

Hemel Hempstead

Herfordshire

'Mark One' New Town – Designated 4 February 1947

The third of the London 'ring towns', Hemel Hempstead was designated to help in decentralising the population of Greater London. Hemel Hempstead had been a town since the middle ages, and of all the 'Mark One' New Towns had the largest and most deeply rooted existing population. This presented a challenge in integrating old and new communities and, as at Stevenage and Crawley, there was much opposition at designation. But by 1957 there was evidence that the mixing had been very successful. With a population of just over 85,000 (just over its 1960 target population of 80,000), Hemel Hempstead is today the primary settlement in Dacorum Borough. Much of the town's infrastructure is over 50 years old and in need of renewal. The town centre and Maylands Business Park are designated as key regeneration areas.



Dacorum Borough Council

Key facts:

- **Location:** 42 kilometres north west of London, based around a thriving market town at the confluence of two rivers.
- **2011 Census population:** 85,786, in 35,675 households.¹
- **Local authority:** Dacorum Borough Council.
- **Local Plan status:** Dacorum Local Planning Framework Core Strategy 2006-2031 (adopted 2013), plus saved policies from Dacorum Local Plan 1991-2011.

New Town designation:

- **Designated:** 4 February 1947.
- **Designated area:** 2,392 hectares.
- **Intended population:** 60,000, revised in 1960 to 80,000 (population at designation: 21,120).
- **Development Corporation:** The original masterplan was influenced by Geoffrey Jellicoe's vision of a town in a park with generous open spaces in and around the town centre and the residential neighbourhoods. This was modified by the Development Corporation, but Jellicoe's vision for the town centre was largely retained, including his unique designs for modern water gardens. Development Corporation wound up 31 March 1962.

Housing, deprivation and health:

- The proportion of homes in Hemel Hempstead that are owner-occupied (58.2%) is 0.4% and 5.3% lower than the UK New Towns and the UK averages, respectively. 28% of housing is socially rented, higher than the UK New Towns and UK averages (21.4% and 18.1%, respectively). In 1966, 69.2% of housing was socially rented. The existing housing stock is generally of good quality and there are very low levels of vacancy. House prices are high relative to incomes.
- Hemel Hempstead has slightly lower levels of deprivation than the English New Towns and England averages. Approximately 0.2% more households are not deprived in

any dimension compared with the English New Towns and England averages.

- The 2011 Census reported that the 'general health' of Hemel Hempstead's residents is broadly consistent with the UK average and higher than the UK New Towns average.

Employment/economic profile:

- Unemployment levels in Dacorum Borough are lower than the national average, but slightly higher than the average for Hertfordshire. Amazon is the town's biggest employer.
- Hemel Hempstead is the principal retail destination within the Borough – Dacorum's Core Strategy notes Milton Keynes and Watford as the town's main competitors.
- Within Hertfordshire LEP.

Development Corporation legacy:

- There are a series of masterplanned neighbourhoods, with one main employment area near the M1 and open spaces informed by the landscape structure in a manner that is critical to planning and development today. The town centre is planned with defined activity zones.
- Hemel Hempstead is a viable town that provides a high-quality place to live and employment opportunities.
- The town's narrow roads and transport infrastructure (in combination with the topography) are not good for modern rapid transport or cycling.

Key issues for the future:

- Accommodating 8,800 new homes in the town, plus new transport and community infrastructure.
- Continued regeneration of the town centre.
- Providing jobs and investment through regeneration of Maylands Business Park.
- Regenerating and greening the neighbourhood centres.

¹ Totals for the following wards: Adayfield East, Adayfield West, Apsley and Corner Hall, Bennetts End, Boxmoor, Chaulden and Warners End, Gadebridge, Grovehill, Hemel Hempstead Town, Highfield, Leverstock Green, Nash Mills, Woodhall Farm

Did you know?

Hemel Hempstead is home to the Jellicoe Water Gardens – a park in the town centre built around the canalisation of the river flowing through it. It is now a registered historic park, selected as an unspoilt example of modernist landscape design, and the subject of a £3.6 million restoration programme commencing in 2015.