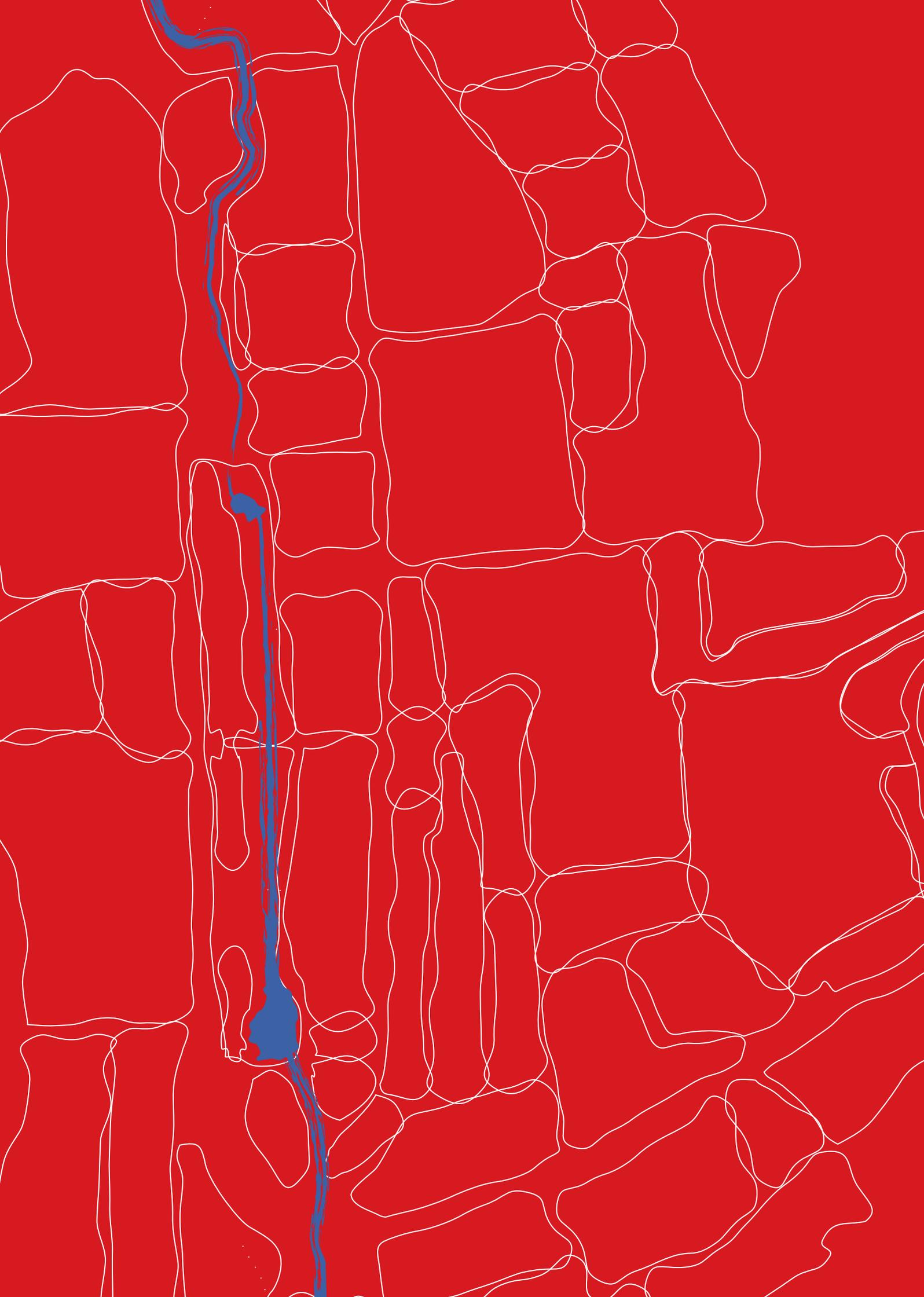




HEMEL HEMPSTEAD  
**MAJOR  
LAND USE  
STUDY**

March 2012

**Allies and Morrison  
Urban Practitioners**

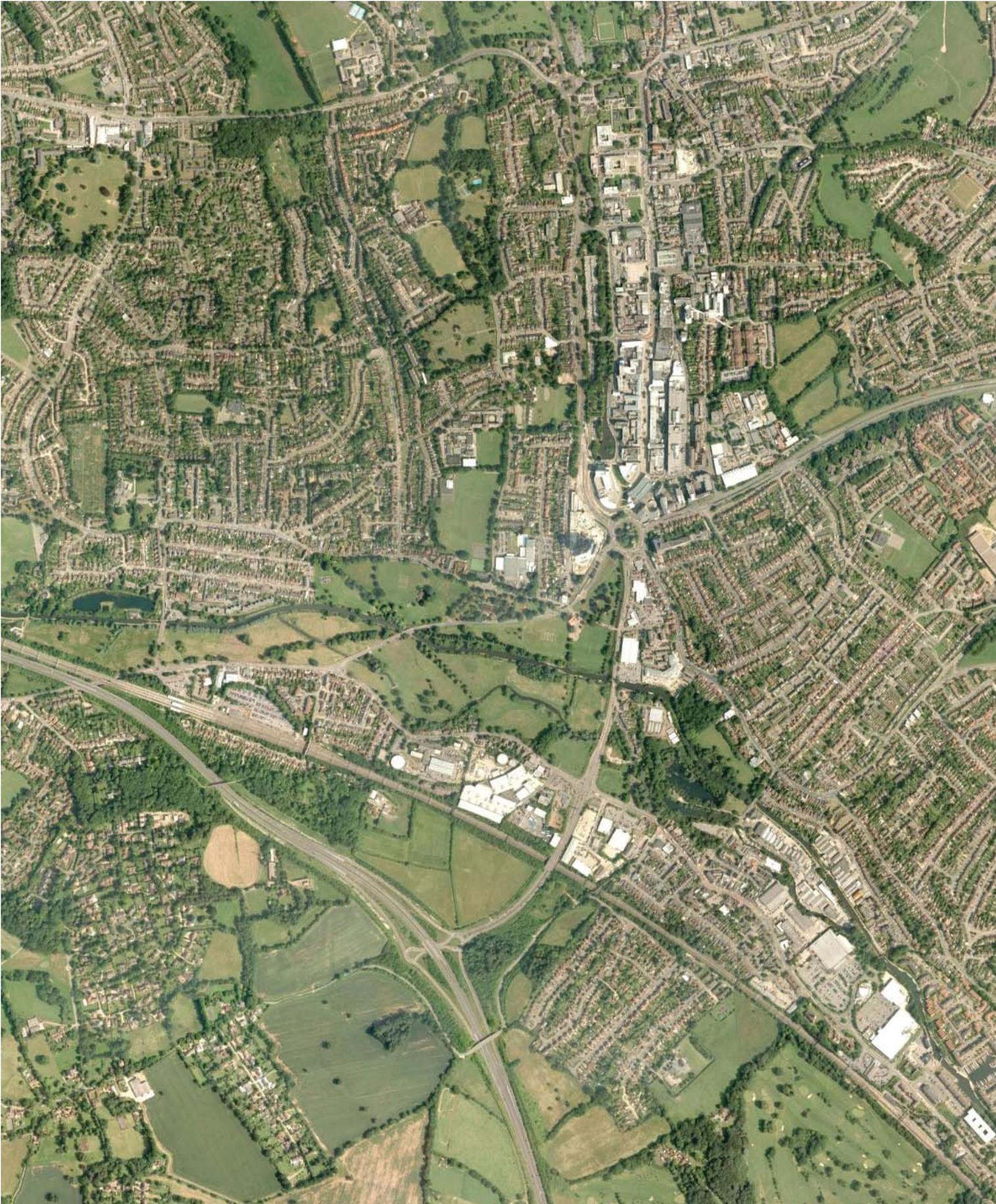


# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>SETTING THE SCENE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>UNDERSTANDING HEMEL HEMPSTEAD</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>MAJOR LAND USES</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>LAND USE STRATEGY</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>LAND USES IN APSLEY</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW</b>	<b>83</b>

Hemel Hempstead  
Major Land Use Study  
March 2012

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**Urban Practitioners**



**Above:** Aerial view of Hemel Hempstead



# 1 SETTING THE SCENE

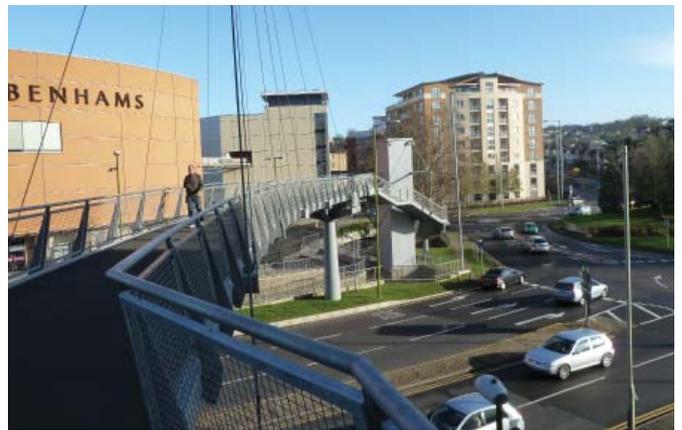
## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dacorum Borough Council (hereafter referred to as 'the Council') is committed to improving the quality and vitality of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre. The Council's aspiration is to transform Hemel Hempstead Town Centre into a vibrant place where people will want to shop, work, live, learn and visit during the day, evening and night. The regeneration of Hemel Hempstead Town Centre is vital to the overall well being of Dacorum. The Council is currently developing a Town Centre Masterplan for Hemel Hempstead which will set a new direction for the future of the Town Centre and will enable transformation and regeneration of the centre to proceed as quickly as possible.

The Council instructed Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners (AMUP) and GL Hearn to produce a Retail Study Update report and a Major Land Use Strategy for Hemel Hempstead town centre. This report is the Major Land Use Strategy which has been informed by the earlier work of the Retail Study Update report. The Retail Study Update report refreshes the Council's Borough-wide retail study of 2009, which itself updated their 2006 study. In doing so, the study explores the capacity for new convenience and comparison retailing in the town centre. A summary of the Retail Study Update report and its findings can be found in Chapter 2.

The purpose of the Major Land Use Strategy is to:

- Inform the ongoing preparation of the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan;
- Inform the emerging Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents of the Dacorum Local Development Framework (LDF); and
- Advise the Council on a strategy for major land uses that could be accommodated in Hemel Hempstead town centre, together with their scale and potential suitable locations.



Above: The route from Hemel Hempstead railway station towards the town centre

## 1.2 BACKGROUND

The Major Land Use Strategy reflects on existing evidence, new analysis undertaken and commercial advice to put forward a strategy for the town centre which provides a framework for major land uses in the centre, identifies the major investment/development opportunities and provides advice on the scale of the opportunities and the locations considered suitable. This is set within the context of the vision for Hemel Hempstead as contained within the emerging Core Strategy.

Whilst the Major Land Use Strategy will not itself be subject to formal consultation, it has been informed by stakeholder engagement, particularly the Masterplan Charette in January 2012 (see section 1.2 for more information). It will form part of the evidence base and inform the Council's LDF and Town Centre Masterplan. These strategies that will both be the subject of formal stages of public consultation.

The Major Land Use Strategy cannot formally allocate any land for a particular use. Instead, it suggests how land could be better used and what uses and form of development may be appropriate. The Strategy will inform the emerging Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Document, which will allocate land for particular uses.

The Hemel 2020 Vision (2005) provided a vision and framework for the delivery of regeneration objectives and projects for Hemel Hempstead. The work has informed key strategies and plans such as the Local Development Framework. This work also contributes towards the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy - Cross Cutting Theme of rejuvenating Hemel Hempstead and also towards reducing crime and creating a safer Dacorum; creating a cleaner and healthier environment; encouraging business and local employment; meeting housing need and promoting culture, arts, leisure and tourism.

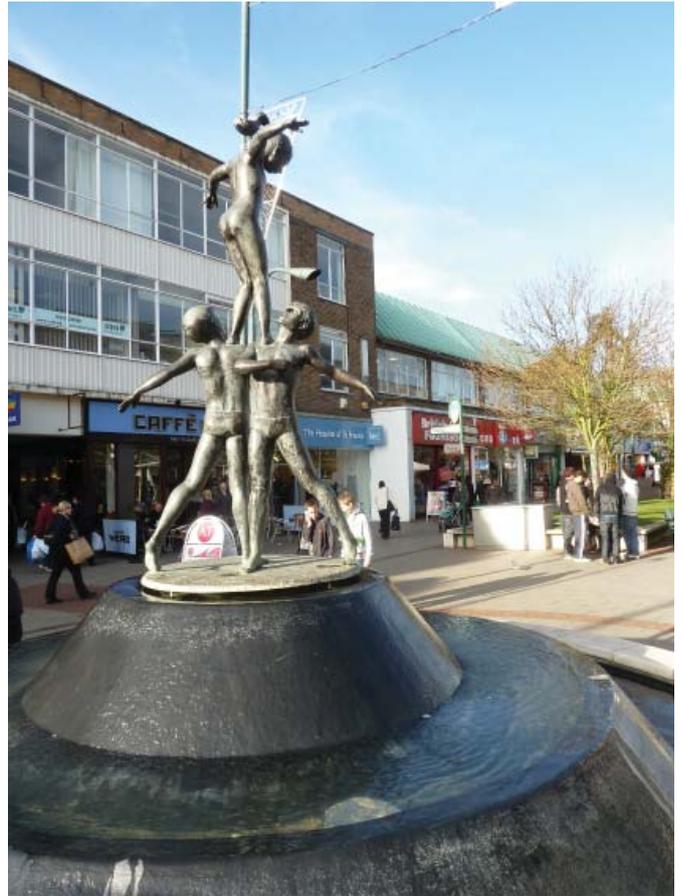
The Council is planning for the future and is progressing its Local Development Framework. A number of recent and current studies are of direct relevance to the future of Hemel Hempstead town centre which is the largest town centre in the Borough and serves as its administrative centre.

### **Masterplan Charette, February 2011**

Supported by CABE and Inspire East, the Council facilitated a major town centre Masterplan charette in January 2011. The future of the Civic Offices were considered at this event and the car park site adjacent to the Water Gardens site was put forward as one of a number of potential locations in the town. The charette led to the preparation of a strategic land use strategy for the town centre which was to be tested through further land use studies and the preparation of a town centre Masterplan. The charette highlighted the opportunity to create a new, more focussed, cluster of civic uses in the town centre which would include replacement council offices and town centre library. The event also highlighted the important role played by the Market Square and the bus station site, recognising them as potential development opportunities at the northern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone and providing the opportunity to form part of an improved network of high quality pedestrian routes across the town.

### **Masterplan Charette, January 2012**

Almost exactly a year later, the Council facilitated a second Masterplan charette. The event provided an opportunity for the Council to provide an update to partners and wider stakeholders on the progress made in the town centre over the previous year. Updates were provided on a series of feasibility studies undertaken by the Council which sought to understand the parameters and issues associated with the potential for redevelopment of key Council owned sites in the Gade Zone.



Above: The Riverside Shopping Centre and Marlowes retail area in the New Town

A series of facilitated workshops then focused on issues associated with major land use issues in the town centre and key transport and movement issues. The feedback from these sessions have been useful as these two workstreams have progressed.

### **Council Accommodation review**

The Council commissioned DTZ to undertake a review of Council accommodation. The outcome of this study has directly informed the brief for the Water Gardens study and Marlowes/Library Site study (see below). Replacement Civic Offices will form part of the Public Sector Quarter (PSQ) and will require a new building of approximately 5,000m<sup>2</sup> (gross). A building of this size is also considered likely to have the potential to incorporate a replacement library for the town and other community uses. The emerging 'PSQ' concept responds to the outcomes of the town centre Charette in January 2011.

### **Water Gardens study**

The Council commissioned Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners and The Landscape Partnership to undertake a study of the Grade II registered Water Gardens in Hemel Hempstead town centre. The study provided a considered view on the historic significance of the Gardens, originally laid out by Geoffrey Jellicoe between 1957 and 1962 as part of the new town development of Hemel Hempstead, and to inform decisions by the Council as it continues to consider the benefits of replacing its current town centre civic offices on Marlowes. Specifically, the northern end of the Water Gardens North decked car park was considered as a potential location for a new PSQ. The study explored how a new building in this sensitive location could best be accommodated and how this would impact on the registered Gardens.

### **Marlowes/Library Site study**

The Council commissioned Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners to prepare development options for the Marlowes/Library site in the town centre. The options consider the redevelopment of the site for a Public Service Quarter (PSQ).

### **Emerging Friends of the Gardens**

This study considers the historic significance of the Water Gardens, which are already widely recognised as a nationally important example of twentieth century landscape design. This recognition led to the Gardens being included on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The Garden History Society has been instrumental in raising the profile and awareness of the Water Gardens and a friends of the garden group is currently being formed.

### **Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy**

The Council commissioned JMP Consultants to develop an Improvement Strategy for the Marlowes Shopping Zone. The Strategy will be used to implement effective public realm interventions that will significantly enhance the public realm and streetscape, with the objectives of securing greater footfall and expenditure and adding to the diversity of uses within the town centre.

In June 2011, the Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy was approved and will kick-start the regeneration of Hemel Hempstead town centre. £460,000 of funding is in place for short to medium term improvements in the town centre. In addition, there is a £50,000 grant which will be spent through a participatory budgeting exercise working with local residents, including temporary treatment improvements to Market Square. A Steering Group has since been working with JMP Consultants to agree a delivery programme and prepare designs for those interventions identified as a priority.



Above: The area around Market Square and the Civic Offices

### **Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Access and Movement Study**

The Council commissioned JMP Consultants to develop an Access and Movement Strategy as part of the development of the Town Centre Masterplan. The work will build upon a variety of previous studies conducted within the area, including the Hemel Hempstead Urban Transport Plan, but will focus upon producing specific strategies for vehicle movement around the town, parking, walking & cycling, and signage & navigation. Within the study, a number of key projects are currently being considered including: pedestrian movements through the Plough Roundabout; bus circulation and stop locations; key walking and cycling routes connecting the town centre to the Hospital, Railway Station and Maylands Business Park; the River Gade walking and cycling route; and connectivity between the Old Town and Gadebridge Park. The study is due for completion in March 2012.

### **Retail Study Update**

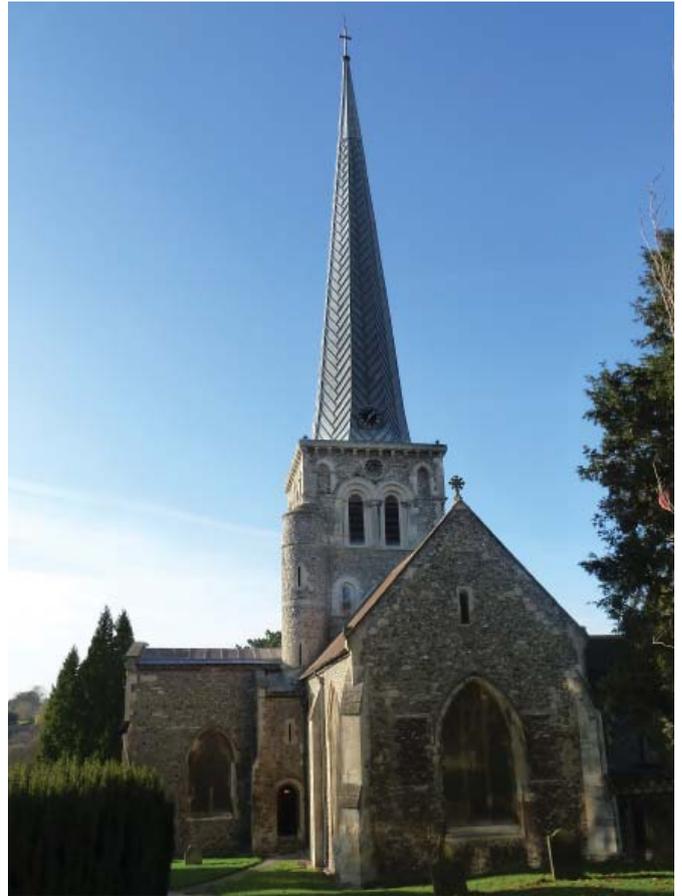
Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners and GL Hearn were commissioned by the Council to update the existing 2006 and 2009 retail study work. The principal requirement was to provide quantitative forecasts of retail capacity up to 2031 for Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring town centres, and the main out of centre locations within the Borough.

The Retail Study Update identified a need for additional convenience goods floorspace to serve Hemel Hempstead. Much of the theoretical capacity arises from the strong trading of the main out of centre stores serving the town. In adopting a sequential approach to addressing the identified need, this convenience floorspace should be directed to a central site in Hemel Hempstead town centre. This will improve the existing level of food shopping, attract more shoppers into the town centre, create potential linked trip benefits and achieve more sustainable town centre focused patterns of shopping.

The theoretical need (in 2016) is for around 2,260m<sup>2</sup> (sales) of convenience floorspace, which with some ancillary non-food floorspace would equate to a superstore of approximately 2,800m<sup>2</sup> sales or 4,300m<sup>2</sup> gross. The need increases over a longer time frame. Whilst the calculations show a theoretical capacity for additional comparison shopping to serve Hemel Hempstead over the study period, the report recommends not making any specific allocation for this floorspace over the short to medium term. There remains vacant floorspace in both the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres and it is considered that the existing floorspace is capable of trading more intensively. It is suggested that the Council monitor the take up of vacant premises and trading performance of the existing stores in the town centre and only when marked improvements are noted should the capacity and need for additional comparison shopping be revisited.

