Capacity schedule

3

Understanding the scale of change

This chapter identifies the effect of the masterplan proposals on the overall provision of floorspace for each type of activity. It also sets out other key pieces of information such as details on housing units, car parking spaces and potential increases in job numbers.

The Luton and South Bedfordshire Retail Study (2009) suggests that, based on predicted growth scenarios, there will be significant need for net additional comparison floorspace (21.300 sq.m) by 2021. There will be limited need (800 sq.m) for net additional convenience floorspace between 2011 and 2016. The masterplan has tested the ability of the town to provide this level of floorspace. It should be noted that planned growth has been slower than anticipated and therefore the time span for this growth may extend.

Table 3.1 identifies the indicative size of the developments proposed as part of the indicative masterplan scheme and also the amount of existing development that would need to be removed to enable the town centre improvements as shown in this masterplan. The final section of this table identifies the overall change in the amount of each type of development.

The development types are categorised based on the Use Classes Order, and can be explained as follows:

- **Class A1**: shops
- **Class A2**: Financial and professional services
- **Class A3**: Restaurants and cafes
- **Class A4**: Drinking establishments
- **Class A5**: Hot food take-away
- **Class B1 or unclassified**: Office space or other vacant buildings with no use identified
- **Class C3**: residential houses or apartments
- **Class D1**: Non residential institutions, such as a library
- **Class D2**: Leisure space, such as a cinema

The table shows that there is 3,000 sq.m of development proposed as 'flexible space'. These developments are proposed where there is a clear need for improvement on the site, but the most appropriate type of activity is dependent on the economic market at the time of development. These sites could come forward as additional retail (A1-A2) or offices if demand is there (Class B1), or alternatively cafés, restaurants, drinking or take-ways (Class A3-A5), or community uses (Class D1), depending on demand and viability.

Existing development removed

To facilitate the necessary change in the town the masterplan indicates that a total of 22,900sq.m of existing floorspace would be removed over the lifetime of the plan. Based on the most recent town centre data (from Experian), 4,420sq.m, or approximately 20%, of this floorspace is currently vacant. The majority of these buildings would be replaced by new developments that are more suited to the needs of the town centre.

20,410 sq.m of retail is shown as removed, approximately 3,500 sq.m is convenience retail. The masterplan would seek to re-provide this quantum of convenience and re-provide the remaining 14,810 sq.m as comparison retail, plus any net additional development.

New development

The masterplan indicates that a total of 46,100sq.m of new floorspace could be developed in the town centre according to these proposals, with over 70% as new retail. These calculations are based on design work undertaken by the masterplan team and should be used for illustrative purposes as a guide to the broad scale of development that could come forward in the town centre.

Net additional development

The masterplan marks a significant diversification of the quality and range of activities available to attract people into Dunstable centre. The overall net increase of development in the town centre is 23,200sq.m. 47% of this increase would be additional retail floorspace, which is equivalent to 10,840 sq.m. This could be increased by 5,600 sq.m if the space identified as flexible came forward as retail, leading to a total of 16,440 sq.m. There is also an increase in the amount of community space in the town centre (6,330 sq.m) and a 10% increase in leisure space (2,200 sq.m).

Changing the housing offer

The masterplan indicates that there is potential for approximately 215 dwellings to be constructed within the town centre. The table identifies the potential floorspace of new housing, based on the following indicative assumptions:

- 60 sq.m per housing for older people unit
- 80 sq.m per apartment
- Housing units (location and indicative bedroom size dependant on demand and housing need)

Central Bedfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA, 2010) indicates that 35% of new dwellings should be affordable housing. This is currently supported by the emerging Core Strategy. It should be noted though that Area Based Viability Studies are currently being undertaken by the Council, which may alter this position.

The tenure split and dwelling type of the affordable housing units for each phase will be determined at the approval of reserved matters for that phase. Both the tenure spilt (including the possibility of affordable rented taking the place of some or all of the social rented provision in line with emerging national policy) and the dwelling type shall be determined in light of the available evidence on housing needs and the availability of grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Viability issues may arise during individual phases. In these situations an increase in intermediate products may result in the development becoming more viable. Any viability issues will be worked on in conjunction with the council to ensure the best possible tenure spilt and mix.

Changing the retail offer

The masterplan indicates where use classes A1-4 could come forward. This is to allow for a balanced mix of shops, restaurants, cafes, and other services to come forward. However, uses other than A1 (A2-A4 see above) would only be brought forward in a controlled manner through careful development control processes.

