



CORE STRATEGIES SUMMARY of the SUPPLEMENTARY ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER

GROWTH AT HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

November 2006

Reason for publication of the Issues and Options Paper:

To consult you on the potential growth of Hemel Hempstead.

Fundamental changes to the East of England Plan are recommended in an independent report following an examination of the draft Plan. Major growth is proposed at Hemel Hempstead requiring new building in the Green Belt in Dacorum and St Albans. Both councils disagree with this aspect of the recommendations. However if approved by Government the councils will be required to implement the final East of England Plan and achieve the best form of development possible.

1. INTRODUCTION

Issues and Options Papers

In May 2006 Dacorum Borough Council and St. Albans City and District Council separately published Issues and Options Papers. These:

- introduced the purpose of the Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents (DPDs)
- set out draft visions for the future pattern of development in Dacorum and St. Albans, together with draft objectives for achieving them;
- discussed some of the social, economic and environmental needs and issues which could be addressed through planning policies in each district; and
- asked a series of questions about these issues

Feedback from Dacorum's consultation is available in a separate document. The role of Hemel Hempstead was specifically raised. 82% of respondents felt that Hemel Hempstead should be the main focus for housing growth, and 59% said that if greenfield sites are needed, they should be identified at the town.

Comments were received from the major landowners, English Partnerships and the Crown Estate. English Partnerships believes that the allocation of the key employment site at Three

Cherry Trees Lane (referred to as Spencers Park) should be reviewed and residential use considered. The employment site could be then relocated to Breakspear Way. The Crown Estate believes there is a major opportunity to expand Hemel Hempstead towards the M1.

The Regional Plan

The East of England (Regional) Plan will provide strategic guidance for councils' Development Plan Documents. These must conform to the Regional Plan.

A crucial step in the preparation of the Regional Plan was reached in June 2006 with the publication of the Report by a Panel of Inspectors. This made some very important recommendations to the Government which affect the future of Hemel Hempstead (see box below).

It is now the Government's responsibility to publish what it considers should be the Regional Plan: this will be presented in the form of Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan in December 2006, when there will be an opportunity for public comment.

The Panel Report implies a step change in housing provision for Dacorum – i.e. from the current target of 360 dwellings per annum to an average 600 dwellings per annum (2001-2021 and probably beyond). Economic growth and provision of infrastructure would also need to be planned for. The scale of change would be substantial. Integrating new development within the existing town community and seizing opportunities to develop community infrastructure would provide separate additional challenges.

Panel Recommendations

- Hemel Hempstead should be identified as a key centre for development and change
- 12,000 additional dwellings should be accommodated in Dacorum between 2001 and 2021, the majority at Hemel Hempstead
- Opportunities for brownfield development and redevelopment should be maximised in the town
- Urban extensions to the town are required (i.e. by building in the Green Belt)
- A review of the Green Belt jointly undertaken between Dacorum and St Albans Councils is needed: this should provide for growth beyond 2021 (i.e. to 2031) [which may mean around 6,000 dwellings]
- The town should accommodate a significant share of the additional jobs allocated to the London Arc sub region (which stretches from Three Rivers to Broxbourne) to help regenerate the Maylands business area, revive business confidence following the Buncefield incident and boost the town centre
- The two councils must work with partners to deliver the growth and make better provision for local residents in terms of health, education, employment and quality of life.
- The councils must determine the split of growth between the different administrative areas
- Growth can be achieved without breaching environmental limits in terms of landscape and other factors.

What we are doing

Normally changes to a Regional Plan do not set out the local implications of major growth.

However we do not believe it is sufficient in the light of the Panel's recommendations to do nothing and we are therefore sharing our understanding of the main implications of accommodating additional growth at Hemel Hempstead with you. Whatever development is eventually required in Dacorum and at Hemel Hempstead by the Regional Plan, it must be taken forward through new local plans (i.e. local development frameworks).

This Issues and Options Paper presents the main options for accommodating the

additional growth and can be regarded as an extension of consultation already undertaken on the Core Strategies for Dacorum and St. Albans.

We are very concerned about the potential loss of greenfield land and publication of this Paper implies no commitment for it or the support of development options. In particular, Dacorum Council said to the Panel during the Examination that while it could support a level of 7,100 additional dwellings (2001-2021), it opposed any suggested changes to the Green Belt. St Albans District Council also stated its opposition to Green Belt boundary changes.

We are seeking your opinion on the potential level and location of growth at Hemel Hempstead. This will help us:

- (1) understand where community preferences lie
- (2) determine our formal response to the Proposed Changes on the East of England Plan (which may succeed in averting some or all of the consequences of growth we do not support)
- (3) implement the final Regional Plan.

expanded to the north and east, i.e. Grovehill and Woodhall Farm neighbourhoods, and extensions to the Maylands business area since the original town masterplan. The former A41 through Apsley and Boxmoor has been bypassed and the M1 is being widened. Growth has brought prosperity and could again be promoted to do so in the future.

Water supply is a regional issue and not one acknowledged by the Panel to restrain growth at Hemel Hempstead.

