

Draft

Version 8

Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Strategy

2014 – 2017





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- About Hemel Hempstead

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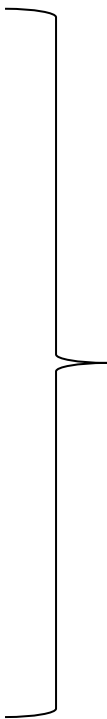
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6 The 9 Key Action Areas:-

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Introduction for the leader and/or CEO to follow

PART 1

About Dacorum

Dacorum is situated in South West Hertfordshire and has an area of 212 square kilometres, 50% of which is Green Belt. The Borough includes the towns of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring, the large villages of Bovingdon, Kings Langley and Markyate, and 12 smaller settlements. It borders St Albans City and District to the east, Buckinghamshire (Chiltern and Aylesbury Vale Districts) to the west, and the Three Rivers to the south. The Borough has excellent road and rail connections, including the M1, M25, A41, the West Coast main line and London Midland into central London. Heathrow, Luton and, to a lesser extent, Stansted airports are all within easy reach.

The Borough has a population of around 138,400 and has a varied business structure. Although it hosts the head or regional offices of a number of large national and international companies, employment is evenly spread among units of all sizes. The Borough's residents are highly qualified, almost a quarter are qualified to degree level or above and fewer people in Dacorum have no qualifications than is the case at the regional or national level. Unemployment (4.2% in 2006) was below GB (4.8%)

Dacorum is a Borough with some hidden significant contrasts. Hemel Hempstead contains some pockets of deprivation of significance, whereas parts of Berkhamsted and the more rural areas have very low claimant counts and enjoy much better health.

About Hemel Hempstead

Hemel Hempstead town centre is one of the key employment areas for the borough so if we are to successfully position Hemel Hempstead town centre as 'destination of choice' for local residents and an attractive place to visit and do business, the town centre needs to carve out a high quality retail offer and combine this with a wider positive leisure, cultural and social experience during the day and into the evening.

The town offers a wide range of shops; there are two Shopping Centres, Marlowes and Riverside, both of which add to the diverse offer in the town centre. Hemel Hempstead would be classed as a 'Clone Town' due to the presence of many common retail chains.

A Clone Town is a global term for a town where the High Street or other major shopping areas are significantly dominated by chain stores.

The term 'Clone Town' was coined by the New Economics Foundation, a British think tank, in their 2004 report on "Clone Town Britain"

Retail presence in the town centre has recently increased to include pound stores, charity shops, and betting shops. There has been a significant growth in these sectors nationally as people's disposable income decreased during the recession. Nationally there was marked increase in the number of charity shops in town centres after 2009, at the height of the economic difficulties.

The usual chains that you see in every town are present, including Primark which is one of the best performing retail chains in the UK, so successful that in April 2014 Primark announced its plans to begin opening stores in the US. This fast growing retailer has more than a 10% share of the UK's high street sales by volume and is establishing itself as the leading discount fashion retailer of choice. Primark's presence in Hemel Hempstead town centre adds to the towns offer.

In February 2012 Dacorum Borough Council carried out a town centre health survey which included information on the number of vacant units in the town centre (Marlowes and Old Town). Almost 13% of units in the town centre's main shopping frontage (comprising shop uses protected by policy 42 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011) were identified as vacant. National average at the time was 10%. This evidence demonstrates the poor performance of the town at that time

There is now evidence that things are changing, albeit slowly... Experian's latest forecast has GDP growth at 2.6%, and 2.5% in 2015.

The main town centre has recently gained a growing residential population with a significant amount of new residential development in recent years. These residents will continue to form an important customer base for the town centre.

Small (Boutique style) independent shops make up the retail offer in the Old Town Hemel Hempstead, along with coffee shops, restaurants and pubs. The Old Town has a completely different feel and has appealed, in the main, to a different customer base. The Old Town does not rely on passing footfall but is a destination – i.e. generally people visit the Old Town because it has that particular specialist shop that they are looking for. The council would like to work to increase passing footfall through regular events and markets to raise awareness of the old Town offer.

Other Strengths....

- A good catchment area
- A Town Centre Partnership
- A diverse retail offer, a good range of household brands
- Pedestrian town centre
- Low cost parking
- Dacorum Borough Council has dedicated budgets for Town Centre Environment Maintenance
- A Town Centre Team in place until 2016
- Tourist Destination (Old Town and Jellicoe Water Gardens)
- Hemel Hempstead Markets
- History and heritage with listed buildings
- Extensive green spaces and parks around the Town Centre

Weakness

(And how it could create opportunities)

- Underdeveloped evening economy
- Investigate introducing Purple Flag status for the town centre – the nationally recognised standard for vibrant, thriving and all inclusive night time economies

- Poor Public Realm
- The delivery of the £3 million improvement works programme

- High Level of vacancy rates for existing office space
- Proactive management and action by key stakeholders in the town centre including The Town Centre Team, Landlords and The Economic Well-Being Team at Dacorum Borough Council. The empty office space provides opportunities for residential accommodation which in turn will increase footfall to the town centre as these residents will use the facilities and services of the town centre.

