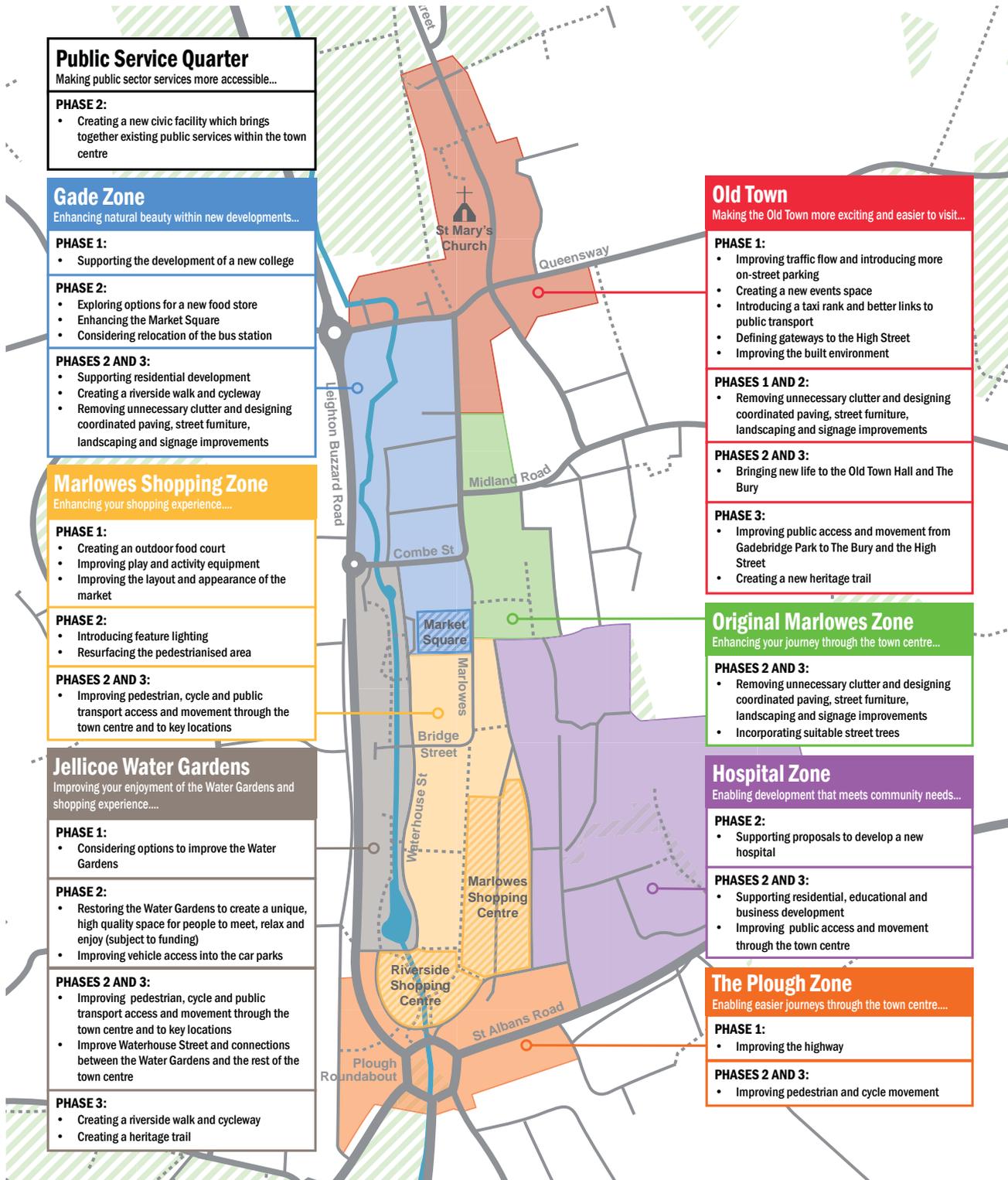
The town centre will be a vibrant place where people will want to shop, work, live, learn and visit during the day and evening. Business and commerce are successful. New development has included offices, civic facilities, homes and shops. The Marlowes Shopping Zone is busy. A residential community occupies the homes. Their demand for services has been met by local provision, use of the town centre facilities and improved access to open space out of the centre. New facilities will