### **Town Centre Masterplan**

The Council is currently producing a Town Centre Masterplan for Hemel Hempstead, which will set a new direction for the future of the Town Centre and will enable transformation and regeneration of the centre to proceed as quickly as possible. The Masterplan will be directly informed by the outcomes of the two Charettes and many of the studies as discussed above. The Masterplan is a key initiative which will help ensure the town centre protects its place in the retail hierarchy and supports a more sustainable form of development.

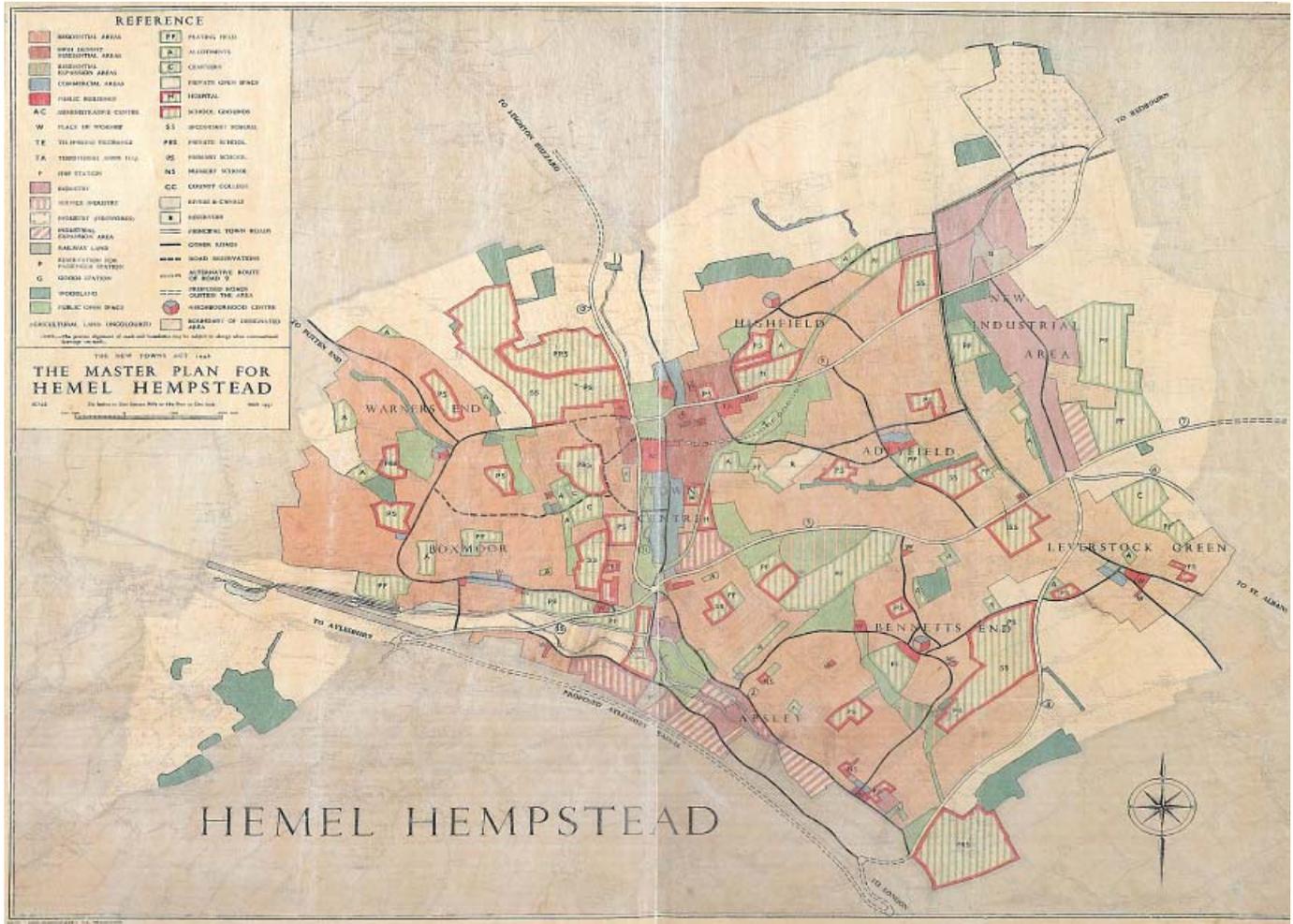


Above: The Old Town

## 1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

This report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2: Understanding Hemel Hempstead**
  - This section reviews the town centre in terms of its historic development, urban design quality, emerging planning policy and its Character Zones.
- **Chapter 3: Major Land Uses** – This section introduces the major land uses required under the relevant Core Strategy policy and to be considered as part of this strategy and the Town Centre Masterplan.
- **Chapter 4: Land Use Strategy** – This section sets out the key concepts for Hemel Hempstead Town Centre showing how the major land uses can be accommodated and two land use plans highlighting how this could be achieved.
- **Chapter 5: Land Uses in Apsley** – This section describes Apsley and sets out proposals for its future.
- **Chapter 6: Summary and Overview** – This section brings together the potential land uses in each to show two potential town-wide land use plans. This section includes information on likely delivery and phasing for the different land uses.



Above: 1947 Masterplan of Hemel Hempstead

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## 2 UNDERSTANDING HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

### 2.1 THE EVOLUTION OF HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

#### The start

The present town probably began during the Saxon period as a small village in a shallow chalkland valley, about a mile and a half north of the confluence of the Gade and Bulbourne rivers. The River Gade rises in the chalk of the Chiltern Hills and flows through Hemel Hempstead before reaching Rickmansworth, where it joins the River Colne.

The name of the town may derive from “Haemele’s homestead”, Haemele being the name of a tribe or individual. Little is recorded about the medieval town, but at least half of it is known to have been granted to the monastic college of the Bon Hommes of Ashridge which lasted up to the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539. Hemel’s Norman church of St Mary’s was started around 1140 and is one of the oldest churches in Hertfordshire. There was a small market, which grew after the 16th century when the town received a royal charter from Henry VIII. By the mid-17th century Hemel Hempstead had become the most prosperous town in the county and was noted for its corn mills and straw plaiting.

#### Later growth

In the mid-18th century a turnpike road to the south of the town carried the main route from London to the Midlands. The Grand Junction Canal opened in 1804, following the line of the road. In 1837 the London – Birmingham railway was diverted from the town by local landowners and the station was built instead at Boxmoor. Later, a branch line was built by the Hemel Hempstead Railway Company, which led to the development of the Alexandra Road area of the town. The town’s main employer at this time was John Dickinson, whose paper mill at Apsley Mill in the Bulbourne Valley employed over 1000 workers, but Hemel was also beginning to be adopted by London commuters. New industries were also established and Dickinson’s Mill was later converted into a munitions factory. By the middle of the 20th century, Hemel Hempstead was practically three separate areas;

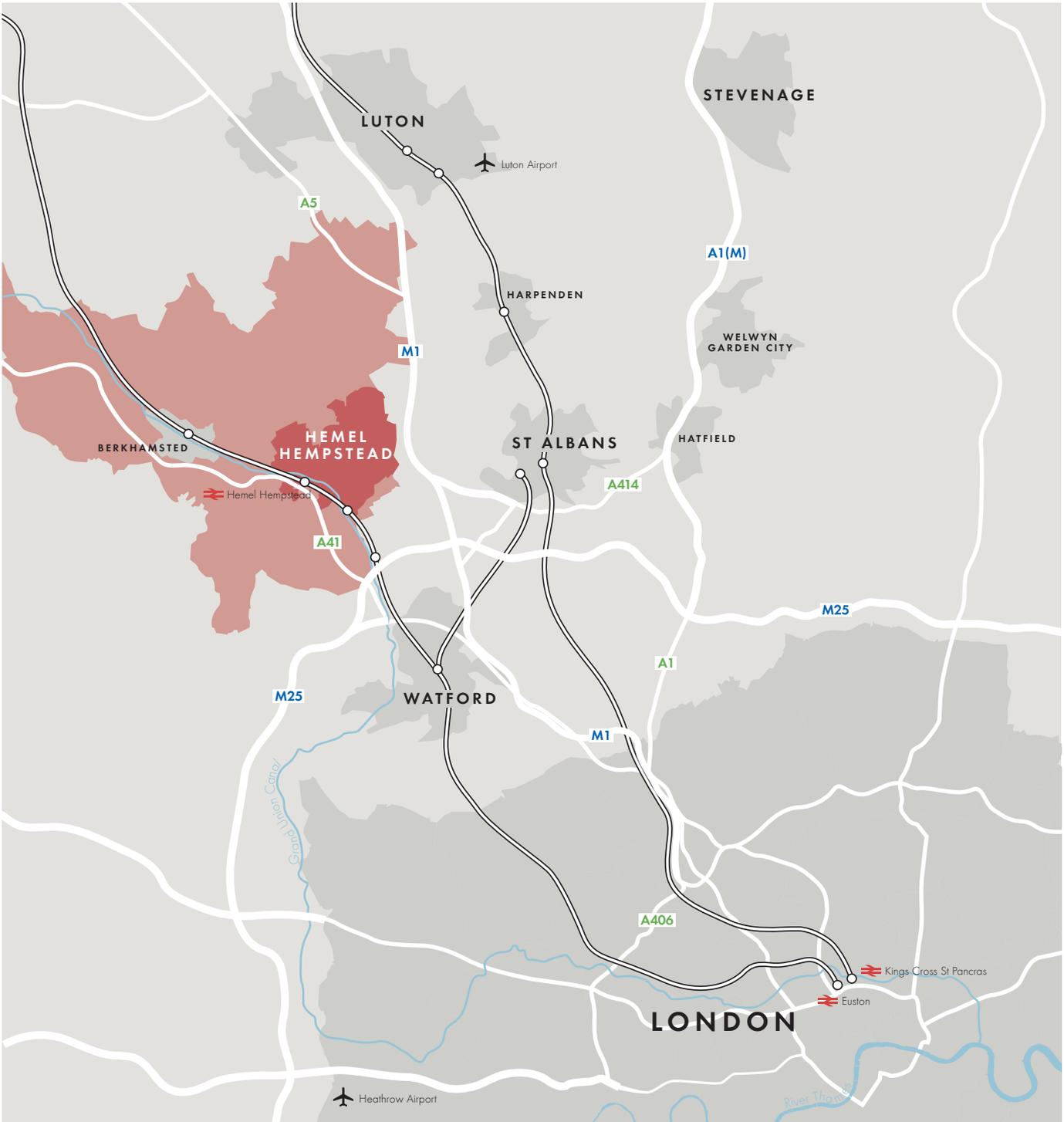
the old town to the north, the Boxmoor commuter suburb around the railway station, and the industrial development in the valley.

#### The New Town

After the Second World War the country faced a severe housing shortage and government responded with the New Towns programme. Hemel Hempstead, along with Crawley and Stevenage, was one of the first to be designated and was to be one of several new and expanded towns forming a ring around London. With a population of 21,000, Hemel was also the largest of the existing settlements in the first wave of new towns.

The Ministry of Town and Country Planning appointed the landscape architect Geoffrey Jellicoe as Hemel’s principal designer and the outline masterplan was published in 1947. Jellicoe’s original plan, which was subsequently modified by the Development Corporation, was based on the idea of a town in a park, with generous open spaces in and around the town centre and the residential neighbourhoods. The first areas to be built were at Adeyfields, Bennetts End and Apsley and 1,000 homes had been built by 1952. Jellicoe’s ambitious 1947 masterplan for Hemel Hempstead New Town was never to be implemented, rejected by the government as being too expensive and impractical. Jellicoe produced a second revised plan and accompanying report for the Ministry of Town & Country Planning in 1949 which was also discarded.

The structure of Jellicoe’s town centre masterplan was largely retained by the Corporation; the relocation of the main shopping area to the Marlowes, the arrangement of a central park flanked by road running north south with residential housing to the west and shops and commerce to the east are all key elements of Jellicoe’s Masterplan.



Above: 1947 Masterplan of Hemel Hempstead

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Jellicoe's plan preserved the old High Street, which is now a conservation area with a concentration of listed buildings, but extended it southwards in a line to form the Marlowes shopping centre as well as educational, civic and office buildings. Waterhouse Street ran parallel to Marlowes, providing access to the bus station and market, and beyond it Jellicoe used the course of the River Gade to provide the Water Gardens that form the western edge to the town centre.

By 1962 the masterplan was substantially complete and the Development Corporation handed over its responsibilities to the National Commission for the New Towns. Today, Hemel Hempstead rivals Watford as the largest town in Hertfordshire with a population of around 89,000 inhabitants (estimation from Hertfordshire County Council). The Marlowes Shopping Centre was built in 1990 with an indoor mall and the Riverside Shopping Centre added to the provision of shops in 2005.

### **Hemel today**

Dacorum, situated in South West Hertfordshire, has an area of 212 square kilometres, half of which is designated as Green Belt land. The Borough includes the towns of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring, the large villages of Bovingdon, Kings Langley and Markyate, and 12 smaller settlements. It borders St Albans City and District to the east, Buckinghamshire (Chiltern and Aylesbury Vale Districts) to the west, and the Three Rivers to the south. The Borough is currently home to approximately 138,000 people, making it the largest district in Hertfordshire.

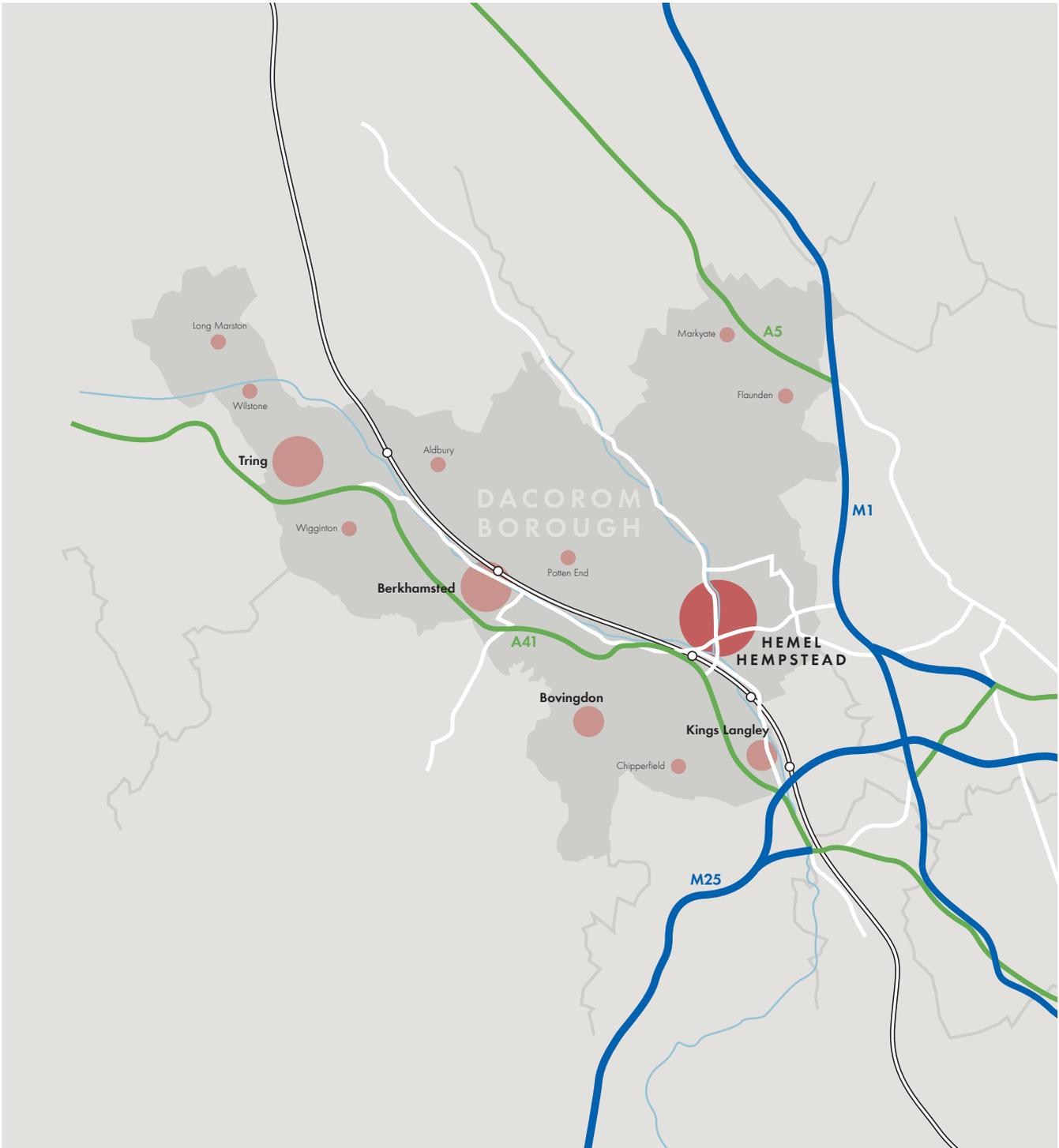
Hemel Hempstead's proximity to the M25, M1, London, and the airports at Heathrow, Luton and to a lesser extent Stansted, is a key factor in the local economy – historically it attracted national players, such as Kodak who located their headquarters in the town centre (the Kodak tower has recently been converted to flats). Hemel Hempstead train station is located approximately 1.5km from the southern end of

the town centre. Buses run from the train station to the town centre approximately every seven minutes and the pleasant walk between the two takes around twenty minutes through the town moor.

Hemel Hempstead is situated approximately 25 miles from central London and is the largest town in the Borough. It was identified as one of the key centres for development and change in the East of England Plan - along with Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, Watford and Luton. While regional governance is no longer what it was, the significance of Hemel as a regional urban growth centre remains clear.

Hemel Hempstead is the principal retail destination within the Borough. The larger towns of Milton Keynes and Watford are Hemel Hempstead's main competitors. Dacorum's market towns and small villages play an important retail role, especially in terms of convenience goods and provide a greater range of specialist, independent shops. The primary shopping area is focused along the Marlowes which includes the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres.

Other than the town centre, the focus for employment in the Borough is Maylands Business Park. This is the largest business park in the eastern region and lies to the east of the town centre. Through the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan, there are plans to rejuvenate the Maylands Business Area as a sub-regional business centre to deliver a first choice employment location with some residential development, leisure space, a green energy centre and improved connections to the town centre and railway station.



**Above:** 1947 Masterplan of Hemel Hempstead

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The main leisure and sports facilities comprise Leisure World, Hemel Hempstead Sports Centre, Esporta which are located at Jarman Park, an out of town leisure and retail park located on the St Albans Road (A414).

Jarman Park is an important facility of the community and is Hemel Hempstead's main leisure and sports facility. It includes a multi-screen cinema, ice-rink, ten-pin bowling and indoor multi-slide water fun park, as well as a bar and clubs, however the bowling and nightclubs are currently closed.

Next door to Jarman Park are Sportspace athletics ground and The Snow Centre, with indoor ski-slopes. The area also includes a large Tesco supermarket. An extreme sports facility has recently been approved to add to the attractions at Jarman's Park and there is an aspiration to attract other leisure and adventure sports facilities along with hotels and ancillary retail uses.

When Jarman Park first opened it was at the forefront of a new wave of commercial leisure parks which arrived at a time when 'town centre first' planning policy was still to be fully introduced and largescale multiplex cinemas were seen as difficult to accommodate within town centres. Whilst elements of Leisure World, particularly the cinema, remain well used, the complex is now in need of improvement.

The owners of Leisure World has recently submitted a planning application for the conversion of the nightclubs and swimming pool into family restaurants, potentially with the inclusion of a new bowling operator and a health & fitness facility. Whilst this does have the potential to provide competition to the town centre, this is an established out-of-town leisure location and could be considered to attract a different type of visit than the town centre.

Jarman Park is designated as an out-of-centre retail and leisure location in the Core Strategy, where significant new retail development above that already permitted will be resisted. The Core Strategy recognises that the role of the area should remain complementary to the role of the town centre and continue to support the retail hierarchy through the sequential approach.

To the south of the town centre is Apsley, classified as a local centre with a neighbourhood shopping function in the Core Strategy. Two Waters and Apsley contain out of centre retailing, including a large Sainsbury's, and a wide range of business opportunities and employment. More information on Apsley can be found in Chapter 5.



