

# DACORUM

## URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

### BOROUGH ASSESSMENT



**Final report**  
**January 2006**



urban  
practitioners



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## INTRODUCTION

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

Dacorum Borough Council has commissioned Urban Practitioners to produce an Urban Design Assessment for Dacorum's three towns - Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring - and three large villages - Kings Langley, Bovington and Markyate. The Urban Design Assessment will assist in the formulation of specific urban design policies within the Council's new Local Development Framework and subsequent supplementary planning documents. Results from the study will be used to inform the Core Strategy.

### WHAT IS AN 'URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT'?

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has defined urban design 'as the art of making places for people. It includes the way places work and matters such as community safety, as well as how they look. It concerns the connections between people and places, movement and urban form, nature and the built fabric, and the processes for ensuring successful villages, towns and cities' (from *By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System*). The Urban Design Assessment Criteria section of this report describes in greater detail the criteria Urban Practitioners has employed in assessing the towns and large villages of Dacorum. This study is being undertaken concurrently with and is complementary to other work, including: - Urban Capacity - Employment Floorspace - Indoor and

Outdoor Leisure Facilities - Open Space  
- Retail Capacity - Urban Nature  
Conservation studies.

### STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This report sets out the borough-wide context for Dacorum, providing an introduction to the individual town and village urban design assessments and setting out the urban design criteria against which the settlements of Dacorum will be assessed. The planning policy context is then laid out considering the documents which have a bearing on the Dacorum Urban Design Assessments and this is followed by a review of policy, which highlights gaps in current policy.



## URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Urban Design as defined by Jonathan Barnett, author of Introduction to Urban Design, is 'the process of giving physical design direction to urban growth, conservation and change. It is understood to include landscape as well as buildings, preservation and new construction, and rural areas as well as cities.' (*Introduction to Urban Design*)

The field has grown tremendously over the course of the last forty years as a result of a number of coinciding changes. Kevin Lynch noted that Urban Design 'blossomed in the wake of the city-planning field, which [is] moving from purely physical concerns to a focus on economic and social policy.' The development of new statistical modelling techniques for such issues as traffic flow meant less focus on the physical environment. Simultaneously there has been recognition of the importance of both historic and natural environments within urban and rural settings, triggering the demand for an interdisciplinary approach to developing the built environment.

The intention of this report is to understand the major urban design issues confronting each large village and town that will inform decisions relating to potential development, conservation and change. The criteria relevant to these decisions have been divided into five major categories, as seen below. We have analysed each criteria through writing, photographic study, mapping and diagramming

### MAKING PLACES (MP)

Each of the towns and large villages being assessed has its own distinct character, and the first set of criteria focuses on the key features that make each place unique. The criteria recognise that aspects of both the built and natural environment are significant in forming a town or village's identity and sense of place.

#### MP1 MATERIALS AND TEXTURES

A photographic study of distinctive and typical materials and textures.

#### MP2 LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

A map of listed buildings and Conservation Areas.

#### MP3 BUILDING HEIGHTS

A diagram of town or village centre building heights to provide a sense of scale.

#### MP4 DENSITY

A photographic study of typical building types in the residential areas of the settlement. This study will be followed by a more rigorous calculation and analysis of building densities in the final strategy.

The classification for densities is based on Government guidance, reflecting advice in PPG3:

- Very low	< 30 dph
- Low	30 - 40 dph
- Medium	40 - 50 dph
- High	50 - 60 dph
- Very high	> 60 dph

### MP5 TOPOGRAPHY

A diagram highlighting the topographical changes across the village of Kings Langley.

### CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE (CE)

The key criteria within 'Continuity and Enclosure' consider the various ways in which the street network, building frontages, and open spaces contribute to coherence and vitality. This category stresses the interconnection between building, street, and street network design on street life.

#### CE1 MORPHOLOGY

A diagram showing the basic morphology of the settlement to clarify permeability within the village and within the village centre.

#### CE2 BUILDING LINES/SETBACKS/GAPS

A diagram of the town or village centre to understand the conditions of the existing street building line.

#### CE3 BUILDING FRONTS/BACK ORIENTATION

A diagram of the settlement centre to understand the active and passive effect that buildings have on the high street.

#### CE4 DESIGNATED OPEN SPACE

A mapping of the Kings Langley's designated open spaces.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS (MC)

The key criteria within 'Making Connections' explicitly analyses the movements within the village and the ease with which this circulation occurs.

#### MCI LAND USE

A diagram showing the key land uses within the village centre with text describing the effect on movements and desire lines.

#### MC2 CIRCULATION DEMAND AND LINKAGES

A diagram showing the predominant pedestrian and vehicular movements, with emphasis added for paths with the greatest demand. (Information gathered through both observation and mapping at the consultation events).

#### MC3 OFF-STREET AND ON-STREET VEHICLE PARKING

A photographic study of practices in off-street and on-street parking.



## URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### MC4 WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

A photographic study of local signage.

### QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM (QPR)

This assessment category considers the impact of various elements of the environment, including both streetscape and natural elements, on the sense of security, safety, and overall coherence of the village.

#### QPR1 STREETScape ELEMENTS

A photographic study of streetscape features, such as lighting, shopfronts, and fences/railings.

#### QPR2 NATURAL ELEMENTS IN OPEN SPACE

A photographic study of natural features.

#### QPR3 SAFETY AND SECURITY

A photographic study of spaces and features that impact on perceptions and experiences of personal safety and security.

### LEGIBILITY (LE)

The key criteria within 'Making Connections' explicitly analyses the movements within the settlement and the ease with which this circulation occurs.

### LI VIEWS, VISTAS AND GATEWAYS

A diagram showing the topography in relationship to key views, vistas (view corridors) and gateways.

### L2 EDGES, PATHS, LANDMARKS AND CHARACTER AREAS

A legibility diagram presenting an analysis of current conditions in terms of primary paths, major edge conditions, significant landmarks, and surrounding character areas.





## BOROUGH-WIDE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES - LARGE VILLAGES

	CRITERIA	GUIDELINE
MAKING PLACES	MP1: Materials and Textures	The use of local materials and styles should be encouraged. Particular materials noted as local to Dacorum villages include red brick, knapped flint, and slate and clay roof tiles. Many of the materials introduced from the 1950s onwards - such as wood siding or modern wirecut bricks - have been criticised by local residents.
	MP2: Listed buildings and Conservation Areas	The current listed buildings should be protected, in terms of their physical upkeep, the treatment of buildings and sites in their immediate vicinity and view corridors to them. Conservation Areas should strive for a consistency of character which extends to streetscape elements and furniture.
	MP3: Building Heights	The villages of Dacorum should generally be constrained to less than three storeys, with the exception of special consideration sites that add to the legibility of the village. Low building heights are critical for maintaining village character.
	MP4: Density and Building Typology	Villages should attempt to create a general gradient of density extending from a village centre zone (high) to an inner zone (medium to high) to a semi-rural zone (low to medium) to a rural/peripheral zone (very low to low). The application of local building typologies would generally flow from this, such as the use of terraces for higher density areas, semi-detached for low-medium density areas and detached buildings for very low-low zones.
	MP5: Topographical studies	Dacorum has several river valleys coursing through it, and topography has had a significant impact on the morphology of the villages, creating distinct street patterns and key views. Development within the villages should continue to accentuate views from the valley sides into the village centres.
CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE	CE1: Morphology	The river valley topography has generally led to a street morphology with High Streets running parallel to the valley, distributor roads running up the valley sides perpendicular to the High Street, and residential access roads branching off from the distributor roads. This morphology should be continued where possible. The use of cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets should be minimised.
	CE2: Village Centre Morphology	The existing street morphology should accentuate the primacy of the High Street and the distributor routes that extend off from it. Residential access roads, particularly cul-de-sacs and dead-end roads, extending from the High Street, should be avoided.
	CE3: Building Lines and Pavements	Consistency in the building lines along each street should be emphasised. Generally, the village centre zone should have minimal setbacks, the inner zone should have, depending on the given street, minimal or medium setbacks, the semi-rural and peripheral zones should have medium to large setbacks.
	CE4: Building Orientation	Building entries should typically face the street, both to create an increased sense of security and added vitality to the public realm. New developments which result in the backs of houses onto primary or district distributor roads should be avoided.
	CE5: Patterns of Open Space	Houses should have rear gardens that back onto other rear gardens as a means of maximising wildlife habitat, privacy and sunlight. New developments should consider the context when determining if front gardens are individual or communal (as individual front gardens are often critical to the character of an area).

Note: Some of the recommendations require the input of agencies external to the Borough Council.

## BOROUGH-WIDE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES - LARGE VILLAGES

	CRITERIA	GUIDELINE
MAKING CONNECTIONS	MC1: Land Use	Non-residential village centre land uses should be protected and enhanced where possible. The potential for flats above shops should be considered in village centres.
	MC2: Circulation, Demand and Linkages	The street hierarchy should consider the High Street within the village centre as a local distributor which encourages pedestrian activity and discourages traffic using the village as a bypass to avoid crowded 'A' roads. The High Streets outside of the village centres should be considered primary distributors for residents to leave the village. District distributors (also referred to as a secondary route) should generally extend from the High Street and primary distributors. Residential access roads (also referred to as tertiary routes) should generally branch off from the district distributors and not the High Street. Footpaths represent important circulation paths in the villages, and cycling routes should be encouraged.
	MC3: Parking	On-street parking should typically be avoided for primary and district distributors and encouraged for local distributors (High Streets) and residential access roads when street widths permit it and it does not impede on the rural character. Newer developments may consider communal on-site parking, particularly if located off of district distributors.
QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM	QPR1: Streetscape Elements	Streetscape elements should be used to reinforce the difference between the different urban design zones, the presence of a street hierarchy through traffic calming treatments, and the distinctiveness of Conservation Areas
	QPR2: Designated Open Land	Strong footpath links into the Green Belt should be encouraged.
LEGIBILITY	LE1: Vistas, Views, Gateways	Vistas into and from the Green Belt should be recognised and protected. View corridors along the High Streets and the Grand Union Canal and toward key orientation points should also be recognised and protected. Clear gateways into the villages should be established and marked by such features as gateway signage, key buildings and changes in streetscape treatment. .
	LE2: Edges, Paths, Nodes, Landmarks, Districts	Landmarks and districts should be clarified through co-ordinated streetscape treatment. Key nodes and gateways should be established.

Note: Some of the recommendations require the input of agencies external to the Borough Council.

