



Dacorum's Local Planning Framework

Core Strategy



DRAFT

Pre-Submission

September 2011

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Foreword

What is the Core Strategy?

The Council is preparing a new 'Local Planning Framework' for Dacorum borough. This will replace the existing Local Plan that was adopted in 2004.

The Core Strategy is the central document in this Local Planning Framework. Its role is to establish the overall pattern of development within the borough over the next 20 years.

A summary of the Core Strategy is set out in section 1. This includes the Key Diagram (Map 1), which shows where change will be focussed in the borough.

Do I need to comment?

Many people have responded to previous consultations (see chart in Figure 2 at the back of section 3). These responses have been used to help prepare the Pre-Submission Core Strategy.

You are invited to comment on this Pre-Submission document to help ensure that the final Core Strategy document continues to reflect your views and those of the local community. Expressions of support are as useful as expressions of concern.

Comments must be in the form of representations, made either online via the Council's consultation portal or by completing one of the representations forms.

What do I need to know before I comment?

The Core Strategy will guide development through economic ups and downs. The regeneration of Hemel Hempstead town centre and Maylands Business Park are important drivers for economic and social change. Significant increases in employment should normally be balanced with proportionate levels of housing. There is a strong need for new homes in Hemel Hempstead and in other parts of the borough. New development should support new infrastructure. The provision of new homes and jobs must take account of the environmental effects - both positive and negative.

You are advised to read the relevant sections of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy (and any other information you consider appropriate) before commenting.

What can I comment on?

All comments must be precise and, if objecting to the Core Strategy, you must clearly set out the changes that are required to the text.

As the Core Strategy will be examined for its “soundness” by a Planning Inspector, your comment must relate to the issue of “soundness.”

In order for the plan to be sound it must comply with the relevant planning regulations and be:

- *Justified* – founded on robust and credible evidence and represent the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives;
- *Effective* – deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored; and
- *Consistent with national policy* – where there is a departure, the Council must provide clear and convincing reasoning to justify this.

Further advice regarding what you can comment on and how to comment is given in the representation form that accompanies this document.

Is there any additional information that supports the Pre-Submission Core Strategy?

The Pre-Submission Core Strategy is supported by a number of background documents and reports, which cannot be fully summarised here. Key documents are specifically referred to within the text. A separate sustainability report has also been prepared on an independent basis by consultants, C4S. This appraises the environmental, social and economic implications of our proposals and highlights if the consultants have concerns regarding either our coverage of topics or overall approach.

The background information and the Sustainability Appraisal Report are available to download from our website free of charge from www.dacorum.gov.uk and paper copies are held in the reference sections of libraries within Dacorum borough. Copies are also available to purchase from Dacorum’s Strategic Planning and Regeneration team.

Any further questions?

If you have any further questions regarding any of the issues raised in this document please contact the Strategic Planning and Regeneration team on 01442 228660 or email strategic.planning@dacorum.gov.uk.

How do I comment?

Please submit comments online using Dacorum Council's consultation portal.

Alternatively, comments can be sent to the Strategic Planning and Regeneration Team at Dacorum Borough Council using the representations form that is available. You should use a separate form for each representation you wish to make.

Copies of the Pre-Submission Core Strategy, representations form and background information can be found on the Council's website www.dacorum.gov.uk, at local libraries or at Borough Council Offices subject to opening times. Anyone without internet access will be able to fill in a representations form and send it to the following address:

By consultation portal: <http://consult.dacorum.gov.uk/portal/>

Email forms to: strategic.planning@dacorum.gov.uk

Post forms to: Strategic Planning and Regeneration
Dacorum Borough Council
Civic Centre
Marlowes
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP1 1HH

Fax forms to: 01442 228771

All comments received will be publicly available.

What happens next?

After the close of consultation, all representations received (both supporting and objecting to the Core Strategy), will be summarised in a 'Report of Representations.'

If any significant new issues are raised then these will be reported to the Council's Cabinet and Full Council, together with a recommendation on how to proceed. This may require further, targeted consultation.

If no significant new issues are raised then the Core Strategy and associated documents will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for formal Examination.

Following receipt of the Inspector's Report, Cabinet and Full Council will consider its findings.

It is hoped that the final Core Strategy can be adopted by the Council in late 2012 / early 2013. The policies it contains are however already being taken into account as material planning considerations.

Contents

1. Summary of the Strategy	1
-----------------------------------	----------

PART A – CONTEXT

2. Introduction	11
3. Borough Portrait	17
4. Challenges	27
5. Borough Vision	31
6. Strategic Objectives	35
7. Other Plans	39

PART B – THE STRATEGY

The Sustainable Development Strategy

8. Promoting sustainable development	51
The distribution of development	53
The location and management of development	56
The Towns and Large Villages	58
The countryside	60
9. Enabling convenient access between homes, jobs and facilities	67
10. Securing quality design	73
Successful urban design	73
Quality of the built environment	76
Quality of the public realm	78

Strengthening Economic Prosperity

11. Creating jobs and full employment	83
A low carbon economy	85
The Maylands Business Park	86
Supporting tourism	86
12. Providing for offices, industry, storage and distribution	89
Offices	89
Industry, storage and distribution	90
13. Supporting retailing and commerce	93
The retail hierarchy	93
Shopping areas	94
Out of centre retail development	95

Providing Homes and Community Services

14. Providing homes	103
Housing programme	104
Housing mix	108
Affordable housing	110
Travelling communities	114
15. Meeting community needs	117
Delivering community services and facilities	117
Delivering leisure and cultural facilities	119

Looking after the Environment

16. Enhancing the natural environment	123
Protecting and improving the landscape	125
Green infrastructure	128
Biological and geological conservation	131
17. Conserving the historic environment	137
18. Using resources efficiently	141
Renewable energy	143
Sustainable design and construction	147
Sustainable resource management	151

Place Strategies

19. Introduction	157
20. Hemel Hempstead	163
21. Berkhamsted	183
22. Tring	189
23. Kings Langley	193
24. Bovingdon	197
25. Markyate	201
26. Countryside	207

PART C – IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

27. Delivery	215
Partnership working	217
Key projects	218
Flexibility and contingency	218
28. Infrastructure	221
Infrastructure requirements	223
Developer contributions	224

29. Monitoring		227
-----------------------	--	------------

PART D – APPENDICES

Appendix 1	Schedule of Superseded Policies	233
Appendix 2	Housing Trajectory	239
Appendix 3	Delivery Mechanisms for the Vision and Strategic Objectives	245
Appendix 4	Glossary	259

Figures

Figure 1	Structure of the Local Planning Framework	13
Figure 2	Core Strategy Preparation Stages	16
Figure 3	Dacorum's Location within South West Hertfordshire	20
Figure 4	Population Pyramid	22
Figure 5	Population Structure Projections	23
Figure 6	Relative Levels of Deprivation Across Dacorum	24
Figure 7	Other Key Documents and Strategies	41
Figure 8	Relationship Between Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Planning Framework Objectives and Policies	42
Figure 9	Principles of Sustainable Development	52
Figure 10	Structure of Core Strategy	52
Figure 11	Dacorum's Spatial Awareness Framework	74
Figure 12	Urban Design Principles	75
Figure 13	3 Step Approach to Successful Design	75
Figure 14	Social Infrastructure	117
Figure 15	Biodiversity and Geology Designations	131
Figure 16	Energy Hierarchy	143
Figure 17	Town Centre Character Zones and Development Opportunities	169
Figure 18	East Hemel Hempstead Character Zones and Development Opportunities	173
Figure 19	Hemel Hempstead Vision Diagram: Built	179
Figure 20	Hemel Hempstead Vision Diagram: Natural	180
Figure 21	Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Vision Diagram	181
Figure 22	East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan Vision Diagram	182
Figure 23	Berkhamsted Vision Diagram	188
Figure 24	Tring Vision Diagram	192
Figure 25	Kings Langley Vision Diagram	195
Figure 26	Bovingdon Vision Diagram	199
Figure 27	Markyate Vision Diagram	205
Figure 28	Countryside Vision Diagram	211

Maps

Map 1	Key Diagram	7
Map 2	Principal Landscape Areas	126
Map 3	High Level Green Infrastructure Network	130
Map 4	Energy Opportunities Plan	145