The NHS Trusts and Primary Care Trusts are changing the way healthcare is provided. One result is the need for a

Other services or town facilities may seek new sites and space to modernise: e.g. the Police are seeking a new custody centre (linked to a magistrates court); the town football club seeks space to grow; there is a demand for meeting places for community and religious groups; park and ride facilities

The County Council's review of primary schools (ref Supplement to Background Paper on Social and Community Facilities) points to some re-planning and release of school capacity in existing neighbourhoods. New neighbourhoods however may require new primary school provision. There is currently scope for some expansion of existing secondary school capacity. The County Council has yet to advise on the thresholds for new secondary school provision.

Our suggested approach to the planning of any future growth is to reflect the character of the town and reinforce the original planning and design principles of the New Town. This would involve the consideration of planned new neighbourhoods (see box for a description of a neighbourhood).

[Question 1]

smaller hospital at Hemel Hempstead. Full Accident and Emergency services are being moved to Watford: other services may relocate there or to St Albans. Dacorum Council opposes any loss of hospital services at Hemel Hempstead. However, we do not expect any growth of the town to affect these decisions.

Note: ¹ green infrastructure includes playing fields, informal open space, schools, woodlands, lakes, grazing land and the canal. The Urban Nature Conservation Study (March 2006) provides an assessment and a recommended strategy for incorporating biodiversity into a green infrastructure at Hemel Hempstead, with links to the countryside

Larger service facilities, such as a group medical practice, meet the needs of several neighbourhoods rather than one or two. It is more cost effective for these facilities to be fully used than have a substantial amount of spare capacity.

[Question 2]

The main routes through the town converge on the Plough roundabout in the town centre. Traffic growth is a continuing concern and would be a downside of further development. The transport implications of significant growth would require further investigation.

In the 1990s the possible option of a northern bypass to help reduce (long term future) congestion was rejected for environmental and cost reasons. The indicative alignment of the bypass followed the edge of the town around Woodhall Farm, Grovehill and Gadebridge North, linking the Redbourn Road with the A41 at Bourne End. The local highway authority would not wish to rule out a reassessment of the need for this road. However private development around the town would not be able to fund this project, and Government support would be needed. We would prefer to seek local solutions and more limited infrastructure

investment, e.g. through management of traffic demand and junction and other small scale highway capacity improvements: new roads would be

planned with specific new developments. We cannot guarantee there would be no localised congestion problems.

[Question 3]

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD CONCEPT

A typical residential neighbourhood has about 2,500 people in 1,000-1,100 dwellings. A neighbourhood is usually of sufficient size to require a one form entry primary school.

Key infrastructure needs:

- Primary school (one form entry (1FE)) or access to primary schooling ¹
 - Local shop(s) ²
 - Community hall/cultural facility
 - Access to health facilities and secondary schooling
 - Public open space and other green infrastructure (e.g. for biodiversity)
 - New highways and links
- Access to passenger transport

Typical land areas

Use	Size (in hectares)	Notes
Housing	25 – 27.5	At a net density of 40 dwellings per hectare
Public open space: - local use	3	On site
- playing fields and district use	4	On site or suitably located elsewhere
Primary School - one form entry	1.3	
- two form entry	2.3	

Typical distances to facilities and services ³

Facility	Distance (in metres)
Primary schools	600
Bus stop	400
Local shop	800
Community hall	800
Local park	400
Secondary school	1,500
Health facility	1,000

Notes: ¹ There are many 1FE schools in the county. While one could be provided with a new neighbourhood, County Council education policy prefers new 2FE primary schools.

² Modern retail economics point to a scale of development bigger than a single neighbourhood to support a full local centre (on the original New town design). However a local convenience store (and perhaps other outlets) should be provided.

³ Maxima used by Dacorum Council in Environmental Appraisal Update (August 2003) from an original source – ‘Sustainable Settlements’ by the University of West of England and Local Government Management Board.

3. ACCOMMODATING MORE DEVELOPMENT

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

The Panel's encouragement of employment growth affects the conclusions of the **Employment Study** (January 2005: Roger Tym). The Study examined employment needs up to 2021 in South West Herts, i.e. Dacorum, Watford and Three Rivers. It concluded there would be a significant oversupply of offices, the largest element of oversupply being in Three Rivers: to reach a subregional balance, Roger Tym commented that neither of the identified key employment sites in Dacorum (Spencers Park, North East Hemel Hempstead) or Three Rivers (Leavesden), would theoretically be needed.

What may be required in Dacorum will depend on the future apportionment of growth across southern Hertfordshire.

HOUSING GROWTH IN THE TOWN

Dacorum Council considers that its **Urban Capacity Study** (UCS) (January 2005: Llewellyn Davies) provides the best estimate for the level of dwellings that can be accommodated in Dacorum between 2001 and 2021. Estimates for new sites are based on design assessments and are considered sound. Densities assumed

Table 1: Urban Capacity

<i>Estimate</i>	Dacorum	Hemel Hempstead
2001 - 2021 ¹	5,500	3,500
2021 - 2031	2,750	1,750

Notes: ¹ Taken from the Urban Capacity Study. This excludes greenfield sites and two major town centre sites, Kodak and the Civic Zone.