## BOROUGH-WIDE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES - TOWNS

	CRITERIA	GUIDELINE
MAKING PLACES	MP1: Materials and Textures	The use of local materials and styles should be encouraged. Particular materials noted as local to Dacorum towns include red brick, knapped flint and ceramic roof tiles. There should be opportunities for high-quality modern materials and styles, particularly with regard to commercial and civic buildings within the town centres.
	MP2: Listed buildings and Conservation Areas	The current listed buildings should be protected, in terms of their physical upkeep, the treatment of buildings and sites in their immediate vicinity and view corridors to them. Conservation Areas should strive for a consistency of character which extends to streetscape elements and furniture.
	MP3: Building Heights	The Dacorum towns should generally be constrained to four storeys or less, with the exception of the Hemel Hempstead town centre
	MP4: Density and Building Type	The Dacorum towns should strive to create mixed use town centres creating high densities with good quality flats above shops. There are opportunities to increase densities on larger sites (over 0.35hectares) which are in close proximity to shops, services or transit stops.
	MP5: Topographical studies	Dacorum has several river valleys coursing through it, and topography has had a significant impact on the morphology of the villages, creating distinct street patterns and key views. Development within the towns should continue to accentuate views from the valley sides into the town centres.
CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE	CE1: Morphology	The town morphology should emphasis vehicular and pedestrian permeability within a clean street hierarchy (see circulation, demand and linkages). Residential footprints should not be too massive, facilitating permeability and future flexibility. Street design which establishes narrow 'blocks' which allow fronts onto access rods and force backs of houses onto primary or district distributors should be avoided
	CE2:Town Centre Morphology	Town centres should be highly permeable and the existing street morphology should accentuate the primacy of the High Street and the distributor routes that extend off from it. Residential access roads, particularly cul-de-sacs and dead-end roads, extending from the High Street, should be avoided.
	CE3: Building Lines	Consistency in the building lines along each street should be emphasised. Generally, the town centre zone should have minimal setbacks, the inner zone should have, depending on the given street, minimal or medium setbacks, the semi-rural and peripheral zones should have medium to large setbacks. Residential buildings along primary or district distributors many have increased setbacks to proved distance from through traffic.
	CE4: Building Orientation	Building entries should typically face the street, both to create increased sense of security and added vitality to the public realm. New developments which result in the backs of houses onto primary or district distributor roads should be avoided. As described in the morphology guidelines, developments which result in fronts along access roads and backs along primary or district distributors should be avoided.
	CE5: Patterns of open space	Houses should have rear gardens that back onto other rear gardens as a means of maximising wildlife habitat, privacy and sunlight. New developments should consider the context when determining if front gardens are individual or communal (as individual front gardens are often critical to the character of an area).

Note; Some of the recommendations require the input of agencies external to the Borough Council.



## BOROUGH-WIDE URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES - TOWNS

	CRITERIA	GUIDELINE
MAKING CONNECTIONS	MC1: Land Use	Mixed use town centres should be encouraged and residential uses based around retail sheds should be explored. The local centres in Hemel Hempstead should be maintained where possible and corner shop retail axes could be explored outside the town centres.
	MC2: Circulation, Demand and Linkages	The street hierarchy should consider the High Street within the village centre as a local distributor which encourages pedestrian activity and discourages traffic using the village as a bypass to avoid crowded 'A' roads. The High Streets outside of the village centres should be considered primary distributors for residents to leave the village. District distributors (also referred to as a secondary route) should generally extend from the High Street and primary distributors. Residential access roads (also referred to as tertiary routes) should generally branch off from the district distributors and not the High Street. Footpaths represent important circulation paths in the villages, and cycling routes should be encouraged.
	MC3: Parking	On-street parking should typically be avoided for primary and district distributors and encouraged for local distributors (High Streets) and residential access roads when street widths permit it and it does not impede on the rural character. Newer developments may consider communal on-site parking, particularly if located off of district distributors.
	MC4: Wayfinding Signage	Wayfinding signage should be applied consistently throughout the towns as a way of indicating places of interest, connections to open land and the presence of a clean street hierarchy.
QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM	QPR1: Streetscape Elements	Streetscape elements should be used to reinforce the difference between the different urban design zones, the presence of a street hierarchy through traffic calming treatments and the distinctiveness of Conservation Areas.
	QPR2: Designated open land	Footpaths that connect to open land in the Green Belt should be protected and developed. Large scale new developments should provide connections to open land, and if particularly large, new designated open land.
LEGIBILITY	LE1: Vistas, Views, Gateways	Vistas into and from the Green Belt should be protected and a designated buffer along the Green Belt should be established to protect against a high-rise development. View corridors along the High Streets and the Grand Union Canal and toward key orientation points should be recognised and protected. Clear gateways into the town centres should be established and marked by gateway signage, key buildings and changes in streetscape treatments. Key viewpoints within the towns should be established and integrated into the design review process.
	LE2: Edges, Paths, Nodes, Landmarks, Districts	Landmarks and districts should be clarified through co-ordinated streetscape treatment. Key nodes and gateways should be established.

Note: Some of the recommendations require the input of agencies external to the Borough Council.

## POLICY CONTEXT

The urban design assessment of Dacorum Borough's three towns, Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring and the large villages of Bovingdon, Kings Langley and Markyate will assist in the formulation of specific urban design policies within the Council's new Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will form the policy basis against which planning applications will be assessed. This section sets out a review of the existing national, regional and local policy context, and has been used to inform the preparation of the urban design assessments. Policy specifically relating to the individual settlements will be incorporated into the town and village reports.

## NATIONAL GUIDANCE

Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and their replacements Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) are prepared by the government after public consultation to explain statutory provisions and provide guidance to local authorities and others on planning policy and the operation of the planning system. They also explain the relationship between planning policies and other policies which have an important bearing on issues of development and land use.

The issue of design is covered primarily in PPS1, though most PPGs provide some guidance on design:

### PPG1: GENERAL POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES (FEBRUARY 2005)

PPS1 sets out guidance on the role of design considerations in planning, emphasising that good design is a key aim. Planning policies should promote high quality design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. The PPS highlights how good design is integral to good planning in delivering safe, inclusive and successful communities.

In addition to outlining guidance on design, PPS1 sets out the Government's commitment to sustainable development and recommends that development plans should ensure that sustainable development is pursued in an integrated manner, in line with the principles for sustainable development.

Community involvement is noted as an essential element in delivering sustainable development and creating sustainable and safe communities.

The provision of improved access for all to jobs, health, education, shops, leisure and community facilities, open space, sport and recreation is highlighted. It is noted that this can be addressed by ensuring that new development is located where everyone can access services or facilities on foot, bicycle or public transport rather than having to rely on access by car.

### PPG3: HOUSING (MARCH 2000)

PPG3 calls for high quality design, landscaping and open space in housing development and stresses the value of development briefs in raising design standards.

The priorities identified within Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 highlight the Government's aim to promote more sustainable patterns of development and make better use of previously-developed land. It considers that new housing and residential environments should be well designed and should make a significant contribution to promoting urban renaissance and improving quality of life.

Good design in new housing developments should be promoted in order to create attractive, high quality living environments which in their design, layout and allocation of space create a sense of community. Design considerations must be informed by the townscape and landscape of the wider locality. The local pattern of streets and spaces, building traditions, materials and ecology should all help to determine the character and identity of a development. Local authorities should encourage places and spaces designed with the needs of people in mind and which respect and enhance the local character. Design should take account of public health, crime prevention and community safety and focus upon the needs of the pedestrian rather than the movement or parking of vehicles.

PPG3 seeks to reduce car dependence by facilitating more walking and cycling, by improving public transport

connections between housing, jobs, local services and local amenities, and by planning for mixed uses. Local authorities should seek to avoid developments which make inefficient use of land (those of less than 30 dwellings per hectare); encourage housing development which makes more efficient use of land (between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare net); and encourage greater intensity of development at places with good public transport accessibility such as city, town, district and local centres or around major nodes along good quality public transport corridors (Section 58, PPG3 Housing).

For the purposes of PPG3, local authorities should adopt the approach to "net site density" which is a more refined estimate than a gross site density and includes only those areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses.



## POLICY CONTEXT

This will include:

- access roads within the site;
- private garden space;
- car parking areas;
- incidental open space and landscaping; and
- children's play areas where these are to be provided.

It therefore excludes:

- major distributor roads;
- primary schools;
- open spaces serving a wider area; and
- significant landscape buffer strips.

### DRAFT PPS3: HOUSING (DECEMBER 2005)

PPS3 currently exists in draft format only as a consultation paper, however it will, in due course replace PPG 3.

The Government's key objective for planning for housing is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford in a community where they want to live.

The government is seeking to:

- Ensure that wide choice of housing types is available for both affordable and market housing to meet the needs of all members of the community
  - Deliver a better balance between housing demand and supply in every housing market and to improve affordability where necessary; and
  - Create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas.
- Developments should be attractive, safe and designed and built to a high quality. They should be located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.

Local planning authorities should develop density policies for their plan area with local stakeholders and communities with regard to the need for additional housing, the need to use land efficiently, the impact on service provision and public space, the importance of promoting good design; the importance of maintaining the character for particular residential areas of environment. The presumption is that in developing density policies, the minimum density should be no less than 30 dwellings per hectare.

Local Planning Authorities should make sufficient land available within or adjoining market towns or villages for both affordable and market housing in order to sustain rural communities, and these towns and villages should be the focal for significant development where they are local service centres and well served by public transport.

Local planning authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type of residential environments they wish to see and develop plans and policies aimed at creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, which are attractive, have their own distinctive identity and positively improve local character; and which promotes designs and layouts that are inclusive, safe, take account of public health, crime prevention and community safety, ensure adequate natural surveillance and make space for water where there is a flood risk.

New development should be of high

quality inclusive design and layout and be informed by its wider context. It should have regard to neighbouring buildings and to townscape and landscape of the wider locality. The key consideration should be whether a development positively improves the character and environmental quality of an area and the way it functions.

Annex 3 of draft PPS3 sets out indicative density ranges for specific types of location expressed as the number of dwellings per hectare (dph):

- Urban: 40-75 dph
- Suburban: 35-55 dph
- Rural: 30-40 dph

Local authorities should work with local stakeholders and local communities to set appropriate density ranges for specific types of location having regard to the density matrix above. The choice of appropriate levels of density for an area should be informed by:

- An assessment of the characteristics of an area, including the mix of uses
- Location and level of public transport accessibility
- The need to use land efficiently
- The importance of promoting high quality design
- The broader spatial strategy and vision for the future development of the area, in particular the need for housing and the housing plans and policies
- The level of service provision and public spaces
- Resource efficiently and the minimisation of environmental impacts.

The presumption is that the minimum

density should be no less than 30 dwellings per hectare.

### PPS6: PLANNING FOR TOWN CENTRES (MARCH 2005)

Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres examines the networks and hierarchies of centres. The Statement requires local authorities to consider the pattern of provision of different centres and the roles, range of facilities and degree of specialisation in these centres, in order to understand a centre's position in the hierarchy. Planning authorities are expected to plan the distribution of growth and use this as an opportunity to rebalance the network of centres to ensure that an area is not dominated by the largest centres and to allow for a redistribution of facilities.

Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation Tools Published alongside PPS6 as a supporting document this guidance suggests that development should adhere to the following principles:

- Orientation of development so that it



## POLICY CONTEXT

- fronts on to the street
- Respect building lines of the existing urban environment
- Maximise the amount of active street frontage
- Avoid designs which are inward looking and which present blank frontages
- Provide level access from the public realm
- In the case of development in edge-of-centre locations, provide good pedestrian access to the centre

When considering parking, the guidance recommends that car parking and service areas should be carefully located within a development using means that minimise visual impact.

