



Dacorum's Growth and Infrastructure Strategy

How the opportunities of tomorrow can create a better today

Draft at 29 January 2019

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1. Dacorum Futures - Why we created this strategy

We all know that things change very quickly these days – the way we live, work, travel, learn and enjoy ourselves. This brings forward exciting opportunities to make the future better than now, but this won't happen by accident. It will require an approach – a clear vision – of how we want to shape the future as a community. This means we have to be clear about the things we need to do ensure that we don't get left behind. And we need to have a clear strategy for how we are going to make things happen.

This is why we have created a strategy to articulate what sort of future we want and how we are going to deliver it. The next few decades could see unprecedented investment in the Borough and we want to get it right.

This process is exciting. It gives us the chance to grasp opportunities and build for the future, while solving some of the challenges we face in our Borough today. This investment – in jobs, homes, transport and other infrastructure – will come but if we don't act to shape it, it's going to happen anyway – with or without the best interests of the borough being addressed.

We will see a large increase in the job opportunities in the Borough, many of which will be in cutting-edge application and development of new technologies and key growth sectors. Alongside this we will experience, and have to shape, a level of housing and community growth that the Borough hasn't experienced since the rapid expansion of Hemel Hempstead as a new town that ended in the 1970s.

The future presents us with a range of opportunities and challenges, which the six key theme areas of this Strategy cover.

There will be huge investment from the private sector into the economy that will see thousands of jobs created much of which will be in the sectors of the future – technology, environmental improvement and protection – as well as more efficient and effective ways of delivering the services and goods we need. Much of this job growth will be in Maylands and the Enterprise Zone but will also happen across the whole Borough. But we will have to work hard to encourage and attract the sort of growth that we want.

Perhaps the biggest change, challenge and opportunity coming the way of Dacorum (and the rest of the Home Counties area) is the need for an accelerated delivery of new housing. Whilst our new Local Plan will determine the appropriate level of growth, the evidence points towards a considerable step-change in the amount and rate of development, which ranges from between a doubling to a trebling of what the Borough has been used to over the past 20 years or so.

Dacorum has always been a popular and attractive location for growth and investment. Our high quality urban and rural environments, sitting just 30 miles to the north of London and in a pivotal position on the major transport networks, provides both the opportunity to expand, yet the need to ensure this is managed in a comprehensive and co-ordinated way. Within Hertfordshire, the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan recognises and sets three growth corridors based on the M1 and M25 motorways, which Dacorum falls into, and around the A1(M) and M11/A10. The context for future growth and expansion is therefore high and pressing.

All of this needs to be done in a way that maintains and enhances the great qualities that Dacorum has – vibrant communities, high quality countryside and a great place to live, work and enjoy.

Responding to, planning for and managing opportunity and change requires us to take a new approach, working with our residents, businesses, Government and our partner organisations. It starts with a vision and a clear set of objectives, which this Strategy sets out. It will require us to subsequently develop proactive plans of action which co-ordinates the work of all stakeholders, consider new development delivery models and set a framework for investment in the Borough to ensure the development we need, and the infrastructure to support it is delivered.

This strategy sets out the foundations for our how we deal with a rapidly growing community in anticipating change and preparing for it well in advance in ways that ensure we keep a wonderful environment, have the services and facilities that local people need - solving the challenges we're facing today, while building for tomorrow, too.

Opportunity and Change as positive forces

We've created this strategy to ensure we make the most of the potential benefits on offer for our borough. It's essentially a plan that helps us ensure the key areas that we look after are connected, coordinated, and working towards a common goal.

This strategy sets out the foundations for our policies and services in a way that solves the challenges we're facing today, while building for tomorrow, too. And it will be the product of the Council working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders across our community. We will continue to engage with residents, leaders, public sector organisations and businesses. This is a plan that will deliver benefits for everyone.

Carefully considered and comprehensive

This vision will steer how we deliver a range of services, including: high quality housing and new housing delivery; economic and business development; health and wellbeing; parks, open spaces and tourism; the environment; transport; and technology. It will also help us to identify how we can work with others to achieve our overall vision for Dacorum.

So, read on to find out how we're going to help Dacorum become an even better place to live, work and spend time – now and in the future.

2. Our vision for Dacorum – from today until 2050

We want Dacorum to be known as:

- A place where everyone has the best start in life.
- A place where both residents and businesses have the opportunity to meet – even exceed - expectations.
- A place where families and young people are welcome, where older people are valued, and where the vulnerable can get the help they need.

But what does that vision mean when it comes to some of the things that matter the most to you? It means...

... **for the economy**

A vibrant economy that makes the most of its location and its transport links, as well as offering varied high-value jobs. One that attracts businesses in emerging growth sectors, keeps unemployment low and continues to attract high levels of investment by working with the business community.

... **for housing**

A borough where people have access to a range of quality homes to meet everyone's needs irrespective of their income. And where effective use is made of land across our towns and villages, meeting the locally generated demand for new homes while protecting the countryside and existing communities.

... **for health and wellbeing**

A place where people can lead healthy lives, in a society that's safe and where the local community is engaged. An area where a better understanding of how to stay healthy is encouraged, and where everyone enjoys access to green space. Where the latest technology can be harnessed to help keep residents safe. And where leisure services are delivered that promote individual and community wellbeing.

... **for tourism**

A buoyant visitor economy that capitalises on attractions both within the borough and on our doorstep. A tourism industry that enhances the reputation of the borough, improves our parks and gardens, and provides access to attractive leisure activities.

... **for the environment**

A borough that preserves and protects its local environment, placing an emphasis on green initiatives such as recycling, air quality monitoring and sustainable transport. Somewhere with plenty of well-maintained green spaces, where the environment is flourishing.

... **for travel**

An area where people can travel easily and sustainably, and move between their homes, jobs and leisure activities within the borough and further afield. A transport network that has a positive influence on our quality life, where people feel connected to shops, parks, schools, their place of work or worship – and to one another.

... **for technology**

A place that makes the most of technology to deliver services to all, powered by excellent internet connectivity. We want our residents, businesses and voluntary sector partners to be able to access and use digital services effectively (whilst providing personal face to face contact where needed), which will transform the way that people live and work, as well as improving council service delivery.

3. Relationship to other Council Plans and Strategies

The Council has a wide range of plans and strategies, which range from the overriding Corporate Plan – which shapes the overall direction of what the Council’s priorities will be and what it will deliver over the next few years – to a wide range of service and statutory plans that add more detail to this.

The Corporate Plan is refreshed every four years to align with the Council’s election process and this will happen after the elections in May 2019. This will include the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which sets out key spending plans. It also guides the other service plans for the whole Council.