include a local general hospital, school, college and cultural centre. Shoppers, visitors and residents benefit from the rationalisation of bus stops and interchange facilities within the centre. The town centre is attractive. New buildings, refurbishment and extension of pedestrian routes have delivered a pleasant and secure environment that makes best use of its built and natural assets and respects its New Town history. Marlowes and Waterhouse Street are significantly improved. There are good connections with the Old Town. A walkway and cycleway runs alongside the River Gade. Green links with Gadebridge Park, Two Waters Open Space, Paradise Fields and the Nickey Line have been enhanced. The restoration of the Water Gardens is admired and public art promoted.

The Place Strategy states that the aim of new development will be to refresh and maintain the role of the centre as a hub of commerce and public transport, while a variety of employment, shopping and leisure uses will be delivered to suit the income levels of local residents. Multiple retailers will be attracted to strengthen the economy. The Place Strategy also recognises the town centre as a neighbourhood, a role which will be reinforced by new housing and that existing and new residents will need access to a similar range of facilities as other neighbourhoods.

The Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead states that, in the town centre, the objectives are to deliver:

- around 1,800 homes;
- a local general hospital;
- a primary school;
- a new library and college;
- new civic and cultural facilities;
- a supermarket and other shops;
- a bus interchange; and
- a better footpath network.



Above: Hemel Hempstead town centre Character Zones as shown in the Council's Hemel Evolution leaflet

2.4 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD TOWN CENTRE CHARACTER ZONES

The Core Strategy and emerging Town Centre Masterplan identifies seven distinct but interlinked character areas around which the regeneration of the town centre will be focused. A holistic, joined up approach will be taken to improvements in order to maximise benefits across the Town Centre as a whole. Each zone, discussed below, accommodates similar uses or built/natural landscape.

The Old Town

The Old Town is based around the High Street, Queensway and the northern tip of the Marlowes. The main businesses include professional services, quality specialist shops and a strong evening economy with a variety of pubs, restaurants and cafes and an arts centre.

The Old Town is attractive and has primarily a service and niche retail focus with its range of social and evening uses complementing the new towns retail based role. The High Street owes its appeal to several factors, including the variety and quality of its historic buildings, the gentle, climbing curve of the street that progressively reveals them, and the preservation of the narrow alleys and yards on the east side of the street.

The quality of the built environment in this zone is recognised for special architectural or historic importance and the notable landmark of St Mary's Church. This zone offers opportunities to improve north/south pedestrian links and refurbishment of the building fascias along the northern tip of the Marlowes.

In Summer 2011, the Council identified the Old Town as a Top Priority project for delivery by 2015. This work incorporates an improved public realm and a range of improvements to the Old Town Hall. A joint