It is generally observed that windfall and other housing opportunities do continue to come forward, although major schemes (such as at Apsley Lock) cannot simply be repeated. The review of the Green Belt recommended by the Panel requires a long term view to be taken of urban capacity. Dacorum Council has assumed

There are opportunities in Hemel Hempstead to accommodate new employment floorspace (i.e. for office, research, industry, storage and distribution uses).

Hemel 2020 Vision looks towards the Gateway area (along Breakspear Way) rather than Spencers Park as a key employment site. As a consequence some land would also be available for employment purposes between Buncefield Oil Terminal and possible new residential development at North East Hemel Hempstead.

The priorities could be to use existing land and identified sites, before development in the Green Belt.

[Question 4]

are high and in line with Government guidance. While what happens on an individual site may vary from expectations, the overall estimate in Table 1 evens out variations. Actually providing the new housing will, of course, be a substantial challenge in itself.

that the urban capacity rate for 2001-2021, which is identified in Table 1, can be sustained in the 10 years after 2021.

We have also considered whether in the period to 2021 the Urban Capacity Study could have missed any reasonable opportunities.

Table 2 sets out Dacorum Council's assessment for accommodating additional housing in Hemel Hempstead. The estimates give an overall indication of

what should be possible and should not be regarded as precise figures.

If any element is not achieved it will have to be compensated for elsewhere.

Table 2: Additional Dwelling Capacity in Hemel Hempstead 2001-2031 ¹

Choices	2001-21	2021-31	Overall
Higher Density on Local Plan Greenfield Sites	100	-	100
Further Growth in the Town Centre	700	400	1,100
Target for Maylands Business Area	300	300	600
Land at North East Hemel Hempstead	350	-	350
Loss of Open Land	250		250
Total	1,700	700	2,400
Note: ¹ This is additional to the estimate in the Urban Capacity Study.			

1) *Further increases in density*

There is no strong basis on which to assume higher density, if schemes are to be reasonably compatible with their locations, particularly in residential areas. Implications of higher density would be taller, more tightly packed and often bulkier buildings, and less parking and amenity space. There would be less

family accommodation in residential areas. On the other hand there are indications from more detailed work on development briefs linked to the Local Plan greenfield sites that about a 10% average increase in the number of units (and density) is realistic.

(2) *Further growth in the town centre*

While the UCS already identifies some sites for development in the town centre, buildings could still be bigger, particularly on the Civic Zone. There may also be additional land, such as at the hospital, which is not currently identified for housing. We think that 1,600 additional dwellings could be planned on key town

centre sites (instead of 500 assumed in the Urban Capacity Study for Kodak and the Civic Zone). This is a substantially greater scale of development than hitherto assumed and has its own consequences – higher buildings, less parking provision and very limited amenity space.

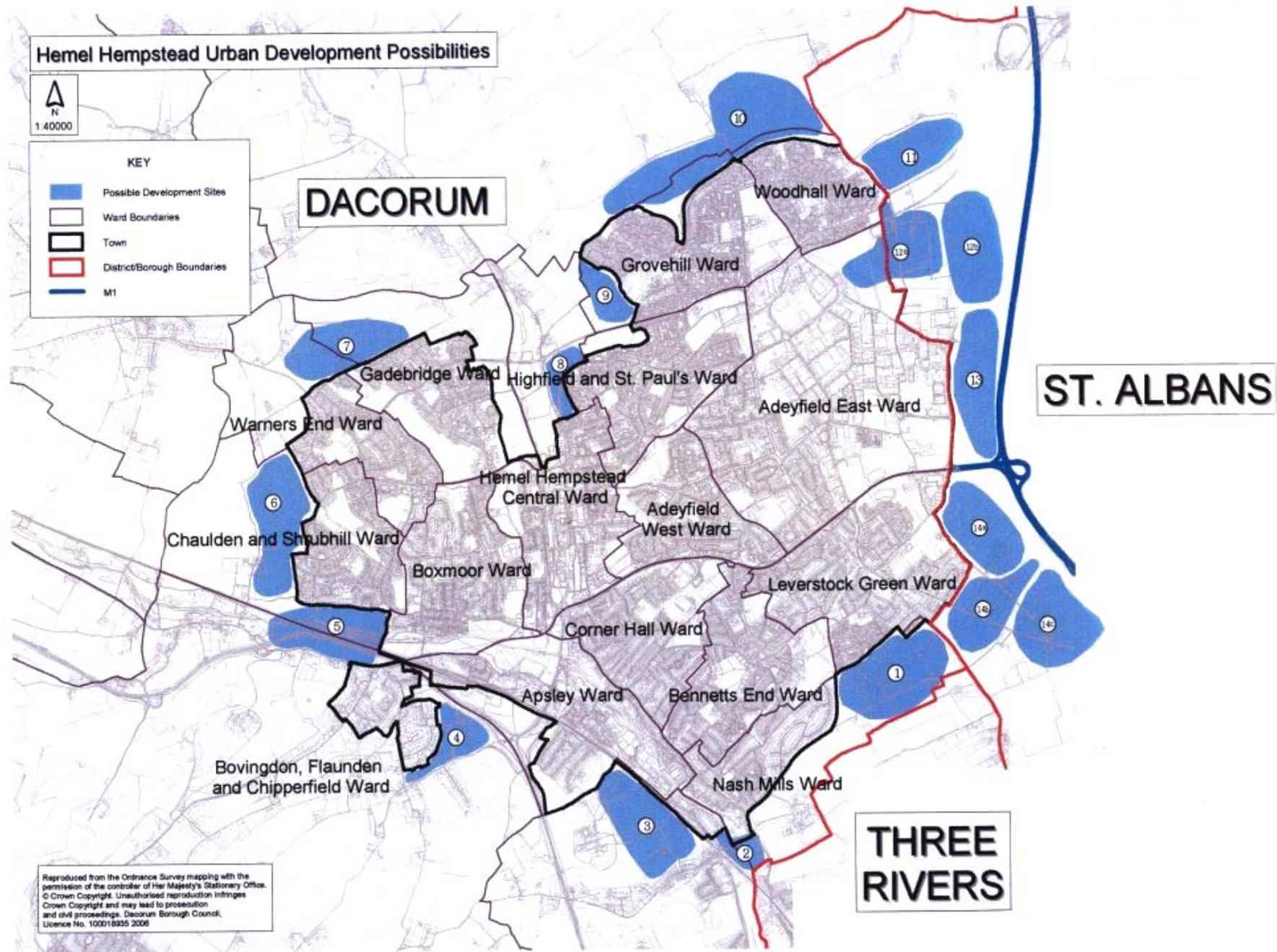
(3) *Maylands Business Area and North East Hemel Hempstead*

