



Shaping
growth in
Dacorum



Green Belt and Rural Area
Appendix B – Dismissed Growth Options
through Issues and Options 2017
Dacorum Local Plan (2020-2038)
Emerging Strategy for Growth
November 2020

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Reasons for rejecting alternative growth distributions

New settlement: a new town or village

Paragraph 72 of the NPPF states that the *“The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities. Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify sustainable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way”*.

The Council has therefore carefully considered the development of a large new settlement. A new settlement has the potential to secure a very high standard of design, access and sustainability and, subject to size, to comprehensively plan for new infrastructure. It can help relieve development pressures on other settlements.

However, there are limited opportunities for standalone new settlements as much of Dacorum is affected by sensitive landscapes (e.g. the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)). Those areas that lie outside the AONB suffer from poor communication links e.g. north of Tring. Furthermore, realistic large-scale brownfield opportunities (such as former MOD land) are lacking in the area.

In order for a new settlement to successfully function as a place, it would need to be large enough to be self-supporting in terms of services and facilities. For example, it would need to have its own completely new transport links, roads, shops, schools, healthcare, etc. This means that to secure a level of infrastructure in order to ensure it is self-supporting, a new settlement needs to realistically contain over 5,000 new homes and is likely in the longer term to contain 10,000 new homes. For comparison, South Woodham Ferrers in Essex, which was built substantially as a new settlement, has around 6,500 homes in its current form and took 20 years to complete.

For all new locations the deliverability of sites needs to be considered. This is particularly important for very large proposals as sites can only be built-out at a certain rate. Sites in excess of 3,000 new homes would be difficult to deliver in the new Local Plan period. The Council is required to ensure that it maintains a five-year rolling supply of housing measured against the housing requirement. New large settlements have very long lead-in times and require substantial infrastructure which could significantly impact on this.

Rural growth

Focusing growth in rural parts of the Borough would not comply with Government planning guidance, or comply with the suggested Locational Principles. It would result in development being directed to the least sustainable parts of the Borough – many of which are protected by environmental and landscape designations. It would also fail to make use of some development locations on the edge of the three larger settlements, many of which are assessed in the initial assessment process to be suitable potential sites for growth.

Export a substantial level of growth to another Council area

Government guidance sets out a clear expectation that every Council area will try to meet its growth needs within its own boundaries, or seek agreement with neighbouring authorities to ensure they are met across the wider housing market area (HMA). Whilst Dacorum is constrained by the Green Belt, landscape and environmental designations, so are the other authorities within the HMA (and beyond). The only realistic proposal that could be considered is under this option of the homes that will comprise the Gorhambury development at East Hemel Hempstead (in St Albans district), and for some of these to count towards Dacorum's needs. This option would still require the allocation of further sites within Dacorum to meet our needs. Some of Dacorum's future jobs need will be met through the Gorhambury development, and this has been agreed in principle between the two Councils. Discussions about housing growth are ongoing with the other Councils in South West Hertfordshire and our approach (and any agreement) is being documented in a Memorandum of Understanding or potentially a Statement of Common Ground

Use greenfield before brownfield land

This approach would not comply with Government planning guidance and would fail to support urban regeneration. The result of this would mean development is directed to the least sustainable parts of the Borough – many of which are protected by environmental and landscape designations. Given the high level of local housing need, a combination of greenfield and brownfield sites is required to meet targets and maintain supply.

Significant expansion of a large village(s)

Focusing growth on one or more of the large villages would not comply with Government planning guidance and would result in development being directed to less sustainable parts of the Borough – many of which do not have easy access to the key services and facilities that can be found at larger settlements. This would also lead to substantial changes to the compact and rural character of these villages.