The Council is also required to produce a Local Plan as the statutory development plan, which is guided by Town and Country Planning legislation and a range of government priorities as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Plan will set out how development will be controlled. It will show where – and how – housing and other growth will happen. Work is underway on this, which includes a major consultation process which happened in 2017 and received over 20,000 comments from the public and others. The draft plan will be complete in the summer of 2019 and will go out once more for consultation. Following this – and any changes that may be made – it will go to Examination by a Planning Inspector. This will deal with the major growth issues in the Borough as well as ongoing planning matters. It should be in place by 2020.

So where does this document link in with the Local Plan and the Corporate Plan? Essentially, it sets out how the Council will work to make the growth that the Local Plan is required to deliver work for the existing and new communities in the Borough. This means being clear what the Council will do – in partnership with other organisations where appropriate – to ensure the right sort of housing is delivered, that infrastructure will be provided on time, that open space is available and properly maintained and how it will provide the services for a considerably larger population. It is vital that this work is in place before the growth happens. So essentially this plan guides what the Council will do regarding growth and makes this clear to local people, partner organisations and developers.

4. Our approach to the things that matter to you

A. Building Dacorum's future with homes for everyone

Our vision

Our Borough is growing, and it's a hugely exciting time to live, work and spend time in Dacorum. But to ensure that this growth is a positive, we need the right number and right type of houses. Dacorum's future depends on a sustainable and carefully considered housing policy today. And given that we all know there is a shortage of suitable homes in the Country there will be a lot more new homes and communities delivered than we have seen for some time. It is the number one thing to get right.

Our vision is an approach to housing that creates opportunities for all Dacorum residents – with new developments that deliver a positive impact and enhance existing communities.

Laying the foundations for growth

By focusing on the development of high quality, safe and affordable homes including for those most in need, we can support the evolution of strong and vibrant communities across Dacorum. While meeting this need for new homes, we're also seeking to make sure that developed land in towns and villages is used effectively, and that our beautiful countryside is protected as much as possible. And we're working hard to harness the opportunities that housing development brings to improve life for existing communities and residents.

Ensuring everyone benefits

The necessary infrastructure – like roads, schools, GPs and public transport links – needs to be introduced alongside or in advance of new developments too. This will make living and working in the borough easier and more convenient. Most importantly, we need to consider the impact of housing on our society. Safe and clean living environments don't just encourage economic growth and prosperity, they promote better mental health and wellbeing too.

“Our vision is a housing policy that creates opportunities for all Dacorum citizens – with new developments that deliver a positive impact and enhance existing communities.”

A coordinated plan

Answering all these demands with one plan is a real challenge. But it's a challenge we can solve if we adopt a coordinated approach – addressing closely related areas like the economy, the environment and transport at the same time.

That's why we've made housing a central component in our wider strategy for Dacorum's future. And it forms the cornerstone of our commitment to help our residents, businesses and communities to thrive and prosper.

What we've achieved so far

Over the last 5–10 years we've achieved a great deal already. And this success has set us up to push ahead and build a better, brighter future for Dacorum.

Beating new home targets

The Council has been successful over recent years in ensuring that new homes have been built in the Borough – this includes those delivered by the private sector as well as the Council and Housing Associations. For example in 2017, 620 new homes were completed against a target of 420. Of these, 135 were affordable.

Investing to tackle the housing shortage

The £15 million in grant funding we've provided to local housing associations has enabled the delivery of 193 affordable homes since 2012. In 2017, Council built 91 homes for social rent with over 400 in the future programme to be delivered before 2023. Meanwhile, our 10,200 social-rented housing stock and 1,800 leasehold properties are all maintained to high level.

Planning pro-actively for new growth

Our Core Strategy from 2013 set plans for over 10,000 new homes in Dacorum by 2031. It has set regeneration plans for 1,800 new homes in Hemel Hempstead town centre – much of which is either complete or is now at planning stages. It has identified new sites at our towns and villages, with the main developments subject to planning proposals. And we have brought forward a regeneration plan for around 1,300 new homes in the Two Waters area of Hemel Hempstead. Work is well under way on our new Local Plan which will address the challenge of significantly boosting the housing supply and planning for the major growth that this Strategy addresses. The new Plan is due for draft completion by summer 2019.

Supporting vulnerable residents

We've built a development of a 41-bed homeless hostel. On top of that, while we've managed to achieve high levels of rental income, we're also supporting those of our tenants who are most acutely in need of relief through the Tenancy Sustainment Team.

Raising safety standards

We're committed to improving health and safety standards, and we're doing that by developing and delivering robust policies and standards around fire and gas safety, Legionella, asbestos management and proactive electrical testing.

Solving private sector housing problems

The housing service has recently launched a new Private Sector Housing Team, tasked with tackling rogue landlords and addressing poor property conditions that affect the health and wellbeing of Dacorum residents.

The challenges we're facing

Meeting the demand for new housing

We're responsible for ensuring a high number of new houses are delivered –based on Government policy – between now and 2036. And there's an increasing pressure to bring forward the delivery of those homes to meet the demand for all types of housing as quickly as possible. This puts us – along with many other authorities – in a very difficult position, having to balance the demand for new houses while protecting the countryside, environment and existing communities.

Protecting our green spaces

Our Green Belt land and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are some of the most attractive in the country. And we're passionate about preserving them. But that places constraints on housing development. To minimise the impact on our Green Belt land, some developments may need to be brought forward to use previously developed land (sometimes referred to as 'brownfield' land). And this may also result in a greater density of buildings in already built up areas, where it's appropriate to do so, in order to reduce the level of development on brand new sites.

Affordability of housing for everyone in society

We're under pressure to increase the supply of homes – across all tenures, to meet all needs and affordability levels. This includes an ageing population and also those with disabilities or mental health issues.

Addressing the needs of an ageing population

Across Dacorum there are approximately 65,000 properties housing over 153,000 people. More than 15% of those are 65 or older. Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) suggests that this percentage is likely to grow significantly over the next 20 years, with a forecast 60% increase in residents in the 65+ age bracket living in Dacorum. This once again affects the type of homes we can build. What changes do we need in the type of homes available which meet the needs of people as they get older? This is a real challenge we will need to resolve.

What we propose

To deliver safe, affordable homes for Dacorum residents, ensure successful tenancies and encourage efficient, effective housing services, we're committing to:

- Developing the new Local Plan, which will identify what we need to do to address housing requirements by 2036. We plan to send this out for consultation by the autumn of 2019, aiming to have it adopted by 2020. It will aim to set out a range of deliverable sites and homes to meet the needs of the Borough and will maximise the use of brownfield sites and urban densities taking into account the character and appearance of our towns, It will include a policy that sets out the importance of delivering more genuinely affordable homes.
- Using our planning powers to help achieve high quality regeneration in Hemel Hempstead Town Centre and the Two Waters area, building on the masterplans we have already put in place.
- Facilitating the delivery of high quality new housing developments meeting all needs, that people will be proud of living in.
- Working with other South West Hertfordshire authorities to develop a Joint Strategic Local Plan, to identify where cross-boundary growth can help our collective communities. And this will also allow us to secure funding for the infrastructure we need to accommodate new housing.
- Working with St Albans and the Crown Estate to develop a master plan for Hemel Garden Communities – delivering around 12,000 new homes and 8,000 jobs. As part of this plan, we'll make sure that community management models are in place, to help new residents integrate into the area and that the new development works well with existing areas.