Though by no means a straightforward option, diversification in the Maylands business area could incorporate a small element of residential use. A notional target could be set, which could be investigated through future masterplanning work.

proposal sites could be made available for housing. All housing would be assumed to be located at least 350 metres from the Buncefield Oil Depot.

(Continued on Page 12...)

12 hectares at North East Hemel Hempstead adjoining Local Plan housing



(4) *Loss of Open Land*

While no general loss is envisaged opportunities could arise through redevelopment of school buildings in the

Primary School Review and relocation of the Town Football Club.
[Questions 5 and 6]

DEVELOPING IN THE GREEN BELT

How much Green Belt land would be needed to meet the Panel’s recommended levels of development is dependent upon views of growth in the town. Table 3 gives an estimate of the level of housing that would have to be accommodated. The longer the time period for planning

purposes the more land it has to be assumed that would be required in the Green Belt. The shortfall to be made up in the Green Belt stated in Table 3 would be at Hemel Hempstead.
[Questions 7 and 8]

Table 3: Dwellings to be built in the Green Belt

	2001-21	2021-31	2001-31
Target for Dacorum	12,000	6,000	18,000
Dwelling capacity for Dacorum	8,800	3,500	12,300
<i>Shortfall to be made up in the Green Belt</i>	<i>3,200</i>	<i>2,500</i>	<i>5,700</i>
Note: The targets are based on the Panel Report, the assumption being made that the Panel’s stated target for 2001-2021 would be carried forward.			

Note: Greenfield sites are sites which are undeveloped. The term is used to describe the character, appearance and use of land: it includes playing fields, allotments, agricultural land and open space within towns and large villages, as well as within the countryside. Not all greenfield sites are within the Green Belt. Green Belt is a policy designation and is defined in the development plan: the Green Belt around Hemel Hempstead is part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. Its purpose is to prevent the merging of settlements and general encroachment of built development into the countryside. The Green Belt boundary can be reviewed through a review of the development plan.



Pouchen End, Hemel Hempstead
 (site number 6)

4. URBAN EXTENSIONS

Dacorum Council was required by the strategic plan (the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan) to review the Green Belt boundary at Hemel Hempstead in the 1990's. The issues surrounding the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 – 2011 were controversial and were debated at an Inquiry in 2000 and 2001. The **Inspector's Report (July 2002)** on the Inquiry contained recommendations for a number of Green Belt sites. The Council's sustainability appraisal in **Environmental Appraisal: August 2003** reassessed these sites and helped guide the final Plan. The conclusions in both documents remain valid, although the context for growth has changed in scale (from 1,000 dwellings then, to a level possibly approaching 6,000).

The main options for major growth around the town are considered below (see Map). The scale of development is of new neighbourhoods, although it may be appropriate to accommodate some new housing within existing neighbourhood limits (see definition of Neighbourhood above).

The Panel stated that they are not committed to or support any landowner proposals. So all 'reasonable' options have to be considered.

Given the scale of growth at Hemel Hempstead to 2031 it is probable that some or all of the **Gorhambury Estate**

Proposal is implied. The proposal, submitted to the Examination by Consultants, Entec (for the Crown Estate), seeks development of 5–6,000 dwellings, extension of the Maylands business area and related development over a period of about 25 years in St Albans district (essentially the area covered by [12] to [14] below).

There are a number of principles which can be used to guide the planning of a new neighbourhood, or the enlargement of an existing neighbourhood. We think the following principles are always important and should be assumed in 'good' planning:

- sensitive recognition of natural and historic features and landform in new layouts
- avoiding or overcoming features which would be damaging to the occupiers (e.g. through noise or air pollution)
- ensuring that the local neighbourhood's needs are met
- providing good access to services (which are not part of the neighbourhood).

