

Draft Economic Development Strategy 2012-2015



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Feedback from the 2009-12 strategy

The Economic Development Strategy 2009-12 was adopted just before the economic slowdown began to bite. During its lifetime, the outcomes within the strategy have mostly been delivered. However in the light of the economic situation, priorities have changed to focus on what the Council can do to help support business through the slowdown, facilitate more business development and, of course, see the successful completion and opening of the Maylands Business Incubation Centre which has proved to be more needed in this climate than ever.

Moving forward into this next strategy period, the Council has assigned additional funding (£150,000 per year for two years 2012-14) and staff resources have been also been redefined to help support the local economy to try and assess where resources are most effectively focused. Baseline work has been carried out which will be revisited after the two years to demonstrate clearly what impact the additional resource has brought about. This will be clearly demonstrated through the use of measurable outcomes assigned to each area which will be reported on during the life of this Strategy at regular intervals in order to direct the precious resource to the area of most beneficial impact.

The Economic Development Strategy 2012-15

The opportunities to accelerate business growth in Dacorum still exist. Developing a thriving economy driven by positive actions that will be delivered by a team of officers from across the Council, and given top priority by the Corporate Management Team, will ensure that every possible action will be taken to create new jobs through commercial growth and a vibrant business community. Through a new high level focus and some additional resources, steps will be taken to make this happen despite the current economic situation.

Dacorum, and particularly Maylands, has much to offer its businesses, employees and new investors now. A new strategy driven by an action plan can help make sure the "business" offer is enhanced to enable continued prosperity across Dacorum and the wider Hertfordshire economy.

Detailed in this strategy are three main areas for action and a range of eight active delivery strands which, with the right capacity, focus and resources, will be delivered over the next three years. Working to this programme, monitoring progress and addressing challenges will help to move the economy forward ensuring it is able to deliver the desired growth.

Using opportunities such as the Growing Places Fund, and working with the Local Enterprise Partnership, Homes and Communities Agency and other partners, Dacorum can become entrepreneurial ourselves and lead developments that will make Dacorum an attractive area to invest, regenerate, locate to or stay in.

1. Brief introduction to Dacorum

Dacorum aspires to be a first choice location for business and employment, and has been working in partnership with our business community for many years to facilitate this. We want Dacorum to be a place where business flourishes, where people will want to come to live and work and where they will be able to do so safely.

This strategy builds on very stable foundations. It concentrates on enabling opportunities to come forward, attracting new inward investment and continuing and enhancing support services to business.

Maylands Business Park and Hemel Hempstead town centre are key employment areas for both the borough and the county. This plan focuses on their regeneration and encourages a high standard of design and construction to ensure an attractive work place. The plan draws from a number of strategies and plans to give an overall strategy for the borough and its economy.

Partnership working is key to success and is an important element of this strategy. We have worked hard to establish solid partnerships with the local business community, public sector bodies and across all areas of the Council to ensure the best ways to move forward.

In order to be able to deliver our future aspirations, Dacorum Borough Council's Spatial Planning department have merged with the team looking after Economic Development and regeneration for the area to form the new Strategic Planning and Regeneration team (SPAR). SPAR brings together expertise in planning policy, infrastructure planning, master planning, economic development, regeneration and learning and skills. The section is responsible for the Council's Local Planning Framework and associated supplementary planning guidance, developing a the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), providing support and advice for businesses, planning and managing the regeneration of Hemel Hempstead town centre and the Maylands Business Park, and neighbourhood renewal. This merger has provided a team with all the right skills to deliver a bright economic future for Dacorum.

Working alongside the SPAR team in developing this strategy and its action areas has been the Maylands Partnership. This Partnership represents the combined business interest of over 400 local businesses, and has played a key consultative role in ensuring this strategy tackles the real economic issues which exist in Dacorum today.



Dacorum: Look no further

Dacorum's success and its bright future lie with being a borough which is clearly "open for business" and through this strategy we will continue to promote Dacorum as a first choice location for business and development. This commitment will be strengthened through this economic strategy, which underpins our desire to enable the borough to develop into the first choice location for business and development. The Council is focused on enabling business

to thrive in Dacorum, demonstrated through the Open for Business statement which is published alongside this strategy.

The economy of Dacorum has great potential. Our aim is to lay out the building blocks which will move Dacorum closer to maximising this potential. The borough's location on the edge of London, on direct routes to all other major parts of the country, including being on the intersection of the M1 and M25, as well as its proximity to London airports, make it a fantastic location for both national and international companies to locate.

Economic Development is one of the council's key priorities and is embedded into the council's service plan and the Local Development Framework. It plays a key part in the Dacorum Development Plan. Through this strategy we will continue to move Dacorum forward as a great place to locate and do business. We want Dacorum to reach its full potential through supporting and stimulating growth, to attract new businesses and create new jobs for the population.

2. Economic model diagram



We have three key areas for action which run through all the economic focus work we will carry out, ensuring that we can back actions with data and measure our success where possible, that partnership working is embraced through all delivery streams and that we continually record and build on success.

