Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway

Feasibility Study

Final Report

March 2011

BDP. Knight Frank mvaconsultancy

DACORUM

Contents

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VISION

‘Investigate the design and development opportunities for an important transport interchange and gateway to Hemel Hempstead, striking the balance between the appropriate mix and scale of land uses whilst satisfying the Council’s design and sustainability aspirations for the site and its context’

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CHAPTER 04 - OPTIONS

CHAPTER 05 - IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

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01 BACKGROUND

Introduction

The Project

BDP, in conjunction with Knight Frank and MVA Consultancy, have been commissioned by Dacorum Borough Council to prepare a feasibility study for Hemel Hempstead railway station, adjacent station car park and its immediate context, which includes commercial and residential properties along London Road.

Hemel Hempstead is located in West Hertfordshire, approximately 25 miles from central London, and is Dacorum Borough's largest town.

The redevelopment of Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway, whether comprehensively or in-part, should aim to (in order of priority):

- ***Improve the appearance and functioning of the transport interchange.***
- ***Deliver a mix of residential housing to support housing growth targets.***
- ***Enhance the relationship of the built environment with its setting.***
- ***Create a gateway appropriate to Hemel Hempstead and its setting.***
- ***Create a development that contributes to the functioning of the residential and business communities in Hemel Hempstead.***

It is proposed that the project will follow a 5-Stage process, which is summarised below and outlined in greater detail in the Project Methodology issued in July 2010 as part of the submission questionnaire.

Stage 1:

During Stage 1 BDP will undertake analysis of the site and its surrounding context, informing the development strategy, and establishing design and sustainability principles for the site. This work will include evaluating and identifying potential land uses and transport issues for the site, which should be further informed by the Knight Frank market assessment, the MVA transport study and wider planning considerations. Stage 1 will also include some preliminary consultation with key stakeholders, including Arriva, Network Rail, London Midland, the Boxmoor Trust and Dacorum Borough Council.

The design and sustainability principles derived from the site analysis and consultation workshops will help guide the subsequent stages of the study.

Stage 2 :

The second stage of the project will focus on developing a Vision for the site and high-level design concepts. The concepts will be principally driven by the requirements as set out in the brief and will be derived from the findings of stage one. The concepts will set out a broad framework in terms of land use, massing and access with strengths and weaknesses summarised alongside.

Stage 3:

Stage 3 will see the development of a series of options which aim to give a clearer indication of heights, massing, land use and access. The options will also be representative of various scenarios with regard to land assembly and ownership. Each option will be tested against the set of design and sustainability principles derived from stage one and two of the project. Following this the options will be subject to further stakeholder consultation with initial viability testing carried out.

Stage 4

Following the stakeholder consultation and review of the options with the client team in the previous stage, a preferred option will be developed. This preferred option will be put through rigourous access and movement, market and viability and sustainability testing with further refinements carried out where necessary.

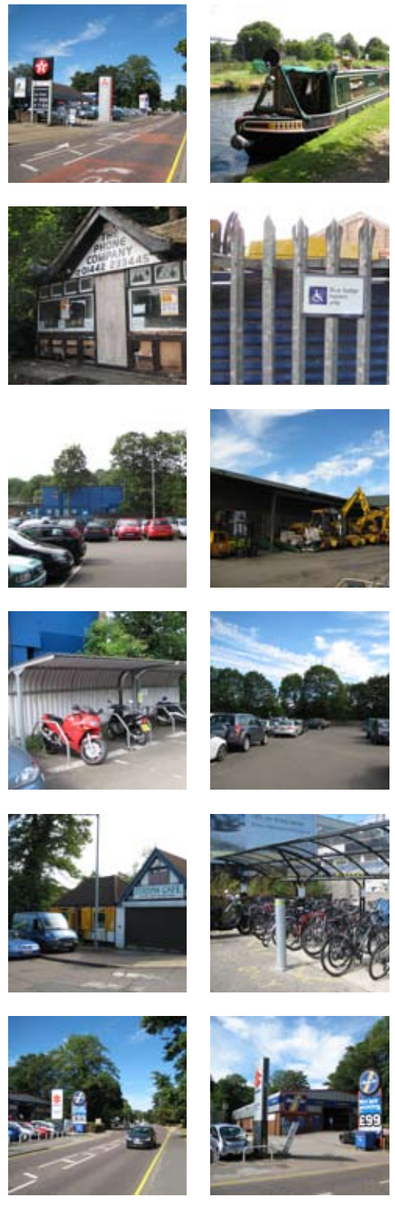
Stage 5

Following the selection and refinement of the preferred option a series of design principles and parameters will be drawn up along with traffic and parking management, sustainability and phasing and implementation strategies. All of the outputs will come together to form a feasibility study.

The Report Structure

This "Analysis, Visioning and Principles report" covers the first two stages of the project and comprises of the following tasks:

- An audit of site context including landscape features, infrastructure, linkages and relationships with adjoining land parcels and uses.
- Site design analysis including key views and vistas, nodes and gateways, urban form and frontages, land form and landscape features and movement networks. This information will be distilled into a constraints and opportunities analysis for the site and its context
- With project highway consultants assess transport context and movement corridors
- With property consultants identify and summarise the existing and future market potential of the site.
- Develop a Draft Vision which; establishes a context for development, defines site-wide design and sustainability principles.



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Introduction

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The Context (Hemel Hempstead)

Located to the west of Hemel Hempstead, the railway station site sits between the A41 carriageway and a large swathe of open space running alongside the Grand Union Canal.

Hemel Hempstead is a town in the south east of England, 27 miles from the outskirts of north west London. At present the town has an estimated population of around 89,000 and was developed as a new town, in the post World War II period.

The town was developed around the principle of having a series of districts focussed around an existing parade of shops or a square, which was designated a neighbourhood centre. The industrial areas were later incorporated into the fabric of the town.

Hemel Hempstead is well served by rail, conveniently situated on the main railway line from London Euston to the Midlands. Served by London Midland, the station has frequent services running to London Euston, Milton Keynes Central, Tring and Northampton making it an attractive commuter town.

Rail services also serve Bedford (via Bletchley) and St Albans (via Watford Junction)

The station itself is fairly disconnected from many of the key attractors within the town, such as the industrial estates and the town centre.

Whilst the town centre is seemingly disconnected from its principal transport interchange, the town benefits from high quality open space that weaves its way through the more urban areas from the fringe, although transport infrastructure has somewhat carved up the landscape, particularly around the periphery of the town.

Introduction

Site Context (Local)

The site is bound by the main railway line to the south and London Road (A4251) to the north. Hemel Hempstead railway station is a well used facility acting as an important gateway for the local community, particularly commuters who take advantage of its convenient strategic location.

The site is principally formed of three main uses; the station and its related elements (car parking, taxi ranks, bus stands), commercial uses (Kwik Fit, The Harvester, Texaco and MG & Rover) and private residential.

A significant proportion of the site is taken up by surface car parking. There are approximately 500 car parking spaces and it is likely that these will be reprovided in the event of redevelopment, potentially in another form.

Due to its backland nature, both in terms of current use and location, the site has a limited number of access points giving it a very secluded feel, particularly to the east within the station car park.

The site is lined with a number of mature trees both to the east and west, with the cluster to the west sitting on top of Roman remains, significantly restricting the development potential of this end of the site. The other line of trees screen the residential units to the north of the site along London Road from the large surface car park.

The site suffers from a series of significant level changes, both at the station forecourt which slopes down towards London Road and along the northern edge of the surface car park, where the landform abruptly drops off towards the commercial and residential uses.

Land Ownership

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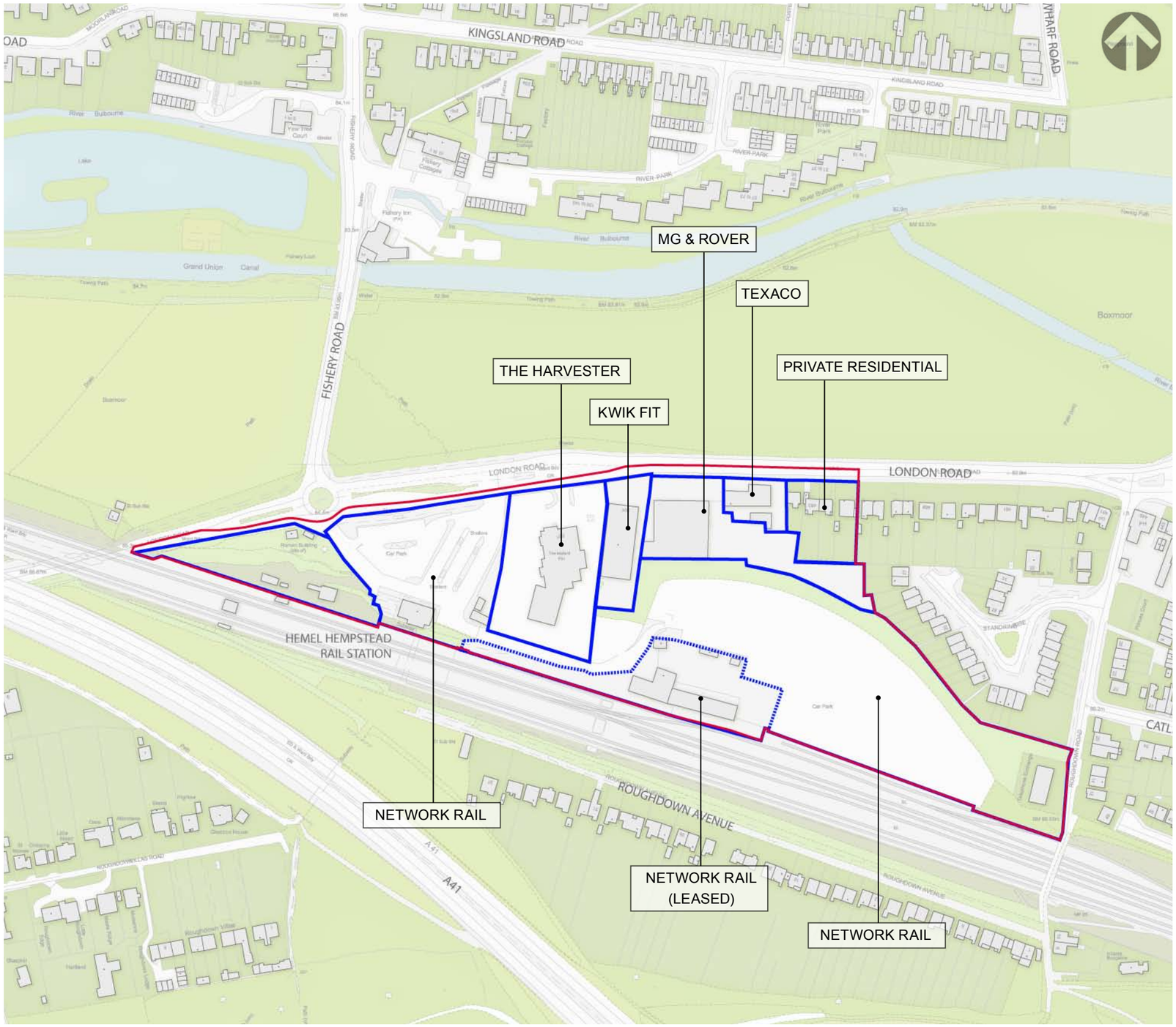
Site Assembly

The site is principally owned by Network Rail, who have control over the station, the adjoining forecourt and the large surface car park to the east of the site. Network Rail also own the plot of land within the carpark that is currently being used for light industrial and railway related uses. It is understood that the tenant on this plot is on a short term lease, which contains a break clause that would allow Network Rail to remove the tenant should the option of redevelopment present itself.

Besides Network Rail, there are a number of other land owners within the site boundary, these include, The Harvester, Kwik Fit, Texaco, MG & Rover and four private residential units, all of which are located to the northern edge of the site along London Road.

The multiple site ownership could potentially be seen as a constraint, and therefore as the project moves forward it is likely a series of options that take into account various land assembly scenarios will be developed.



Property Market Review

The Hemel 2020 Vision sets out the Council's aspirations for the development and improvement of the town, a priority of which includes improvements to the transport interchange facility at the railway station. The following is a baseline report which provides an overview of the key property market sectors which will help to inform the development of potential options for the enhancement of the station area and to reinforce its position as a key gateway to the town.

Information has been derived from a variety of sources including on-line databases, in-house research, the views of our Knight Franks agency teams, as well as discussions with estate agents and commercial agents active in the Hemel Hempstead market and a review of previous work undertaken by and on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council, including:

- Dacorum Retail Study Updated (2009);
- Housing Land Availability Paper (April 2009);
- The South West Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (Nov 2008)
- Dacorum Borough Council Affordable Housing and Section 106 Viability Study (Nov 2009)

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

Hemel Hempstead is one of Hertfordshire's "new towns", situated a few miles north west of where the M25 and M1 cross and 27 miles (43.5 km) to the north west of London. The Borough has excellent road and rail connections, including the M1, M25, A41, the West Coast main line and London Midland into central London. Heathrow, Luton and, to a lesser extent, Stansted airports are all within easy reach. The population of Hemel according to the 2001 Census was 81,143 and has an estimated primary catchment area of 169,000.

The East of England Plan (May 2008), proposed the physical, social and economic regeneration of Hemel Hempstead. Policy LA2 of the plan included proposals for housing growth of 12,000 units by 2021 in Dacorum, concentrated at Hemel Hempstead which requires sustainable urban extensions. Although there is now some uncertainty around Regional Plans, it is likely that the principal of significant urban growth will remain.

The Site

The subject site is some distance from Hemel Hempstead town centre situated on London Road. The site is broadly triangular in shape and 4.2 ha (10.37 acres) in size. The site comprises a station building and interchange facilities as well as a circa 500 space surface car park. In addition the site also incorporates a number of residential properties, car showroom premises, a Harvester restaurant and several industrial / storage facilities. The site is predominately in the ownership of Network Rail, although subject to a franchise agreement with London Midland Trains. The restaurant, residential, industrial and car sales premises are all in third party ownership.

We have not undertaken an assessment of existing use value / the cost of land assembly at this stage, however, given the type and number of uses currently located on the site, this is likely to be significant. The likely cost of land assembly coupled with the cost of providing enhanced interchange facilities and the consolidation of station car parking within a multi-storey structure means that the redevelopment needs to create sufficient value to offset what would be considered abnormal development costs. It is therefore essential that development value is maximised by creating an appropriate density and mix of the highest value uses in order to create a viable proposal.

RESIDENTIAL MARKET

National Context

When considering the viability of residential uses it is important to understand the national context as the wider economy has a role in influencing investment, development and occupier market activity at the local level.

The UK housing market has been experiencing a significant downturn. On several measures the speed and severity of this downturn is worse than the one seen in the early 1990's. The most significant driver behind the weak market conditions has been the fall-out from the credit crunch. Access to mortgage finance has been severely restricted, and the cost of finance has risen simultaneously.

There is still much conflicting opinion surrounding both the land and new homes markets in the UK. After seeing very little activity in the 2009, transactional activity has started to increase particularly in the south east. However, sales values do remain depressed from the 2007 highs. Average house prices rose almost 6% during 2009 and the data for June 2010 shows an annual house price change of 8.2 per cent. This change brings the average house price in England and Wales to £165,314.

Maintaining growth in the rate of new-build starts will not be straightforward. At the sharp end of the downturn the development sector has lost staff and skills and will take time to rebuild capacity. But the biggest issue is how to access good quality development land. With the banks in no hurry to force distressed sales of the portfolios they lent against, there is precious little good land, particularly land with workable planning consents, available to buy.

Solutions to the impasse are being found by new joint-venture arrangements between the banks and the newly re-financed developers. Despite this, we ought to expect that the growth of new development volumes will be a slow process suggesting that very tight new-build supply will remain a feature through 2010.

In addition to the above it is worth highlighting one key trend which has emerged over the past 12-18 months. Developers have moved away from higher density development comprising smaller 1 and 2 bed flats towards larger family dwellings. The general consensus amongst developers is that larger units are more likely to withstand the current adverse market conditions as such units appeal more to the owner occupier/family markets rather than the buy-to-let/ investment market. Given the nature of the subject site it is likely that this market trend will apply.

Local Market Context

In line with the UK market generally, Hemel has experienced a significant downturn in market conditions up until the last quarter of 2009. This manifested itself in a considerable reduction in both the number of potential purchasers and property transaction levels. A number of the major schemes such as the proposed Watermark development were delayed as a consequence of the recent turbulence in market conditions. The most significant residential scheme in Hemel town centre is the Dandara Image development, which is a mixed use scheme comprising 434 residential one and two bed units. The scheme includes the refurbishment of the former Kodak building which is the tallest building in the town. Prices start from £165,000.

We have been advised by a number of local agents active in the town that applicant registration levels have continually increased since the beginning of 2010. To that end, local agents report that there is now a renewed confidence in the sales market, resulting in improved market sentiment and increased sales rates. That said this report increase in demand has predominately been for family housing as opposed to apartments. Agents report that the apartment market remains depressed and in their opinion is likely to remain so in the short to medium term.

When asked about the prospects for residential development as part of the station development agents were of the opinion that residential use would be attractive to the market especially from

Property Market Review

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commuters capitalising on Hemel's excellent transport links into London. Echoing the general sentiment agents also commented, that given the characteristics of the surrounding area and developers caution towards higher density schemes that having a mix of larger units and family housing would be advisable. They indicated that a maximum of circa 30% of the total residential content maybe appropriate for flatted development. Agents also commented that good quality design to mitigate the impact from a visual and noise perspective of the adjoining railway was seen as critical to the marketability and success of the development.

In respect of sales values according to findaproperty.com the average sales values in the area are:

Studio Flats	£137,617
1 Bed Flats	£124,152
2 Bed Flats	£168,556
3 Bed Flats	£202,947
2 Bed Houses	£217,516
3 Bed Houses	£264,883
4 Bed Houses	£418,223

Find a property.com

New build, good quality development would attract a small premium over and above the values highlighted above. General sale value tones for new build development would be circa £200 - £220 per sq ft for family housing and £250 - £260 per sq ft for flats. In terms of existing values there are a number of large semi detached family homes currently on the market within close proximity to the station, which have asking prices ranging from £370,000 - £410,000.

STATION RETAIL MARKET

National Context

Over the last two years the retail market have seen a sustained downturn, with overriding national, and indeed global, factors fundamentally impacting on every local market. This downturn has been inextricably linked to the credit crisis. Initially, from the middle of 2007, it brought a sharp correction to the over-heated investment market and then subsequently its effects fed through to the economy and occupier markets from the latter end of 2008 and 2009.

However, over the last six months, with yields looking more attractive relative to cash and government bonds, investment demand has returned for UK commercial property, albeit interest is confined to prime or good secondary assets (i.e. quality assets with low risk of tenant default). This demand-supply imbalance has brought about a sudden return to increasing prices as buyers have had to compete for those limited opportunities which are available.

The health of the occupational market remains driven by location. Occupier demand is strong for Greater London, regional centres and market towns, with anecdotal evidence of limited rental growth. However, poorer secondary and tertiary locations, both in terms of town and pitch, are struggling with little sign of recovery from the current cycle.

Local Context

As mentioned above Hemel station site is some distance from the town centre, which has a reasonable provision of comparison and leisure uses. The town centre offer has been significantly improved with the recently developed Riverside Shopping Centre, which comprises 24 units including Debenhams, Next, H&M and Pizza Express. That said, despite the presence of some quality retailers there remain a number of vacant units within the development, which reflects the current economic climate and the weakness in the occupational markets as well as the market perception of Hemel Hempstead as a retail location.

Although the station is some distance from the town centre, there is significant scope to improve the retail and catering provision associated with the station. The current provision is extremely limited and unlikely to be capitalising on the full potential of the commuter trade.

In terms of the improvement to the station's retail and leisure offer, the distance from the town centre may actually be seen as positive, as there are unlikely to be linked trips to the town centre which would cannibalise spend and trade from new occupiers. There is likely to be capacity for an improved newsagents as well as additional café units. In addition there may also be the potential for a small format or basket food store, such as a Tesco Metro or Sainsbury's Local. The inclusion of a small food store would certainly improve the marketability of the other units but also improve the viability of retail development in this location. The food sector area of the retail market which has remained strong throughout the downturn is that for foodstores. Rents have held up well and yields also remain strong given the covenant strength of the operators.

Typically rents for station retail is in the region of £15.00 to £17.50 per sq ft and a 7% yield. Food retail rental values would have a similar rental tone, however, the yield profile would be significantly better at circa 5.5%.

EMPLOYMENT MARKET

National Context

The overall picture for the office market in the UK has been poor in recent months with covenant strength weakening and rents adjusting rapidly to reflect the overall economic downturn. With occupiers increasingly looking to consolidate their accommodation amid the downturn, we anticipate that downward pressure on rents will remain throughout 2010 albeit at more muted levels to that seen in 2009. The continued shortage of credit and a lack of desirable investment stock have kept transactional volumes at subdued levels. In the South East, investment turnover in Q1 totalled £68.6m, 87% below the quarterly average for the last six years.

Location		Developer	Period	Floorspace	Details
Breakspear Pk, Breakspear Way	*OOT*	*Catalyst Capital*	*Q2 07*	*112,500*	*Spec at start date; Refurbishment providing offices and data halls*
2 Orchard Fields, Maylands Ave	*OOT*	*PruPim*	*Q3 09*	*30,000*	*Spec at start date; High tech bldg. Major repairsv after Buncefield*
Spectra Hse, Boundary Way	*OOT*	*Azurie OS*	*Q2 09*	*19,500*	*Spec at start date.*
Amberside Hse, Wood Ln	*OOT*	*Jarvis*			

Source: Promise [OOT: Out of Town}

Property Market Review

The increasing threat of tenant defaults caused by the recession and the associated effect on asset performance is nevertheless leading to heavy discounting on assets with high risk tenants. Consequently, a pricing distinction has emerged between prime assets. The keenest pricing relates to prime buildings in prime locations which offer secure income, while prime buildings with a greater degree of occupational risk, such as multiple tenanted offices, are being discounted accordingly.

Local Context

Hemel is categorised as a small office centre with an estimated office stock of 3.8 million sq ft. Over the last 20 years, completions in Hemel have totalled 1.1 million sq ft, equating to an average of 54,000 sq ft pa, although completions in recent years have been significantly lower than this level. At the end of 2009 availability was estimated at 13.1% of total stock.

It is also worth noting that the vast majority of office stock is out of centre. By way of example the table on the facing page provides an indication of the most recent developments all of which are out of centre locations.

In addition to the existing stock there is an estimated 2.1 million sq ft of space in Hemel's development pipeline and of this 0.4 million sq ft has planning permission with the remaining more preliminary. To put this into context, at current take up levels this equates to a 45 year supply. Of the planned space in Hemel there are 3 schemes over 100,000 sq ft and 4 between 50 – 100,000 sq ft. the vast majority of space planned is located out of centre on or near to established existing employment locations.

Top rents are estimated at £20 per sq ft. That said significant increases in incentives and reduced lease terms mean that effective rents have fallen well below this level. At end-2009, prime yields in Hemel are reported to stand at 8.25%.

The station area is not considered an office location being some distance from both the town centre and the larger established out of centre employment locations. That said the station area may attract some small to medium sized business that would benefit from being in commuting distance from London. However, discount rental values would have to be applied to account for the untested location. Given existing prime rental levels, we would have concerns about the viability of new build office development in this location.

Other Uses

In addition to the residential, retail and office market we have also considered the possible alternative uses including Hotel and Healthcare use.

HOTEL

Historically hotels have rarely been able to compete on value with alternative uses such as office space or residential on new build developments. On new build and mixed use sites alternative use will generally, not always, offer better value per square metre to the developer, but an employment generating hotel use can help to support or provide an amenity service to office and residential occupiers. In addition, hotels can often "set the tone" for the quality of the overall development, acting as a marketing tool to sell residential units in particular.

In recent years, shareholders and the hotel groups themselves have identified that they should concentrate on being hoteliers and not holders of large amounts of property which has led to a large scale split of "bricks and brains" by many operators.

By divesting themselves of the holding costs of bricks and mortar by way of sale and lease or manage back arrangements and taking on new leases or management contracts, it has allowed them to develop more bedrooms and push out brands by releasing equity in the property itself. Management contracts are now more acceptable to investors and many of the recent transactions have been on the basis of a sale and manage back. Lease income and the yields applicable have historically been preferred by investors, but with yield compression on management contracts and a better understanding of how they work, they are now an established and sought after investment vehicle.

Very few of the mainstream full service operators will now take leases. The long term rental obligation on the balance sheet is considered as unattractive by most hotel groups. Management contracts are now becoming more acceptable. Most budget and limited service operators will take leases, as their largely room only driven income is less volatile than full service hotel income and easier to predict.

The table below provides an indication of the costs and values that may be appropriate for the Hemel area, although it should be noted that specific market testing has not been undertaken at this time.

