





Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Dacorum Local Plan (2024 – 2040): Revised Strategy for Growth (for consultation)
Date:	4 October 2023
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Sheron Wilkie, Portfolio Holder for Place
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1: Dacorum Local Plan (2024-2040) – Revised Strategy for Growth Print Version.</p> <p>Appendix 2: Local Development Scheme Update – September 2023.</p> <p>Appendix 3: RSG 2023 Community Impact Assessment.</p>
Background papers:	<p>Most Recent Timetable:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Local Development Scheme (LDS) (Adopted February 2022) <p>Local Plan Documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan Update Newsletter (Published 2021) Emerging Strategy Consultation Summary Report (2021) Dacorum Local Plan Emerging Strategy for Growth (Regulation 18 Consultation, published 2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan Emerging Strategy for Growth 2020-2038 - Summary Document Part 1 - Local Plan Emerging Strategy for Growth 2020-2038 - pages 1 to 187 (PDF 8MB) Part 2 - Local Plan Emerging Strategy for Growth 2020-2038 - pages 188 to 261 (PDF 4MB) Part 3 - Local Plan Emerging Strategy for Growth 2020-2038 - pages 262 to 297 (PDF 11MB) Part 4 - Local Plan Emerging Strategy for Growth 2020-2038 - pages 298 to 359 (PDF 11MB) Dacorum Local Plan Issues and Options (Regulation 18 Consultation, published 2017) Issues and Options Consultation Report of Responses (Published 2019) <p>Background Cabinet Reports</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet Report: Dacorum Borough Local Plan (July 2021) <p>Other relevant documents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hemel Garden Communities Spatial Vision (Published 2021) Evidence Base for Emerging Local Plan
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>LDS: Local Development Scheme</p> <p>SCI: Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>DPD: Development Plan Document</p> <p>NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework</p>

	PPG: Planning Practice Guidance CAONB: Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty SAC: Special Area of Conservation
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Corporate Priorities	<p>The Dacorum Local Plan 2024-2040 promotes the achievement of all the corporate priorities as set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clean, safe and enjoyable environment • Building strong and vibrant communities • Ensuring economic growth and prosperity • Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need • Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery • Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	ALL
Purpose of the report:	To consult the Committee on the Dacorum Local Plan (2024 – 2040): Revised Strategy for Growth (focussed consultation).
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	<p>That the Committee informs Cabinet of its views on the Dacorum Local Plan (2024 – 2040): Revised Strategy for Growth (focussed consultation).</p> <p>That the Committee informs Cabinet of its views on the proposed Local Development Scheme (timetable for Local Plan).</p>
Period for post policy/project review:	<p>This document is for consultation only and a final ‘Publication version’ of the Local Plan will be produced later in the process (see timetable in report) having regard to the consultation responses received to date, including previous consultations.</p> <p>Once the final Local Plan is adopted, a review will be undertaken at least every 5 years, subject to the introduction of new Planning Reports.</p>

1. Introduction/Background:

- 1.1 The Local Plan sets out the long-term strategy for sustainable development in Dacorum. It will coordinate and enable the growth and investment that our borough needs. It also provides the policy framework for how decisions on planning applications will be made. The final Local Plan will be informed by evidence and the views of the community, it will include
- i. A vision and objectives.
 - ii. An overall 'spatial strategy'.
 - iii. Planning Policies.
 - iv. Site Allocations and requirements for developments (including infrastructure).
- 1.2 A Local Plan is the policy driver to deliver ambition and priorities for our places. The Council needs a Local Plan to secure the right types of homes are delivered in the right locations. A Local Plan can set out which areas need rejuvenating and which areas, including open space and Green Belt need to be protected. On adoption, it will coordinate and direct infrastructure delivery and allows communities to help shape how their places will change. Having an up to date plan gives greater certainty to local communities and to developers.
- 1.3 The risks of not having an up to date Local Plan are highlighted in section 7 of this report. In summary not having an up to date Local Plan means not having a plan for the future of our places and communities and not being able to protect areas that are most important to the community. The Council will have less control of its own planning function as there is a risk for speculative applications coming forward in locations that are either inappropriate or less than optimal, and where the Council is forced into a reactive, rather than proactive position.
- 1.4 Dacorum Borough Council is preparing a new Local Plan for the period 2024 to 2040. Once adopted, it will replace the;
- i. Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted July 2017);
 - ii. Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted September 2013); and
 - iii. The "saved" parts of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (adopted May 2004).
- 1.5 In November 2017, the Council published the Issues and Options (Regulation 18) consultation seeking comments on the key issues facing the Borough. More than 22,000 responses to this we received from over 2,000 individuals and organisations.
- 1.6 In November 2020, the Council published the Emerging Strategy for Growth (Regulation 18) consultation seeking comments on a full draft Local Plan, including site allocations and policies to meet a housing need figure of 922 dwellings per annum¹. This consultation received over 16,000 responses from over 4,000 people.
- 1.7 A consultation report was presented to Cabinet on 27 July 2021, summarising the key issues raised. The consultation report forms the basis for officer recommendations on revisions to the strategy presented later in this report. At the same meeting of Cabinet, it was agreed to defer the publication of the Local Plan and to undertake further evidence base work, primarily on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC and a review of the Borough's urban capacity.