- Prepare an Infrastructure Delivery Plan that will identify the schools, roads, transport and other requirements needed to support the borough's continued growth. We'll also maximise the opportunities provided by new technology to deliver effective and efficient transport systems.
- Ensuring that our staff skills are updated and the necessary resources are available to deliver high-quality council services. And we'll look to improve community engagement and interaction, with initiatives such as the Youth Forum and the Tenant Academy.
- Delivering a programme of new council Housing at social rent and work with Housing Associations to maximise their contribution to meeting the housing needs of the Borough.
- Working with the private sector to improve their offer to the market, maintain a continuous supply of available rental homes whilst protecting the rights of tenants.
- Working with the private sector to improve their offer to the market and maintain a continuous supply of available rental homes.
- Preventing buildings used for employment purposes from being converted to housing under permitted development rules by having what is called an Article 4 direction, which will stop this. It will apply to Maylands, and other smaller employment areas.
- Drafting a new housing strategy that will meet the objectives set out above by Spring 2019. This will help ensure we accelerate the supply of homes across all tenures and types.

B. Generating a vibrant economy with opportunities for all

Our vision

A growing, dynamic economy is good news for everyone in Dacorum – not just businesses but workers and residents too. It allows us to make the most of our superb location and transport links, and introduces varied high-value jobs into the area.

A solid base for business

We're fortunate that we already have a strong economy. Unemployment remains very low – at the end of 2018 it was just 1% - and the borough continues to attract high levels of investment. Dacorum is proud to host a diverse range of businesses and employers. Some of the world's biggest companies operate in our borough, while at the other end of the scale a thriving small business sector is supported by partner initiatives like the Enterprise Zone. Our vision is to maintain this diversity, while looking to the future to explore where we can grow the economy.

Driving progress and possibilities

We want to make our economic future a relentlessly positive one and create opportunities for all. To do that, we need to grow our economy to fuel the development of new roads and transport infrastructure. We see a flourishing economy as vital to regenerating and improving our town centres – ensuring they're attractive places to visit, shop, live and work. A vibrant economy will also capture the economic mood and understand key drivers to encourage more investment and build the Dacorum brand. And, of course, it will deliver the volume and variety of jobs we need.

"We want to make our economic future a relentlessly positive one and create opportunities for all."

Steering the economy in the right direction

By ensuring that we are creating the right environment for our economy, we can help control how our borough grows and attract the right type of businesses. We're working hard to develop strong links with the type of organisations we want to bring to the area, like green- and clean-technology firms and those in emerging growth sectors

Maylands is an example of our vision in action – showing just what's possible with a clear and consistent strategy. Regional business centres like Maylands help us to attract the right calibre of employer to the borough. This in turn encourages the development of valuable skills by working in partnership with local educational facilities. And this type of self-sustaining, organic relationship is precisely the balance we're trying to strike with our strategy.

Something for everyone's leisure time

From urban pursuits to serious shopping, Dacorum has it all. The XC extreme sports centre in Hemel Hempstead has a 14-metre climbing wall and skate park, plus an incredible 160-metre indoor caving system, one of the largest in Europe. We have the Snow Centre, a great place to learn to ski and snowboard – all on real snow, no matter what time of year. Our three main town centres offer a wide range of shops and places to meet, eat, drink and relax.

"From urban pursuits to serious shopping, Dacorum has it all."

Benefits for both visitors and residents

As Dacorum expands, the capacity of the attractions and destinations in the borough needs to grow too. We've been working in partnership with local businesses and tourism organisations like Visit Herts to capitalise on what we already have and build a path for the future.

Attracting more visitors means more revenue for local businesses; we want to draw in both domestic and international tourism by further improving the quality and variety of attractions available – this includes the retail and leisure facilities in Dacorum's town centres. At the same time, we want our parks and open spaces to be even better, cleaner and more enjoyable places to be. We'll continue to put on the same variety and quality of events that we always have.

More than anything else, we want people to be excited by the variety and quality of activities in their local area.

What we've achieved so far

The process of building the economy is well underway. So, we have plenty of progress to show you from our efforts over the last 5–10 years.

Incubating growing businesses with the Enterprise Zone

Maylands Gateway was awarded Enterprise Zone status, along with the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and Rothamsted Research. The Local Enterprise Partnership has also been actively working to promote investment from enviro-tech businesses.

Maximising the potential of the Maylands master plan

Adopted in 2007, the plan has continued to drive growth in the wake of the Buncefield explosion. Three of the four corners in the Heart of Maylands have now brought forward regeneration projects, delivering housing, retail units and employment spaces. The area continues to attract significant investment – over £250 million in the 2017–2018 financial year – and in the past few years we have attracted firms such as Royal Mail, Prologis, Amazon and Smiths Industries to locate here.

Supporting entrepreneurs across Dacorum

We're supporting the organisations that give businesses the resources and network they need to succeed. The Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors group is a prime example of this – featuring members from around 70 organisations, and now run as a standalone organisation managed by local business leaders – working to promote the area to other firms. We opened our highly successful Maylands Business Centre in 2013, extended it in 2017 and a further satellite centre will open in 2019.

Shining a spotlight on success

The council's Economic Development team continue to deliver successful programmes that support businesses of all sizes. This includes training courses as well as the delivery of both the Dacorum's Den awards and Dacorum Business Heroes at no cost to the council – sponsored entirely by the business community.

Harnessing the potential of Hemel's evolution

Within Hemel Hempstead town centre, the council has completed the Hemel Evolution programme – an urban-realm improvements initiative made possible by securing £70 million in private investment. Hemel Hempstead has also secured a Business Improvement District (BID) award, and will raise nearly £900,000 over a five-year period led by the local business community working with the Council. The BID will fund events, marketing, provide the presence of Ambassadors to assist shoppers and to liaise with retailers, social media presence and additional cleansing. It will be the voice of the Town Centre with bodies like the Council, the Police and transport operators. Also, the first phase of our Maylands urban realm improvement project was completed in 2016.