Tables

Table 1	Settlement Hierarchy	54
Table 2	Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt	62
Table 3	Transport Responsibilities	68
Table 4	Economic Development Strategy Objectives	84

Table 5	The Retail Hierarchy	93
Table 6	Out of Centre Retail Locations	95
Table 7	Prospective Housing Supply 2006-2031	104
Table 8	Prospective Distribution of Housing 2006-31	106
Table 9	Strategic Sites and Local Allocations	107
Table 10	Estimated Requirements for People Living in Caravans	114
Table 11	Step Changes in the Code for Sustainable Homes and Additional CO ₂ Reductions compared to Building Regulations Part L 2010	146
Table 12	Characteristics of Villages and Hamlets	210

Policy Schedule

Policy CS1	Distribution of Development	55
Policy CS2	Selection of Development Sites	57
Policy CS3	Managing Selected Development Sites	57
Policy CS4	The Towns and Large Villages	59
Policy CS5	Green Belt	62
Policy CS6	Selected Small Villages in the Green Belt	64
Policy CS7	Rural Area	65
Policy CS8	Sustainable Transport	69
Policy CS9	Management of Roads	70
Policy CS10	Quality of Settlement Design	77
Policy CS11	Quality of Neighbourhood Design	77
Policy CS12	Quality of Site Design	78
Policy CS13	Quality of the Public Realm	79
Policy CS14	Economic Development	87
Policy CS15	Office, Research, Industry, Storage and Distribution	91
Policy CS16	Shops and Commerce	96
Policy CS17	New Housing	108
Policy CS18	Mix of Housing	110
Policy CS19	Affordable Housing	112
Policy CS20	Rural Sites for Affordable Homes	113
Policy CS21	Existing Accommodation for Travelling Communities	115
Policy CS22	New Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers	116
Policy CS23	Social Infrastructure	121
Policy CS24	The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	133
Policy CS25	Landscape Character	133
Policy CS26	Green Infrastructure	134
Policy CS27	Quality of the Historic Environment	138
Policy CS28	Carbon Emission Reductions	148
Policy CS29	Sustainable Design and Construction	149
Policy CS30	Sustainability Offset Fund	150
Policy CS31	Water Management	155
Policy CS32	Air, Soil and Water Quality	156
Policy CS33	Hemel Hempstead Town Centre	175
Policy CS34	Maylands Business Park	176
Policy CS35	Infrastructure and Developer Contributions	225

1. Summary of the strategy

- 1.1 The purpose of the Core Strategy is to anticipate and manage change in Dacorum over the years to 2031. It needs to balance the need for new development and infrastructure against the need to maintain the environmental assets and unique character of the borough. It is also one of the key tools to help maximise and co-ordinate new investment in Dacorum and help promote economic regeneration.
- 1.2 Dacorum is an attractive borough, with a largely affluent, healthy and mobile population. However, when looking ahead there are a number of challenges to face:

<p style="text-align: center;">Challenges</p> <p>How to achieve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Balanced and sustainable growth2. A stronger role for the Maylands Business Park3. The regeneration of Hemel Hempstead town centre4. Strong, inclusive communities5. A resilient natural environment6. A high quality and sustainable built environment
--

- 1.3 In order to meet these challenges, the Core Strategy sets out a vision of what the borough should be like in 2031. Strategic Objectives set out how this vision will be realised. They include objectives for the central themes of:
- Strengthening Economic Prosperity
 - Providing Homes and Community Services; and
 - Looking After the Environment.

How much growth and change there will be within the borough

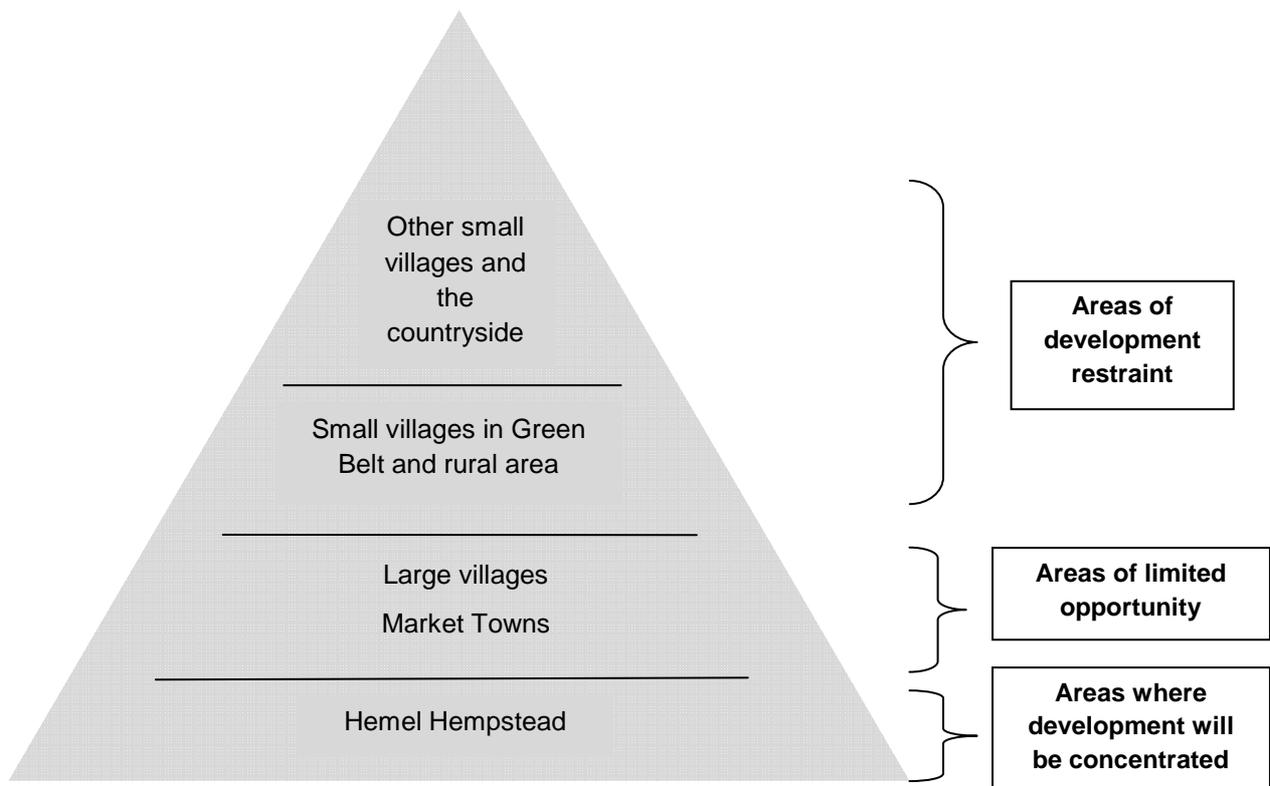
- 1.4 An average of 430 new homes will be provided within the Borough each year, for the plan period (2006-2031). This equates to a total of 10,750 homes. The actual level of delivery is expected to be slightly higher, due to Government rules which do not allow assumptions to be made for 'windfall' sites for the whole plan period when setting the housing target.
- 1.5 The approach to providing homes is to optimise the use of land within defined settlements, with the addition of some 'Local Allocations.' Local allocations are modest extensions to existing settlements which will help meet local housing and infrastructure needs. The release of these sites will be carefully phased to ensure they are only brought forward if required.

- 1.6 In addition to new homes, an additional 131,000 sqm (net) of office floorspace will be provided. There will be no net loss of industrial, storage and distribution floorspace over the plan period. This will help deliver about 10,000 new jobs by 2031 and support the drive towards achieving full employment within the borough. Supporting infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and leisure facilities will also be provided, together with improvements to the local transport network.
- 1.7 The emphasis is upon sustainable growth which links social and economic objectives and balances these with environmental considerations.

Where change will be focussed within the borough

- 1.8 The Key Diagram (Map 1) shows where these changes are expected to happen. These changes will be managed through a ‘settlement hierarchy’ which identifies areas which will be the focus for development and those which will be subject to greater development restraint.

The Settlement Hierarchy



1.9 Further detail of development strategies for each of the towns and large villages, and the wider countryside, is set out in the 'Place Strategies' (sections 19 to 26). Each strategy includes a local vision and objectives which express specific aspirations for these places. The visions are framed in the context of what each place will be like in 2031.