¹ The Emerging Strategy for Growth proposed this annual housing figure in line with proposed revisions to the standard method published by DLUHC on the 6th August 2020. This proposal was subsequently revoked by DLUHC on the 16th December 2020, as Local Planning Authorities were instructed that the method will remain that which was first introduced in 2017.

- 1.8 The document before this committee is the next stage in the preparation of the new Local Plan and has been prepared for public consultation under Regulation 18 of the Local Plan Regulations (England) 2012 (as amended). This sets out the Council's proposed changes to the Emerging Strategy for Growth, reflecting on the key issues raised by the community.
- 1.9 The consultation is an opportunity for the local business and residential community, stakeholders and site promoters to provide feedback on the proposals in the document, including a small number of additional/updated evidence base studies, and to comment on the proposed changes prior to the Local Plan being finalised for pre-submission (Regulation 19) consultation in 2024.
- 1.10 This report sets out the following next steps on the Local Plan;
- i. Agree a new timetable known as a Local Development Scheme targeting submission of the Local Plan ahead of the Government's deadline 30 June 2025
 - ii. As part of above new timetable carry out community engagement (regulation 18 consultation) 30 October – 12 December 2023; and
 - iii. Set up a task and finish group to look at key issues throughout the preparation of a Regulation 19 plan in 2024

2. Key Issues:

New Local Development Scheme (LDS) and planning reforms

- 2.1 A Local Development Scheme is required under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The Council's current adopted Local Development Scheme (2022) is now out of date. The Council intends to revise the LDS (Appendix 2).
- 2.2 The Government has consulted on a range of major reforms to the planning system and changes to national policy and guidance in recent years. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill formally commenced back in May 2022 is now at an advanced stage².
- 2.3 In tandem with progress on this Bill, Government has consulted separately on Plan-making reforms: consultation on implementation (July 2023, closing 18 October). Through this consultation, the Government has made clear that Local Plans being prepared under the current planning system must be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination by 30 June 2025. Any plan that does not meet this deadline will need to start afresh under the new system. Officers' note that the new LDS proposes Submission of the new Dacorum Local Plan three months prior to this deadline, and recognise that timescales are tight.
- 2.4 If the Council was unable to meet this deadline, it would be unable to adopt a Local Plan until 2028 at the earliest. The implications of this are set out in section 7 of this report.
- 2.5 The Council has been working on a Local Plan since 2017 and has consulted with the community twice since then. The proposed LDS allows the Council to submit a Local Plan under the existing Regulations³, which it has been planning for and have been engaging with the community on.

² The Bill is expected to progress through its third and final reading in the House of Lords before reaching its final stages, including Royal Assent.

³ The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

- 2.6 The Government has not yet set out what the new Local Plan process will be in terms of new Regulations or guidance. On the 25th July 2023, DLUHC published its consultation 'Plan Making Reforms: Consultation on Implementation'. This proposes a 30-month timeframe for Local Plans. This timeframe includes two periods of public consultation (lasting eight weeks and six weeks), three 'gateway assessments' during the preparation of the plan, and a new six-month examination in public. This is considerably less flexible than the current system, and is much more condensed.
- 2.7 In addition to the introduction of a statutory timescale for plans, the consultation proposes:
- Streamlining local plans - Reducing duplication by introducing National Development Management Policies.
 - Digital transformation - including that Plans are produced digitally, rather than as "analogue" (PDF or paper formats).
 - Introducing 'Supplementary Plans' - specifically for producing borough wide design requirements.
- 2.8 This consultation does not include any detail on the provisions of the proposed updated NPPF, the content of new National Development Management Policies or a revised methodology for determining local housing needs. Separate consultation on these matters is expected to come later, although the dates are to be confirmed by DLUHC.
- 2.9 A national, General Election is expected to be held by January 2025 which may have an impact on the new Local Plan process.