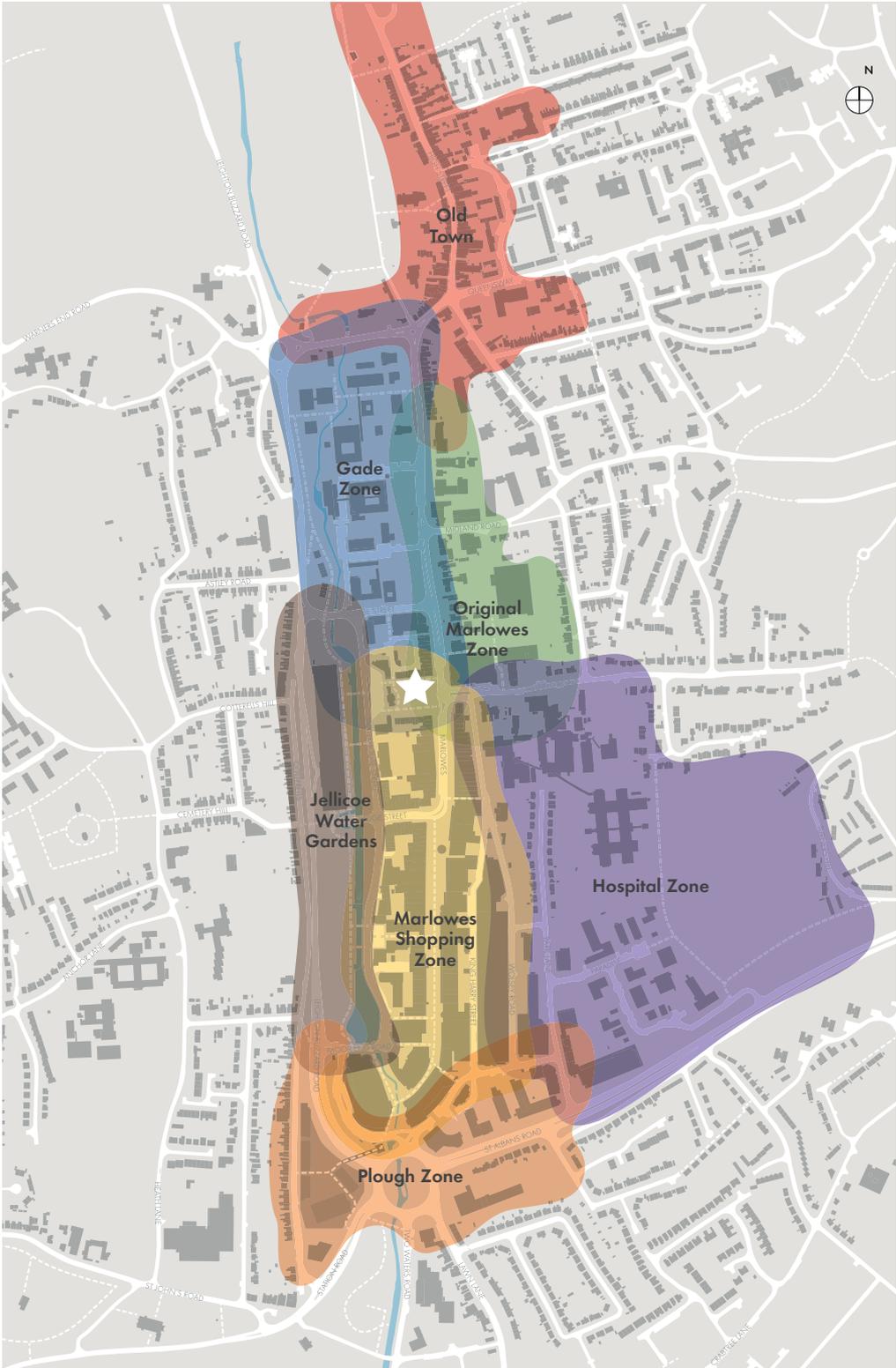
project between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council will deliver the first phase of improvements to the highway and public realm in autumn 2012. This will involve the delivery of a new one-way traffic system along the High Street, the creation of an events space, improved accessibility to public transport, street furniture decluttering and a more consistent approach to the use of surface materials, signage and street furniture.

Later phases will consider highway and public realm improvements to the rest of the Old Town as set out in a heritage and economy strategy, which will be delivered jointly by Dacorum Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council. The heritage and economy strategy will deliver a conservation area review and appraisal; an economic development study and plan; delivery plans and the basis for a bid for future funding.

Original Marlowes Zone

The Original Marlowes Zone contains part of the north eastern section of the Marlowes and a notable feature is its listed villas. The northern section of this zone effectively forms a continuation of the Old Town along the eastern side of Marlowes. The south of the area includes services for the town centre such as a large doctors surgery and the Asda and Iceland food stores.