The place where development will be concentrated

1. Hemel Hempstead

1.10 Hemel Hempstead will be the Main Centre for Development and Change in the borough and the focus for new homes, jobs and infrastructure. This will include:

- **New homes.** Around 8,800 new homes will be provided in the town. This includes Local Allocations at West Hemel Hempstead, Marchmont Farm and the Old Town. 35% of all new homes will normally be made available at affordable prices or rents.
- **New jobs.** A significant proportion of anticipated new employment floorspace will be delivered in the town over the lifetime of this strategy. The Maylands Business Park will be the focus for this growth.
- **New services and facilities.** New leisure facilities, a performing arts venue and cemetery will be provided. Hertfordshire County Council have also advised that six new primary schools will be needed to serve both the new and existing population of the town.
- **New infrastructure.** Public transport links between Maylands Business Park, the town centre and Hemel Hempstead railway station will be improved.

1.11 Within Hemel Hempstead four areas have been identified for particular attention:

(a) Town Centre

The regeneration and refurbishment of the town centre will continue, building on its distinctive identity through improvements to the public realm. This will include provision of around 1,800 new homes, a local general hospital, a primary school, a new supermarket and community facilities.

(b) East Hemel Hempstead (Maylands Business Park)

Promote Maylands Business Park as a sub-regional business centre. It will be the focus for high quality, energy efficient development, with improved access to open space and local services and facilities. Approximately 1,000 new

homes, a primary school and a significant amount of new office floorspace will be developed. The delivery of some facilities, such as Park and Ride and a new sports ground may require extending into St Albans District, on land between the town and the M1.

(c) Neighbourhood Centres

The New Town neighbourhood structure will be reinforced and enhanced, and work will continue to regenerate, reinvigorate and “green” neighbourhood centres.

(d) Green Spaces

The network of open land will be maintained. Public open spaces will be improved, particularly the greenspace in the Two Waters area of the town.

- 1.12 The town centre and Maylands Business Park are designated as Key Regeneration Areas.

Places of limited opportunity

2. Market Towns

- 1.13 A ‘second tier’ of market towns will meet their local housing needs and provide employment and services for local and adjacent communities.

a) **Berkhamstead** – will have around 1,180 new homes. This includes a local allocation at Hanburys, Shootersway and the strategic site at Durrants Lane/Shootersway (Egerton Rothesay School), which will provide new homes, improvement to the school and additional playing pitches. Two ‘education zones’ have also been identified on the edge of the town to ensure the future primary age schooling needs are met. Existing employment land will be retained.

b) **Tring** – will have around 480 new homes. This includes a local allocation at West Tring to provide new homes, an extension to the Icknield Way General Employment Area, playing fields and new open space. The capacity of Tring School will be increased and new detached playing fields can be provided.

3. Large Villages

- 1.14 The following villages have been identified as areas where limited development is appropriate to ensure population stability.

- a) **Markyate** – will have around 200 new homes. 90 of these will be provided as part of the redevelopment of the Hicks Road General Employment Area, together with a new doctors surgery, public space, employment premises and other commercial uses.
- b) **Bovingdon** – will have around 130 new homes. This includes a local allocation north of Chesham Road to provide new homes and open space. Existing employment uses such as the Prison and Brickworks will be protected. A long-term solution to parking issues in the village centre will continue to be sought.
- c) **Kings Langley** – will have around 110 new homes and see improvements to school facilities. Its growth will complement proposals to the east of the Grand Union Canal in Three Rivers District.

Areas of development restraint

- 1.15 In rural areas and the urban fringe the priority is to maintain existing urban boundaries and protect the character of the smaller villages and the wider countryside.

4. Small Villages within the Green Belt and Rural Area

- 1.16 Significant environmental constraints apply in this ‘fourth tier’ of small villages and their rural character will continue to be protected. Some small villages are identified as being important for local services and facilities. Local affordable housing and other very limited development will help sustain the villages, i.e.:

- a) Chipperfield
- b) Flamstead
- c) Potten End
- d) Wigginton
- e) Aldbury
- f) Long Marston
- g) Wilstone

5. Other small settlements and the wider countryside

- 1.17 The approach in other small settlements and the wider countryside is to:

- a) maintain the openness of the areas of the borough designated as Green Belt or Rural Area;
- b) protect and enhance both the natural and historic landscape character;
- c) protect and extend the identified network of Green Infrastructure within and outside settlements, with particular attention being given to Key Biodiversity Areas; and

d) conserve and enhance the special qualities of the parts of the borough within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

- 1.18 Maintaining the countryside helps to prevent towns and villages from merging into one another and ensures that they retain their distinctive characters.
- 1.19 Support will be given to the rural economy, with particular emphasis upon farming, local food production and sustainable tourism. The landscape, habitats and biodiversity will be protected and enhanced, particularly those that are rare or locally distinctive.

How development and change will be managed

- 1.20 Development and change will be controlled through a series of policies designed to help the borough respond to future challenges. These cover topics such as accessibility, economic development, the mix and tenure of new homes, the provision of social and community facilities and protection of the historic and natural landscape. Particular emphasis is placed upon the use of sustainable design and construction methods and ensuring that all development is of a high quality and reflects local character.
- 1.21 New development will be phased to ensure that there is either existing infrastructure capacity to accommodate increased demand or that additional infrastructure is provided. Careful consideration will be given to the provision of physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, sewerage and waste disposal facilities), social infrastructure (e.g. such as schools, healthcare and recreational facilities) and green infrastructure (e.g. formal and informal open space and waterways). Development will be expected to make appropriate contributions towards these infrastructure needs. These contributions will usually be in the form of planning conditions, obligations and a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charge. Where appropriate, pooled contributions will be used to address the cumulative impact of development proposals.
- 1.22 The Council's monitoring processes will determine whether the Council's planning policies are being delivered as intended, are having the desired outcomes and whether they are successful at responding to changing needs and circumstances.