**Above:** Plan of Hemel Hempstead showing the railway station, Apsley, Jarman Park and Maylands Business Park in relation to the town centre

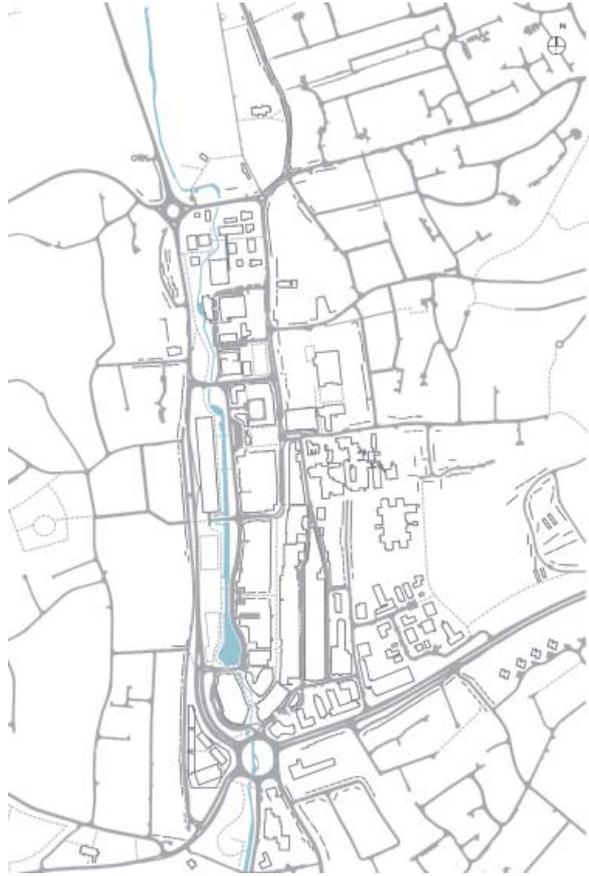
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**Above:** Aerial photograph of Hemel Hempstead town centre  
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Above: Paths in the town centre



Above: Edges in the town centre



Above: Positive edges in the town centre



Above: Negative edges in the town centre

## 2.2 URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

One of the most effective ways of analysing towns and cities is to find out how easy it is to understand a place and to navigate through it. Kevin Lynch, a famous American urban planner, wrote *The Image of the City*, which was a study on how users perceive and organise spatial information as they navigate through places. Lynch reported that users understand their surroundings in consistent and predictable ways, forming mental maps with the following five elements:

1. **Paths** - the streets, roads, paths in which people travel;
2. **Edges** - boundaries such as buildings, walls, fences, trees etc;
3. **Districts** - relatively large sections of towns and cities which have a specific character;
4. **Nodes** - focal points and intersections; and
5. **Landmarks** - objects, such as buildings, which serve as external reference points and help people orientate themselves.

These five elements in Hemel Hempstead town centre are discussed below, followed by the remaining urban design analysis for the town centre.

### Paths

The paths through the town centre are shown on the opposite plan (top left). The grey lines show the main routes, generally open for all users, and the grey dashed lines show the pedestrian only routes.

The layout of the New Town street network and the buildings which surrounded them created an enclosed town centre environment, with the dominant movement encouraged to be north-south along the Marlowes.

East-west connections through the town centre are relatively poor and restricted, in part due to the Marlowes Shopping Centre and multi-storey car park to the east of Marlowes, and the Water Gardens and Leighton Buzzard Road to the west, which forms a particularly strong barrier to movement, with multiple

lanes of traffic significantly restricting pedestrian movement. This is also, in part, caused by the topography of the area, with the town centre sitting in the valley surrounded by hills. These barriers have effectively created an elongated north-south pedestrian channel, rather than a more connected network of paths. A bridge has been installed to link the former Kodak building development to the town centre, which replaces the underpasses previously found under the Plough roundabout.

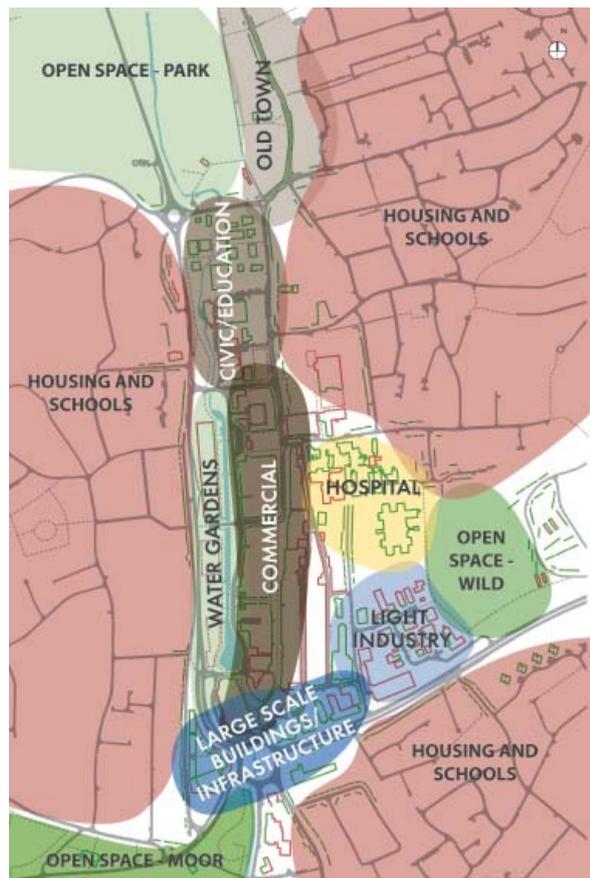
### Edges

The predominant edges are shown on the opposite plan (top right). The Old Town shows clear, well defined edges along the High Street and the northern end of Marlowes. The edges of the civic and educational buildings fail to define the paths in the area as the buildings generally sit in space rather than define it. The edges have then been split to show positive edges (bottom left), which provide a positive aspect to the town centre and generally consists of active fronts, doors and windows, and negative edges (bottom right), which generally consist of blank walls, a lack of natural surveillance and other unattractive features. The majority of the edges along the Marlowes provide a positive aspect to the town centre in terms of active frontages (irrespective of their architectural quality), whereas the paths to the east show more negative aspects along King Harry Street and Wolsey Road and in part along Waterhouse Street and the decked car park adjacent to the Water Gardens.

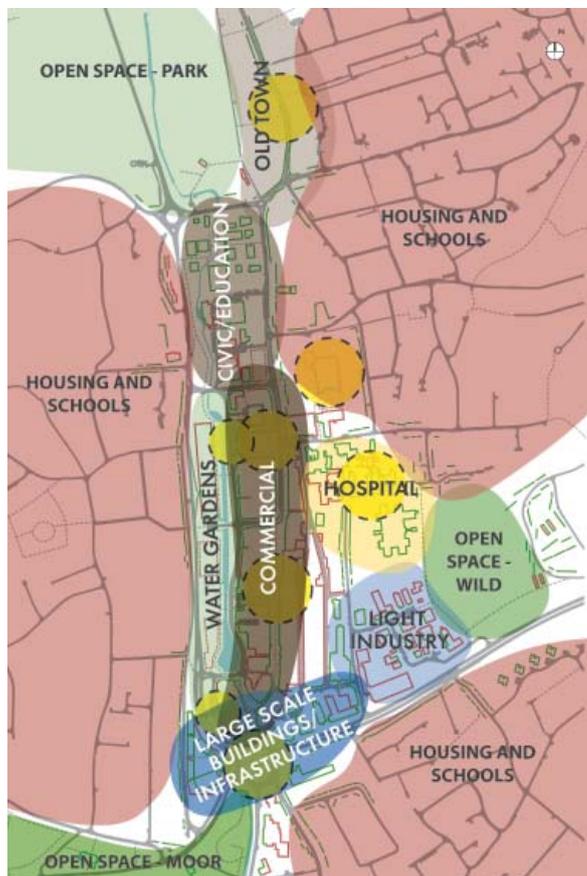
The edges of the buildings are clearly shown in the figure ground plan (top left, p22), which shows the current urban grain of the town centre. The plan shows a fine grain of development in the Old Town, clearly defining the High Street, whereas the commercial core of the town centre shows a coarser grain, particularly the three blocks which make up the Riverside Shopping Centre. The plan also clearly highlights the relatively large footprints of the civic and education buildings surrounded by space.



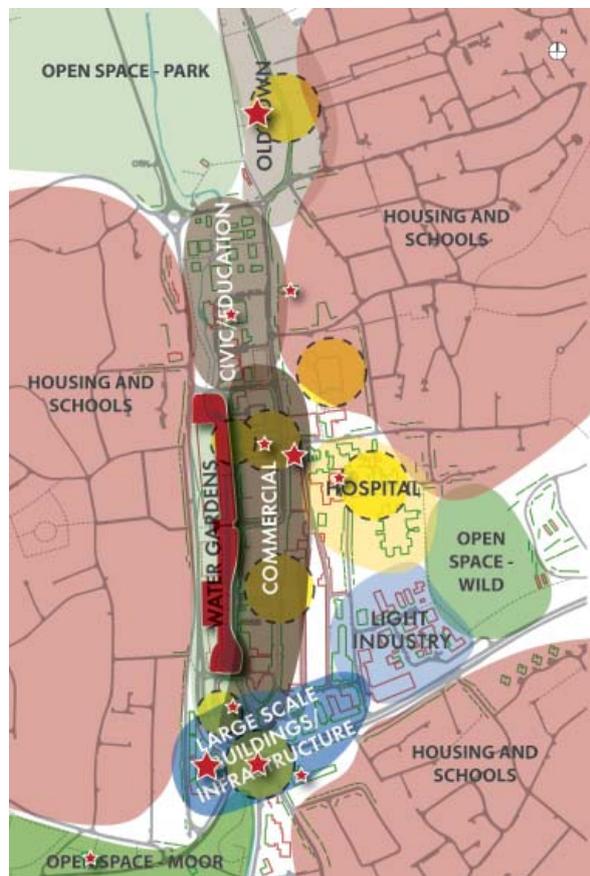
Above: Figure ground plan of the town centre



Above: Districts of the town centre



Above: Nodes within the town centre (yellow circles)



Above: Landmarks in the town centre (red stars and filled area)

### **Districts**

Hemel Hempstead town centre is effectively made up of a number of districts which offer a clear identity and character. These consist of the Old Town, the civic and educational area of West Herts College and the public sector uses, the main retail area along Marlowes, the Hospital area, the light industrial area of Paradise, the Water Gardens and the large scale buildings and infrastructure around Plough Roundabout. Similar 'Character Zone' areas have been identified through the Core Strategy. Surrounding the town centre are clear areas of open space, with Gadebridge park to the north, Paradise fields to the east and the town moor/Two Waters to the south.

### **Nodes**

The town centre consists of a number of focal points, intersections and strategic spots with a specific character with a feeling of entering, which are both positive and negative. These consist of the Old Town, Market Square and the bus station, Asda, the hospital, the main retail area along Marlowes and the Plough Roundabout.

### **Landmarks**

The town centre lies in the river valley, forming a focal point for views from the valley sides, which helps to explain the elongated north-south alignment. St Mary's Church and the Kodak tower are the main landmarks in the area and form important orientation points at either end of the town centre. Other, more secondary, landmarks in the town centre consist of the Carey Baptist Church and St John Church, the Civic Offices, Hamilton House (a nine storey office building on the corner of Marlowes and Hillfield Road), and the telephone exchange and Debenhams buildings adjacent to the Plough roundabout.

### **Access**

Hemel Hempstead train station is located to the south west of the town centre, approximately 1.5km from the Riverside Shopping Centre. There is a frequent bus service every seven minutes from the station to the town centre or it takes around twenty minutes to walk through the town moor.

The town centre is very well served by buses, with around 40 bus services calling or terminating at Hemel Bus Station, located on Waterhouse Street adjacent to and in between the Water Gardens and Market Square. The local bus network operates on a loop around Waterhouse Street, Combe Street, Marlowes and Bridge Street, with 15 bus stops located on the loop providing excellent access in the heart of the town centre. A further two bus stops are located at the southern end of the Marlowes Shopping Zone on Waterhouse Street near to the Riverside Shopping Centre, whilst modern bus stop facilities in the form of a super stop are provided at the Riverside Shopping Centre for terminating services.

Hemel Hempstead town centre is easily accessed by car and has a good level of car parking facilities, with six car parks in very close proximity to the town centre.



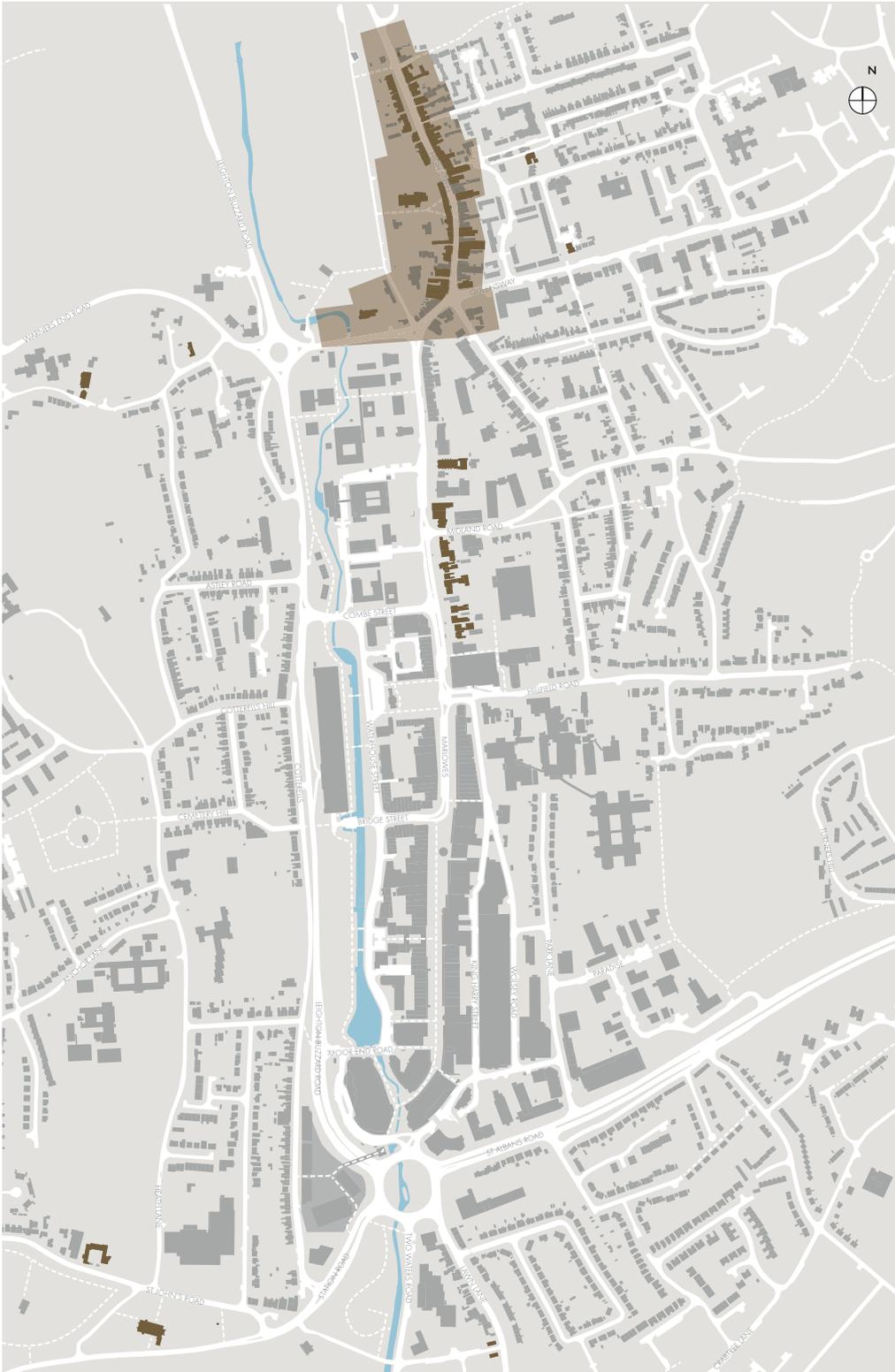
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**Above:** Plan showing bus routes (red and blue lines), bus stops (red squares), bus station/super stop (yellow areas), car parks and the one way system around Wolsey Road and Park Lane



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**Above:** Plan showing the topography of the area and how the town centre sits in the valley floor



Above: Plan showing the conservation area in the Old Town (light brown area) and listed buildings (dark brown buildings)

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### **Land uses**

Hemel Hempstead town centre is dominated by comparison goods shops. The comparison offer is reasonably strong with better quality retailers located in the Riverside Shopping Centre and the Marlowes Shopping Centre, although there is a lack of aspirational fashion brands. The Marlowes (shopping street) is of poorer quality with a significant number of discount stores, betting shops, charity shops and amusement arcades. The major comparison retailers located within the new town centre include Debenhams, TK Maxx, HMV, H&M, Next, Primark, Marks & Spencers and New Look. Beyond Bridge Street, the primary frontage ends and the shops become more service orientated and more secondary in nature.

There are also a significant proportion of services which include banks/building societies, travel agents and betting shops. Although the centre is primarily made up of comparison goods shops, there is convenience shopping provision comprising Asda, Iceland (located to the east of the Marlowes) and a small Tesco Express which is located on the Marlowes. In addition to this there is a smaller convenience supermarket located on the Marlowes called the Mosaic Supermarket. With regards to evening activity there are only three bars/pubs towards the northern end of the Marlowes and a couple of restaurants at the southern end which are part of the Riverside Shopping Centre.

In addition to the main retail area focused upon the Marlowes, the Old Town makes up further secondary retail offer. However, the Old Town is separated from the new town and consists mainly of service uses such as restaurants/cafes/takeaways, pubs and estate agents with a small comparison shopping offer.

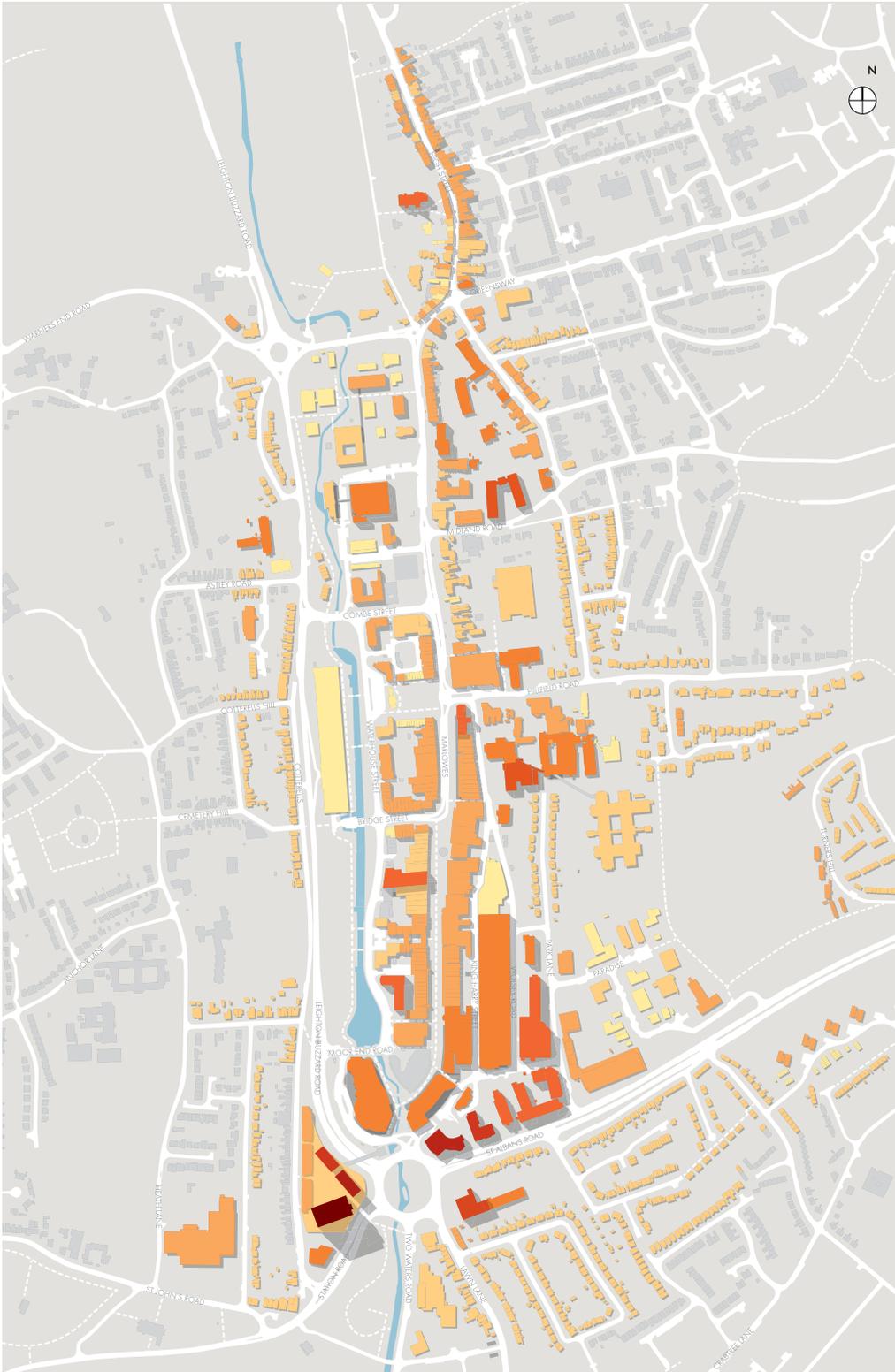
In between the Old Town and New Town lies office, civic and educational uses, including West Herts College, the Civic Offices, Library and Police Station.

Larger scale office uses are located at the southern end of the town centre, east of the Riverside Shopping Centre. Further east is Paradise light industrial area which contains the Royal Mail depot site now subject to redevelopment proposals. To the north of Paradise and south of Hillfield Road is Hemel Hempstead General Hospital.