We can often "plan out" (or resolve) issues, but some constraints may be seen as overriding and perhaps should prevent general building development. The identification of constraints may also help selection of development locations if required.



Marchmont Farm, Hemel Hempstead
(site number 9)

Extensive building along prominent open countryside in the Gade valley and Bulbourne valley would destroy a particular characteristic of the town. Building on the flood plain would increase the risk of flooding. Public open space of town-wide importance is irreplaceable. The substantial loss of top quality agricultural land and sterilisation of mineral deposits would prevent best use of our natural resources. Government policy recommends no building over historic, environmental and conservation designations (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest, nature reserves and Scheduled Ancient Monuments). Building too close to hazardous installations (i.e. Buncefield Oil Terminal and related pipelines), contrary to any advice from the Health and Safety Executive and British Pipeline

Agency, would be dangerous. And finally, even though building may be proposed in the Green Belt, we should not lose sight of its wider purposes in helping to prevent the merging of settlements or badly planned development.

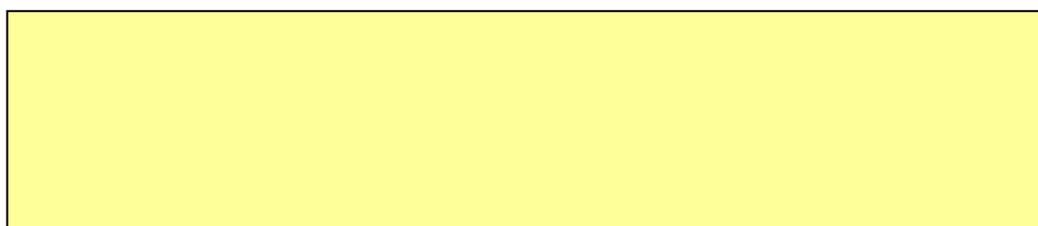
[Question 9]

The options for urban extensions around Hemel Hempstead have been assessed in terms of accessibility to existing services and facilities and in terms of important environmental constraints. The need for particular new infrastructure has also been considered. The full picture is given in the main Issues and Options Paper: this summary focuses on the potential scale of development and lists the more critical issues.

[1] BUNKERS PARK

The proposal for residential development put forward (and rejected) in the 1980s could be resurrected.

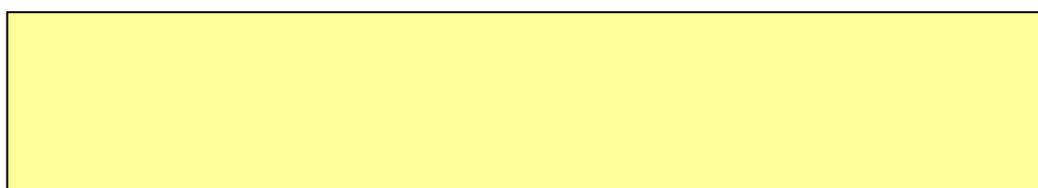
Scale: New neighbourhood.

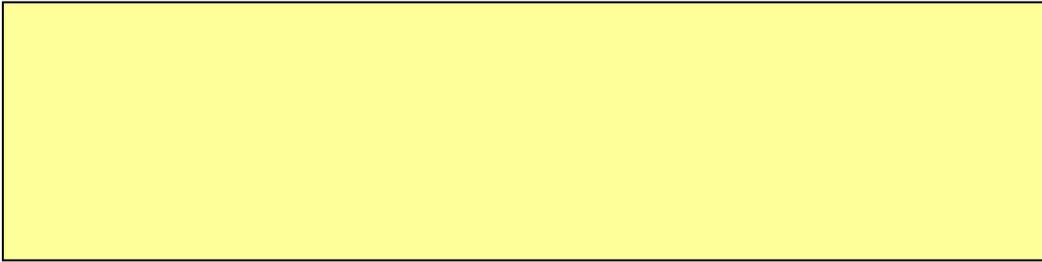


[2] NASH MILLS

Building proposals have been and are being suggested by landowners on parcels of land in the bottom of the Gade valley at Nash Mills.

Scale: Limited extension of existing developed area.