These three areas are surrounded by our eight focused delivery streams, which are explained in more detail in section 4 of this strategy.

3. Areas for action

Action area A - Intelligence gathering: understanding performance and constraints

Work is on-going to identify areas of success and failure. Some of this work will come from statistics and some from liaison with businesses, developers and their agents, listening to our consultative partnerships and others. Time and resources are being focused in this area to ensure that we are starting from a firm knowledge base and that we are able to identify trends as they arise.

Action points include:

- Bring together a report on the current employment situation, such as numbers of business and employees, sectoral and cluster information
- Seek and listen to commercial property views on success factors and gaps, and incorporate solutions into action plans
- Maintain current contact information for Dacorum businesses
- Study best practice from other business parks and implement in Dacorum where relevant
- Understand what brings business into the area and identify opportunities to increase awareness of the Dacorum profile
- Understand the constraints in terms of multiple land ownership, relating to infrastructure needs and public realm.

Action area B - Partnership building and a team approach

Partnership working is at the very core of Dacorum's economic development plans, and helps to ensure that the business community and all relevant public sector agencies work together towards common aims. Working in this way combines the flair and enterprise of the private sector with the long-term leadership, vision and accountability of the public sector and has proven to be an effective and efficient way to maximise the use of resources available. The Council and its partners can help businesses to grow by working as a single team to remove barriers and to enable all to access the services on offer.

By working in partnership with the local community and also the public sector and other business support agencies, we can ensure that the support we provide is right for economic growth and that we can adapt quickly to changes in the economic climate. We will also continue to work closely with policies developed at central government level to ensure that we can maximise their benefits locally.

Partnership working has played an increasingly important role in ensuring that we are effective at delivering at a local level. We have played a lead role in establishing and developing a range of effective delivery partnerships. It has enabled us to make sure that we are doing the right things, in the right way, at the right time for the right people in an open, honest and accountable manner.

Action points to include;

- Increase joint working with the Hertfordshire LEP, Hertfordshire County Council and other neighbouring authorities.
- Clarify joint working with the Homes and Communities Agency
- Secure high level strategic input from the Local Strategic Partnership Executive
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the business partnerships and seek to address gaps where they exist
- Create new corporate officer groups committed to delivering the positive action plan and meeting regularly to monitor progress and ensure complementarity
- Set up networking opportunities for Dacorum businesses to stimulate the supply chain.

Action area C – Building on success

Maylands, Dacorum's largest business park, recovered from the potential doomsday scenario of the effects of the Buncefield incident in 2005 by taking positive action. Business engagement has increased since this time and work on the Maylands Masterplan was brought forward. We have continued to work side by side with those businesses that had been badly affected along with many other Dacorum businesses to ensure their views are included in future long term strategic planning.

During the last two or three recession-hit years there have been a number of empty units and sites within areas of Maylands, and the Maylands Gateway and Heart of Maylands projects are yet to come forward for development.

Whilst our retail economy has also been hit by the economic downturn, Hemel Hempstead's town centre is still performing well with our empty units being below the national average figure. Recognising the importance of our retailers and their offer we have taken time to review our town centres and plan for their future.

Some notable successes from the last three years include:

- Significant new investments – Including Royal Mail, Britvic, Amazon and Palmer Harvey
- We have continued to build a reputation as a “community of businesses” through continuous two-way dialogue with the business community
- In 2011 we opened the Maylands Business Centre a dedicated business incubator – to grow our own local businesses
- Small scale business parks for example, have been built to adapt to local business needs. EG MacDonald Business Park – which has had a high level of take up of occupation
- Achieved second place nationally for the Local Innovation Award for economic resilience
- A landmark site at the entrance of Maylands Business Park has been developed to deliver a new hotel which opened summer 2012
- Successful bids to Local Sustainable Transport Fund – allowing us to deliver a series of sustainable transport improvements within the borough during 2012-2015
- A Town Centre Masterplan has been drafted and is on target to be adopted by Full Council in January 2013
- A series of physical improvements have been implemented in the town centre to upgrade the quality of the public realm. Artwork has been overhauled and cleaned and a new food court area has been designated with new modern street furniture.
- Through partnership working, there has been a significant drop in town centre crime figures over the last two year period.

These successes will be built on and celebrated. Focus will continue on the delivery of the master plan aspirations in both Maylands and the town centre promoting the Dacorum offer.

4. Delivery - A new action plan for the Dacorum economy

In order to back up the three action areas, we have detailed eight areas for delivery which all need to move forward cohesively. Some of this work is already under way, but needs to

dovetail better with the other areas to ensure maximum impact. This work is already contained within the existing budget.

New areas of work have received additional resources and funding from external sources to pump-prime the longer term private sector investment needed to bring the economy forward to meet its potential.

A. Leadership, strategy, delivery and monitoring

To increase the chances of success, there is a new focus and commitment shared by the whole the Council and its partners.

- Pro-active governance arrangements

New structures put in place must ensure that the wide range of work being undertaken is joined up and delivers. Feed through outcomes and issues to the right strategic level for action.