Investing in Dacorum as a place to visit and enjoy

The value of tourism to the local economy is huge. In 2017, there were over 3.1 million day visits to Dacorum and a further 1.3 million nights spent here, representing a value to the local economy of nearly £270m per annum, supporting over 4,500 jobs. We've been investing in tourism for four years, raising the profile of destinations across the borough. Since 2015, we have seen a 13% rise in day trips. For two of those years we've been working with Hertfordshire's tourism hub, Visit Herts, to monitor the results of our efforts and drive more visitors to Dacorum's destinations. We have created Enjoy Dacorum, our brand for promoting tourism in the Borough. Built through the Enjoy Dacorum Partnership, this dedicated Dacorum tourism website – www.enjoydacorum.co.uk – showcases the very best of what our borough has to offer.

Advancing Dacorum's high streets

In 2016, Hemel Hempstead was a runner-up in the British High Street Awards – testament to the regeneration work that is still ongoing. We've also invested £100,000 into the Tring Town Plan.

Ensuring our historic areas are maintained

History is important to the borough. The word "Dacorum" itself has ancient Roman origins, and every year tens of thousands of visitors come to see our historic sites and museums. That's why we've been considering the potential of using The Bury in Hemel Hempstead into a museum and arts venue. We've also invested in improvements to the Old Town Hall theatre in Hemel Hempstead, a building that dates back to 1852.

Making Jarman Square even more enjoyable

Jarman Square is home to restaurants, a Cineworld cinema with IMAX, a contract-free gym and leisure centre. Dacorum Borough Council has invested in Jarman Square's Planet Ice too, helping it improve its facilities and offer even better experiences.

Attracting sport and media events

Hemel Hempstead was once again the starting point for the last leg of the Tour of Britain, one of the cycling world's toughest races. Hemel has hosted the event twice since 2014, and has hosted the women's final. We've also seen an increase in filming in the borough, which brings additional revenue and prestige.

The challenges we're facing

Ensuring our investment pays back

We need to foster a strong and vibrant economy to make sure that local people benefit from having a range of good employers and well paid secure jobs. By securing private investment this increases economic activity and output and will have a positive effect for the economy – local and national - and the wellbeing of our residents.

Availability of land to build businesses

Land for offices, warehouses, factories and business units is essential if our economy is to develop. The Enterprise Zone at East Hemel Hempstead offers 55 hectares of land, offering new opportunities for investment. But we need to make sure whether more land is needed to ensure our competitive position is maintained and the economy can grow and flourish into the future.

Protecting our town centres

The way we shop and spend leisure time is changing. The impact of internet shopping and, to a lesser extent, out of town retail centres means that the town centres will need to change and include a much wider variety of uses other than shopping, particularly leisure. We need to reinvigorate our town centres to adapt and prosper in the rapidly changing reality of modern retail. We cannot pretend that this will be easy – and there are no easy solutions.

Targeted, sustainable growth

We need to ensure the economy is geared up to harness the potential of growing business sectors. Specifically, we want to make sure our borough is attractive to enviro-tech organisations, which we can support via the Enterprise Zone.

Addressing the skills supply chain

Our economy will only grow if we have the supply of skills to meet the type and number of jobs available. At the same time, we need to find the right balance between jobs requiring significant training and expertise, and those which are open to candidates with more basic skills.

Digital and physical connectivity

The transport network is the lifeblood of our economy, and reliable connections from our homes to places of work are crucial. But the way we work is changing, and digital connectivity is giving rise to more remote and home working. So, that need for connectivity extends to the digital world too, where access to reliable and fast fibre broadband connectivity is vital. Meanwhile, the roll-out of 5G and fibre to the premises will attract progressive employers to the area.

Securing investment to deliver a dynamic economy for the future

Whilst occupancy of business space remains high, the economy doesn't stand still. We need to create the right conditions for business investment in Dacorum building on our great locational and enterprising strengths, to ensure a high value economy can be maintained and improved in the long term. Our vision is of a Borough as a welcome and attractive home to high value businesses in the growth sectors of the future.

Developing Dacorum as a great tourism destination

A growing regional economy and an expanding population provides the great opportunity to promote and develop the Borough's attractiveness for visits, days out and longer term stays, not just to provide enjoyment for our residents and visitors, but to reap the economic benefits of this growing part of the economy. We need the right approach to making space for leisure and tourism developments and securing them, and the right level of promotion and support for businesses to bring out all that is best in Dacorum as a place to visit and enjoy.

What we propose

Nurturing our economy and helping it grow while the wider climate is unpredictable will be a challenge. But it's one we can prepare for, with a considered, clear and consistent plan. That's why we're committing to:

- Maintaining the promotion of Dacorum as a prime location for inward investment, working with organisations like the Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors Network and the Herts Local Enterprise Partnership to raise the Gross Value Added per head of the area, keeping employment levels high and unemployment low
- Create a regulatory and policy environment to help emerging sectors flourish – helping business to navigate the complexity of locate and develop new ventures. This will connect with economic development across South West Hertfordshire through the Joint Strategic Plan.
- Work with the Local Enterprise Partnership, Crown Estate and other organisations to deliver a multi-modal transport interchange – connecting two or more types of transportation for people – to serve connections between town centres and Maylands and the Enterprise Zone.
- Ensure a healthy supply of land for businesses and employers across the borough. We'll look at the possibilities for Council-owned land at Green Lane, Maylands and work towards bringing forward developments that are able to meet both the needs of the council and the Enterprise Zone. We will consider whether further land is needed to meet the challenges of the future.
- Work with the Enterprise Zone and partners to ensure further delivery of new developments that meet the needs of investors and provide high-quality employment opportunities. Through this, we'll also look to generate high-value inward investment from target growth sectors like enviro-tech.
- Seek funding from Government and work with agencies to improve fibre and gigabit connectivity for businesses – crucial to the growth of Dacorum today and tomorrow.
- Work with the University of Hertfordshire and West Herts College to ensure we're developing the skills we need to supply emerging growth sectors and new employers entering the borough. As use of artificial intelligence becomes more commonplace this is increasingly important.
- Facilitating good, high value jobs based on the skills that will sustain and develop new and emerging growth sectors.
- Building on Dacorum's entrepreneurial spirit, and the success of the Maylands Business Centre, encourage the creation of business start-ups through our business development activities and our planning requirements to create the spaces for them to set up and flourish.

- Address the role of our town centre high streets in the borough; now and in the future. We'll look to reimagine town centres – helping them to facilitate more social interaction and provide meeting places, sustain the leisure economy, deliver high quality new housing and ensure diversity among retailers with a healthy mix of chains and independents.
- We will support the development of the tourism economy in Dacorum through engagement with tourism promotion agencies and businesses.
- If our bid to secure external funding is successful, we'll deliver the museum and arts venue conversion of The Bury. This will preserve a much-loved building and create a new cultural destination perfect for adults and children alike.