Task and Finish Group

- 2.10 As part of the formulation of the Local Plan, its policies and site allocations it is proposed that a Task and Finish group be formed. The purpose of the group would be to review and challenge the proposed overarching strategy, individual policies, site allocations and other key features of the plan prior to a first draft of the document produced for wider consultation.
- 2.11 It is envisaged that the group would highlight strengths and weaknesses of the emerging plan, challenge contentious issues and identify opportunities and solutions. The Task and Finish Group would be set up in accordance with the provisions of the Council's constitution. Details of the programme of meetings will be finalised in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Programming Panel.
- 2.12 Paragraph 6.2 (page 42) of the Dacorum Constitution sets out that the The Chairman or Vice Chairman of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee can request the setting up of a Task and Finish Group to assist the Committee in the carrying out of its specific functions. The procedure for appointing Task and Finish Groups is set out in the Task and Finish Groups Procedure Rules (Part 4 of the Constitution).
- 2.13 Paragraph 2.5 (page 219) sets out that all Task and Finish Groups set up at the request of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall consist of at least six members. Comply with the political balance rules in section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1985 and elect their own Chairman. Task and Finish Groups are informal bodies and shall have no decision-making powers. There is no requirement to have formal agendas or minutes of meetings, although for the purposes of transparency it is recognised a summary note of meetings is advisable.

Next steps for the Local Plan – Content of Regulation 18 consultation

2.14 The purpose of the next Regulation 18 public consultation will be to respond to consultation feedback provided in late 2020/early 2021. Officers have developed a revised strategy that addresses many of the key issues raised as well as considering further evidence. These changes are summarised in turn below.

Key Issue 1 raised by community – Housing Target is too big.

2.15 Context: The community response stated that the Standard Method results in inflated housing targets for the Borough, and that the method did not adequately consider the Borough's constraints such as the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt.

2.16 How officers have responded: The standard method for calculating housing need is currently 1,018 dwellings per year for Dacorum. The Council does not have any evidence at this stage to justify an alternative approach to the standard method figure. However, the borough is constrained by environmental constraints (including the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and planning policies (Green Belt). Officers therefore consider, in line with paragraph 11 (b) of the NPPF, that constraints are an important factor and have reviewed evidence, including the site selection process in light of this.

2.17 The map below summarises the key constraints identified across the borough. The Council has limited control over most of these important designations. Exceptionally, Conservation Areas and the Green Belt are subject to review and updates by the Council. A Green Belt study has already been prepared for the Local Plan, and consulted on previously. It demonstrates that significant areas of the borough perform moderately or strongly against the purposes of the Green Belt.

2.18 The Council's revised approach is to afford greater protections to the Green Belt, alongside other identified constraints. Green Belt matters are presented in further detail later in this section.