### **Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings**

There is only one Conservation Area in Hemel Hempstead, which includes the Old Town centre and part of Gadebridge Park. The old heart of Hemel Hempstead became a Conservation Area in 1968 and was one of the first to be designated in Hertfordshire. The boundary is tightly drawn around the medieval town and takes in the High Street, the parish church and the Charter Tower. The High Street is also an area of archeological significance. Most of Hemel Hempstead's listed buildings are concentrated within the short span of the High Street and their group value is considerable. The Church of St Mary is the oldest, most prominent and important building, listed Grade I.

There are very few listed buildings in Hemel Hempstead outside the Old Town. Of these the most prominent are the cluster of 19th century villas along Marlowes, opposite the Civic Centre.



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**Above:** Plan showing building heights in the town centre - the darker the orange/red, the taller the building

### **Building heights**

The building heights in Hemel Hempstead town centre vary widely along its length. The Old Town Centre is defined by high quality predominantly two and three-storey buildings, with a significant three-storey listed building that acts as a gateway to the High Street.

South of the Old Town, the area is defined by modernist civic buildings on the western side, ranging in heights from one to four storeys. The eastern side of the street is predominantly two and three-storey buildings, including several listed villa's.

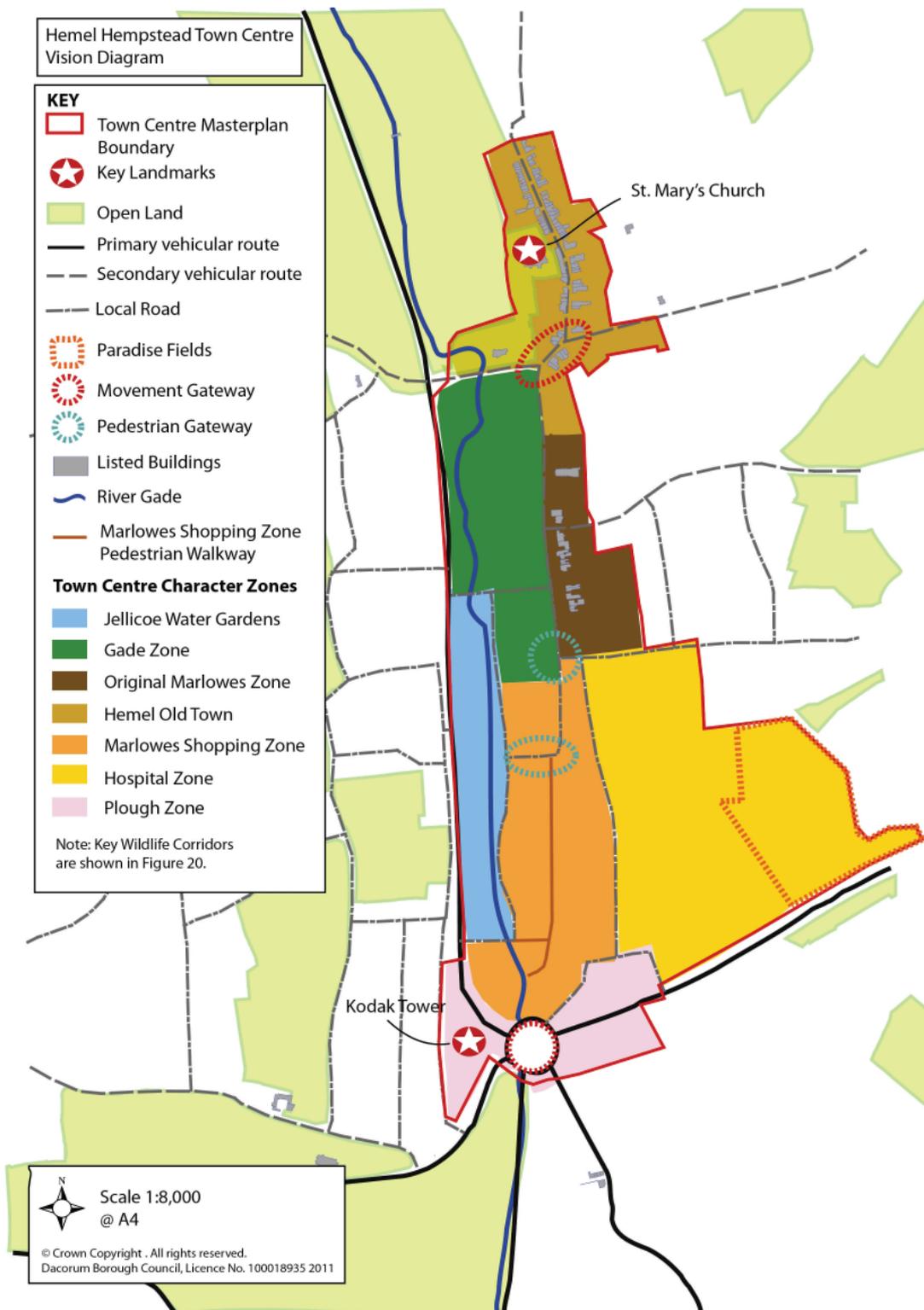
The area around Market Square is almost entirely three-storey buildings with the exception of the buildings fronting the square north and south of single storey and Hamilton House, a nine storey 1970s office building on the corner of Marlowes and Hillfield Road.

The Marlowes pedestrianised shopping area is a mix of two to five-storey buildings of variable quality, with building heights rising towards the southern end. The Riverside Shopping Centre and adjacent new residential blocks rise up to eight storeys and the recently refurbished Kodak Tower of 20 storeys acts as the major landmark in the area. The residential dwellings surrounding the town centre are predominantly two and three storey buildings.

St Mary's Church and the Kodak Buildings are the critical orientation points at the scale of the entire town of Hemel Hempstead, creating clear poles marking the two ends of the town centre and the Gade Valley floor. The spire of St Mary's Church, located in the Old Town, acts as the major northern landmark and can be seen from many different places, including from the Marlowes and from the Victorian residential areas to the east.

Hemel Hempstead's major roads were designed to promote views of the Kodak Building, promoting the modernist conception of high-rise buildings floating in the landscape. Key views to the Kodak Building include the vista from the train station and Station Road, and when travelling west along St Albans Road.

Adjacent to those two landmarks, are the critical gateway junctions - the Plough Roundabout (sometimes referred to as the magic roundabout) and the intersection of Queensway, the Marlowes and the High Street.



Above: Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Vision Diagram

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## 2.3 PLANNING POLICY REVIEW

### Dacorum Core Strategy

The Council is in the process of preparing a new 'Local Development Framework' (LDF) for the Borough. This will replace the existing Local Plan that was adopted in 2004. The Core Strategy is the central document in the Local Development Framework and its role is to establish the overall pattern of development within the borough over the next 20 years.

A strategic objective of the Core Strategy is to promote Hemel Hempstead as the focus of the Borough for homes, jobs and strategic services, reinforcing the role of the neighbourhoods in the town. There are a range of relevant policies relating to the distribution of development and the selection of development sites – all of which promote Hemel Hempstead as the town's most sequentially preferable location for new retail, economic and housing development. This approach is set within a strong policy framework which seeks to protect the countryside and landscape setting of the Boroughs towns. Principles relating to design quality and the quality of the public realm are also established at this strategic policy level.

The Core Strategy puts forward Place Strategies for the key settlements in the Borough. A detailed Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead is outlined which includes vision statements for both the town and the town centre. The vision for Hemel Hempstead town centre is:

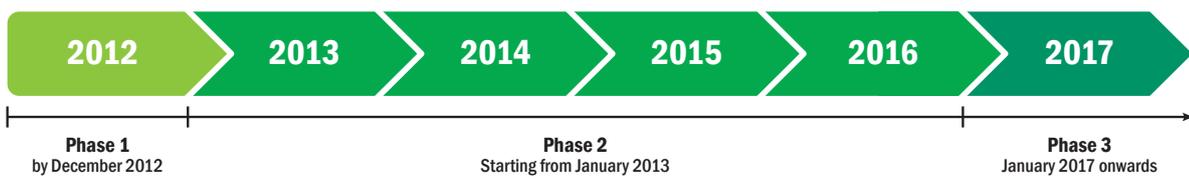
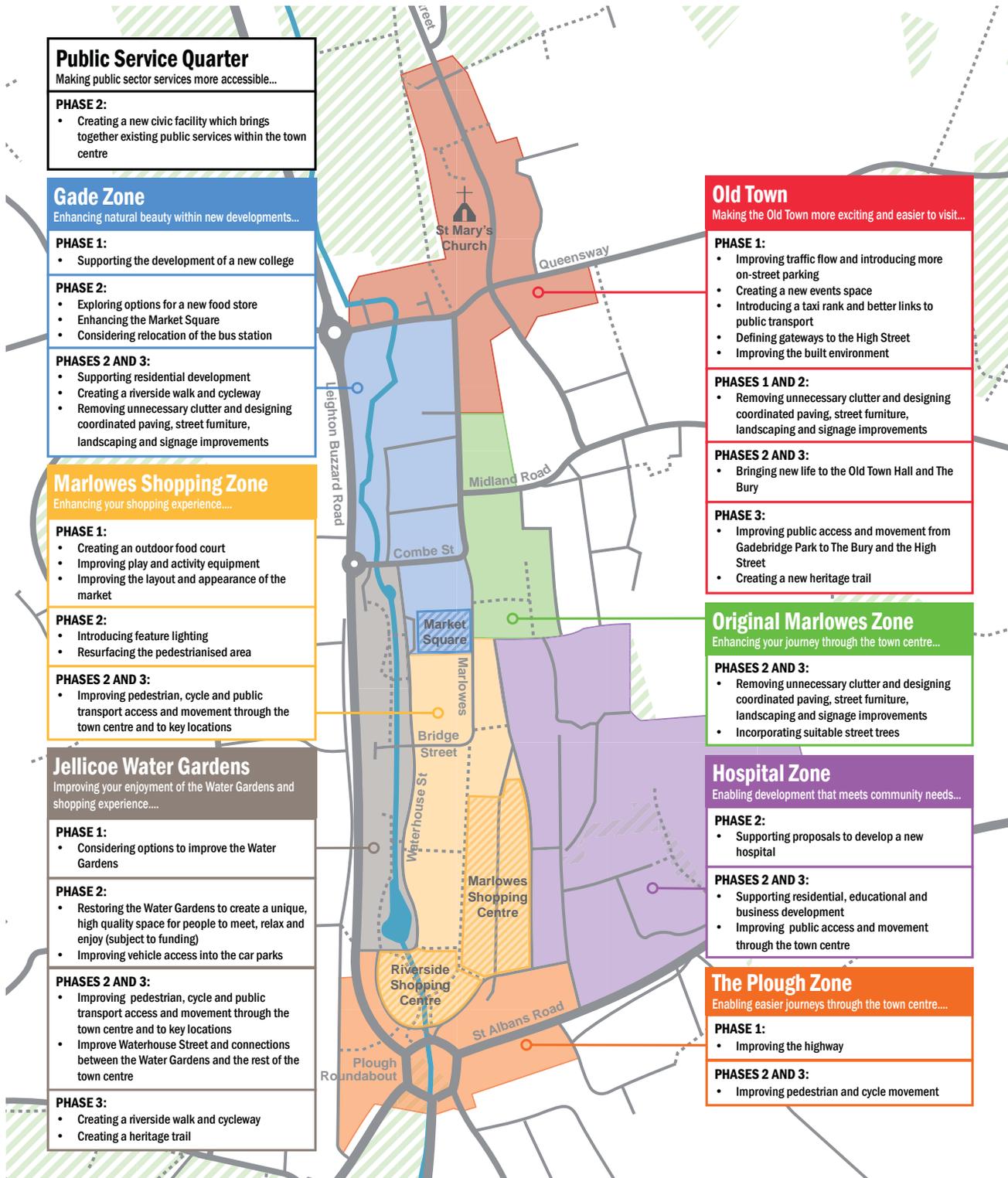
*The town centre will be a vibrant place where people will want to shop, work, live, learn and visit during the day and evening. Business and commerce are successful. New development has included offices, civic facilities, homes and shops. The Marlowes Shopping Zone is busy. A residential community occupies the homes. Their demand for services has been met by local provision, use of the town centre facilities and improved access to open space out of the centre. New facilities will*

*include a local general hospital, school, college and cultural centre. Shoppers, visitors and residents benefit from the rationalisation of bus stops and interchange facilities within the centre. The town centre is attractive. New buildings, refurbishment and extension of pedestrian routes have delivered a pleasant and secure environment that makes best use of its built and natural assets and respects its New Town history. Marlowes and Waterhouse Street are significantly improved. There are good connections with the Old Town. A walkway and cycleway runs alongside the River Gade. Green links with Gadebridge Park, Two Waters Open Space, Paradise Fields and the Nickey Line have been enhanced. The restoration of the Water Gardens is admired and public art promoted.*

The Place Strategy states that the aim of new development will be to refresh and maintain the role of the centre as a hub of commerce and public transport, while a variety of employment, shopping and leisure uses will be delivered to suit the income levels of local residents. Multiple retailers will be attracted to strengthen the economy. The Place Strategy also recognises the town centre as a neighbourhood, a role which will be reinforced by new housing and that existing and new residents will need access to a similar range of facilities as other neighbourhoods.

The Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead states that, in the town centre, the objectives are to deliver:

- around 1,800 homes;
- a local general hospital;
- a primary school;
- a new library and college;
- new civic and cultural facilities;
- a supermarket and other shops;
- a bus interchange; and
- a better footpath network.



Above: Hemel Hempstead town centre Character Zones as shown in the Council's Hemel Evolution leaflet

## 2.4 HEMEL HEMPSTEAD TOWN CENTRE CHARACTER ZONES

The Core Strategy and emerging Town Centre Masterplan identifies seven distinct but interlinked character areas around which the regeneration of the town centre will be focused. A holistic, joined up approach will be taken to improvements in order to maximise benefits across the Town Centre as a whole. Each zone, discussed below, accommodates similar uses or built/natural landscape.

### The Old Town

The Old Town is based around the High Street, Queensway and the northern tip of the Marlowes. The main businesses include professional services, quality specialist shops and a strong evening economy with a variety of pubs, restaurants and cafes and an arts centre.

The Old Town is attractive and has primarily a service and niche retail focus with its range of social and evening uses complementing the new towns retail based role. The High Street owes its appeal to several factors, including the variety and quality of its historic buildings, the gentle, climbing curve of the street that progressively reveals them, and the preservation of the narrow alleys and yards on the east side of the street.

The quality of the built environment in this zone is recognised for special architectural or historic importance and the notable landmark of St Mary's Church. This zone offers opportunities to improve north/south pedestrian links and refurbishment of the building fascias along the northern tip of the Marlowes.

In Summer 2011, the Council identified the Old Town as a Top Priority project for delivery by 2015. This work incorporates an improved public realm and a range of improvements to the Old Town Hall. A joint

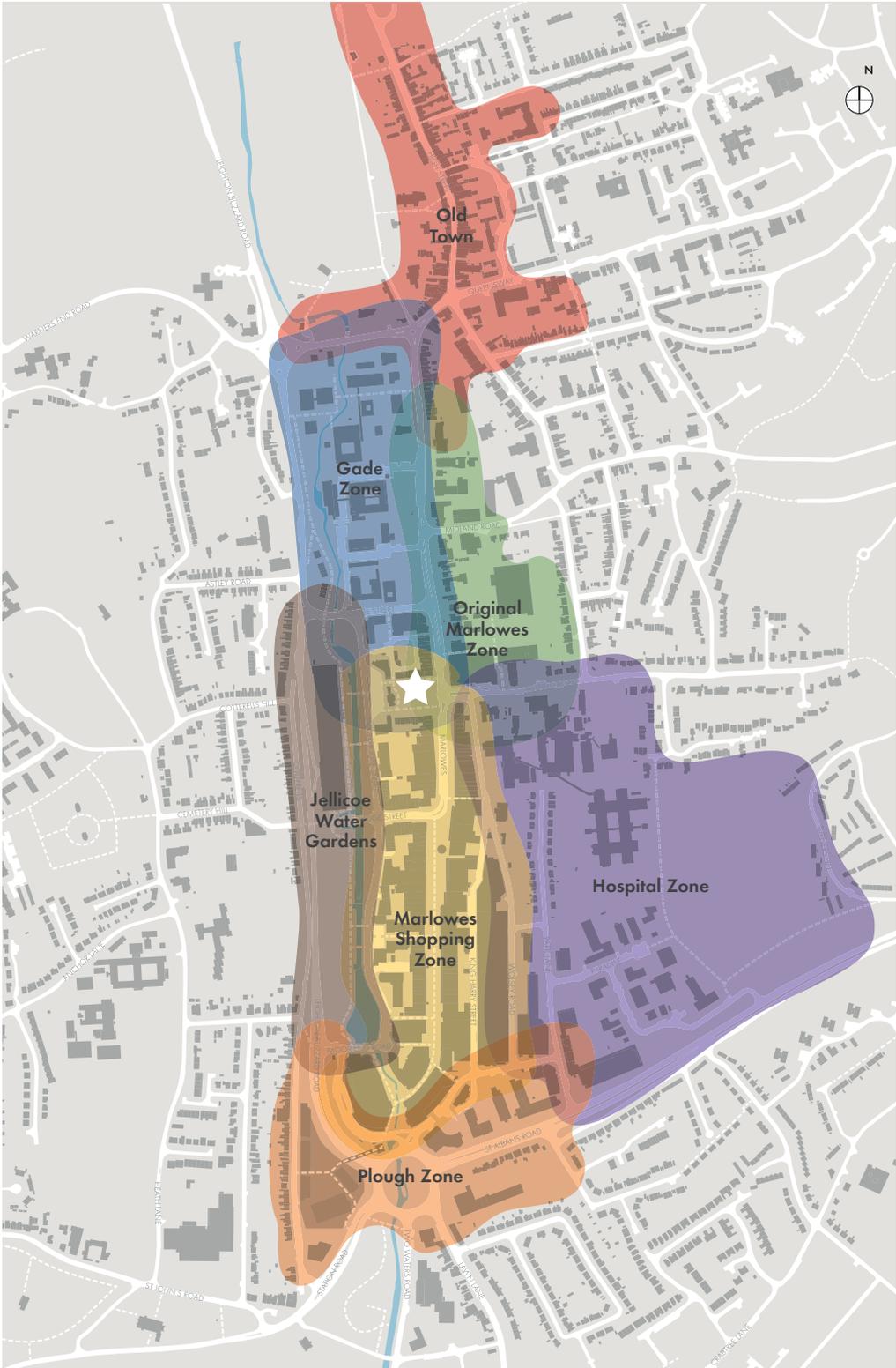
project between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council will deliver the first phase of improvements to the highway and public realm in autumn 2012. This will involve the delivery of a new one-way traffic system along the High Street, the creation of an events space, improved accessibility to public transport, street furniture decluttering and a more consistent approach to the use of surface materials, signage and street furniture.

Later phases will consider highway and public realm improvements to the rest of the Old Town as set out in a heritage and economy strategy, which will be delivered jointly by Dacorum Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council. The heritage and economy strategy will deliver a conservation area review and appraisal; an economic development study and plan; delivery plans and the basis for a bid for future funding.

### Original Marlowes Zone

The Original Marlowes Zone contains part of the north eastern section of the Marlowes and a notable feature is its listed villas. The northern section of this zone effectively forms a continuation of the Old Town along the eastern side of Marlowes. The south of the area includes services for the town centre such as a large doctors surgery and the Asda and Iceland food stores.

There are opportunities in this area for more sympathetic architecture and improvements to the building fascias of the listed buildings, removing unnecessary clutter and incorporating coordinated paving, street furniture and street trees.



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Above: The Character Zones merged to form overlapping and blurred boundaries shows the importance of the Market Square as the point where the central zones overlap (white star)

### **The Gade Zone**

The Gade Zone includes the north western section of the town centre from Queensway to Combe Street, and includes part of the River Gade. The area includes West Herts College campus, the Civic Centre and other public sector uses, and the Marlowes Methodist Church. This zone holds significant regeneration opportunities for new educational and civic facilities, alongside supporting residential and retail at the southern end of the zone. With such a mix of uses, there are also opportunities for decentralised heating systems or Combined Heat and Power (CHP).

This zone also includes the Market Square and bus station, with potential for the bus station to be removed or relocated and new commercial leisure uses to help regenerate the space.

### **Jellicoe Water Gardens**

This area encompasses the whole of the registered Water Gardens, running from Combe Street to Moor End Road, and is a key design feature of the Mark 1 new town.

The Water Gardens can play an important role in Hemel's future, as a key feature in a renewed high quality environment. Renovating and maintaining the Gardens will be important, as will ensuring that adjoining developments address, and do not turn their backs to, the Water Gardens.

Options are currently being considered to improve and restore the Water Gardens to celebrate their uniqueness and importance as part of the New Town and create a high quality space for people to meet, relax and enjoy. Subject to design considerations, this zone could provide an alternative location for public service uses on the Water Gardens North car park. There are also opportunities to improve Waterhouse Street and connections between the Water Gardens and the rest of the town centre.

