

1. DACORUM FUTURES – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“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.”

Councillor Andrew Williams, Leader of the Council February 2019

2. WHY DO WE NEED A 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 major growth and investment of in the Borough through the creation of new communities and jobs 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 no guarantee that the best interests of the borough will be addressed. 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 resilience, improvement and protection – as well as more efficient and effective ways of delivering the services and goods we need. 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 of what the Borough has been used to over the past 20 years or so. 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. This strategy sets out how the Council will act to achieve this and the Local Plan, which will be out for consultation later this year, will set out where development will happen and what sort of development we are seeking.

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 a proactive plan 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.

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's the product of the Council working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders across our community. We will continue to engage with residents, organisations and businesses. This is a plan that will deliver benefits for everyone.

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.

3. 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.

4. WHAT WE PROPOSE FOR THE THINGS THAT MATTER TO YOU

A. Building Dacorum's future with homes for everyone

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, and 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 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.
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- 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

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. 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 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 artificial intelligence becomes more commonplace – where computers and machines take human jobs – 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

To enable our 2050 plan – 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 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.
- 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. It should be recognised, however, that we will be looking to national government and in particular 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.

D. On-track for a better transport network

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 new innovations in helping people to get about, including the use of smart technology and demand-responsive transport.
- 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. These changes will make it easier for people to use our town centres 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.

E. Harnessing the opportunity of technology and digital connectivity

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 develops 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 changes 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 attractive a wide range of employers with a particular focus on the high tech environmental sector and to deliver 8000 new jobs by 2050.