C. A happier, healthier and safer Dacorum

Our vision

We're lucky to live in a country with some of the best healthcare and longest life expectancies in the world – 83 for women and 79 for men. But when it comes to healthcare and wellbeing, we can always do better. Our vision for the next 30 years is to improve every aspect of Dacorum residents' health, safety and wellbeing. The Council doesn't control most of the services that have a direct impact on this but there are many areas that our actions can have a beneficial impact on health and wellbeing.

Exercising our right to health and wellbeing

We already know that our physical activity and diet have an overwhelming impact on our overall health. That's why, together with our service provider Everyone Active, we want to offer accessible activities, gyms, and leisure opportunities across the borough – including ensuring that gym membership is affordable to the widest number of people. And we want to protect – not destroy – open spaces, which can be used for outdoor exercise.

“Our vision for the next 30 years is to improve every aspect of Dacorum residents' health and wellbeing.”

Securing a safer future

We want to continue our focus on safety. And that means looking at everything we do, from gritting roads and creating safe spaces for children to play through to making sure CCTV protects us without limiting civil liberties. We also want Dacorum to be an inclusive, caring borough that seeks to prevent social isolation and homelessness.

In the decades to come, Dacorum Borough Council wants every resident to have the opportunity to be more active, to be healthier and to be even safer.

What we've achieved so far

We've completed a lot of work over the last 10 years. But for us, it's just the beginning. Here are a few of the biggest achievements over the last decade.

Getting active across the borough

'Get set, go Dacorum' was a £250,000 Sport England-funded project to help more local people get fit and stay active across the borough. A total of 3,500 participants have taken part in over 50 different activities so far. We've also overseen extensions to sports facilities across the borough, including the new skate park and plans for an outdoor gym at Gadebridge Park. Our new Physical Activity and Sports Strategy has created the framework for planning for high quality facilities for a wide range of sports and activities.

More cycling across the borough

Cycle Hub is the not-for-profit community cycle centre based at Grovehill/Woodhall Farm Adventure Playground. It's making cycling more accessible for everyone. And with the Tour of Britain pro cycling event now regularly taking place in Dacorum, the borough is becoming a cycling hotspot.

More places for children to play

We've also been encouraging more children to get active: new play equipment has been added to multiple parks and open spaces around the borough, while the new Gadebridge Splash Park and Water Gardens and Hemel Hempstead town centre play areas have just opened. We've also been staging pop-up fitness activities for kids.

Everyone Active partnership

Dacorum Borough Council and Everyone Active have teamed up to provide great-value gyms at local leisure centres. Residents can enjoy contract-free memberships options and clean, friendly gyms.

Dacorum residents are proud to live here

84% of Dacorum residents say they are proud to live in the area. What's more, 71% think that Dacorum Borough Council listens and acts on the concerns of local residents.

Community and care services

A total of over £70,000 of Community Grants are awarded to community groups annually. These have included Kings Langley Community Benefit Society, Sunnyside Community Playgroup, Tring Yarn Bomb, Electric Umbrella and Wigginton Village Shop.

Our contracted voluntary sector services – Reducing Social Isolation, Promoting Healthy relationships, Information Advice and Advocacy, Living Stable Lives and Supporting the Voluntary Sector– have been specifically designed to meet the needs of the community. We have done this by focusing on things such as reducing social isolation among older people, supporting residents develop and maintain healthy relationships, helping households overcome problems of difficult life conditions and helping the voluntary sector to develop and be sustainable.

Fighting crime

The Dacorum Community Safety Partnership demonstrates that tackling crime, where there are rapidly changing trends, through working together and sharing information is more effective. This has been particularly the case on issues such as Domestic Abuse.

Public health

The Council provides a range of public health services through its Environmental Health Service, which ensures that restaurants and food outlets are operating safely, that Health and Safety rules are followed by local employers, together with a range of environmental protection enforcement.

The Private Housing Service ensures the safety of tenants living in private rented accommodation, in particular, Houses in Multiple Occupation making sure all facilities are provided and are safe and that tenants are free from harassment.

Together with the voluntary sector, we assist in supporting people with drug and alcohol problems.

The Council works with HCC, who have responsibility for the Public Health Service, on a range of initiatives that are largely focused on healthy living, in particular improving diet and exercise.

The challenges we're facing

Exercise and obesity

Physical activity levels are falling, fuelling a national obesity crisis that is putting added pressure on the NHS. We need new sporting facilities, more open space and more opportunities for children to play. Tackling obesity in young people is particularly important.

Building new homes

Housing developers want to build more houses, but we're here to encourage and require them to include more open spaces for the benefit and wellbeing of current and future residents. These open spaces must be accessible to all and properly maintained.

An ageing population

There are more people over 65 than ever before – and that number is increasing. In 2016, 18% of the UK population was over 65¹. By 2046 it's expected to be almost 25%. This means health provisioning and care facilities need to expand and increase their capacity. The key to this is ensuring that there is an improvement to primary health care – a focus on prevention and provision of care to ensure conditions don't deteriorate quickly – and we will work with the NHS, the Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group and GPs to deliver on this.

Isolation and loneliness

This ageing population also increases instances of loneliness. Over 2 million people in England over the age of 75 live alone. Many go without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member for over a month.

Rising crime rates

Reported incidences of knife crime, alcohol and drug-related crimes, anti-social behaviour offences and violent crimes and sexual offences are increasing across the country. More resources need to be provided for the police and fire services if these and other challenges are to be met.

Digital exclusion

As many as 90% of UK adults use the internet. But we need to find a way to ensure the remaining 10% aren't excluded from the benefits of using online services and in some cases being able to access services at all.

Social integration

Britain is proudly multicultural, and that means we all need to work together to ensure integration between communities.

Working as one council in partnership with organisations

Dacorum Borough Council is a group of departments and teams, just like any other organisation. We strive to work together seamlessly with our partner organisations such as the NHS and Sport England – but we can always do more to improve. It's vital that key services – like health provision and infrastructure providers – know what we're doing, what we've got planned and how we can deliver more, working together.

¹ Source: <https://www.ageukmobility.co.uk/mobility-news/article/how-old-is-the-uk>

Pressure on public services

Public sector organisations, whilst faced with budgetary constraints and competing priorities, have the challenge of delivering better services whilst customer expectations continue to rise. This underlines the need for better and more effective partnership working to co-ordinate resources and ensure we are in a good place to secure external funding where it is available.