- Lack of Identity and profile
- Delivery of a series of targeted initiatives to instil a sense of civic pride. Consultations with key stakeholders involved in marketing the town centre to develop a 'brand'

- Events to be held to increase the town's reputation as a place for entertainment as well as retail.
- Poor linkages between areas of the town centre including inadequate pedestrian and cycle routes
- As part of part of the Dacorum Borough Council Masterplan, high quality pedestrian routes and cycle ways will be developed which will improve accessibility and 'town centre experience ". Development of Bank Court, Waterhouse Street and Jellicoe Water Gardens will open up vistas to Marlowes Shopping area
- A weak leisure offer – a lack of family friendly entertainment and restaurants
- Proactive management of the town centre and delivery of the Action Plan that is annexed to this strategy will address the issue of family friendly entertainment. Footfall will increase attracting inward investment and developing a more inclusive local economy over time and through Hemel Evolution and on Dacorum Borough Council land
- Poor condition of Jellicoe Water Gardens
- A programme of improvements at a cost of £2.4 million will be delivered to restore the Water Gardens and will provide a tourist and leisure offer for the town centre with the creation of learning and information hub and play area for children.

The two biggest threats are...

- The potential leakage of customers/investment to Watford, Hertfordshire's largest town and the region's central hub for shopping and Milton Keynes.
- The effect digital technology has had on retail and the impact that has on people's shopping habits, and how people use town centres. (This is a national issue)

The principle and overarching aim of this Town Centre Strategy, Key partners and Dacorum Borough Council is to deliver a programme of initiatives focused on enhancing the image of the town centre and better celebrating its heritage assets as well as supporting other strategies to improve the economic viability and vitality of the town centre. Also it aims to create involvement in the future sustainability of town centre management at a time when council resources are shrinking.

The Changing Face of Retail

Retail and the way in which people use town centres are changing.

In recent years there have been many reports on the changing face of the high street (town centre) including...

- The Grimsey Review Sept 2013 www.vanishinghighstreet.com/the-grimsey-review
- Portas Review 2011 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mary-portas-high-street-review>
- Improving High Street and Town Centres Nov 2012 updated April 2014 – MP Eric Pickles Department for Communities and Local Government <https://www.gov.uk/.../policies/improving-high-streets-and-town-centres>
- Reports from the Future High Streets Forum, chaired by MP Brandon Lewis, Minister for High Streets. <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/future-high-streets-forum>

The national Future High Streets Forum advises government on the challenges facing high streets and helps to develop practical policies to enable town centres to adapt and change.

Without exception the message that is being clearly voiced is ...

“High streets and town centres are changing – they are facing serious challenges from out-of town shopping centres

Town centres need to be social places with a vibrant evening economy and offer that something different that the internet and out-of-town centres cannot match.”

Grimsey Report

People’s shopping habits are changing; there was a time when the shopping experience belonged exclusively on the high street. Now there are no limits, the options for where people ‘shop’ continues to evolve. The growth of online shopping has changed everything; 2013 was the biggest online Christmas ever with an additional 211 million online visits compared with to the year before. £1 in every £8 is now spent online. The popularity of Amazon, EBay and online grocery shopping bears testament. Cities, towns, villages, parades, shopping centres, out of town retail parks, shopping parks and leisure parks all compete for their share of consumer spend. The retail property sector is very much competing in a multi-channel shopping world.

Over the last 10 years there has been a significant change in the occupancy of town centres nationally. The table below highlights some of the categories that have experienced the greatest decline.

Occupier Category	Change in total units
Music Shops	-45%
Greeting Card Shops	-32%
Travel Agents	-31%
Off-Licences	-21%
Book Shops	-19%
Pubs	-8%

Source: Experian Goad – Declining occupiers (2004 – 2012)

However certain categories have seen significant growth, as per the table below

Occupier Category	Change in total units
Convenience Stores	+153%
Cafes	+75%
Betting Shops	+43%
Charity Shops	+34%
Fast Food Outlets	+30%
Restaurants	+20%

Source: Experian Goad

The changing physical face of shopping and leisure destinations in the UK reflects the evolution of people from cities through to the latest out of town or in-town centres that include shops, cinemas, restaurants, gyms, banks and health and beauty services and leisure. Town Centres that incorporate this offer and offer something other than just shopping are in a prime position. Town centres need to offer the WHOLE experience, e.g. from shopping to seeing a film, followed by visiting a restaurant. Successful town centres are those that offer customers a great experience and a place where they can purchase goods and services which are not obtainable on-line e.g. a cafe culture or leisure experience.

By increasing the offer in a town centre it will extend the dwell time in the town centre after the shops have closed. I.E. more people come into the town and stay longer.

Hemel Hempstead Town Centre is in that prime position as it offers a diverse range of services and facilities together

To ensure economic viability which includes a vibrant economy to attract people, town centres need to identify their unique selling point (USP).

Vision

If Hemel Hempstead Town Centre is to become an attractive, thriving centre it must have a very clear vision of what it wants to achieve.

In 2031 Hemel Hempstead town centre will be an appealing, attractive and sustainable destination with a thriving economic centre and high quality environment.

The regeneration and evolution of the town centre will emphasise the natural and cultural assets of the town and celebrate its history and rich heritage. Hemel Hempstead town centre will evolve into a vibrant place where people want to shop, work, live, learn and visit

Dacorum Borough Council – Hemel Hempstead Masterplan

The Physical Regeneration of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

Exploiting key assets within the town centre – heritage, and popular tourist attractions – and aligning these with new innovative developments can help define a distinguishing offer and achieve an attractive, thriving town centre. We need to instil a sense of Civic Pride amongst businesses and residents and the delivery of the strategy with its aims and objectives will facilitate that happening.