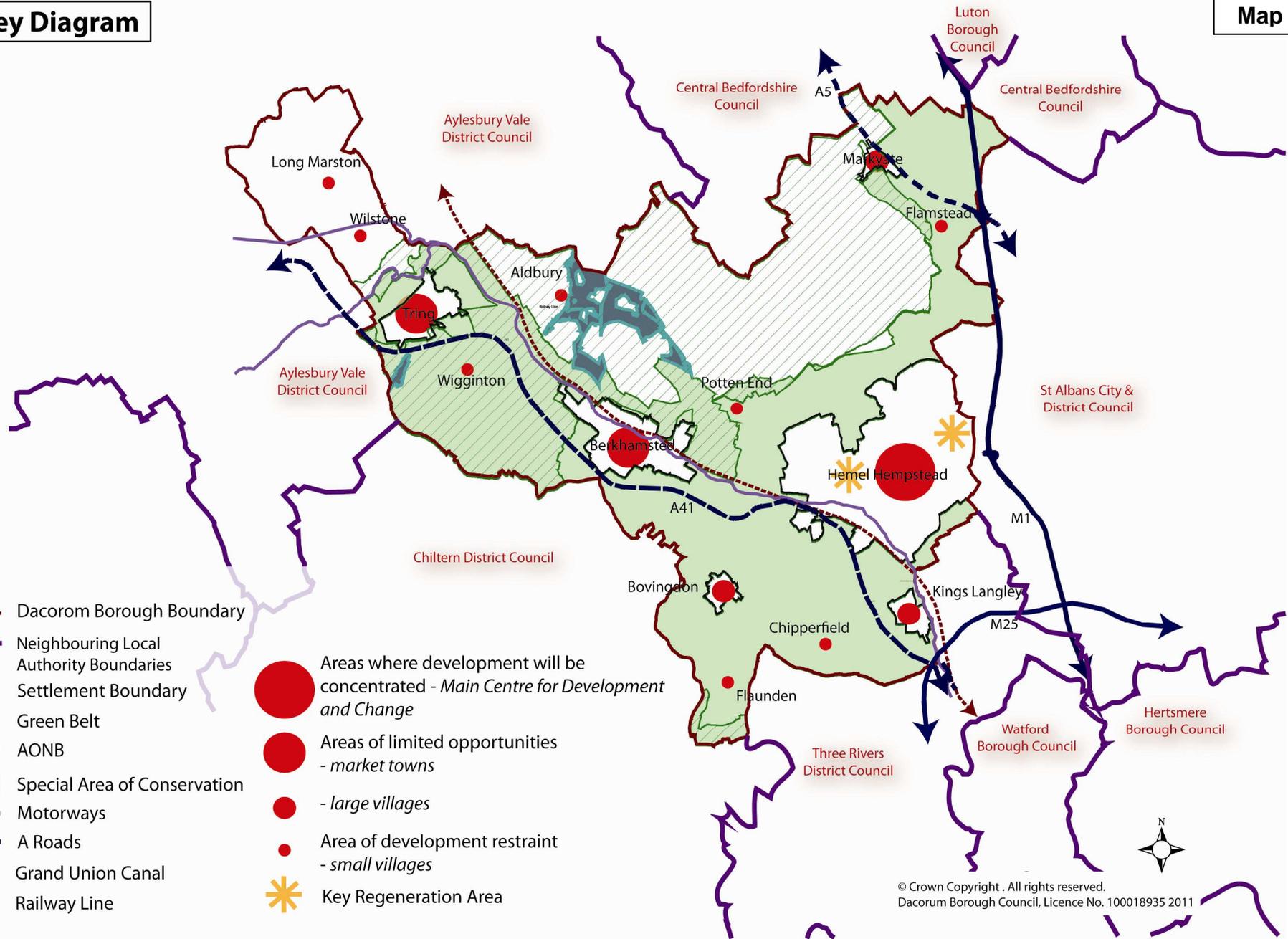
Key Diagram

Map 1

KEY

-  Dacorum Borough Boundary
-  Neighbouring Local Authority Boundaries
-  Settlement Boundary
-  Green Belt
-  AONB
-  Special Area of Conservation
-  Motorways
-  A Roads
-  Grand Union Canal
-  Railway Line

-  Areas where development will be concentrated - *Main Centre for Development and Change*
-  Areas of limited opportunities - *market towns*
-  - *large villages*
-  Area of development restraint - *small villages*
-  Key Regeneration Area



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PART A

THE CONTEXT

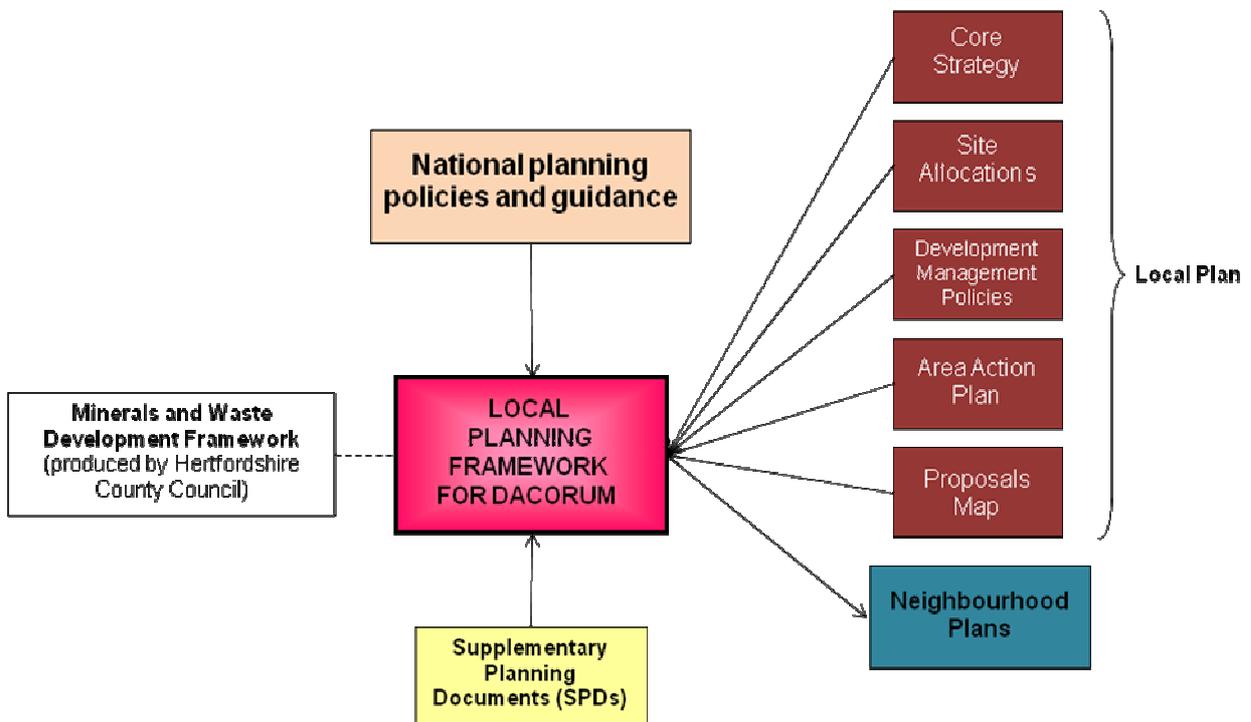
Introduction

2. Introduction

The Core Strategy

2.1. The Core Strategy is the first of the documents that will make up the borough's new local plan. The local plan is the collective name for a series of documents (known as Development Plan Documents) that together will guide future development. Figure 1 illustrates the structure of the local planning framework.

Figure 1: Structure of the Local Planning Framework



2.2. The Core Strategy sets out the planning framework for guiding the location and level of development with the borough over the next 20 years. It will be used to determine planning applications and as a starting point for more detailed policies and site specific proposals that will be contained in subsequent planning documents. It will also help implement the land use elements of other plans and strategies.

2.3. Other Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that will help to achieve the vision and objectives set out within this Core Strategy are:

- **Development Management Policies** – supports the Core Strategy by setting out additional, more detailed planning policies that the Council will use when considering planning applications.

- **Site Allocations** – sets out the Council’s detailed proposals and requirements for particular sites and areas. These will be illustrated on the Proposals Map.
- **East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan (AAP)** – provides a detailed planning framework for the eastern part of Hemel Hempstead, whose regeneration is of particular importance to the wellbeing and prosperity of the borough and beyond. The extent of this AAP within Dacorum is shown on the Proposals Map. The extent of the AAP within St. Albans is to be confirmed.

2.4. These DPDs will be supported by a series of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which give specific guidance on how the Council’s planning strategy and policies will be implemented for specific topics, areas or sites. Although they will not form part of the statutory development plan for Dacorum, they will be important considerations in the Council’s planning decisions.

2.5 Neighbourhood Plans may become part of the statutory development plan. The decision to prepare a neighbourhood plan will be a matter for the local community – either a town or parish council or neighbourhood forum. The Council will support local communities in preparing relevant neighbourhood plans and will adopt plans that are supported by local referendums.

2.6. Whilst documents in the Local Planning Framework are being prepared, policies in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 will continue to be used to guide development until they are replaced. Those Local Plan policies that are superseded by policies in this Proposed Submission Core Strategy are listed in Appendix 1.

Consultation and Evidence

2.7. This Core Strategy has been prepared following extensive consultation with stakeholders and the local community, in line with the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The main preparation stages are shown in Figure 2. A summary of all consultation undertaken so far is contained in the Core Strategy Report of Consultation available from the Council’s offices and from its website www.dacorum.gov.uk.

2.8. To ensure that the Core Strategy and other DPDs are based on a thorough understanding of the issues and challenges faced, a wide range of information and studies known as the ‘evidence base,’ have also been prepared. A full list of these, together with links to the individual documents, is available online at www.dacorum.gov.uk.

Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment

2.9. The policies and proposals in this Core Strategy have been subject to a formal Sustainability Appraisal (SA), carried out by independent consultants C4S. This

Sustainability Appraisal incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required under European law.