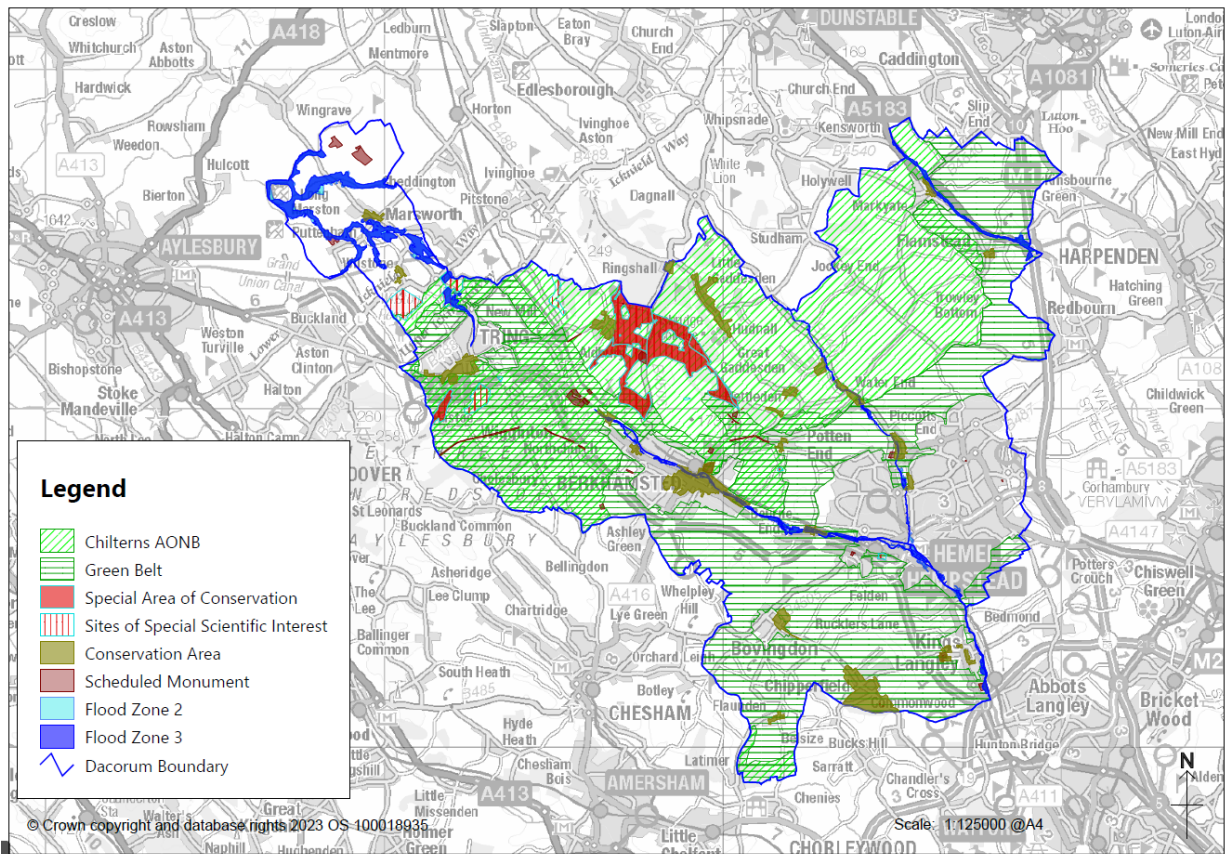


Figure 1: Summary of Key Constraints in Dacorum

- 2.19 At this stage, officers consider it appropriate to consult on a lower housing requirement for the Local Plan. The revised consultation will deliver in the region of 900 dwellings per annum. (c.14,350 dwellings in total between 2024 and 2040).
- 2.20 Officers consider the revised strategy will enable the Council to deliver on a number of key objectives, including in particular the delivery of sustainable new communities and regeneration ambitions for Hemel Hempstead. It will deliver a balanced mix of new housing, genuinely affordable housing, and significant new public open spaces while still protecting the most constrained parts of the Borough.

Key Issue 2 – Urban Capacity not optimised.

- 2.21 Context: A significant number of comments highlighted that not enough had been done concerning optimising the use of urban land.
- 2.22 How officers have responded: Officers have reviewed urban capacity across the Borough. This included a “call for urban / brownfield sites” in 2022. Additional opportunities have been identified at Hemel Hempstead, with capacity for around 500 additional homes to be delivered in the town centre and in Two Waters/Apsley. No major urban/brownfield opportunities have been identified in the other key settlements, including at Berkhamsted and Tring.
- 2.23 The revised strategy also proposes to increase the ‘windfall’ allowance given to sites expected to come forward speculatively in urban areas and elsewhere in the borough. Such sites do not require allocations in the Local Plan and are now expected to contribute just over 3,000 homes in the plan period, an increase of 600 homes when compared to the previous draft Local Plan.

2.24 For context, the following table presents a summary of historic windfall delivery rates for Dacorum since 2006 and on this basis the increased windfall development allowance is considered realistic.

Table 1: Net windfall completions 2006/07 to 2021/22

Year	Total Net Windfall Completions	Total Overall Completions	Windfall as a %
2006/07	290	411	70.6
2007/08	264	390	67.7
2008/09	308	415	74.2
2009/10	188	237	79.3
2010/11	597	600	99.5
2011/12	398	447	89
2012/13	219	290	75.5
2013/14	102	219	46.6
2014/15	190	379	50.1
2015/16	369	660	55.9
2016/17	395	723	54.6
2017/18	288	586	49.1
2018/19	306	557	54.9
2019/20	373	481	77.5
2020/21	458	711	64.4
2021/22	210	801	26.2
Totals	4,955	7,907	62.6

Key Issue 3 – Too much Green Belt growth.

2.25 Context: A number of comments received at the last consultation raised the issue that there was disproportionate growth proposed for Berkhamsted and Tring. Generally, comments emphasised that the previous Local Plan placed too much reliance on land to be release from the Green Belt.

2.26 How officers have responded: Officers have revisited evidence on Green Belt. The revised strategy seeks to significantly reduce growth allocated on Green Belt land for most settlements across the borough. Importantly, the revised strategy seeks where possible to protect land that performs strongly against Green Belt purposes⁴. The following table summarises the revisions to the draft strategy for housing growth that was consulted on in 2020.

Table 2: Summary of Revisions to the Strategy

	Previous draft strategy (2020)	Revised Strategy (2023)
Local Plan period	2020 – 2038 (18 years)	2024 – 2040 (16 years)
Governments Standard Method figure for calculating housing need	922 dwellings per annum	1,018 dwellings per annum

⁴ Paragraph 138 of the NPPF lists the five purposes of the green belt, which are to a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Proposed Housing Supply in Local Plan	16,899 homes c.940 dwellings per annum	14,345 homes c.900 dwellings per annum
	Number of Homes	Number of Homes
Supply for Hemel Hempstead	10,688	11,742 (↑10%)
With Planning Permission	1,873	1,983
Allocations	7,105	7,592
Windfall allowance	1,710	2,167
Supply for Berkhamsted	2,236	1,264 (↓43%)
With Planning Permission	143	139
Allocations	1,876	850
Windfall allowance	217	10%
Supply for Tring	2,731	522 (↓81%)
With Planning Permission	313	89
Allocations	2,274	250
Windfall allowance	114	183
Supply for Bovington	241	230 (↓5%)
With Planning Permission	27	9
Allocations	190	190
Windfall allowance	24	31
Supply for Kings Langley	274	68 (↓75%)
With Planning Permission	71	7
Allocations	155	0
Windfall allowance	48	61
Supply for Markyate	215	53 (↓75%)
With Planning Permission	8	2
Allocations	183	20
Windfall allowance	24	31
Supply for Rest of the Borough	514	466 (↓9%)
With Planning Permission	273	161
Allocations	0	0
Windfall allowance	241	305