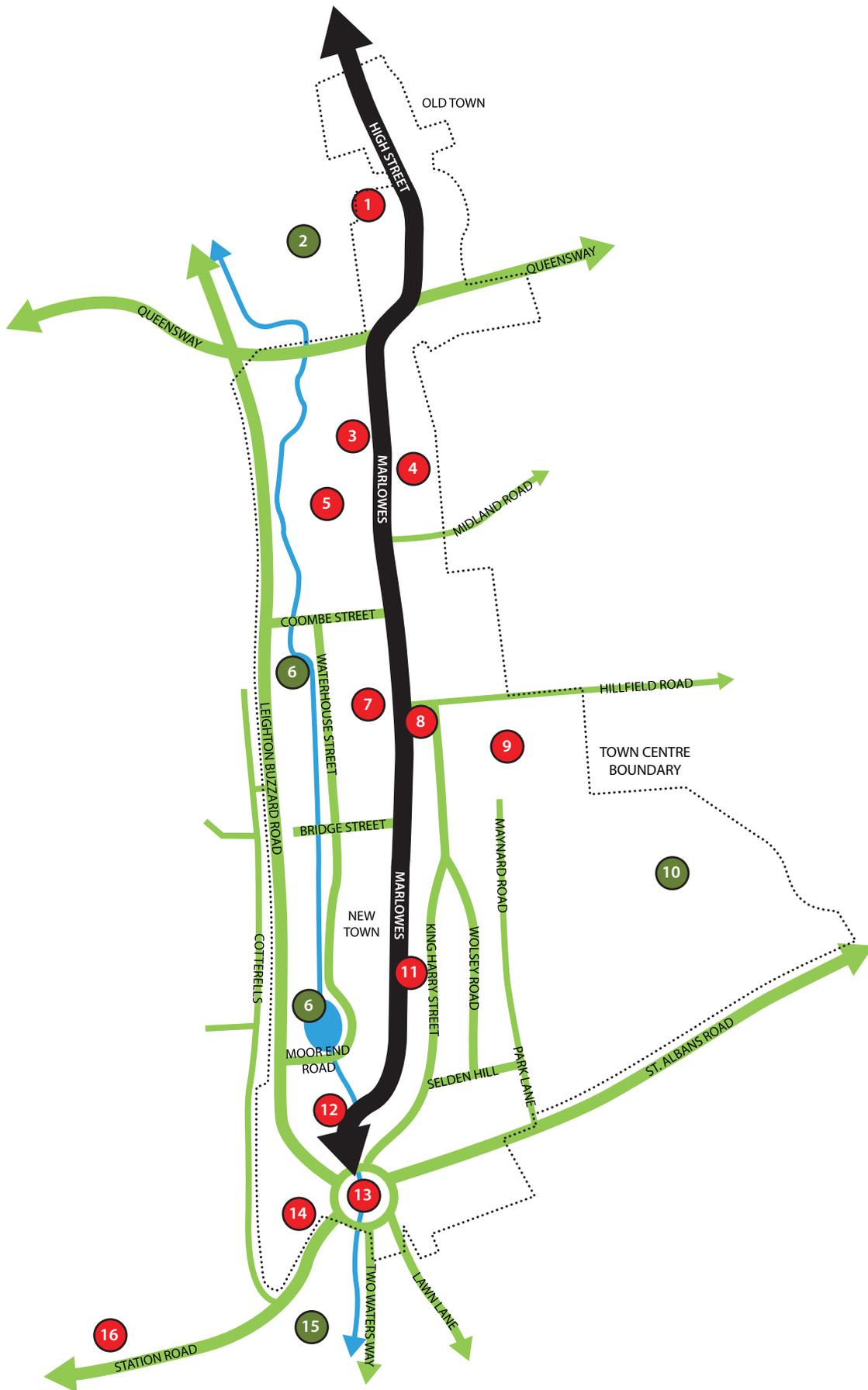
### **The Hospital Zone**

This area includes the hospital site, Paradise employment area, and the offices, hotel and surgery opposite, as well as Paradise Fields. While uses in this area are critical to the vitality of the town centre, the area doesn't function well as part of the urban fabric.

The Hospital Zone holds significant regeneration opportunities for mixed use development which will be important in helping supporting the town centre. This development could include a new hospital, new housing, a primary school linked utilising part of Paradise Fields and retained and improved employment uses. There are also opportunities for improved open space and pedestrian and cycle links, particularly to the town centre, and a decentralised heating system or CHP.

The area presents the opportunity for a possible partnership project involving the Council, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the West Herts Hospital Trust and possibly a development company to redevelop and regenerate the area.

The area also includes the Royal Mail site, which has come to the fore due to the closure of the Park Lane Royal Mail sorting office. An application for the residential development of around 80 new homes is currently being considered for this site.



**Above:** Summary of major routes, landmarks and key features in Hemel Hempstead town centre  
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**Summary of major routes, landmarks and key features in Hemel Hempstead town centre:**

1. **St Mary's Church**
2. **Gadebridge Park**
3. **Marlowes Church**
4. **Carey Church**
5. **Civic Offices**
6. **Water Gardens**
7. **Market Square**
8. **Hamilton House**
9. **Hemel Hempstead General Hospital**
10. **Paradise Fields**
11. **Marlowes Shopping Centre**
12. **Riverside Shopping Centre (Debenhams)**
13. **Plough roundabout**
14. **Kodak Tower**
15. **Town Moor**
16. **St John's Church**

**The Marlowes Shopping Zone**

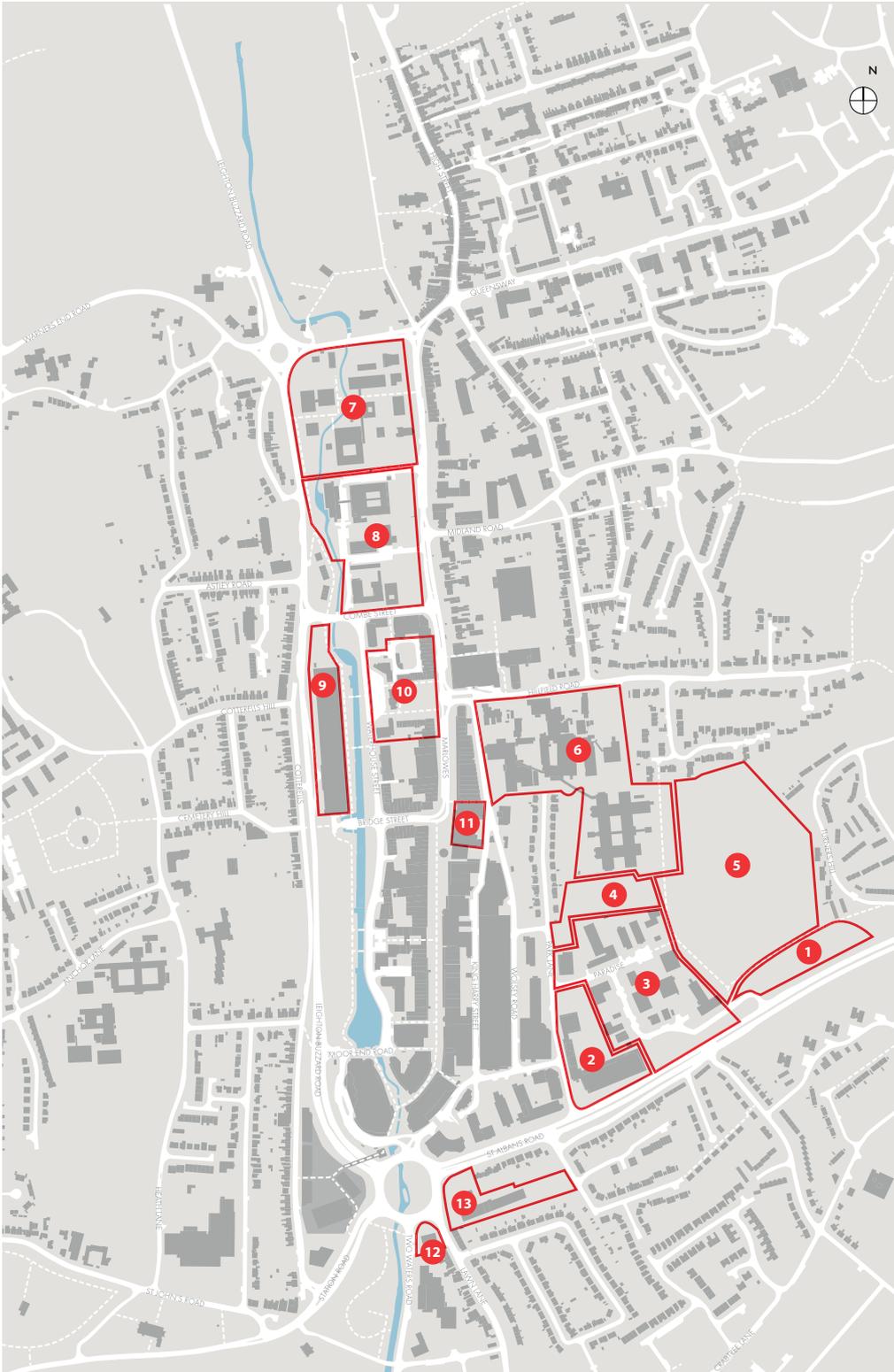
This zone consists of the area south of Market Square and includes the ramped area north of Bridge Street and the pedestrianised area south, including the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres. It is the prime retail pitch of the town centre and is in need of refurbishment and renewal. The Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy will implement public realm improvements that will significantly enhance the public realm and streetscape and help secure a greater footfall and expenditure within the town centre. The area around the pedestrian gateway near the Market Square is also a potential location for office uses.

**The Plough Zone**

The Plough Zone is focussed around the Plough Roundabout and is an important gateway to the town centre. The roundabout, while successful in traffic management terms, presents a major obstacle to pedestrian and cycle friendly access to the town centre.

The area has recently been enhanced by the Riverside Shopping Centre and residential development with an improved environment around the River Gade, and the redevelopment of the Kodak site, with a new pedestrian footbridge.

Redevelopment opportunities in this area should enhance this key gateway to the town and respect the location adjacent to Boxmoor and Corner Hall residential area, whilst significantly improving pedestrian and cycle links and a higher quality public realm.



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Above: Potential development sites in Hemel Hempstead town centre

## 2.5 POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES

The following sites have been identified as potential development sites in the town centre, although some of the sites may not be redeveloped or only partially redeveloped or improved. The sites focus in the northern and eastern parts of the town centre, with very few central area opportunities.

Site no.	Site name	Character Zone	Area - ha*
1	Paradise open space (HCA site)	Hospital Zone	0.8
2	Royal Mail depot site	Hospital Zone	1.4
3	Paradise employment area	Hospital Zone	3.0
4	Hospital car park (owned by HCA)	Hospital Zone	0.7
5	Paradise fields	Hospital Zone	5.0
6	Hospital site	Hospital Zone	4.7
7	West Herts College	Gade Zone	2.9
8	Civic area	Gade Zone	2.5
9	Water Gardens North car park	Water Gardens	1.0
10	Market Square area	Gade Zone/Marlowes Shopping Zone	1.3
11	Mosaic supermarket	Marlowes Shopping Zone	0.25
12	Plough roundabout south	Plough Zone	0.2
13	Telephone exchange site	Plough Zone	0.7

\* site area is approximate only and has not been informed by a site survey



**Above:** The Kodak Tower has been reused for new town centre housing

## 3 MAJOR LAND USES

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The emerging Core Strategy puts forward a Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead to help make the town centre a vibrant place where people will want to shop, work, live, learn and visit during the day and evening. In order to achieve this vision, the Place Strategy includes objectives to deliver a number of different land uses within the town centre.

In many ways, these objectives form the brief for the land use strategy and the principal task is to consider the options for how these land use objectives could be successfully accommodated in the town centre. This chapter explains each of these major land uses and why they are required. The following chapter explains how such uses could be successfully integrated within the town centre incorporating high quality urban design.

The Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead states that, in the town centre, the objectives are to deliver:

- around 1,800 homes;
- a local general hospital;
- a new primary school;
- a new library and college;
- new civic and cultural facilities;
- a supermarket and other shops;
- a bus interchange; and
- a better footpath network

These key elements are now explained in more detail.

### 3.2 NEW HOMES

The emerging Core Strategy states that Hemel Hempstead will be the focus for higher levels of housing growth and proposes 1,800 new dwellings in the town centre, with another 6,000 new dwellings in the rest of the town. The Core Strategy states that new homes should match the needs of the community in terms of their size, type and affordability and that they should also be adaptable and accessible to all occupiers.

The redevelopment of the Kodak site already accounts for around 400 new homes in the town centre and the Core Strategy identifies 80 new homes in the northern part of the Old Town as a local allocation. These figures, therefore, count towards the total requirement of 1,800 new dwellings. However, as the Core Strategy housing figure is for a period up to 2031 and this major land use study and the emerging town centre masterplan are focussing on the next 10 years, it is unlikely that sites for all these new homes will be found at this stage.

Delivering housing growth will be challenging given the current housing market and economic conditions, but this study, alongside the town centre masterplan and Core Strategy, takes a longer term perspective. The Council is currently working with the Homes and Community Agency to help deliver new housing and also has committed to invest its own capital and other resources. The challenge is to ensure that development contributes to 'place making' and is achieved in a sustainable way, alongside a growing vibrant economy in a high quality environment, thereby improving the overall attractiveness of Hemel Hempstead.



Above: The current Hemel Hempstead General Hospital site, viewed from Hillfield Road



Above: The current West Herts. College campus

### 3.3 A LOCAL GENERAL HOSPITAL

The PCT and West Hertfordshire Hospital NHS Trust have recently delivered a new 24/7 Urgent Care Centre and a new GP-led health centre in 2009, as part of a programme of works at Hemel Hempstead hospital site combined with the centralisation of acute facilities to Watford Hospital. This redevelopment programme will deliver a new local general hospital on the existing hospital grounds on a reduced footprint.

Three options for the new hospital have previously been considered. Option 1 considered the new hospital on the part of the site closest to Marlowes, where the current Tudor and Halsey buildings are located. Option 2 considered the new hospital adjacent to this, on the site of the Windsor day hospital and Windsor building. Option 3 considered the retention of the current Verulam building at the southern end of the site, adjacent to Paradise fields.

Land released through this redevelopment programme is likely to accommodate new homes and possibly a new primary school, together with improvements to routes in the area, particularly those to the town centre.

### 3.4 A PRIMARY SCHOOL

A collaborative partnership has been established between the Council and Hertfordshire County Council departments to develop a comprehensive plan for school places to 2031. The work considered the need for more nursery, primary, secondary and higher education places and educational facilities for children and young people in the borough, as a result of a recent birth rate forecast. It has also considered the additional demand from housing growth in the borough, together with recent population forecasts.

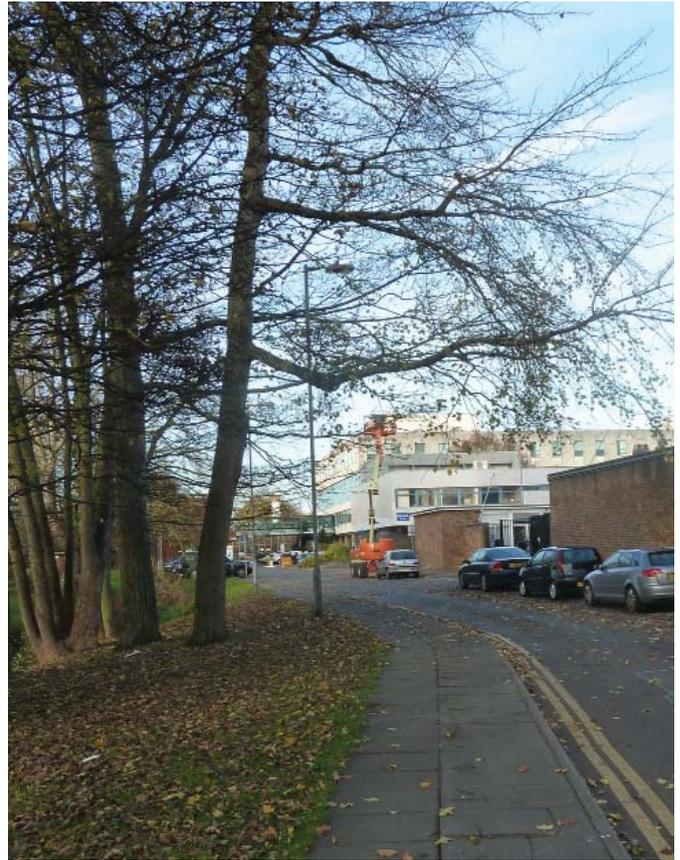
The Core Strategy, therefore, proposes a new primary school consisting of two forms of entry in the town centre. It is considered that a new primary school in a town centre could take the form of an 'urban' type design which usually takes up less space than older single storey out of town schools.

### 3.5 A NEW COLLEGE

There is a need in the town centre for a larger replacement college to serve both young people and adults within the borough. West Herts College is proposing to build a new, purpose-built campus on its existing site in the town centre, offering state-of-the-art facilities for courses serving the needs of the Dacorum community and the wider area of south west Hertfordshire. The college has submitted a planning application to the Council for the new college, alongside residential development of 130 new homes. The application is currently on hold and discussions are ongoing. It is understood that a range of other potential locations are still under consideration.



**Above:** The Police Station and Library sites fronting Combe Street



**Above:** The Civic Offices along Dacorum Way, adjacent to the River Gade



**Above:** Part of the Civic site, consisting of the Civic Offices, Magistrates Court building and the Herts Pathfinder Trust building

### 3.6 NEW CIVIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES, INCLUDING A NEW LIBRARY

The Civic Block, at the northern end of the Town Centre, comprises a range of public services, each in their separate buildings. These include West Herts College, Dacorum Borough Council Civic Centre Offices, the Magistrates Court, the Hertfordshire Pathfinder Health Trust, the Police Station and the Library.

The majority of these buildings were built in the 1960s, at relatively low density. These buildings are generally considered to be inefficient and no longer suitable for modern requirements. The Magistrates Court closed at the end of September 2011, the Police Station is considered to be bigger than necessary for modern operational needs and the Library is unable to deliver a modern service in an effective and customer friendly manner. The Herts Pathfinder (Mental Health) Trust building requires either major refurbishment or re-provision and the Council's Civic Centre far exceeds current and predicted space requirements and requires a level of investment which would represent very poor value for money.

As such, the Council is keen to deliver a new 'public service quarter' (PSQ). This new PSQ has significant regeneration potential with an emphasis on a community focused building which would include a range of public and voluntary sector service providers with a focus on a new library at its heart. The PSQ could play an important role in generating activity and vibrancy in the town centre. This role is particularly important at a time when vacancies are a problem for many town centres.

The Council commissioned property consultants G L Hearn to undertake a high level development feasibility study of the Civic Block (excluding the College) area. A key driver for the study was ensuring the value generated from redevelopment of the area would fund a new PSQ facility.

Two potential locations for a new PSQ have been identified - the Marlowes/library site and the northern section of the Water Gardens North decked car park. Studies have been carried out on both sites to investigate the potential for a 5,000m<sup>2</sup> PSQ on each site.

A PSQ integrated into the town centre, in general, will maintain activity that will support local businesses and the PSQ itself will attract people into the town throughout the day and potentially into the evening.

Locating the PSQ at the northern end of the Marlowes could be important in rebalancing a town centre where the main centre of gravity is clustered at the southern end with the dominant Riverside and Marlowes shopping centres. However, locating the PSQ on the Water Gardens north car park could help reinvigorate the Water Gardens and provide a new east-west route through the town centre, whilst helping to regenerate the Market Square.



**Above:** Asda and Iceland, viewed from the top of the NCP car park on Hillfield Road



**Above:** The vacant site on the corner of Marlowes and Combe Street

### 3.7 A SUPERMARKET AND OTHER SHOPS

The 2011 Retail Study update identified a need for additional convenience goods (food) floorspace to serve Hemel Hempstead. Much of the theoretical capacity arises from the strong trading of the main out of centre stores serving Hemel Hempstead, the Tesco at Jarman Park (total size of 4,361m<sup>2</sup> of which 2,791m<sup>2</sup>/64% is convenience) and Sainsbury's in Apsley (total size of 4,637m<sup>2</sup>, of which 3,431m<sup>2</sup>/74% is convenience). The level of convenience offer within the town centre itself is limited, with the main operator being Asda to the east of the Marlowes. Given the level differences between the site and the Marlowes, the store is not considered particularly well connected to Marlowes and hence not especially conducive to linked trips.

In adopting a sequential approach to addressing this need, in accordance with national planning policy and the emerging Core Strategy, the Council will seek to direct this convenience floorspace need onto a central site in the town centre. This will help improve the existing level of food shopping, attract more shoppers into the town centre more regularly, creating potential linked trip benefits and achieving more sustainable town centre focused patterns of shopping.

The provision of a major foodstore within the town centre will provide a further choice to consumers for a major food shop and providing a greater opportunity for linked trips. Whilst there will always be a concern that a large foodstore will generate trips only to and from the store, any intervention which brings more visitors into the town centre should be welcomed and a well designed scheme will deliver some extended trips to the town. The larger foodstores generally contain some level of non-food provision, and this will need to be carefully managed.

In August 2011, the Council commissioned a study by GL Hearn/BDP to consider the feasibility of a new supermarket in the Gade Zone, south of the West Herts College site. This area is the largest site in the town centre which, subject to the re-provision of the current uses, could accommodate a new foodstore

which could act as a northern anchor for the new town and help regenerate this part of the town centre.