- 2.10. Sustainability Appraisal is a mechanism of systematically assessing the social, environmental and economic effects of strategies and documents contained within Development Plan Documents. It is also a continuous process. The framework for assessing policies and proposals was established through an initial Scoping Report (February 2006) and followed by a series of Working Notes associated with each stage of consultation. Sustainability Appraisal has also been an integral part of assessing the merits of strategic sites and local allocations and helping develop policy wording.
- 2.11. This Pre-Submission Core Strategy is accompanied by the *'Dacorum Local Development Framework Core Strategy – Pre Submission Sustainability Appraisal Report (September 2011)'*.
- 2.12. Under national and European law¹ the Council is required to assess plans or projects which could affect sites of European importance (known as Natura 2000 sites). These are Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats. Part of the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC lies within Dacorum (see Map 1). A 'screening' was been undertaken in 2008 to assess whether proposals within the Core Strategy would have any adverse impacts upon these sites, either alone, or in combination with other plans. No significant effects were identified. This screening has been reviewed and updated² and the conclusions of the report remain unchanged.
- 2.13 The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, subsequent Working Notes, the Sustainability Appraisal Report and Appropriate Assessment Screening Report all form part of the evidence base for the Core Strategy. Copies are available from www.dacorum.gov.uk.

¹ The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

² **Dacorum Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment: Summary Report, Halcrow, September 2011.**

**Figure 2:
Core Strategy
Preparation Stages**



Stage Completed



Not yet done

**We Are
Here**

- **Adoption of Core Strategy**
- **Receipt of Inspectors Report**
- **Examination**
- **Submission of**
 - Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal
- **Publication of, and representations on**
 - Pre-Submission Core Strategy
 - Sustainability Appraisal Report
- **Consultation on**
 - Draft Core Strategy
 - Draft Final Sustainability Appraisal
 - November 2010
- **Consultation on**
 - Emerging Core Strategy
 - Issues and Options – East Hemel Hempstead. Area Action Plan
 - Sustainability Appraisal Working Notes
 - June 2009
- **Consultation on**
 - Supplementary Issues and Options – Site Allocations
 - Sustainability Appraisal Working Note
 - Place Workshops – Summer 2008
- **Consultation on**
 - Issues and Options – Site Allocations
 - Supplementary Issues and Options – Core Strategy, Growth at Hemel Hempstead
 - Sustainability Appraisal Working Notes
 - November 2006
- **Consultation on**
 - Issues and Options – Core Strategy
 - Sustainability Appraisal Working Note
 - May 2006
- **Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report**
 - February 2006
- **Consultation on**
 - Emerging issues and options
 - July 2005
- **Gathering background information and commencing technical studies**
 - 2004 onwards

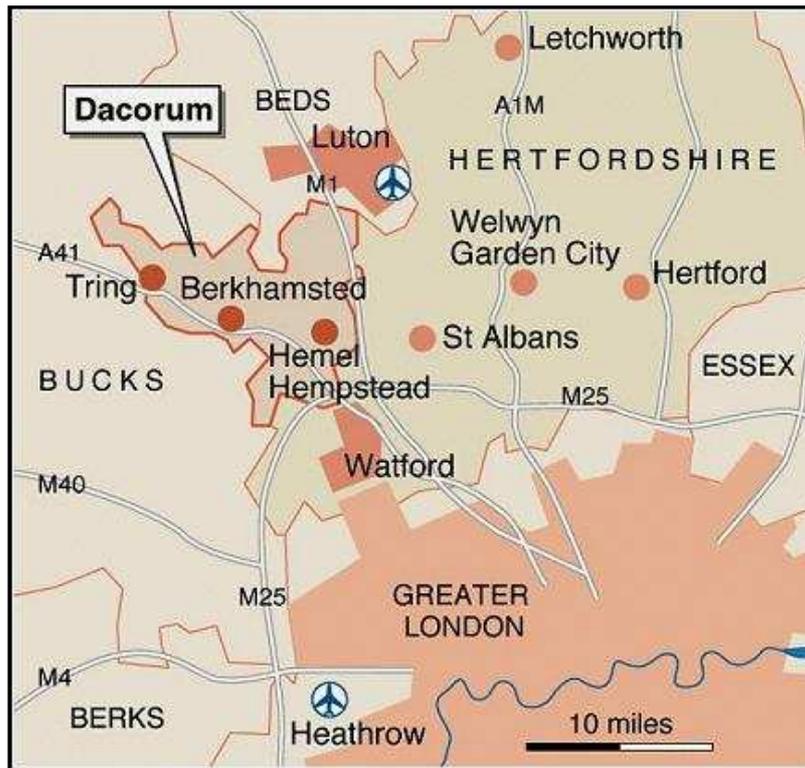
Borough Portrait

3. Borough Portrait

Location and context

- 3.1 The name Dacorum comes from the “Hundred of Dacorum,” one of the ancient administrative units of Hertfordshire. The borough covers 81 square miles of West Hertfordshire extending almost from the outskirts of Watford, northwards to the Chiltern Hills (see Figure 3). It is currently home to approximately 138,000 people, making it the largest district in Hertfordshire.
- 3.2 The majority of residents live in the principal town of Hemel Hempstead. This is a Mark 1 New Town and will continue to be the focus for development and change within the borough. Much of the town’s infrastructure is over 50 years old and in need of renewal. The town centre and Maylands Business Park are designated as key regeneration areas (Map 1).
- 3.3 In addition to Hemel Hempstead, there are also two market towns (Berkhamsted and Tring) and a number of villages, all with their own distinctive character. Almost 85% of the borough is rural. 60% of this area, and just over half of the borough as a whole, falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 3.4 Its location on the south western edge of Hertfordshire means that the area has strong links with the adjoining counties of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. Significant growth is planned for Luton, whilst many smaller nearby towns, such as Amersham and Chesham, will experience relatively little change.
- 3.5 Much of the borough’s countryside falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt, reflecting its proximity to London and the development pressures that this brings. This countryside is accessible to visitors from a wide area. The Chiltern Hills are one of the most accessible areas of countryside for residents of many large towns and cities, including Aylesbury, Luton, Watford and London to spend their leisure time and plays an important role as their ‘green lung’.
- 3.6 The main lines of communication through the borough are the A41 trunk road, the Euston to Glasgow (West Coast main line) railway and the Grand Union Canal. The M1 runs down the eastern boundary and the M25 crosses the south-eastern tip of the borough. There are limited east-west links. Luton airport is easily accessible from the M1, with Heathrow airport also within a relatively easy distance. There are mainline stations at Berkhamsted, Tring, Kings Langley and two stations in Hemel Hempstead. All offer good commuter and leisure services south to Watford and London, and north to Milton Keynes, Northampton and Birmingham.

Figure 3: Dacorum's location within South West Hertfordshire



Dacorum's economy

- 3.7 Dacorum has a successful economy, which employs around 60,700 people (2009)³ across a range of sectors and size of businesses. Historically, the economy of the area has included a strong element of manufacturing. The area was once a centre for paper making, with a number of mills located along the canal, although all of these have now ceased commercial production. In recent years the manufacturing sector has declined significantly. Around a quarter of jobs are now in knowledge based industries such as high-tech manufacturing, financial and business services (FBS), computing and research and development (R&D), and communications industries. Storage and distribution, retail, health, education and the service sectors also employ significant numbers of people. The rural economy and tourism are relatively small, but locally important sectors.
- 3.8 The Maylands Business Park in Hemel Hempstead is of significance to the borough and wider sub-region and is a focus for regeneration. The Buncefield oil terminal, on the eastern edge of the Maylands area, is of national significance for the storage and distribution of fuel – in particular aviation fuel. The site is subject to reconstruction following a fire in December 2005.

³ ONS 2009 data, from www.nomisweb.co.uk

- 3.9 Hertfordshire has the highest average income in the East of England. At £29,456, Dacorum's average annual income is slightly lower than that of Hertfordshire and the adjoining authorities of St. Albans and Three Rivers. However, it is significantly higher than that of nearby Luton, and slightly higher than for the adjoining authority of Central Bedfordshire⁴.
- 3.10 Unemployment levels are low compared to the national average, but slightly higher than the average for Hertfordshire. However, these levels vary within the borough, with Hemel Hempstead's unemployment rate almost twice that of Berkhamsted and Tring.
- 3.11 Adult education qualification levels in Dacorum are above average for Hertfordshire and England, with only 7.5% of the adult working population having no recognised qualifications⁵. Nevertheless, there are still local skills shortages, particularly in terms of basic numeracy skills and specialist skills within certain employment sectors.
- 3.12 Due to good transport links, many residents work outside the borough. However, the proportion of residents working elsewhere is currently the lowest in the county, making Dacorum more 'self-contained' than the rest of Hertfordshire. Within the sub-region the borough's principal competitors for office-based jobs are Watford and St Albans, with Luton and Hatfield also seeking to attract local employers. Historically the M4 corridor has been more successful at attracting new employers than south-west Hertfordshire. A significant number of residents regularly commute into London.
- 3.13 Whilst there are high levels of vehicle ownership, just under a fifth (17.3%) of households do not own a car⁶. The level of vehicle ownership varies across the borough, and tends to vary with levels of deprivation. Vehicle ownership is a lot higher in the rural wards than those in and around Hemel Hempstead.
- 3.14 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.