### PPS7: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS (AUGUST 2004)

PPS7 promotes good quality, sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside. PPS 7 promotes well designed and inclusive design in rural areas which is in scale with its location and is sensitive to the character of the countryside and local distinctiveness. Design should contribute to the sense of local identity and regional diversity. Local planning authorities should take a positive approach to innovative, high-quality contemporary designs that are sensitive to their immediate setting and help to make country towns and villages better places for people to live and work.

### PPG13: TRANSPORT (MARCH 2001)

PPG13 requires that new development should help to create places that connect with each other sustainably; the aim is to provide the right conditions to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport and to put people before traffic.

### PPG15: CONSERVATION AREAS AND LISTED BUILDINGS (SEPTEMBER 1994)

Guidance regarding Conservation Areas is of particular importance to this urban design assessment as each of the six towns and villages have designated Conservation Areas. PPG 15 encourages detailed control of the external appearance of buildings in Conservation Areas, and emphasises the importance of the relationship between buildings and their surroundings and of the quality of townscape. The character and appearance of many Conservation Areas is not just reliant upon high quality and historic buildings but also dependent on the treatment of roads, pavements and other public spaces. When considering new development, it is most important that buildings should be designed with respect for their context, as part of a larger whole which has a well-established character and appearance of its own, rather than directly imitating earlier styles.

### NATIONAL GUIDANCE: URBAN DESIGN GUIDES BY DESIGN URBAN DESIGN IN THE PLANNING SYSTEM: TOWARDS BETTER PRACTICE, DETR/CABE, 2001

By Design is a Government-sponsored guide that aids the understanding of urban design by describing its key objectives. The guide considers how people use buildings and open space and what they feel about the places they live, work and visit.

The guide considers that successful streets and places have certain characteristics in common. These can be distilled into objectives of good urban design:

- Character: a place with its own identity, that is memorable and easily appreciated
- Continuity and enclosure: a place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished
- Quality of the public realm: a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas
- Ease of movement: a place that is easy to get to and move through
- Legibility: a place with a clear image that is easy to understand
- Adaptability: a place that can change easily
- Diversity: a place with variety and choice

The analysis of the physical form also draws on the following:

- Layout: urban structure and grain
- Landscape: the character and

- appearance of open space
- Density and mix: the amount of development and the range of uses
- Scale: height and massing
- Appearance: details and materials

### URBAN DESIGN GUIDANCE (URBAN DESIGN GROUP 2002)

The Urban Design Group, a membership organisation founded in 1978, aims to promote effective action in improving towns and cities. The Group produced its own advisory report for all those involved in commissioning, preparing or using guidance.

The report contains a checklist for site and context appraisal that expands the seven objectives set out in By Design:

- Character: natural features – landscape setting, land form, ecology, trees and hedgerows
- Human impact: historical development, settlement pattern, local history and place names
- Buildings and structures: colours and textures, building elements and fenestration, materials, rhythm and pattern





## POLICY CONTEXT

- Continuity and enclosure: building lines, setbacks, gaps, back views, active frontages
- Quality of the public realm: overlooking, hard landscaping, planting, street furniture, structures, safety and security, maintenance
- Ease of movement: access, public transport, roads, cycling, walking
- Legibility (ease of understanding): image and perception, local views, strategic views, vistas, landmarks, skylines, roofscape, gateways, thresholds, boundaries and barriers, nodes
- Adaptability: aspects that contribute to an area's adaptability
- Diversity: aspects that contribute to an area's diversity and mix of uses

### HOUSING AUDIT: ASSESSING THE DESIGN QUALITY OF NEW HOMES CABE 2004

In October 2004, CABE published an audit of 100 recent housing developments in London and the South East. Schemes were scored against a range of criteria including car parking and highways, architectural design and policy guidance and implementation.

The majority of buildings audited (61%) were assessed as 'average', a fifth (17%) were judged 'good or very good' and a similar figure were considered to be of 'poor' quality. The audit demonstrated that a number of urban design principles, including the appropriate use of scale, the creation of active frontages and the forging of identifiable relationships between public and private space are becoming standard, however, the

dominance of highway infrastructure and limited use of bespoke design are also prevalent. The findings of the CABE audit will be used to contribute to the over-arching urban design policies for residential development in the borough.

### URBAN DESIGN COMPENDIUM (ENGLISH PARTNERSHIPS/THE HOUSING CORPORATION, 2000)

The Urban Design Compendium examines the factors that make neighbourhoods comfortable and safe. It aims to provide accessible advice to developers, funding agencies and partners on the achievement and assessment of the quality of urban design for the development and regeneration of urban areas. It is written to provide a source of good practice to all those involved in commissioning, designing or evaluating development projects.

The Compendium identifies key aspects of urban design:

- Places for people
- Enrich the qualities of the existing urban places
- Make connections
- Work with the landscape
- Mix uses and forms
- Manage the investment
- Design for change

The Compendium also includes a character appraisal inventory that covers substantially the same topics as those covered in By Design and the Urban Design Group Guidance. They will be used as a checklist in assembling the criteria for the Dacorum Urban Design Assessment.

### CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS (ENGLISH HERITAGE 1997, REVISED 2005)

Guidance produced by English Heritage on Conservation Area Appraisals is currently being updated and is expected to be published by the end of the year. Its contents reflect recent practice on historic areas characterisation, pioneered in landscape and archaeological survey work and increasingly being applied to smaller urban areas.

### REGIONAL GUIDANCE

In addition to national planning guidance, regional planning guidance is also relevant and important.

Under the new arrangements set out in PPG11 on Regional Planning, regional planning guidance is issued by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions following a public examination into a draft submitted by the regional planning body. This body, working with other regional stakeholders is now responsible for preparing the draft guidance.

The more recent RPG has addressed design either by emphasising regionally important design issues to which local authorities should respond or by setting out a strategic framework for design policy.

### EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN: DRAFT REVISION TO THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (RSS) FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND DECEMBER 2004

Dacorum is situated within the East of England region within the London Arc sub-area. The vision for the East of England is to sustain and improve the quality of life for all people who live in, or visit the region, by developing a more sustainable, prosperous and outward-looking region, while respecting its diversity and enhancing its assets (para 3.2). One of the 14 stated objectives is to:

"Protect and enhance the built and historic environment and encourage good quality design and use of sustainable construction methods of all new development." (para 3.3)

The East of England plan states that new development in both urban and rural areas will be of a high quality, delivered through local development documents (policy SS16). New development should maximize its contribution to the attractiveness and character of the local



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area:

- Make efficient use of land
- Housing development should be built at the correct density and respect local building styles, character and identity
- Provide a mix of uses and building types where appropriate
- Have regard to the needs of all sectors of the community
- Address crime provisioned, community safety and public health

The region's cities, towns and villages are rich in character and may have a strong sense of local identity. Areas with distinctive local character may warrant local guidance setting out how new development can be sympathetic in form and layout to that which already exists (Para 4.82). Local Development Documents should also sensitively seek to exploit the traditional architecture of rural villages and market towns, on the quality and distinctiveness of the townscape and use of materials.

## LOCAL GUIDANCE

### DACORUM BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 1991-2011

Dacorum Borough Local Plan was adopted by Dacorum Borough Council in April 2004 and covers the period between 1991 and 2011. The Local Plan is a statutory document prescribing policies on a range of themes for the whole of Dacorum Borough. The aim of the plan is to strike a reasonable balance between protecting the high quality environment of Dacorum whilst making

provision for sustainable development needed to accommodate existing and future needs.

#### Land Use designations

Dacorum's towns and large villages have been divided into the following designations (policy 9), as illustrated on the proposals map, each type of area will contain a mix of uses as this characterises town and local centres:

#### - Residential

Where appropriate, residential development is encouraged. Change of use to residential is acceptable. The introduction or intensification of incompatible non residential development will be resisted but small scale social, leisure, community and business users will be acceptable

#### - General Employment Areas

Appropriate employment generating development is encouraged

#### - Town centres and local centres

In town and local centres a mix of uses, including housing, social and community uses is sought, shopping and compatible leisure uses are encouraged. Shopping and business development will be controlled in order to enable a broad range of uses to be maintained. High density development will generally be supported as is the mixed use of individual buildings.

#### - Open land areas

The primary planning purpose is to maintain the generally open character, ancillary buildings and works,

additions, replacement and redevelopment of buildings or changes of use are guided and controlled.

#### - Retail

Shopping is the primary function in both town and local centres. However, more diverse uses are appropriate and encouraged within local centres. Policy 39 states that town centres are given preference over local centres as the location for retail development and other appropriate uses (policy 41). Within town centres the shopping area has been sub-divided into a main shopping frontage and a mixed frontage (policy 42). Within the main shopping frontage, no further loss of shops will be permitted at street level. In mixed frontages a minimum proportion of shops will be maintained as part of a mix of uses.

#### Design

Dacorum Borough Council expects a high standard from all development proposals, believing they should make a positive contribution to and enhance the environment. The council seeks to protect and enhance the attractive landscape character of the Borough and development should be appropriate in terms of layout, site coverage, design, scale, bulk, height, materials and landscaping (Policy 11). In addition it should also respect the townscape, density and general character in which it is set. All development is expected to make a positive contribution to the Borough (policy 96).

#### Housing

There is high demand for new housing within the Borough of Dacorum. Policy 14 commits the Council to provide 7,200 additional houses (policy 14), 1,250 of which are to be affordable (policy 20). These additional houses should be across a range of sizes and types and be of a density of between 30-50 dwellings per hectare, proposals of less than 30 dwellings per hectare should be avoided (policy 21).

## LAYOUT AND DESIGN OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS (APPENDIX 3)

### General Guidelines

- Proposals should be guided by existing topographical features of the site and its surroundings.
- They should respect the character of the surrounding area and in particular there must be adequate space for the proposed development.
- There is a need for variety and imagination in the layout and design of housing.
- Careful consideration needs to be given to the spatial quality of layouts.





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- Open spaces should be related to building height to provide variety and interest and careful thought should be given to its intended function.
- Each space should have its own special identity and attention must be paid to the sequence of spaces and how they are linked.
- The design of individual building should respect the overall street scene and the finishing material should be in keeping with those of the surrounding area.

### Privacy

- Residential development should be designed and laid out so that the privacy of existing and new residents is achieved.
- Buildings should at least maintain the distances with their neighbours given below (see Gardens and amenity space and spacing of dwellings.)
- Exceptions may be possible in individual circumstances depending upon the particular topography character of the area and nature of adjoining land uses.

### Gardens and Amenity Space

- All residential development is required to provide private open space for use by residents.
- Private gardens should have a minimum depth of 11.5 m and a range of garden sizes should be provided to cater for different family compositions. Generally all gardens should be of a width, size and shape to ensure the space is functional and compatible with the surrounding area.
- Residential development designed for multiple occupancy will be required to

provide a private communal amenity area to the rear of the building at least equal to the footprint of the building for two storey developments and increasing with building height.