- Increased liaison with Herts LEP

Ensure that Maylands is a major delivery vehicle for economic growth within Hertfordshire including a bid to the Growing Places Fund, broadband delivery and sustainable transport.

- Leverage of additional resources and investment

- i. Where funding opportunities exist, prepare and submit bids through effective partnership and knowledge
- ii. Work with the Herts LEP to secure Growing Places Fund resources
- iii. Deliver the further LSTF funding to continue work that has started
- iv. Enable the maximum gain through developer contributions, balanced against the need to attract investment and achieve development delivery.

- Local Government Resource Review

As the agenda develops, introduce the prospect of targeted tariff reduction on key sectors/preferred use types and any possible spatial preferences.

Measurable outcomes will be:

- Effective structures in place across all levels
- Cohesive delivery across a range of partnerships
- Success at attracting additional resources
- Good reputation for delivery
- Effective and strategic use of developer contributions including S106 and CIL to deliver the infrastructure required to support a thriving economy

B. Inward investment and marketing

It is recognised that we need to increase Dacorum's visibility as a place to work, live and enjoy, thereby maximising our potential for new inward investment. As such we will focus resources into the newly launched Look No Further campaign which has been developed to raise the profile of the area, to improve our reputation and to attract new businesses into the borough. Some actions to support this include:

- Create a new inward investment website. The website will be user friendly, easy to navigate and will pull together the three strands of the Look No Further campaign: live, work and enjoy.
- Continue to develop the "Look No Further" branding message and associated proof points. From this information, construct fast facts to sell what Dacorum has to offer in order to attract investment.
- Create a suite of marketing information to deliver the messages to potential investors. Work closely with partners such as UKTI, the Hertfordshire LEP and our local commercial agents to gain improved recognition in the commercial property world.
- Engage existing business ambassadors for Dacorum and expand their support for the Look No Further campaign.
- Be prepared and trained to help to meet and greet potential investors with people who know the local offer and can really sell it.
- Deliver a creative media campaign around Look No Further, and celebrate successful investments into the area.

Measurable outcomes will be:

- New Dacorum Look No Further website developed and launched
- Increasing website traffic through the use of SEO
- Comprehensive Dacorum offer developed with quality marketing materials
- Increased investment inquiries
- Increased investment into the area
- Trained and knowledgeable sales team working to attract investment across the Council and partners
- Assessment report of which pilot activities deliver the best return after two years.

C. Economic development

In addition to our increased inward investment activity, we will also be looking at our care and retention offer to make sure that all businesses (commercial and retail) located in Dacorum can expect a relevant and high quality suite of support functions to make running their business in Dacorum as easy as possible.

The Maylands Business Centre, opened in 2011, aims to provide local businesses with a diverse and full range of business support functions, covering a broad array of issues. Working with partners from both the private and public sector, we will put together a programme which will provide businesses, regardless of size, sector or the amount of time they have been trading, with support and advice across all topics important and helpful to

businesses such as financing, business planning, resource efficiency, import/export, sales, retail and marketing.

- Business Support

- i. Work on a one to one basis with our existing businesses to help move them towards increased prosperity and growth while taking a flexible and creative approach ensuring that we make Dacorum a simple place to do business. We will simplify the wealth of services on offer to make them more understandable for the businesses to know where to go for all their needs.
- ii. Work closely with the 'high growth' sectors which contribute upto 50% of new jobs created in an area and help them realise their goals and aspirations. To promote high growth further, we will hold or sponsor suitable networking events that will help our businesses share best practice and work together towards the economic wellbeing of the entire community.
- iii. Continue to develop a support package for businesses using local providers at low or no cost to business including more high profile events and workshops open to the business community tailored to address identified needs.
- iv. Explore capacity and potential development of aspects such as B2B mentoring, Angel financing and innovation platforms (link University of Herts).
- v. Ensure that there are good links into the Herts LEP's strategies to maximise the opportunities for the economy of Maylands and Dacorum.

- Delivery of business incubation

- i. Delivery of the Maylands Business Centre has been very successful in helping new businesses to flourish. Several of them have reported growth in their business as a result of moving to the centre, one by as much as 80%, and many have now taken on their first employees. There are also three organisations who have taken on apprentices under the Government's apprenticeship scheme.
- ii. Continue to maintain high levels of occupation at the Maylands Business Centre through active marketing and having a great offer to new and small business and work towards developing a waiting list for the units at Maylands Business Centre.
- iii. Investigate the introduction of a retail incubator scheme, working with our Town Centre Partnership and market operators to bring opportunities for emerging retailers to test the waters with a supported market stall incubator and mentoring package.
- iv. Continue to develop and offer a growth programme which takes business through the early years of development with less risk and offers move on accommodation within the Maylands area. Growing your own business promotes locality in an area, which can ensure that any future growth stays in the area.
- v. Work with business partnerships such as Maylands and Town Centre partnerships to develop opportunities for new start up businesses, both commercial and retail.