Number of rooms	*30 to 40*
GIA per room	*28m2*
Build cost per room	*£45,000 - 55,000*
Rental Value per room	*£5,000 -8,000*
Investment Yield	*5.50%-7.00%*

HEALTHCARE

Despite the current economic environment the healthcare industry has continued to grow. Traditionally land values associated with healthcare have not been able to compete with residential or employment uses, more recently the value gap has closed. Developers are seeing healthcare as a viable option to residential and often a pre-let can be secured which greatly assists cashflow and reduces the overall development risk.

In terms of Hemel Hempstead catchment, there is limited private healthcare provision and although no market testing has been undertaken at this stage, it is likely there would be capacity for additional healthcare provision. The general requirements include a prominent location boarding an affluent area and a site of circa 1 to 1.5 acres. This size of site would typically accommodate 60 to 80 beds depending on the massing of the building. Positively a healthcare facility generally has low parking ratios. To provide an indication of values, typically good quality facilities yield land values of circa £20,000 to £30,000 per bed space.

Conclusions

Given the nature of the site there will inevitability be substantial costs associated with development including land assembly costs, the cost of consolidating the existing car parking and the costs of improving and upgrading the interchange facilities. It is therefore essential that viability is maximised through the creation of an appropriate scale of development and mix of uses.

In this respect it is clear from our property market research, that despite the property market downturn, that residential will be the main value driver, albeit, oriented more towards larger family housing units rather than apartments. It was also clear that there is good potential to enhance the quantum and quality of retail and A3 provision which could include a small basket food store. It is our opinion that the inclusion of an element of food retailing within the overall mix will be helpful in the context of scheme viability. In addition to the above we also considered a range of other uses including office, healthcare, and hotel use. All could be considered appropriate in terms of the characteristics of the site, but given the current economic climate, such uses would not achieve higher land values than residential use, and indeed may not be viable in their own right.

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Local Planning Review

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1.1 Introduction

This section sets out the policy context for the Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway site. In particular, it considers the regeneration context in Hemel Hempstead - the Hemel 2020 Vision - as well as existing and emerging planning policies.

1.2 Hemel 2020: Our Vision, Our Future (2006)

Hemel 2020 is a regeneration vision produced by Dacorum Borough Council in partnership with local residents, businesses and community groups along with English Partnerships and the East of England Development Agency. Launched in 2006, the Vision is intended to outline a spatial framework for the delivery of regeneration objectives that reflect the town's particular characteristics, opportunities and needs. It emphasises the need for sustainable housing and communities; a thriving town centre; the rejuvenation of the Maylands industrial area; and the need to improve the natural and historic environment.

The Vision pinpoints 6 initial opportunity projects throughout Hemel Hempstead that will enable the delivery of these regeneration objectives. These have been incorporated within the emerging Core Strategy. This list is not comprehensive and in relation to the Station Gateway site the vision recognises the need throughout the town to enhance green links with development and open spaces as well as links between key passenger interchange points and the town centre.

Hemel 2020 is an overarching vision, intended to be read in conjunction with the current Local Plan and emerging Local Development Framework as a basis for guiding future development planning for Hemel Hempstead. It does not set out any detailed proposals nor the timescale for implementation, at present it continues to inform the vision of the Core Strategy and the projects will continue to move forward either independently or potentially as collaborative schemes.

1.3 Planning Context

The following section contains a summary of the national and local planning policy context within which the Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway will sit.

1.3.1 Status of the Development Plan

The Council adopted the Dacorum Borough Council Local Plan 1991 – 2011 on 21st April 2004. These policies have been 'saved' up until the new style Local Development Framework (LDF) is adopted in its place.

The original target dates anticipated that by the end of 2013, all the documents required for the Local Development Framework will have been adopted, thereby replacing the District Local Plan. This would include Site Allocations and all Development Control Policy as well as the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan. Recent amendments to the national planning system may incur delay in this process.

A present, the policies within the District Local Plan form the statutory development plan in accordance with Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, although the emerging policies within the Council's LDF, and national planning statements are material considerations in determining planning applications.

1.3.2 Relevant National Policy

Key national planning policies relating to the development of the Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway include -

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development: Outlines the framework for the new planning system in terms of creating and securing sustainable communities through inclusive, accessible and sustainable developments.

PPS Planning & Climate Change supplementary to PPS1: Presents key policies on tackling climate change, encouraging energy efficient development that minimises resource consumption and sustains biodiversity. Local authorities are required to set a percentage target for on-site renewable energy in-line with PPS22.

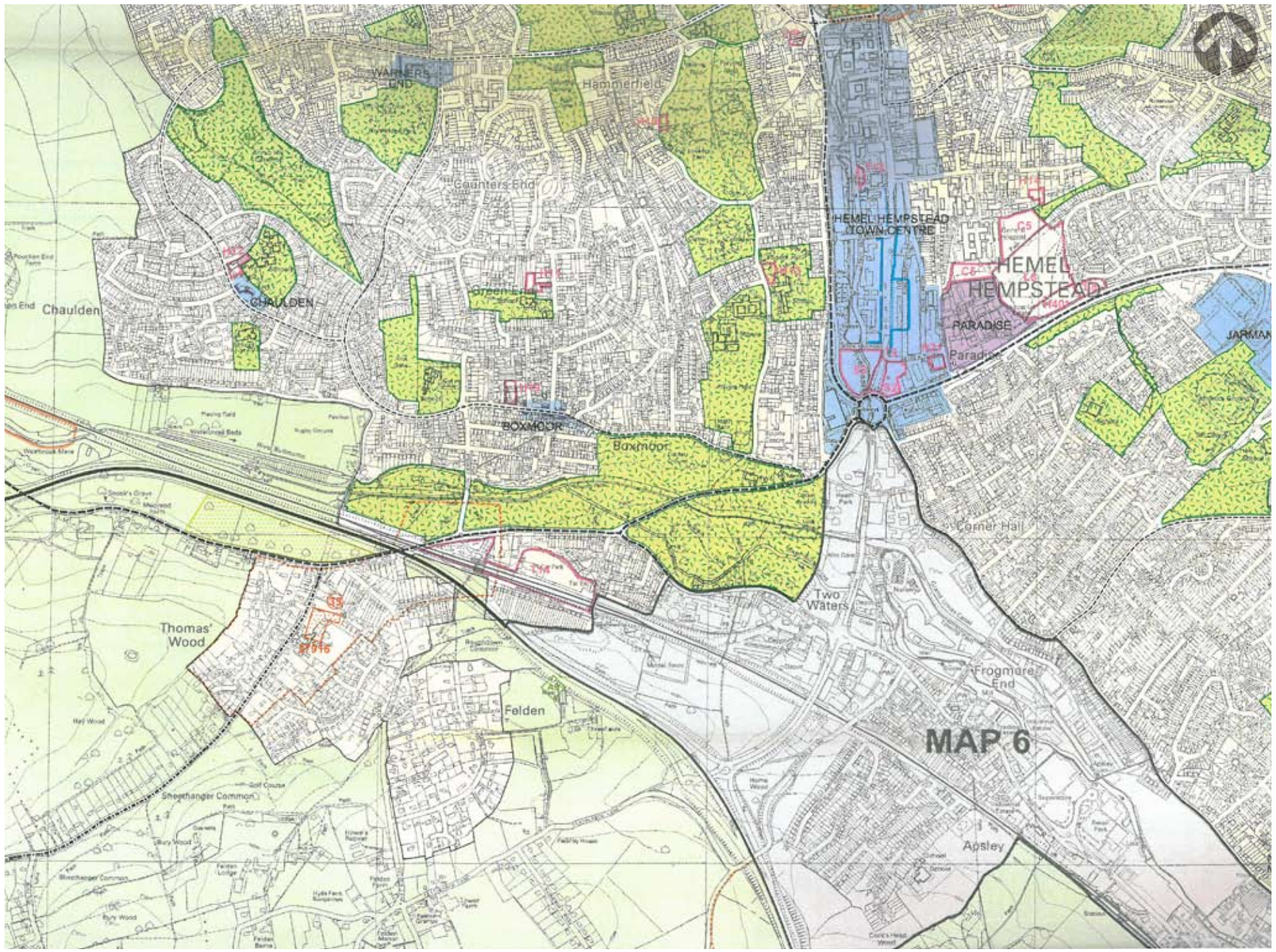
PPS3 Housing: Seeks to promote high quality housing, a mix of housing tenures and prices, housing developments in suitable locations which offer good access to jobs and services and the re-use of previously developed land.

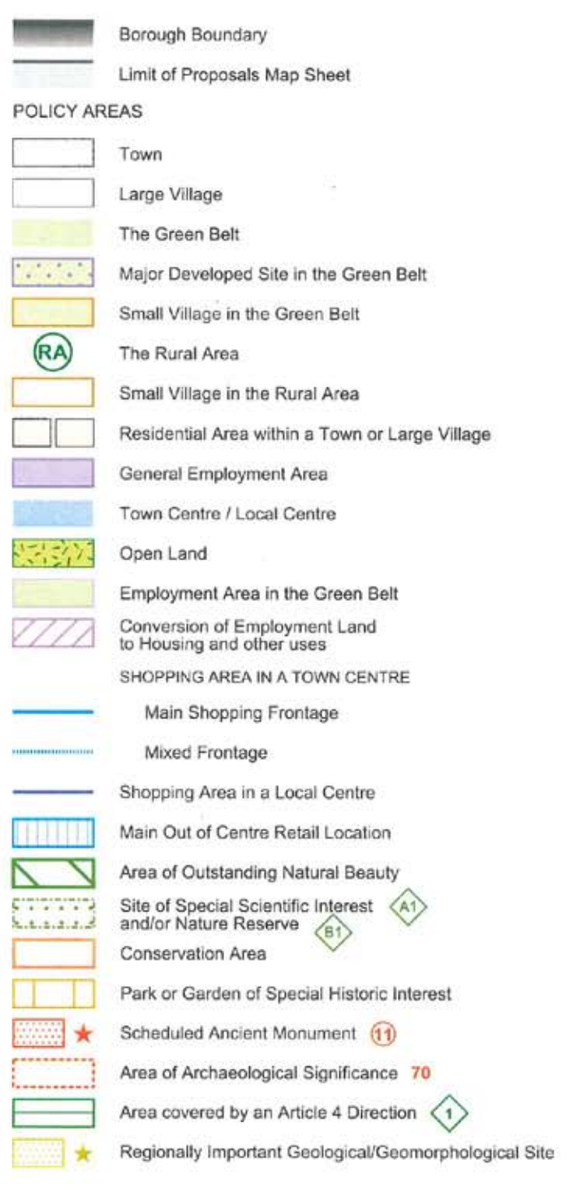
PPS4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth: Consolidates the previous PPS6 and PPS7 setting out the planning policies for sustainable economic development in urban and rural areas.

PPG13 Transport: Advocates sustainable forms of transport and reducing the need to travel, particularly by car, through the sensitive location, scale and density of development which can raise quality of life making it safer and easier for people to access jobs, homes and services.

PPS22 Planning for Renewable Energy: Seeks a percentage of the energy used in new residential, commercial and industrial developments to come from on-site renewable energy.

PPS25 Development and Flood Risk: Introduces a sequential approach to selecting sites for development, with low risk (Zone 1) areas assessed before Zone 2 or Zone 3 areas.





Dacorum Borough Local Plan (1991-2011)

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Local Planning Review

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1.3.3 Regional Policy

Since the change of Government, local authorities are no longer required to conform to targets set out in regional policy. All Regional Spatial Strategies were formally revoked on 6th July 2010. Nevertheless, the East of England RSS is of interest, as it provided the housing and employment targets and policy framework to which emerging policy reports were working.

The RSS aimed to concentrate growth and development in 21 Key Centres for Development and Change, of which Hemel Hempstead was one. Accordingly it set a high growth target for Dacorum, requiring provision for 10,000 new dwellings in 2006-21, and 'substantial job growth', including through improvements to the town centre. Identifying the town as a key regional transport node, the RSS called for substantial improvement to the image and quality of the town's built fabric and public realm, including multifunctional green space. To help make room for this growth, the Plan also proposed strategic reviews of the Green Belt in two places, one of which was around Hemel Hempstead. There was a successful legal challenge to the RSS, a consequence of which was the deletion of parts relating to Green Belt review and significant housing growth at Hemel Hempstead. The review of the RSS was expected to result in revised employment and housing targets broken down to the district level. With the abolition of the RSS, this review and examination process of the RSS has ceased and there are no new regional or district targets.

As a result, Dacorum Borough Council is presently in the process of independently revisiting its strategic housing allocation and density targets. These will be presented as two options in the draft Core Strategy which is due to go out for Public Consultation in November 2010. All regional tier policy has been scrapped as has the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan 1991 – 2011 and the Council is undergoing review of its emerging policy and future approach in relation to these recent changes.

1.3.4 Local Planning Policy

The current Local Plan, the emerging Local Development Framework and the Hemel 2020 document form the basis for future development planning in the town.

Dacorum Borough Council Local Plan 1991 – 2011 (Adopted April 2004)

The Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway site has several site specific planning policies within the Adopted Local Plan:

- The Hemel Hempstead Town Centre boundary encompasses the site and as such the area is a preferred location for development (Policy 2 Towns).
- The majority of the site is designated as a 'Residential Area' in which contextual residential development is encouraged and small scale non-residential amenity development will also be acceptable. The introduction or intensification of inappropriate non-residential development is not supported in these areas.
- Changes of use of existing properties to residential institutions is also encouraged as are higher levels of housing density in particular areas that are well served by passenger transport (Policy 21 Density of Residential Development).
- The Housing Character Appraisal (Policy location 7 Boxmoor) highlights site allocations and design recommendations for housing, identifying the land adjacent to the station as a potential residential or mixed use location.
- The western part of the site is designated as the Boxmoor Area of Archaeological Significance requiring development to protect the archaeological integrity of the site as appropriate.
- Under policy proposal T14, the existing station interchange facilities within the site are safeguarded for this ongoing future use (Policy 118 Important Archaeological Remains).

There are also a number of general Local Plan policies that need to be considered when producing detailed proposals for the site. These policies include:

Form of Development and Design

Key policies relating to the form, nature and design of development are as follows:

Policy 11 Quality of Development: States that development will not be permitted unless it is appropriate in terms of design on the site itself, in relation to adjoining properties and in the context of longer views. A high standard of design is expected against a number of criteria with particular respect to enhancing local townscape, character and ecological and historical features.

Policy 111 Height of Development: Permits buildings of over 3 storeys within towns and large villages provided they harmonise with the character of the surrounding area and contribute positively to the local context. In all cases special regard should be paid to the effect of site levels on the resultant appearance and visual impact of any design.

Policy 21 Density of Residential Development: States that densities are expected in the range of 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare net. However, higher densities will be encouraged in locations where services and/or workplaces can be reached without the need for motorised travel or which are served well by passenger transport.

Policy 20 Affordable Housing: Sets out the general expectation that a minimum of 20% of the units on redevelopment sites should be for affordable housing in sites of 1 hectare or more in an area capable of accommodating 15 dwellings in Hemel Hempstead. Higher levels may be appropriate on larger sites.

Services and Community Facilities

Policy 44 Shopping Development outside Existing Centres: Any larger retail proposals at the site will be required to demonstrate that a sequential approach to site selection has been followed in accordance with Policy 38 (Shopping Hierarchy) and that there is a quantitative and qualitative need for the development.

Policy 70 Social and Community Facilities in New Developments: Advocates that development consider the need to provide integrated social and community facilities and that larger scale development will not be granted until this has been considered.

Local Planning Review

Flood Risk

From the Environment Agency's flood risk maps and the Borough's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment the site is not within a Flood Risk Zone 2 or Zone 3 area, indicating that in accordance with PPS25 most forms of development of this nature would be acceptable from a flooding perspective. As the Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway site is over 1 hectare in size in total, a Flood Risk Assessment would be required to be submitted with a planning application for the whole site.

Policy 107 Development in areas of flood risk: States that a precautionary approach to flood risk will be taken when considering development based on the sequential approach set out in PPG25. The production of a Flood Risk Assessment will be required for all sites where the Environment Agency advises that the risk of flooding exists.

Policy 124 Water conservation and sustainable drainage systems: Requires proposals to demonstrate inclusion of water conservation and sustainable drainage practices which may include infiltration, grey water recycling and rain water storage techniques.

Natural and Historic Setting

A number of policies relate directly to the wider protection of nature and biodiversity within Hemel Hempstead (Policies 96-106). Although the site is not within any particular naturally designated site it neighbours an area of Open Land to the north and Green Belt to the South. As such, policy recommendations to enhance biodiversity can contribute to strengthening the ecological network for the wider area.

Policy 118 Important archaeological remains: Requires consultation with English Heritage and the County Archaeological Group where proposals affect areas of archaeological potential. Applications will require the submission of archaeological evaluation to encourage the enhancement of archaeological remains and their settings.

Emerging Local Development Framework

Although at an early stage, the Council's Emerging Core Strategy, June 2009, provides an indication of future planning policies over the period 2011-2031. The Core Strategy presents the broad emerging objectives for the Borough that include:

- Delivering new homes in the Borough focused within Hemel Hempstead (6,500) and meeting the diverse mix of types, tenures and dwelling sizes that are needed.
- Enhancing Hemel Hempstead's role as the main centre within the Borough encouraging higher density of development, with a thriving sub regional business and shopping hub and distinctive New Town identity.
- Focusing on the re-use of urban sites and maximising the use of places with high transport accessibility using high quality design whilst maintaining the local character and variety.
- Enhancing the Borough's landscape character, open space, biological and geological diversity, heritage and cultural facilities.
- Making provision for a full range of social, leisure and community facilities.
- Providing convenient transport opportunities to meet residents' needs thereby reducing car use and encouraging the use of public transport.

A suite of area specific draft Spatial Strategy documents complete the Emerging Core Strategy, setting out key regeneration projects and particular aspirations for these areas. The Spatial Strategy for Hemel Hempstead will act as a primary policy conduit for delivering these aims and will include the statutory planning policies for the Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway. The draft document indicates that improved transport interchanges are key to facilitating employment and regeneration opportunities with the strategy recognising the need to create a strong link between the railway station, as an important gateway, to the town centre and Maylands Business Park. The report particularly highlights the key vista of the former Kodak building from the station. An emphasis on the improvement of green networks within the area, the creation of a new Urban Park and proposed 'Green Gateway' adjacent to the station provide significant opportunities for an integrated approach between regeneration proposals.

Emerging Sustainable Development Strategy

The draft Sustainable Development Strategy reiterates the broad principles of national policy PPS1 combining these with localalised policy recommendations that incorporate and develop existing local plan policies within key themes:

- The location of development and change through a settlement hierarchy for Dacorum and main principles for siting development. Site specific: The station site is a First Tier area for concentrated development.
- Enabling access between homes, jobs and facilities - the promotion of sustainable transport measures to facilitate climate change, social inclusion and quality of life. Site specific: In all areas, ancillary uses will be acceptable and protected as long as they support the primary function of that area.
- Quality of urban design - policies based on a spatial awareness of the surrounding context and 8 key urban design principles derived from CABE's 'By Design.' Site specific: See below.

Urban Design Assessment Reports first published in 2006 have recently been revised and updated to inform the Urban Design policies of the emerging Core Strategy. In relation to the station at Boxmoor particular reference is made to the need to improve the legibility of the area and enhance the public realm:

"The mainline railway station in Boxmoor is a key gateway into the town and overlooks the moor. Improvements should be made to enhance the environment and provide better signage and links to key destinations.

There should be a strong pedestrian connection to the town centre and the railway stations in Boxmoor and Apsley. There are opportunities to improve the signage between these places at key nodes along the streets and through the open spaces."

Within the report the site is designated as a 'semi-rural zone' for which some key design principles from the assessment are highlighted below:

- Buildings should typically be two-three storeys. There may be opportunities to develop four-storey buildings on block sites of 'increased density'
- Neighbourhoods should maintain a diversity of typologies however the zone could potentially become slightly more dense, ranging from medium to high densities
- There should be strong connections to open land within the neighbourhoods. Long paths that interconnect neighbourhoods and connect to the Green Belt are encouraged.

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02 SITE ANALYSIS

Traffic & Movement

2

This section presents an appraisal of existing transport conditions at Hemel Hempstead Station and its immediate surroundings, providing a baseline assessment of the transport context to inform both the client and project teams prior to further masterplan development. The report also summarises notes taken during discussions with James Dale, Jenny Applestone and Sue Jackson of Hertfordshire County Council's Highway Department. At the time of writing the report, we were unable to make contact with Arriva Bus Company regarding bus services and operation at the station. The report will be updated following these discussions.

Policy and Infrastructure Context

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) adopted an Urban Transport Plan for Hemel Hempstead (updated January 2009), which supplements and expands the proposals contained in their Local Transport Plan for the period 2006/07 to 2010/11. The aim of the UTP is to identify short, medium and long-term strategies to improve transport over the next 15 to 20 years. Hemel Hempstead's UTP main transport objectives are to:

- locate developments to reduce travel needs/distances and encourage public transport, walking and cycling use;
- provide opportunities to reduce car use through sustainable transport choices;
- promote modal shift and active travel;
- improve road safety, especially for non-car modes;
- support 'smarter choices' travel demand management measures, including Destination Travel Plans for Hemel Hempstead Station;
- promote efficient freight and distribution;
- reduce negative impacts of transport on the environment; and
- improve traffic management.

The document includes specific aspirations for several sustainable transport measures at Hemel Hempstead Station including:

- improving pedestrian/cycle accessibility;
- introducing pedestrian crossings;
- integrating rail and bus more readily to improve interchange;
- improving and introducing additional cycle/motorcycle parking;
- improving wayfinding and signing;
- improving the public realm; and
- improving personal security.

The UTP highlights the need to create a station gateway, providing better connectivity with Hemel Hempstead town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods, greater integration with other modes such as buses, cycling and walking, and reducing car travel to/ from the station. As part of a public transport user survey (2008) carried out by Hertfordshire County Council, of those people who responded, 42% mainly access the station by foot, 30% travel by car (as a driver or passenger) and only 20% by bus. Considering the local geography and service availability, there appears to be scope to increase the public transport modal share for travel to the station.

HCC's infrastructure & Investment Strategy Transport Technical Report (2009), gives mention to the County Council's aspirations for improving rail services from London to Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Milton Keynes and carrying out station improvements as part of their Rail Network Strategy. However, that document doesn't detail specific proposals for such changes.

Dacorum Borough Council's Local Development Framework (LDF, 2004) aims to promote 'an integrated transport network, with an emphasis on encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking and reducing the overall need to travel by private car'. In Dacorum's Emerging Core Strategy (the central document to developing a new LDF), the Council's vision, relevant to the station includes: improved public transport links between Maylands Business Park, the town centre and Hemel Hempstead Station.

Overall, Dacorum Borough Council will seek to integrate transport, securing changes to the road network, location of car parks, traffic management and public transport systems to assist in delivering reduced reliance on the private car; improved pedestrian and cycle integration; bus priority; and help to deliver high quality interchange facilities within the town centre and at Hemel Hempstead Station.

Site Location

Hemel Hempstead Station is located to the southwest of the town centre, with Boxmoor lying between the station and the town centre. Station Moor, owned by the Boxmoor Trust lies to the north of the station with Felden lying beyond the A41 to the south of the station. Figure 3.1 shows a context plan for Hemel Hempstead Station.

London Road connects with A41 to the northwest, linking the station with neighbouring towns including Berkhamsted, Tring and Aylesbury to the northwest, Felden to the southwest and Kings Langley, Watford and the M25 to the southeast.

To the east, London Road branches into the London Road (A4251) to Aspley and Kings Langley in the southeast and Station Road to the northeast, connecting the station to the A414 (towards St Albans and the M1) and Leighton Buzzard Road (A4146) to Hemel Hempstead town centre.

The Station building is located adjacent to the southern side of London Road between the London Road/Fishery Road roundabout and the London Road/Station Road (A4146) roundabout.