2.27 The table below summarises the key changes to the strategy with regards to Green Belt land:

Table 3: Summary information on Green Belt allocations

	Previous draft strategy (2020)	Revised Strategy (2023)
Total area of Green Belt in Dacorum	10,634 hectares	10,634 hectares
Total area of housing allocations in Green Belt (red line boundary)	661.38 hectares (6.2% of total)	453.9 hectares (↓31%) (4.3% of total)
Developable area - land proposed to be removed from the Green Belt	661.38 hectares (6.2% of total)	294.92 hectares (↓55%) (2.8% of total)
Draft Green Belt allocations proposed	16	4

	Previous draft strategy (2020)	Revised Strategy (2023)
Total homes on Green Belt land:		
Hemel Hempstead	5,500 (up to 2050)	5,500 (up to 2050)
Berkhamsted	1,750	850
Tring	2,200	250
Bovingdon	150	150
Kings Langley	145	0
Markyate	150	0

- 2.28 The revised allocations in the Green Belt will be expected to deliver more than just housing. These strategic allocations are proposed to deliver new land for employment, community and retail uses, public green space, transport improvements and infrastructure (such as new schools and health provision).
- 2.29 At **Hemel Hempstead**, The Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) Programme is an ambitious proposal to transform Hemel Hempstead through the regeneration of the existing town and delivery of new housing and infrastructure - providing a sustainable approach for growth, in accordance with the Town Country Planning Association (TCPA) Garden City Principles, and enshrined also in the Hemel Spatial Vision.
- 2.30 In total, the programme will deliver a total of 11,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs by 2050 across St Albans District and Dacorum Borough Council. The transformation will include an extended Business Park and a regenerated and transformed town centre for Hemel Hempstead and further new housing, open space and infrastructure across the rest of the town.
- 2.31 The Spatial Vision for Hemel Garden Communities was published in 2021 following the designation of Hemel Hempstead as a Garden Town in 2019. The Spatial Vision focuses on the creation of a greener, more connected new town, which builds on its existing strengths, and the heritage and culture of Hemel Hempstead and its New Town legacy:
- ‘Hemel Garden Communities will create new neighbourhoods and transform existing ones and the wider area, building on the best of its heritage and culture to become a greener, more connected New Town. The vision is organised into four thematic pillars, all of which reinforce the aspirations to promote healthy lifestyles and respond to the climate crisis. Hemel Garden Communities will be home to inclusive, integrated neighbourhoods connected by a green network, and thoughtfully designed places with engaged communities, all underpinned by digital connectivity, a self-sustaining economy and pioneering green technology driven by Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter (Herts IQ)’.*
- 2.32 The North Hemel (HH01) growth area is expected to deliver beyond the Plan period (2024-2040). Officers recognise that the draft allocation is particularly sensitive in Green Belt and landscape terms and therefore up to 40% of the area designated for Hemel Garden Communities could be retained as Green Belt to deliver open space or biodiversity enhancements. Additional technical work is being undertaken to understand the precise level of mitigation required and will inform the final version of the Local Plan in due course.
- 2.33 At **Berkhamsted**, the number of recommended allocations on Green Belt land has reduced from nine to just one (South of Berkhamsted). The recommended site performs weakly against the main purposes of the Green Belt.

- 2.34 At **Tring**, the number of recommended allocations on Green Belt land has reduced from three to just one (Dunsley Farm). The recommended site performs moderately against the main purposes of the Green Belt but only half of the previous allocation is now recommended for development. The remaining half will be retained in the Green Belt. Sequentially, there is no other land that performs weaker in Green Belt terms at Tring.
- 2.35 At **Bovingdon**, the number of recommended allocations on Green Belt land remains the same (one). Following discussions with the Parish Council, officers consider that the draft allocation at Grange Farm will deliver a number of benefits for the village that align with the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. Grange Farm performs the weakest against the main purposes of the Green Belt.
- 2.36 At **Kings Langley and Markyate**, no Green Belt allocations are recommended. Previously, one such allocation was proposed at each settlement (c.150 dwellings each).