- Care and retention package
 - i. Maintaining relationships with local businesses is extremely important and we are constantly working on how to improve and strengthen this. This will involve ensuring that communication streams between the Council and businesses are always open and strengthening the businesses already in Dacorum, by listening to business needs and, where possible, acting on them.
 - ii. Increase opportunities for businesses to network with each other. Promote networking opportunities to all, and work with existing networking organisations to help shape the offer to meet business needs. – Development of a “Dacorum Chamber of Commerce” model.
 - iii. Explore ways to help our businesses improve their local supply chain activity including holding targeted events and developing a local business directory.
 - iv. Explore ways to specifically engage and support the high numbers of micro businesses within Dacorum as identified within background research.
 - v. Investigate ways to create opportunities for businesses to export. Look at holding trade events and link up with UKTI to investigate emerging markets for export and promote to our local business community.
 - vi. Develop care and retention options which are relevant to retail as well as commercial businesses.

Measurable outcomes will be:

- A higher number of businesses accessing advice and information for growth
- MBC fully occupied and move on business from it locating into Maylands
- Business incubation in place for retailers
- Minimise any loss of business from the area
- Increased supply chain activity between local business
- Create opportunities to increase in exporting
- Maintain and increase economic data to identify trends, issues and contact information
- Revisit the data after two years and assess changes

D. Tourism

Tourism is worth almost £64bn p.a. to the national economy. It contributes 2.8 - 3.9% of total GDP and earns almost £16bn in foreign exchange each year.

Tourism is a new focus for Dacorum, and through the employment of a Tourism and Marketing officer for an initial two-year period we will explore the true value of tourism to our borough. We will work to maximise our range of visitor attractions from extreme sports facilities (such as the Snow Centre and XC skateboarding/climbing and caving venue), to our countryside and heritage visitor offering.

Supporting and developing tourism is an integral part of our economic development aspiration. Encouraging others to enjoy Dacorum is a job for everyone – people who live,

work or visit here. We have a varied offer of activities and attractions and many of these are remain largely underutilised.

There is potential to market Dacorum's offer for the benefit of the local economy. This comes down to tourism/destination management. Whilst Dacorum is unlikely to attract week/fortnight holiday makers, Dacorum has a market for local residents to better use local facilities, business visitors (with Maylands Business Park) and 48 hour "staycationers" who may visit specifically for attractions that Dacorum has to offer. We want to make the most of those visitors, encouraging them to spend more time in Dacorum.

Employing a Marketing and Tourism Officer on a two year contract basis who will:

- Use the value and volume survey to establish a baseline measurement of the value of tourism currently (2011) to our economy. From this baseline the Council will be able to measure the effectiveness of our focus on tourism.
- Through the development of the Look No Further 'enjoy' strand we will seek to promote our tourism offer through our new website and to self fund the Tourism and Marketing post in the longer term.
- Establish a tourism board to advise and consult on the best activity to increase our tourism economy and work in partnership with our local hotels and attractions to put together linked visits where possible
- The Council will partner suppliers in joint marketing and advertising Dacorum as a day visit location
- The Council will build a suite of relevant marketing material around our attractions targeting both the leisure and business visitor.

Measurable outcomes will be;

- Tourism and Marketing Officer in post
- Increased volume and value of tourism in Dacorum
- Up-to-date information (events and what's on) on website
- Combination offers on website (e.g. joint activities, short breaks etc)
- Regularly visited website
- Tourism media coverage e.g. Visit Britain, Enjoy England, Enjoy Hertfordshire
- Media program to promote Dacorum

E. Skills and employment

The Council has developed an effective employer led Skills Partnership which brings together a range of organisations including Dacorum's Business Community, key stakeholders including Jobcentre Plus and The National Apprenticeship Service and school representatives. The Council will provide a forum in which partners can develop co-ordinated, collaborative thinking and action with the purpose of providing high growth.

The Employment and Skills Partnership (ESP) will own and deliver a co-ordinated Employment and Skills action plan which will capture the context, targets and steps to achieve the ESP aims.

For a current copy of the ESP action plan visit www.?????.co.uk (TBC)

- Improve skills and boost employment
Developing the current and future workforce by increasing practical skills levels and helping growth and competitiveness will have an impact on the survival rates of businesses.
- Meeting employer skills needs
Working with existing and new employers to understand their skills needs now and in the future to support the development of their businesses to grow and thrive. Sharing this information with local education providers so that they can deliver training and services to meet needs, and help Dacorum's economy competitive to provide more jobs and skills opportunities.
- Improving access to work and learning. including apprenticeships and work experience
Supporting Dacorum's residents to improve their skills, job and advancement prospects through integrated employment support and training opportunities ensuring our businesses are able to reliably access their markets. Work with businesses and the workforce in promoting apprenticeships and work placement opportunities.
- Promote better information for employers, colleges, universities, learning and training providers to make more informed decisions
By engaging with employers we will ensure that the demand for training ceases to be driven by providers and is led by the business community. Training must be informed by adequate knowledge of current or future employment opportunities. The skills arena is complex and very often confusing. We will work to simplify messages, promoting skills opportunities in a clear and concise manner.
- Promoting enterprise and career opportunities
Helping people to be more entrepreneurial in developing their careers by providing high quality information, advice and guidance on the opportunities to develop skills, and promoting and celebrating local successes.
- Building effective relationships with Hertfordshire's university and colleges
By working more closely with both our local university and colleges we can help them to provide relevant courses to support our businesses future skills needs. In addition we will work together to promote graduate placements into our business community.