### Spacing of Dwellings

- The minimum distance of 23m between the main rear wall of a dwelling and main wall (front or rear) of another should be met to ensure privacy and avoid a cramped layout.
- Spacing between dwellings should be provided at a distance which is consistent with the surrounding areas.

### Sunlight and Daylight

- Residential development should be positioned to maintain satisfactory levels of sunlight and daylight for existing and proposed dwellings.
- A 45 degree angle of light should be maintained as a basic minimum to all significant windows of habitable rooms.

### Access and Servicing

- Roads and footpaths should take account of guidance in "Roads in Hertfordshire: A design guide"
- In order to reduce speeds and encourage sustainable modes of transport, vehicle routes should be winding though not unnecessarily circuitous.
- Pedestrian routes and cycleways should have the most direct access to the existing network and facilities whilst avoiding excessive gradients.
- Appropriate provision of shared surfaces will be required.
- Loop or spine routes should be provided to allow buses to enter large

sites.

### Noise

- A good internal standard to achieve is around 40 dB(A).
- Externally a reasonable part of the garden should not be subject to noise levels exceeding 55dB(A).
- The impact of noise can be minimised by careful attention to layout landscaping and noise screening measures.
- Schemes should be designed to minimise potential noise nuisance to dwellings from within the site. Particular attention should therefore be given to the location of parking areas and children's play areas.

### Crime Prevention through Design

- Developers and architects are strongly advised to consult the Hertfordshire constabulary Architectural Liaison Officer for advice at an early stage.
- Where possible the recommendations in British Standard 8220 (parts 1-3) should be incorporated in development proposals.

### Water Environment

- Surface water run-off can be reduced by the use of permeable surfaces and / or swales and filter strips alongside roads.
- Special precautions may be required in areas of groundwater supply.
- Additionally efforts should be made to reduce demand for water e.g. by collection and storage of rainwater and appropriate recycling of wastewater

## APPENDIX 4: LAYOUT AND DESIGN OF EMPLOYMENT AREAS

The potential impact of employment developments on the quality of the environment can be much greater than residential development due to the large rebuilding masses usually involved and the potential problems of nuisances through traffic movements, noise, fumes or mechanical vibration.

- Care should be taken in the layout and the design of buildings to ensure that there is not unreasonable loss of amenity to nearby residents
- Schemes should be designed to minimise the visual impact of outside storage of materials, equipment etc

### Access and Servicing

- Layout will require adequate facilities for off-street loading, unloading, vehicle turning, circulation and parking for all vehicles.
- Special care should be taken in the location of loading bays and accesses to mitigate the impact of traffic and noise on adjoining uses.
- Vehicle access should be separated from pedestrian access and also take



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account of the needs of cyclists. Public access should be planned to avoid the need for members of the public to pass through work or storage areas.

- On large employment sites it may be appropriate to ensure that buses can operate through the site or that stopping facilities are provided close to the sites and are associated with pedestrian links.

### Health and safety

- Applicants should notify the Health and Safety Executive and Fire Authority in addition to the council where hazardous substances are involved.

### Pollution Control

- Adequate arrangements must be made for the storage, collection and disposal of solid waste with special stringency required for toxic or hazardous substances.

## APPENDIX 5: PARKING PROVISION

- The County Council has adopted SPG for parking provision at new developments, this sets out recommended maximum car parking standards for each of the use classes and requires the identification of 'Accessibility Zones' at the local level.
- Dacorum Borough Council has undertaken work to define zones and has adopted Accessibility Zones for the Application of Car Parking standards.
- Most of Dacorum falls into zone 4, however some areas in towns fall in

zones 1-3 where less parking is required.

### Non – Residential Development

Car Parking Provision (% of maximum demand-based standard)

Zone	
1	0-25
2	25-50
3	50-75
4	75-100

In rural areas, due to limited accessibility, the maximum standards will normally be applied directly without restraint. Cycle parking provision will also be required.

### Residential Development

All parking demand should be met on site, although reduced provision may be acceptable for high density residential proposals in appropriate locations.

### Design and Layout

- A standard minimum size parking space is 2.4mx4.8m. For hardstanding a minimum depth of maneuvering space between rows of spaces or other limits is 6m. Where spaces take the form of garages or carports this should be increased by 7.3m.
- Where spaces are provided in private drives fronting garages, the garage doors should be set not less than 5.5 m from the highway boundary. The minimum highway requirement is a 1m easement strip behind the kerb of the public highway.
- 4% of the total car parking provision should be allocated for disabled people as part of all major developments. Spaces should be wider than normal at 3.3m, appropriately marked and signed and

located conveniently in relation to building entrances or pedestrian areas.

- Where and how cars are parked is crucial to both the quality and safety of new development. For residential development in curtailage parking arrangements are preferred. Where communal parking is required cars should be located in small groups and subject to natural surveillance.
- Large unbroken expanses of parking or excessive hard surfacing areas at building frontages are undesirable. All parking must be adequately screened and landscaped.
- In cases of communal parking the relationship of building and parking facility should be such that walking distances to the parking spaces are shorter than the nearest carriageway parking opportunity.
- All parking areas should be clearly marked.

## LAND DESIGNATIONS

### Conservation Areas

All six towns and large villages have designated Conservation Areas where development is restricted and there is a presumption against the demolition of any building that contributes to the character of a Conservation Area. New developments or alterations to existing buildings will be permitted provided they are carried out in a manner which preserves or enhances the established character or appearance of an area.

### Ancient Monuments

Planning permission cannot be granted for development which would adversely affect scheduled ancient monuments.

Ancient monuments are located in four of the six settlements.

### Areas of Archaeological Significance

Areas of Archeological Significance which are located within all towns and villages in the study area. Care must be taken to ensure that these sites are not adversely affected by new development.

## LOCAL PLAN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Dacorum's Local Plan Public Engagement Strategy was produced by Dacorum Borough Council in June 2002. The document produced before the changes to the planning framework contained in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out the Council's ideas for increasing the involvement of people in the next Local Plan review and reflects comments and suggestions made by organisations and individuals during the consultation process.

The aims of the Public Engagement Strategy are to:

- Give everyone who wants to the opportunity to contribute constructively and participate in the



## POLICY CONTEXT

- Local Plan review process;
- Actively encourage participation from any groups who have in the past been under-represented in the Local Plan process;
  - Keep organisations and the public informed about the Local Plan;
  - Ensure corporate participation; and
  - Learn from the consultation process the views of other Council services and, where possible, outside organisations.

The document identifies a number of stakeholders who need to be consulted.

### Town and Parish Councils and interest groups

This is a broad group that includes representatives of a particular area of interest, including Hertfordshire County Council, Parish and Town Councils, interest groups, major landowners and developers. The strategy suggests that the best way to consult the large potential number of groups is to run events to which a number of groups are invited. Proposals include the facilitation of workshop/discussion group events involving representatives from all groups and possible individuals where an interest has been expressed.

The document identifies the following for consideration in the consultation process:

- The use of plain English wherever possible;
- The identification of key groups and community leaders;
- The investigation of the production of briefing packs prior to workshops; and
- The investigation of the use of a

regular newsletter, via mail or email.

### The general public

This group includes residents in Dacorum and those with an interest in planning Dacorum. This group is identified as being generally harder to reach than other interested parties. The strategy suggests that an improved awareness of the Local Plan would help to raise the profile of planning issues and improve the success of consultation with the general public. The following suggestions are also made:

- local opinion and the organisation of a workshop session
- The provision of a regular newsletter to be distributed via the Dacorum website, libraries, civic offices and other public locations; and
- The distribution across the Borough and consultation on documents and information produced as part of the formative stage of the development plan, including the potential for access and comment forms via the Dacorum website.

### Other parts of the Council

The strategy highlights the importance of internal communication within Dacorum Borough Council and suggests:

- Presentations to key departments contributing to the Local Plan, e.g. Highways, Development Control, Housing, Environmental Resources;
- The use of corporate communication through the intranet and internet; and
- Involvement with future reviews of the Community Plan.

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Dacorum Local Development

Scheme (LDS) document was produced by Dacorum Borough Council in April 2005. The document outlines the local planning authority's three year programme for preparing planning documents, under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The purposes of the LDS are:

- To provide a point of reference for the community to find out about the Council's planning policies
- To set out the programme for production of new and/or more detailed planning policies in the form of Local Development Documents (LDDs)
- To prioritise the preparation of documents in order to foster effective use of resources

The LDS sets out:

- The LDDs that the Council intends to produce, indicating subject matter and geographic coverage for each are:
- LDDs to be included as part of the plan;
- LDDs to be supplementary planning documents;
- Information on the Statement of Community Involvement;
- Information on the annual Monitoring Report;
- A timetable for the production of documents up to 2008;
- Milestones to be achieved as part of the process leading to adoption of the LDDs;
- The relationship of the LDF to existing policies;
- Other supporting documents and statements that will be required or referred to;
- Current development plans and

- policies will be "saved"; and
- The resources available and any constraints
- An evidence base

The production of the LDF will be based on an evidence base consisting of:

- Specific studies
- Monitoring report
- Contextual information
- Related strategies

This Urban Design Assessment will provide part of the evidence base that will be used to inform the production of the LDF.

## STRUCTURE OF DACORUM'S LOCAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Development Plan Documents (DPDs) to be prepared by the Council are outlined below:

### The Core Strategy

Sets out the strategic vision, objectives and spatial strategy for the area. Contains core policies and a development diagram. Due for adoption – June 2008.



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### Site Allocations

Allocates land for housing and other purposes. Due for adoption - June 2008.

### Development Control Policies

A suite of policies and standards against which applications for development will be considered. Due for adoption - April 2009

### Action Area Plan (for East Hemel Hempstead Town Gateway)

Sets out the spatial strategy for an area subject to economic change and expansion. Area extends to St Albans. Due for adoption- July 2009.

The Council will also produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that sets out the approach to involving stakeholders in the community in the production of the LDF and on planning applications for major developments. The SCI is due to be adopted in May 2006.

In relation to this study, the Council intends to produce Urban Design Statements that will set out detailed guidelines for high quality urban design, having regard for local character, in the main settlements. This will supersede Supplementary Planning Guidance on Development in Residential Areas. Formal consultation on these documents is due to take place around September 2010.

## STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT FOR PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS AND PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The preparatory work for the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy Documents and Planning Applications was produced by Dacorum Borough Council in April 2005. The legislative changes introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require the Council to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) with the following main consultative steps:

- Preliminary consultation
- Consultation on a draft statement (perhaps with alternatives)
- Deposit of the final draft over a six week period, allowing for any alterations to be made

## ACCESSIBILITY ZONES

The Council has adopted 'Accessibility Zones for the Application of Car Parking Standards' and asserts that the purpose of using the zonal approach is to reduce the use of private car through parking restraint. The approach is used for non-residential development only. A table illustrates the maximum percentage of car parking provision allowed within each zone and the monitoring and review section states that the Accessibility Zones will be reviewed to assess their suitability to take account of possible changes in policy, new developments and other such changes. The document also lists the location of Accessibility Zones and also notes that most settlements fall within zone 4

where normal maximum car parking standards apply. Some parts of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring fall within zones 1-3, and therefore require less parking. The documents summarises Accessibility Zones which apply to each settlement in a series of tables and provides indicative descriptions of the areas.

## SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE - ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES

Dacorum's supplementary planning guidance – Environmental Guidelines was published by Dacorum Borough Council in May 2004. The guidance focuses on the preservation of the natural environment and resources as well as more generalised design matters such as shop fronts and development in Conservation Areas. The guidelines also contain the Council's enforcement code of practice and detailed guidance on incorporating safety and security into all development proposals.

## Flood Defence and the Water Environment

Tring is included in the Thames Valley LEAP and rest of the Borough in the Colne Valley LEAP (Local Environment Agency Plans). Two main rivers, the Gade and the Bulbourne run through the Borough. Both have areas of low lying land adjacent to them which are shown on maps as 'land liable to flood'. Recognising the susceptibility of land flooding is a material planning consideration and flood plains should be protected through land designation.

## Landscaping on Development Sites

The spaces around buildings should be designed to a high standard including the enhancement of existing trees and landscaping. Natural boundaries comprising hedgerows and trees and more scattered trees throughout a site should be retained a space to carry out buildings operations and underground services should not be laid through the landscaping. Account should be taken of trees; future growth and their likely effect on future occupiers. The layout of development should allow sufficient space to avoid damage to established trees, and buildings should be outside the extent of the root systems.

Landscape and Nature Conservation Conservation and enhancement of natural habitats help to create a more attractive and varied environment and is fundamental to maintaining biodiversity and ecological processes.

The vision, objectives, framework, targets and action plans for the conservation of the Borough's biodiversity is set out in the Dacorum Nature Conservation Strategy. There is a presumption against





## POLICY CONTEXT

development which would adversely affect Sites of Specific Scientific Interest and Nature Reserves (as designated on the proposals map). The layout of built elements of a scheme should avoid disruption of any wildlife linkages and planting should create continuity of species.

### Shop Fronts

Dacorum contains a variety of different shopping areas. Conflict can arise when new shop fronts are unsympathetically inserted into older buildings and guidance is issued in order to avoid this.

### Advertisements

Advertisements should be controlled in the interest of amenity and public safety. In areas subject to a Special Control Order, which is much of Dacorum's countryside, the Council may apply more stringent control.

### Development in Conservation Areas or Affecting Listed Buildings

Development in Conservation Areas or affecting listed buildings need special care and attention to detail with regard to colour, design and materials. New development within Conservation Areas should positively enhance the characteristics of the street scene and blend in with the local building tradition. Proposals to alter listed buildings must not adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of the building.

### Conversion of Agricultural Buildings

The conversion of agricultural buildings is acceptable where they are appropriate to the area, where the building is located and where they preserve building integrity. Leisure and community uses

are preferred, followed by commercial uses, and lastly, residential uses.

### Disabled Persons Access

Access to and into buildings are important planning considerations and developments should be designed sensitively to allow access to and within buildings. Environmental guidance concerning disabled person access should be applied to the design of all buildings to which the public will require access as well as in cases where a building is being refurbished or a new shop front is being installed. Guidance covered includes parking provision, access to buildings and facilities inside the building as well as special provision in supermarkets, auditoria and induction loops.

### Waste Management

The guidance intends to encourage sensitive waste management to minimise environmental impacts resulting from the handling, processing, transport and disposal of waste. Applicants are encouraged to think about waste management issues before submitting a development proposal, considering land contamination, water pollution as well as waste disposal and recycling. Proposals on brownfield sites need to consider the issue of contamination and remediation to ensure the safe treatment and disposal of contaminated material and restoration of the site. The design of individual buildings should incorporate adequate space to facilitate waste recycling through separation, storage, handling, bulking and collection of waste generated within the property.

### Enforcement Code of Practice

The enforcement code of practice outlines the procedures to be adopted when dealing with all reports of unauthorised development. The guidelines are intended both for members of the public who make complaints and those being complained against.

### Safety and Security

This guidance provides detailed information for all development proposals to incorporate reduced opportunities for criminal activity and anti-social behaviour and to reduce the fear of crime within the Borough. The aim is to introduce the concept of incorporating suitable crime prevention measures at the design stage of new developments. The guidance seeks to highlight design opportunities that are environmentally pleasing to create an attractive environment or residents and visitors alike, whilst reducing the opportunities for criminal behaviour through applying the following principles of crime reduction:

- Natural surveillance
- Boundaries
- Landscaping
- Lighting
- Security measures

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT FOR DACORUM

The Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum was adopted as supplementary planning guidance by Dacorum Borough Council on 5 May 2004. The assessment contains an evaluation of the landscape for the

purposes of:

- Advising on development control and policy development for future development plans and
- Providing a framework for other landscape planning, regulation, conservation and management activities in the country.

This assessment aims to highlight, conserve and reinforce Dacorum's distinctiveness.

### General Landscape Features of Hertfordshire

#### - Physical Influences

**Topography:** The maximum elevations within the county are on the Chiltern Hills. Upland areas are divided by a number of river valleys and lowland areas

#### - Historic and Cultural Influences

Most construction within the last 150 years has been in the southern and south-western parts of the county, whilst the north-east remains sparsely populated and rural.

#### - Transport



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**Roads:**The M1, a long section of the M25 and an upgraded A1(M) have all been built through Hertfordshire

**Rivers:**The Grand Union Canal is used mainly for recreational purposes rather than transport and is a notable landscape feature

**Railways:**The London and Birmingham railway followed the route of the Grand Junction Canal up the Tring Valley

## URBAN NATURE CONSERVATION STUDY

The Dacorum Urban Nature Conservation Study was produced by the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre for Dacorum Borough Council. The study has used existing habitat information to map out urban wildlife resources in the six principal settlements in Dacorum. The study identifies wildlife sites and 'wildspace' areas as well as a complex network of ecologically valuable sites, corridors, chains and green wedges throughout each settlement. The study was commissioned to provide guidance on policies, a review of resources, and recommendations on planning and management issues to support urban biodiversity with regard to both the planning context and land management and community issues. It is also to be used in assisting the preparation of the LDF and the community strategy.

The study notes the importance of wildlife changes and addresses ecological issues by explaining what green infrastructure is and why urban wildlife is

important. The document recognises that the whole Borough of Dacorum must be considered in its totality and that towns and villages cannot be regarded in isolation. Countryside character, along with borough landscape types, historic influences and land use are also discussed providing details on the attributes of specific landscape 'zones' each with their own distinctive geology, topography, archaeology and ecology.

Planning issues are explored and the relevance and restrictions of certain aspects or planning terms such as Green Belt, open land and spaces are explained. Population levels, rights of way and future development sites are also referred to, and urban biodiversity is discussed in relation to the English Nature's accessible natural greenspace standards. Other consideration and definitions are provided for natural greenspace and accessibility. Woodland access is also discussed as is the provision of wildlife sites within urban areas of Dacorum, types of habitat resource, wildlife corridors, ecological networks and stepping stones. Land management issues are discussed through identifying factors which influence land management and a series of aims with regard to land management are articulated. For example,

- To manage all wildlife sites designated as Open Land in the Local Plan for their ecological interest
- To protect other wildlife sites within and adjacent to the urban area and to seek appropriate management to ensure that their biodiversity resources are maintained
- To improve the management of

publicly accessible Open Land sites with known ecological value to enhance wildlife interest

Areas for management of biodiversity resources are divided into four broad areas and the role of education and community are also noted as opportunities to integrate knowledge and activities relating to biodiversity issues into schools and community events.

The mapping and description methodology used by the study is explained and their results are documented in the form of settlement maps and descriptions.

Recommendations are made with regard to biodiversity and the planning system such as enhancing ecological resources and minimising the impact of development on other sites or ecological resources. Guidance is also given on a series of issues such as: protected species, protected sites, ecological parks, new development, street trees, greenspace factor; green wedges and corridors, urban fringe development, transport infrastructure and community involvement. The following conclusions are put forward:

- Sites of specific interest, local nature reserves and wildlife sites should be protected from adverse development according to their importance. Every effort should be made to ensure they are receiving appropriate management. Their value must also be recognised as potential critical capital
- Links to open countryside and recognised sites of wildlife value

should be protected and enhanced with appropriate management were possible

- New sites should be enhanced or created for wildlife value, they can also be beneficial in helping to offset areas of deficiency and improve public accessibility
- All opportunities for local nature reserve designation should be explored
- Locally valuable 'wildspace' areas should be protected

The appendices of the document provide settlement reports for Berkhamsted, Bovingdon, Hemel Hempstead, Kings Langley, Markyate and Tring. The reports examine each settlement individually and detail their specific environmental characteristics with reference to location, topography, historical perspective, residential and urban character, landscape character, ecological resources. Planning issues are also examined and aspects such as the presence of Green Belt, open land, open spaces, rights of way, population levels, future development sites and local plan





## POLICY CONTEXT

policies are addressed. Urban biodiversity is also taken into account with particular reference to the provision of local nature reserves, accessibility issues, open land biodiversity, urban fringe sites, corridors and sites of local interest within the settlement. The recommendations are made with regard to these aspects and are directly related to existing local plan policies.

### CHILTERN BUILDINGS DESIGN GUIDE

The Chilterns Buildings Design Guide was produced by the Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) and provides advice to ensure that outstanding and distinctive qualities of the Chilterns Landscape can be conserved alongside urban development. The information it provides is consistent with the advice of central government and the specific areas of advice that the Guide provides are:

- The character of the Chilterns landscape
- The approach to co-ordinating settlements
- The special character of villages
- The ways in which new building can be sympathetically incorporated into the village/countryside setting
- Design features and details of individual buildings and small developments
- Materials and landscaping

This document is intended to be used by all those involved in the development process. The guide has been adopted by the council as supplementary planning

guidance for making decisions on planning applications in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as well as briefly discussing the notion of village statements, listed buildings and conservation areas.

The Guide has a detailed section on the landform, geology and environmental features of the Chilterns. It lists environmental features which make up the character of the villages and buildings, such as topography, major land uses and historical development over the 20th century through to the present day. The guide goes on to discuss the settlements patterns and village character of the Chilterns and specifically refers to and describes three main areas of the escarpment, the valleys and the plateau. Additionally, the guide identifies specific characteristic qualities and aspects of vulnerability for several areas, such as those that lie at the foot of the escarpment.