⁴ Median annual pay, gross: Nomisweb.co.uk 2010

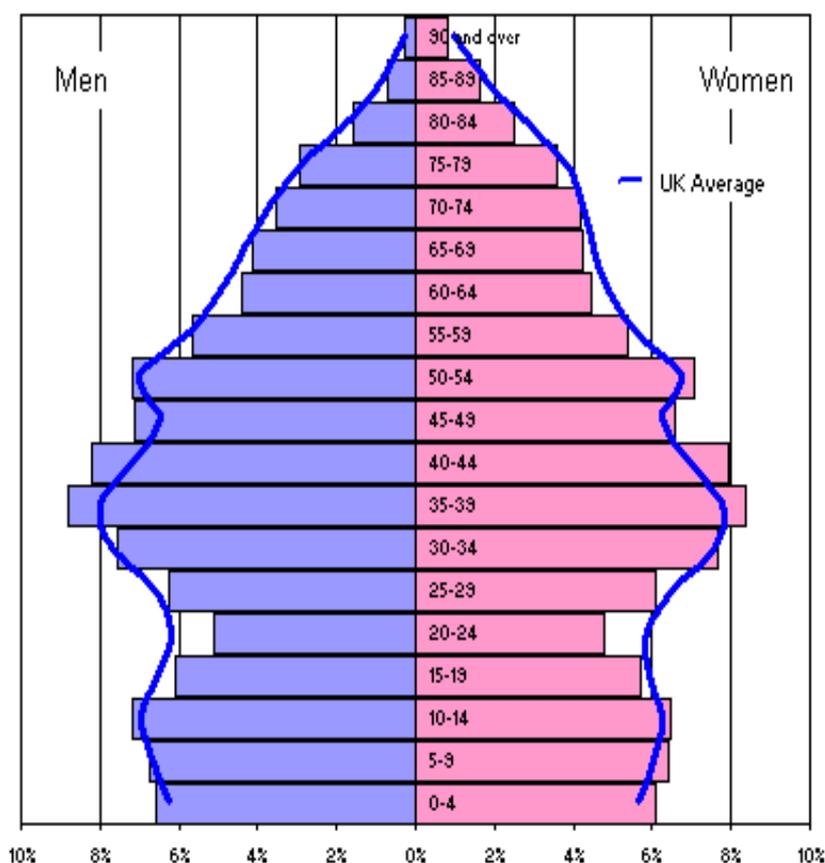
⁵ ONS, Annual Population Survey, Nomisweb.co.uk 2010

⁶ Census 2001

Dacorum's Community

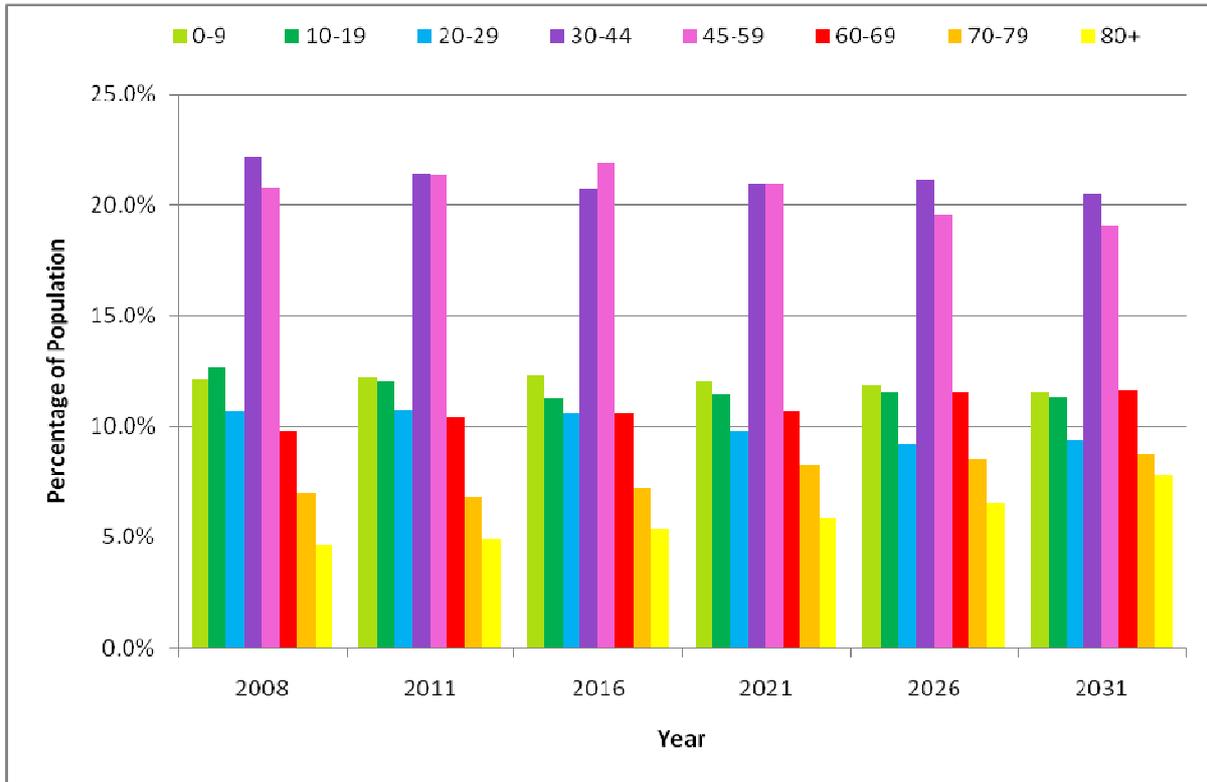
3.15 The age structure of Dacorum's population is very close to that for the country as a whole (see Figure 4). Around a quarter of the population is under 20 and a fifth are over 60. Future projections indicate that the number of people over the age of 60 will increase substantially by 2031 (see Figure 5). This raises challenges for the borough in terms of providing the right mix of accommodation and ensuring easy access to essential services and facilities.

Figure 4: Population Pyramid



Source: Census 2001, Office for National Statistics

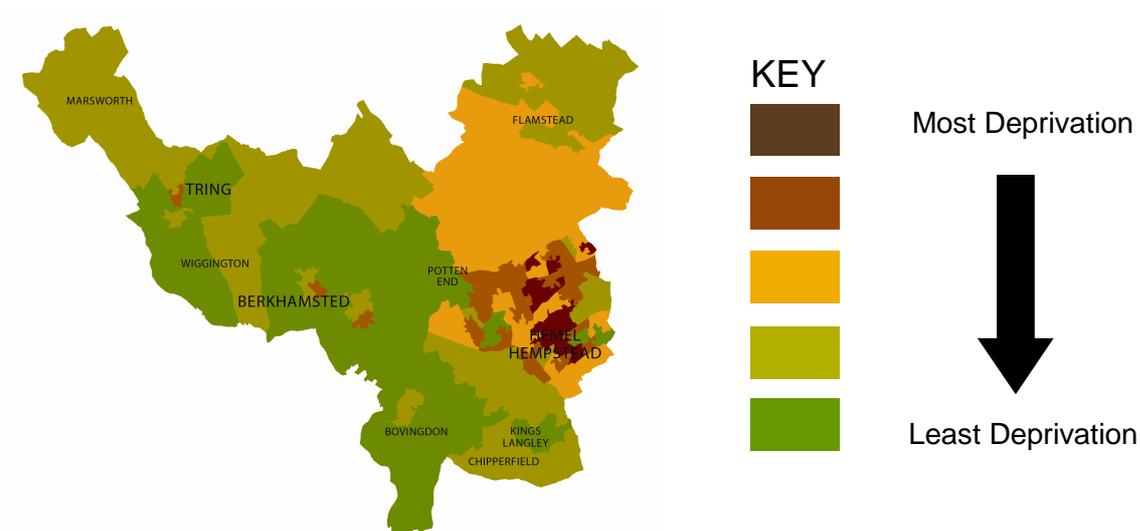
Figure 5: Population Structure Projections



Source: ONS 2008 based sub-regional population projections

- 3.16 Dacorum is less ethnically diverse than the average for England, with just over 8% of the population classifying themselves as ‘non-white.’ The Asian population is the largest non-white group. There is a varied ethnic mix across the borough, with Hemel Hempstead having the highest non-white population.
- 3.17 The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks the area as only the 266th most deprived district out of 326 authorities. Although overall deprivation levels are generally low, there are pockets of deprivation. The least deprived wards tend to be located in the eastern half of the borough (see Figure 6). The most deprived wards in the borough are all located at Hemel Hempstead, underlying the need for social and economic regeneration initiatives to be focussed upon the town.