This approach to making town centres a diverse multifunctional destination for shopping, leisure, socialising, creativity, working, living and learning is at the heart of The Portas Review. Hemel Hempstead is well positioned to create a unique town centre experience unavailable anywhere else. To achieve this, we need a strategy that will provide a clear direction for the town centre and will co-ordinate planning and management activities. This will help deliver positive change and provide a catalyst for further investment.

Hemel Hempstead town centre and the delivery of initiatives to ensure it is an attractive and sustainable destination, with a thriving economic centre and high quality environment; is one of the Council's key priorities. The Council has committed over £30 million towards the regeneration of Hemel Hempstead town centre and has also provided additional funding to enable the establishment of a dedicated Town Centre team for two years. The Town Centre team will deliver this strategy in partnership with other key stakeholders.

Regeneration work has now been completed in the Old Town, Hemel Hempstead with significant improvements to the public realm; the high street in the Old Town now offers a pleasurable experience to both shoppers and visitors. Sympathetic improvements highlight the conservation style of this area and include York stone and granite surface finishes, improved street furniture and events space. The Old Town High Street now operates a one-way system which improves accessibility by reducing traffic congestion and increasing parking in the area. A new 'Heritage Trail' has been developed and 'heritage plaques' are now displayed on buildings to celebrate and promote this historic 'jewel in Hemel Hempstead's crown' even further.



The Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan contains key proposals for each of the town centre character zones (see map on page??) which are to be delivered in three phases over the next ten years. However in the short term, a Marlowes Improvement Strategy is delivering a scheme of regeneration works to the pedestrianized area of the Marlowes Shopping Zone (MSZ).

Improvements include:-

- The creation of a central piazza style town square (Bank Court), defining the heart of the MSZ and providing an important pedestrian and visual link to the Water Gardens and town centre car parks. It will be a social and leisure hub and will include a performance area and interactive fountain
- A line of trees will be planted along the length of the MSZ giving shade and providing a relaxing environment
- A large screen display and internet access will provide a place where major sporting events could be viewed for example.
- Unique play areas will be created along the MSZ including sensory features and encouraging a flow of footfall throughout the MSZ

These proposals follow lengthy public consultations.



Jellicoe Water Gardens

Part of the improvement strategy for Hemel Hempstead town centre is the restoration of the grade 2 registered Jellicoe Water Gardens. Dacorum Borough Council has received a £2.4 m award from the Heritage Lottery Fund / Big Lottery Fund to restore the Jellicoe Water Gardens. The Water Gardens were designed by the renowned landscape architect Geoffrey Jellicoe and were an integral part of his Masterplan both for Hemel Hempstead New Town and his design for the town centre. The Water Gardens were completed in 1962.

Over fifty years on, the gardens are showing their age and are in need of significant capital investment. The structures – bridges, railings and surfaces - have deteriorated and much of the original planting has been lost. As part of the regeneration of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre, Dacorum Borough Council will comprehensively repair and restore the Water Gardens as a valued and vibrant community space, in keeping with its historical and environmental significance.

The Water Gardens will once again be an outstanding public space and source of pride to local residents. They will attract shoppers and tourists who will spend time in the Water Gardens as part of their visit to Hemel Hempstead Town Centre and vice versa.

Improvements will include:-

- A restored flower garden (opposite Bank Court) with colourful planting inspired by the original scheme designed by Susan Jellicoe
- A new and exciting play area, specially designed for the Gardens with features' based on Geoffrey Jellicoe's serpent theme
- Widened terrace and restored lime avenue, with space for a coffee kiosk and seating overlooking the play area and flower displays
- A growing area with raised beds and picnic tables, where horticultural sessions will be held for volunteers to pick up gardening tips and help care for the Gardens
- A striking new community building to provide facilities for Friends, volunteers, school groups and learning organisations to get involved in maintenance and environmental tasks
- Enhancements to the river to improve water quality and create a better environment for fish
- Access improvements to make it easier for everyone to enjoy all of the Gardens
- New lighting to highlight the Gardens' features and provide safe routes to the car parks
- New interpretation boards to explain the Gardens' history, and the plants and wildlife that can be discovered.

Gade Zone Regeneration

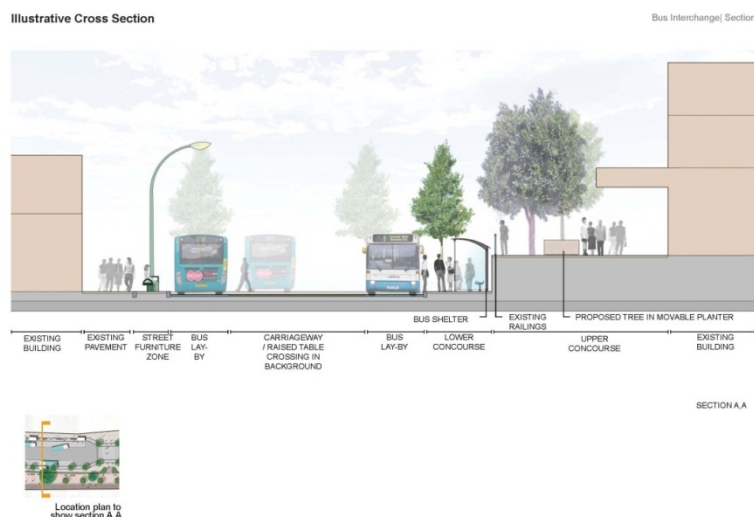
The Gade Zone encompasses the area from and including the Market Square up to Queensway. Within this area are the Bus Station, West Herts College, Civic Centre and the Library.