Measurable outcomes will be;

- A successful skills partnership working together to deliver on skills needs
- Development of apprenticeship and graduate programmes across Dacorum businesses
- Increase the number of apprenticeships created and offered to local people
- Increase effective and appropriate work placements for school children
- Facilitate innovative solutions developed through working with local businesses to address recruitment needs and increase skills levels
- Increase skill levels for Dacorum residents.

F. Simplifying the planning process

The Council is committed to encouraging sustainable business growth. This commitment is reflected in key council documents that will help influence the development and growth of the borough. For example, the emerging Local Development Framework, the Maylands and Town Centre master plans and the Maylands Area Travel Plan.

These documents provide a framework for how the planning process can be used to help to bring forward and enable development.

- Using some of the proposals identified in the Enterprise Zone Bid, simplify various aspects of development (particularly extensions, change of use and permitted uses) through Local Development Orders (LDOs) where appropriate.
- Simplify the planning process where appropriate so it is easier for businesses to expand or relocate to the area
- Re-visit our land use assumptions in Maylands as set out in adopted planning policy and the Maylands Masterplan to better reflect changes in the market and to achieve greater diversification (including a greater housing component if this could act as a stimulus).
- Publicise the Open for Business statement and gain buy in from all staff.

Measurable outcomes will be:

- Establish if, where and how to use LDOs and enact them
- Identify more flexible use for land within the Gateway and market it in partnership with the HCA
- Publicise the agreed Open for Business statement and aim for all staff to buy into the concept, developing a reputation as a Council which helps to reduce barriers to development
- The Council's Corporate Regeneration Group will continue to meet to consider potential land uses, availability and how to drive development and regeneration.

G. Key sites and development

Understanding the importance of creating the right conditions to foster economic growth, we have been working to establish clear plans to help regenerate the main business areas. The key economic drivers for Dacorum are Maylands Business Park and Hemel Hempstead town centre. Master plans have been completed for both areas to help encourage and guide investment and development (www.dacorum.gov.uk/...(TBA)). The master plans provide clear visions and action plans to help these areas realise their potential. Proactive partnership working with the HCA and other landowners will enable key sites to come forward to deliver economic growth and housing.

Maylands Business Park

- Maylands Gateway
 - i. Bring forward the 60 acre site at Maylands Gateway, owned by the Council and the Homes and Communities Agency, which alone has the potential for over 7,500 new jobs.
 - ii. Consider accelerating the release and development of the Council and HCA sites, refreshing the land use assumptions (as above), and reach agreement with the HCA over timing and approach.
 - iii. Carry out initial infrastructure investment to allow development to start (including identification of resource requirements and timing).
 - iv. Market the Gateway offer – 60 acres of land in public sector ownership in a great location.

- Heart of Maylands

Work proactively with the current land owners to deliver an action plan which can facilitate the regeneration of this area and use Growth Area Funding and other opportunities to help stimulate development activity.

- Boundary Way (“Buncefield Phoenix”) area

Encourage development of key sites across this complex area by working with developers on a site specific basis. In relation to Buncefield oil terminal, consider the varied uses/types of development that could be progressed given the Health and Safety Executive’s restrictions.

- Spencers Park

Bring forward the delivery of the housing site including the delivery of affordable houses using Growing Places Fund.

Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

- Town Centre regeneration – Public Service Quarter

Work to deliver the major regeneration scheme to bring forward new developments that will benefit and boost footfall into the wider Town Centre. This area will deliver a new college, food store and a new Public Service Quarter which will include a replacement civic centre and library together with voluntary and community services.

- The Market Square

Deliver temporary improvements to the Market Square area and consider appropriate uses for the site in the long term.

- The Hospital zone

Encourage the redevelopment of the Hemel Hempstead Hospital site and a mixed use development of the employment area.

Jarman Park

Work proactively with landowners and leisure/retail proposals to help develop a unique retail and leisure hub.

Measurable outcomes will be:

- PSQ regeneration scheme comes forward as an integrated part of the town offer.
- Market Square is improved and longer term plans considered for future delivery
- Maylands Gateway infrastructure needs are identified and costed
- Initial investment to make sites attractive to investors is made through a variety of means
- Co-marketing of the Gateway site with the HCA
- Delivery of phased regeneration in the Heart of Maylands area
- Delivery of Spencers Park
- Provide a staged plan for the regeneration of Jarman Park.

H. Regeneration

The master plans for both Maylands and Hemel Hempstead town centre provide clear regeneration visions for the areas and action plans will be continually reviewed on how Dacorum Borough Council can work to help realise these areas' potential.

The visions for the two areas are:

Maylands:

“To create an environment where a range of businesses can grow and prosper through the development of Maylands as a sustainable, well connected green business park offering a high standard of accommodation within a pleasant environment, served by a range of conveniently located shops and amenities.”