Figure 6: Relative Levels of Deprivation across Dacorum



- 3.18 Housing in Dacorum is expensive by national standards. The average house price for Dacorum is almost £330,000, compared with the average for the London Commuter Belt of around £324,000⁷. Whilst earnings growth has kept pace with national figures, house prices have more than doubled over the same period. The borough has high levels of public sector housing stock, particularly in Hemel Hempstead; a legacy of its New Town roots. Provision of additional affordable housing to meet existing and future needs is a key challenge.
- 3.19 The 2001 census found just over 70% of Dacorum’s population to be in good health. However, there are inequalities within the borough by location, gender, level of deprivation and ethnicity.
- 3.20 Crime levels in Dacorum are around average for the East of England, and slightly lower than both the national and county averages. Total recorded crime has actually fallen in recent years.

Dacorum’s environment

- 3.21 The borough has a range of very attractive and distinctive landscapes, with several significant visitor attractions including the Ashridge Estate, Grand Union Canal and Tring’s Zoological Museum. Over a third of the area falls within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This designation, together with the Green Belt, constrains the amount and type of development that is allowed within the rural areas. The countryside is one of the assets most highly valued by the local community⁸ and

⁷ Hometrack, March 2010

⁸ Dacorum Residents Survey 2009, Opinion Research Services

it is well used for recreational purposes. The beechwoods at Ashridge and Tring woodlands are designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and protected under European law.

3.22 The borough's landscape ranges from the rolling hills, beech woods and chalk streams that characterise the Chilterns, to the lower, flatter landscape of Boarscroft Vale. It is home to a number of rare species, including the Black Poplar, Water Voles and White-Clawed Crayfish. Dacorum also has a rich and varied historic heritage, from the distinctive New Town architecture to more traditional brick and flint buildings of the market towns. The Grand Union canal runs north to south, formerly providing the power for the paper mills that once dominated the Gade Valley. The borough is home to 25 Conservation Areas, 4 Registered Parks and Gardens, some 2,000 Listed Buildings, around 30 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and many known archaeological sites.

Challenges

4. Challenges

- 4.1. As the borough portrait outlines, Dacorum is an attractive borough, with a largely affluent, healthy and mobile population. However, this generally positive picture hides some significant challenges.
- 4.2. The core challenge is to provide balanced and sustainable growth.

Challenge 1 - Balanced and sustainable growth

New jobs ought to give residents a choice of working close to where they live. These jobs will need to be in a range of different sectors to suit differing skill levels, but focus upon those sectors where there is predicted to be the largest rise in future demand.

Locally generated housing needs ought to be accommodated. A view will need to be taken regarding how much in-migration should be accommodated. The right type of housing should be provided in the right locations, taking into account changes in the population structure. The borough's high average house prices should be compensated for by a rise in the number of new affordable homes, catering for a range of different needs.

By carefully considering the location of homes, jobs and essential services, travel demand can be managed, congestion and pollution eased and all residents given better access to the places where they work, shop and spend leisure time. This can also help to reduce the predicted growth in traffic on the M1 and other heavily congested routes through central Hertfordshire.

The approach to new development and growth must recognise the borough's environment and countryside, and therefore it is appropriate to exercise some restraint.

- 4.3. There are also more specific challenges that relate to the borough's economic health, the well being of its residents and the future of its environment:

Challenge 2 - Strengthen the role of the Maylands Business Park

- 4.4. The Maylands Business Park is the largest in the borough and also of sub-regional importance. Its success is critical to the wider economic prosperity of the borough and beyond. The need for a strong regeneration focus was given added impetus by the Buncefield explosion in December 2005. The development of The Gateway as a

green business park will assist with long-term recovery and provide skilled jobs. The area currently suffers from a lack of services and facilities accessible to its daytime population. Proposals for the Heart of Maylands will be critical in filling this gap and help improve the attractiveness of the areas to employers and employees alike.

Challenge 3 - Regenerate Hemel Hempstead town centre

- 4.5. The range of shops and facilities offered by Hemel Hempstead town centre has already been improved through the Riverside development. However, further improvements to both the retail offer and quality of the overall environment must be made if the town is to compete with larger sub-regional centres across the borough boundary. Central to this regeneration is the provision of new homes and high quality office space, both of which will increase footfall. A range of leisure and community facilities will be available to local residents.

Challenge 4 - Strong, inclusive communities

- 4.6. The impact of new development upon community cohesion and local character must be carefully considered. In particular it must contribute fully to infrastructure needs and not result in undue pressures upon local schools, health facilities and other key services and facilities. Where possible it should help increase the range of social, leisure and cultural facilities, which are currently quite low for the size of the population. Inequalities, whether based on race, gender, religion or income, must be reduced.

Challenge 5 - A resilient natural environment

- 4.7. The combined effects of climate change and population growth will increase pressures on the natural environment. These impacts must be reduced through the prudent use of natural resources, encouraging renewable energy production, the effective disposal of waste, the sustainable design of new development and careful land management.

Challenge 6 - A high quality and sustainable built environment

- 4.8. Development must celebrate and reinforce local distinctiveness - reinforcing the good qualities and reducing or removing the bad. It must recognise that what is appropriate in one location cannot necessarily be replicated elsewhere, in order to retain the individual identities of each place. Development must also help to mitigate against the impacts of climate change, through sustainable design and construction and reducing the need to travel, particularly by car.

Borough Vision

5. Borough Vision

- 5.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy⁹ has the vision of “*Working together to make Dacorum a happy, healthy prosperous place to live, work and visit.*” The Council has taken this vision and used it to develop a more detailed picture of what the borough will be like in 2031.

DACORUM 2031: A VISION

Dacorum’s Sustainable Community Strategy has been fulfilled. The community recognises Dacorum as a happy, healthy, prosperous and safe place in which to live and work and to visit.

The natural beauty of the Chiltern Hills and the varied character of the countryside is admired and cherished. The countryside is actively managed and supports a healthy local economy and diversity of wildlife. Water quality in the rivers is good. Towns and villages have sufficient water supply. Carbon emissions have been reduced and renewable energy production is sensitive to its surroundings. New woodlands have been planted for the future and the borough looks much greener. Effective use has been made of developed land in the towns and villages, protecting the countryside.

Hemel Hempstead has been transformed through regeneration of the town centre and Maylands Business Park. The town is fulfilling its potential as a sub-regional business centre, important for green enterprise, and is meeting the locally generated demand for new homes.

The market towns of Berkhamsted and Tring and the large villages provide all the necessary services for their communities and surroundings.

The economy is buoyant and all parts of the borough have local employment opportunities, which are both varied and accessible.

Communities are inclusive and healthy. Minority groups are an accepted part of culture and diversity. New homes are affordable and cater for the needs of the population. Open space, facilities and services are accessible. New schools have opened and Hemel Hempstead has a new local hospital. Access to the Watford Health Campus is improved. Public transport is more widely used.

Differences in the character of each place are recognised and valued. Developments have added to character through their design, and sustainable construction is the norm. Special features, such as the Grand Union Canal, remain an active part of the heritage of the borough. The wider historic environment is valued and protected.