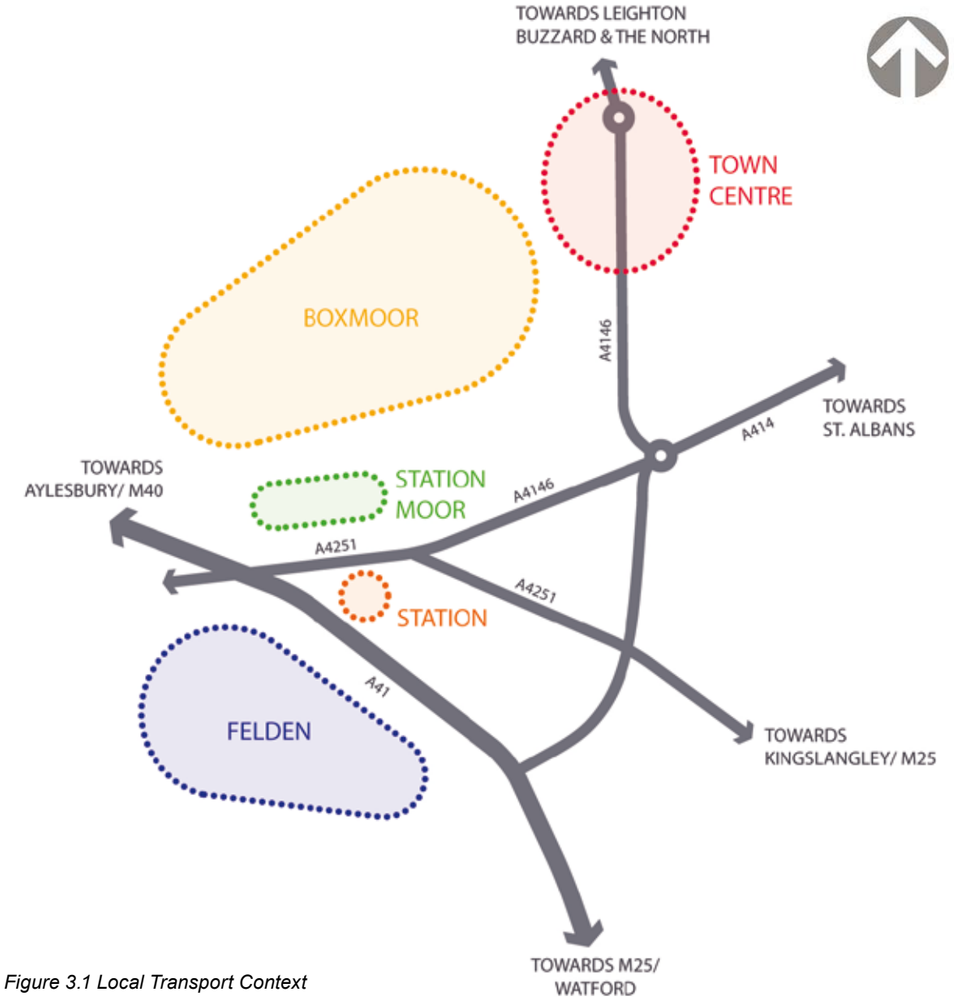

Figure 3.1 Local Transport Context

Traffic & Movement

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Rail Services

The station is located between the main rail interchange of Watford Junction and Milton Keynes stations. London Midland operates the rail services to London Euston, Milton Keynes, Tring and Northampton. There are also additional services to St Albans (via Watford) and Bedford (via Bletchley). Passengers can reach London Euston within 30 minutes. From Milton Keynes passengers are also able to access the West Coast Mainline with trains to Birmingham New Street, Liverpool, Manchester, Preston, North Wales and Glasgow.

There is currently only partial step-free access to the station, which includes a level access ramp at the main entrance to the booking hall; however there is no level access to the platforms. Our desktop review did not reveal any proposals for Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliancy in the near future.

The service frequencies from Hemel Hempstead Station are shown in the table to the right.

Hemel Hempstead's Urban Transport Plan notes insufficient rail service frequency from Hemel Hempstead Station to satisfy demands especially commuter trips into/out of London and our desktop review did not find any proposals to improve these services.

There are two vehicular access points from London Road into the station forecourt as shown in Figure 3.2. These two accesses are shared with pedestrians and cyclists. All vehicles including buses enter the station at the eastern entrance and exit at the Fishery Road roundabout.

Station Parking Provision

Station parking is provided in front of the station and in a large car park to the east accessed on a private two-way road within the station forecourt.

In all, 496 marked-out parking spaces, including 11 disabled spaces are available at the station. The daily parking charge is £6.00 with a reduced rate of £4.00 for those parking off peak (after 10am). There are also weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual tickets available. An occupancy rate of 100% was recorded in 2008 as stated in the Hemel Hempstead Urban Transport Plan (2009) and our 'spot check' site observations appear to confirm this. On-street parking is not permitted on London Road and the nature of the road and high traffic volumes preclude 'overspill' on-street car parking.

Station Bus Interchange Facilities

Bus interchange facilities are provided within the station forecourt close to London Road. The interchange area consists of a layby diverting buses from London Road into the station forecourt and rejoining London Road at the eastern exit on the London Road/ Fishery Road roundabout. Bus stop laybys are also provided at both the eastbound and westbound bus stops on London Road.

Currently the interchange arrangement contributes to delays to buses, notably during the evening peak as they are unable to exit the station and re-join the network efficiently due to high volumes of vehicles trying to leave the station car park and join the congested London Road. Currently, buses are not given specific priority at the London Road/Fishery Road roundabout.

In general, good bus stop shelters, seating and bus information are provided at all the bus stops outside the station.

Hemel Hempstead's UTP (2009) highlighted concerns of bus travellers including:

- Inconvenient location of some bus stops;
- Low bus frequencies and reliability;
- The lack of timetable and route information;
- Long waiting times;
- Insufficient sheltered seating for waiting;
- Insufficient services, especially during the evenings and early morning on Sundays.

Hemel Hempstead's UTP also notes a lack of linkages between Hemel Hempstead Station, the town centre and Maylands Business Park as well as poor connection between the station, the east and the west.

The following table summarises those bus services that start/ terminate or pass through the station bus stops. Currently, while a number of services are provided, bus frequencies are relatively poor, notably between the station, the town centre and Maylands Business Park.

Train Services

Hemel Hempstead to:	Peak Frequency	Off Peak Frequency
London Euston	5 per hour	4 per hour
Milton Keynes Central	3 per hour	3 per hour
Tring	3 per hour	3 per hour
Northampton	1 per hour	1 per hour

Bus Services

Service	Route	Frequency
320	To Rickmansworth / Maple Cross	2 buses per hour (0530-1900) 1 bus per hour (1900-2300)
634	To Stevenage	1 bus per hour (0700-1900)
H13	To Maylands	4 services (0640-815) 3 return services (1430-1530)
PB1	To Maylands	4 services (0745-0915) 3 return services (0800-0940)
X31	To Luton	3 services (1015-1415) 1 service (1810) 1 service (0730) 3 services (1000-1400) 1 service (1805)
2	Woodhall Farm to Chaulden (circular)	3 buses per hour (0700-1930) 1 bus per hour (2000-2300)
3	Woodhall Farm to Chaulden (circular)	3 buses per hour (0700-1930)
1 bus per hour (2030-2330)		
51	To Flaunden (circular)	4 services (0930-1430)
52	Hemel Hempstead to High Wycombe High Wycombe to Hemel Hempstead	1 bus per hour (0700-1930) 1 bus per hour (0730-2015)
352	Hemel Hempstead to Watford Watford to Hemel Hempstead	Approx. bi-hourly (0730-1800) Approx bi-hourly (0800-1945)
500	Aylesbury to Watford Watford to Aylesbury	At least 2 buses per hour (0600-1900) At least 2 buses per hour (0700-2000)
501	Aylesbury to Watford Watford to Aylesbury	1 bus per hour (2040-2240) 1 bus per hour (2100-2400)
600	Bennetts End to Chaulden (circular)	3 services (0610-0740)
773	Aylesbury to London	1 service daily (0708) returns (1853)
PB2	Maylands to Railway station (circular)	2 buses per hour (1645-1845)
T2	Chesham to Watford	5 services (0720-1000)

Traffic & Movement

Walking

Pedestrians access the station via the same access points as vehicles and cyclists as shown in Figure 3.2. The footpath is narrow at the eastern entrance and there is no footpath provided at the western entrance. There is also a pedestrian only entrance as shown in Figure 3.3 opposite, leading pedestrians through the bus interchange and car park to the station entrance via a series of marked zebra crossings.

There is a signalised pedestrian crossing outside the station; however there are no other formal pedestrian crossings on London Road.

There are footpaths either side of London Road, Fishery Road and Station Road, linking the station to nearby Boxmoor and Hemel Hempstead town centre. There are two main footpaths through Station Moor, which provide a quieter route for pedestrians to access Boxmoor and the town centre. The distance between the station and the town centre is approximately 1.3 miles, which is around a 25 minute walk, with pedestrians able to complete part of this journey through Station Moor by the river.

The residential areas to the south of the railway station are not easily accessible due to the presence of the railway tracks and the A41. There is no direct link between Roughdown Avenue and the station; therefore pedestrians are required to walk approximately 0.6 miles out of their way to access the station via London Road.

Roughdown Avenue is an inadequately lit, poorly maintained link, with little natural surveillance. Pedestrians travelling from the Felden area (to the south of the station) have to either walk along the busy London Road or via a footbridge over the A41 to connect with Roughdown Avenue and London Road. Using London Road entails a half mile or approximately 10 minute walk, while using the footpath and footbridge means a walk of approximately 0.75 miles to the main residential area (about a 15 minute walk).

HCC is implementing some key pedestrian refuges on Station Road; however there are no further schemes to improve pedestrian access to Hemel Hempstead Station.

Cycling

There are 14 covered cycle racks at the station, providing parking for up to 28 bicycles.

Cyclists access the station via the same access points as vehicles and pedestrians. Local or national cycle routes on London Road, Fishery Road or Station Road are not provided. To avoid the busy London Road (A4251) cyclists can follow the tow path to the north of the station, which is accessible from the station via Fishery Road.

Cycling between the station and Hemel Hempstead town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods (including Boxmoor) is likely to take between 8-15 minutes at an average speed meaning the station is within highly convenient cycling distance.

Site Observations & Identified Access and Movement Issues

A site audit of the station forecourt, interchange and main routes to/from the station was undertaken on the 7 July 2010, in which access and movement issues were identified. The audit included a review of the station forecourt, access roads and connecting network on London Road and within Station Moor.

In summary the following issues/problems were highlighted:

Station Entrance/Forecourt

- The station entrance is some distance from the main access points and bus stops on London Road;
- The station entrance is narrow and cluttered causing conflict between passengers entering/leaving the ticketing hall and waiting at the station entrance;
- The poorly designed station building doesn't allow for sufficient shelter and seating for passengers;
- The ramp to the station is too narrow and steep for wheelchair users;
- There is little sense of arrival place at the station, particularly for visitors unfamiliar to the station and Hemel Hempstead;
- On leaving the station building it is difficult to navigate through the car park to the bus stops and London Road due to the presence of parked cars, guard railing and general street clutter;
- Parking in front of the station restricts pedestrian sightlines and acts as a barrier for pedestrian movement, notably for vulnerable/visually impaired passengers; and
- Travel information and wayfinding signs are confusing and cause clutter within the station site; and,
- Car parking in front of Station dominates the station entrance and restricts pedestrian sightlines.

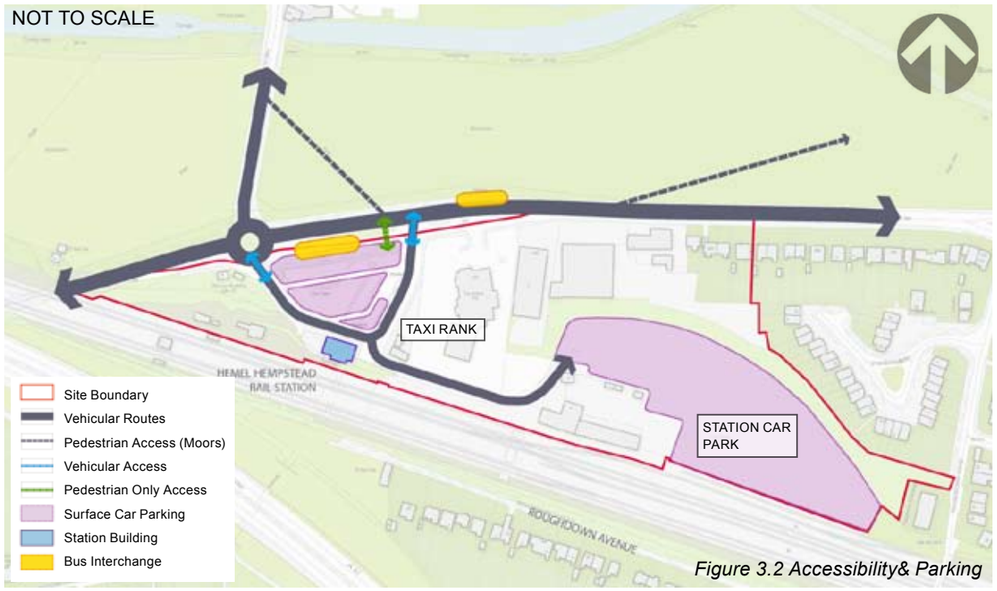

Figure 3.2 Accessibility& Parking

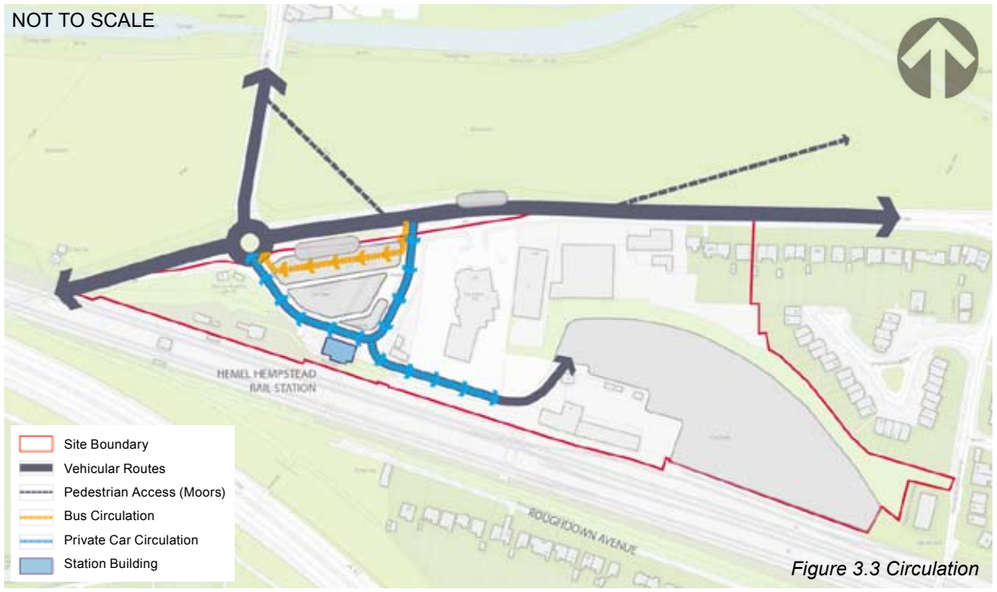

Figure 3.3 Circulation

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Traffic & Movement

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Bus Interchange

- During peak times the bus stop laybys with the station and on London Road increase bus journey times as buses are delayed in re-joining the traffic flow;
- The bus stop laybys are not fully accessible on London Road. The current bay alignments prevent buses from reaching the kerb effectively; and
- The westbound bus stop layby takes up considerable road space next to the London Road/Fishery Road roundabout, which may cause congestion during peak time periods.

Walking and Cycling

- There is no footpath or provision for disabled/visually impaired passengers to enter/exit the station at the western exit next to the London Road/Fishery Road roundabout;
- The footpath leading to the large car park to the east of the station is narrow and overgrown. The footpath width and gradient is not suitable for wheelchair users;
- There are a lack of resting facilities outside the station on London Road and Station Road;
- The footways, notably on the northern side of London Road and Station Road are too narrow in some sections for such a busy road, and make passing other users problematic. An alternative, pleasant route is provided through Station Moor, however the footway is narrow in places and inappropriate for the mobility or visually impaired due to the presence of gates;
- A signalised pedestrian crossing is provided on London Road, opposite the station however, this crossing is outdated, poorly maintained, cluttered with guard railing, and pedestrians are forced to cross in two stages. There are no further pedestrian crossing facilities provided on London Road;
- The London Road/Fishery Road and London Road/Station Road roundabouts act as barriers to pedestrians, notably at the London Road/Fishery Road roundabout where there is no provision for pedestrians to cross. Inadequate crossing facilities are provided at the busy London Road/Station Road roundabout;
- There is a lack of directional signing for pedestrians or cyclists along London Road;
- Cycle parking facilities within the station forecourt are at capacity. Some of the spaces are currently used by motorcycles and scooters. Indiscriminate parking is evident on the railings next to the bus stops;
- Station Cycle Parking is at capacity.

Personal Security

- There is little in the way of natural surveillance after dark outside the station;
- Storage buildings next to the station entrance create potential for ‘hiding places’; and
- Due to the proximity of Station Moor there is a lack of natural surveillance, and low lighting along the Station Road pedestrian link, which may discourage pedestrian use after dark and during winter months.

Traffic management and road safety

- There is little protection for pedestrians from vehicles on exiting the station due to the frequent vehicular movements within the car park and drop-off/pick-up activity outside the station entrance; and
- Station Road is a wide, relatively straight road which is noisy and dominated by heavy traffic, which is intimidating for pedestrians, notably vulnerable users and cyclists, and is unpleasant for pedestrians to spend any length of time in, even though the proximity to the Station Moor.

The public realm

- The station forecourt is unattractive and not visually pleasing to the user. The station buildings are outdated and poorly maintained;
- The large car park detracts from the local area; and
- Signing clutter creates poor legibility and detracts from the public realm.

Traffic & Movement

SWOT Analysis / Opportunities/Constraints

A ‘SWOT’ (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis has been undertaken for the Masterplan study area, which considers all transport modes.

The main current weakness (and future opportunity) is that the station is detached from its surroundings and its users, another weakness it that the predominant mode of travel to/from Hemel Hempstead Station is by the private car. By improving connectivity there is the clear possibility to greatly improve the pedestrian/ cyclist experience of the station and redefine the station as a place that encourages all modes of travel rather than providing for car convenience and use.

Strengths

- Excellent rail connections with London
- Excellent road connections to Hemel Hempstead, surrounding towns and motorways including the M25 to London
- Extensive station parking to meet demand
- Generally good quality bus shelters
- Walkable/cycling distance from Hemel Hempstead town centre
- Station Moor setting/path provides a pleasant environment for pedestrians

Weaknesses

- Detached from Hemel Hempstead town centre
- Lack of trains to satisfy demand especially commuter trips into/ out of London
- London Road is busy and congested throughout the day, notably at the London Road/Station Road roundabout
- London Road severs the links between the station and Station Moor
- Limited bus services to Hemel Hempstead town centre and Marylands Business Park
- Lack of bus services east/west from the station
- Poor bus stop layouts
- Station entrance is dominated by parked/moving vehicles
- Lack of waiting facilities/shelter outside station entrance
- Station buildings are outdated and detract from the local setting
- Poor or lack of pedestrian crossing facilities on London Road
- Poor pedestrian/cycle connectivity and legibility from the station to Station Moor and Hemel Hempstead town centre
- Station cycle parking facilities are inadequate to meet demand
- Guardrails/street clutter both unattractive and prevent pedestrian desire lines being followed
- Poor streetscape and environment, including safety and security within the station site and connecting routes

Opportunities

- Improve travel information at the station and bus stops including real-time passenger information
- Promote integrated timetabling and ticketing between bus and rail services
- Realign the London Road/Fishery Road roundabout
- Consolidate and rationalise station car parking to free up developable land (including a review of parking charges)
- Provide more motorcycle parking
- Provide more disabled parking bays
- Remove bus stop lay-bys on London Road and within the station
- Relocate bus stops to allow for better connection with the station entrance and provide fully accessible bus stops
- Introduce shelter and seating next to the station entrance
- Improve pedestrian/cyclist connectivity with London Road, Station Moor and Hemel Hempstead
- Provide additional walk routes connecting the station with Station Moor
- Introduce formal and informal pedestrian crossings on London Road and Station Road
- Improve cycle access to the canal and introduce cycle lanes and/or shared use paths within Station Moor, on London Road and Station Road
- Improve cycle facilities and introduce additional cycle parking within the station forecourt
- Improve and introduce additional wayfinding signs between the station, Hemel Hempstead town centre and residential areas
- Introduce seating along walk routes to the town centre
- Improve personal security within the station site and surrounding network including better lighting
- Improve streetscape with the removal of unnecessary guard railing and street clutter

Threats

- Increasing car use, and continued car dominance
- High levels of available parking discourage sustainable travel
- Limited accessibility on buses and at rail station
- Limited bus penetration in residential areas limits mode share

Summary

Inline with issues identified by Hertfordshire County Council and Dacorum Borough Council in their UTP and other policy documents, our review of the Hemel Hempstead Station Gateway site has highlighted significant issues and future opportunities for improving the station’s relationship to Hemel Hempstead town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods.

Our transport assessment, discussions with HCC and access and movement site audit of the gateway site have identified issues with regards to:

- rail services, notably to London;
- car dominance through extensive station parking;
- poor bus interchange facilities and services;
- poor pedestrian and cycling facilities within the station;
- poor pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods; and
- poor public realm.

Recognising that connectivity is the main weakness of Hemel Hempstead Station, a number of opportunities have been identified, which include improving:

- station access and interchange;
- rationalising car parking;
- bus facilities and services;
- pedestrian and cyclist facilities within the station;
- pedestrian and cyclist links to the town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods;
- public realm.

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Site Analysis

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Commuter Catchment Area

In terms of cycling, a distance of 1.5 miles, the equivalent to around 10 minutes at average pace, has been identified as a suitable catchment area for commuters who intend to use rail services at the station.

In terms of walking, a distance of between 800-1600m, the equivalent to 10-20 minutes walking an average pace, has been adopted. This distance is widely seen as an acceptable standard. When considering the walking catchment area it is important to note that whilst on plan the catchment appears to cover a circular shaped area, in reality, levels of accessibility and barriers to movement, such as rail lines, roads and water bodies, are likely to have a significant impact, effectively deforming the catchment area and subsequently making it smaller in places.

Discouraging commuters from driving to the station, whilst promoting more sustainable means of transport, such as walking and cycling is especially important. Not only does it reduce the need for car parking at the station, it also reduces congestion in and around the station, promotes a healthier lifestyle and is in line with achieving a reduction in carbon emissions.

Site Boundary

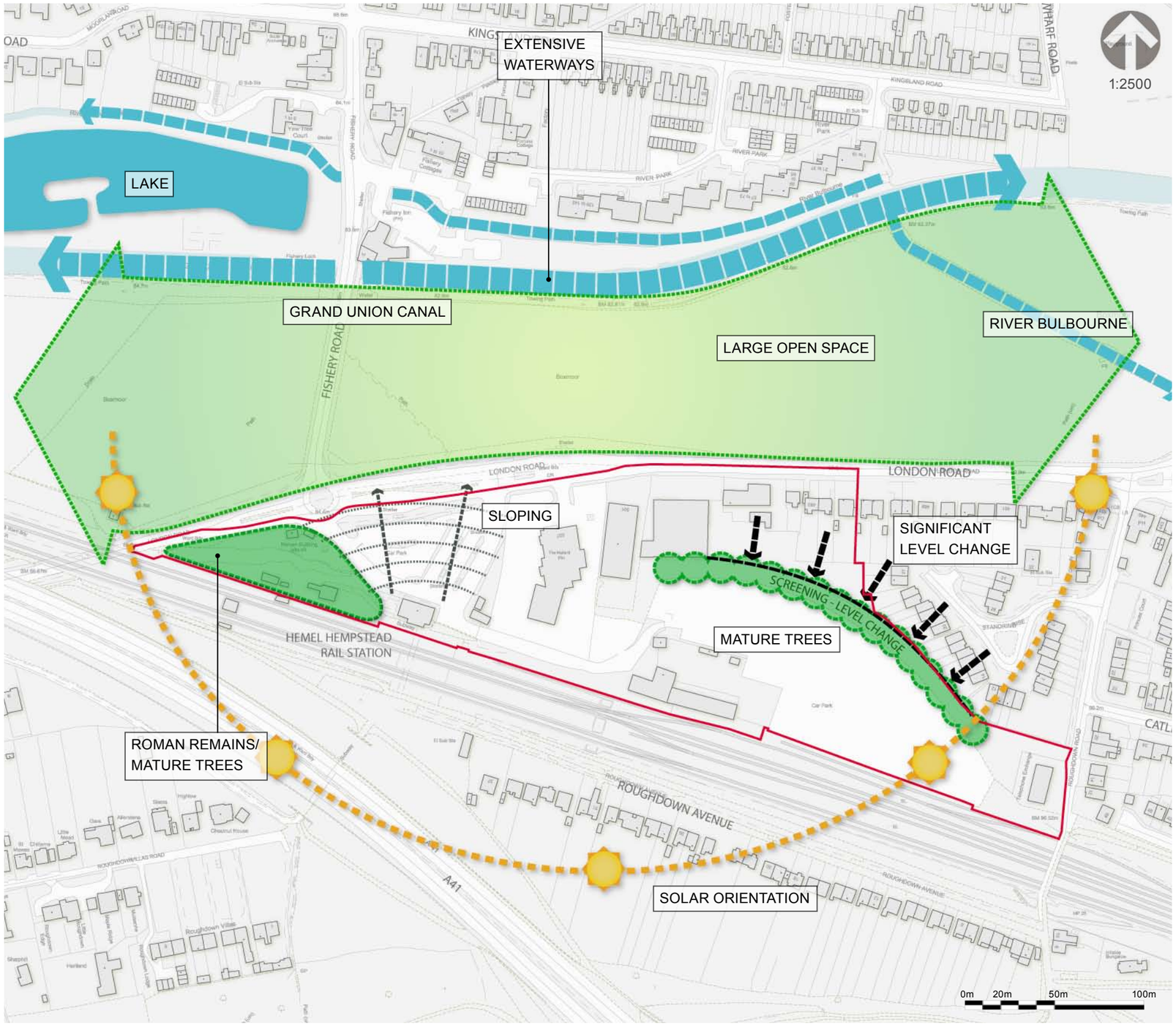
Site Analysis

Land Form and Natural Assets

The site is subject to a number of abrupt level changes both on the periphery and within. Whilst often level changes of this nature could be seen as a constraint or a challenge to development, they also offer a unique opportunity for a new development to take advantage of the topography by building less desirable uses into the landscape.