The designing new buildings section provides a series of principles to assist with various aspects of building design and covers the following areas:

- Environmentally sensitive design and use of materials
- The location and siting of new development
- The relationship of new buildings to the landscape, neighbourhood and site
- The landscape qualities of the site
- Street patterns, plots and spaces between buildings

The following is considered with regard to individual buildings:

- The 'typical' Chilterns cottage

- Detailed design considerations

There is also guidance for the scale and form of new buildings, with specific reference to:

- Roofs, terraces, roof lights and chimneys
- One-off designs, shapes, sizes, materials
- Windows, walls, doors and porches
- Parking and garage access
- Landscaping, boundaries and paving

The last portion of the document discusses the conversion of buildings and provides an explanation of what a village design statement is, how to prepare one and the potential benefits it is likely to have. The Chilterns Conservation Board have also produced a Flint Technical Note. This Technical Note is one of a series that are intended to supplement the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide, by providing additional guidance on the appropriate use of locally available materials. A Timber Technical note is due for publication in early 2006.

### DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT INTO RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES IN NEW DEVELOPMENT 6 SEPTEMBER 2005

The report sets out current policy on density which is being used to determine planning applications for new residential buildings. It sets out how the policy is being applied and how the LDS envisages a review of this policy .

The public have been consulted to gauge public perception of new developments.

It is the scale, design and character of a development which is important not just the final density figure. Aspects of character include:

- The relationship with adjoining development
- Amount of space used for car parking
- Space around buildings for amenity purposes and landscaping

Good urban design must be achieved as part of new development. This is generally considered to be a matter of the amount and general form of building to the space (and its quality) and movement patterns (on roads and paths) around. Judgments about the quality and effect of new development are difficult to arrive at objectively, however the following should be considered:

- The degree to which policies addressing the issue are being implemented, and
- The consistency with which they are applied; and
- What we think of the results



## POLICY CONTEXT

### Application of policy:

To assess how policy on density has been applied a number of sources have been drawn on:

### Planning Decisions

From a study of planning casework reports on Development Control Committee agendas 2004/5 it is seen that some schemes are permitted with shorter rear gardens than 11.5 metres or with less amenity space (for flats) than twice the area of the building footprint. While there are grounds for exceptions and 100% of schemes will not achieve the standards, it is not known how many cases this applies to.

A review of all planning decisions would be a massive task with the purpose being to understand the variations when granting planning permission, however, given that that planning decisions should be related to the provision of the development plan and all other material considerations, it is doubtful how useful such a review would be.

### Appeals

The results of appeal decisions lend weight to the council's intention in the Local Development Scheme to revisit Development in Residential Areas and strengthen core policy through the use of clearer and prioritised urban design principles (rather than existing density figures). A criticism which has been levelled at the residential character area's approach is that it does not fully present a view of how an area should change or what it should look like after new building. From experiences at appeal, there seems little wrong with the

Council's policy on amenity areas in principle, though it is felt it could be more clearly presented, particularly when exceptions would be reasonable.

### Completed Schemes

The development monitoring system (Acolaid) shows completed schemes for the last four years from 2001/2, showing completed schemes, their location, number of dwellings, type of scheme, density and parking provision. It should be noted however that records are not fully complete.

The density of new dwellings built 2001-2004 is shown below .

### Density of New Dwellings Built

	2001	2002	2003	2004
Dacorum	26	32	24	28
East of England	22	24	29	37
London	48	56	80	83
South East	24	26	33	43
England	25	27	34	40

(dwellings per hectare (dph))

Source: DBC records

Land Use Change in England: Residential Development to 2004

Average densities are following Government guidance and increasing at both the regional and national level. The pattern in Dacorum is more variable than that across England as a whole, although it corresponds with the long term trend. Substantial schemes in Apsley (e.g. John Dickinson Site) and in Hemel Hempstead town centre have affected the local four year trend.

### Average Density and Parking Provision within Towns 2001/2-2004/5

Location	Character Type (by density)	Average Density (dph)	Parking Provision %
Defined Residential Area	Very Low	9	120
	Low	41	113
	Medium	53	100
	High	60	90
	Very High	102	100
Elsewhere in Town		59	68

Source: DBC records

Average Density – dwellings per hectare over all sites. The site area as defined in PPG3 Housing.

Parking provision i.e. actual provision as a percentage of the target (maximum standard) sought. Parking provision records do not cover 2001/2.

Average densities are higher in Hemel Hempstead, as the main town. This is only location which has exceeded 30%. There is a significant contrast between towns and the more rural settlements.

It is outlined within SPG that parking provision should be provided at less than maximum standard in areas where housing densities are high, for example in town centres with high levels of accessibility. Overall parking is provided at less than the maximum standard, more noticeable so in Hemel Hempstead. In more rural locations parking provision is higher than the maximum standard, however this reflects lower accessibility (because there are fewer public transport services.) Outside of residential areas (e.g. within the town centre and on former

employment sites) densities approach 60dph with parking provision substantially less than standard. This reflects the higher accessibility levels of these locations.

Within the residential areas average densities exceed the guidelines which are set in SPG apart from very high (Appendix 3). These guidelines are set out below:

- Very Low <15 dph
- Low 15-25 dph
- Medium 30-35 dph
- High 35-45 dph
- Very High >45 dph

New development can change valued character, even if it is at relatively low density (i.e. below 30dph). The critical issue is this: what are the most important character elements to follow and this changes from area to area. It is evident that as building density and intensity increases within built up areas, amenity space decreases. In many cases the standard of space to building footprint appears to be relaxed. It is important to note the value of amenity



## POLICY CONTEXT

space, and to ensure that the setting of the buildings and its context, its relationship to adjoining buildings and occupiers, its contribution to landscape and biodiversity should not be overlooked and needs to be reflected more strongly in future guidance.

### Public Perception

A questionnaire was directed towards people who were considered likely to have a general interest in the issues. It was not directed at specific schemes. Approx. 120 questionnaires were distributed and the response rate was about 12%. The results are summarised below:

Characteristic	Perception	
	Negative (%)	Positive(%)
Appearance	25	75
Space available:		
Internal	11	89
External	52	48
Character		
Safe and Secure	3	97
Pleasant etc	22	78
Amount of building (too much?)	48	
Parking Availability (off and on street)	41	59

Source: Borough of Dacorum



## METHODOLOGY FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

### METHODOLOGY FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

This section aims to provide an assessment of current policy in relation to the urban design criteria set out previously in this report in order to progress and inform an urban design methodology for the settlements of Dacorum and to highlight any existing gaps in policies that can be addressed via the new LDF.

The Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 aims to guide development and meet the Borough's detailed planning needs. The Local Plan covers a large and diverse area and contains generic borough wide policies. More detailed area specific guidance is contained in Area Based Policies Supplementary Planning Guidance which supplements and amplifies the policies within the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011. Although it does not carry the same weight under planning law as policies and proposals contained within the Local Plan, it plays an important role in providing more detailed advice on which planning decisions are made.

Both the Local Plan and SPG contain guidance on urban design. Urban design features in part 3 of the Local Plan with additional, spatial guidance given in appendices 3 and 4 relating to the layout and design of residential and employment areas (for example spacing between dwellings).

Area specific guidance can be found in Supplementary Planning Guidance: Area Based Policies, chapter 4: Development

in Residential Areas. This Policy statement provides a comprehensive base of policies which complement those found in the Local Plan. The aim of the policies is to assess and consider the impact of development proposals upon the specific character of the area in which they are to be set. The residential areas of the borough's towns have been divided into a series of character areas. Appropriate design objectives and control policies have been defined for each of these areas. These policies contain more detailed, area specific urban design guidance than the Local Plan; however they refer to Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring only and are not sufficiently forward-looking, for example policies seek to retain the existing character of an area rather than highlighting potential opportunities for future change and improvement.

The methodology for further analysis of character is divided into three parts. The first part assesses the policies contained within both the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance against the urban design criteria set out in this report. The existing policy relevant to each criterion is summarised, followed by a brief evaluation and description of any gaps in the policy directed toward that criteria, it has been noted where the Urban Design Assessment has tried to fill an existing policy gap. The second part of this section proposes the most significant areas where the existing Planning Guidance could be updated. Finally, English Heritage's recently approved framework for future Conservation Area Character Appraisals is shown.

## MAKING PLACES

### BUILDING TYPES

#### *Policy Summary*

While no guidance on building type exists within the Local Plan, area specific policies within the Supplementary Planning Guidance (p 64- 407, Supplementary Planning Guidance Area Based Policies) do consider the types of buildings which would be acceptable as part of development within a specific residential area for each residential character area.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

This guidance is limited to the towns of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring and to residential uses only and comes in the form of a character appraisal rather than suggesting forward-looking options. The Urban Design Assessment has suggested case studies for both towns and villages which propose new typologies for areas. Borough wide guidance (i.e. covering all settlements within the borough) would prove useful.

### MATERIALS / ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

#### *Policy Summary*

Policy 11 in the Local Plan states that development will not be permitted unless the materials and design are appropriate to the site itself, in relation to adjoining property and in the context of view corridors (p 47, Local Plan). Any development should enhance and not detract from the existing environment and character of an area. The policy states that applicants will be required to

produce sufficient information and detailed plans to accompany any development proposal.

Guidance in SPG: Area Based Policies Chapter 4: Development in residential areas (p 64, Supplementary Planning Guidance Area Based Policies) considers building design in each character appraisal and the design principles of each character area stating the types of design which would be acceptable for residential development within that particular area.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

It would prove beneficial to include an assessment of specific building materials as part of the character assessment for the character areas and then conclude with guidelines for materials which should be used in development, such materials may be modern or traditional. Additionally high quality, sustainable and durable materials should be encouraged while remaining sensitive to the character of the area.





## METHODOLOGY FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

### LISTED BUILDINGS / CONSERVATION AREAS

#### *Policy Summary*

Policy 119 states a general presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Demolition or replacement of listed buildings will not be permitted without the strongest justification (p 287, Local Plan). The policy protects listed buildings against alteration or extension which is out of scale with the external appearance or historical character of the building. The policy offers adequate protection of individual listed buildings and values the contribution they make to the quality of the environment.

Policy 120 considers development in Conservation Areas and development outside Conservation Areas which may impact upon them (p 290, Local Plan). The policy contains a paragraph making reference to 'the importance of Conservation Areas when providing articles such as street furniture, highway signs, paving materials, lighting and overhead lines.'

Policy 121 (p 292, Local Plan ) outlines measures used to ensure the protection and enhancement of Conservation Areas in order to control inappropriate types of permitted development which would be to the area's detriment.

Policy 111 Height of buildings states that tall buildings should not harm the character or setting of listed buildings or Conservation Areas (p 264, Local Plan).