⁹ *Towards 2021 – the Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy*, The Dacorum Partnership, January 2008

5.2 This borough vision is complemented by a set of local visions set out in each Place Strategy (see sections 19 to 26). These local visions express specific aspirations for the individual towns and large villages and for the wider countryside and set out how these places will be by 2031.

Strategic Objectives

6. Strategic Objectives

- 6.1. In order to focus action, measure progress and meet the borough vision, a set of strategic objectives have been developed. These have been subdivided into the four Theme sections from the Strategy (Part B), together with Delivery and Monitoring (Part C). The first three objectives are cross-cutting. This means that they will not be achieved solely through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy policies, but through the combined effect of all policies within the Core Strategy.
- 6.2. These strategic objectives are complemented by a set of local objectives set out in each Place Strategy (see Sections 19-26). These highlight issues of specific importance to each of the borough's towns, large villages and countryside that need to be addressed.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To promote healthy and sustainable communities and a high quality of life for Dacorum. 2. To mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. 3. To promote social inclusion and cohesiveness, embrace diversity and reduce inequalities. 4. To enable convenient access between jobs, homes and facilities, minimise the impact of traffic and reduce the overall need to travel by car. 5. 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 6. To conserve and enhance the function and character of the market towns, villages and countryside. 7. To ensure the effective use of existing land and previously developed sites. 8. To create safe and attractive environments through high quality design. 	<p>The Sustainable Development Strategy</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. To promote a vibrant and prosperous economy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to strengthen confidence in Hemel Hempstead's role as a thriving sub-regional business centre and shopping hub; 	<p>Strengthening Economic Prosperity</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to develop the Maylands Business Park as a leader of “green enterprise” and focus of the low carbon economy; – to maintain commercial enterprise and employment opportunities in the market towns and large villages; and – to support rural enterprise. 	
<p>10. To provide a mix of new homes to meet the needs of the population.</p> <p>11. To provide for a full range of social, leisure and community facilities and services.</p>	Providing Homes and Community Services
<p>12. To protect and enhance Dacorum’s distinctive landscape character, open spaces, biological and geological diversity and historic environment.</p> <p>13. To promote the use of renewable resources, protect natural resources and reduce waste.</p> <p>14. To protect people and property from flooding.</p> <p>15. To minimise the effects of pollution on people and the environment.</p>	Looking After the Environment
<p>16. To co-ordinate the delivery of new infrastructure with development.</p> <p>17. To ensure that all development contributes appropriately to local and strategic infrastructure requirements.</p>	Implementation and Delivery

6.3. Progress towards meeting these strategic objectives needs to be monitored. Whilst some of the strategic objectives can be directly monitored, others set a broader direction of travel. The Council’s approach to monitoring delivery of the Core Strategy is set out in Part C – Delivery and Review.

Other Plans

7. Other Plans

7.1 The challenges and objectives outlined cannot be tackled by the Local Development Framework alone. They are already being addressed in varying degrees by a range of other strategies and policies at national, county and local levels. It is therefore important that the Core Strategy, and other Development Plan Documents, complement and reinforce these. Figure 7 lists some of these key documents and strategies.

Figure 7: Other Key Documents and Strategies

National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning policy statements and guidance • Planning Circulars
County or Sub-region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East of England Plan¹⁰ • Hertfordshire 2021 A Brighter Future • Hertfordshire's Economic Development Strategy 2009-2021 • Local Economic Assessment (LEA) • Local Transport Plan (LTP) • Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) • Minerals and Waste Development Framework for Hertfordshire • Management Plan for the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty • Documents and strategies produced by the Local Enterprise partnership (LEP)
Local
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards 2021- The Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy • Corporate Plan • Housing Strategies • Green Space Strategy • Dacorum's Economic Development Strategy • Dacorum Development Programme • Maylands Masterplan • Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The Community Strategy

7.2 'Towards 2021- The Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy', sets out the community's aspirations for Dacorum. It was produced by the Dacorum Partnership, the area's Local Strategic Partnership, (LSP). This group represents the borough

¹⁰ Until removed through enactment of the Localism Bill.

and County Councils and delivery partners such as local healthcare providers, the police, community groups and voluntary organisations operating within Dacorum. The Local Planning Framework is a key delivery mechanism for the wider Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). Its objectives must therefore link with, reinforce and elaborate upon those drawn up for the SCS (Figure 8).

7.3 The objectives of Dacorum’s SCS broadly correspond to those set out within the County’s community strategy, ‘Hertfordshire 2021 A Brighter Future,’ prepared by Hertfordshire Forward. The principal difference relates to the inclusion of specific objectives relating to transport and access within the Hertfordshire strategy.

Figure 8: Relationship between Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Planning Framework Objectives and Policies

Community Strategy Objective	Equivalent Strategic Objective(s)	Principal Core Strategy Policies
Reducing crime and creating a safer Dacorum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote healthy and sustainable communities and a high quality of life • To create safe and attractive environments through high quality design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS10 • CS11 • CS12 • CS13 • CS29 • CS30
Creating a cleaner and healthier environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect and enhance Dacorum’s distinctive landscape character, open spaces, biological and geological diversity and historic environment. • To mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. • To minimise the effects of pollution on people and the environment. • To promote the use of renewable resources, protect natural resources and reduce waste. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS23 • CS24 • CS25 • CS26 • CS28 • CS29 • CS30 • CS31 • CS32
Delivering lifelong learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a vibrant and prosperous economy: • To strengthen confidence in Hemel Hempstead’s role as a thriving sub-regional business centre and shopping hub; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS7 • CS14 • CS15 • CS16 • CS23

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop the Maylands Business Park as a leader of “green enterprise” and focus of the low carbon economy; • To maintain commercial enterprise and employment opportunities in the market towns and large villages; and • To support rural enterprise. • To promote social inclusion and cohesiveness, embrace diversity and reduce inequalities. • To provide a full range of social, leisure and community facilities and services. 	
Encouraging business and local employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a vibrant and prosperous economy: • To strengthen confidence in Hemel Hempstead’s role as a thriving sub-regional business centre and shopping hub; • To develop the Maylands Business Park as a leader of “green enterprise” and focus of the low carbon economy; • To maintain commercial enterprise and employment opportunities in the market towns and large villages; and • To support rural enterprise. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS4 • CS7 • CS14 • CS15 • CS16
Meeting housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a mix of new homes to meet the needs of the population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS3 • CS6 • CS7 • CS17 • CS18 • CS19 • CS20 • CS21 • CS22
Promoting culture, arts, leisure and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a full range of social, leisure and community facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS14 • CS23

tourism	<p>and services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect and enhance Dacorum's distinctive landscape character, open spaces, biological and geological diversity and historic environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS24 • CS25 • CS26 • CS27
Encouraging community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote social inclusion and cohesiveness, embrace diversity and reduce inequalities. • To provide a full range of social, leisure and community facilities and services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS1 • CS2 • CS8 • CS23
Meeting the needs of children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a full range of social, leisure and community facilities and services. • To enable convenient access between jobs, homes and facilities, minimise the impact of traffic and reduce the overall need to travel. • To co-ordinate the delivery of new infrastructure with development. • To ensure that all development contributes appropriately to local and strategic infrastructure requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS8 • CS9 • CS23 • CS34
Improving social care and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a full range of social, leisure and community facilities and services. • To promote social inclusion and cohesiveness, embrace diversity and reduce inequalities. • To co-ordinate the delivery of new infrastructure with development. • To ensure that all development contributes appropriately to local and strategic infrastructure requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS2 • CS23 • CS34

Meeting the needs of older people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a full range of social, leisure and community facilities and services. • To enable convenient access between jobs, homes and facilities, minimise the impact of traffic and reduce the overall need to travel. • To co-ordinate the delivery of new infrastructure with development. • To ensure that all development contributes appropriately to local and strategic infrastructure requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CS8 • CS9 • CS23 • CS34
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7.4 The Sustainable Community Strategy's cross cutting themes (Promoting healthy and caring lifestyles; Developing community cohesion; Rejuvenating Dacorum and Acting on climate change) will be supported by the Core Strategy as a whole, rather than being linked to an individual objective or policy.