The site also benefits from an arrangement of mature trees along the bounding edge of the neighbouring residential uses. These trees offer the potential to act as visual screening to the residents from any new development.

Just to the north of the site there are a number of water bodies, most notably the Grand Union Canal and Bulbourne River. The Grand Union Canal offers an attractive and relatively direct pedestrian route towards the town centre from the station.



- Site Boundary
- Ownership Boundaries
- Mature Trees (Roman Remains)
- Sloping Land
- Mature Trees
- Significant Level Changes
- Waterways

Site Analysis

2

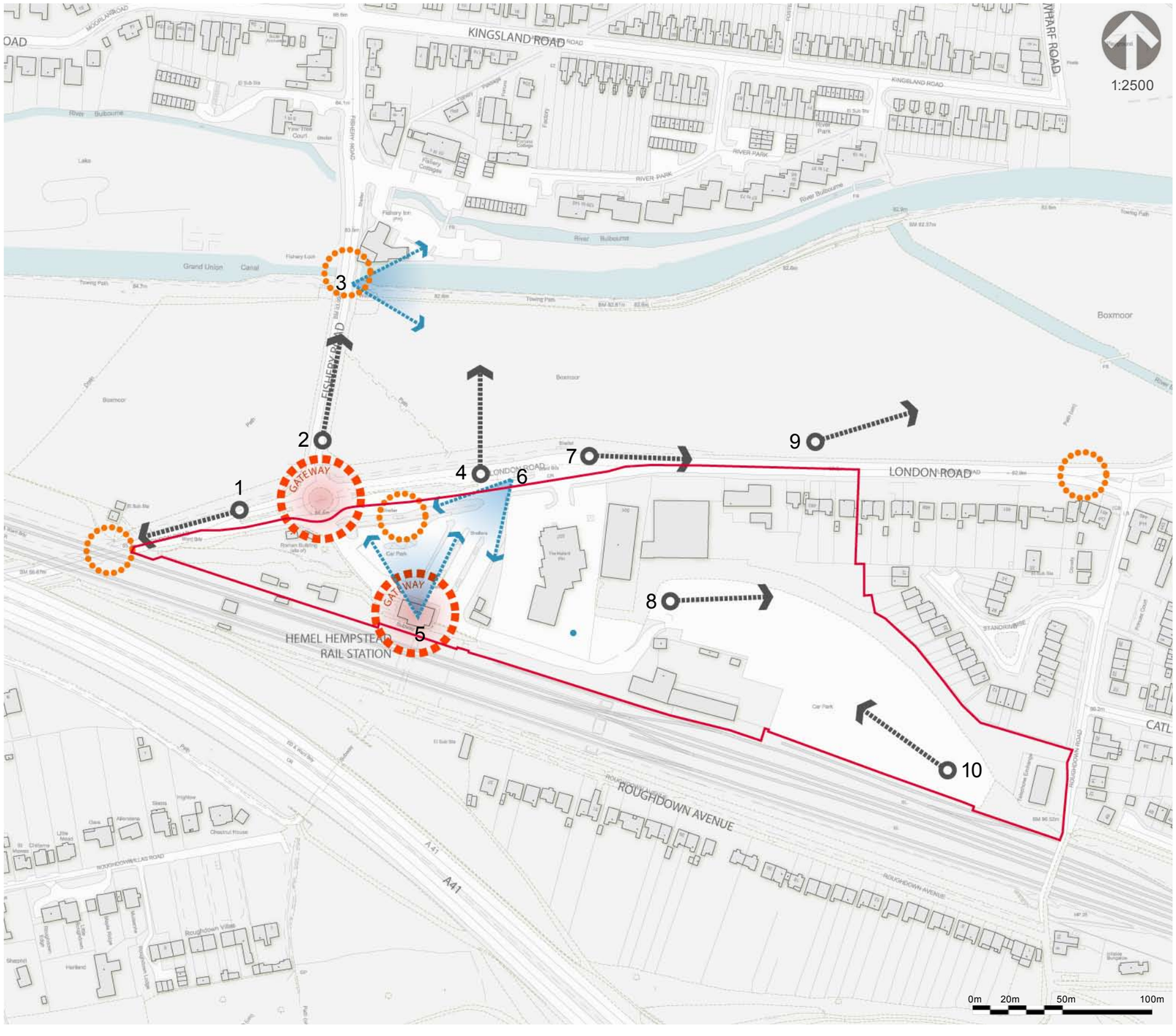
Gateways, Vistas, Nodes & Views

At present the station site fails to take advantage of potential and existing views. The station itself is well set back up against the railway line, hidden beyond layers of street furniture and rows of parked cars.

The emphasis of the station forecourt is quite evidently vehicular movement and circulation, with little regard for pedestrian movement, which tends to weave through the flow of traffic moving in an opposing direction.

The roundabout that sits on the junction of Fishery Road and London Road is one of the prime examples of a location where a view opens up into the site and towards the station from the street. Unfortunately this location is dominated by traffic, poor crossings and inadequate footways making it a less than inviting environment.

The view towards the canal from the station is also of particular importance as not only does it provide the first impressionable view upon arrival at Hemel Hempstead, it also forms the beginnings of the route towards the town centre along the canal towpath. At present this view is relatively unhindered.



Site Boundary
Gateways
Views
Nodes
Vistas

2

Site Analysis

2

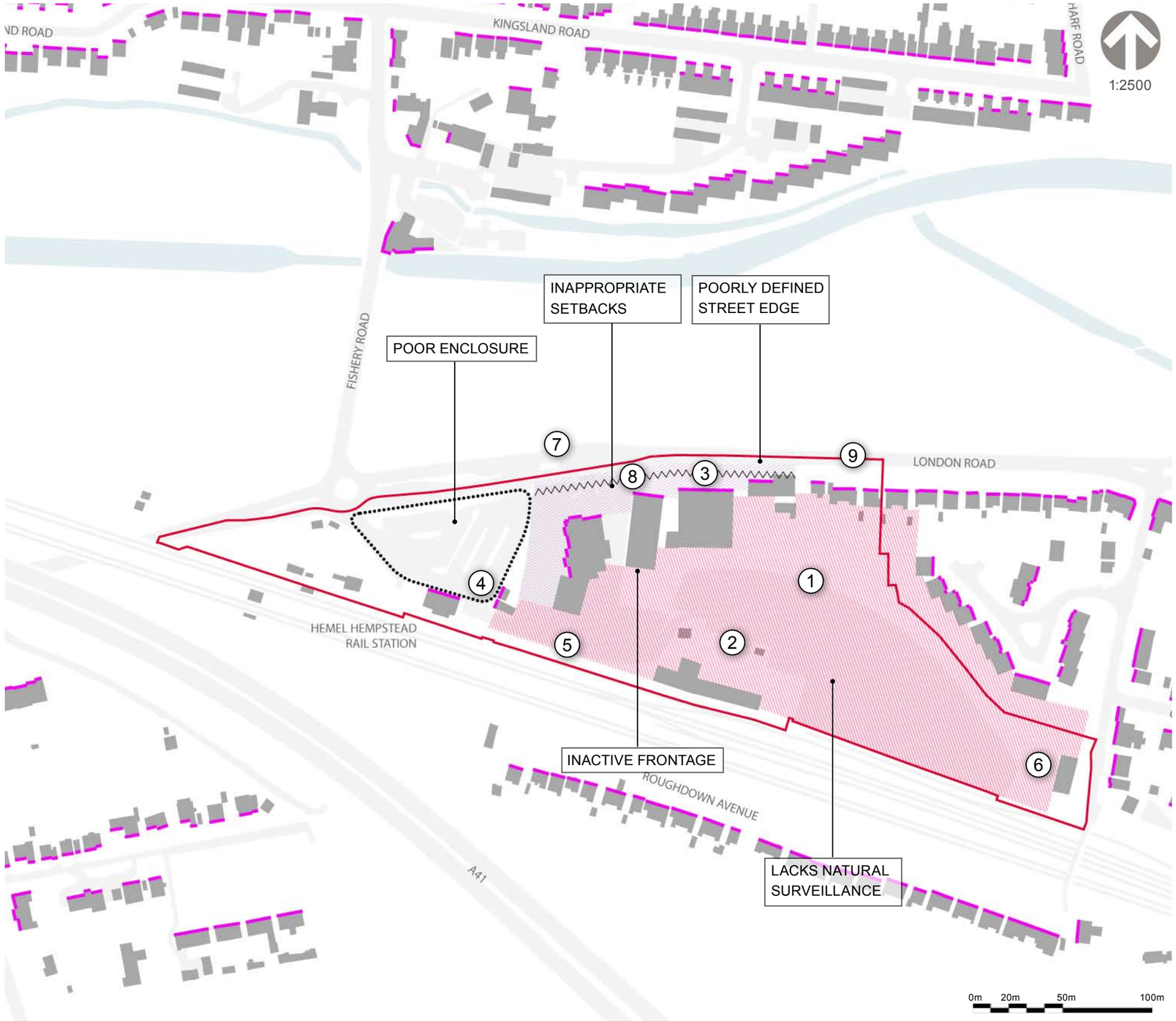
Urban Form + Enclosure & Frontage

The urban form of the site is unlike that of much of the immediate surrounding areas. Much of the site is taken in by surface car parking, with a smattering of large floor plate box type uses, including Texaco and Kwik Fit to the north. This type of urban grain is totally at odds with what is principally small grain residential units in all directions.

Due to the nature of the blocks and their uses within the site boundary, much of the site suffers from a complete lack of natural surveillance, particularly within the large surface car park to the rear of the commercial uses. The lack of natural surveillance created by the inactive rear facades of the buildings along London Road is further compounded by an abrupt level change and a line of mature trees. The poor levels of surveillance within the car park have the potential to create an unwelcoming environment that could be perceived as being unsafe.

Once again, due to the commercial nature of the uses along London Road, the street suffers from an ill defined street edge and a lack of active frontages, with a building line that fails to engage with passers by; this is further compounded by inappropriate building setbacks.

The forecourt to the north of the station building fails to succeed as a public space on many levels. In terms of urban form, the space lacks definition around the edges, with only the station building and two smaller units to the east failing to enclose a space of this size proportionately, principally due to their lack of height.



Site Boundary
Poorly Defined Street Edge
Lack of Surveillance
Inappropriate Setback
Active Frontage
Poor Enclosure
Built Form

2

Site Analysis

2

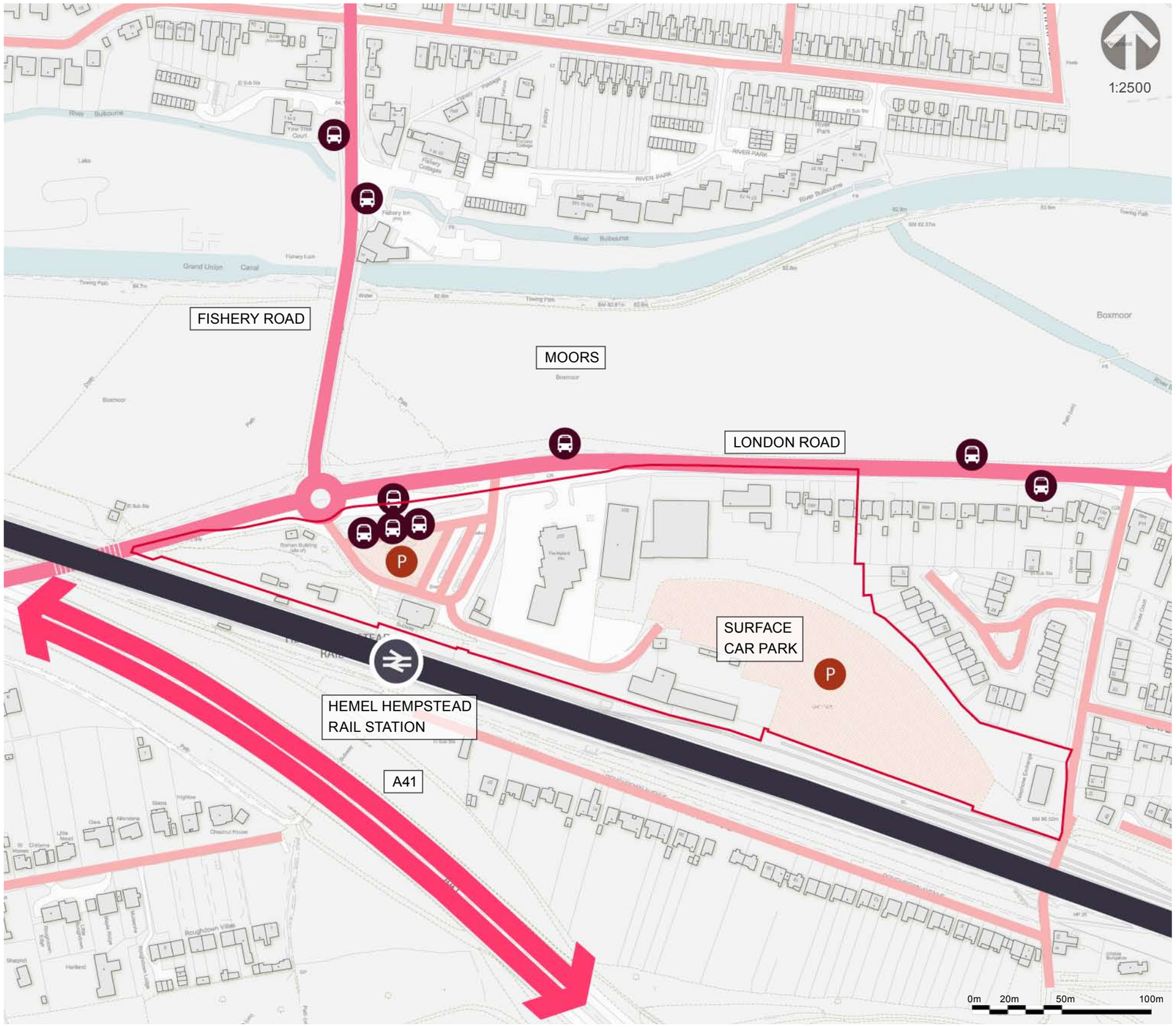
Vehicular Movement, Public Transport and Car Parking Network

In terms of wider accessibility the site is fairly well connected given that it sits along the main rail line from London to the Midlands. The site is also well placed in terms of its location for private vehicle owners as it is within relatively close proximity to both the M1 and M25 motorways. The site also benefits from a number of bus routes passing along its northern edge (London Road) and circulating within the site.

Despite its relatively strategic accessibility, at a more local level the site experiences connectivity issues in a number of locations. Both the Moors and the rail line are significant barriers to movement to the north and south of the site respectively, with limited crossing points.

The site itself is very internalised particularly given the existing surrounding development. This is further compounded by the existence of mature trees, significant level changes and potential land ownership issues which may prevent improved accessibility being achieved through the creation of new routes in the event of redevelopment.

Despite criticisms, the site is fairly well served by buses, it also has a small amount of cycle storage and private car parking along with a brimming taxi rank. These features, coupled with the rail services in and out of the station, are all key components of a fairly well contained, albeit basic, transport interchange,



- Site Boundary
- Bus Stop
- Car Parking
- Rail Station
- Rail Line
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Access Road

Site Analysis

Pedestrian & Cycle Network

On-site observation have shown that the site and its surroundings make for a vehicle dominated environment. The site itself is bound on its northern edge by the fairly busy London Road. The quality of the pedestrian environment along London Road is less than desirable, with limited crossing points, poorly maintained and ill defined narrow pedestrian footpaths.

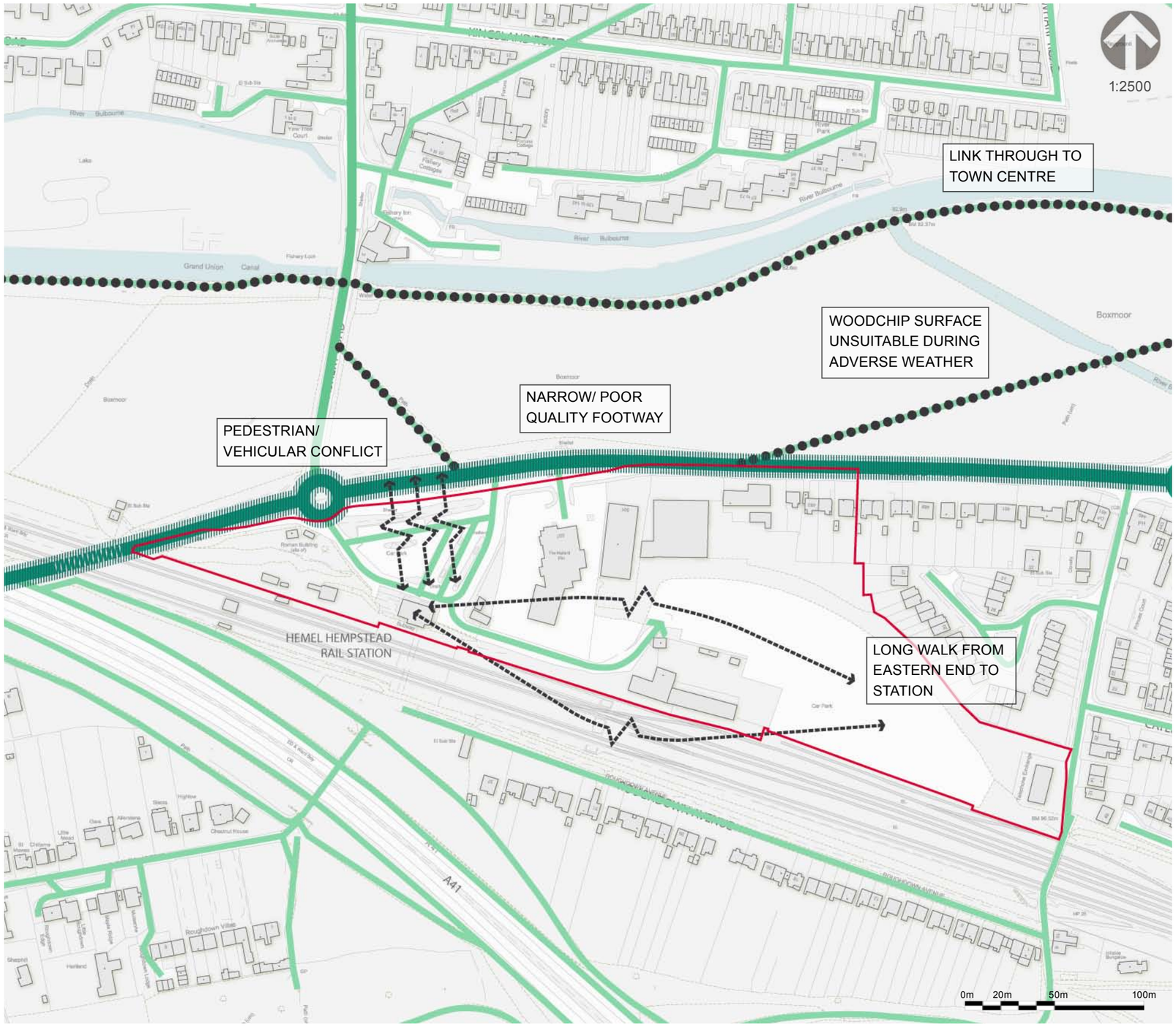
The roundabout that sits on the junction of Fishery Road and London Road is of particular concern as its location makes it a significant yet under utilised gateway for pedestrians, although the pavement to the south side of the road is almost non existent making it an unattractive and unsafe environment.

There are a number of incidences where pedestrian and vehicular movement come into conflict, most notably within the circulation space to the north of the station forecourt. The general flow of pedestrians tends to move in a north-south direction, from the station building to London Road and back, this axis of movement is totally at odds with vehicular flows which tend to move east-west, as a result its often the pedestrians that are diverted and/or restricted in their movement.

Another issue within the site relates to the location of the vast surface car park to the east of the site. Due to its size and placement, the car park becomes understandably under used the further you move from the station, as the walking distance grows.

Beyond walking, there is limited cycling infrastructure in place, with only a small amount of cycle storage provided on site. Opportunities to encourage both cycling and walking in and around the Moors could potentially be improved by a change in the woodchip surfacing and the resurfacing of the canal tow path, this would improve links to the town centre from the station.

- Site Boundary
- Poor Accessibility/Connection
- Poor Pedestrian Footway
- Poor Pedestrian Surfacing
- Primary Pedestrian Route
- Secondary Pedestrian Route
- Minor Pedestrian Routes



2

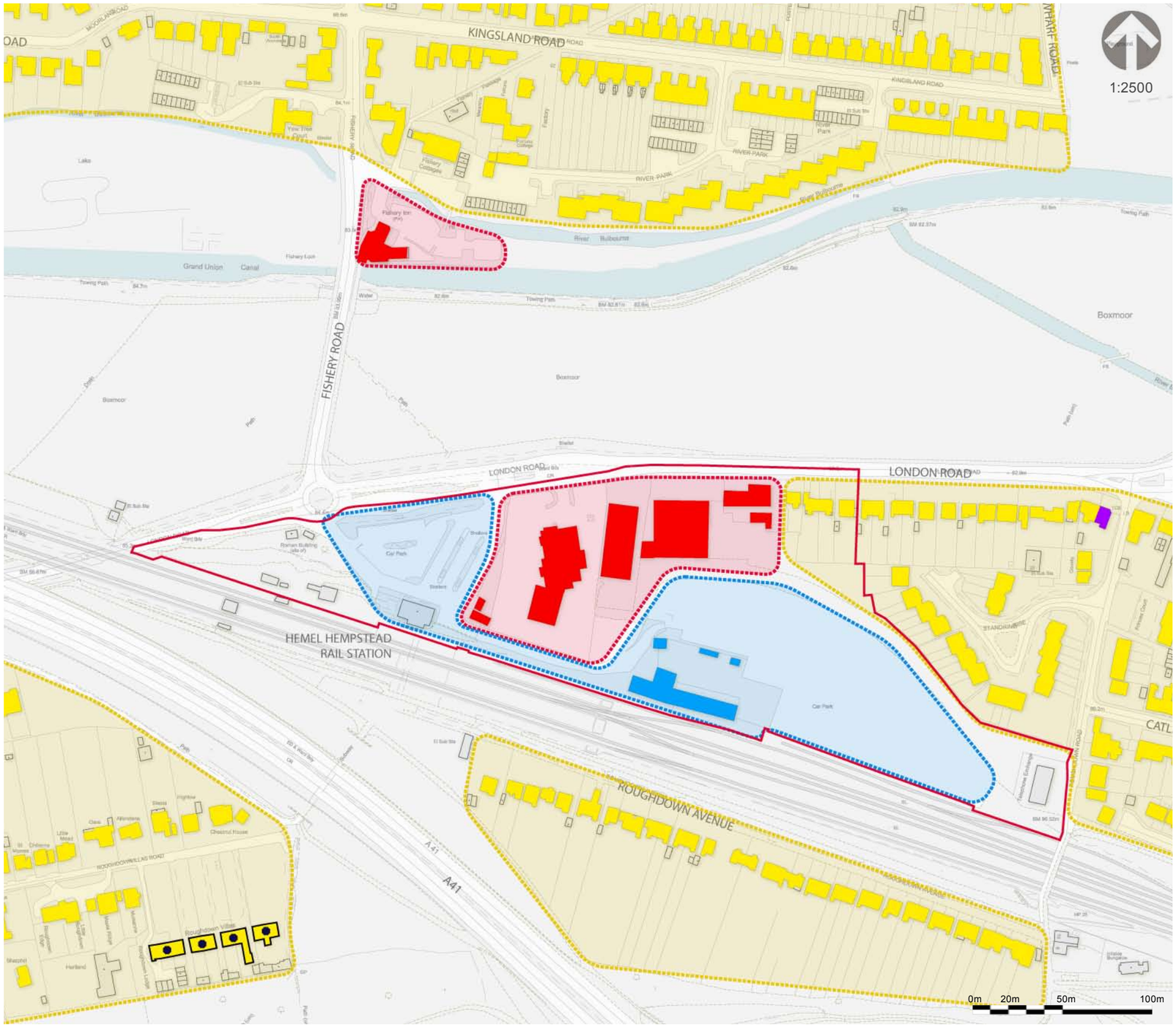
Site Analysis

2

Land Use

Whilst the majority of the site is surrounded by residential, particularly towards the southern and eastern extents, the site itself is predominantly a mix of transport, light industrial and commercial uses.