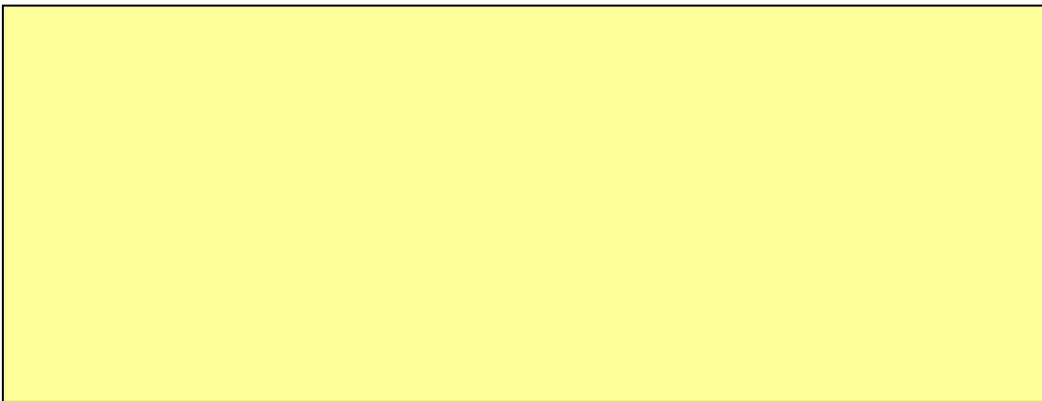




[3] SHENDISH

A proposal for 300 dwellings was considered at the last Local Plan Inquiry but not supported by the Inspector. The owners remain interested in residential development options.

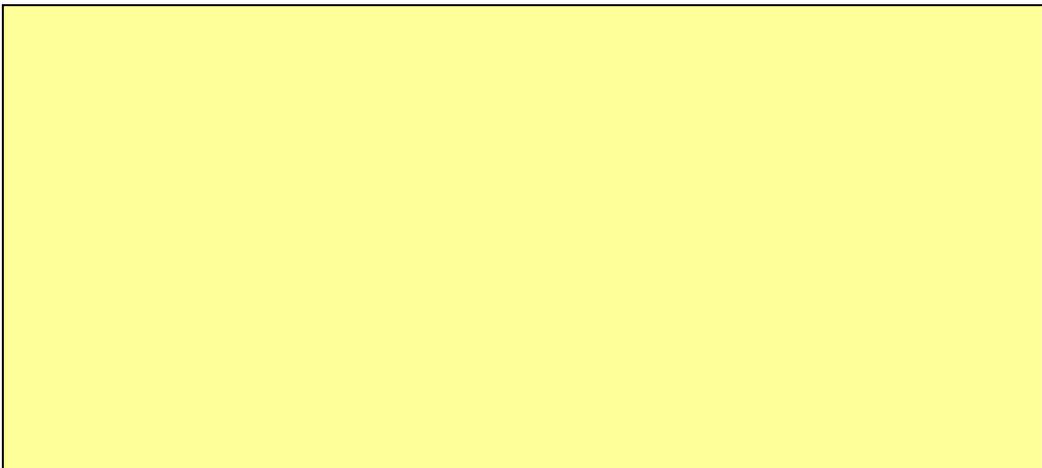
Scale: New neighbourhood



[4] FELDEN

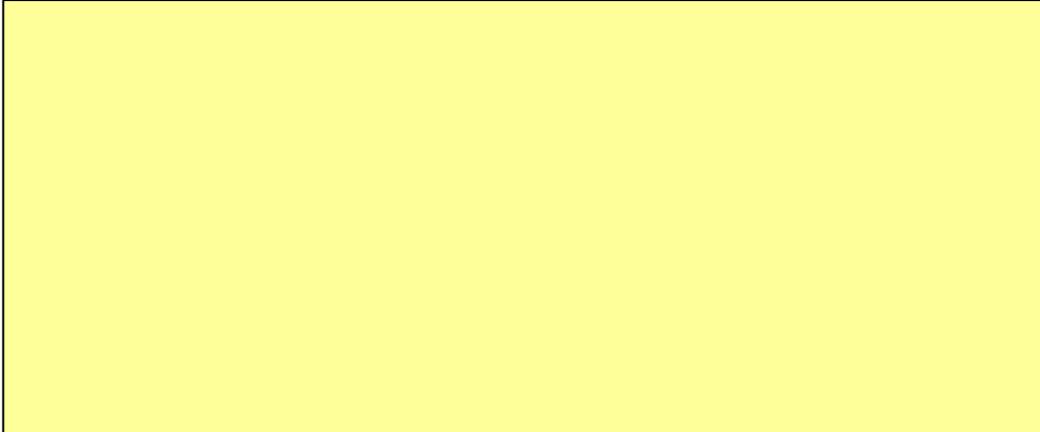
A small part of the 20 or so hectares between the A41 and Featherbed Lane was proposed for housing by a landowner at the last Public Local Inquiry, but not supported by the Inspector.

Scale: Expansion of existing developed area



[5] BOXMOOR

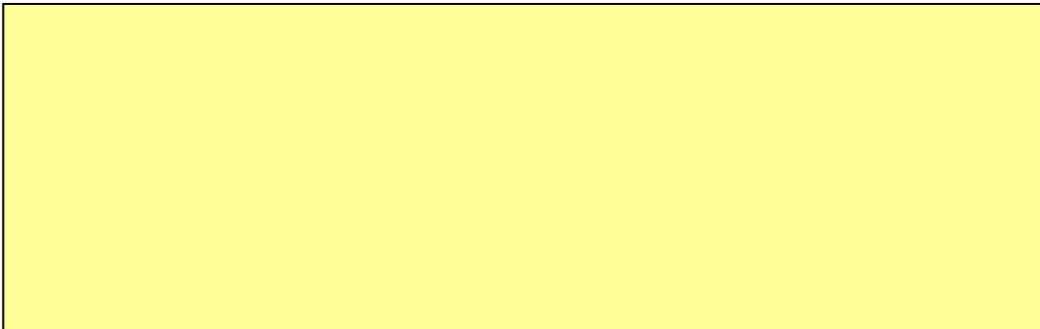
Scale: Expansion of existing developed areas.