What we propose

To enable our 2050 vision – and to offer Dacorum residents even safer communities and services – we're committing to:

- Improving our communication and consultation with key stakeholders and the voluntary sector to drive inclusivity. And we'll enhance our information sharing, helping partners benefit from the statistics and insights we hold.
- Actively work within the Community Safety Partnership to monitor crime statistics across the Borough, develop strategies and actions to reduce crime and disorder and to ensure that all organisations involved work to a common purpose.
- Stimulating digital inclusivity – finding ways to help people get online to get access to services affordably and easily, whilst providing face to face contact for those who need it.
- We want Dacorum to be an age-friendly place. We will work with our partner organisations to ensure the needs of the Borough's ageing population are addressed, ensuring inclusivity in the economy, engagement and participation in the community and good access to services.
- Ensuring our Neighbourhood Action Teams hold events in newly developed areas to help with community integration. We'll also make clear requirements of developers to ensure new development is planned to provide, and give, good and easy access to sports, recreational and outdoor activities, and to local services.
- Creating an action plan from our Physical Activity and Sports strategy that encourages the delivery of more sports facilities and opportunities for physical activities across the borough.
- Working with Everyone Active to continue to provide high quality sports and leisure facilities for our residents and businesses.
- Making clear requirements of developers to ensure new development is planned to provide, and give good and easy access to sports, recreational and outdoor activities, and to local services.
- Giving housing developers clear expectations of how they should build in health and wellbeing into new communities and helping them understand who and when they need to engage at the council.
- Working with NHS organisations at all levels to further improve the provision of healthcare services across the borough.
- Ensuring the right stakeholders are at the table when in discussion with Herts County Council. We'll make sure Dacorum's voice is heard.

D. Creating a clean, green and attractive Dacorum

Our vision

Protecting the environment for our residents and future generations is one of the biggest concerns of our times – and rightly so. Councils play a crucial role in helping to reduce plastic use, generate less waste and live more sustainably.

A growing population means more environmental challenges, but we're committed to tackling these head-on. A clean, green environment in Dacorum is achievable, provided we retain a strong vision and implement an ambitious but realistic plan.

More recycling, less waste

We want to be innovative and forward-thinking in the way we approach waste collections, by using low or zero-emission refuse vehicles and convenient, user-friendly collection systems to facilitate more re-use and recycling of waste.

We'll look into providing more home composters and food digesters to prevent the need for the collection of waste in the first place. Where waste is collected for recycling, it will where possible be sent to local re-processors to avoid materials being transported around the world. This will promote the market for sustainable products too.

And, in perhaps our most significant decision, we will minimise as far as possible the need for single-use plastics.

"Ultimately, our vision is a sustainable borough with a strong awareness of its impact on the environment."

Happy residents who enjoy living in their area are more likely to be environmentally aware, which is why we're focusing on developing quality green spaces for people to spend their leisure time in. We'll maintain these spaces in a way that promotes biodiversity – for example, by carrying out less frequent grass-cutting in certain areas and retaining natural play areas. We want make sure these areas are usable for years to come, so we'll implement clear management plans for their upkeep.

We'll also look to reduce the reliance on cars in Dacorum, which will help to protect the environment for everyone and improve air quality across the borough. You can read more about our commitment to transport improvement in the next chapter.

Ultimately, our vision is a sustainable borough with a strong awareness of its impact on the environment. And one that recognises the vital importance of a healthy future for generations of residents to come.

What we've achieved so far

We've already made strides to improve Dacorum's environment through the following initiatives:

Increasing the recycling rate

In 2017/2018, Dacorum had an impressive recycling rate of over 50%. However, we're not complacent – while it's a solid start, we want to improve this over the next 5–10 years.

Retaining our Green Flag awards

The Green Flag Award Scheme recognises well-managed parks and green spaces, and we think it's a real source of pride for our borough. Dacorum holds five Green Flag awards for our parks and open spaces – we want to retain them, and look to win more in the future.

Managing our air quality

We want to make improvements to the environment in Dacorum continuously and air quality is an important issue. That's why we have an Air Quality Action Plan, recognising however that the Council alone cannot solve all the problems. We have assessed the air quality in our borough and designated three areas where we recognise improvements need to be made.

Providing a new Splash Park in Hemel Hempstead

Summer is perfect for enjoying quality time with the family, and we've made that even more fun in the borough with our new Splash Park. As well as enjoying the water, kids and parents can take advantage of the skate park and play areas with climbing frames, slides, swings and balance beams.

Gaining Environmental Management System accreditation

This accreditation provides reassurance that we take our environmental impact seriously – requiring us to measure and improve key indicators.

Maintaining clean streets and open spaces

Our Clean, Safe and Green service features area based multi-functional teams which provides a balanced perspective on services ranging from litter-picking to mowing. This team works together to maintain outdoor spaces in the borough and ensure a pleasant environment for every resident.

The challenges we're facing

We're not complacent about the challenges we face in the future to ensure Dacorum remains a clean, green, safe and sustainable place to live and work. These include:

More homes means more waste management pressure

Projections from Hertfordshire County Council² suggest that in 20 years' time the amount of waste we produce annually will be 200,000 tonnes higher than today. As property development increases in Dacorum, we'll need to be innovative in the way we resource and approach waste collection to maintain a pleasant environment in the borough and ensure we are environmentally sustainable.

Capacity of household waste sites

We currently have 26 neighbourhood recycling sites across the borough where residents can deposit their household waste for recycling free of charge. However, we will need to consider how changing recycling needs and population growth will impact on the capacity of these sites and how we maintain an excellent service in the future.

² Source: Hertfordshire Waste Partnership's Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy

Sustaining the market for recyclable materials

Globally, only 15% of plastic waste is collected and recycled into secondary plastics each year³. For us in Dacorum, a healthy demand for materials we recycle is essential to our strategy for environmentally friendly waste management.

Reducing single-use plastics

Single-use plastics are a huge threat to environments across the world and have become an increasingly prominent issue over the last couple of years. In Dacorum, we're prioritising the reduction in use of these plastics.

Improving air quality

The quality of the air we breathe is central to our quality of life. Our Air Quality Action Plan demonstrates our commitment to reducing levels of air pollution, and we need to ensure we continue to set ambitious and achievable air quality goals in the future.

A focus on biodiversity

Hertfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan was among the earliest of its kind to be produced in the UK. It identifies habitats and species that are a priority for conservation action. This is an excellent start, but we need to keep reviewing this to support the biodiversity of our borough.

Litter prevention

A reduction in litter and fly tipping will make the borough a better place to live for everyone. One of our biggest challenges is enforcing prevention policies.

Considering other options for The Bury

The Bury in Hemel Hempstead is a Grade II listed town house, but it is currently unused. Dacorum Borough Council and Dacorum Heritage Trust are working together on ways to transform The Bury into a vibrant museum and arts venue, situated in the gateway to both the Old Town and our Green Flag award-winning Gadebridge Park.

Improving the conditions of the river in Gadebridge Park

The new £1-million splash park in Gadebridge Park has rejuvenated the space and made it a popular destination for families. But we need to do more. The Environment Agency – part of whose role is to ensure the quality of our rivers – has agreed with the Council to realign parts of the river Gade in Gadebridge Park. This will bring its course back to a more natural route, together with new footpaths and boardwalks to enable people to enjoy the river environment better. The impact will mean cleaner water, a better environment for fish and other creatures and will ensure a more natural plant growth.