The retail and commercial uses that are found within the site are significantly different to those that are found in the town centre, this may prompt a different approach to land use planning for the site compared to that of a rail station gateway found in a town centre location. It may therefore be sensible to suggest that aside from residential, the land use mix be focussed on local retail.



Site Boundary
Residential
Retail
Light Industrial/ Commercial
Other Uses (e.g. Pharmacy)
Listed Building

Surrounding Land Uses

2

Site Analysis

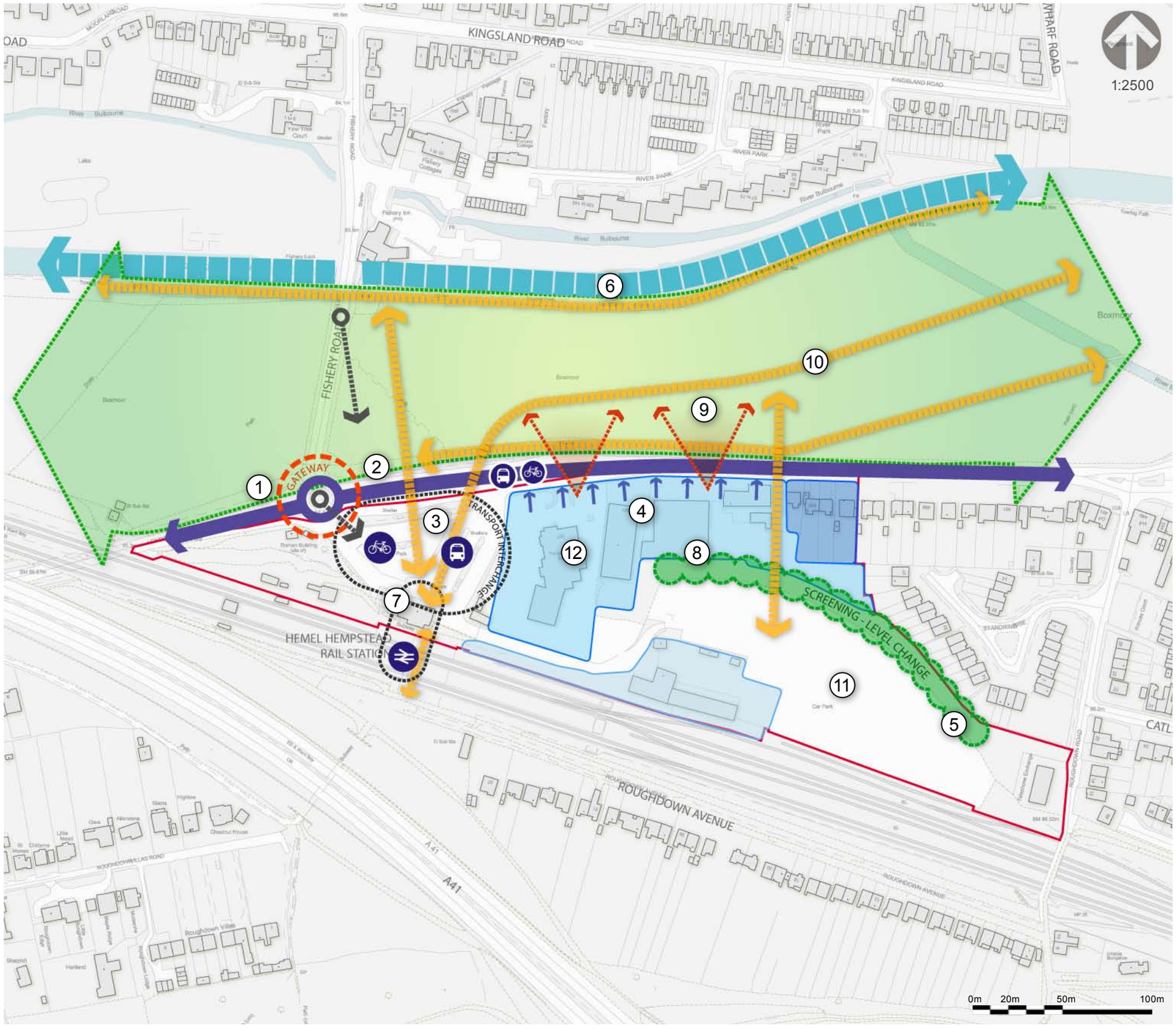
2

Opportunities

The list below and the diagram summarise the key opportunities for the station gateway site.

These include:

1. Enhanced pedestrian gateway to the site from the Fishery Road/ London Road junction.
2. More direct, wider and more appropriately sited pedestrian crossings and footways.
3. Emphasis on creating a more pedestrian friendly environment as opposed to the vehicle dominated system it has at present.
4. A more engaging and continuous frontage along London Road at a human scale.
5. Mature trees lining the existing private residential units to the north of the site will allow for natural visual screening.
6. The Grand Union Canal offers the potential for creating a cycle and pedestrian link to the station from the town centre, which at present feels relatively disconnected from the station gateway site.
7. The view from the station forecourt towards the Grand Union Canal potentially forms the beginnings of a strong link towards the town centre and Two Waters.
8. The abrupt level changes offer a unique opportunity to embed less attractive uses into the landscape.
9. Improved views into the site from the surrounding roads.
10. Improved access and potential resurfacing of footways across the Moor with improved signage and wayfinding.
11. Development opportunities on existing surface car park
12. Potential to redevelop existing uses along London Road.



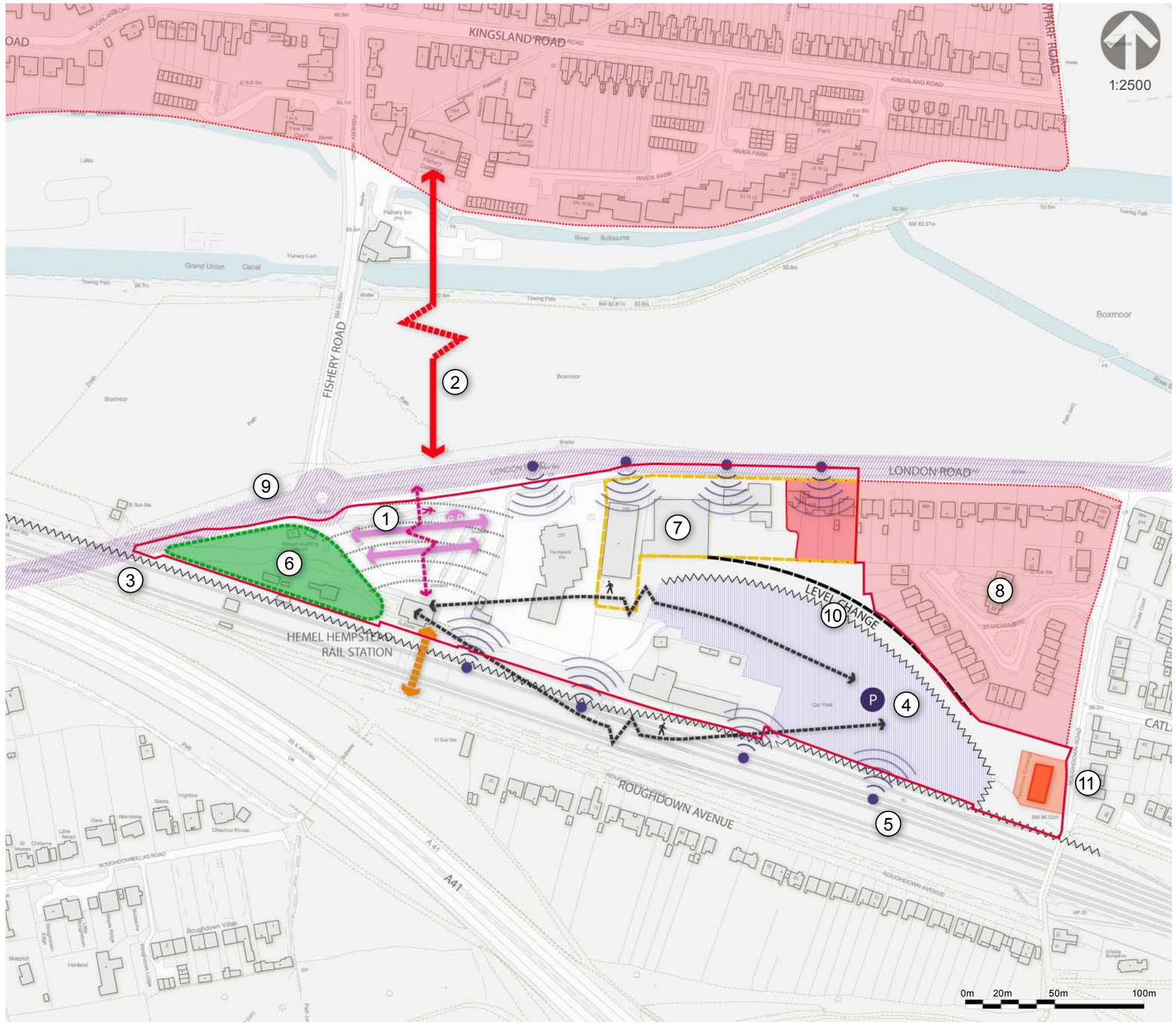
- Site Boundary
- Pedestrian Footway
- Views towards site
- Open Space
- Waterways
- Gateway
- Views Out of Site
- Cycle/ Bus Highway
- Transport Interchange
- Cycle Facilities
- Rail Station
- Bus Interchange
- Mature Trees
- New Active Frontage
- Development Opportunities

Site Analysis

Constraints

The list below and diagram summarise the main constraints in and around the site. The issues presented here include:

1. The station forecourt suffers from pedestrian/ vehicular conflict due to opposing desire lines.
2. There is limited connectivity between the residential to the north of the site and the station, this is a result of severance created by the Grand Union Canal and its limited crossings and is further compounded by the Moor and London Road.
3. The rail line to south of the site also creates severance with limited crossing points which generally provide a poor pedestrian environment.
4. The location and placement of the surface carpark to the west is questionable as the eastern end suffers from being too far from the station building in terms of walking distance.
5. The site suffers from noise pollution from both the north and the south caused by vehicular traffic and the rail line.
6. Mature trees and Roman remains mean that development in the western corner of the site is restricted.
7. Multiple land ownerships along the eastern London Road edge may be an issue in terms of creating a comprehensive scheme.
8. Potential issues of overlooking and overshadowing with regard to neighbouring residential to the east.
9. The quality of the pedestrian environment is generally poor along London Road, particularly towards the railway underpass.
10. Abrupt level changes and blank/inactive facades of existing uses must be considered when developing a scheme.
11. Telephone interchange must be retained.



- Site Boundary
- Poor Footway
- Roman Remains
- Car Parking
- Vehicular Flow
- Poor Accessibility
- Poor Connection
- Noise Pollution
- Pedestrian Subway
- Neighbouring Resi.
- Existing Resi.
- Sloping
- Solar Orientation
- Retain Buildings
- Severance
- Land Ownership

3

03 DESIGN PRINCIPLES & SITE CONCEPT

Brief & Vision

Client's Brief

Project Brief
Summary from Schedule Seven – Service Specification, from the Council's Brief

VISION
(Adapted from p42 of the schedule)

'Investigate the design and development opportunities for the Hemel Station Gateway site, striking the balance between the appropriate mix of land uses and scale of development, whilst satisfying the Council's design and sustainability aspirations and reflecting the site's context, current and emerging planning policies, and its role as a major transport interchange'

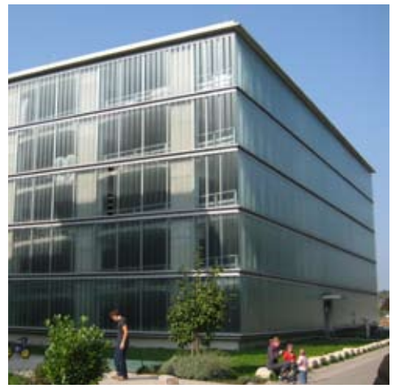
Assumptions for Options Development:

- Improvements to the station forecourt and integration of other modes of transport with the station
- Consolidation of the existing surface car park into a single multi-storey facility
- Development to take place on the Network Rail land holdings
- Re-location of the Harvester pub, and the site's availability for redevelopment
- Improve connections to the moors and tow-path along the Grand Union Canal
- Ensure proposals are robust and deliverable

Design Components

A number of factors will determine the range and content of the development options for the station gateway site, which will be outlined in an 'options matrix' for consideration by the project team (in Workshop 03).

The selection of a shortlist of options for Stage 03 (options development) will be based on the most appropriate and desirable combination of parking numbers, quantum of house and other land uses, scale of development, site coverage and the schemes deliverability, along with a range of other decisions inherent to the design and evaluation process (i.e. sustainability requirements, future operators, access and movement for vehicles). Outlined on the following pages is a summary of the key determinates for the development of options, and the formation of the options matrix.



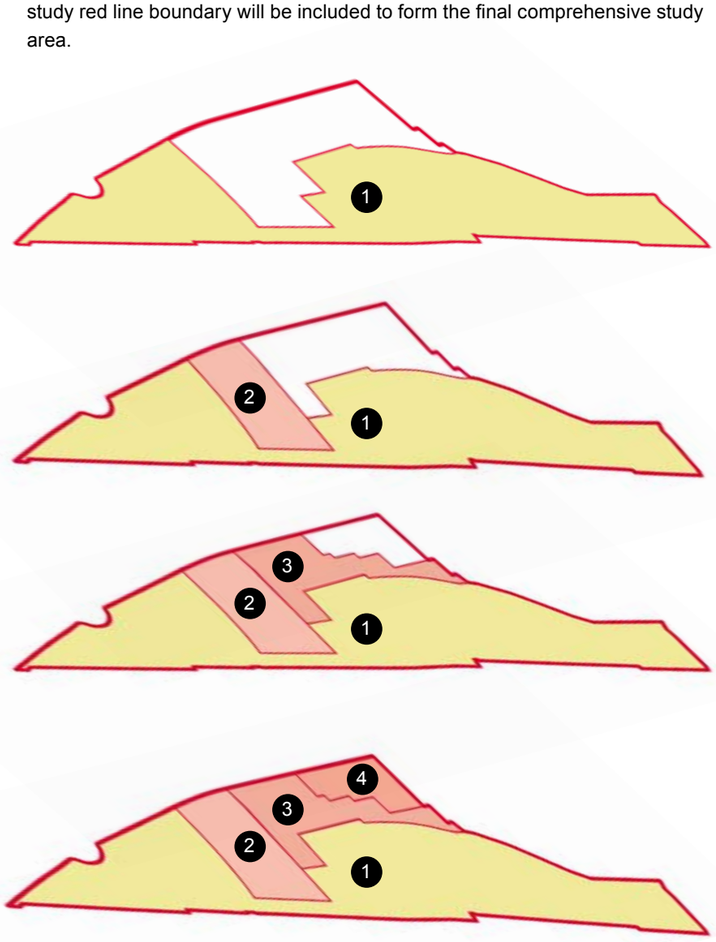
3

Design Components

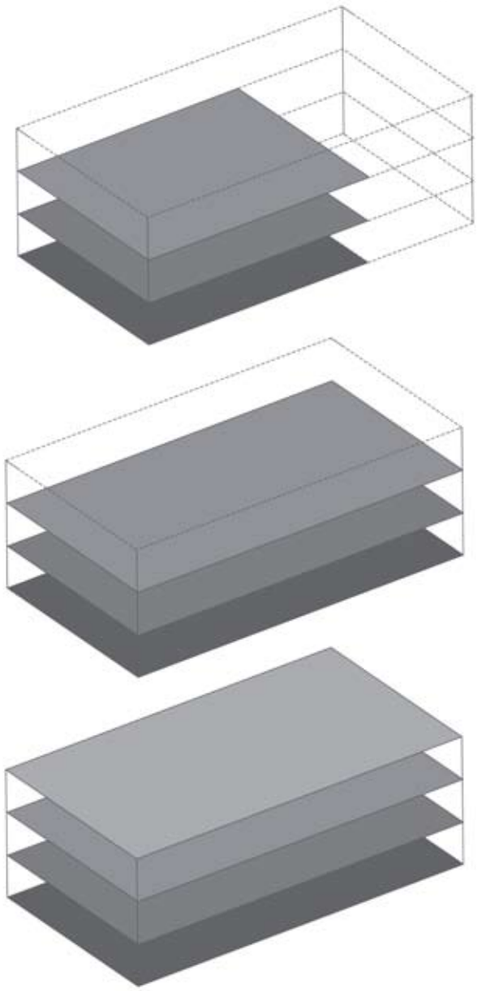
3

Design Criteria

- **Site Coverage and Land Assembly:** three site areas will be considered in the preparation of design options that reflect the acquisition of properties within the red line, and which sit outside the Network Rail(1) ownership. We will work from the assumption that the Harvester(2) will be relocated from the site (to a previously agreed site to the east at the junction with Two Waters and London Roads), combining to form the minimum site area. The three commercial properties(3) (Kwik-Fit, Rover/MG dealer and the Texaco) located along London Road frontage, will be added to define the second site area. Lastly, the four residential properties(4) on London Road, located within the study red line boundary will be included to form the final comprehensive study area.



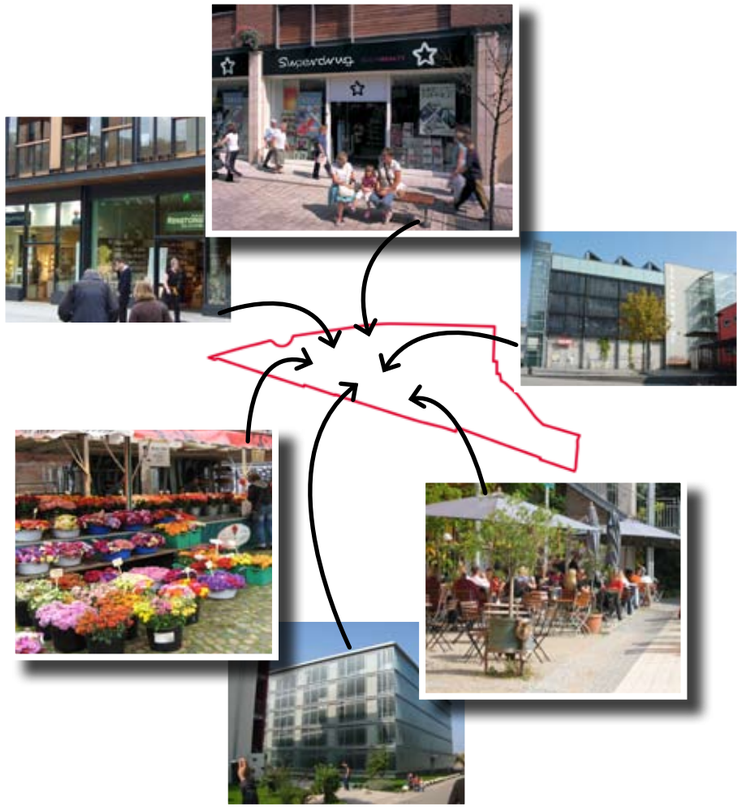
- **Scale of Multi-Storey Car Park:** to create site area available for redevelopment the existing surface car park must be consolidated into a single multi-storey facility, located within close proximity of the station entrance. The scale of the facility and number of spaces it re-provides must be carefully considered, as there's likely to be tensions between the needs of the station users, desire of the operators and aspirations of the Council to deliver a sustainable transport interchange on the site. The cost implications of the multi-storey parking facility will have a significant influence on the viability of the scheme. The options will investigate a range of parking solutions.



- **Residential Typologies & Mix:** the site will support a range of housing types and tenures, though the quantum, density and emphasis of the residential component must consider the Council's objectives (re: housing targets) and the market's appetite for housing. Knight Frank will outline the optimum quantum and balance between flatted development and family housing (e.g. terrace and semi-detached housing), and the split between private and affordable housing, which will also be informed by the Council's current planning guidance. The housing component of the scheme will be focused on the existing car park site, with connections to further housing along London Road as part of a more comprehensive scheme.

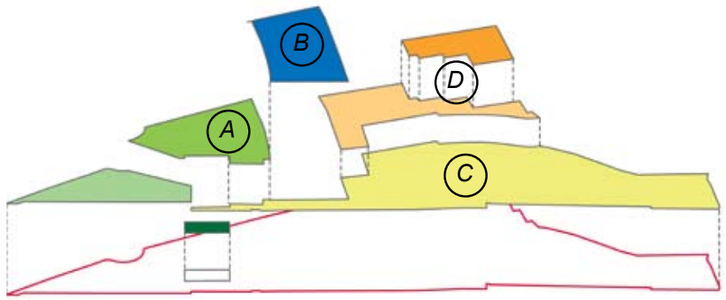
Design Components

- **Land Use Mix**: a range of additional land uses will be considered in the scheme design to supplement the residential properties and support the site's function as Hemel Hempstead's primary transport interchange. It's important that any retail uses being proposed don't compete with the town centre and its role as the primary retail destination for the community. Any retail uses on the site will serve station customers and the immediate neighbourhood (Boxmoor). Other uses may include local health and commercial space, such as small incubator and business units. Knight Frank will specify the land uses deemed appropriate for the site, and those which can be supported in the current market.



- **Station Improvements:** initial discussions with Network Rail and the station operator, London Midland, identified their desire to seek major improvements to the station building as part of any future proposals. Both parties recognised that funding a new station, beyond the improvements to the forecourt and interchange area, were a difficult proposition particularly as they are unable to commit financial assistance to the delivery of any proposals. The options will investigate the extent to which the scheme can find improvements to the station, while further negotiation with Network rail and London Midland will be required to discuss funding.

- **Phasing:** the careful and considered location of routes and land uses across the site can enable development to come forward in accordance with the availability of land, and without jeopardising a future comprehensive redevelopment of the site. The phasing of development may need to account for current constraints in the market or the costs incurred by land acquisition, and must therefore be designed in parcels that deliver the objectives outlined on the following pages, without restricting future development opportunities.