The study looked at three options which consisted of:

1. A large foodstore of 8,600m<sup>2</sup> gross (6,000m<sup>2</sup> net), which would require significant land assembly including the Council offices, Magistrates Court, Library, Health Centre, Police. It would accommodate undercroft parking, a service area facing the River Gade and housing to the north. This option would assume that the PSQ is provided in a different location;
2. A mid sized foodstore of 6,000m<sup>2</sup> gross (4,000m<sup>2</sup> net), and new housing adjacent to the River Gade. This would still require significant land assembly, albeit less than Option 1. This option could offer the possibility of providing the PSQ on the Library/Marlowes site; and
3. A smaller store format of 4,500m<sup>2</sup> gross (3,000m<sup>2</sup> net) which would offer greater proportion of housing in a better environment and could also provide the PSQ on the Library/Marlowes site. This would require less land assembly, but is still likely to include the health centre site and potentially also the library site. This option is only marginally larger than the existing town centre Asda store. Operators may not consider this size of store a viable option, particularly if store format or car parking levels are compromised, and it is considered there would not be market interest in anything smaller.

There is also the possibility of providing a supermarket on the Police/Library/Marlowes site which would bring retail closer to the Marlowes retail zone, with new housing on the Civic office site.

In terms of delivering a foodstore, operators will pay significant land values which could help not only to deliver a new foodstore in the town centre, but also help deliver other land uses such as the PSQ and help kickstart the regeneration and transformation of the town centre.



Above: Market Square



Above: The current bus station viewed from the Water Gardens. Two people have to walk through the bus station to get from the Water Gardens car park to Marlowes.

### 3.8 A BUS INTERCHANGE

Hemel Hempstead Bus Station is currently located off the northern section of Waterhouse Street, adjacent to Market Square. This is a central location with easy access to the town centre, however the quality of the bus station is poor and it has a negative impact on the environment of the Water Gardens, Waterhouse Street and Market Square. The current layout is basic with limited passenger facilities provided in terms of waiting facilities and information provision. It is located away from the main thoroughfare of the town, reducing the natural surveillance during off-peak hours thus creating potential issues in relation to personal security. As such, the current bus station has been identified for possible relocation and the site redeveloped to help improve the environment of Market Square, Waterhouse Street and the registered Water Gardens, while improving east-west links through the town centre.

The Access and Movement Strategy will consider movement to and through the centre by all modes. A parking strategy will also be prepared.

A relatively new bus super-stop has now been provided at the southern end of the town centre, adjacent to Debenhams, accessed from Plough roundabout and Moor End Road, which provides a number of bus stops and bus lay-bys. Considering this facility, and that a new bus station would require a significant portion of easily-accessible land, the Access and Movement Study is currently considering whether the bus stops could be relocated along the Marlowes to complement the bus stops already there, thereby removing the requirement for a dedicated bus station. The emerging study suggests that this could be feasible in both operational and design terms. It is considered not appropriate for bus layovers to be taken at on-street stops and further investigation could be given to providing these in the current bus super-stop, underused car parks or other street space such as King Harry Street.

If the bus station was to be relocated, this would enable the site, along with Market Square, to be regenerated. The Market Square is an important point of transition for the town centre and is where many of the character Zones come together. It is located at a point on the Marlowes where the quality of retail drops off considerably.

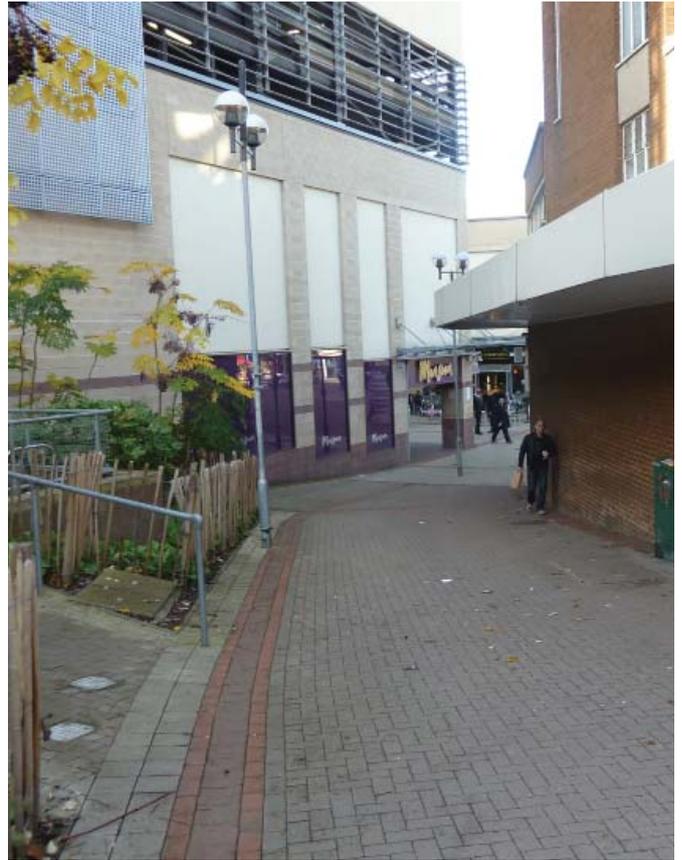
The Market Square now represents a vacant space within the Town Centre for much of the week following the relocation of the street market to the pedestrianised area and the removal of the old market stall structures. Strategically it is very important lying between the northern end of the main shopping area and the southern end of the civic area. There is the opportunity to use the Market Square area and the bus station site to bring forward new commercial development and activity at the northern extent of the shopping area.

Whilst the retail study does show sizeable retail capacity in the longer term, from a market perspective, the study does not see any prospects of significant re-balancing of the comparison retail offer in the town centre through major new development this far to the north of Marlowes. The lack of commercial leisure and family catering outlets in Hemel suggest that this is something to be considered for the regeneration of Market Square area.

There is an opportunity for the redevelopment of this part of the town centre to contribute significantly to the regeneration and improvement of Waterhouse Street.



**Above:** Clear pedestrian desire lines to cross Plough roundabout



**Above:** Important pedestrian route from Marlowes to Selden Hill and car parking



**Above:** Paths in the Water Gardens

### 3.9 BETTER FOOTPATH NETWORK AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Access and Movement study currently being produced consider how the footpath network in Hemel Hempstead town centre can be improved. A number of issues and opportunities are currently being considered, which include improving the pedestrian and cycle route from the town centre to the railway station through potentially a shared pavement scheme, improving pedestrian public realm linking Bridge Street and the Old Town, improving the crossing at Leighton Buzzard Road/Combe street junction and developing a north-south walking and cycling route along the River Gade. It is important for the land use strategy to consider these improvements in devising the strategy to ensure that the location, size and type of land uses respond positively to such routes. In view of the town's very strong north-south axis, improvement of east-west links is seen as a priority.

Environmental improvements in the town centre are also relevant to the quality of the footpath network. The Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy proposes improvements to the public realm along the southern end Marlowes, and incorporates improvements along Bridge Street. There are also plans to improve the public realm in the Old Town and the need to improve the environment around the Plough roundabout, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. There are also aspirations to improve the environment and public realm along Waterhouse Street to make this a more pedestrian friendly environment and enable a greater evening/leisure economy with cafes and restaurants spilling out, overlooking the Water Gardens.

The Jellicoe Water Gardens are a Grade II Registered Park and Garden – the equivalent type of status afforded to open and landscaped areas as listing is to buildings of special architectural and historic interest.

The recent Water Gardens study identified an initial programme of restorative work. The Council is considering applying for a Heritage Lottery Fund for this restorative work, along with any additional works that might be considered appropriate to the Water Gardens' historical interest and befitting of its registered status.

The involvement of local residents and businesses will be important to the success of any bid and as such, the Council consider that a new subgroup of the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Partnership would be best placed to provide this input. The renewal of the Water Gardens within the setting of a wider strategic delivery context of the Town Centre Masterplan would help support the bid and give it credibility.



Above: Looking North along Marlowes towards the Civic Centre and the Old Town



## 4 LAND USE STRATEGY

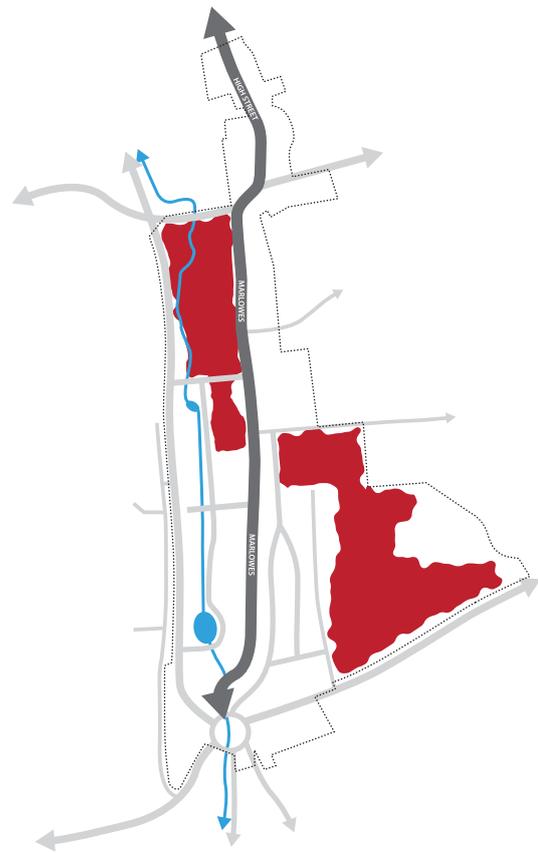
### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explained the requirement for each of the major land uses for Hemel Hempstead town centre, as identified in the Core Strategy's Place Strategy for the town centre. This chapter introduces the overall strategy for new land uses within Hemel Hempstead town centre, followed by two land use options of how this strategy could be achieved. It links the urban design analysis and the major land uses, along with commercial property advice, resulting in a sustainable and realistic strategy for the town centre, with two land use options which can directly inform the town centre masterplan.

High quality urban design is essential to deliver places which are genuinely sustainable; places that create social, environmental and economic value. Good urban design can create places where people want to live, work and visit. It is crucial for the major land uses to incorporate high quality urban design in order to contribute to the regeneration and revitalisation of Hemel town centre and, in doing so, taking forward the 1947 Hemel Hempstead New Town Development Corporation motto 'Greater, Richer, More Beautiful.' This means bespoke designs which consider their town-wide and immediate site context, propose an appropriate mass and scale of development, improve the town's structure and provide active frontages on existing and new routes.



**Above:** The basic current structure of the town centre - Marlowes/High Street is the main route through the middle.



**Above:** Main areas for change - the Gade Zone and the Hospital Zone are the two main areas for change in the town centre.

## 4.2 LAND USE STRATEGY

### Main areas for change

The Gade Zone and the Hospital Zone are the two Character Zones which offer the greatest opportunity for change and regeneration in Hemel Hempstead town centre. The Gade Zone sits in an important location between the Old Town and New Town and fronts Marlowes, the main route linking the two. The area also includes the River Gade, an important but currently under-utilised feature in the town centre. The Gade Zone currently contains a large number of buildings occupied by public sector uses which are no longer suitable for modern requirements.

The Hospital Zone offers the opportunity to regenerate a large area of the town centre. There is scope to provide a new, more compact, local general hospital in the area whilst releasing under-used land for redevelopment. Retaining these community uses, while introducing new uses within a more connected network of routes, will be important to the diversity and vitality offered in the town centre.

### Retail

For a town of its size, Hemel Hempstead has a relatively weak food retail offer in the town centre with the only main supermarket in a town centre location being the medium sized Asda which itself is not particularly well integrated to the commercial core. The town has two nearby out of centre stores, one at Jarman Park and one at Apsley. The Retail Study Update identifies that in Hemel Hempstead there is theoretical need by 2016 for a convenience food store of approximately 2,800m<sup>2</sup> (net) 4,300m<sup>2</sup> (gross) and that this need will increase as time goes on.

The released civic offices site has been earmarked as the most appropriate location for new food retail floorspace. This area is likely to become the largest town centre development opportunity in the coming years. This has the potential to provide a northern anchor for the town's retail offer, complementing the southern anchor of Debenhams and the other major

comparison retailers and improving the environment north of the Market Square. Such a location, close to the existing retail uses along Marlowes, could help deliver other important town centre uses, such as the Public Service Quarter (PSQ) and kickstart the regeneration of the town.

There is interest in the area from a number of major foodstore operators and how this demand is harnessed will be an extremely important factor in the future success of the town. A new foodstore could generate new visits to the town centre and provide linked shopping trip benefits. A range of development options, all of which include a food store in this location, are possible. The pros and cons for the varying sizes are listed below:

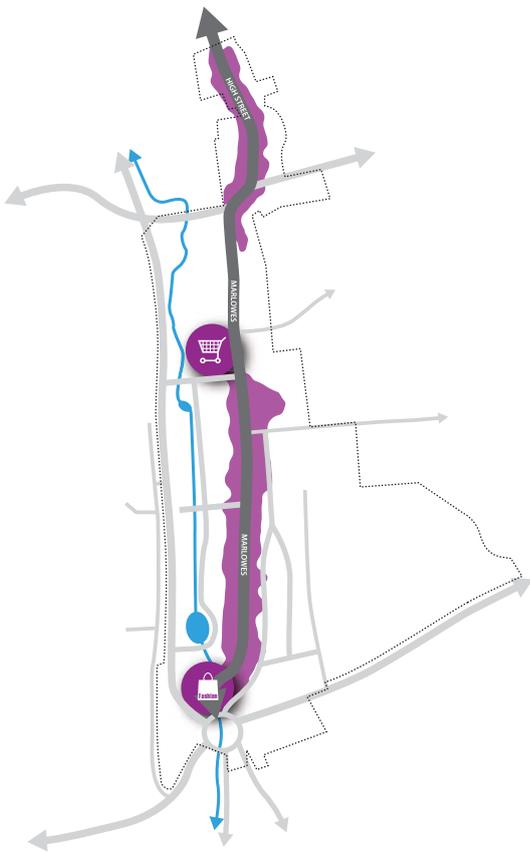
### Large foodstore

#### Potential pros

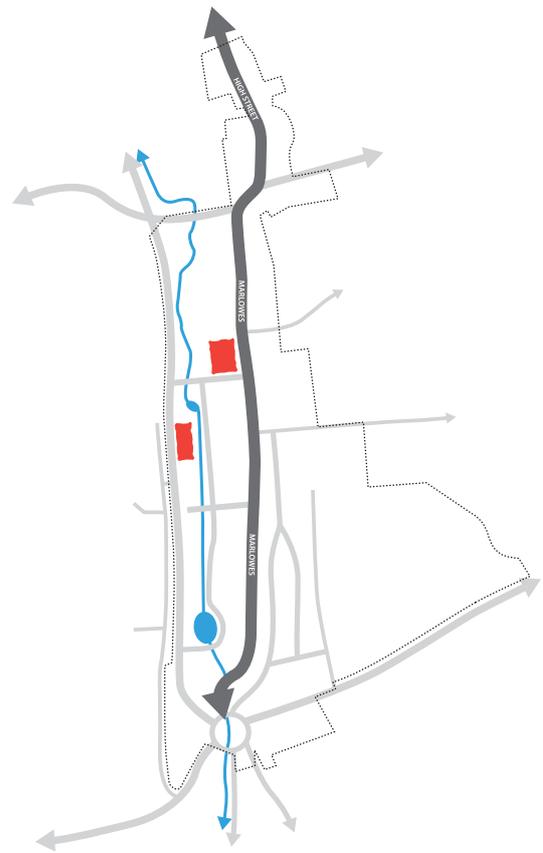
- Most able to compete with the out of town provision and bring shoppers into the town centre.
- Therefore likely to result in the most linked trips from food shopping.
- Likely to provide the largest capital receipt provided a relatively uncompromised layout can be agreed for the retailer.
- Therefore most likely to deliver self-financing PSQ.

#### Potential cons

- A large format store will be the most difficult to accommodate in townscape terms, with there being a danger of operator pressure for the provision of large surface parking areas and a large store footprint.
- Likely to require significant third party interests, potentially including health centre, library, police and magistrates court sites.
- Therefore land assembly is a risk to delivery and allocation of capital receipt may be complex and take some considerable time to secure.



**Above:** Retail - a new convenience foodstore can act as an anchor to the northern end of the New Town, complementing the southern anchor of the Riverside Shopping Centre. The strategy supports the existing small scale and niche comparison retail in the Old Town.



**Above:** Public Service Quarter - the two potential locations.

- Large format stores of this scale have the largest non-food offer – this may result in opposition from existing town centre retailers and investors.
- Difficult to accommodate optimum commercial quantum of car parking, although provision of parking will be an important factor in the viability of the scheme.
- Greatest impact on road network as the larger the store, the more trips are generated.

### **Medium foodstore**

#### **Potential pros**

- Considerably larger than existing town centre provision and probably of sufficient scale to draw custom from out of town.
- Will therefore generate increased linked trips.
- Should generate significant capital receipt to help support the provision of a new PSQ.
- Potentially can be accommodated without need to buy in police/magistrates land. This reduces the risks and complexities associated with delivery.
- May allow reprovision of PSQ on Pavilions site if required.
- In townscape terms, is easier to accommodate in an acceptable form to protect the character of the area.

#### **Potential cons**

- Still requires land assembly including health centre and library.
- Unlikely to be a 'standard' foodstore format which could impact on operator demand.
- Will still accommodate non-food provision on a scale which may attract objections from existing town centre traders.
- Compromised car parking, particularly if the store is to be located alongside the new PSQ on the Marlowes/Library site.

### **Small Foodstore**

#### **Potential pros**

- Relatively small land take, though still likely to require health centre re-provision.
- Praises the scope for more balanced mixed-use redevelopment incorporating a significant amount of housing uses. Taken with the redevelopment of the College site, this could form the basis of a new town centre community in this northern part of the town.
- If there is any non-food products on offer this is likely to be relatively small and unlikely to be of major concern to other town centre traders.
- This option will allow reprovision of PSQ on Marlowes/Library site.

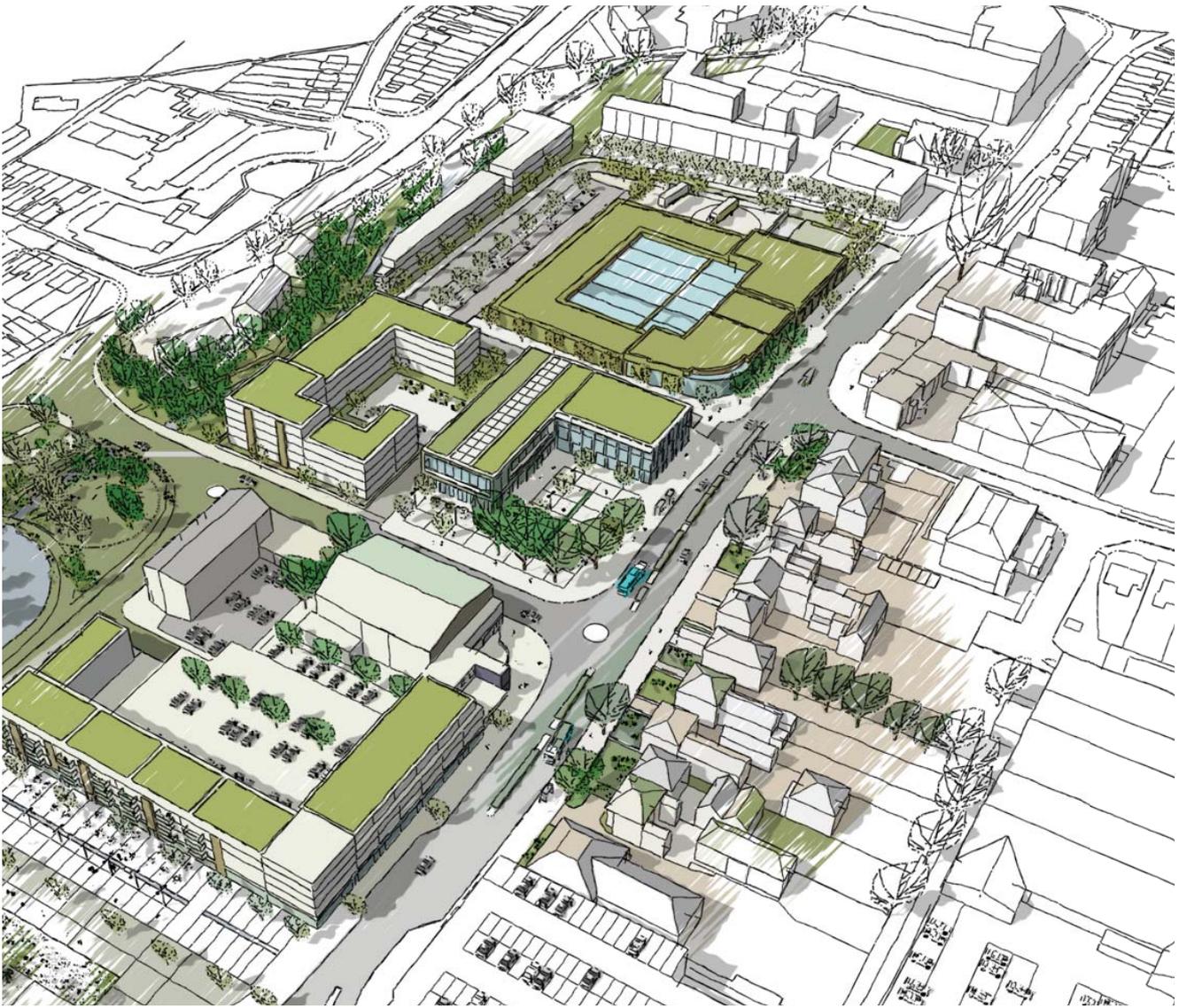
#### **Potential cons**

- Not much larger than the Asda opposite – therefore may not be attractive to the market.
- Smaller capital receipt for the Council and therefore unlikely to fund the provision of the PSQ.
- More likely to divert trade from Asda than compete with Tesco/J Sainsbury's so few new visitors to town centre and associated linked trips.