The regeneration of the Gade Zone includes:-

- Supporting the development of a new college on the existing site.
- Creating a new Public Service Quarter (PSQ) which will bring together existing public services within the town centre under one roof.
- Enhancement of the Market Square supporting the development of a vibrant leisure offer
- Relocation of the bus station from its current location to a more central position within the town centre allowing for greater ease of access for pedestrians.
- Supporting residential development.
- Creating a riverside walk and cycleway (the river Gade)
- Removing unnecessary clutter and designing coordinated paving, street furniture, landscaping and signage improvements

The new Bus Interchange will be located along Marlowes and Bridge Street, this will help make it as easy as possible for visitors to access the town centre and help support businesses in the area.

The Bus Interchange will provide visitors with new toilets, next to the food court area, extra bus shelters, with real time passenger information boards, new seating, extra space by removing the planters near the ramp and improved landscaping, refurbished ramped area and a dedicated coach and long haul services in Bridge Street. This priority access for buses, supported by changes to Waterhouse Street, will make Hemel Hempstead a pleasant travel experience for new and regular visitors to the town.



The taxi rank will be relocated to Waterhouse Street which will also include formal disabled parking and help improve the link between the Jellicoe Water Gardens, Bank Court and the Marlowes Shopping Zone (MSZ)

Many opportunities will be presented to businesses as a result of the physical improvement works, outlined above, to the MSZ, Jellicoe Water Gardens, Bus Interchange and Gade Zone. Businesses can expected to see the following

- A more vibrant, family friendly and exciting town centre which becomes a destination of choice.
- A high quality trading environment.
- An increase in footfall from shoppers and from the tourism opportunities presented by the regeneration works in the Jellicoe Water Gardens.
- A more robust town centre economy which attracts inward investment and establishes a culture which stimulates existing businesses growth.
- A targeted programme of events that add to the vibrant atmosphere in the town centre.
- Improved linkages and signposting to all areas of the town centre encouraging a flow of footfall and promoting areas which may have been overlooked in the past.
- The more central location of the Bus Interchange will help promote sustainable modes of transport and improve facilities and access to the town centre businesses and services.

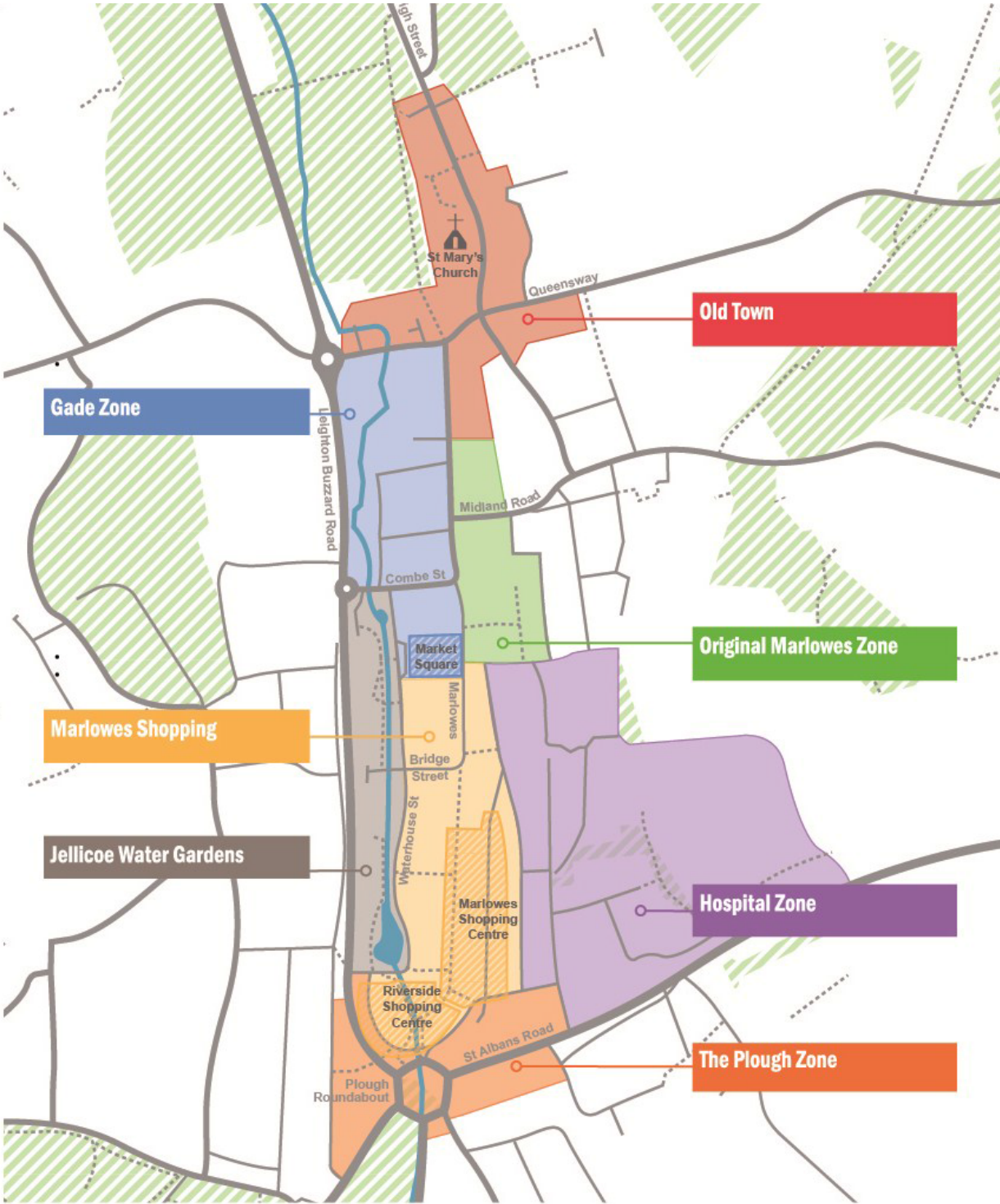
It is recognised that both The Old Town and Marlowes have their own USPs so will attract different customers/visitors. The new Town Centre Team will work with both areas to not only celebrate their difference but also to encourage the maximum possible economic growth. These two very distinct areas in the town centre complement each other and will work together to ensure that as far as possible there is no duplication e.g. in terms of delivering an event.