Structure of the Regulation 18 Consultation

- 2.37 Appendix 1 sets out a draft print version of the Regulation 18 consultation. This consultation will be hosted online using the Council's new corporate engagement platform 'Let's Talk Dacorum'; however, the 'printer-friendly' version will be provided, in the first instance, for those without digital access. This document contains the same text as the digital platform will.
- 2.38 Appendix 1 sets out the draft text to be included on the consultation website and is structured as follows:
- a. Introduction:
 - i. 'Dacorum Borough Council is Preparing a new Local Plan': This sets out the overarching aim of the consultation, its scope and how it links with the previous 'Emerging Strategy for Growth' consultation.
 - ii. 'More about this consultation': This includes an explanation of the Local Plan process, where Dacorum currently sits, the purpose of this consultation and a 'you said, we did' section on the key issues raised by the community in 2020.

Please note that on our digital site this information will be provided as a video (production work in progress). The plain text version currently contains a placeholder link to the video, and a plain text version of the voice over.
 - b. Settlements:

This section includes the changes proposed to the strategy for the six key settlements, and for the wider countryside. Each sub-section is structured as follows:

 - i. 'More about the settlement': the context and location, and why the changes have been proposed.
 - ii. 'Changes to the strategy for the settlement': This sets out the difference with regards to housing growth, following by a summary of the proposed benefits where relevant. This is then broken down into the changes to the housing supply, i.e.: Local Plan Proposed Allocations, windfall allowance and sites with planning permission.
 - c. Appendix A: Site Requirements:

Appendices A1-A7 set out a more detailed schedule of Local Plan allocations for each settlement, these tables set out the key development and land use requirements, not detailed site requirements.

Please note that on our digital site this information will be provided within interactive maps for each settlement. PDF Maps have been included for reference within Appendix 1.

Methods to be used for Regulation 18 consultation

- 2.39 The consultation will be undertaken in compliance with the Council’s adopted SCI, and will be open for comments for 6 weeks.
- 2.40 The focus of the consultation will be through the new corporate online engagement platform – ‘Let’s talk Dacorum’. This platform, hosted on ‘Engagement HQ’ software, delivers a more user-friendly and interactive experience with the aim to enable more people to review and comment online using smart phones or tablets. This will be complemented by a wide-ranging communications strategy that seeks to re-establish face-to-face engagement events while also seeking to encourage other hard-to-reach groups to get involved in the plan making process.
- 2.41 As well as engaging residents and businesses, the consultation is intended to serve as a starting point for detailed conversations with infrastructure providers to discuss requirements for the revised strategy. This will ensure an effective Infrastructure Delivery Plan is produced for when the Local Plan is due to be finalised in 2024.
- 2.42 The Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, will oversee and finalise the details of the consultation schedule.

Evidence base behind the Local Plan

- 2.43 The upcoming consultation will focus on feedback from the community on the changes made to the Local Plan since 2021. Much of the existing evidence used to inform the previous draft Local Plan in 2020 remains relevant for this consultation and is available on the Council’s website⁵. Notable evidence that is relevant to the upcoming consultation includes the following:

- Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report⁶
- Site Selection Topic Paper
- DBC Site Assessment Study
- Urban Capacity Study
- Chilterns Beechwoods SAC Mitigation Strategy⁷
- Green Belt Review Stage 1, 2 and 3 studies (Topic Paper – Green Belt summarises these)
- Landscape Sensitivity Study
- South West Herts Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Local Plan Strategic Transport Modelling Report / 2036 Scenario
- Berkhamsted and Tring Sustainable Transport Study

⁵ The evidence base for the 2020 Emerging Strategy for Growth Consultation is available at <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan/technical-work-for-the-early-partial-review>

⁶ This is currently available separately at <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan>

⁷ This is currently available separately at [https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation-\(sac\)---mitigation-strategy](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation/chilterns-beechwoods-special-area-of-conservation-(sac)---mitigation-strategy)

- Indoor Leisure Facilities Needs Assessment
- Leisure Facilities Strategy
- Open Space Study
- Playing Pitch Strategy

2.44 New evidence that will be published alongside the revised strategy for growth will include:

- Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report (Update)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (Update)
- Site Selection / Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (Update)
- Viability Study for the Local Plan (New)

2.45 Following consultation and taking account of responses received, additional evidence will be progressed/ updated ahead of the Local Plan being finalised for Regulation 19 in autumn 2024. This will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Updated housing and employment needs studies (including joint studies with other South West Hertfordshire authorities)
- Updated transport evidence, including sustainable transport studies and transport modelling
- Updated draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Integrated Impact Assessment (an expanded version of the Sustainability Appraisal)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Heritage Impact Assessments for large scale allocations

Next stage after Consultation with community (preparing for Regulation 19)

2.46 Regulation 18 of the 2012 Regulations requires the local planning authority to notify relevant bodies and individuals on the content of the proposed new Local Plan, and invite these to make representations on what they believe the new plan should contain. The bodies and individuals are specified in Reg. 18(2) and are set out in more detail within the adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

2.47 Regulation 18 specifies that the Council must take into account any representation made during the Regulation 18 consultation. Therefore, the Council will produce a 'consultation report', summarising the feedback from the community consultation in line with the provisions of the SCI, and present this to the committee in spring 2024. Officers will also have regard to key issues raised from the previous consultation where they relate to other policies and sections of the draft Local Plan published at that time.