### **Location issues associated with new convenience retail**

Major food stores are often difficult to accommodate in core town centre locations given the size and customer parking requirements. They are, nevertheless, key town centre uses that attract a significant number of visits and have the potential to generate linked trips which supports the wider town centre economy. Their location and design should therefore ensure that they are properly integrated into the town centre.

Medium and large supermarket developments are often considered to be appropriate edge of centre



**Above:** An indicative sketch of a new PSQ on the Marlowes/Library site may

developments. Such locations are often considered acceptable on the basis that the parking associated with a new store of this type would be designed, located and managed so that it serves the town centre as a whole in addition to the store itself.

In planning terms, the most sequentially preferable location for a major new foodstore is on a site as close to the core town centre as possible. The southern end of the Gade Zone would therefore represent the most preferable location for a use of this type. However, much will depend on the availability of the land required for such a development. A medium sized store that will have the gravity to generate linked trips and recover some of the shopping trips currently being lost to existing out of centre locations would be favourable. However, as the distance between such a store and the town centre increases, so the store's potential beneficial economic impact on the town centre economy decreases. A location at the northern end of the Gade Zone, subject to site availability, would therefore be less (sequentially) preferable in planning terms.

### **Comparison retailing in the town centre**

Whilst the retail study does show sizeable comparison retail capacity in the longer term, from a market perspective there is little prospect of any major retail-led regeneration schemes coming forward. Therefore, there is little prospect of any significant re-balancing of the comparison retail offer in the town centre and the opportunity area to the north of the town in the Gade Zone will be driven by food retail and potentially commercial leisure development opportunities.

There does remain vacant floorspace in both the Marlowes and Riverside Shopping Centres and it is considered that the existing floorspace is capable of trading more intensively. As such, the strategy focuses any new comparison retail in the established Marlowes shopping area, complemented and supplemented by smaller niche retail opportunities in Old Town. This would utilise vacant units, make

greater use of upper floors and any development sites which may be available for redevelopment in the future, such as the Mosaic supermarket site.

### **Public Service Quarter**

The existing civic offices, despite its historical associations with the New Towns Movement, is considered no longer fit for purpose. Studies have shown that the building is expensive and inefficient to run and provides the Council with more space than is required. Feasibility studies have been undertaken to explore options associated with the re-provision of the civic offices to an alternative site within the town centre.

The Council is currently considering two central locations for the new PSQ; on the Marlowes/Library site on the corner of Coombe Street and Marlowes, and on the Water Gardens north decked car park, utilising the northern part of the site.

The PSQ on the Marlowes/library site would, in combination with a new foodstore, act as an important anchor to this important area between the Old Town and New Town, maintaining public sector services in an established location. The PSQ in this location would have an impact on the size of foodstore which could be delivered on the remaining part of the site.

The PSQ on the Water Gardens North car park would release more land in the Gade Zone, which could be important if a larger foodstore was considered acceptable. However, more importantly, it could help to rejuvenate the Water Gardens, by offering a higher quality building than the current decked car park, increasing the usage of the Water Gardens and helping to make the Gardens a safer place during the day and evening. The release of the existing civic centre site and a decision to locate the PSQ on the Water Gardens North car park site could also play an important role in helping to fund the restoration of the Water Gardens. The need to improve access to the new facility from the Marlowes would also help bring



**Above:** An indicative sketch of a new PSQ on the Water Gardens North car park site

forward improvements to, and potential redevelopment of, Market Square.

Both of the options have the capacity to contribute positively to the regeneration of the town. The relative merits of these options are as follows:

#### **PSQ on Marlowes/Library site**

##### **Potential pros:**

- Would give this key civic/community facility a high street address and profile. Marlowes is the commercial and service provision spine of the town so siting a replacement civic office facility on this principal town spine would aid legibility.
- Marlowes is serviced by a wide range of bus services thereby ensuring the location is highly accessible by public transport.
- The site is available and within public sector control. However, all of the site is not owned by Dacorum District Council so some degree of site assembly will be required.
- The site is the lesser constrained/sensitive of the two options – there are fewer environmental and heritage asset issues to be addressed in progressing a new development on this site.
- There is potential to create a new public space associated with the entrance to the new facility.
- Such an approach could indirectly help to limit the size of a new food store in this location which could help ensure a new food store is of an appropriate size and scale.

##### **Potential cons:**

- Less potential uplift in land value is released as the site could be disposed of for higher value commercial development.
- Associated with the above point, using this site for a new PSQ development reduces the redevelopment potential of the wider civic zone. This could limit the potential size of a new food store in this part of the town centre which, in

turn, would reduce the capital receipt generated. This could limit the wider regenerative benefits for the town as a whole.

- The benefits of demolishing the existing civic facility and providing a smaller PSQ on an adjacent site could be perceived as less tangible than more radical/ambitious solutions.
- This approach would not so directly address the need to secure investment in the Water Gardens.
- There would be no specific benefits to Market Square through pursuing this option.
- It may be more difficult to provide parking for both the PSQ and supermarket on the same site, however some of the parking could be shared for both uses.
- Temporary accommodation may have to be found for the library when the PSQ is being built.

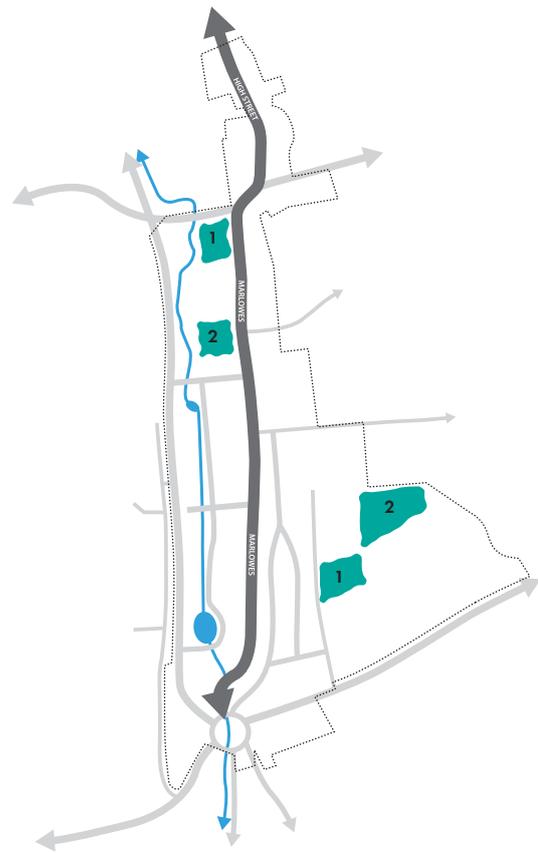
#### **PSQ on Water Gardens North car park site**

##### **Potential pros:**

- This option would deliver much needed investment into the historic Water Gardens. If carefully designed, a new PSQ in this location could help add life and activity to the Water Gardens which are currently an underused resource in the town centre.
- Siting a new PSQ facility opposite the Market Square would draw a significant number of new pedestrian movements across this space and help better connect Waterhouse Street with Marlowes.
- The siting of a new PSQ facility on the northern part of the decked car park site provides the opportunity, subject to demonstrating that such an approach protects the setting and integrity of the Water Gardens, to create a new east-west route across the town.
- A new PSQ facility responds positively to Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe's vision for the town. Early concepts for the new town included civic facilities set within the new Water Gardens.



**Above:** Residential - main areas of potential new residential development in the town centre.



**Above:** Education - the likely locations of the new West Herts College (top) and a new primary school (bottom).

- The special and unique qualities of this site create the opportunity for a very special building which could help transform the image of the Water Gardens and help regenerate the western side of the town centre.
- This site would enable to release of a larger, more commercially attractive and more valuable site in the vicinity of the existing Council offices.
- The PSQ could be built while still allowing complete continuity for all parties currently on the civic site relocating to the new building.

#### **Potential cons:**

- The Hemel Water Gardens are included in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Whilst the car park site falls outside the formal boundary of the historic Water Gardens, redevelopment of part of the decked car park would have a significant impact on the setting of the Gardens.
- The stakeholders associated with the historic gardens have registered their concerns about the potential redevelopment of this site and its potential detrimental impact on the setting of the Gardens.
- There are significant risks planning, programming and funding risks associated with utilising this site for a new PSQ.
- Planning permission would be more difficult to achieve given the sensitivities of the site.
- Given the sensitivities, the programme is likely to be more protracted. This is important as the facility will need to be operational before the existing Civic Offices can be decanted.
- This option may cause issues associated with the aspirations the Council have to secure Heritage Lottery Funding for the refurbishment of The Water Gardens. A decision would not be made to commit grant aid to the Gardens until certainty is reached on the future use of the decked car park site.

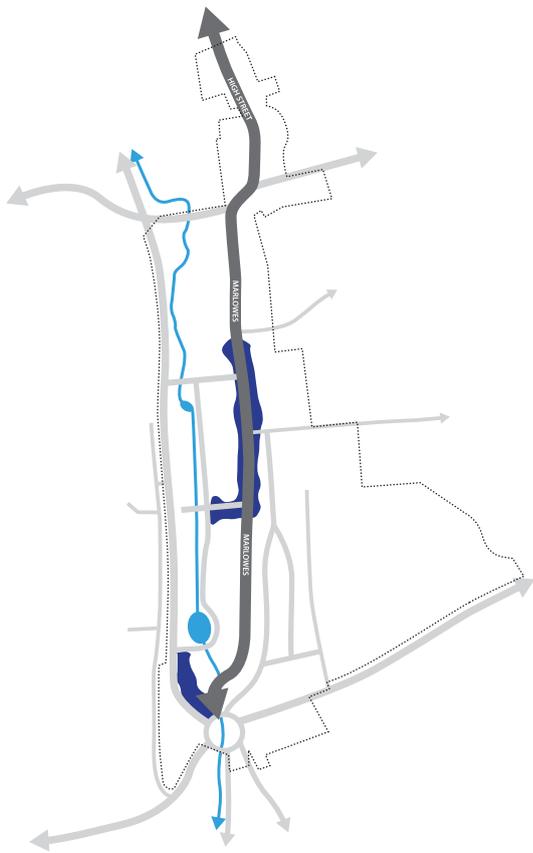
#### **Residential**

The regeneration of the town centre will help support a significant amount of new residential development, which will provide much needed new homes and help improve the vibrancy of the town and promoting a more sustainable form of development. New residential development will also help fund new infrastructure required in the town centre. A number of the Character Zones and development sites will incorporate an element of residential development. Such sites include the hospital site on the land remaining following the new hospital, the Royal Mail depot site fronting St Albans Way and the West Herts College site. The redevelopment of the Gade Zone could also contain an element of new residential development, which could significantly improve the quality of the environment along the River Gade. The Plough Zone also contains potential sites for new housing, which could accommodate higher density development in line with nearby tall buildings to signify this important southern gateway to the town centre.

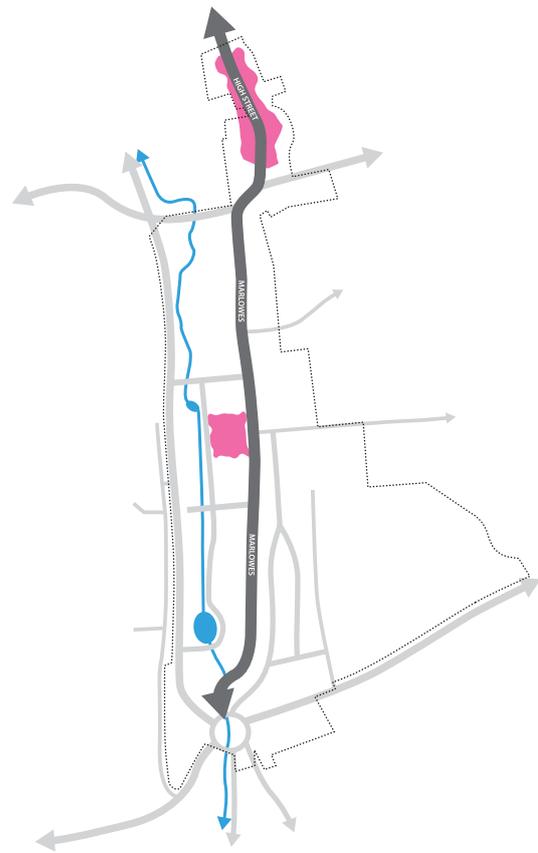
#### **Education**

At the northern end of the Gade Zone, the Council supports the regeneration of the West Herts College site for a new modern high quality College campus which would replace the existing facilities. The college is a major education facility in the town and the council recognises the important role it plays. It is also a major employer which is of benefit to many local people.

Reuse of the existing college site for a replacement college facility would be the Council's preference land use strategy for the site. Such an approach would provide the opportunity to introduce new housing development onto the site which could, subject to flooding issues being resolved, take advantage of the environmental amenity provided by the site's good access to the riverside.



**Above:** Buses - removal of the bus station and relocated bus stops accommodated along Marlowes, with greater use of the new super stop next to Debenhams.



**Above:** Leisure and culture - as part of the regeneration of Market Square and the cultural uses in the Old Town, particularly use of the old Town Hall.

Other potential college locations within the Gade Zone have been discussed and considered. Principal amongst these has been the consideration given to the new replacement college facility utilising the site of the existing Civic offices. Whilst the college would be considered an appropriate town centre use, the southern end of the Gade Zone is considered the most appropriate location for a new town centre food store given the potential benefits of such a use to the town centre economy. These benefits are linked with the physical relationship and proximity of the store and its parking to the existing core town centre.

A new primary school is likely to be located within the Hospital Zone, benefiting from the proximity of the Paradise Fields open space, a small proportion of which could be used for school playing fields. A site on the southern part of the hospital site (a current hospital car park) or on the top tier of Paradise open space, is considered the most appropriate locations for a new 2-form entry primary school.

### **Bus interchange**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Access and Movement Study suggests that it is feasible to relocate the bus stops along the Marlowes to complement the bus stops already there and make greater use of the new bus super-stop adjacent to Debenhams.

### **Leisure and culture**

Market Square is both an important space in the town centre, forming a key east-west route between Waterhouse Street and Marlowes. But the site, as identified in both the Town Centre Masterplan Charette events, is itself a development opportunity.

In order to improve the environment around this important part of the town centre, to maximise pedestrian movement and to capitalise on new northern anchors of a new foodstore and PSQ, new uses are needed for the Market Square and the adjacent bus station site.

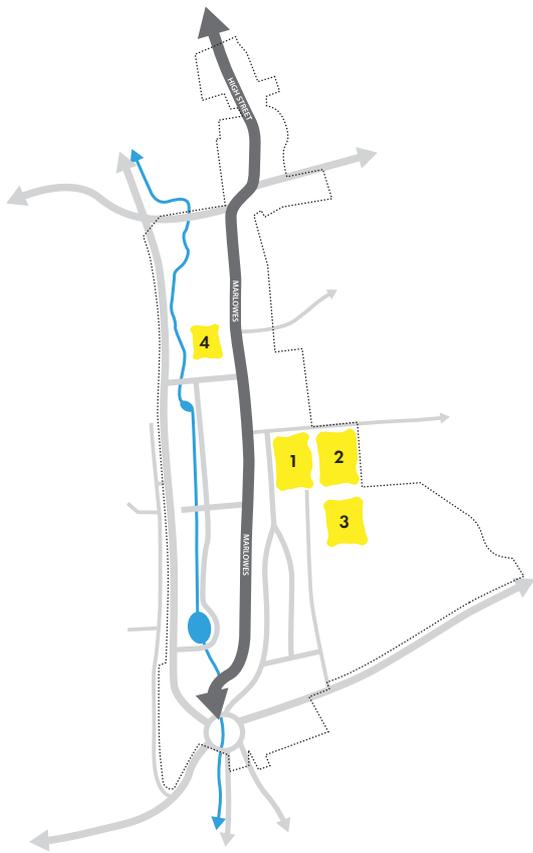
The Transport and Movement Study will provide advice on the future of Waterhouse Street and the provision of bus stops in the northern part of the town centre. The study finds that the release of the existing bus station site can be facilitated through the re-provision of additional stops on the northern section of Marlowes. This is a very important improvement for the town centre and significantly increases the range of opportunities for a reconfigured and partially redeveloped Market Square.

A vision for Waterhouse Street has emerged during the preparation of the MLUS and the Transport and Movement Study for Waterhouse Street to be a far more pedestrian friendly environment, with fewer cars and other vehicles and more restaurants and bars. This vision is further strengthened by the direct relationship the length of the street has with the Water Gardens and the westerly aspect which affords good evening sun which makes outside tables and chairs more attractive and viable.

Market Square, where the services provided by the existing bus station has been appropriately re-provided, could play a major role in strengthening this vision. A small format cinema should be explored on the northern section of Market Square, in conjunction with the redevelopment of underused row of lock-up shops fronting the southern side of Market Square.

Market Square is a key point of transition in the town centre where a number of adjoining zones come together. However, if Market Square is going to be used for any form of commercial development this will need to present an alternative use complementary to the existing town centre services and facilities. The lack of commercial leisure and family catering outlets in the town centre and the relationship the site and this location has with the core retail area, the Water Gardens environment and Waterhouse Street.

The Market Square and bus station sites are not considered viable for additional comparison retail as



**Above:** Health - the potential locations for a new local general hospital



**Above:** Employment - focussed around Paradise and the office cluster at the southern end of the town centre

it would be difficult to attract an anchor retailer to this non-core location. The site is also not considered viable for the new foodstore due to its size and difficulty in terms of site assembly. However there is a clearly identified lack of leisure uses in the town centre – filling this gap would both broaden the appeal of the centre and potentially extend trading hours into the evening.

One element of a leisure offer is provision of family catering outlets which may both attract a specific trip and be used by those visiting the town for shopping and other reasons. This is currently lacking in Hemel Hempstead at present although there has been an attempt to create a cluster of uses around the waterside within the Riverside shopping centre.

The second element of this would be a major leisure operator and the most appropriate use would be a cinema. Historically this would have been difficult to deliver in the town – cinemas are expensive to deliver and pay relatively low rents which necessitate a sizeable amount of additional enabling development, often A3 users. Also the proximity to Leisure World at Jarman Park would have probably been off-putting within what is a relatively small catchment area for this use.

However, the advent of digital cinema means that some operators are now re-visiting opportunities in smaller town centres and the economics of a 4/5 screen cinema have improved. Use of the bus station site could certainly make such leisure uses more achievable. This maybe a medium-longer term aspiration, particularly due to the difficulties of site assembly around the Market Square, and maybe be more viable following the regeneration of the Gade Zone. It will be important to still retain some open space in this location and incorporate an improved east-west route through the town. This will be of particular importance if the PSQ is relocated to the Water Gardens north car park.

Such an approach would complement the aspiration, being explored within the Transport and Movement Study, to transform Waterhouse Street into a far more pedestrian friendly part of the town - one more befitting its direct relationship with the Water Gardens and its westerly aspect which benefits from evening sun.

The land use strategy supports the evening and cultural uses found in the Old Town, and the Council will continue to develop and use the Old Town Hall for cultural uses.

### **Health**

The new local general hospital will be an important town centre facility. Whilst consideration could be given to providing a new general hospital on the Civic site, the Hospital Zone is the most likely deliverable area for the redevelopment of the hospital site to provide a new hospital on a smaller footprint.

Accessibility to this facility by the local community will be a key consideration. A development directly integrated with the town centre is preferable where local people can most easily gain access to the facility from the many bus routes along Marlowes. The land released, preferably further up the hill, has potential to deliver high quality and mixed tenure housing development.

### **Employment**

It is important to retain and improve the existing light industrial and office uses at Paradise as they provide local employment and help support other town centre services. In the longer term, there may be opportunities to promote mixed use development in this location given its proximity to the town centre, subject to other policies in the Local Development Framework.

Whilst the Core Strategy refers to new office uses within the town centre, particularly the area around the pedestrian gateway near the Market Square, there



-  Blocks
-  Open space
-  River Gade
-  Town Centre Boundary
-  Main routes
-  Pedestian routes
-  New Public Service Quarter
-  New civic/community/leisure/visitor use
-  New convenience retail - supermarket
-  New community hospital
-  New primary school
-  New housing
-  New/enhanced employment
-  New commercial leisure - cinema
-  New commercial leisure - restaurants
-  Consolidate/enhance existing evening u
-  Improved leisure - Old Town Hall theatre
-  Consolidate/enhance existing comparis
-  Improved open space
-  Improved public realm
-  Improved parking
-  New parking
-  New vehicular links
-  Relocated bus stops
-  Bus super stop

is a greater focus of new office space at Maylands Business Park. While at the current time, rents of office space would not support new build in the town centre, offices should be encouraged where possible, particularly in the upper floors of buildings and around the existing office cluster at the southern end of the town along Seldon Hill and Paradise. However, whilst there are clear benefits to be gained from securing employment uses in the town centre, particularly activity and spin-off benefits for other local business, in general the market is more interested in decentralised locations, such as Maylands Business Park, that are accessible from a wider range of locations and offer higher levels of car parking that can be accommodated in the centre.