Marlowes is the main “clone” shopping area with its recognised chain stores, an anchor store (Debenhams) plus coffee shops, restaurants and other public services such as the post office, volunteer services and council offices.

The Old Town is an historic and attractive area within Hemel Hempstead town centre with many listed buildings and heritage assets creating a more “visitor experience” with pubs, antique shops and restaurants. .

A TOWN FOR THE FUTURE www.dacorum.gov.uk/hemelevolution

Town Centre Regeneration Zones



Partnership working - a joined up approach

Partnership working is crucial to deliver this strategy; no one sector alone can successfully and effectively deliver against all aims and objectives. Different sectors have different skills and experience to 'bring to the table'; engaging with key stakeholders will also instil a sense of ownership for the town centre.

There are many key stakeholders in the town centre including Dacorum Borough Council, businesses, landlords, the local community and voluntary sectors, Police, NHS, West Herts College and other public sector services. We all have shared goals and common aims, how we get there may be different but a coordinated approach is needed to be effective.

The Town Centre Team will play a vital role in ensuring that effective Partnerships are established to deliver a raft of initiatives. Partnership working will ensure that all activity is delivered in a transparent way, to budget, and that activity is closely monitored and measured against a range of KPI's. The Town Centre Team will be responsible for collecting and collating data from key partners to produce a 'Dashboard of Indicators' which will, over time, produce a picture of not only the town centre's performance but the impact of any initiatives delivered (see Monitoring & Evaluation on page 26)

As acknowledged in The Portas Review, the public sector alone cannot create vibrant town centres; there is also a role that landlords, retailers and businesses must play. Therefore, we need a strong, robust town centre partnership approach to deliver this strategy.

The Partnership need to develop into a self-sufficient organisation that can guarantee that the town centre continues to develop and improve to the benefit of all those stakeholders who are contributing to that partnership. The council will of course be a key member of that partnership.

PART 2 – DELIVERING THE VISION

The aim of this Town Centre Strategy is to:-

To work in partnership with others to:-

Create a safe, clean, child and family friendly, vibrant and exciting destination that will attract visitors, shoppers and inward investment.

Create a culture that encourages businesses to grow and take greater ownership for their trading environment/town centre.

Deliver activity that will increase footfall and decrease the vacancy rate thereby encouraging future inward investment.

What will success look like?

- A positive increase in the perceived image of the town centre and its offer-locally, regionally and nationally
- An enhanced town centre environment that is clean, safe and child friendly
- Key stakeholders involved in the town centre working together as a team. Proactive management of the town centre environment where problems are identified and resolved within a given time frame. Established and agreed Service Level Agreements with service partners.
- An inclusive and targeted Events Programme for the town centre with joined up working with other key stakeholders to maximise impact, reduce delivery costs and avoid duplication.
- A shared town centre Marketing & Communication strategy to promote the town centre and its offer to the immediate and wider area.
- Increase in footfall to the town centre and a decrease in the vacancy rate.
- Increase in spend (for businesses and the Council through an increase in use of Council owned car parking facilities).
- Increase in business start-ups/inward investment and their longevity (i.e. not just temporary lets).
- An engaged town centre business community where businesses feel supported and take ownership for their trading environment/town centre.
- A skilled town centre workforce.
- A robust self-sustainable Town Centre Partnership with 20 + members that is working towards independent legal status e.g. a Community Interest Company.
- Income generated through the proactive management of event/promotional space and the Hemel Hempstead Market.

Full use of digital technology in the town centre, including a town centre app.

For a list of monitoring and evaluation measures please see page 32

Activity to deliver this strategy can be grouped under 9 key action areas



Many of the projects /initiatives delivered will be cross functional and partnership working will be at the very core of their successful development and delivery.

9 Key Action Areas

6 ia Partnership Working

There are a diverse range of public and private sector bodies which have a stake in the future of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre. Whilst Dacorum Borough Council has a key responsibility to enable and manage change, private landowners also have a responsibility as long-term investors. A co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to the improvement of the town centre can only be achieved by a strong town centre partnership approach - supported by investment agencies and working together with private landowners, local businesses, service providers, developers and all other key stakeholders. Crucially we need to grow and develop these partnerships effectively if we are to successfully collaborate on implementing the Town Centre Strategy.

The Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Partnership has now evolved into a more strategic facing Town Centre Partnership (TCP). With additional members and a more strategic approach, the TCP is well placed to ensure the effectively delivery of this strategy. The TCP is made up of members representing all sectors and who have a vested interest in the sustainability and economy of Hemel Hempstead town centre.

A detailed action plan with S.M.A.R.T. aims and objectives will be compiled with the Town Centre Partnership to support this strategy. The effective delivery, within budget and to time, of the action plan will be overseen by the Town Centre Partnership with robust reporting processes put in place to communicate progress and success.