Managing air quality

Government and EU air quality targets are designed to improve the air that we all breathe. And we need to work harder to cut emissions. As you'll see in the chapter on Transport, we're aiming to reduce the quantity of traffic in key areas throughout the borough.

³ Source: the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

What we propose

We're passionate about creating a sustainable Dacorum. To make our environment the best it can be for current and future residents, we will:

- Work to continue the increase in the recycling rate and to minimise the amount of household waste that arises.
- Aim to improve local household waste sites alongside minimising the amount of waste that arises.
- Continue to maintain and enhance our green open spaces, and consider ways how we do this, whilst enhancing biodiversity and ensuring easy access.
- Introduce a range of initiatives to update our biodiversity action plan.
- Improve air quality in line with our Air Quality Action Plan whilst at the same time lobbying government to act on areas that the Council has little or no control over such as emissions from vehicles and encouragement for low pollution transport.
- Effectively enforce litter and fly-tipping prevention measures.
- Significantly reduce single-use plastics in the work of the council.
- Seek to incorporate the best possible sustainability measures in new construction, including energy efficiency in new buildings and the use of renewable technologies.
- Visitors deserve to breathe clean air, just like residents. We will set clear targets for reducing pollutants although it should be recognised, however, that we will be looking to national government and vehicle manufacturers to act to reduce the harmful emissions from cars, buses and lorries.
- Continue to work to increase annual visitor numbers by promoting the reputation of the borough as a place of culture, history and natural beauty – a must-see tourist destination.

E. On-track for a better transport network

Our vision

Dacorum has great transport links. We sit adjacent to the motorway network with direct access to the M1, M25 and the A41. The west coast mainline railway serves five stations and offers fast access to London Euston – just 20 minutes from Hemel Hempstead - and to Birmingham New Street, and now Crewe, to the north. These connections put international air services from Heathrow, Stansted and Luton within easy reach.

However, our networks are congested and getting around is not always easy. With substantial household and population growth daily trips on public transport and roads are set to rise significantly. That's why Dacorum Borough Council, working in partnership with HCC, who are the Transport Authority, aim to create a long-term plan to ensure we're supporting the area's growth and delivering an expanded and completely reimagined transport network – what we refer to as 'sustainable transport'.

Sustainable transport is essential to the Borough's economic success. People need to get to work, go shopping and explore every opportunity on offer in Dacorum. The transport network is the life-blood of the entire county.

Although we are not the transport authority, we are working together with Hertfordshire County Council and public transport providers and the Transport Systems Catapult, to ensure trains, roads, buses and cycle routes are fit for purpose. Are bus services good enough to support those communities not served by train stations? Do timetables make sense for largest number of people? How do we expand our road network while minimising our impact on the environment? These are all key questions that we, with our partner organisations, need to address.

Road transport is essential to the UK's prosperity, but many urban areas cannot sustain the present growth in road traffic. More cars mean new roads, increased congestion, and costlier parking.

Everyone in the Dacorum area deserves easy access to shops, parks, schools and their place of work.

Our vision is a sustainable, easily accessible transport network: one that makes it easy to pay for travel with simple, integrated fares and smart ticketing. And a system that means public transport is the preferred option, reducing our reliance on cars.

What we've achieved so far

In the last five years, Dacorum Borough Council has been working hard to improve transport across the area.

- **Hemel Hempstead bus interchange**

As part of the Hemel Evolution Regeneration programme we've created a new bus interchange, offering improved access to the town centre.

- **Hemel Hempstead Old Town traffic improvements**

Hemel Old Town has been given a new lease of life with a high-quality regeneration project. The new one-way system has greatly improved traffic flow and reduced congestion.

- **The Marlowes and Water Gardens regeneration**

New public information systems and bus stop upgrades have improved pedestrian access to the town centre, while the Marlowes and Water Gardens have been transformed. This has attracted retailers, private investment and housing.

- **Maylands Growth Corridor Work**

Extensive work around the Maylands Growth Corridor, plus planned work to Junction 8 of the M1 motorway and Breakspear Way will ease congestion and pave the way for new homes and jobs. Shared walking and cycling routes have been installed between Hemel Hempstead Station and the town centre.

- **Easier access to our stations**

We've engaged with Network Rail, the Train Operating Companies and Hertfordshire County Council on plans to improve the passenger transport facilities at Hemel Hempstead station in conjunction with regeneration plans for the area, lifting its quality and also providing new homes. Pedestrian access to Hemel Hempstead Station has been improved. For example, walkways to and from Heath Park have been upgraded. Encouraging pedestrian and cycle access is a crucial part of reducing vehicle traffic around the station.

- **The shift to more sustainable transport**

The South West Herts Growth and Transport Plan has started identifying opportunities to move towards more sustainable transport. Reducing single occupancy car journeys is central to this plan. The new draft A414 strategy looks at improving connections between Hemel Hempstead, Welwyn Garden City, Hertford and Harlow and delivering better public transport facilities.

The challenges we're facing

Technology travels fast

Technological progress never slows, especially in the field of transport. Electric cars, driverless cars, and electric bikes are either already here or just around the corner. Future planning policy needs to support these innovations and more: we need to ensure that we build in as much flexibility to allow for technologies that haven't yet emerged.

Ensuring the right approach to car parking

Planning policy allows developers to develop housing with a lower parking provision than local people would like (worrying that this will exacerbate difficulties with on street parking). Whilst the Council will have its own parking standards they may be challenged by developers as being too generous. The rationale behind government policy is that sustainable public transport will allow these lower figures hence our work, together with Herts County Council who are responsible for public transport, to improve how it operates.

The position of the rail station

Hemel Hempstead rail station is located just out of town, making it difficult for commuters to move between the station and their homes or places of work. We can't change this however. Our priority must be to make it easier for people to move between the station, the town and residential areas is essential to reduce local congestion.

Joining the dots of the cycle network

We've made good progress building a mature network of cycling routes, but they're not joined seamlessly. All routes should be safe and well-lit – and ideally not shared with cars and other road traffic.

Old habits are hard to change

Reducing road congestion and changing the approach to parking means behaviours will need to change. How do we encourage residents to move away from car ownership and towards public transport, walking and cycling? The honest answer here is that cultural change such as this takes both time and the provision of credible alternatives where we will press the government and private providers.