In addition to Policy 120, there is

additional guidance in the Area Based Policies Supplementary Planning Guidance which provides character appraisals and policy statements for 3 Conservation Areas; Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead High Street and Potten End (p 23 onwards, Supplementary Planning Guidance Area Based Policies). The policy statements offer specific, area based guidance which allows for much greater policy detail regarding, in particular, floorscape/ paving and street furniture, materials and roofscape and shopfronts, advertisements and security, for example The Berkhamsted Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Policy Statement concludes that 'well co-ordinated and designed or selected signage, bus shelters, bins, seating, street lighting and railings should be introduced to replace the existing street furniture and signage which is ugly and utilitarian. The emphasis should be on quality rather than historicism.' (Para 4.2.2 p26 Supplementary Planning Guidance, Area Based Policies)

Section 5 of Supplementary Planning Guidance, Environmental Guidelines issues guidance on shop fronts to ensure that all shopping areas are pleasant to be in and compare favourably with surrounding towns or competing facilities. It states that attention should be given to the character of the building into which shop fronts are to be inserted. 'Shopfronts should not detract with the style, scale and proportion of the buildings on which they are located.' (Para 5.5.2, p 17, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Environmental Guidelines)

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

Guidance on streetscape, shopfronts, signage and street furnishings in Conservation Areas should be strengthened to overcome the lack of co-ordination of streetscape elements by creating a new discrete policy dealing with street furniture, shopfronts, signage and streetscape, in all Conservation Areas specifically. It should be ensured that street furniture, shopfronts and signage located within Conservation Areas is of a high quality design, in keeping with and adding value to the character of the area. The preservation of historic street furniture should be encouraged.

The existing shop front guidance in Supplementary Planning Guidance, Environmental Guidelines should be extended to ensure that not only are shop fronts sympathetic to the buildings in which they are inserted but that are in character with the surrounding area.

### BUILDINGS HEIGHTS

#### *Policy Summary*

Most of Dacorum is characterised by low rise buildings of domestic scale. Policy 111 (p 264, Local Plan) states that buildings of more than two storeys in height will not be permitted in the countryside or in small villages unless there are exceptional reasons and visual impact is protected. Within towns and large villages buildings up to three storeys will be permitted. Taller buildings will be permitted in Hemel Hempstead town centre and may be allowed elsewhere provided that views and area character are protected.

Higher buildings will be expected to make a positive contribution to the townscape.

Development will not be permitted unless it is appropriate in terms of building height, as mentioned in Policy 11 (p47, Local Plan).

Building heights also form part of the character appraisal in the area based policy SPG and the housing development principles.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

Within Dacorum there are a number of strong view corridors. There is a need to more forcefully regulate building heights and quality within these areas to protect these views (see topography for further information). We would recommend that specific viewpoints are identified and building applications are reviewed with these viewpoints considered. Our UDA attempts to establish these viewpoints.



## METHODOLOGY FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

### DENSITY

#### *Policy Summary*

Guidance on the density of residential development appears in Policy 21 of the Local Plan to ensure that the land is used efficiently. Densities will generally be expected to be in the range of 30-60 dwellings per hectare net (p81, Local Plan). Existing density Policy is considered in a report to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 September 2005. Policy 21 states that densities of below 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) should be avoided, higher densities will be encouraged in more urban areas and lower in more rural areas, this is in line with guidance in PPG3 and the draft PPS3. Housing proposals will not however be permitted if the density of the scheme is out of scale with that of the surrounding area and character.

The character area appraisals found in chapter 4 of SPG:Area Based Policies give a broad indication of the density of an area in relation to the matrix (p 75, Supplementary Planning Guidance Area Based Policies). Density forms part of the Area Development Principles to be used to guide development within the character areas.

Density guidance is also given for all housing proposal sites and these standards are expected to be met

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

A link should be made between high quality design and density as well as impact upon character and views.

It is recognised that government

guidance recommends densities of no less than 30dph, however in Dacorum Borough Hemel Hempstead is the only location where existing densities have consistently exceeded 30 dph. It seems that a conflict exists between government guidance and the protection of the character of the towns and villages of the borough. The Urban Design Assessment has proposed densities for the respective urban design zones, most of which exceed 30 dph.

### TOPOGRAPHY

#### *Policy Summary*

Appendix 3 of the Local Plan (A3.1 p 415, Local Plan) states that proposals should be guided by the existing topographical features of the site and its immediate surroundings. No specific topographical study has been done, however topography was assessed as part of the Landscape Character Assessment for Dacorum.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

A topographical study should be undertaken and the results used to inform urban design policy as it is a critical feature of Dacorum. A regard for topography will also help to protect important views and area characteristics. The Urban Design Assessment has considered the impact of topography on the existing morphology and on viewpoints.

### CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE

### MORPHOLOGY

#### *Policy Summary*

There is no specific guidance which refers to morphology.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

Guidance should be established which makes reference to morphology; this could be incorporated into an existing policy, for example, Policy 11 (p 47, Local Plan) or similar. There has been significant development within Dacorum over the last 20 years which has applied cul-de-sac developments which are out of character with rural roads, high streets and Victorian grids. Morphology should be given urban design consideration the same way that other urban design criteria are considered.

### BUILDING LINES

#### *Policy Summary*

There is no specific guidance with regard to building line for the large villages, however the development principles in the Residential Character Area Assessments make some reference to building lines within the towns.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

In cases where new development is built adjacent to existing settlements, policy should require that there is consistency in building line distance from the street. Policy should assert that new developments maintain a distance from the street in keeping with the area's character. The Urban Design

Assessments have asserted general setback distances for the general setback distances for the respective urban design zones in the towns and villages.

### BUILDING ORIENTATION

#### *Policy Summary*

There is no specific guidance with regard to building orientation i.e. the location of building frontages in relation to the street.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

Where new development is built adjacent to existing settlements policy should ensure that building orientation is consistent. Policy should assert that building orientation is in keeping with the character of the area. The Urban Design Assessment guidelines have assessed building orientation for the respective urban design zones in the towns and villages.





## METHODOLOGY FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

### PAVEMENTS

#### *Policy Summary*

Policy 61 states that appropriate provision for pedestrians will be a requirement of all development proposals. The Council commits itself to the provision of direct, safe and secure walking routes, particularly in and around town centres, local neighbourhoods and to schools and stations (p188, Local Plan).

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

It is suggested that the policy should require the mandatory provision of pavements in all major development schemes particularly in rural areas and where possible design these to restrict parking on pavements. There could be additional guidance which informs developers of appropriate widths and distances from the street, depending on the area's character and the nature of the development proposed.

### PATTERN OF OPEN SPACE

#### *Policy Summary*

Policy 73 states that the provision of leisure space (i.e. public and private playing space including playgrounds) should be distributed within reasonable walking distance (i.e. 400m by footpath) of facilities of a type which reflects the needs of the local population, for example sports/ play facilities (p 215, Local Plan)

Policy 76 states that residential developments of over 25 dwellings or 1 hectare must provide public leisure space to meet borough standards (p 217, Local Plan).

Policy 116 of the Local Plan protects open land in towns and large villages from building and other inappropriate development (p 270, Local Plan). The policy states that the location, scale and use of the new development must be well related to the character of existing developments, its use and its open land setting. Appendix three of the Local Plan: Layout and Design of Residential Areas states that each space must have its own identity and attention must be paid to the sequence of spaces and how they are linked (p 415, Local Plan). In addition all residential development is required to provide private open space for use by residents whether the development is houses or flats. Private gardens should be a minimum of 11.5 m deep and generally should be of a width, shape and size to ensure the space is functional and compatible with the surrounding area. For multiple occupancy residential developments a communal amenity area must be provided at the rear of the property, at least equal to the footprint of the building for two storeys development and must increase with building height (p 416, Local plan).

Open space provision is considered as part of the character area assessments in SPG.

Appendix 6 of the Local Plan considers open space and play provision. It sets out the relevant categories of open space and guidelines on design and layout (p 443, Local Plan).

Backland Development is not specifically

considered in the Local Plan itself. Chapter 4 of the Area Based Policies Supplementary Planning Guidance considers backland development in the character area assessments for the borough's towns. Paragraph 2.6.5 (p 71, Area Based Policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance) considers two forms of backland development; plot amalgamation and tandem development. There is a general presumption against tandem development as a 'generally unsatisfactory form of accommodating new housing' It is stated that plot amalgamation is considered to be appropriate in certain areas. Each character area policy statement issues guidance on whether plot amalgamation is appropriate in each specific area.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

Policy should be strengthened to include linkages between areas of open space and could utilise the work of the Urban Nature Conservation Study. Back to back gardens should be encouraged as a way of reinforcing privacy and maximising natural habitats. The Urban Design Assessment guidelines stress the importance of back to back gardens. Additionally it has been noted that guidance regarding backland development features as SPG and only considers the character areas of towns. A policy reference to backland development that applies borough-wide, should be included as part of the Local Plan review.

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

### CIRCULATION, DEMAND AND LINKAGES

#### *Policy Summary*

Policy 49 states that the overall need for movement of people and goods should be reduced by the careful location of new development and states that any transport measures which minimise adverse environment impact, improves facilities for passenger transport walking and cycling and promotes the use of different transport modes will be encouraged (p169, Local Plan). Opportunities should also be taken to link and extend public rights of way and passenger transport links. The Council will also give priority to walking and more sustainable modes of travel.

Policy 55 states that traffic management schemes should achieve an effective balance between environmental benefits, road safety and traffic flow. The design of such schemes should take account of all road users (p179, Local Plan).

Policy 62 (p189, Local Plan) encourages



## METHODOLOGY FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

improvements to the highway and other public areas to facilitate cyclist safety and convenience. Particular encouragement will be given to the creation of links to schools and colleges and links to other major journey generators such as shopping areas, transport interchanges, places of employment and community or health facilities. Appropriate provision for cyclists such as changing facilities and secure parking and storage will be a requirement of major development and workplace cycling should be actively encouraged.

### *Evaluation and Gaps*

The Urban Design Assessment guidelines assert that each town and village should have a clean street hierarchy based on primary and district distributors, High Streets and residential access roads. Proposed hierarchies are given for each settlement. Provision of a network of safe and secure pedestrian routes which avoid busy roads should be emphasised.

## PARKING

### *Policy Summary*

Policy 49 states that car parking will be controlled in order to discourage unnecessary car use (p169, Local Plan).

Policy 57 concerns parking provision and management which will be used as a tool to encourage reduced car ownership and usage. There should be local incentives to encourage residents to shift transport modes to walking, cycling or public transport (p 181, Local Plan).

Private parking provision is considered in

Policy 58. New developments will be encouraged to minimise parking provision and to encourage access by means other than the private car. Car parking standards apply as a maximum as set out in appendix 5 of the Local Plan (p 425).

Shared use of private parking outside of working hours is encouraged in policy 59 (p187, Local Plan).

Appendix 5 of the Local Plan (p 425) sets out parking standards (including cycle parking standards) for residential and non residential development as well as setting out guidelines for the design and layout of parking provision, for example minimum size of parking space, safety issues and designing parking for disabled drivers.

### *Evaluation and Gaps*

Steps to reduce on street parking, particularly as part of new development should be made. The potential parking congestion caused by the conversion of large residential properties into flats should be considered.

Street widths are often not sufficient for on street parking and two way traffic. Widths of streets should be considered as part of new developments with specific approaches to on street parking.

## LAND USE

### *Policy Summary*

Policy 9 (p 9, Local Plan) relates to the land use division in towns and large villages. The settlements have been divided into four land uses (as shown on

the proposals map), therefore establishing the broad character and primary use of different parts of the towns and large villages.

### *Evaluation and Gaps*

There could be specific provisions made to protect non-residential uses in village centres to encourage mixed use development in town centres and to encourage and protect non-residential uses outside of town centres.

## QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM

### STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

#### *Policy Summary*

Policy 120 encourages the consideration of streetscape elements such as street furniture, highway signs, paving materials, lighting and overhead lines in Conservation Areas (p 287, Local Plan).

Policy 112 (p 265, Local Plan) states the guidelines under which consent for the display of advertisements will be permitted, considering amenity and character of the surrounding area, safety, material and size.

Policy 113 (p 267, Local Plan) considers exterior lighting and ensures that there is not significant adverse impact upon important rural and urban features, visual character and amenity.

Policy 115 (p 269, Local Plan) encourages the provision of new public works of art; however regard will be paid to the contribution it will make and

its relationship to the surrounding area.

Appendix 6 of the Local Plan states that careful thought should be given to the siting of street furniture; e.g. seating, lighting and litterbins in open space (p 443, Local Plan).

Appendix 8 of the Local Plan considers the siting of exterior lights and aims to protect against over lighting in sensitive locations using a zonal approach. The effect of illuminated advertisements is also considered (p 457, Local plan).

The Conservation Area character appraisals and Policy statements in Area Based Policies SPG (p 23-63, Supplementary Planning Guidance Area Based Policies) contains an assessment of the existing and guidance on future street furniture, signage and lighting provision, however this is only for three Conservation Areas.

### *Evaluation and Gaps*

There is a need for coherent guidance to be provided within the Local Plan on streetscape elements for all settlements, not just Conservation Areas. This will



## METHODOLOGY FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

help facilitate a cohesive and uncluttered streetscape which is harmonious and sensitive to the character of the surrounding area.

### QUALITY OF OPEN SPACE ALLOCATIONS

#### *Policy Summary*

Policy 72 states that the provision of open space should be given high priority (p213, Local Plan).

Policy 73 (p 215, Local Plan) sets out the standards which leisure space and public and private playing space should meet, in terms of size and access.

Policy 74 explains that all existing leisure space in all settlements other than towns and large villages will be retained (p 216, Local Plan).

Policy 75 states that building on leisure space will not be permitted. Where leisure space is lost through development replacement space must be provided to an equivalent or better standard in an accessible alternative location (p 216, Local Plan).

Policy 76 (p 217, Local Plan) asserts that new residential developments of over 25 dwellings or 1 hectare in area must provide public leisure space to meet the standards laid out. The space must be usable and appropriately designed.

Appendix 6 (p 443, Local Plan) establishes guidance regarding the quality and design of open space as well as establishing that spaces should be

imaginatively planned and of sufficient size to reflect the needs of those for whom it is intended. Long thin strips of land will not contribute to open space requirements. Open spaces should be designed for their function and should enhance the setting of adjacent buildings and landscape features. Future maintenance of open spaces should be considered and in many cases a full and viable management plan should be submitted.

#### *Evaluation and Gaps*

The policies in the Local Plan set out the importance of the provision of open space and the standards to which it should be provided, however there is not enough reference to the quality of the space and how high quality open space could and should be achieved.

Additionally there is a policy gap relating the linkages between open spaces. The provision of high quality open space should be stressed within Local Plan policies rather than tucked away in Appendix 6. It is hoped that the Urban Nature Conservation Study will assist with the formulation of such a policy.

### PROPOSED UPDATED PLANNING GUIDANCE

#### *Residential Character Area Appraisals Update*

The Residential Character Area Appraisals presented as Supplementary Planning Guidance in the Local Plan provide a comprehensive review of the established residential areas in

Dacorum's towns. The guidance breaks down the towns into several discrete areas - 36 areas for Hemel Hempstead, 21 areas for Berkhamsted and 19 areas for Tring - classified by elements of the built environment, including *housing*; (age, design, type, height, size, layout, density); *amenity* (open space, amenity land, front gardens and forecourts, landscaping and planting, views and vistas, landmarks and focal points); *traffic* (parking, routes); and *non-residential buildings*. Each character area appraisal concludes with a 'scope for residential development'.

The broad purpose of the Urban Design Assessment has been to create a strategy approach to the development of the towns and large villages of Dacorum. This approach recommends that zones much larger than the Residential Character Areas be established, with the creation of four to five Urban Design Zones for each settlement. The Residential Character Area Appraisals formed the critical base of research for the establishment of the Zones. The Urban Design Zones designated for the towns in the Urban Design Assessment are generally the agglomeration of similar Residential Character Areas, and the Zone boundaries are typically based on Residential Character Area boundaries.

The Assessment has also employed a series of criteria drawn from several national standards, including the Urban Design Compendium and By Design, which differ from those applied in the Residential Character Area Appraisals. In light of the broad strategy approach

of the Dacorum Urban Design Assessment and the expanded criteria, it would be important to update and expand the Residential Character Area Appraisals. This should involve the application of the assessment criteria used in the Urban Design Zones at the more detailed Residential Character Area level. It should also include clear references to areas where there is considered scope for increased residential densities.

#### *Village Urban Design Guidance*

The Residential Character Area Appraisals only covers Dacorum's towns. It would be useful to have similar character appraisals and development principles/ policy guidelines for the large villages which could, in turn inform future forward-looking strategies.

#### *Employment Areas*

As its title suggests, the Residential character Area Appraisals only currently cover those areas of the towns and large villages predominantly in residential use. It is recommended that the updated Character Area Appraisals (outlined



## METHODOLOGY FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

above) are also developed for non-residential areas (i.e. the core employment areas).

### Comprehensive Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design guidance within the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance lacks coherence. The Local Plan policies concerning urban design are scattered throughout the plan with many additional and important points being made within the appendices of the document where they are easily overlooked. SPG provides additional guidance for residential areas, however this only relates to the three towns.

It would be useful to locate all urban design policies together, for example a single discrete document which outlines urban design policies which would allow for more specific policies and greater depth of detail. We would recommend that a general urban design policy be included in the Core Strategy with the potential for this Urban Design Assessment to be adopted in some form as a new SPD. The London Borough of Lewisham has a general urban design policy which provides a good example.

No guidance on backland development is contained within the Local Plan and a specific borough wide policy should be introduced as part of the comprehensive urban design guidelines. This policy would set out guidance regarding first, how backland development sites are selected and second, what the urban design parameters for these sites are. Many county and borough councils have added backland development policies

into their Local Plans, the London Borough of Lewisham and Southend on Sea Borough Council both have good examples of backland and in-fill development policies.

### Specific Guidance on Hemel Hempstead Neighbourhoods

The Hemel Hempstead Neighbourhoods, planned as discrete units composed of residential areas, open space, shops and community uses (including schools, churches and health services), require unique evaluation and Planning Guidance. Because these areas were designed as units, it would be important to understand how well the originally conceived relationships are working, such as walking distances to schools, the encouragement of through traffic to arterial roads along the neighbourhoods' peripheries, and the success of the local shopping centres. An evaluation of the Hemel Hempstead Neighbourhoods could facilitate additional Planning Guidance that clearly address a range of issues such as the neighbourhood's land uses, morphology, circulation, area and population.

### Streetscape Urban Design Guidance

The existing policies regarding streetscape are too general in nature. Guidance should be more comprehensive, covering a wider range of elements, for example shop frontages and signage. While policy 120 addresses streetscape in Conservation Areas, many Conservation Areas streetscape elements are detracting from the character. This policy needs to be strengthened to avoid further damage. This kind of guidance would be

envisaged as a new SPD.

### Guidance on Continuity and Enclosure: Morphology, Setbacks and Building Orientation

Guidance that addresses morphology, orientation and building line setbacks in the context of character areas should be incorporated within the Local Plan. Guidance should encourage development which complements an area's character and new development should not compromise the existing character. This guidance should also have regard to the impact morphology, orientation and building line setbacks can have on density.

### Guidance on Views

The Local Plan and associated SPG's offer no guidance with regard to views. The Borough of Dacorum is characterised by undulating landscape with many settlements located in river valleys. The area's topography has resulted in a number of distinctive view corridors which should be protected. Specific guidance would address and treat differently both the span of the view corridors and the emphasis on protecting the views of key features. A policy should exist which specifies that buildings should work with the topographical features of the area, for example housing on streets running up valley slopes, as in Kings Langley, should be lower than the buildings below them. A detailed topographical study of the towns and large villages should be undertaken to inform this policy.

### Guidance for Car Parking

Parking, particularly on-street parking, is an issue identified through the urban design assessments of all six areas. In the villages, on street parking has been identified as a significant concern. On street parking in narrow streets is causing vehicle/ pedestrian conflict and congestion. Many streets are too narrow to accommodate on street parking and two way traffic. Existing policy within the Local Plan should be strengthened; it should incorporate a policy direction to encourage off street parking provision, where possible, for all new development. New residential development must consider the street widths for new and existing streets, and create a realistic policy for implementing off street parking capacities.





## FRAMEWORK FOR CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS

### FRAMEWORK FOR CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISALS

The English Heritage published 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' in August 2005, provides a clear explanation of the importance and benefits of character appraisals, step-by-step advice on how to prepare them, what they should cover and what the output should be. Conservation Area appraisals form part of the process to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the designated area and provides a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future. Undertaking such an appraisal offers an opportunity to re-assess designated Conservation Areas and to evaluate and record their special interest. The following English Heritage suggested format for a Conservation Area Appraisal, as found in appendix 2 of the report.

#### Summary of suggested format for a Conservation Area appraisal

1. Introduction (background to the study, scope and structure of the appraisal) Planning policy framework (national, regional and local, with reference to the local development framework)
2. Definition (or summary) of special interest
3. Assessment of special interest, suggested checklist headings;
  - a) Location and setting
    - Location and context, including a Conservation Area map

- General character and plan form
  - Landscape setting (topography and land form; geology; setting of the Conservation Area and its relationship with the setting/ landscape; identification of significant landmarks and panoramas).
- b) Historic development and archaeology
    - The origins and historic development of the area
    - The archaeological significance and potential of the area (including identification of scheduled monuments)
  - c) Spatial analysis
    - Character and interrelationship of spaces within the area
    - Key views and vistas (both out of and into the area; view points)
  - d) Character analysis
    - Definition of character areas or zones characterisation
    - Activity, prevailing of former uses within the area, and influence of these (and any historic patronage) on the plan form and building types
    - The architectural and historic qualities of the buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area
    - The contribution made by key unlisted buildings (including any recommendations for locally listed buildings)
    - Local details
    - Prevalent local and traditional building materials and the public realm
    - An audit of heritage assets (if appropriate)
    - The contribution made by greenery and green spaces; and ecology/ biodiversity

- value.
  - The extent of loss, intrusion, or damage, i.e. negative factors
  - The existence of any neutral areas
  - General condition of the area and built fabric, identification of BARs Problems, pressures (including need for any Article 4 directions), and the capacity for change.
4. Community involvement (how the process was undertaken)
  5. Suggested boundary changes (extensions, deletions, if relevant)
  6. Local generic guidance Summary of issues (including need for statutory action)
  7. Useful information, appendices and contact details
  8. Management proposals/ strategy (developing a management strategy)