6 ib The Town Centre Team

This is a new team within the wider Strategic Planning and Regeneration group and now sits alongside the team responsible for delivering the town's regeneration programme. The Town Centre Team is:

Town Centre Manager -	Responsible for the delivery of the Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan. Income Generation
Economic Development Officer Town Centre -	Responsible for Business Growth, Business Engagement, Data Capture/trends, Skills Training
Town Centre Coordinator -	Responsible for events and associated marketing.

Environmental Management of the
town centre.

Admin Support - Responsible for providing admin support to the Town Centre Team

The Town Centre Team will work in partnership with key stakeholders including the Town Centre Partnership to deliver the Town Centre Strategy and associated action plan.

Measureable Outcomes

- **20+ membership, engaged and active. Regular Partnership meetings.**
- **Representation from all sectors, Inc. Businesses, Public Sector, Voluntary Sector, Residents.**
- **An established and shared Marketing & Communication Strategy.**
- **Adoption and successful delivery of the Town Centre Strategy.**

6. ii Business Support & Engagement

If Hemel Hempstead town centre is to thrive we need to provide a culture that encourages businesses to grow and take greater ownership for their town centre/trading environment.

We need to provide support to businesses in the town centre enabling them to add maximum value to the town centre's economy. We need to help them thrive and grow in the current economic climate and during the period of the improvement works, and for the period beyond.

Part of this support is to provide access to skills development opportunities.

A business is only as good as its staff and a town centre is only as good as its businesses

There is a raft of knowledge and experience at Dacorum Borough Council which can be accessed and many services that are already in place to which businesses can be signposted. There are many synergies with the Dacorum Borough Council Economic Development Strategy.

The Town Centre Team has a dedicated Economic Development Officer who will be tasked with delivering activity to support businesses, provide statistical data and measure economic growth.

Measureable Outcomes

- **Businesses actively seeking advice and support and information for growth.**
- **Reduction in vacant units**
- **Increase in Business Start-ups and inward investment.**
- **Set-up of a comprehensive database of businesses/landlords in the town centre.**
- **Increase in take up of retail skills courses.**

6 iii The Old Town

The Old Town is a unique area within Hemel Hempstead and a valuable asset. Regeneration works in the high street have now been completed to upgrade the paving, improve traffic flow and generally delivery initiatives that will enhance the natural and cultural assets of the Old Town.

We need to promote this area, increase footfall and create a sense of vibrancy; to do this we will work in Partnership with businesses in the Old Town to deliver a raft of initiatives including events, and work closely with the boroughs Tourism Officer to maximise publicity for the area.

An example of this partnership approach was The Old Town Festival event which was developed and delivered to launch the regenerated High Street. This encouraged in visitors and promoted the Old Town businesses and their offer. It was a family fun day and brought a real sense of community back to the high street.



Building on the success of the Old Town Festival, we have launched a programme of monthly markets to be held in the high street which, along with the Halloween event and the Victorian evening, will add vibrancy to the area. We will continue to work with businesses/residents to identify initiatives that will support them and facilitate economic growth.

Measureable Outcomes

- All businesses engaged and either formed as a Partnership or has active representation on the Town Centre Partnership.
- Establishment of a regular monthly market and other activities to drive footfall
- A clean, well maintained public realm.

Crucial to the effective delivery of activity to meet these aims, is the formation of a robust partnership of local Old Town Businesses and residents all of whom have a vested interest in the success of the Old Town high street as that is their trading environment and place to live.

6 iv Hemel Hempstead Market

Hemel Hempstead Market is currently held every Thursday to Saturday in the Marlowes pedestrian area in the town centre. There is also a newly developed Food Court area which allows for eating 'al fresco'. On Wednesday there is an Antiques and collectables market.

Following a successful bid in 2013, the management of the market is now managed by Saunders Markets. It is acknowledged by both Saunders Markets and Dacorum Borough Council that the Markets need further improving, including the current market offer which could be better with the addition of high quality craft and food stalls. The Markets could be presented in a much more aesthetically pleasing manner, currently there are a mismatch of stall canopies which make for a disjointed appearance and poor image. All of this has had an impact on the revenue that the market has been able to generate. Working with Saunders Markets steady progress is being made to address the issues and grow the market.

The Market is a valuable asset to the town centre attracting shoppers and visitors thereby having the potential to make a significant difference to the local economy.

In order to achieve the aim for Hemel Hempstead to have a vibrant and exciting town centre, it is essential to have a successful market with a quality look and offer to contribute to this happening.

Saunders Markets are eager to make Hemel Hempstead Market the best it can be. By working in Partnership with Saunders Markets and other key stakeholders in the town centre the following improvements will be delivered:-

- In addition to the regular markets we will introduce occasional themed and specialist markets.
- The canopies will be of the same style and colour and branded to create a visually pleasing image and will complement the new Public Realm created as a result of the improvement works.
- New traders will be sourced that will bring a high quality offer over time.
- The market contract is being actively managed by the Town Centre Team, with a series of KPI's and monitoring measures put in place.
- Establish a regular monthly market in the Old Town with a high quality offer



Measureable Outcomes

- **A thriving market that is visually attractive.**
- **An increase in a quality offer and number of stalls.**
- **Introduction of a least three themed markets a year (Old Town/ Marlowes).**
- **Regular meetings arranged with Saunders Markets to monitor and evaluate progress.**

6 v Events

One of the aims listed in this strategy is to create a safe, child-friendly, vibrant and exciting destination that will attract visitors and shoppers.