What we propose

We're committed to tackling the transport challenges that Dacorum faces, with a carefully considered action plan to be delivered with key agencies. So, to build a better future for Dacorum, we will:

- Help to deliver the South West Herts Growth and Transport Plan – which sets out the key transport projects for the area to support growth - working with HCC and seek to implement those projects within the Council area.
- Bring forward a sustainable transport strategy for the whole of Hemel Hempstead in conjunction with the Hemel Garden Communities programme to improve movement across the town and make it easier for people to walk, cycle and use public transport.
- Through the Enterprise Zone and the Hemel Garden Communities programme, work with our partners to deliver major highway and transport improvements to Maylands and East Hemel Hempstead, and access to the M1 motorway using funds generated by the new developments.
- Consider how new innovations in helping people to get about, including the use of smart technology and demand-responsive transport, can be encouraged.
- Work to investigate a cycle scheme similar to London's 'Boris Bikes'. We would also investigate how we might be able to bring low-cost, accessible electric bikes to key sites, such as the rail stations and Maylands.
- Making improvements to access arrangements to the Water Gardens car parks and making the area more friendly to pedestrians.
- Work has begun on a new multi-storey car park in Berkhamsted. This will make it easier for people to use the town centre and sustain the local economy.
- Use Section 106 agreements (public benefits from developers included as part of commercial planning approvals) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income to help fund and deploy sustainable transport options.
- Ensure sustainable transport measures are included in all development on new greenfield sites as part of our master planning.
- Consider the solutions to providing a commuter-friendly fast link between Maylands and Hemel Hempstead station thus increasing the chances of attracting new business.
- Encouraging walking and cycling through the development of safe, signposted and well lit quiet ways' in new and existing developments.
- Encourage residents to move to multi-occupant transport schemes (car sharing, park and ride, buses) making it a viable, safe and popular choice for everyone.

- Develop a strategic level 'green travel plan' and agree targets for a drop-in car journeys.

F. Harnessing the opportunity of technology and digital connectivity

Our vision

Technology moves fast. It's vital that we embrace this progressive and dynamic world if we're to revitalise how we work as a council, and deliver local services in a relevant way. Used effectively, technology should make life easier for residents and businesses across our borough.

We must ensure that as a community we're keeping up with technology and that everyone can access and use our digital services effectively. This is particularly important for an ageing population that hasn't grown up with digital platforms, as it can feel overwhelming. That's why we'll continue to put people at the heart of how we design and deliver public services – especially when they're being delivered through digital channels.

It will be important to ensure that Dacorum as a whole doesn't get left behind when new technologies are being rolled out – this is vital for businesses and residents alike.

Creating a connection

It's important that we create policy changes to support the roll out of ultra-fast fibre broadband and 5G (as well as faster future mobile bandwidths). This is vital as the adoption of new technology trends will hinge on connectivity.

The Internet of Things (IoT) – which enables everyday items to connect to the internet and exchange data with other devices – means that many devices and systems will be networked in the near future. From our perspective, this is really exciting because IoT-enabled devices and sensors give us endless possibilities for public service improvements – from connected CCTV systems to smart traffic lights.

“We will continue to put people at the heart of how we design and deliver public services – especially when they're being delivered through digital channels.”

Tackling challenges with technology

We will implement our own localised plans as part of the Government's 2017 Industrial Strategy. Technology is key to addressing four of the most pressing challenges in this strategy: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data; an ageing society; clean growth; and the future of mobility.

Our vision for how we harness technology sees us introducing digital services that will transform the way that the council works and the way people live for the better. And we will be working to ensure these advantages are available to residents and businesses. Technology has the potential to increase productivity, drive economic growth, create jobs, connect individuals and improve how services are provided. And we want to make the most of that potential for the benefit of everyone in Dacorum.

What we've achieved so far

Over the past five years the Council has already implemented a number of changes.

- **Modernising council working practices**

Flexible and remote working was introduced, which we found not only maximises desk space within our offices, but makes our workforce far more resilient. And, as part of this process, staff were provided with better mobile tablets and laptops for more effective remote working.

- **Becoming more efficient**

We've also reduced the amount of physical document storage in our building. We've reduced the use of paper dramatically and continue to take steps to minimise its use.

- **Remote access to council services**

We delivered a series of projects to improve remote access to council services. These include providing small businesses with virtual assistants and installing better telecare systems for residents in assisted living housing. Our new My Dacorum facility is helping our customers access a wide range of services online.

- **Improved council communications**

By increasing our use of digital media, we have been able to communicate more effectively with the community and share information more frequently. We have designed and now operate the MyDacorum portal so our residents can access a range of Council services under one easy to use account.

Created the Hertfordshire Enviro-Tech Enterprise Zone

Working with St Albans and Herts County Council the Enterprise Zone encompasses Rothamsted Research, the Building Research Establishment and an area of over 200 acres in Maylands and East of Hemel Hempstead. It will focus on attracting and retaining a wide range of hi-tech employers and creating up to 8000 new jobs and plans to offer the latest full fibre and 5G connectivity.

The challenges we're facing

Keeping up with technology

Technology is moving at a rapid pace and that makes future planning a challenge. We need to be ready for technologies that haven't even fully emerged yet. We have to make sure we can maximise the opportunities that technology will bring, now and in the future.

The right skills and knowledge

Our working practices need to be futureproofed. Council staff must have the right skills and knowledge to make the most of new opportunities with technology. We also need to be working with employers and training providers to ensure these skills are available in the community.

Network coverage

We're aiming to reach the point where ultra-fast fibre connectivity and 5G is universally accessible across the borough. Currently, rural coverage can be patchy in some areas across the borough.

Accessing and acting on data

The Internet of Things allows us to access useful data and run our services more efficiently. We need to explore how we can begin to collect and use this data to benefit residents and businesses.

What we propose

We need to address the challenges that we face as technology develops, and also to make the most of the opportunities technology brings. We will:

- Seek to ensure the best coverage of full fibre and 5G connectivity, and enhance the Borough's appeal and offer to inward investors.
- Encourage the installation of the technology infrastructure required for full digital connectivity so communities, the economy and the environment can see the benefits. Where possible, we will use our assets to help site key infrastructure needed to provide full fibre connectivity.
- We will maximise the use of digital connectivity in the town centre.
- Ensure sufficient skills and knowledge of technology is developed within the council with particular regard to meeting the service requirements of a growing population, and making access to services easier.
- Create policy through the Local Plan to ensure the rollout of super-fast fibre broadband connectivity and 5G (and future generations) is achieved in conjunction with new developments.
- Support local businesses to make use of the help available through the Government's Industrial Strategy to access new technology. Make sure that businesses are able to access the highest-speed broadband available. This will be an ongoing task for us.
- Through active participation within the Enterprise Zone, ensure the delivery of the major transport improvements to Junction 8 of the M1 and the road network through Maylands.
- Ensure that the branding and marketing of the Enterprise Zone is effective in attracting a wide range of employers with a particular focus on the high tech environmental sector and to deliver 8000 new jobs by 2050.