3

Design Principles

3

1. Transport & Movement: *improve the appearance and functioning of the transport interchange*

a. Include safe, accessible, attractive routes that connect the station seamlessly into the surrounding pedestrian, cycle and road networks
b. encourage journeys between the station and the town centre via a range of transport modes, other than private vehicles
c. the availability and pricing of station parking should be used to reinforce a sustainable/integrated transport plan for Hemel Hempstead, without having an adverse impact on the operation of the station, both today and in the future
d. improve the access to the site and its permeability, providing safe and attractive routes along London Road, and between the moors and the site
e. provide legibility and focal points in the development that direct movements to and from the station

2. Mix of Uses: *deliver a mix of residential housing to support housing growth targets, with supporting uses that reflect the site's role as a transport interchange destination*

a. the range of residential typologies should reflect the needs of the community and the market's ability to deliver development on the site in the current and future scenarios
b. retail and commercial uses should support the operation of the station without prejudicing its operation – providing a convenient offer that improves the experience for station customers
c. any retail uses at the station must not compete with the town centre's offer, and should be focused solely on the immediate neighbourhoods and station users
d. the scale and quantum of residential properties should reach the threshold that foster a 'sense of community', one which integrates with the existing neighbourhoods

3. Quality of Built Form: *enhance the relationship between the built environment and its setting*

a. the scale, setback and design of the scheme along London Road should improve the quality of views from the moors and contribute to the gateway character of the site
b. layout and design of the station forecourt, including the adjacent frontages, should provide improved legibility and serve to focus views and pedestrian movements between the station entrance, London Road and the moors
c. the treatment and screening of the multi-storey car park should be considered as part of all proposals
d. the development will demonstrate the use of high quality materials which are locally sourced, are durable and require a minimum amount of on-going maintenance
e. improve the quality of the public realm and station forecourt by framing spaces and routes with attractive, and where possible, active frontages

Design Principles

3

4. Character: *create a gateway development appropriate to Hemel Hempstead that responds sensitively to its context*

a. The layout, scale, height and density of development will make a positive contribution to the character of the area, and the site's role as an important gateway to Hemel Hempstead
b. Views and vistas along London Road and from the adjacent open spaces towards the station must focus on key buildings and focal points providing improved legibility in the streetscene and 'way-finding'
c. The style and architectural treatment of the buildings will reflect the area's unique identity and relationship with surrounding open spaces (urban park & moors) and waterways (Grand Union Canal and River Bulbourne)
d. Existing mature trees should be retained where possible in order to screen development, frame views and maintain the existing character of the site
e. Improve levels of enclosure along important routes between the station entrance and its context
f. Ensure the character varies across the site to reflect the change in land uses, users and levels of accessibility (public, semi-private and private spaces and routes)

5. Community: *create a development that contributes to the functioning of the residential and business communities in Hemel Hempstead*

a. The scale, type and tenure of residential development on the site must be able to sustain a balanced community, rather than a disparate set of individuals
b. Allowances will be made for the services required to support the new residents and businesses, considered in the context of the wider neighbourhood (Boxmoor) and not on a 'site-only' basis
c. Ensure people have every opportunity to engage socially, physically and economically with Hemel Hempstead
d. the development must avoid preferential location and orientation of housing types, promoting a balanced provision of residential properties across the site
e. spaces and routes should be publicly accessible and movement through the site should be encouraged in order to avoid the site becoming an 'enclave' or gated community

6. Deliverability: *inform the design process with robust market and valuation appraisals that outline what is deliverable today, whilst future proofing for market changes in the future*

a. Identify the appropriate scale of residential development required to maximise value, create a balanced community, and avoid prejudicing the future operation of the station
b. Ensure the preferred scheme is viable in the current market, whilst making allowances for future movements (positive or negative)
c. Consider the site's existing operators, land owners and tenants, and the implications of pursing a holistic redevelopment of the site, as opposed to a staged approach
d. Consider the constraints and implications of Network Rail's procurement processes, and the opportunities to promote the development through an 'off-market' agreement – conversely, investigate the likelihood of a private developer (consortium) successfully negotiating the development with Network Rail
e. Identify potential funding support for station improvements and the delivery of the multi-storey car park facility (via Dacorum, Herts CC, Network Rail and/or London Midland)
f. Consider the impact (financial and procedural) of implementing the Council's Compulsory Purchase Powers (CPO) in order to deliver the redevelopment of the site
g. Determine the added value associated with incorporating additional land uses (other than residential) as part of the development, and the implications on the operation of the station – i.e. local retail serving the commuter footfall and immediate neighbourhoods

Design Principles

3

Sustainability

Sustainability: *regeneration of the Station Gateway will set a new benchmark in sustainable development for Dacorum Borough Council. Its impact, locally and globally, both for today and generations to come, will be addressed through a holistic approach to sustainable development.*

Sustainability will form a constant thread throughout the Masterplan and ultimately the delivered development:

- reduce demand for resources (eg non-renewable energy sources, water, materials with high life cycle impact etc)
- minimise pollution and other adverse environmental impacts
- enhance the quality of life occupants and their surrounding communities
- minimise operating and maintenance costs through use of life cycle costing and durable design.

This will be achieved through considerations of first principles in the Masterplan, such as microclimate, solar orientation, architectural form and fabric etc to capitalise on the free benefits of the ambient environment and the inherent attributes of the buildings.

Sustainable design and development measures should form the basis for all proposals, from concept design, to construction, and on-going maintenance and operation. The following sections outline the sustainability objectives of the Masterplan and provide examples of solutions which could be incorporated into the Masterplan to deliver a sustainable development.

1. Environmental Performance of Buildings

Objective: *Achieve a minimum BREEAM (or equivalent) rating of 'EXCELLENT' on all non-domestic buildings*

Objective: *Achieve a minimum Code for Sustainable Homes (or equivalent) Level Four on all residential units*

Solutions:

- Appoint a BREEAM / Code assessor at RIBA Stage B to ensure BREEAM / Code requirements are incorporated into early design proposals and hence ensure maximum credits are achieved for the lowest cost

2. Residential

Objective: *Provide high quality, medium to high density housing and increase the local population to facilitate provision of viable local community facilities, employment, leisure and retail*

Objective: *Provide a range of housing which meets the needs of the local population, addressing diversity and accessibility*

Solutions:

- Mix of types – flats, houses, maisonettes
- Mix of sizes – from one person to families with multiple generations living together
- Mix of tenures – private, affordable, social rent, shared ownership, first time buyers
- Range of needs – families with children, elderly people, travellers, people with disabilities, wheelchair accessible

3. Employment and Entrepreneurial Opportunities

Objective: *Ensure a wide range of jobs will be created through the new development, particularly for local people*

Solutions:

- Provide new retail, commercial and industrial employment opportunities through provision of appropriate buildings and infrastructure
- Provide a range of sizes and types of commercial units, to maximise flexibility and opportunities
- Create spaces and buildings which can be easily adapted to allow for future change of use, expansion of start-up businesses etc
- Preferentially promote sustainable technologies and industries
- Initiatives should be promoted for the training and employment of local residents, including apprenticeships, to reduce trips and improve the skills of the community – both in construction and operation of buildings and infrastructure

4. Community Facilities

Objective: *Provide a range of facilities to meet the community's needs*

Objective: *Provide education opportunities for local people*

Solutions:

- Provide multi-functional and adaptable buildings, to meet the changing needs of the community
- Options for community facilities include: small scale retail, place of worship, nursery/creche, sports facilities for youth and adults, job centre, post office, bank, senior citizens club, children's club, art studio / graffiti wall for youth, skateboard park, pub, hotel, health centre, other leisure / recreation etc
- Promote education about sustainable living, using on-site resources such as an energy centre as demonstrations









Design Principles

Sustainability

5. Green Spaces and Biodiversity

Objective: *Protect the local environment and prevent its deterioration. Enhance local biodiversity and minimise damage/removal of existing habitats*

Objective: *Meet the requirements of Hertfordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan (http://www.hef.org.uk/nature/biodiversity_vision/index.htm) and Dacorum Borough Council Urban Nature Conservation Study (http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/pdf/UNCSMar06.pdf)*

Solutions:

- Provide public green /open spaces and enhance links to existing green spaces
- Provide allotments to enable the community to grow food locally
- Provide green corridors to facilitate movement of flora and fauna between green spaces
- Provide outdoor play areas for children and adults
- Use extensive green roofs for habitat enrichment, amenity space for residents, rain water retention, building insulation and reduction of the urban heat island effect
- Plant local native flora and fauna
- Reduce water demand through careful selection of species

6. Alternative transport

Objective: *Improve accessibility to the site to minimise the need for car journeys and reduce carbon emissions from transport*

Objective: *Provide facilities to encourage alternative forms of transport to cars, such as buses, cycling and walking*

Solutions:

- Create safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes through the site and into the wider community to encourage residents and visitors to walk and cycle
- The level of parking provision must be balanced between the future operation of the railway station, the attractiveness of Hemel Hempstead as a commuter destination, and the promotion of sustainable transport initiatives
- Prioritise parking for car clubs, car sharers and electric vehicles (with charging points)
- Provide a high quality, safe and accessible public transport interchange
- Improve access to the train station and legibility around the station
- Provide secure cycling facilities – for example racks at the train station, public racks overlooked by shops and at all residential developments
- Consider a car sharing club for residents
- Develop and implement a green travel plan

7. Water Supply, Water Pollution and Flooding

Objective: *Maximise use of rainwater / groundwater for non-potable applications*

Objective: *Ensure the quality of runoff water is better than existing to protect water resources*

Objective: *Ensure that quantity of runoff water is less than existing to prevent flooding*

Solutions:

- Use rainwater attenuation methods to minimise the risk of flooding and / or provide water for non-potable applications – for example provide space for rainwater tanks in all buildings, use living roofs to attenuate rainwater etc
- Minimise hard landscaping
- Use recycled water for WC flushing and irrigation – rainwater or greywater
- Remove pollutants such as sediment, nutrients, litter, hydrocarbons etc, prior to discharge to natural watercourses or municipal drainage systems – for example grass swales, detention ponds, litter traps, oil interceptors etc
- 100% of waterfittings / sanitaryware should be zero/low water consumption
- Water metering, leak detection and monitoring across the entire site
- Flood resistant design (plumbing, ground floor uses, appropriate access and exit etc) and construction materials









Design Principles

3

Sustainability

8. Energy

Objective: *Implement the Energy Hierarchy to reduce air pollution and greenhouse emissions: (1) Use less energy, (2) Supply energy more efficiently than grid sourced electricity, and (3) Use renewable energy onsite*

Objective: *Reduce carbon emissions by at least 20% compared to Building Regulations and current building standards, through a combination of energy efficient measures and renewable energy*

Solutions:

Use less energy:
- Incorporate passive heating and cooling: optimised U-values, solar shading, passive heating and cooling, exposed thermal mass and night venting, orientation, natural ventilation, natural daylight, low air permeability, exposed thermal mass, free cooling etc
- Reduce consumption through behaviour change
- Maximise opportunities for engineering solutions to further reduce energy consumption in detailed building design and provide flexible designs to secure future adaptation of buildings to new and emerging technologies: dynamic simulation to inform building design, iterate simulation to optimise designs, energy efficient lighting (indoor and outdoor) and appliances, appropriate zoning and control systems for lighting (indoor and outdoor) and heating, demand management systems – BMS – to optimise efficiency of systems and services under different operating conditions, meter all major energy uses separately, monitor and report energy/CO2 performance of buildings in-use, aim to achieve an EPC 'A' rating etc

Supply energy more efficiently than grid sourced electricity:
- Use combined heat and power (CHP) and / or community heating
- Ensure all buildings and facilities have the capability to connect to the CHP and / or community heating
- Ensure the CHP will be 'future-proofed' to enable future developments in energy systems (eg fuel cells, anaerobic digestion of wastes to produce biogas etc) to be linked into the CHP
- Provide a mix of land uses and building types which will maximise the potential for CHP by providing an optimal balance of electricity and heat demand

Use renewable energy onsite:
- Install renewable energy technologies for buildings, such as solar water heating, photovoltaics, biomass, wind, waste to energy technologies, ground sourced heat pumps etc
- Install renewable energy for transport (eg pool of electric hire cars charged by PV or green electricity)

9. Waste Management

Objective: *Implement the waste hierarchy – (1) reduce, (2) reuse, (3) recycle, (4) recover energy, (5) landfill*

Objective: *Provide facilities of appropriate size and nature to enable operational wastes from all areas (retail, residential, commercial, public realm etc) to be reused/recycled*

Solutions:
- Dedicated space for disposal, segregation, storage and collection of recyclables – within operational areas of buildings and for segregation / storage / collection
- Provide waste and recycling bins in the public realm
- Provide local composting facilities, for use on allotments
- Identify local recycling services
- Reclaimed materials in construction (in particular demolition waste)
- Modern methods of construction (eg modular, pre-fabrication)
- Design for deconstruction
- Develop site-wide waste management strategy

10. Materials

Objective: *Materials should be responsibly sourced to minimise adverse impacts on people and the environment*

Solutions:
- Deconstruct buildings which are to be removed and retain demolition materials on site, to maximise reuse and recycling of materials and components
- Promote sustainable construction materials – high recycled content, locally sourced, sustainable sources, durable, low embodied impact, pre-fabricated, low emissions etc









Design Principles

Sustainability

11. Land

Objective: *100% of the land should be allocated to valuable use (environmental, social and economical benefits)*

Objective: *Maximise retention of material on site and minimise importation of virgin material*

Objective: *Ensure soil quality is appropriate for proposed land uses*

Solutions:

- The land uses mix should promote a balanced and inclusive development that meets the needs of the new and existing communities
- Cut and fill should be balanced and minimised
- Use the “Contaminated Land Exposure Assessment” (CLEA) model to assess the human health risks from contaminated soils and, if necessary, use appropriate sustainable remediation techniques (eg insitu, bioremediation etc) and ensure soil quality is within health-based reference values
- Implement remediation where required, using insitu sustainable techniques (eg bioremediation) where appropriate, and avoid ‘dig and dump’
- Ensure remediation reduces contamination to within appropriate health/ environmental levels

12. Microclimate

Objective: *Control local microclimate for comfort of residents and visitors, and for the benefit of local ecosystems*

Objective: *Ensure that wind speeds are “tolerable” and “acceptable” using the Lawson Comfort criteria. Prevent “unacceptable” wind speeds.*

Solutions:

- Use vegetation to mitigate noise from sources such as major roads and the railway line
- Use vegetation and water features in the urban environment to control temperature and humidity, prevent wind channelling, and provide shade and recreation spaces
- Shelter belts for protection from wind (eg walls and building design)
- Buildings in irregular patterns to avoid wind channelling
- South facing windows with solar shading to maximise daylight in winter yet prevent direct sunlight and overheating in summer
- Light coloured facades on north faces of buildings to reflect summer heat and minimise glare

13. Health and Wellbeing

Objective: *Provide facilities which promote the health and well-being of residents and visitors*

Objective: *Provide a safe and secure site, and design out crime*

Objective: *Improve local visual amenity through quality design*

Objective: *Provide an accessible site which meets the needs of a variety of people*

Objective: *Ensure occupants have access to views and natural daylight*

Objective: *Prevent emissions of harmful pollutants to the atmosphere*

Objective: *Minimise noise pollution during and after construction, and ensure facilities’ noise does not exceed background +5dB*

Solutions:

- Consider the effects of the development on neighbouring properties – eg privacy, access to daylight
- Create environments which encourage children to exercise and play
- Assess the building forms, orientations, external façade, windows and internal layouts to provide good daylighting
- Maximise and enhance external views
- Provide easy access to green areas and facilities
- Provide legible and attractive routes within the site and to connect with the surrounding areas
- Design for safety and security, using ‘Secure by Design’ principles
- Create active facades and avoid blank walls
- Develop concepts in consultation with an access consultant
- Provide building design solutions and technologies that will assist the needs of the physically, mentally and sensory disabled
- Provide access to the site and through the site which meets the needs of the disadvantaged – consider parking, paths, stairs, ramps, lifts, signage, street furniture
- Ensure that emissions of NOx, ozone depleting substances, substances with high global warming potential, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) etc are within appropriate environmental and health limits, or best practice guidelines









3

Site Concept

Hemel Hempstead (2020 Vision)

The Hemel 2020 Vision encompasses 20 inter-related projects and is about '*enhancing quality of life, providing more homes, creating new businesses and employment opportunities and enhancing our environment. It is about raising the profile of Hemel Hempstead as an exciting town in which to live,work, play and visit and an attractive place for investment' (p 4).*

Through BDP's work on the Urban Park we have been made aware of the importance to improve connections between the station, town centre, and the surrounding neighbourhoods via a number of sustainable transport modes. The benefits derived from these two commissions must be maximised at every interval, whilst considering the on-going work by Dacorum Council to deliver change.

Site Concept

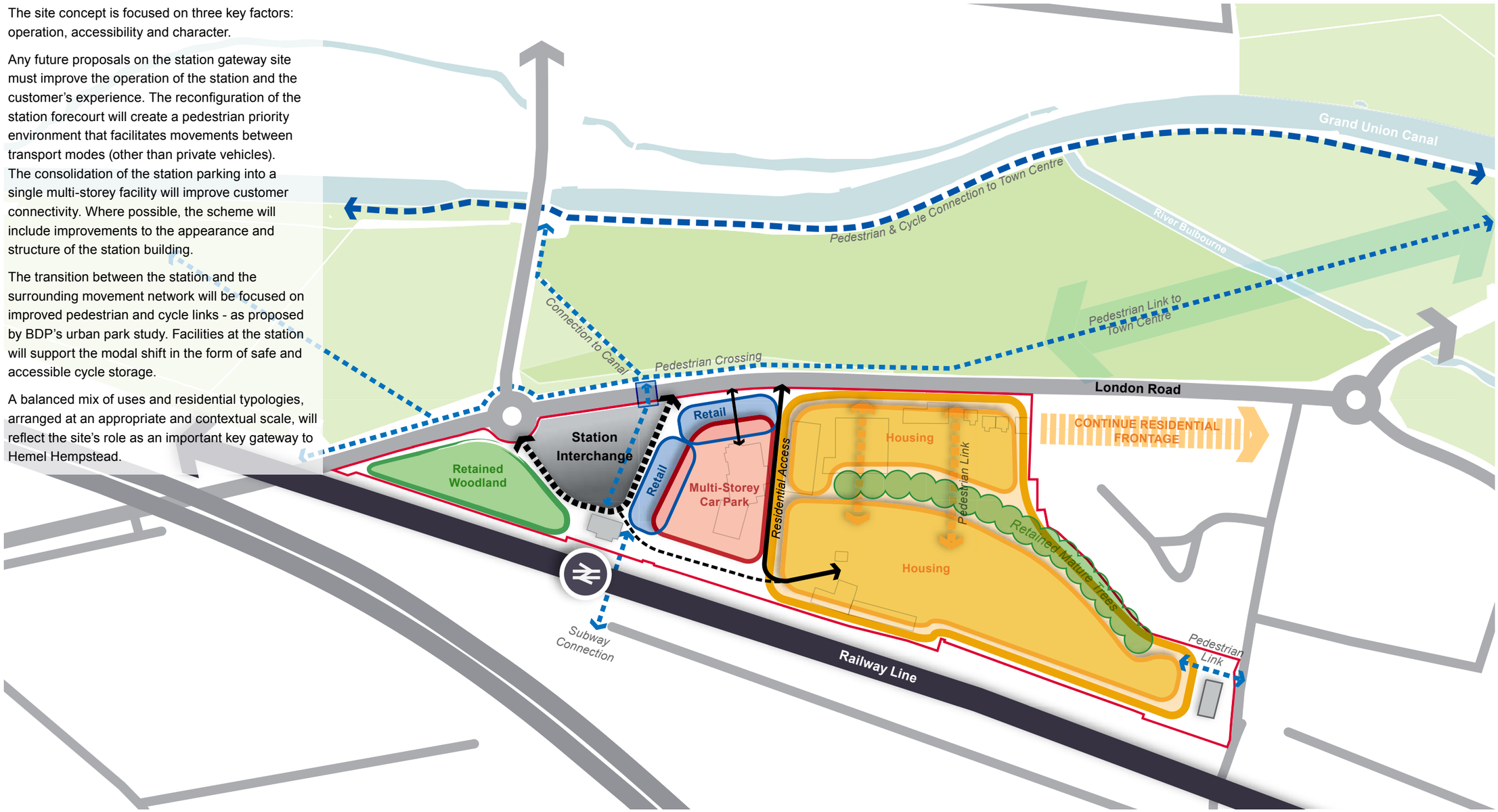
Station Gateway

The site concept is focused on three key factors: operation, accessibility and character.

Any future proposals on the station gateway site must improve the operation of the station and the customer's experience. The reconfiguration of the station forecourt will create a pedestrian priority environment that facilitates movements between transport modes (other than private vehicles). The consolidation of the station parking into a single multi-storey facility will improve customer connectivity. Where possible, the scheme will include improvements to the appearance and structure of the station building.

The transition between the station and the surrounding movement network will be focused on improved pedestrian and cycle links - as proposed by BDP's urban park study. Facilities at the station will support the modal shift in the form of safe and accessible cycle storage.

A balanced mix of uses and residential typologies, arranged at an appropriate and contextual scale, will reflect the site's role as an important key gateway to Hemel Hempstead.



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4

04 OPTIONS



Option Development

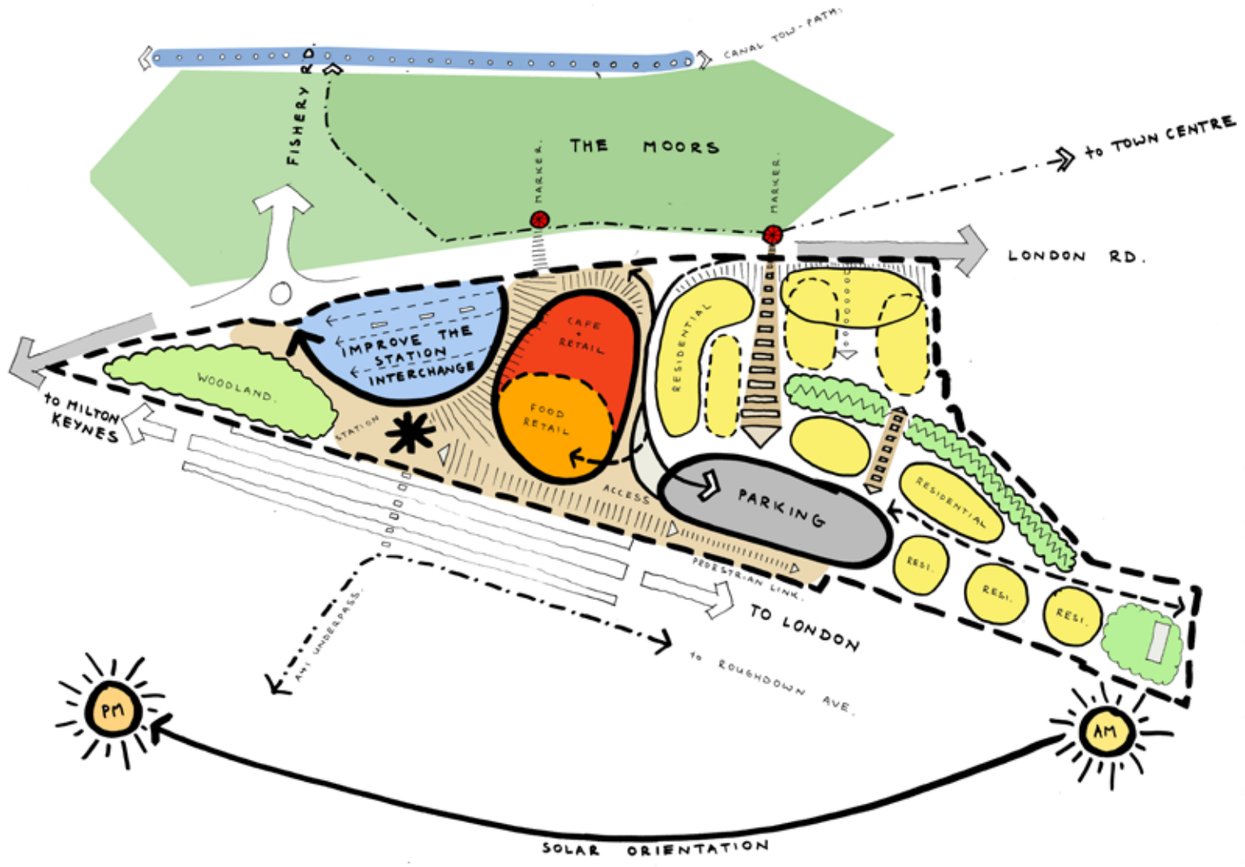
4

A number of scenarios have been developed using a matrix that identifies a range of components, considerations and influences (referred to as *'Design Components'*). The Design Components are taken into consideration when generating design solutions for the site. The matrix has been developed to reflect the key findings and principles derived from the previous sections.

During the project workshops, the design and client teams reviewed the Design Components to ensure they fully represent the issues and opportunities relating to the site's regeneration. Following this, the team constructed design scenarios and combinations of the design components in order to seek a short-list of between 3 and 4 options, two of which are displayed within this chapter.

Once selected, the project team prepared schematic layouts for each of the options, supplemented by a schedule of accommodation that will be subjected to a preliminary appraisal. A preferred option was then selected by the team and further investigated in greater detail and subjected to a further and more rigorous viability assessment, which will form the basis of this study and the project going forward.

4



Schedule of Accommodation

Residential	Small Retail	Car parking	
		Floor Space	Spaces
17075	279	12800	512

Flats	106	(assumes 100sqm/flat)
Houses	36	(counted off plan)
TOTAL	142	

SCENARIO 1

Scenario one looks at the comprehensive redevelopment of the site. Its looks to provide a mix of food and retail uses alongside around 142 residential units and a newly constructed multistorey car park that reprovides the station car park in a more conveniently positioned form alongside the rail line and closer to the station building. The scenario also proposes a reconfiguration and rationalisation of the vehicular flow of the station forecourt with a push towards a more pedestrian friendly environment.

Pros:

- The multistorey car park is positioned to allow for the immediate reprovision of the existing car parking, minimising the impact of a potential stall in the project due to issues relating to the acquisition of the Harvester site.
- The multi-storey car park acts as visual and acoustic screen for residential from the rail line.
- A carefully managed design solution allows for certain components of the site to be removed, reduced or reconfigured to suit various phasing options and a combination of land assembly scenarios.
- The multi-storey car park, whilst initially providing 500 spaces over three storeys, has the potential to be expanded with further storeys added.
- The mix of houses and flats proposed enables the site to fit more units and create interesting forms that help enclose space, activate streets and aid legibility.
- Improvements to the station forecourt with a more logical flow of vehicular traffic, will lead to the creation of a more pedestrian priority environment with a strong sense of arrival and visual connection between the station and the Moors, which in turn will aid connections to the town centre that sits beyond.
- Food and retail units are limited to convenience uses that are suited to an out of town centre station location, as it is not an aspiration to attempt to compete with the town centre. Whilst being minimal the placement of the retail uses is such that they still create a sense of arrival at the station.