Building on the current calendar of events, and working in partnership, we will deliver a range of targeted events and initiatives. These events will help to drive up footfall at key times throughout the year.

As part of the improvement works in Marlowes (MSZ), a dedicated performance space has been incorporated into the designs as well as 'play areas' that have been specifically designed for children to encourage a flow of footfall along the entire length of the pedestrian area.. The commitment to creating a safe child-friendly environment will also be enhanced by the re launch of the Child Safe Zone.

The Town Centre Team has a dedicated Town Centre Coordinator who will work in Partnership with key stakeholders in the town centre and particularly the Town Centre Partnership and Old Town Partnership to create joint marketing and delivery of events across the whole town. Events will be delivered in a coordinated approach thereby maximising their impact and minimising the resources needed.

The Town Centre Coordinator will put together a targeted and shared annual events programme liaising with Dacorum Borough Council's Tourism Officer and others who have a vested interest in the town centre.

Research will be conducted as to what events businesses, visitors to the town centre and the local community would like to see delivered. This will produced a diverse programme of activity which will meet demand where possible e.g.

- Families will want family friendly entertainment delivered in a safe environment and normally at weekends and school holidays.
- Young adults could be more interested in events that have a music focus allowing us to capitalise on the new event space.

- There may be a demand to deliver activity to encourage office workers to use the town centre at lunch-time and stay after work (extend dwell time).
- The associated marketing of any events will be done using the raft of mediums available including internet and social media.

6 vi



Measureable Outcomes

- A shared and targeted calendar events programme.
- Events delivered in partnership and in a joined up approach.
- Maximise revenue generating opportunities presented by charging for event/promotional space.

Marketing and

Communications

There is no point in delivering all of the initiatives if we don't promote and communicate what is happening in Hemel Hempstead town centre.

Agreed and shared marketing and communications plans will be developed in conjunction with the Town Centre Partnership to ensure that Hemel Hempstead town centre and its offer is promoted. The plan needs to include activities aimed at making Hemel Hempstead a destination of choice with a vibrant family friendly atmosphere that will also encourage inward investment thereby supporting and developing the town centre's economy. It will need to deliver a range of messages to a range of audiences. The Town Centre Team will work in partnership with others to ensure that joint working creates the best impact and value.

As the 'audience' for the Marketing and Communication strategy will include a diverse range of people, from customers to Council members, a variety of channels will be used, some as shown below.....



Embracing Digital Technology

With today's technology, the digital town centre has arrived and is here to stay. According to Experian Hitwise, online department stores appear to be at the core of this growth and now account for 23% of all retail site visits. Next day delivery and click and collect capabilities are believed to play a role in their apparent success. Experian predicts that by 2025 as much as £1 in every £5 is likely to be spent online making it vital for retailers to embrace this as part of their offer.

The innovations in technology development are increasingly changing consumer and community behaviour – how people communicate and buy goods and services. The advent of the Smartphone and the increasing trend for using the internet to search for the best deal for the goods you want is presenting two main issues for traditional retailers. Go into a coffee shop today and see how many people are using smartphones and tablets, 62% of the UK's population use a Smartphone. So it makes economic sense that across the county, towns and cities are starting to investigate using mobile phone and NFC (Near Field Communications) technology not only as a promotion tool but also to add value to the

Measurable Outcomes

- Produce and distribute a regular Town Centre Newsletter – 'About Town'
- Develop a Town Centre web page on the LNF website.
- Set-up communication processes that include Social Media.

customer experience. Cambridge are currently introducing an initiative where customers use their mobile phone to collect 'parking credits' when they make a purchase. At the end of their shopping they present their phone to the reader on the car park pay machine, the total credits collected are calculated and the total taken off the amount of the car park ticket

E.g. credits collected = £3,

Cost of car park ticket before reduction = £6,

Total cost that the customer pays is £3.

The £3 reduction is made up by the retailers who have participated in the initiative.

Major chains and some smaller retailers have already gone some way to embrace this technology by developing multi-channel strategies but it's vital for the 'Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Experience' that the independent retailers and other smaller retailers who lack the resources of a large head office, are also given the opportunity to compete in this arena.

If Hemel Hempstead town centre is not to be left behind, we need to embrace this technology

The Town Centre Team will conduct further research into the use of this technology and the creation of the 'Digital High Street', working in partnership key stakeholders and partners in the town centre, the Town Centre Team will develop strategies that will take the town centre forward. Hemel Hempstead town centre really will be 'A Town for the Future'.

Some of the initiatives on which further research will be carried out include:-

- The use of 'Click and Collect' – collection boxes in town centre from which people can collect goods ordered on line.
- Wi-Fi for the Marlowes.
- The Hemel Hempstead App.
- Loyalty scheme and more, using mobile technology
- 'My High Street.Com' giving independent shops the ability to sell and promote online.

6 vii Good Environmental Management

Good maintenance and high standards of cleaning of the town centre is important in raising its profile. Clean, safe, accessible and attractive streets, well maintained street furniture and clear signage are all fundamental elements which contribute to creating a pleasant environment for life within the town centre. Dacorum Borough Council and other agencies provide a range of services including public facilities, street cleansing, pest control, domestic waste collection, car parking services, and grounds maintenance which maintain the 'street scene'.

**Establishing the priorities for maintaining the 'street scene',
will be monitored and updated on a regular basis.**

**Any issues identified will be flagged up to the relevant service
for action**

The ease with which people travel to and from the town centre and move around it will influence its attractiveness and success as a town centre. It is important that the town centre is accessible to all, be it by bus, on foot, by bicycle or in the car.