Hamilton House, a nine storey office building on the corner of Marlowes and Hillfield Road, is currently vacant but could be improved to provide higher quality office accommodation in the heart of the town centre. However, if this is not viable, it could be redeveloped or reused for residential use.

All the proposed land uses within the strategy have regard to the proposed environmental improvements in the town centre, particularly improving the Water Gardens and public realm improvements in the Old Town, along Waterhouse Street and Bridge Street and along the Marlowes, as proposed in the Marlowes Shopping Zone Improvement Strategy.

### Open space/public realm improvements

The Transport and Movement Strategy considers improvements to key routes to help encourage walking and cycling to and within the centre. Beyond existing commitments to improving the core pedestrianised area of Marlowes, key opportunities include improvements to Bridge Street, Waterhouse Street and Market Square. The longer term open space improvements for Market Square will be closely linked to the new land use proposals for the area. .

A programme of environmental improvements has been prepared for Old Town to help support the area's role in complementing the town centre with specialist retailing and evening economy uses.

### 4.3 LAND USE PREFERRED OPTION

This Preferred Land Use Option shows how the major land uses could be successfully accommodated and delivered in the town centre.

The option consists of the following:

- A PSQ of 5,000m<sup>2</sup> (gross) on the Marlowes Library site in the Gade Zone.
- A civic/community/leisure/visitor use on the Water Gardens North car park site.
- A medium 'urban' supermarket of 6,000m<sup>2</sup> (gross)/4000m<sup>2</sup>(net) in southern half of the Gade Zone, (a smaller foodstore and more housing could also work).
- Removal of bus station – bus stops along Marlowes, bus stops and waiting bays in current super stop next to Debenhams.
- An improved Market Square with 5,000m<sup>2</sup> (gross) of commercial leisure, utilising the bus station site.
- A new local general hospital located on a 1ha of their land closest to town centre, with the remaining land for housing.
- A new 'urban' Primary School on 1.5ha on the northern section of Paradise Fields, with improved open space (partly used for new Primary School).
- The West Herts. College site redeveloped for a new College and housing.
- Around 630 residential units throughout the town centre (not including Hamilton House converted for residential)
- Mixed use development of residential and employment uses at Paradise
- Hamilton House identified as a potential mixed use conversion containing ground floor retail use with offices or residential above.
- New parking on West Herts. College site, on the Civic site associated with the new supermarket and on the Hospital site.
- A small amount of additional comparison retail in the Old Town and/or New Town retail area (vacant units, utilising upper floors, greater intensification, redevelopment of small sites etc).
- Two new vehicular connections to Leighton Buzzard Road - one inbetween West Herts. College site, and other extending Bridge Street.

The Preferred Land Use Option includes the following proposals:

Site no.	Site name	Character Zone	Area - ha*	Residential units proposed	Other uses proposed
1	Paradise open space (HCA site)	Hospital Zone	0.8	40 (@50 dw/ha)	-
2	Royal Mail depot site	Hospital Zone	1.4	80 (@80 dw/ha)	-
3	Paradise employment area	Hospital Zone	3.0	-	Light industrial uses
4	Hospital car park (owned by HCA)	Hospital Zone	0.7		
5	Paradise fields	Hospital Zone	5.0	-	2 form entry primary school
6	Hospital site	Hospital Zone	4.7	200 (@80 dw/ha)	Community general hospital
7	West Herts College	Gade Zone	2.9	130 (taken from planning application, 77dw/ha)	New college
8	Civic area	Gade Zone	2.5	32 (@80dw/ha)	6,000m <sup>2</sup> (gross) supermarket, PSQ of 5,000m <sup>2</sup> (gross)
9	Water Gardens North car park	Water Gardens	1.0	-	Civic/community/leisure/visitor use
10	Market Square area	Gade Zone/ Marlowes Shopping Zone	1.3	12 (@ 80 dw/ha, 2 levels)	5,000m <sup>2</sup> commercial leisure - restaurants ground floor, small cinema first floor on northern block
11	Mosaic supermarket	Marlowes Shopping Zone	0.25	32 (@80 dw/ha, 2 levels)	2000m <sup>2</sup> (gross) retail
12	Plough roundabout south	Plough Zone	0.2	24 (@120 dw/ha)	-
13	Telephone exchange site	Plough Zone	0.7	84 (@120 dw/ha)	-

\*site area is approximate only and has not been informed by a site survey



**Above:** Looking North along Marlowes towards the Civic Centre and the Old Town



## 5 LAND USES IN APSLEY

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Apsley is a 19th Century mill town that owes much of its development to local businessman John Dickinson who, in 1809, purchased an existing mill in Apsley where he developed what would become a large papermaking business empire. Paper production in the area continued until 2006 when the last papermaking mill at nearby Nash Mills closed. A small National Paper Museum called the Paper Trail occupies one of the remaining mill buildings.

Today, Apsley acts as an outer district of Hemel Hempstead. The traditional high street continues to host a range of small independent businesses along London Road. The riverside mill sites have largely now been redeveloped for retail warehousing, a large foodstore, major office buildings and some large scale housing developments either side of the Grand Union Canal. These developments enjoy good quality rail lines with London via the adjacent Apsley Station.



Above: Figure ground plan of Apsley

## 5.2 APSLEY AND DACORUM'S RETAIL HIERARCHY

Apsley, whilst within walking distance of Hemel Hempstead town centre, has its own place within the Dacorum retail hierarchy. Beneath the principal town of Hemel Hempstead, the secondary towns of Berkhamstead and Tring and Woodhall Farm which is classified as a 'Local Centre with a district shopping function', Apsley is one of the Borough's 18 local centres with a neighbourhood shopping function. Within this retail hierarchy, the role of such centres is to provide a range of mainly small shops, services and facilities of a local nature, serving a small catchment.

The area also has a now long established out of centre retailing function which is recognised in the emerging LDF. The Apsley Mills retail park contains a range of bulky good retailing and a large foodstore. The Core Strategy is clear that additional retail floorspace in this out of centre location is not part of the retail strategy for the Borough.

## 5.3 EXISTING AND EMERGING SITE/LAND ALLOCATIONS

Apsley has been the subject of a number of studies in recent years. The adopted Dacorum Local Plan sought to incorporate the recommendations of a study into Apsley. The result was the allocation of almost the entire local centre under four site specific proposals. However, in making these allocations, the Local Plan made it clear that, given the complexity of ownerships involved, they did not envisage comprehensive schemes coming forward. The policies operated, therefore, more as a positive framework for change. It is significant that these site specific land allocations are not actively being carried forward via the progress being made on relevant sections of the Core Strategy.

The site allocations DPD remains at an early stage of preparation but only contains two potential sites (note that the inclusion of sites at this very early station does not mean the Council support their allocation) in the immediate Apsley area. The White Lion pub (site APS 41) is identified as a potential housing site although this site falls within the designated shopping centre. In addition, the Frogmore Road Industrial Estate (site H/h17a) is identified as a potential location for housing and mixed use development. This site is designated for employment land uses.



Above: Current land uses in Apsley

## 5.4 LAND USE STRATEGY FOR APSLEY

The core of Apsley local centre is Victorian in character and operates as a traditional high street in this local centre. It may be that individual sites are identified and brought forward for development as they become available. This, however, given Apsley's historic urban structure, is likely to take place on a piecemeal basis.

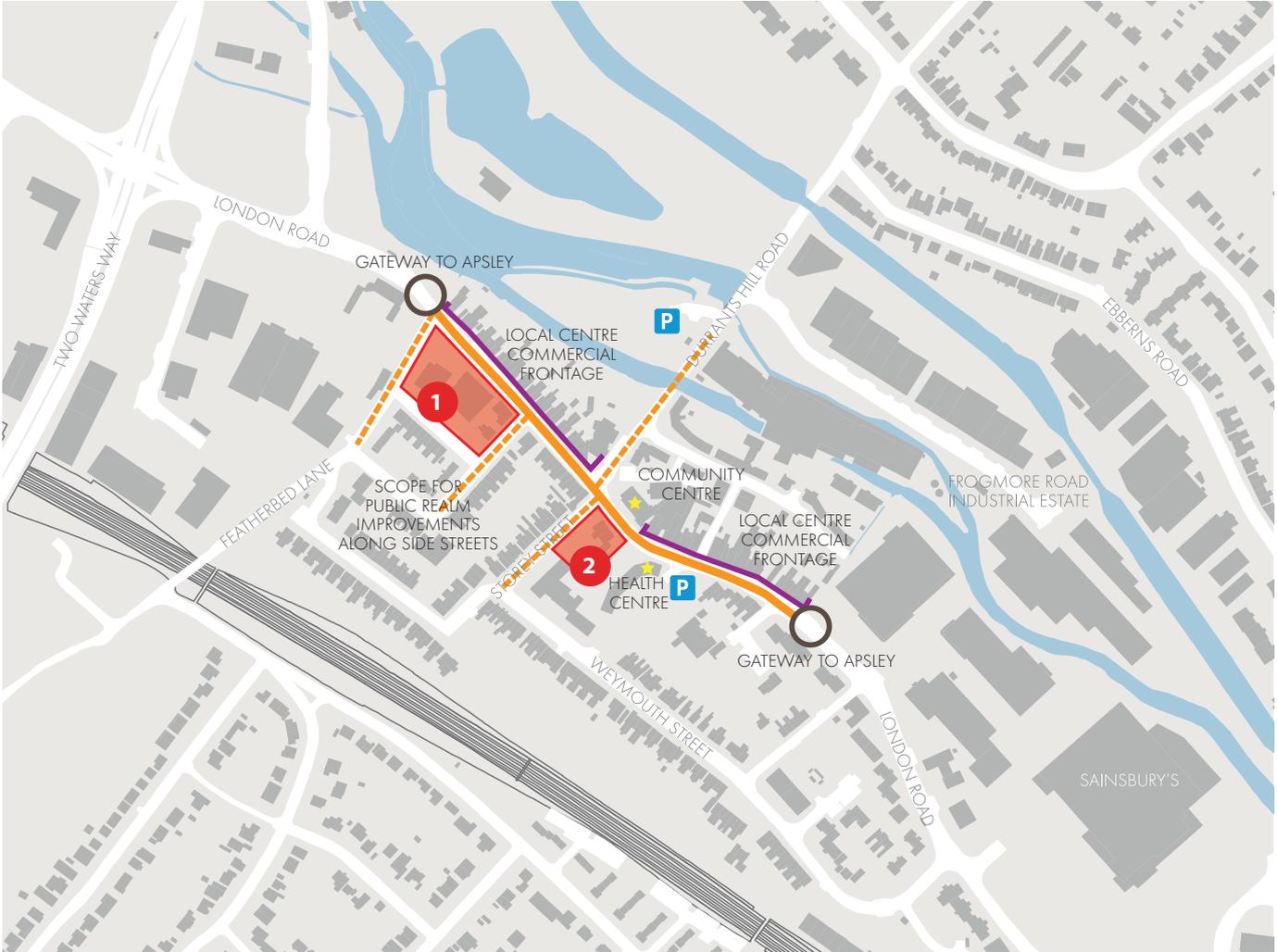
Regarding the two sites (APS 41 and H/h17a) most recently identified in the Issues and Options Site Allocations report of 2008, at the present time, there would appear to be little evidence supporting these allocations to be taken forward. There would also appear to be little to be gained for the centre as both would involve the loss of employment generating uses in a location that has already successfully restructured following the decline of the local paper making and associated industries.

The White Lion pub site is in existing commercial use and benefits from an important and prominent location on London Road. Housing development here would create a break in the commercial frontage which could harm the economic vitality of the centre as a whole. The Frogmore Industrial Estate is likely to play a strategic role for the town and the Borough as a whole in terms of employment land supply. Site along Fourdrinier Way have already been redeveloped for housing in recent years along with much of the former mill and warehouse site associated with paper production adjacent to the canal. Whilst there may be some regenerative benefits to further mixed use development of some of these employment sites (subject to other relevant policies), the majority of the sites that remain in industrial use have a high probability of flooding and are unlikely to be considered appropriate for residential uses.

There are however, a number of underdeveloped sites within the centre that have the scope to help deliver improvements to the centre. The land adjacent to the new medical centre on the corner of Storey Street and London Road appears to have significant development potential. The site enjoys a prominent core site and street frontage which would lend itself to a mixed use redevelopment incorporating commercial, community or retail uses on the ground floor of the London Road frontage.

This site is located within an existing cluster of community facilities in the centre. The Apsley Community Centre is opposite the site which provides a range of flexible spaces and hosts a wide spectrum of community activities and clubs. A new health centre is located adjacent to the site with associated health and wellbeing related uses located beyond. In view of the amount of housing growth Apsley has had to accommodate in recent years, there is a need to ensure the necessary community infrastructure is in place to serve this growth. This development opportunity, should it come forward, potentially provides scope for a mixed use redevelopment scheme which enhances the range of community uses in the centre.

In addition, the site on the southern side of the corner between London Road and Featherbed Lane, currently occupied by a car dealership and car repair centre, occupies an important part of the local centre but the current uses do not contribute positively to the centre. Should these sites become available for redevelopment, they have significant potential to contribute positively to the economic health of the centre through sensitive and appropriately scaled mixed use development. Retail ground floor uses would be appropriate with housing uses occupying upper floors and the land to the rear fronting Featherbed Lane and Manor Avenue.



Above: Current land uses in Apsley

## **5.5 POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS TO APSLEY CENTRE**

A range of environmental improvements to the network of paths and waterside environments were identified and consulted upon in 2011 as part of the Two Waters study undertaken by the Council. These improvements should remain an aspiration and, where possible, financial contributions should be negotiated from developers of local sites which would benefit from such improvements.

Within the centre itself, some improvements have already been delivered. Pavements have been block paved and heritage lamp columns used within the centre. However, the environmental quality dramatically falls on routes immediately off the main road. Improvements should be extended to these connecting streets to encourage local people to feel more part of the centre and to encourage them to support local Apsley businesses. The redevelopment of the London Road sites identified above would also play a significant role in delivering environmental improvements to the centre.



## 6 SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Dacorum Core Strategy outlines an ambitious vision for Hemel Hempstead. Through the establishment of a strategic land use strategy for the town centre, the Hemel Hempstead Major Land Use Study (MLUS) will play a central role in facilitating this vision. The Council are committed to the preparation of a masterplan for the town centre which will present a spatial expression of this vision. The MLUS will form a key part of the foundation on which the masterplan for the town centre is being prepared. The Transport and Movement Study is directly relevant to the Major Land Use Study and is being prepared in parallel. Alongside the MLUS, the Transport and Movement study will also underpin the Town Centre Masterplan.

Building on a review of the character areas identified previously in the Dacorum Local Plan, a number of activity zones have been identified across the town centre. These form the basis for the town centre masterplan and provide a framework for the MLUS.

### 6.2 SUMMARY

This report brings together a variety of options and potential interventions for a range of different land uses. Where the Council is the principal land owner, the Council themselves will be responsible for driving the proposals forward. Where other land owners have the controlling stake, implementation will need to be driven and coordinated by the landowners in question. The most significant project will be the delivery of the PSQ and new foodstore which are directly linked given the potential to provide the latter on the site of the existing Council offices and other public sector uses. A Preferred Land Use Option has been produced to show how the various options for all the land uses could fit together in a way which is deliverable.

In order to deliver the Preferred Land Use Option, third party land will be required as will the co-operation of other public sector bodies. This is an issue that was not fully resolved over a number of years when the Waterhouse Square scheme was being pursued. The MLUS has been prepared in a very different economic and public sector funding climate although focus will continue to be required to ensure the public sector organisations collaborate. However, the complications which may arise from negotiating joint delivery mechanisms and allocation of commercial receipts should not be underestimated and resources should be directed to progressing these issues and engaging directly with relevant land owners.

It is apparent from previous studies that the sites being examined are constrained. Level changes may present opportunities (e.g. undercroft car parking) but can also cause complication in design terms. If the Council is to be wholly or largely reliant on private sector funding arising from commercial development to deliver the PSQ it will need a clear understanding of viability when assessing the relative merits of options. That said, financial considerations may not be the only issue relevant to decision making.

It is likely that a 'clean' development opportunity will maximise receipts from commercial development and



the more the opportunity is compromised, the more impact it will have on achievable values. That said, the Council will need to give careful consideration to procurement routes and may well require contractual certainty around form and quality delivery rather than relying on planning powers when it comes to the major foodstore. This will certainly impact on procurement strategy and may well necessitate the direct linkage of the foodstore with the PSQ.

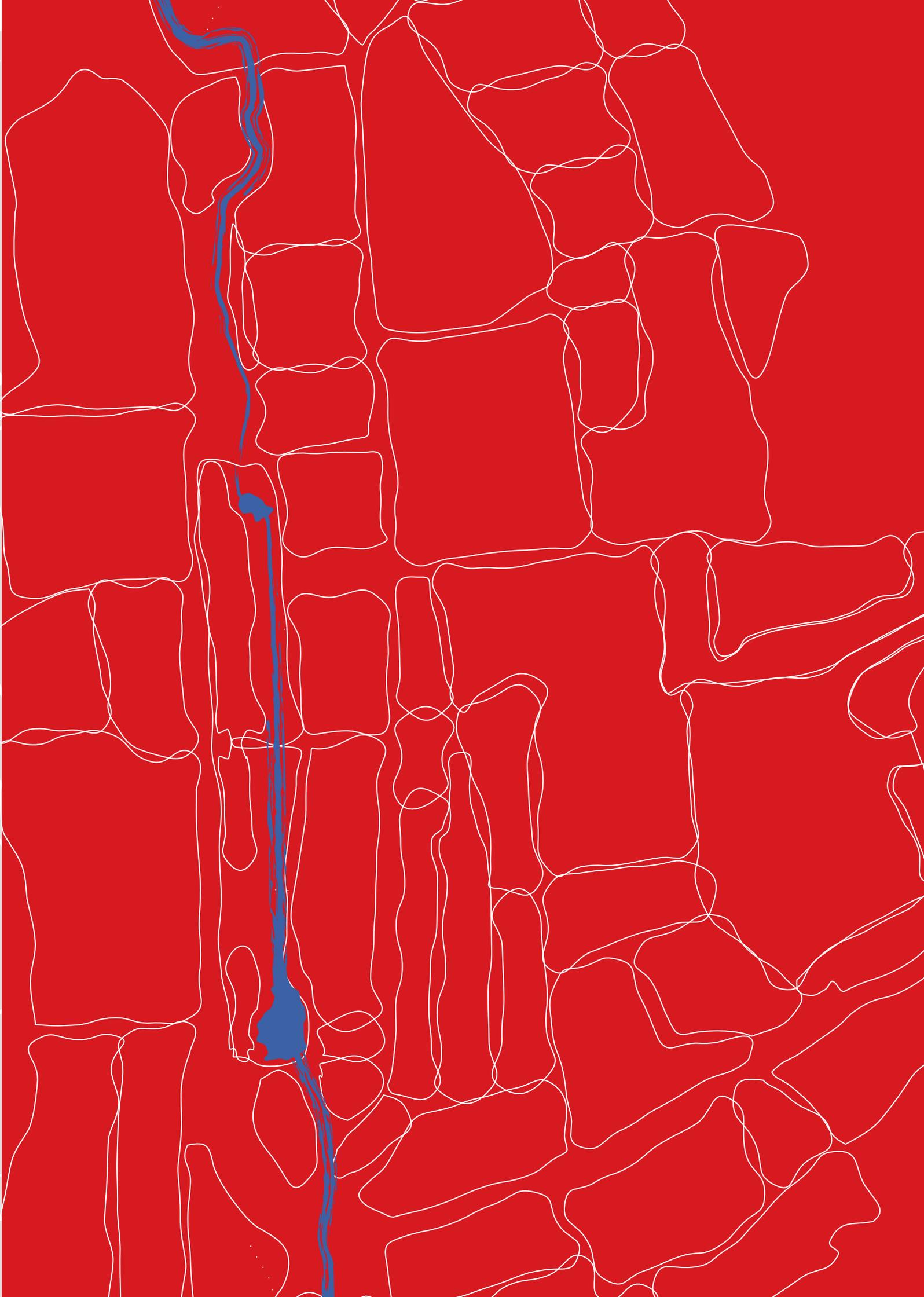
Regarding Market Square, there has been no financial modelling or feasibility studies undertaken to assess whether commercial leisure is likely to be a viable proposition for this site. The advice offered in this report is based on professional opinion and experience rather than a detailed market appraisal and assessment. Clearly decisions made around the PSQ and the bus station will have a sizeable impact on the economics of development in this location and it is considered that it would be worthwhile carrying out an examination of likely land assembly costs and space planning principles to assess whether this is an opportunity that might be considered by the market.

With regard to Apsley, its local centre provides a local shopping role to the immediate area. The retail part has a far wider catchment. New retail development should be directed to more sequentially preferable locations in the town centre. In view of the volume of housing development that has taken place in recent years, it is important to ensure the community infrastructure is in place to meet growing demand. There are two potential development sites within the local centre. In view of its proximity to the concentration of other community uses at the southern end of the centre, one of these sites would be particularly well suited to mixed use redevelopment incorporating community uses.

Building on the design policy position emerging through the preparation of the Core Strategy, given the nature of some of the uses being considered in the MLUS and the sensitivities associated with some

of the sites in question, it will be important for the Masterplan to emphasise the importance of design quality in new development.





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