Hemel Hempstead town centre:

“In 2031 Hemel Hempstead town centre will be an appealing, attractive and sustainable destination with a thriving economic centre and a high quality environment. The regeneration and evolution of the town centre will emphasise the natural and cultural assets of the town and celebrate its new town history and rich heritage. Hemel Hempstead town centre will evolve into a vibrant place where people want to shop, work, live, learn and visit.”

Whilst these are the two main areas, regeneration plans are also being developed for the High Street, Hemel Hempstead, the Old Town Hall, and the Jellicoe Water Gardens located at the back of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre.

In addition to these areas we will be looking to encourage the regeneration of Jarman Park in Hemel Hempstead. Working with stakeholders, the aspiration is to plan the delivery of a unique retail and leisure hub which will appeal to a wide catchment area.

a. Delivery of the Maylands and Town Centre master plans and public realm improvements

Continue implementation of the agreed regeneration programmes in Maylands and the Town Centre, such as bringing forward the Heart of Maylands and the Public Service Quarter using funding and current land holdings as a catalyst for development of these areas, which will have a positive impact on the attractiveness to developers and investors.

In addition to the existing Masterplan for Maylands Business Park, a Physical Improvement Strategy is being developed to advise on improvements to the public realm. This will cover the specifications for the parks' character areas, including costing to be used to negotiate S106 contributions from developers to enable the accelerated delivery of regeneration.

The Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan contains key proposals for each of the town centre character zones which we aim to deliver in three phases over the next ten years. However in the shorter term, a Marlowes Improvement Strategy is in place to advise the regeneration of the pedestrianised town centre public realm. This includes upgrades to the planters and planting schemes, street furniture, lighting and paving. Funding has already been committed and the roll out of these schemes will continue with the aim of making the pedestrianised town centre a more attractive shopping location.

A one way system will be implemented in High Street, Hemel Hempstead and an events space created. In addition, accessibility will be improved and facilities upgraded within the Old Town Hall Theatre to attract more performers and increased audiences. These works will help to strengthen and broaden the Old Town economy.

b. Sustainable transport

Through funding gained from the local sustainable transport fund, we have a number of projects that we can now implement from the sustainable transport plan. These include:

- New and improved walking and cycle routes to Maylands Business Park and cycle parking improvements
- Deliver a Maylands Business Park bus link and infrastructure improvements between Hemel Hempstead Station, the town centre and Maylands. This will include bus infrastructure upgrades for example, real-time information screens, smart cards and better buses.
- Investigate the possibility of road improvements on Green Lane to reduce congestion and enhance access to the M1 motorway. Develop a preferred lorry route over the longer term to reduce congestion on Breakspear Way.
- Support the Maylands Area Travel Plan and Car Club to provide a dedicated travel planning / behavioural change programme.

c. Superfast broadband

In partnership with the LEP, business, BT and HCC, work will continue to accelerate the provision of superfast broadband into business areas clarifying where extra resources may be needed to achieve our targets and addressing the need.

Success factors

- Public realm improved both at Maylands and in the town centre
- Funding gained for improvements to the Jellicoe Water Gardens

- Old Town improvements implemented
- More use of sustainable transport achieved (less cars)
- Work towards 100% coverage of Maylands and other business areas, with superfast broadband
- Continued delivery of the Marlowes Improvement Strategy
- Agreed five year plan of improvements for Maylands
- Improve the layout and operation of Hemel Hempstead Market.

5. Monitoring and evaluating delivery

As we implement this strategy a robust monitoring system will be essential to show the effects of the actions we have taken, and their associated cost benefits.

The action points within this strategy will be incorporated, as appropriate into Dacorum Borough Council's corporate plan and will flow down from this through the service plans and Dacorum delivery plans to ultimately become work plans for the accountable officers.

Delivery will be monitored regularly through performance management and reported annually to Cabinet, through our annual monitoring report **Delivering Success**.

Through constant review we will be able to adapt to changes and evaluate performance regularly therefore ensuring that delivery is maintained against a constantly changing economic landscape.

- Supplementary information
- Open for Business statement
- Executive summary of research

Open For Business



Introduction

Dacorum aspires to be a first choice location for developers and inward investment businesses, and we have been working in partnership with our business community, landowners, commercial agents and developers for many years to facilitate this.

We want Dacorum to be a place where sustainable development is embraced, where business flourishes, where people will want to come to live and work and where they will be able to do so safely

Dacorum Borough Council is committed to supporting this aspiration by adopting a range of pro-active business attitudes and attributes to ensure that we are as competitive and accommodating as possible in enabling sustainable development in Dacorum and in supporting the soft landing of inward investment.

Andy Cook – MD FFEI Boundary Way, Maylands Business Park

"I have been working with Dacorum Borough Council for many years now, both as a business owner and through chairing the Maylands Partnership. I have found the economic development team to be both supportive of our business needs and responsive to the issues we have needed to drive. The team are a pleasure to work with and continue to make a positive impact on the business community."