The Town Centre Team will implement clear processes for highlighting issues to the relevant department and, where applicable, will manage the contracts that have been set up for the maintenance of specific features e.g. The Fountain.

Like many other towns, Hemel Hempstead town centre has a problem with pigeons and other pests which cause damage to buildings and at worse present a health and safety risk. The Town Centre Team along with other officers at Dacorum Borough Council is investigating and trialling ways of controlling the pigeon population and other pests.

Measureable Outcomes

- A cleaning and maintenance programme established.
- Regular monitoring processes put in place to assess level of cleanliness and other issues that may affect how the town looks and feels.
- Actions taken to resolve any maintenance issues, within 48hrs of being identified.
- Monthly report produced detailing results of weekly/monthly walkabouts.

6 viii Town Centre Management into the future...

To ensure the on-going success of Hemel Hempstead town centre into the future it will need dedicated resource and a financial self-sustainable Town centre Partnership to steer activities for the benefit of all. There are ways this can be achieved such as the establishment of a Community Interest Company (CIC) or a Business Improvement District (B.I.D.) for a defined area within Hemel Hempstead town centre.

A C.I.C. is a private limited company not for profit and designed for social enterprises that want to use their profits and assets for the public good.

When a Town Centre Partnership is formally set-up at Companies House as a C.I.C. its funding is totally reliant on voluntary contributions i.e. a membership fee.

A B.I.D is when businesses from a defined area get together and decide on the projects/initiatives that they want delivered and that they have identified will make a difference to their business environment. These projects/initiatives inform a business plan. Businesses pay for the delivery of those projects/initiatives through a levy, for which everyone in the B.I.D. area is liable, and it is businesses who vote on whether or not to establish B.I.D. status in their area.

A BID provides sustainable funding for an agreed period of time, allowing the private sector to work with partners within a flexible mechanism to deliver a wide variety of projects and services which will improve their business environment

The journey to a B.I.D. will take approximately 2 years although to establish a C.I.C may be faster. It's crucial that we have an engaged and active Partnership to carry this forward; business need to decide which route they want to take to further improve their town centre.

It should be noted that Dacorum Borough Council is only funding the Town Centre Management initiative for 2 years.

Whichever option is decided will allow for a greater sense of ownership with businesses taking responsibility and tangible actions to deliver the CIC or B.I.D. business plan. Monies collected are ring fenced for this purpose.

Potential Income Generation

All revenue generating opportunities will be investigated and additional income streams actively sought. These could include:-

- Charging for event/promotional space in the town centre (commercial)
- Use of notice boards (commercial)

- Establishment and management of pavement licenses in town centre (a fee to have tables/chairs and any other hard structure on the pavement)
- Working with enforcement on the active management of the use of 'A' Boards.
- Income from commercial bodies attending events e.g. chestnut seller.
- Voluntary contributions

This list is not exhaustive.

Measureable Outcomes

- **Town Centre Partnership vote to conduct a feasibility study into establishing a B.I.D.**
- **Development and Campaign stages of a B.I.D. successfully delivered.**
- **A 'yes' vote**

6 ix Monitoring and Evaluation

In the course of the delivery of this strategy, a range of statistical data will be captured and recorded to build up comprehensive picture of the economic vitality of the town centre :-

- Performance of the town centre – Inc. footfall and accessibility.
- Business Engagement.
- Inward Investment - Inc. vacancy rates and new business start-ups.
- Environmental Management of the town centre - Inc. public realm (look and feel) the town centre offer – Inc. the Markets.

A robust monitoring and evaluation process is essential to show the effectiveness and impact of the delivery of this strategy

To be able to improve the performance of the town centre, you first need a picture of what is happening now, a **baseline**. To create that baseline we will be conducting a Town Centre Health Check, collating data on the performance of the town centre including its environment and accessibility. Activity and change can then be monitored and compared from this baseline, using it to prove trends or showcase opportunities.

By selecting and monitoring a list of 'Key Performance Indicators' (KPIs), which include both statistical and anecdotal measures such as:-

- Footfall,
- Vacancy Rates
- Environmental Management
- Local Spend, YOY and YTD
- Market performance, look and feel
- Car Park Occupancy,
- Crime and Safety perception
- Reported Crime
- Events
- Retail Mix
- Business Confidence
- Commercial Rents
- Media Interactions including click-through on website
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys

(This list is not exhaustive)

A valuable evidence base can be built to inform future decisions. This evidence can also be used to generate further inward investment and show off the potential value of the town centre for business and community uses.

By collecting this data over a number of years we will be able to build up a picture to show how the town centre is evolving and bring to light interesting trends. Knowing these trends is vital for a strategic approach to town centre management and can be very helpful to measure Hemel Hempstead town centre's performance against other centres.

Provided we can assure them of the confidentiality of their data, many retailers may share their monthly or weekly figures of how many people passed through their doors, how many transactions they made, and in some cases an average transaction figure. If we can obtain these figures from a number of retailers and combine them to anonymise the data, we will start to see a picture of the activity patterns on the high street. By adding other statistics, the picture gains more depth – **A Dashboard of Indicators**.

Measureable Outcomes

- **Monthly reports produced for Environment Management and Business Trends /Growth.**
- **A series of agreed and shared KPI'S and monitoring processes put in place.**
- **Comprehensive use of the town centres footfall counters to analyse footfall data and produce reports to show trends i.e. impact of an event**