[6] POUCHEN END (WEST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD)

A proposal for open space/playing fields and 550-600 dwellings on about 40 hectares of the higher slopes was considered at the Local Plan Inquiry, but not supported by the Inspector. The lower slopes are included in the present consideration.

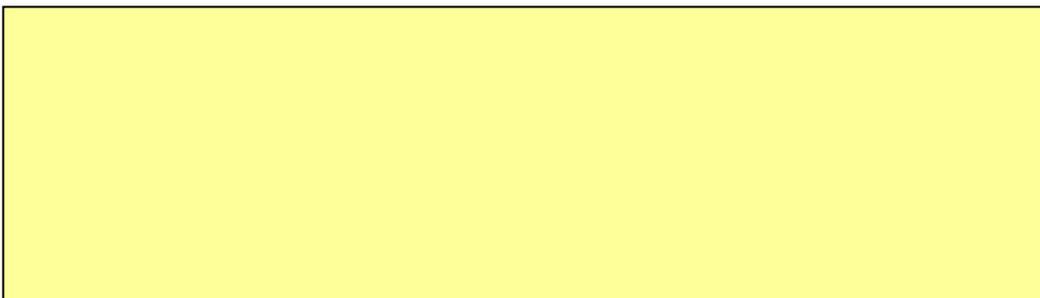
Scale: New neighbourhood



[7] GADEBRIDGE NORTH

The countryside in this area has not been considered for residential development before although there is some landowner interest now.

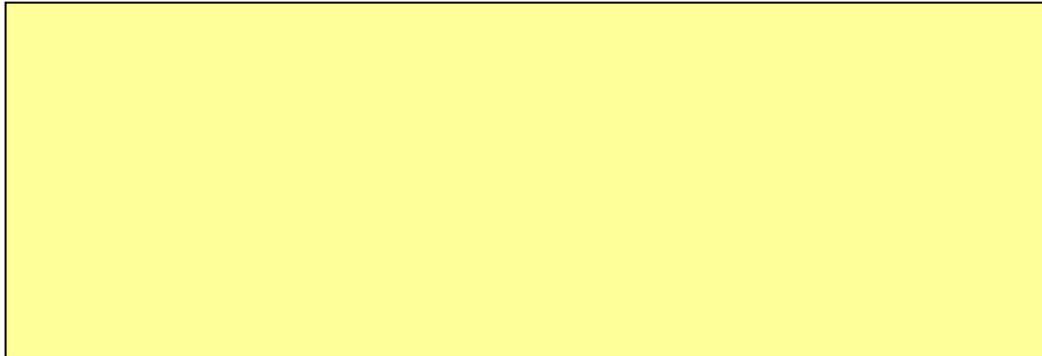
Scale: New neighbourhood



[8] OLD TOWN

About 10 hectares of land lies between Gadebridge Park and Highfield. It is divided into two by Fletcher Way, the smaller area (about 2 hectares) being next to the Old Town

Scale: Extension of existing developed areas



[9] MARCHMONT FARM

The Inspector at the last Local Plan Inquiry commended a proposal to extend Grovehill neighbourhood onto land at Marchmont Farm in preference to land at West Hemel Hempstead. The Inspector's conclusions show a careful consideration of Green Belt objectives and environmental concerns. So it is his suggestion which is the option. Enlargement of the development area would be very damaging to the environment and reduce the benefits of proximity to Grovehill.

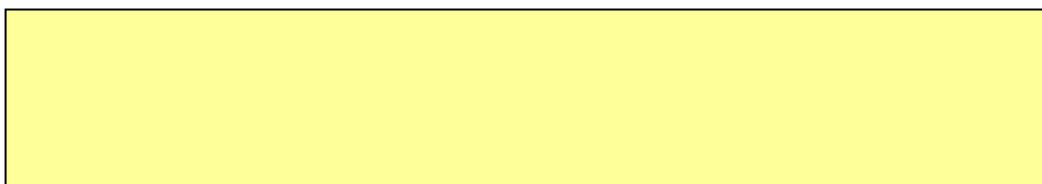
Scale: Extension of neighbourhood (for about 300 dwellings).

