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# STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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| <b>Report for:</b>   | Overview and Scrutiny Committee  |
| <b>Title of report:</b>  | Hemel Town Centre Vision   |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 14 March 2023  |
| <b>Report on behalf of:</b>  | Councillor Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Place  |
| <b>Part:</b>   | I  |
| <b>If Part II, reason:</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Appendices:</b>   | <p>Hemel Town Centre Vision</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Consultation feedback (attached)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Urban Analysis (attached)</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Public realm opportunities (attached)</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Opportunity sites (attached)</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Hemel Spatial Vision (available via link)<br/> <a href="https://hemelgardencommunities.co.uk/hemel-garden-communities-spatial-vision.pdf">hemel-garden-communities-spatial-vision.pdf (hemelgardencommunities.co.uk)</a></p> <p>Appendix 6 – Our Hemel Story (available via link)<br/> <a href="https://thinkhemel.com/HEM-Storybook-web-2022-09-14.pdf">HEM-Storybook-web-2022-09-14.pdf (thinkhemel.com)</a></p> |
| <b>Background papers:</b>  | Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan 2011-2021 <a href="https://dacorum.gov.uk/hemel-hempstead-town-centre-masterplan---adopted-jan-13-(small).pdf">hemel-hempstead-town-centre-masterplan---adopted-jan-13-(small).pdf (dacorum.gov.uk)</a>   |
| <b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b> |  |

### Report Author / Responsible Officer

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|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Corporate Priorities</b> | <p>A clean, safe and enjoyable environment</p> <p>Building strong and vibrant communities</p> <p>Ensuring economic growth and prosperity</p> <p>Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need</p> |
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|  | Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery<br>Climate and ecological emergency   |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                                | All Hemel Hempstead wards   |
| <b>Purpose of the report:</b>                        | 1. To outline for Informal Cabinet the Town Centre Vision and appendices.   |
| <b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b> | 1. To support the Town Centre vision and next steps to Council in July 2023.<br>2. To agree a soft launch of Town Centre Vision and appendices to investors at UKREiIF (16-18 May 2023) |
| <b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>        | N/A   |

## 1 Introduction:

1.1 The Hemel Place work started in summer 2021, Thinking Place, a place branding, marketing and place-making specialist carried out stakeholder engagement. The response to this formed our Hemel Place Story, which has a main big idea and three themes;

Big idea – Growing a fresh new future

Theme 1 – A vibrant destination for enterprise

Theme 2 – Enhance your wellbeing in Hemel

Theme 3 – Where connections matter

Strapline – ‘where life is greener’

1.2 The Hemel Place Story was launched on July 8th 2022, with an event including external speakers, a range of guests and a new [www.thinkhemel.com](http://www.thinkhemel.com) website.

1.3 This paper provides an overview of the Town Centre Vision. The town centre is an important area of the Hemel Place work, hence been given early priority ahead of a Hemel Place Strategy. The town centre needs intervention to support the current businesses and attract a new diverse economy, repurposing vacant units and development sites to a destination for leisure and culture as well as providing homes in a sustainable location.

1.4 The main audience for the vision is developers. The intention is to soft launch the vision at UKREiIF an investor’s forum held in Leeds, 16-18 May 2023. Any feedback following this event could be incorporated into the final document approved by Cabinet in July 2023.

1.5 Placeshaping work is progressing in Tring and Berkhamsted. Thinking Place were commissioned in autumn 2022, they completed engagement work with the community and key stakeholders. A narrative for each town has been produced and agreed by the Tring and Berkhamsted Steering Groups. The narratives are included below and the steering groups are working on scoping the next steps, which will be different for each town.

Tring narrative

Theme 1 embrace our quirky spirit

Theme 2 the natural choice

Theme 3 buzz with us

Berkhamsted

Theme 1 harnessing our hidden history and heritage

Theme 2 location, connection; London and local

Theme 3 cultivating a hub and heart

- 1.6 The place work in Tring and Berkhamsted are important interdependences for the Hemel Town Centre Vision as there is an opportunity to share cultural activities across the three towns, benefitting our wider communities.

## **2 Summary of Town Centre Vision:**

- 2.1 The attached document provides an overarching vision for the town centre and highlights the main aims and priorities in order to deliver the vision. It provides an overview of Hemel Town Centre for those who are not familiar and a suggested approach to land use and opportunity sites, particularly aimed at investors. Importantly the land uses should remain flexible to accommodate active opportunities in the market.
- 2.2 The main document is accompanied by six appendices, which will work as chapters and be relevant to different audiences. For example, the opportunity sites will be of interest to developers, public realm proposals for future bid opportunities. The appendices are;

Appendix 1 - Consultation feedback (attached)

Appendix 2 – Urban Analysis (attached)

Appendix 3 – Public realm opportunities (attached)

Appendix 4 – Opportunity sites (attached)

Appendix 5 – Hemel Spatial Vision (available via link) [hemel-garden-communities-spatial-vision.pdf](https://hemelgardencommunities.co.uk/hemel-garden-communities-spatial-vision.pdf)  
([hemelgardencommunities.co.uk](https://hemelgardencommunities.co.uk))

Appendix 6 – Our Hemel Story (available via link) [HEM-Storybook-web-2022-09-14.pdf](https://thinkhemel.com/HEM-Storybook-web-2022-09-14.pdf)  
([thinkhemel.com](https://thinkhemel.com))

- 2.3 The Town Centre vision will be a key part of a future Hemel Place Strategy. Intervention in the town centre is important and a key priority for Hemel.