There are opportunities in this area for more sympathetic architecture and improvements to the building fascias of the listed buildings, removing unnecessary clutter and incorporating coordinated paving, street furniture and street trees.



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Above: The Character Zones merged to form overlapping and blurred boundaries shows the importance of the Market Square as the point where the central zones overlap (white star)

The Gade Zone

The Gade Zone includes the north western section of the town centre from Queensway to Combe Street, and includes part of the River Gade. The area includes West Herts College campus, the Civic Centre and other public sector uses, and the Marlowes Methodist Church. This zone holds significant regeneration opportunities for new educational and civic facilities, alongside supporting residential and retail at the southern end of the zone. With such a mix of uses, there are also opportunities for decentralised heating systems or Combined Heat and Power (CHP).

This zone also includes the Market Square and bus station, with potential for the bus station to be removed or relocated and new commercial leisure uses to help regenerate the space.

Jellicoe Water Gardens

This area encompasses the whole of the registered Water Gardens, running from Combe Street to Moor End Road, and is a key design feature of the Mark 1 new town.

The Water Gardens can play an important role in Hemel's future, as a key feature in a renewed high quality environment. Renovating and maintaining the Gardens will be important, as will ensuring that adjoining developments address, and do not turn their backs to, the Water Gardens.

Options are currently being considered to improve and restore the Water Gardens to celebrate their uniqueness and importance as part of the New Town and create a high quality space for people to meet, relax and enjoy. Subject to design considerations, this zone could provide an alternative location for public service uses on the Water Gardens North car park. There are also opportunities to improve Waterhouse Street and connections between the Water Gardens and the rest of the town centre.