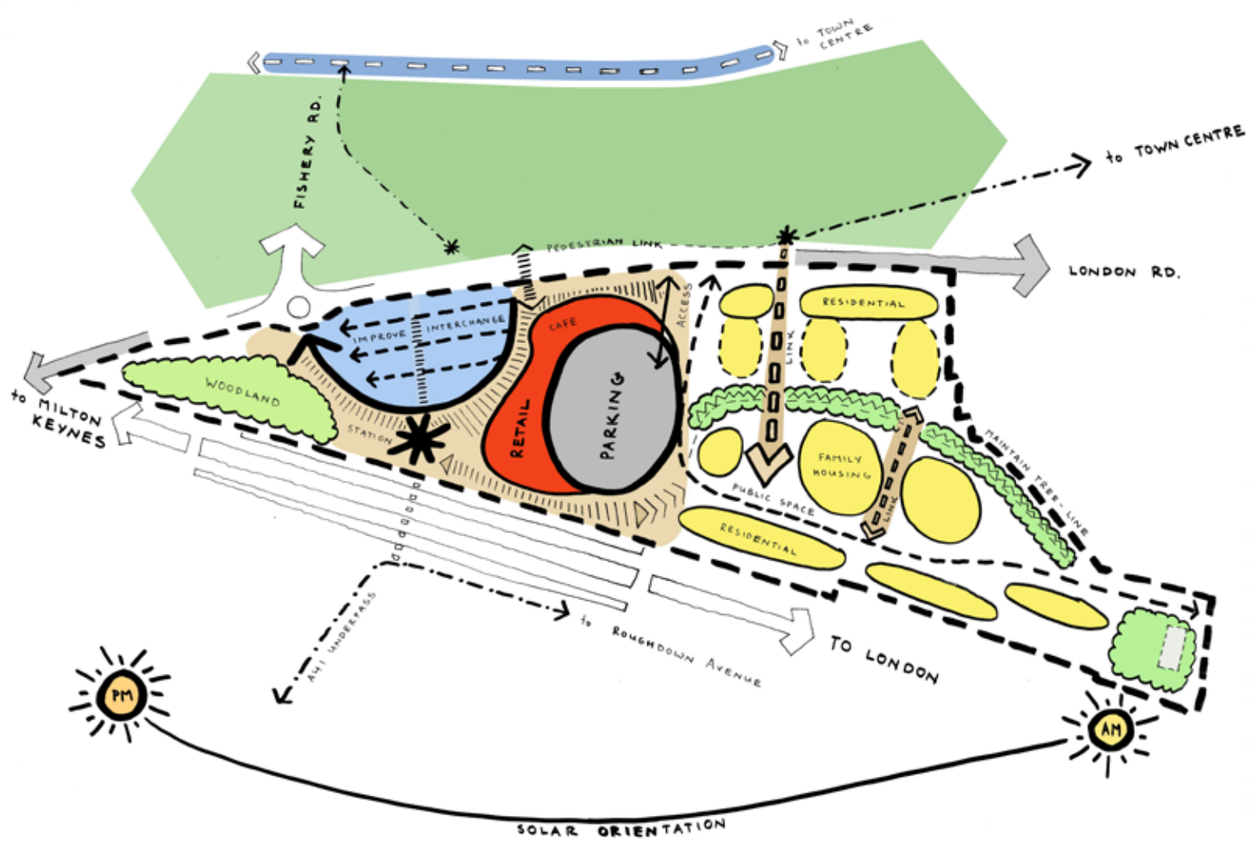
Cons:

- Weak east-west connections between the interchange and residential due to level changes and the placement of the multi-storey car park.
- Despite aspirations to create a mixed community, the proportion of flatted apartments this scenario proposes may struggle in a market that is principally driven by larger format more traditional house types.
- Whilst the multi-storey carpark provides visual and acoustic screening for the proposed residential from the rail line, its likely the facades of the structure will require careful consideration to minimise the negative impact on surrounding pedestrian routes.


1:2000
INSET
LONDON ROAD
Grand Union Canal
Boxmoor
Hemel Hempstead Station
A41
Roughdown Common
Telephone Exchange
BM 96.52m
INSET
LONDON ROAD
0m
20m
50m
100m

4

4



Schedule of Accomodation

Residential	Small Retail	Food Store	Car parking	
			Floor Space	Spaces
26959	791	318	12532	501

Flats	147	(assumes 100sqm/flat)
Houses	56	(counted off plan)
TOTAL	203	

SCENARIO TWO

Scenario two, as with scenario one, looks at the comprehensive redevelopment of the site. It looks to provide around 200 residential units alongside a newly constructed multi-storey car park that is integrated into a mixed food, retail and residential block. Similar to the previous scenario, this option also proposes a reconfiguration and rationalisation of the vehicular flow of the station forecourt, aiding in the creation of a more pedestrian oriented environment.

Pros:

- The configuration and orientation of the residential allows for strong east-west pedestrian links
- Level changes are put to good use, providing visual screening for the residential units to the north of the site.
- Given the nature of the local housing demand, this scenario provides significantly more family housing than other options.
- The design provide an improved frontage along London Road with taller units used to enclose the street and aid legibility.
- The multi-storey car park is hidden within a mixed residential and retail block, allowing for the public space along London Road and the station interchange to receive active frontage.
- Station and residential car parking circulation is separated, lessening congestion on certain roads during peak periods.
- The design solution is flexible enough to allow for parcels of land to be developed as and when they are acquired, without a wholly negative impact on the overall scheme if some parcels remain undeveloped.

Cons:

- It is likely Roughdown Road will experience higher levels of traffic from the new residential properties.
- In an attempt to separate traffic flows a new junction along London Road will be required.
- The integrated and mixed used nature of the multi-storey car park makes the option of increasing the capacity of the multi-storey car park difficult, unlike in scenario one where new levels can be placed on top.
- Whilst the scenario is flexible enough to cater for various land assembly options, the scheme relies on the acquisition of the Harvester site as this is pivotal to the reconfiguration of the station car parking, which essentially is the catalyst for the development of the residential phases of the scheme.
- Certain areas around the multi-storey car park are likely to suffer from inactive frontages, although mitigation in the form of articulation and planting will be used to limit the impact where possible.


1:2000
Grand Union Canal
Boxmoor
LONDON ROAD
Hemel Hempstead Station
A41
BOUGHDOWN AVENUE
Boughdown Common
Telephone Exchange
0m
20m
50m
100m

4

Preferred Option: Scenario 2

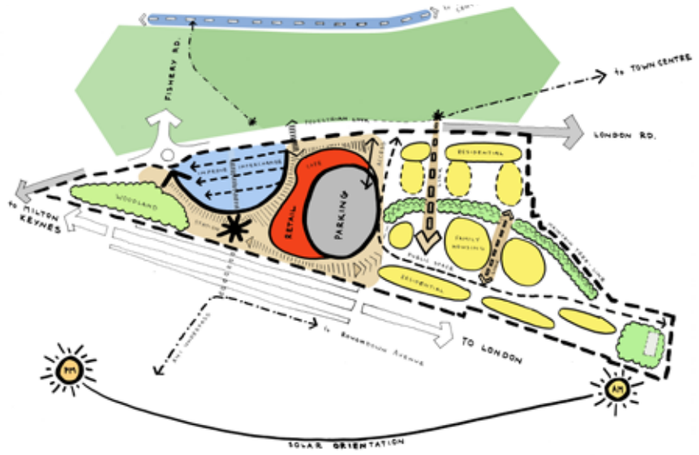
4

Scenario two has been selected as the preferred option. This option centres around using the acquisition and redevelopment of the Harvester site as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the existing station car park and subsequently the surrounding land parcels as and when they are acquired. The scheme will provide around 200 residential units in a mix of forms which include a significant amount of traditional family format houses. Alongside the family housing will sit a number of generously proportioned flatted apartments, which are deemed to be suitable for the local market.

Whilst the selection of this scheme as the preferred option is principally on the basis of its viability, it also provides a much higher quality design solution that other scenarios, as the acquisition of the Harverster site frees up a substantial amount of land giving greater flexibility to the east and improving the potential for connections and permeability between the residential and the station.

Design Evolution
As the scheme evolved a number of changes were applied to the design, the main changes that occurred are as follows:

- **Private Gardens:** Design guidance combined with future occupant aspirations suggested that the provision for private gardens, particularly along side the railway line may have been a bit short. In response, all units where allocated a minimum of 11.5m length of garden, where units were unable to meet this requirement, layouts were reconfigured.
- **Retail/ Food Uses:** Early thinking led to suggestions of the inclusion of a small food store overlooking the station concourse. Further investigation and consultation has led to retail aspirations being toned down significantly with a move towards more modest convenience type uses that do not pose any threat to the town centre and are more acceptable for the location.
- **Car Parking:** Whilst there are aspirations to create a sustainable development that promotes greener modes of transport, it is also a necessity to produce a scheme that is financially viable. Given the location and the current demands from house buyers it was necessary to incorporate a scheme that provides a minimum residential parking ratio of 1:1 principally using on street parking.
- **Highways & circulation:** Given the narrow nature of Roughdown Road and the negative impact new junctions would have on London Road, efforts have been made to ensure that the route through the site does not become a rat run and that where possible journeys are minimised. Interventions such as narrow highways, minimised corner radii and tabling of certain areas of the roadway within the site have been integrated to create an effective home zone, improving the quality of the environment within the proposed residential area.



Design Framework

Land Use

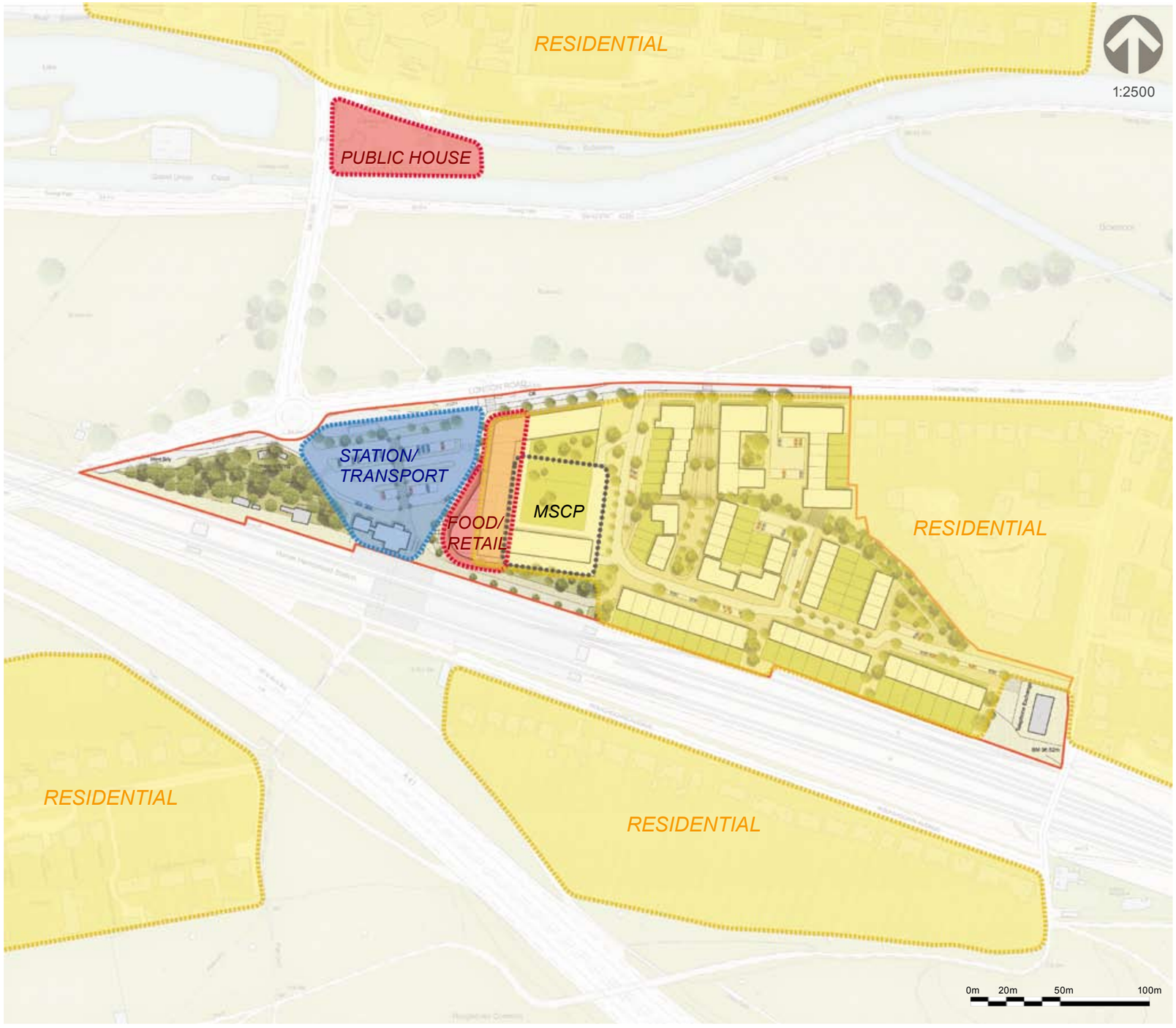
The proposal is principally residential development that includes a modest provision (318sqm) of convenience food and retail alongside a reconfigured station forecourt area. The scheme aims to consolidate uses, placing retail and food towards the station arrival area, overlooking the station concourse enhancing the sense of arrival.

Retail and food uses are restricted to convenience type units as there is no aspiration to create competition for the town centre. Instead retail and food uses placed within the site will cater for the local population and station users.

The single storey retail and food uses will be integrated with a 500 space multi-storey car park that sits beneath and behind a U-shaped block of residential units which benefit from a landscaped courtyard on top of the multi-storey car park. The single aspect retail and residential units will be used to mask two sides of the multi-storey car park and provide an active frontage to the adjacent public realm.

Aside from the station interchange and the retail, the rest of the site will be principally residential. The residential development will provide approximately 203 units, of which 147 will be flatted apartments and 56 family houses. Whilst these unit numbers seem quite precise, the scheme will be developed in a manner that could allow for changes to tenure to mirror the residential market demand, as such the layout of the scheme remains very flexible.

Flat and traditional house types can be seen across the breadth of the site, with flatted units used to punctuate taller corner blocks and along London Road.



Site Boundary
Residential
Retail
Station Uses

4

Design Framework

4

Vehicular Movement

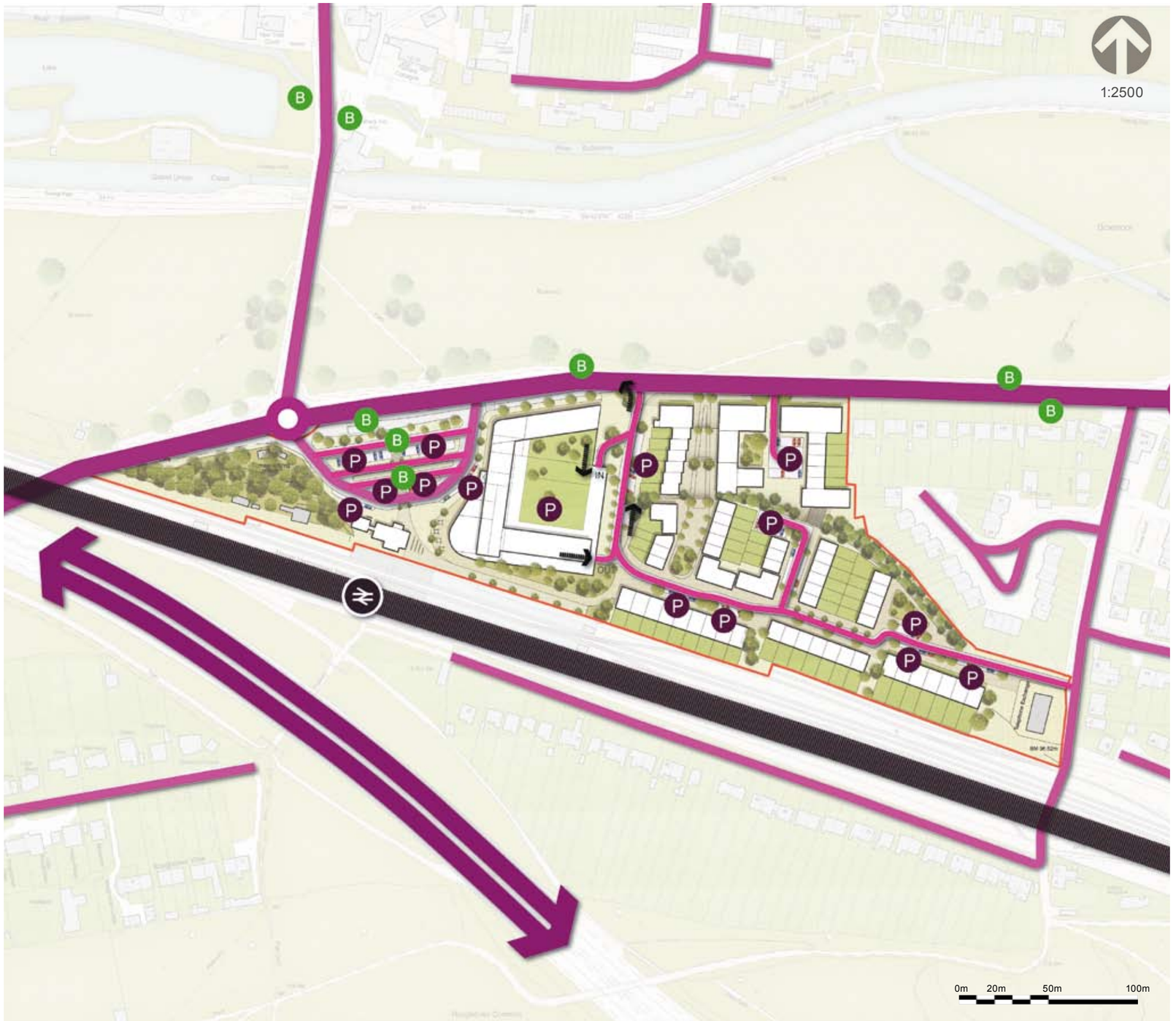
Vehicular flow has been rationalised and separated by purpose, with short stay station car parking circulation, such as buses, taxis and drop offs entering through the station forecourt. Whereas longer stay users intending to use the multi-storey car park and residential traffic will access the site from separate points along London Road and Roughdown Road. The separation of these flows of traffic should make for a more efficient transport interchange that is not overly dominated by cars as well as providing a calmer environment in the residential areas of the development.

The station will benefit from a new arrangement of the forecourt allowing buses to pick up and drop off passengers closer to the station, making for a more integrated interchange.
The new forecourt area will also benefit from a more orderly arrangement of parking with taxi ranks to the left and right of the station and disabled parking provided in the nearest set of bays.

Given the current expectation from home buyers efforts have been made to provide a minimum on street parking ratio of 1:1 for the proposed residential. Parking will be broken up into small groups of around 3 to 5 cars per group, which will be separated by vegetation and provided in a range of forms and orientations to provide a more pedestrian focused environment.

Servicing of the commercial premises along the station forecourt will occur in two forms. Units will be principally serviced from the rear via the multi-storey car park, although where possible the units could also potentially be serviced from the front via the station forecourt during periods when the station is closed.

Smaller scale highway interventions will be required to ensure that the route through the site does not become a rat run. Where possible the highway should deviate from being a straight line, corner radii should be reduced and certain areas of roadway should be tabled in a bid to reduce speed and promote a pedestrian oriented environment.



Vehicular Route
Rail Line
Car Parking
Bus Stand

Design Framework

Pedestrian Movement

A key objective of the scheme was to produce a pedestrian priority environment. As well as new proposals to the east of the site, the scheme also proposes a number of changes to London Road and the station forecourt area. These proposals will look to improve crossing points over London Road, improve the sense of arrival and legibility of station users when they leave the station and generally give greater emphasis on allowing pedestrians to move in an uninterrupted fashion.

There are two new potential crossing points proposed for London Road. These crossings should not necessarily be viewed as formal signalised crossings, more so as traffic islands, at least initially. The proposed crossing points sit at the northern end of two main desire lines, one along the axis towards the station, the other through the centre of the proposed residential area. It is hoped that these crossings will improve and encourage linkages towards the Moors and subsequently the town centre, by catering for existing desire lines.

The interventions proposed for the station forecourt area, will see a clear north-south route designated for pedestrians between the station and the Moors; not only will this allow for an uninterrupted flow of pedestrians it will also open up a visual connection towards one of Hemel Hempstead's greatest assets.

The arrangement of the proposed residential will provide a permeable development with clear routes across the site, this in turn will reduce walking distances and create a clear and legible pedestrian hierarchy, encouraging walking and cutting out needless car journeys.

Small scale interventions will be required to the landcaping and footway along London Road and beyond to facilitate pedestrian movement beyond the bounds of the new development and towards the town centre. The introduction of wider footways, improved crossing points, high quality materials and improved conditions of surfaces will help facilitate movement.

Pedestrian Route

Proposed Crossing

Design Framework

4

Improvements to surrounding roads

Whilst this study looks to improve the station interchange area, improvements to the surrounding streets would help provide wider access to the site and stronger connections towards the town centre. Changes to the surrounding routes will also ensure that the benefits of any interventions within the site boundary are felt further afield as accessibility will be improved as well as more sustainable modes of transport being promoted.

The principal interventions suggested for the the surrounding streets include:

Footways
Where possible pedestrian footways should be widened or reinstated. The footways should provide a surface that is easily used by the disabled and people using push chairs. Paths should be clear of clutter and physical barriers to improve general movement and visibility. Where possible footpaths should be continuous, have an even surface and a constant grade between street intersections. Corner radii at intersections should be at a minimum to ensure that pedestrian flows do not have to unnecessarily deviate from desire lines.

Crossings
Crossings should be located along desire lines and less restrictive with fewer barriers. Crossings need not be signalised, central traffic islands along London Road could potentially provide a pedestrian refuge that does not overly disrupt the flow of traffic, yet that offers convenient and safe crossing points for pedestrians.

Parking
Car parking along London Road should be restricted. The continual presence of parked cars to the west of the station interchange exit creates a potential hazard as well as restricting pedestrian movement.

Vegetation
Trimming back and clearing of vegetation from the edges of the road and footway will improve visibility and allow for wider footways. The banks and verges could be replanted with low shrubs and ground covers to provide seasonal interest.

Signage
Signage is an important element along key links, providing wayfinding information and awareness of the greater context. Signage could be branded to offer a sense of continuity between the town centre and station area. Signage could be incorporated into the fabric of the public realm through methods such as building markers, etched paving stones and plaques. Redundant and unnecessary items of furniture, structures and signage should be removed or simplified. Signage that is replaced should not obstuct the flow of pedestrians.