2.48 The next stage of Local Plan preparation, after this consultation, is for the Council to prepare a pre-submission draft of the Local Plan and invite representations under Regulation 19 of the 2012 Regulations. Officers will work collaboratively with members through the Task and Finish Group to develop the final draft 'pre-submission' version of the Local Plan, and formally publish this in accordance with Regulation 19 in October 2024. At this stage, stakeholders are invited to submit formal representations on the plan's content, before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination. All representations made at that stage will be considered by an Independent Inspector.

- 2.49 The Local Plan needs to be prepared in accordance with current Government guidance. To be found "sound" the Local Plan needs to comply with the NPPF, specifically paragraph 35, which requires Plans to be:
- a) *Positively prepared – based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements;*
 - b) *Justified – an appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;*
 - c) *Effective – deliverable over its period based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and*
 - d) *Consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development.*
- 2.50 A number of iterations of Sustainability Appraisal/ Strategic Environmental Assessment has informed the revised strategy, to assess emerging proposals against a number of economic, social and environmental objectives and to identify what measures could be included to offset adverse impacts. The Plan is also subject to an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 that considers the impact of the Plan on protected sites such as the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC.
- 2.51 Officers will continue to develop the evidence base underpinning the wider Local Plan and take into account the findings from these. Discussions with relevant bodies under the 'Duty to Cooperate' will continue to ensure that key cross-boundary issues are resolved as far as possible. Before finalising the Plan, any changes to legislation, planning policy and/or Government guidance will need to be considered.
- 2.52 The content of the pre-submission version of the Local Plan will be reviewed at the proposed Task and Finish Group meetings alongside any new evidence produced, before it is published in accordance with Regulation 19. An approximate schedule of milestone dates is set out below;
- **Task and Finish Group:** Regular T&F sessions beginning in 2023, running until the publication.
 - **Regulation 18 Response Report:** March 2024
 - **Formal Approvals Process:** September 2024
 - **Regulation 19 Consultation:** October – November 2024.

3. Options and alternatives considered

- 3.1 Do nothing – stop work on Local Plan. Officers do not recommend this option as it means the Council will have limited control over where future homes, jobs and infrastructure will be located. This option will likely increase speculative planning applications on land currently designated in the Green Belt and a rise in challenging (and expensive) planning appeals. Crucially, it would not be planning effectively for the future needs of our communities or environment.
- 3.2 Alternative proposed vision/strategy - the preparation of the Local Plan involved the reviewing and testing of a range of growth options and scenarios. Alternative options were developed and presented at earlier stages in the plan making process (Issues and Options 2017; Emerging Strategy for Growth 2020). The revised strategy has been developed and refined over time as new evidence emerged. The proposals currently recommended by officers represent an appropriate strategy for the borough in light of alternatives.
- 3.3 Further delay for Levelling Up Regeneration Bill and new plan making process - officers have not identified any benefits in halting plan preparation until autumn 2024, and would associate the majority

of the risks identified below in section 7 would be relevant. In addition, the new plan making process is yet to be defined and with that carries many uncertainties and risks as a result. , (potentially regulatory) 30 month timescale will be interrupted by purdah with the Local Elections in May 2027.

4. Consultation

4.1 Officers from the following services have been consulted during the preparation of the Local Plan;

- a) Strategic Leadership Team
- b) Development Management
- c) Environmental Health
- d) Environmental Services
- e) Strategic Housing
- f) Housing Development
- g) Commercial Assets and Property Development
- h) Community Partnerships
- i) Hertfordshire County Council (lead authority for highways; education; health and policing)

4.2 The Councils Senior Leadership Team and all members have been briefed on the new timetable and content of the consultation.

5. Financial and value for money implications:

Financial

5.1 None directly associated with this report – the Local Plan is funded from current and approved budgets.

Value for money

5.2 The Local Plan is being prepared in line with the approved budget. Spending is regularly monitored against forecast and any external consultants are appointed through a formal procurement process where cost and value for money considerations were reflected in the scoring criteria.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase 2004 (as amended) (“the 2004 Act”) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) (“the 2012 Regulations”) set out the requirements and the statutory procedure for the preparation of a Local Plan.

7. Risk implications

7.1 The Local Plan has its own detailed risk assessment and this is contained in the Local Development Scheme. This is regularly monitored in accordance with the Council’s programme management procedures.

7.2 If the Council does not undertake a further Regulation 18 consultation at this stage, the community and other key stakeholders will not be provided with an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the spatial strategy, prior to the Local Plan being finalised.

7.3 If the Regulation 18 consultation is delayed, there is a significant risk that the Council will not meet the deadline of the 30th June 2025. This would result in considerable delay to adoption, as the Council would

be required to start again under the new system. If the Council has to restart from the 30th June 2025, then it would be unable to adopt a new Local Plan until spring 2028.