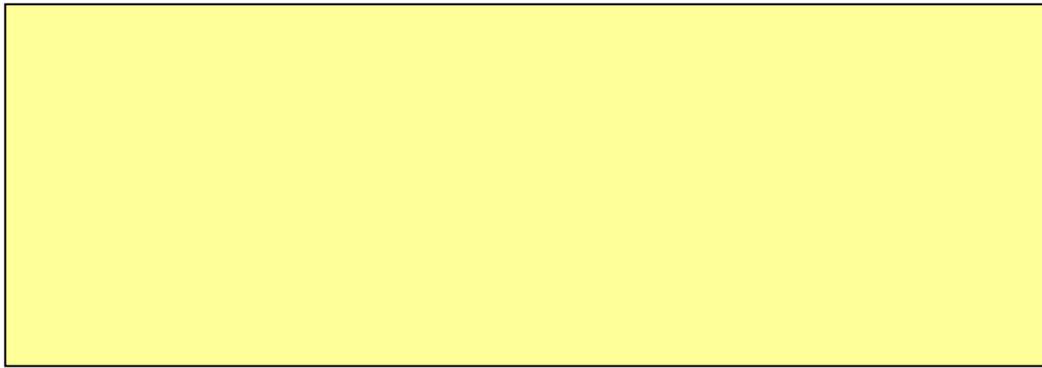


[10] GROVEHILL AND WOODHALL FARM

The countryside in this area has not been considered for residential development before, although it was assessed in a Technical Report in the 1990s by Dacorum Council as being a sensitive area on the fringe of high quality landscapes.

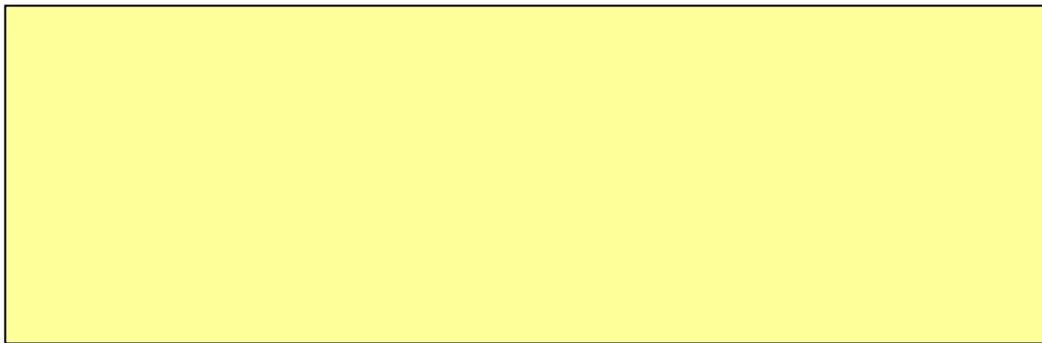
Scale: New neighbourhood





[11] HOLTSMERE END (REDBOURN ROAD NORTH)

Scale: New neighbourhood in St Albans district



[12] WOOD END FARM (REDBOURN ROAD SOUTH)

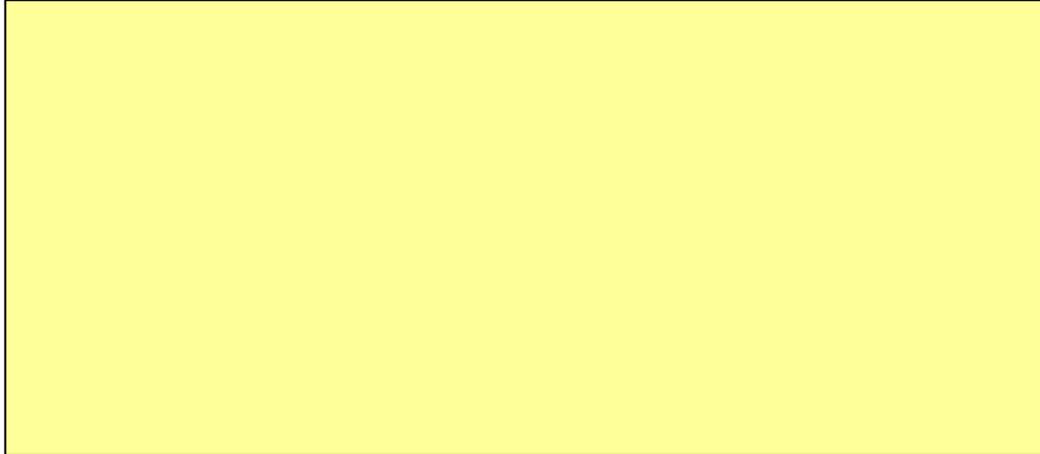
Scale: Extension of prospective residential area at North East Hemel Hempstead (in Dacorum) into St Albans district to create a new neighbourhood, with a second neighbourhood wholly in St Albans district



[13] BREAKSPEAR WAY (EAST OF BUNCEFIELD)

This area lies between the M1 and Buncefield Oil Terminal, and is not suitable for residential development.

Scale: Extension of business area in St Albans district.



[14] LEVERSTOCK GREEN

Land within the Gorhambury Estate is physically of sufficient size to accommodate more than one new residential neighbourhood. One neighbourhood (termed [14a] *Westwick* here) could fall to the east of Westwick Row, another ([14b] *Blackwater*) to the south east, and yet another ([14c] *Corner Farm*) beyond this. The motorway is a barrier to further development to the east.

Scale: One to three new neighbourhoods in St Albans district



Overall Preferences

We are also interested in your relative preferences among the potential locations for residential development and whether there are

other locations we should consider for growth on the edge of Hemel Hempstead.

[Questions 25 and 26]

This publication is about **Core Strategy. Supplementary Issues and Options Paper. Growth at Hemel Hempstead.** If you would like this information, or you would like to contact the Council in any language not listed above, please call 01442 867213.

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