Reduced/ inaccessible footway due to grass verge


Lack of footway to the west of station interchange


Restricted and narrow footways


Narrow footway/ car dominated street


Overgrown vegetation/ scattered signage


Unwelcoming and unkepmt footpath


Cluttered pedestrian environment

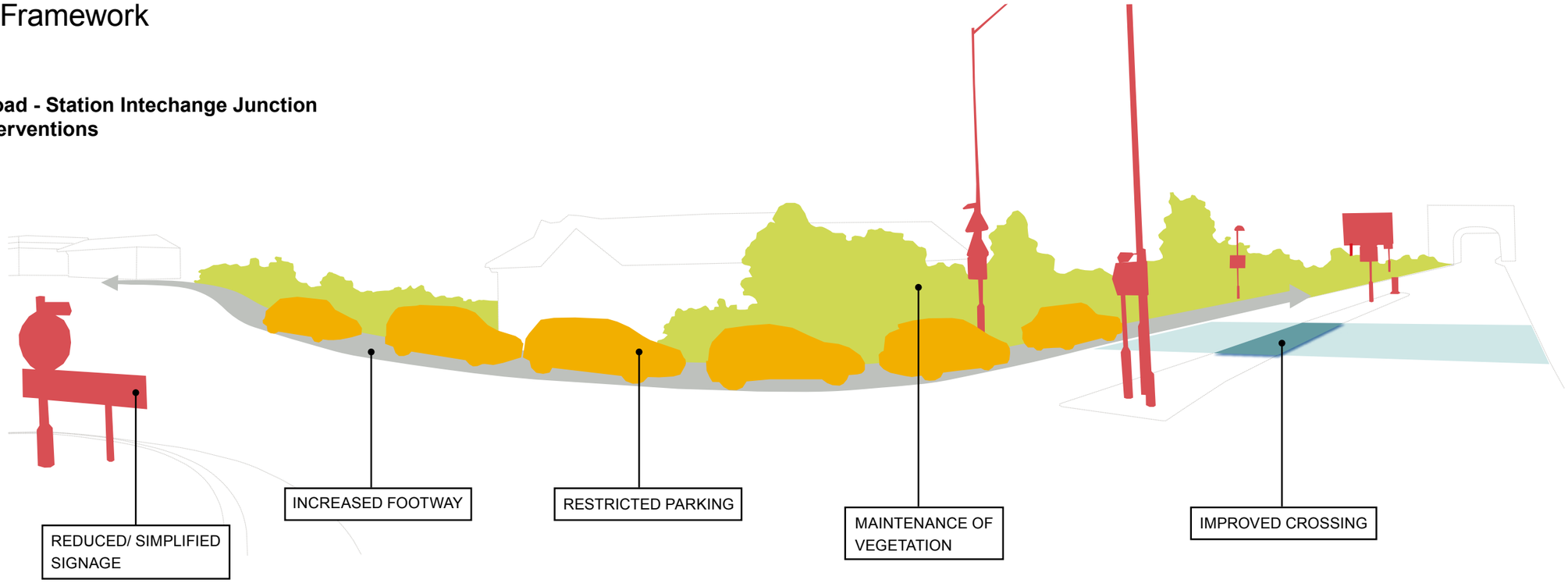

Cars parked in inappropriate locations along main road


Excess carriageway and street markings

Design Framework

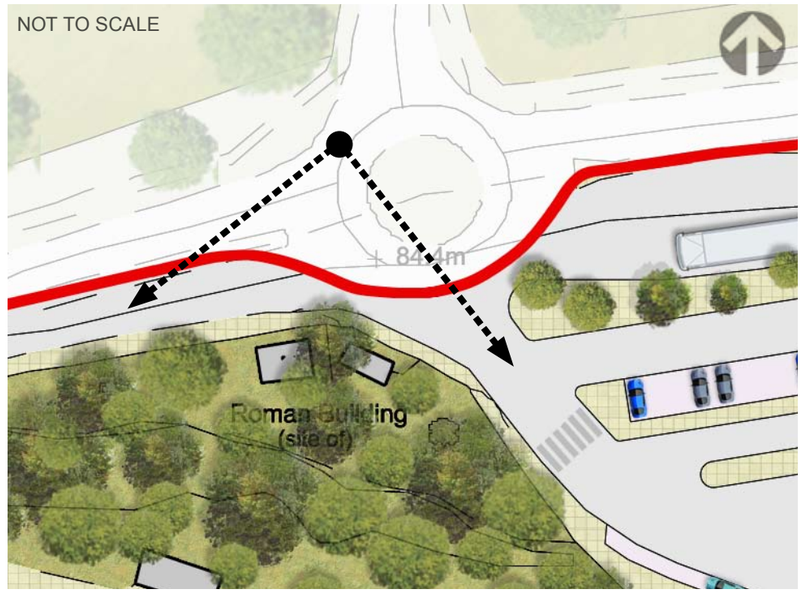
4

London Road - Station Intechange Junction
Design Interventions



The area to the west of station interchange is particularly problematic in terms of its poor pedestrian environment. Issues ranging from overgrown vegetation, persistent car parking along the verge and the lack of pedestrian footway and crossing points make it difficult for pedestrians to reach destinations to the west in a straighforward fashion.

The proposals for this junction would see the vegetation trimmed back and a new footway laid from the interchange toward the underpass to the west. Car parking along the verge will also be restricted creating more room for the pedestrian footway. Signage would be simplified and placed in locations that does not interfere with pedestrian flow. The street will also benefit from a new non-signalsied island crossing connecting the station and the moors.



Design Framework

4

Urban Form

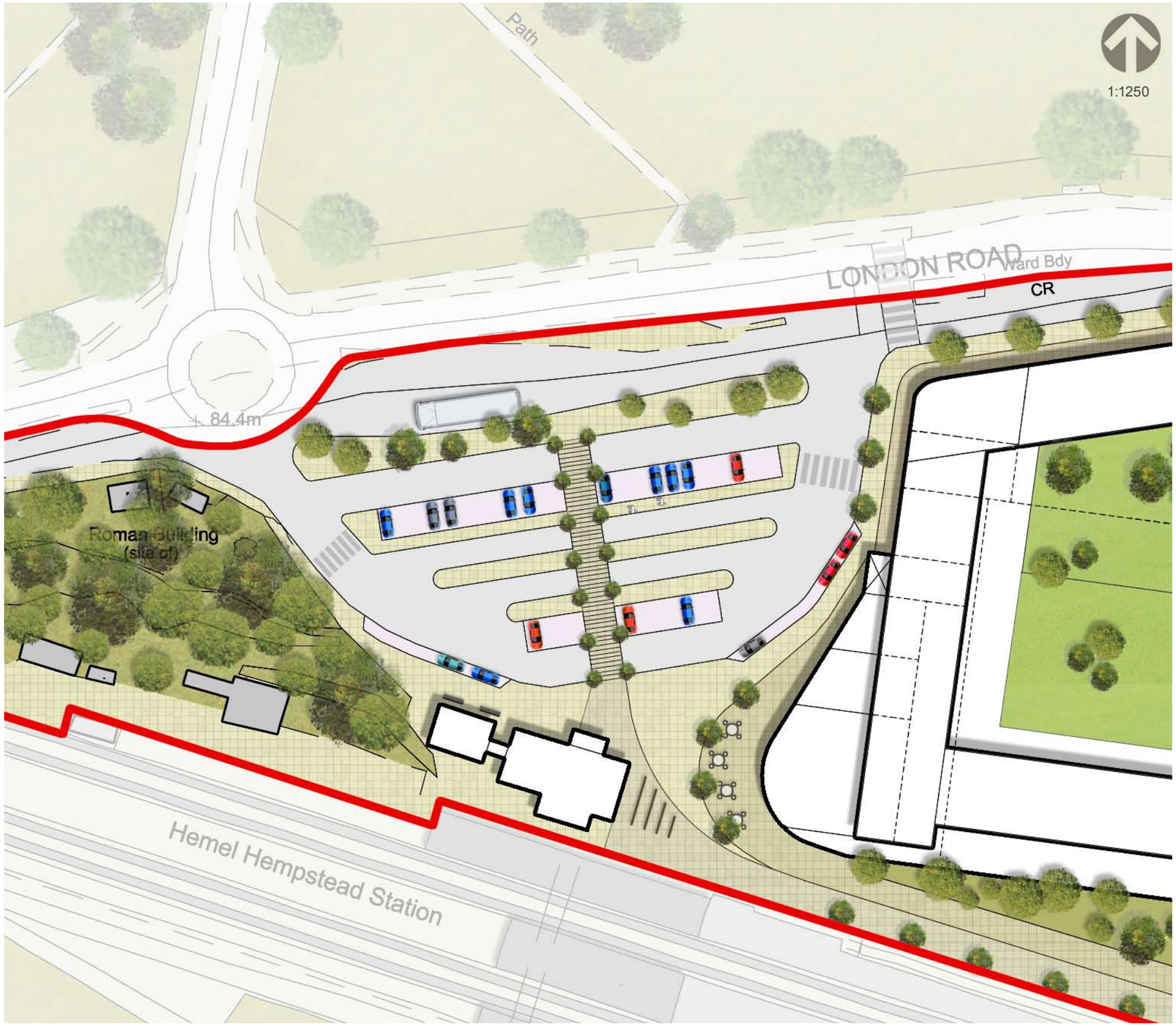
The site poses a number of challenges in terms of producing a successful scheme particularly with regard to its land form. As stated within the baseline study the site suffers from a number of significant level changes. Whilst there is difficulty in designing around complex land form, there has also been a number opportunities that arise in terms of using level changes for visual and acoustic screening and building into and stepping up with the land form to create a distinctive form to the site. The stepped nature of the form is of particular relevance to the northern portion of the residential development that sits where the existing commercial premises are located.

Despite the complexity of the landform, the site lends itself very well to catering for east-west connections, which in turn allows building form to maximise solar gain potential.

The preferred option scheme proposes a relatively low rise solution with a focus on residential development, particularly towards the east of the site. Variations in height of the form occur along London Road and surrounding the station forecourt area, where the building form is four storeys, whereas the remainder of the site is predominantly three storeys. The increased storey height is to offer a sense of enclosure to the surrounding public spaces and streets.

Where possible building form should front onto and have its principal access at the edge of public space and routes with the intention of providing active frontage and natural surveillance to the pedestrian realm. Orientating the building form in such a way will improve the perception of safety and security and aid the sense of vitality by animating the street scene.

Building Form
Active Frontage
Passive Frontage



Design Framework

Station Access and Movement Improvements

The proposed station forecourt layout has been designed to enhance and improve the profile of the station and meet the Council's sustainable transport objectives. The proposed station forecourt layout aims to:

- retain current car parking, taxi and kiss-and-ride provision to meet current demand for these activities;
- increase the station's profile on the main carriageway by providing a central pedestrian link to the station entrance and relocating current demands to dedicated activity zones;
- create a safe and legible environment for all station users through the introduction of defined activity zones i.e. dedicated spaces for car parking, taxi drop off/collect, stop and shop, bus interchange areas and pedestrian only zones, which are conveniently located and accessible to all users;
- provide dedicated disabled bays close to the station entrance;
- increase the area available for station users next to the station entrance;
- improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility and crossing potential through dedicated, direct and safe routes;
- create a clear visual connection through an uninterrupted line of sight between the Moors and the station entrance;
- provide convenient bus interchange facilities, within a shorter distance from the station entrance, which are fully accessible to all user types;
- upgrade general station facilities such as signing to improve wayfinding, improved bus stop facilities, bus/rail travel information, lighting and the public realm to enhance the station's profile, encourage the take-up of more sustainable travel such as walk/cycle and bus, improve the public realm and personal security; and
- increase provision for cycles and motorcycles in a convenient location next to the station, which are secure and sheltered.

4

4

Station Interchange

The proposal for the station interchange aims to create a pedestrian priority environment, that provides the rail passengers with a strong sense of arrival as well as a good sense of direction upon leaving the station. The new arrangement for the vehicular circulation and car parking will open up views of the Moors from the station, visually connecting pedestrians with one of areas greatest assets as well as providing an uninterrupted route to the main road.

London Road

The proposal for London Road shows a new line of residential units along the length of the street where the commercial uses currently sit. The new development helps create a more defined edge to the street with taller built form with active frontages and entrances onto the street helping to enclose the public space as well as adding to the sense of vitality and perception of safety and security. Street trees will be incorporated to formalise and reduce the scale of the street.

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Courtyard Blocks


Terraced Blocks


Corner Blocks

Summary

Preferred Option: Scenario Two

Site Coverage & Land Assembly
Scenario two proposes the comprehensive redevelopment of the site. This will take in land currently owned by Network Rail, the Harvester, a number of commercial properties and four private residential uses. The Harvester site is of particular importance as it will act as a catalyst for the development of the wider scheme as it will enable Network Rail to shift its surface car parking into a multi-storey car park nearer to the station. This move would subsequently free up the existing surface car park for redevelopment.

Scale of Multi-storey Car Park
A new multi-storey car park is proposed for the existing Harvester site. The car parking will sit over 4 storeys providing 500 spaces. The multi-storey carpark will sit within a block that is cased on two sides (Station Interchange/ London Road) by single aspect residential units with a single storey of retail and food uses at the base overlooking the station interchange. Unlike scenario one, the expansion of the car park, whereby further levels are added on top, is not an option due to the integrated and mixed use nature of the block. On street residential parking will be provided at a ratio of 1:1, with spaces provided in small groups broken up by vegetation and street furniture.

Residential Typology & Mix
The scheme aims to provide a balanced mix of flats and houses in order to produce and maintain a sustainable community. Given the market demand, it is a generally accepted fact that any scheme should aim to incorporate a fairly sizable proportion of traditional family houses. As a result the scheme will provide approximately 203 units, of which 147 will be flatted apartments and 56 family houses. Whilst this scheme still incorporates a high number of flats, they will be generously proportioned and have been market tested and will be built out accordingly. The scheme will be developed in a manner that could allow for changes to tenure to mirror the residential market demand, as such the layout of the scheme remains very flexible.
Flatted apartments will be used to best effect along principal routes and overlooking public spaces as a means of enclosing streets and aiding legibility.

Land Use Mix
The preferred scheme will be principally residential, with around 203 units. Beyond residential the site will also see the provision of a modest amount of food and retail uses (approximately 318sqm). These uses will primarily be convenience based and in keeping with their out of town centre station setting so as not to diminish the role of the town centre. The retail and food uses could potentially incorporate uses such as a small convenience store, a cafe that utilises the open space alongside the station forecourt, as well as other uses such as a launderette and dry cleaners.

Station Improvements & Forecourt
The scenario does not propose any major changes to the station itself although a reworking of the station forecourt and interchange area will see a move towards a more pedestrian priority environment. Views will be opened up towards the Moors from the station, helping to facilitate movement towards the town centre and improving usage of the Moors and the canal tow path.

Phasing
Given the primary function of the existing site revolves around servicing an existing railway station, it is imperative that one of the first moves is to ensure the station car park maintains its 500 space capacity. As such the acquisition of the Harvester site will play a very important role in allowing the relocation of the existing car parking and in turn freeing up the existing car park for redevelopment. With the multi-storey car park in place and residential units being constructed on the existing car park, work could potentially begin on the northern section of the site, which is currently under various ownerships. Whilst failure to acquire these sites to the north along London Road would slightly diminish the vision for a comprehensive scheme, level changes and existing vegetation is such that the proposals for the southern and eastern ends of the site could still go ahead. The redevelopment of the station forecourt could potentially begin immediately pending funding allocation and is quite contained, although may require phasing in its own right to minimise disruption to the station.

Station Gateway within the wider context

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05 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Implementation Strategy

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The Hemel 2020 Vision sets out the Council's aspirations for the development and improvement of the town, a priority of which includes the upgrade to the transport interchange facilities at the railway station. The appropriate redevelopment and enhancement of the station environment will help to reinforce its position as a gateway and key arrival point to the town.

The preceding sections of this report consider the opportunities and constraints of the site from an urban design perspective and provide an overview of the planning and property market issues. Together this analysis helps to inform a series of options illustrating a mix and scale of development which is appropriate for the site. The options were informed through discussions with key stakeholders including the majority landowner Network Rail and Dacorum Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council in respect of planning and highways issues.

Although the site is relatively small (4.2 ha (10.37 acres)) it does represent a complex opportunity given the ongoing operational requirements of Network Rail. Further in order to achieve comprehensive development and meet the overall design aspirations for the site a number of additional third party interests are required.

Mix of Uses

Although there have been recent signs of recovery in the property market following the fallout of the credit crunch, conditions remain volatile. From our property market research and given the characteristics of the site it is likely that the development of the site will be residential led. Small scale retail is also appropriate in the context of improvements to the station and interchange facilities, however, the retail content must in no way undermine or compete with the town centre provision. In addition to residential and retail use, office, hotel and healthcare uses were also initially tested but after detailed consideration were discounted for either locational or viability reasons.

In respect of the residential content, before the 'crash', it is likely that this site would have been considered appropriate for higher density development, however, this sentiment has changed. Developers remain highly cautious towards higher density developments in most areas outside established prime city centre locations. This is a view which can be applied to the subject site and has been reinforced by local agents active in the market.

Accordingly the options considered have sought to take a balanced approach between flatted development and family housing. However there is certainly some flexibility within the masterplan which would enable some elements of family housing to be replaced by flats or vice versa to match market conditions at the time of delivery.

Delivery Approach

Irrespective of the delivery approach a number of implementation principles should underpin the delivery of the development proposals for the enhancement of Hemel Station;

- The implementation of development must reflect the Hemel 2020 Vision;
- The development must be commercially viable;
- The site must be considered in a comprehensive manner albeit a phased approach to delivery may be appropriate;
- Delivery of buildings, station and highway improvements and new public realm are closely linked. Enhancement to the public realm, improved pedestrian routes and interchange improvements are fundamental to achieving the overall development objectives and must be addressed comprehensively;
- There must be a continued commitment to consultation and community engagement both leading up to and during implementation;

Options

There are a number of options that the Council should examine in considering how best to secure the delivery of new development on the station site. We examine these below:

Planning and Facilitation

Currently the Council does not have a land interest in the site and therefore control can only be provided through their powers as Statutory Planning Authority. Under this option the Council's role will be to provide the strategic policy framework for re-development of the site, encouraging pre-planning application discussions with the promoters of development, negotiating and processing planning applications for development, negotiating Section 106/278 agreements with the development partners and monitoring the implementation of development on the site.

Adoption of specific planning policy for the site in the form of a planning brief or Supplementary Planning Document will not in itself prompt the progression of scheme specific proposals. However, it will provide greater certainty in respect of the Council's requirements/aspirations for the site which may encourage developers to progress plans for the site.

What this option will not do is assist with land assembly which is of course a fundamental issue for the site. We have engaged with the development consortium through this project and whilst

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they have been working on the site for a considerable time, it does appear that they are still a long way from being able to secure ownership to the extent that they would be able to proceed with a scheme.

Theoretically every landowner will have a price at which they will be prepared to sell. However, there are clearly some difficulties in respect of the specific land ownerships here – in particular our understanding is that the 'book value' of the Harvester pub is significantly in excess of its open market value and even the latter puts a strain on the viability of the scheme.

To add to this, the major land ownership of Network Rail is fundamental to delivering a comprehensive scheme for the site. Although the enhancement of the station and its environs are a priority for the Council, it is unlikely to be considered a priority by Network Rail unless clear justification from both an operational and viability perspective are demonstrated. Given the abnormal development costs the viability of development is far from straight forward and therefore if Network Rail are left to implement the proposals development is unlikely to take place in the short to medium term.

Taking all this into account, even if the Council takes a very active facilitation role, seeking to bring the various parties together and acting as an 'honest broker' in negotiations, we see no strong likelihood of a scheme being brought forward.

Full Compulsory Purchase

If the first option is broadly a 'do nothing' approach aside from the statutory planning role, at the other end of the spectrum is the use of compulsory purchase powers to assemble the site as a whole. This is an approach which should not be entered into lightly and is likely to have cost and timescale implications but does have advantages in terms of the level of control.

Theoretically land in Network Rail ownership is not immune from a local authority's use of compulsory purchase powers. We would highlight, however, that this can sometimes been considered as a grey area. In particular the debate around whether car parking constitutes 'operational' land means that the case for successful CPO use is not entirely clear cut. If the Council is contemplating using CPO to this extent we would recommend taking detailed specific advice on this issue.

Assuming a successful use of CPO powers, the land will at least pass through the Council's ownership. It would be possible to then undertake a straightforward disposal of the land to a single developer and rely on planning powers to ensure an appropriate scheme is delivered. However, we would not expect this to be an acceptable way forward given that having used is land assembly powers the Council will wish to maintain direct contractual control over the form and timing of the development. (This may also be necessary to secure the CPO as it will need to demonstrate strong prospects of delivery).

That being the case, the form of contract put in place is likely to fall within the definition of a Public Works Contract and therefore will necessitate a full EU-compliant procurement process, most likely through undertaking a Competitive Dialogue.

Traditionally when embarking on a CPO, a Council would select a preferred developer early in the process (prior to incurring any liability for blight etc) and the latter would provide a full indemnity for all costs to be incurred (purchase price, fees, inquiry costs etc). However, in the current market developers' willingness to provide such indemnities is limited, as indeed is their ability to secure funding for this.

It is not possible to say for certain whether a developer would be prepared to provide a CPO indemnity for the station site without market testing. (This could be tested through issuing a Prior Information Notice (PIN) on OJEU but the results are unlikely to be definitive). However, we consider the balance of probability is that an indemnity will not be forthcoming and the Council may need to fund the CPO itself. We examine this in more detail below.

Partnership Approach with Network Rail

Whilst there is a clear attraction to an option which puts the Council in total control of the development site, taking on Network Rail in a CPO could be a long and expensive process with no guarantee of success.

Therefore we consider the most attractive route for the Council would be to reach agreement with them for a joint marketing approach backed up by a CPO. Under this, a legal agreement would be entered into between the parties setting out physical parameters for the scheme and a mechanism for the division of any receipts.

Based on the outcome of our viability work, the most likely best-case scenario is a 'cost neutral' development which picks up the cost of replacement of the existing car park in a new multi-storey structure and a small allocation for upgrade of station facilities with no receipt over and above.

The onus would be on the Council initially to demonstrate to Network Rail the viability position and particularly to establish agreement that a development here is not going to be capable of paying for a significant increase in parking numbers. (There is of course no reason why NR should not provide funds to deliver additional parking if they chose to do so).

So we consider it most likely that if agreement were to be reached it would be along the following lines:

- Obligation on developer to provide 500+ car parking spaces in agreed form and general location;
- Phasing requirements enabling continuity of parking to be provided;
- Agreed allocation of receipt over and above cost of car park plus recovery of Council's land assembly costs.

Once financial and physical parameters were agreed, a joint marketing exercise would be undertaken through OJEU (Network Rail are bound by similar procurement regulations to the Council) to select a development partner. As with the previous option, the Council would underwrite the land assembly process with use of (or threat of the use of) CPO powers

Of course this option is entirely dependent on arriving at an agreed position with Network Rail. This is unlikely to be straightforward particularly given the position taken by the operating company London Midland who when we met them indicated that they would expect an increase in parking from 500 to 750 spaces at no cost to themselves.

However, we do think this is the most likely option to produce a successful outcome. If the Council is unable to agree terms with Network Rail, the chances are that they would oppose any attempts to CPO them very rigorously which would certainly be costly and time consuming.

The Development Consortium

Our terms of reference did not include any specific direction to assess how the Council could work with the Development Consortium. However, given their longstanding involvement in the site and their role in the overall project, we thought it worthwhile to make some observations about their future role here.

The first option we set out here does not involve the Council taking any direct land ownership and contractual role. In that case it would have no influence on whether the consortium was able to secure sufficient land ownership to deliver a comprehensive scheme, and there is no reason why they should not seek to do so.

We do see a problem for them around Network Rail. While they indicate that there has been a positive dialogue between the parties, it appears to us that Network Rail would be bound by procurement regulations and would find it difficult to do an off market deal with the consortium.

If we go down either of the options involving the use of compulsory purchase, we do not consider that the Council has the ability to deal off market with the consortium for the same reasons –

a Public Works Contract will need to be put in place and this necessitates an EU procurement exercise.

So regardless of the merits of the consortium as a developer or the quality of their proposals, from a regulatory perspective it is hard to see how the Council can deal with them unless they are able to secure the assembly of the site through direct negotiations.

Council Funding

As we indicated above, even with the scheme approaching viability (assuming no affordable housing) it is doubtful whether a developer would be able to finance a full CPO indemnity. That being the case, it is likely that the Council will need to provide funding for land assembly to enable the development to go ahead.

There is an upside to this. Where the cost of land assembly is being met by the developer, it will expect to take a profit margin on this amount, as it will on all costs of the scheme. The Council does not automatically apply such a margin. With total acquisition costs of circa £8.5m this represents a saving to the scheme of £1.7m.

If the Council wishes to assist delivery of the scheme still further, it could consider funding the provision of the new car park, which would increase the saving by a further £1.23m. However the latter is less straightforward to ring fence as ideally we will wish to leave developers with some flexibility around design, positioning and integration of other uses so the idea of putting up the new car park before going to the market to provide a 'ready to develop' site is not really practical.

There is a further saving, if relatively marginal in that the Council is able to borrow money at a cheaper rate than the private sector and this again feeds through into the viability.

Of course there is also a downside here in that with the Council incurring these costs up front there is no guarantee that it will get them back in receipts for the site. It would be possible to put some protection in place here by seeking offers for the assembled site prior to progressing the CPO to a stage where significant costs are incurred. However there will still be some risk of non-performance by the developer. Also with a marginal scheme, it may be that the base offer does not cover the site assembly costs and the Council would be reliant on non-guaranteed overage payments to recover its costs.

It may well be that the Council considers these to be acceptable risks and indeed that it would be prepared to treat its investment to some degree as a subsidy to make the scheme happen. This is something that will need to be considered in much more detail should the Council be minded to proceed on this basis.

We have not discussed the Council's financial position as far as its ability to provide funding for the scheme out of resources. If this is not possible or appropriate, the Council would need to look at borrowing.

The introduction of Tax Increment Funding (TIF) has been widely trumpeted as a measure which would assist the delivery of regeneration schemes. However, it is largely aimed at commercial development and the White Paper ("Local Growth – realising every place's potential) is extremely light on detail so it looks like this is not something that will prove of assistance in the short term.

The White Paper does introduce the government's New Home Bonus which sees the government providing matched funding against additional Council Tax generated by new residential delivery for a period of six years. Whilst this is not an enormous amount (maybe upwards of £1m) it is an additional amount which can be diverted to the development.

Ultimately we are most likely to be looking at Prudential Borrowing. Given the reasonable viability of the scheme, there is a prospect of presenting a sensible business case for this, but again it will need to be examined in more detail.

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