7.4 The Council currently has a housing supply of 2.19 years, and the Core Strategy (adopted in 2013) is over ten years old. Hence, the recommendation to agree a new timetable for delivery of the Local Plan ahead of the new process and transition arrangements.

7.5 By not progressing the new Local Plan, the Council will ultimately have less control of its own planning function (as the current plan is already considerably out of date). This will result in an increase in 'planning by appeal' where speculative applications are submitted, including on land in the Green Belt. There are a number of significant risks associated with this approach, all leading to negative impacts on communities:

- a) Delay to adoption increases vulnerability to predatory applications.
- b) This significantly compromises the Council's ability to make planning decisions based on local circumstances; and
- c) This reduced the council's power to refuse poor quality development proposals.
- d) It would inhibit the delivery of wider corporate objectives and sustainable development (out of date policies on climate change, poorly coordinated infrastructure delivery, and reduced levels of affordable housing).
- e) This is particularly the case for areas such as Hemel Town Centre, where significant regeneration and implementation of the new Town Centre Strategy would conflict with the existing, dated policies of the Core Strategy.
- f) Any bids for external funding would be compromised and investors could lose confidence because of a lack of certainty.
- g) Communities will likely become confused and disenfranchised as a result, as their previous consultation responses would no longer hold weight within the new process.

7.6 There are also a number of risks associated with future service delivery within the organisation:

- a) It will add costs and delays to the planning service.
- b) Planning appeals associated with predatory Green Belt applications draw resources away from delivering other priorities.
- c) It will result in significant amount of abortive work, as the Council has been preparing the emerging Local Plan for c. 7 years.
- d) Preparing a 'new style' local plan would require extensive updated evidence; this will result in considerable resource and financial impacts.

8. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

Community Impact Assessment

8.1. A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) was prepared to support the preparation and consultation of the Emerging Strategy for Growth, and was entered into the CIA database prior to the Cabinet meeting on the 20th October 2020. This document has been reviewed, and it was deemed that no major changes are required. The CIA is appended to this report (Appendix 3).

Equalities

8.2. The Council is undertaking an 'Integrated Impact Assessment' of the Local Plan, including Equalities Impact Assessment. This will consider the equalities impacts of the new Local Plan in detail as the

document is finalised. This assessment will be scrutinised at the Local Plan examination by an independent inspector.

Human Rights

- 8.3. There are no implications for Human Rights relating directly to this report. Participation in the statutory consultation is optional, and free text boxes will be provided to capture all feedback. This consultation would not contravene respect for private and family life, home and correspondence, freedom of thought, belief and religion, freedom of expression and protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms.

9. Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

- 9.1. The Dacorum Local Plan, once adopted, will deliver multiple benefits relating to climate change, health and wellbeing and community safety. The vision of the plan is centred on creating sustainable development and as a result, the proposals within the document set out the mechanisms for achieving this. The Council is not proposing to consult on draft policies at this stage. It will be a topic for the Task and Finish group to engage on the development of relevant policies.
- 9.2. The Council is undertaking an 'Integrated Impact Assessment' of the Local Plan, including Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment and Health Impact Assessment. This will consider the social, economic and environmental impacts of the new Local Plan in detail as the document is finalised. As stated in paragraph 8.2, this assessment will be scrutinised alongside the emerging Local Plan at the examination in public by the independent inspector. Overall, once adopted the Dacorum Local Plan will improve the overall sustainability of the area and secure improvements to biodiversity.

10. Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

- 10.1 There are no implications directly associated with health & safety and HR/OD arising from this report.
- 10.2 A number of proposed allocations are within Dacorum's ownership (HH05 Market Square, HH06 Civic Centre Site, HH17 Cupid Green Depot, and HH23 Old Town/Cherry Bounce (previously allocated as 'LA2'). Dacorum also retains some land interests on the HH01 North Hemel and the HH04 Paradise / Wood Lane sites). These proposed allocations are retained, following a review of the strategy proposed in 2020. The Housing Development team and the Commercial Estates Team have continued to be consulted throughout the process of developing the revised strategy.
- 10.3 Consultation with internal departments, such as waste services, will be undertaken as the pre-submission draft Local Plan is developed, to understand the impacts of the revised strategy on Dacorum's assets prior to the policies being finalised.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 In summary, it is recommended to agree a new Local Development Scheme (timetable) for the Local Plan, to complete a regulation 18 consultation in autumn 2023 feeding back to the community the changes made since the previous consultation which closed in 2021. A draft a regulation 19 Local Plan will be prepared ready for consultation in autumn 2024 and submitted to the Secretary of State ahead of 30 June 2025.

11.2 The feedback from the Regulation 18 consultation will be reported to the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny in early spring 2024.