Call to action

As a response to the economic situation Dacorum Borough Council aims to use the period from 2012-14 to facilitate the delivery of development within the borough to enable the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper.

We believe that it is our role to do whatever we can to aid the development process. Our aim is to promote Dacorum as an easy place to develop and invest, with a council who will work to enable this to happen.

Behind the commitments we make below is a series of action plans to make the necessary internal changes to ensure that we deliver on our promises. For more information on what we are doing or to make comment please contact business@dacorum.gov.uk

Mark Pilgrim – MD, N-Computing, Breakspear House, Hemel Hempstead

“We have recently moved our UK head office from Slough to Hemel Hempstead. Dacorum Borough Council’s Economic Development team supported us in a number of ways through the moving process including helping us with our initial property search, linking us up with the University of Hertfordshire to help in our search for language graduates, and giving us information on the whole range of business support opportunities available to me and our business. I look forward to a long lasting partnership with the team at Dacorum.”

Open for Business commitment

Development Management

The **Development Management Team** is undertaking a review of all our processes and practices to improve the service that we provide. There are key priority areas to be addressed to improve our service in terms of speed and simplicity of process. It includes making the service more accessible to agents and applicants.

The Development Management Team’s three prime objectives to support Open for Business are:



Accessibility and availability of staff – Development Management will introduce a new contact service in the form of planning surgeries to replace the existing appointment service. This will allow quicker face to face discussions/problem resolution between officers and agents/applicants and reduce time spent on the more formalised pre-application process.



Review of formal pre-application process – We will undertake a review of the current pre-application process, changing the templates for responses to highlight the key benefits/positives of the development and offering alternatives/solutions where issues arise so providing a more pro-active focus to the service.



Improve validation/legal agreement processes – We will review our practices in terms of dealing with validation of applications and administration of legal agreements so as to provide a speedy and effective service allowing timely decisions and clarity on when to expect a decision.

Mike Peacock – Projects and Infrastructure Manager, Henkel, Wood Lane End, Maylands Business Park

“We involved the Planning Team at Dacorum at a very early stage in our design of a new HQ building in Maylands as it helps no-one to submit an application that would be doomed to fail.

The real test of how a Planning Team operates is what the architect thinks about them and our architects reported that the Planning Team were very supportive and helpful throughout and enabled us to avoid any pitfalls. From my perspective, the Dacorum Planning Team is certainly ‘Open for Business’.”

Strategic Planning and Regeneration

The **Strategic Planning and Regeneration team** is a solution-focused, flexible pro-active team which listens and responds to local needs and provides advice and support. From writing the new Core Strategy and working with development management to deliver high quality development schemes, to delivering regeneration projects and working with partners to support economic growth in the area, the department is all about being Open for Business and enabling delivery.

The Strategic Planning and Regeneration Team's three objectives to support Open for Business are:



Promote inward investment – We will develop our inward investment activity to attract businesses into Dacorum. This will be supported by the introduction of a new vibrant website, and we will create more sector specific support. To support future investment we will further our collaborative working with Development Management, Planning and other stakeholders to speed up planning decisions for inward investments.



Deliver ambitious regeneration schemes – Based around our main business areas, Maylands Business Park and Hemel Hempstead town centre we will deliver against regeneration plans which include significant public realm improvements and redevelopments providing increased vitality to the town centre and the business park making these areas attractive both to visit and invest in.



Improve accessibility around Hemel Hempstead – We will deliver improvement schemes which will develop key transport links including, Maylands Business Area – Town Centre – Hemel Hempstead Station, to aid movement around our town and support our aim of increasing the use of sustainable transport.

Strategic Housing

The Strategic Housing Section has commissioned a new Housing Market and Needs Assessment 2012, which is publicly available on the Council's website. This document provides a clear and concise evidence base, which highlights the prevalent housing need in the borough. Publishing this document on the Council's website will enable developers to quickly ascertain the need for affordable housing in Dacorum.

Strategic Housing has also drafted a new Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document which will clearly outline the affordable housing requirements for s106 sites, and the Council's aims for affordable housing in Dacorum.

The Strategic Housing Team's three objectives to support Open for Business are:



Accessibility and availability of staff – Strategic Housing will endeavour to provide early and efficient support to those developing housing in the borough. This will take the form of telephone conversations, fast responses to email enquiries or informal/formal meetings to discuss housing delivery in the borough.



Simplification of policy – The service prepares its policies in an easy to interpret and digestible format, through leaflets and the website. This is to be supplemented by the target above, where staff will be available to further explain any areas of policy that are more complicated to understand.



Standardised s106 definitions – Standard definitions are prepared in conjunction with the legal department relating to affordable housing. Definitions can be flexible to aid delivery and early discussions of variations will be facilitated. This will simplify and speed up the s106 process to enable housing delivery.

Executive Summary

To help develop the Economic Development Strategy 2012-15, local businesses were asked about their concerns and aspirations for Dacorum and an economic profile was developed. The Executive Summary looks at some of the key sets of information and findings from this research to give a snapshot of how Dacorum is performing.