## **3 Options and alternatives considered**

- 3.1 Do nothing – stop working on the Hemel Place Strategy and Town Centre Vision. This option is discounted as the need this work to attract investment and businesses as well as building reputation and improving civic pride.

## **4 Consultation**

- 4.1 A survey was open to residents and communities across Hemel Hempstead from November 2022 – January 2023. It was hosted on a website supported by commonplace. The answers are being analysed and will be important when drafting the Hemel Place Strategy. Many findings have also been included in the drafting of the Town Centre Vision. 434 people answered the survey which had 21 questions included below. A response to these questions can be found in appendix 1.

1. How proud of Hemel Hempstead are you?

2. Why do you feel this way?

3. What would make your score even better?
4. Please tell us three things that are most important to you for the future of Hemel Hempstead?
5. Where is your favourite place in Hemel?
6. Why is this your favourite place?
7. Where is your least favourite place in Hemel?
8. Why is this your least favourite place?
9. If you live in Hemel Hempstead, where do you consider is the heart of your community?
10. Could you please give us the name of this place?
11. How can we as communities support each other with the cost of living crisis and other challenges?
12. Are there any community activities or groups providing support that you would like to make us aware of AND/OR that you feel is missing from this community?
13. If you have a disability or health condition, how do you feel Hemel Hempstead supports you as a place to live?
14. What is your impression on how communities interact with each other in Hemel Hempstead?
15. Do you feel that Hemel Hempstead is a community that promotes acceptance, inclusion and a sense of belonging to all its residents?
16. What do you consider most important to you when thinking about a place to live?
17. If you work in or visit Hemel Hempstead, would you consider living here?
18. What is the reason behind your answer to question 17?
19. How often do you visit Hemel Hempstead town centre?
20. Why do you visit Hemel Hempstead town centre?
21. What would make you visit the Town Centre more often?

## **5 Financial and value for money implications:**

- 5.1 None arising from this report

## **6 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 None arising from this report

## **7 Risk implications:**

- 7.1 Resources/budget – there is a risk that the programme of Hemel Place and Town Centre work is not resourced sufficiently in the future. A new Place Communities and Enterprise service that will support the implementation of the place work has mitigated this risk. Funding will be on a project basis and will look to secure funding from bids and other sources.

## **8 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:**

- 8.1 A Community Impact Assessment was carried out in April 2021 when the Hemel Place work first started. Attached is a Community Impact Assessment focussed on the Town Centre Vision. The aim in the vision is

for the town centre to be a place where the community can meet and be close to nature. The focus will be to develop the town centre so it is accessible to all, including people and communities from a range of diverse backgrounds, fostering community cohesion and celebrating diversity. This is positive for all in the community. There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

## **9 Sustainability implications**

- 9.1 There are eight aims that set out delivery of the town centre vision (pages 18-19 of vision document). Aim no. 4 includes focusing on sustainable transport systems. Creating an environment that better connects the Town Centre to other areas of Hemel (the station, the emerging Hemel Garden Communities, Apsley, Maylands, etc.) whilst supporting active movement and enabling healthy lifestyles and improved wellbeing.
- 9.2 Aim no. 5 focuses on climate change and biodiversity. This includes ensuring that any interventions and actions address the climate and biodiversity challenges we are facing today and in the future. This includes enhancing the biodiversity offer in the town centre to create a healthier environment as well as improve the connection between people and nature.
- 9.3 Aim no. 7 focuses on reinvigorating the town centre and creating an evening economy by providing new residential, community and employment opportunities. A key aim is to make the Town Centre feel safer using creative changes.

## **10 Council infrastructure**

- 10.1 The placeshaping approach at the Council will enable the majority of teams to work together in delivering the Town Centre Vision. The Council is moving away from teams working separately, to a multi-disciplinary approach which focuses on geographic areas and importantly works with the community and stakeholders in the area who know the place best.

## **11 Conclusions:**

- 11.1 In conclusion the committee is invited to scrutinise the draft Town Centre Vision and support its use to attract investment at UKREiiF in May 2023. The next steps will be to present the vision to Cabinet in July 2023 and draft an action plan to set out short, medium and long-term actions to deliver the vision.