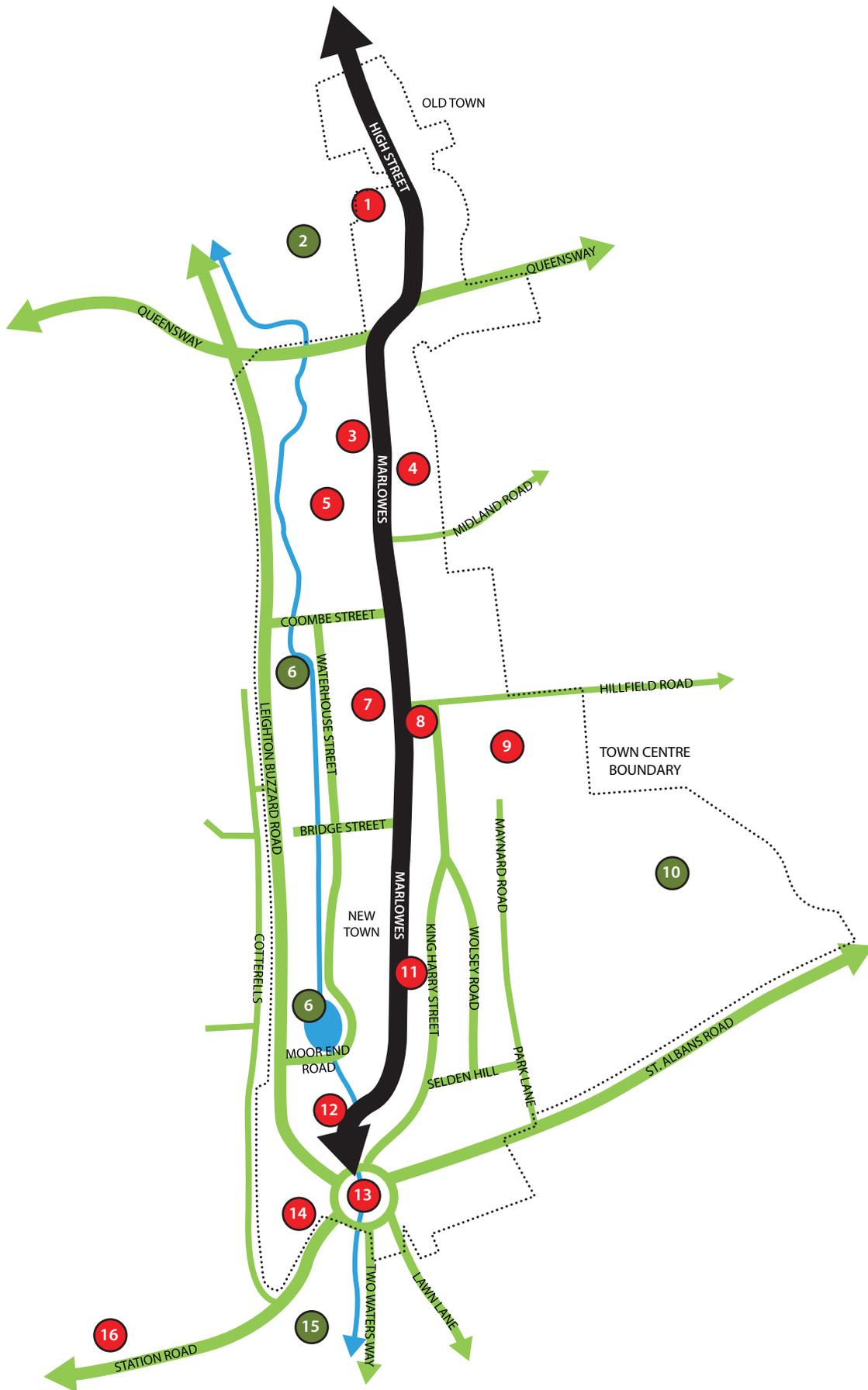
The Hospital Zone

This area includes the hospital site, Paradise employment area, and the offices, hotel and surgery opposite, as well as Paradise Fields. While uses in this area are critical to the vitality of the town centre, the area doesn't function well as part of the urban fabric.

The Hospital Zone holds significant regeneration opportunities for mixed use development which will be important in helping supporting the town centre. This development could include a new hospital, new housing, a primary school linked utilising part of Paradise Fields and retained and improved employment uses. There are also opportunities for improved open space and pedestrian and cycle links, particularly to the town centre, and a decentralised heating system or CHP.

The area presents the opportunity for a possible partnership project involving the Council, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the West Herts Hospital Trust and possibly a development company to redevelop and regenerate the area.

The area also includes the Royal Mail site, which has come to the fore due to the closure of the Park Lane Royal Mail sorting office. An application for the residential development of around 80 new homes is currently being considered for this site.



Above: Summary of major routes, landmarks and key features in Hemel Hempstead town centre
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Summary of major routes, landmarks and key features in Hemel Hempstead town centre:

1. **St Mary's Church**
2. **Gadebridge Park**
3. **Marlowes Church**
4. **Carey Church**
5. **Civic Offices**
6. **Water Gardens**
7. **Market Square**
8. **Hamilton House**
9. **Hemel Hempstead General Hospital**
10. **Paradise Fields**
11. **Marlowes Shopping Centre**
12. **Riverside Shopping Centre (Debenhams)**
13. **Plough roundabout**
14. **Kodak Tower**
15. **Town Moor**
16. **St John's Church**

The Marlowes Shopping Zone

This zone consists of the area south of Market Square and includes the ramped area north of Bridge Street and the pedestrianised area south, including the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres. It is the prime retail pitch of the town centre and is in need of refurbishment and renewal. The Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy will implement public realm improvements that will significantly enhance the public realm and streetscape and help secure a greater footfall and expenditure within the town centre. The area around the pedestrian gateway near the Market Square is also a potential location for office uses.

The Plough Zone

The Plough Zone is focussed around the Plough Roundabout and is an important gateway to the town centre. The roundabout, while successful in traffic management terms, presents a major obstacle to pedestrian and cycle friendly access to the town centre.