Economic profile key facts:

- Dacorum is home to 7,375 businesses. 87% of these have fewer than 10 employees.
- The highest concentrations of businesses within Dacorum are in professional, scientific and technical, information and communication and business administration sectors.
- In 2010 Dacorum had the smallest net loss of business when compared to Hertfordshire, the East of England and England as a whole.
- Dacorum had very strong survival rates for 1, 2 and 3 year survival when compared to Hertfordshire, East of England and England.
- Dacorum has a significantly higher number of businesses that are less than 3 years old than both the East of England and National averages.
- Dacorum had the highest levels of foreign direct investment in Hertfordshire during 2010 taking a 20% share of the new investment made by foreign companies within the county.
- Hertfordshire has a very high level of disposable income (over 20% above the average for England).
- The affordability of purchased homes for Dacorum was low with the lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings ratio 8.8 for 2010.

Business survey key findings:

- 220 responses were received. Over 90% of respondents to the survey were senior staff/CEOs or owners.
- Half of the businesses who responded to the survey were office based and the greatest majority (35%) of the business respondents in premises were below 500 sq ft.
- The survey found that over 70% respondents usually use local suppliers/services.
- Businesses cited business to business activity (including word of mouth, networking, local business and recommendations) as most significant for how businesses source their customer base.
- 36% of businesses said they buy locally and would buy locally more often if they knew what was available and who to contact.

- The businesses who do not source locally stated that local suppliers not being available were the main reason for not sourcing locally
- 44% of businesses have grown over the last 12 months and a further 40% have remained stable. Over the next 12 months 57% of businesses expect to show growth and a further 38% see their businesses remaining stable.
- Respondents looking to grow, most frequently cited a 'clear growth strategy', 'industry factors' or 'increased marketing and sales' as the reasons for their optimism in the next 12 months.
- The businesses remaining static or downsizing in the coming year mainly put this down to issues such as increasing costs and reduced demand for their products/services.
- Businesses choose to locate within Dacorum due to living locally, location and transport advantages.
- The cost of locating a business in Dacorum, parking issues and the image of Dacorum were all given as negatives to running their businesses from Dacorum.
- Only 19% of the business respondents said they would consider moving their company away from Dacorum in the future.
- Businesses are most likely to be in contact with the Council about business rates, Environmental Health and Planning.
- Businesses stated that lower rates, cheaper premises and improved broadband were all things that would influence them to stay in the area.
- 45% of businesses surveyed said they know what types of business support are available in Dacorum.

Issues raised in the executive summary will be addressed by Dacorum Borough Council. The table below shows how these will be addressed within the strategy.

Issue	Response
87% of businesses have fewer than 10 employees	Small business measures identified within the ED strategy including exploring ways to specifically engage and support the high numbers of micro businesses within Dacorum.
Highest concentrations in professional, scientific and technical, information and communication and business administration sectors	Clusters to be investigated with potential supply chain activity looked into as mentioned in ED Strategy
In 2010 Dacorum had a smallest net loss of business in Herts and very strong survival rates for 1, 2 and 3 years when compared to Hertfordshire, East of England and England.	Continued business support, incubation and care and retention work to continue. Dacorum's strong performance in these areas has been addressed within the strategy under the Economic Development activities in the delivery section.
Dacorum has a significantly higher number of businesses less than 3 years old than both the East of England and National average.	Specific measures to address both care and retention and business support have been addressed within the strategy under the Economic Development activities in the delivery section.
Highest levels of foreign direct investment in Hertfordshire	Continued inward investment and marketing to promote Dacorum are highlighted within the strategy under the inward Investment and marketing activities in the delivery section
The affordability of purchased homes for Dacorum was low with the lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings ratio 8.8 for 2010	This area is being addressed by the Housing team with a range of affordable housing planned in the borough.
Business to business activity the most significant for how businesses source their customer base. And 36% of business said they buy locally and would buy locally more if they know what is available	Continued work to support and deliver networking and B2B events as well as explore a dedicated "Dacorum Chamber of Commerce" included within the delivery section of the strategy. New business directory being produced to help identify local suppliers.
Cost of locating a business in Dacorum, parking issues and the image of Dacorum were all given as negatives to running their businesses from Dacorum.	Regeneration plans underway to improve the image of Maylands and the Town Centre.
Businesses stated that lower rates, cheaper premises, and improved broadband were all things that would influence them to stay in the area.	The Business Centre will continue to provide affordable starter office space with the range of support offered increasing with activities outlined under the delivery section of the strategy. Broadband is also being addressed with these activities featuring in the regeneration section of the strategy.
Over the next 12 months 57% of businesses expect to show growth with a further 38% seeing their businesses remaining stable.	Continued promotion of apprenticeships and skills programmes to support growing businesses included within the employment and skills section of the strategy.
Businesses are most likely to be in contact with the Council about business rates, Environmental Health and Planning	Being the first point of contact for businesses for enquiries within the Council as included in the economic development section of the strategy.

Continue to inform businesses what is available through the Dacorum Look No Further website .