The area has recently been enhanced by the Riverside Shopping Centre and residential development with an improved environment around the River Gade, and the redevelopment of the Kodak site, with a new pedestrian footbridge.

Redevelopment opportunities in this area should enhance this key gateway to the town and respect the location adjacent to Boxmoor and Corner Hall residential area, whilst significantly improving pedestrian and cycle links and a higher quality public realm.



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Above: Potential development sites in Hemel Hempstead town centre

2.5 POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES

The following sites have been identified as potential development sites in the town centre, although some of the sites may not be redeveloped or only partially redeveloped or improved. The sites focus in the northern and eastern parts of the town centre, with very few central area opportunities.

Site no.	Site name	Character Zone	Area - ha*
1	Paradise open space (HCA site)	Hospital Zone	0.8
2	Royal Mail depot site	Hospital Zone	1.4
3	Paradise employment area	Hospital Zone	3.0
4	Hospital car park (owned by HCA)	Hospital Zone	0.7
5	Paradise fields	Hospital Zone	5.0
6	Hospital site	Hospital Zone	4.7
7	West Herts College	Gade Zone	2.9
8	Civic area	Gade Zone	2.5
9	Water Gardens North car park	Water Gardens	1.0
10	Market Square area	Gade Zone/Marlowes Shopping Zone	1.3
11	Mosaic supermarket	Marlowes Shopping Zone	0.25
12	Plough roundabout south	Plough Zone	0.2
13	Telephone exchange site	Plough Zone	0.7

* site area is approximate only and has not been informed by a site survey



Above: The Kodak Tower has been reused for new town centre housing

3 MAJOR LAND USES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The emerging Core Strategy puts forward a Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead to help make the town centre a vibrant place where people will want to shop, work, live, learn and visit during the day and evening. In order to achieve this vision, the Place Strategy includes objectives to deliver a number of different land uses within the town centre.

In many ways, these objectives form the brief for the land use strategy and the principal task is to consider the options for how these land use objectives could be successfully accommodated in the town centre. This chapter explains each of these major land uses and why they are required. The following chapter explains how such uses could be successfully integrated within the town centre incorporating high quality urban design.

The Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead states that, in the town centre, the objectives are to deliver:

- around 1,800 homes;
- a local general hospital;
- a new primary school;
- a new library and college;
- new civic and cultural facilities;
- a supermarket and other shops;
- a bus interchange; and
- a better footpath network

These key elements are now explained in more detail.

3.2 NEW HOMES

The emerging Core Strategy states that Hemel Hempstead will be the focus for higher levels of housing growth and proposes 1,800 new dwellings in the town centre, with another 6,000 new dwellings in the rest of the town. The Core Strategy states that new homes should match the needs of the community in terms of their size, type and affordability and that they should also be adaptable and accessible to all occupiers.

The redevelopment of the Kodak site already accounts for around 400 new homes in the town centre and the Core Strategy identifies 80 new homes in the northern part of the Old Town as a local allocation. These figures, therefore, count towards the total requirement of 1,800 new dwellings. However, as the Core Strategy housing figure is for a period up to 2031 and this major land use study and the emerging town centre masterplan are focussing on the next 10 years, it is unlikely that sites for all these new homes will be found at this stage.

Delivering housing growth will be challenging given the current housing market and economic conditions, but this study, alongside the town centre masterplan and Core Strategy, takes a longer term perspective. The Council is currently working with the Homes and Community Agency to help deliver new housing and also has committed to invest its own capital and other resources. The challenge is to ensure that development contributes to 'place making' and is achieved in a sustainable way, alongside a growing vibrant economy in a high quality environment, thereby improving the overall attractiveness of Hemel Hempstead.



Above: The current Hemel Hempstead General Hospital site, viewed from Hillfield Road



Above: The current West Herts. College campus