	Residential (C3) (units)			Shops, restaurants, cafés and services (Class A1 - A4) (sq.m)	Community facilities (Class D1) (sq.m) (approximate)	Leisure facilities (Class D2) (sq.m)	Flexible space (Class A1-A4, B1 or D1) (sq.m)	Other uses (Class B1 or Unclassified) (sq.m)	Total floorspace (excl. C3)
	Apartments / Maisonettes (units, approximate)	Houses (units, approximate)	Total (units, approximate)						
Retail, Health, Leisure and Education Core: Quadrant Shopping Centre and neighbouring land									
Removed	20	9	29	14,420	540	0	0	490	15,450
Added	30	0	30	31,250	6,000	2,200	3,000	0	43,100
Net additional	10	-9	1	16,830	5,460	2,200	3,000	-490	27,650
Heritage Quarter: Priory Church to St Mary's Gate									
Removed	0	0	0	5,740	130	0	0	0	5,870
Added	135	25	160	0	0	0	2,100	0	2,100
Net additional	135	25	160	-5,740	-130	0	2,100	0	-3,770
Town centre neighbourhood: High Street North to Edward Street									
Removed	0	0	0	250	0	0	0	1,330	1,580
Added	20	10	30	400	0	0	500	0	400
Net additional	20	10	30	150	0	0	500	-1,330	-680
TOTAL									
Removed	20	9	29	20,410	670	0	0	1,820	22,900
Added	185	35	220	31,250	6,000	2,200	5,600	0	46,100
Net additional	165	26	191	10,840	6,330	2,200	5,600	-1,820	23,200

Table 3.1: Capacity schedule

Potential for additional jobs

The proposals set out in the masterplan provide opportunities for employment. The numbers of jobs that could be created are based on the gross internal floorspace per workspace, as shown in Table 3.2. A workspace indicates the number of desks or posts that a building of a certain land use and size could reasonably expect to contain. They do not show the number of full-time equivalent employees, as this is largely dependent on the occupier of each individual building.

Car Parking

Town centre parking

There are nine off-street car parks (six public and three private) that serve the town centre providing approximately 1,760 spaces for commuters and visitors – 1,281 of the spaces are available for both long and short stay compared to 479 designated short stay spaces (ALDI and ASDA existing customer car parks).

A car parking study has recently been undertaken that reviews the existing supply of off-street car parking serving the town centre and sets out the framework for the car parking strategy in the town centre over the next 10-15 years against the background of the overall vision for the town centre in terms of the Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan and wider policy aspirations. The study is of particular importance for the Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan given that the local parking standards are in need of review, and it is important that the emerging car parking strategy for the Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan does not conflict with the future Council-wide car parking strategy / policy.

The study includes an assessment of recent car park occupancy surveys to calculate the ratio of existing car parking spaces to the town centre floor area, using the maximum observed utilisation to balance the existing parking demand with supply, taking into account vacant floor space in the town centre as this impacts on the existing demand for car parking.

The parking study does not include the ASDA customer car park in the analysis given that the existing parking provision of 384 spaces at the store does not reflect the ratio of parking spaces to floor area across the rest of the town centre and is in fact far greater. Therefore, to avoid skewing the results of this exercise ASDA's customer car parking requirements in the context of the masterplan should be considered separately from the rest of the town centre.

The key findings of the study in relation to the proposed town centre parking schedule are set out below:

- It is recommended that the ratio of 1 parking space per 52.9sq.m of town centre GFA is used as the basis for deriving the proposed car parking provision for the Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan;
- The majority of car parking should be located in the northeast quadrant in close proximity to the core town centre retail offer of the expanded Quadrant Shopping Centre, and where feasible, for off-street parking to be accessible from each of the four main radial routes into the town centre (A5 north and south, B489 and A505); and
- In respect of the ASDA customer car park it is considered that 384 spaces would represent a minimum requirement to support the enlarged ASDA store i.e. no less than what is currently provided. As a starting point (subject to further refinement and discussions with key stakeholders) an additional allowance of 68 spaces is proposed for store extension, which is based on the ratio 1 parking space per 52.9sq.m of town centre GFA.

Medical Centre parking

There are a combined total of 47 car parking spaces that serve the five existing GP practices that would be brought together in one consolidated facility, proposed to be located on the Ambulance Station and ex-Magistrate's Court site to the east of ASDA. This represented the baseline position in terms of car parking provision. Accordingly, the masterplan proposes a minimum of 47 car parking spaces to serve this new site.

Town centre parking requirements

Future town centre parking requirements would be an increase in provision of approximately 5% when compared to the existing parking stock of 1,764. The initial assessment set out in the car parking study indicates that this is a generally acceptable level of parking to accommodate the proposed town centre offer, as it takes into account observed car park utilisation in Dunstable and the vacant floor space to demonstrate that there is a lower existing demand for spaces compared to the supply of parking spaces. Further work, from a strategic viewpoint by Central Bedfordshire Council with its planned borough-wide car parking policy and strategy development study in 2010 and through site specific transport assessments as developments come forward, will inform future parking requirements in the town centre.

Residential parking

The proposed residential car parking provision has been considered against the parking design principles set out in 'Design Supplement 7: Movement, Streets and Places' of the 'Design in Central Bedfordshire. A Guide for Development' design guide, which recommend the following levels of parking:

- 1 bedroom - 1 space;
- 2 bedrooms - 2 spaces;
- 3 bedrooms - 2 spaces;
- 4 bedrooms - 3 spaces; and
- Plus visitor parking at 1 space per 4 dwellings.

In terms of status, the new Central Bedfordshire Council's Design Guide, was adopted by the Executive on 12 January 2010 as a Supplementary Planning Document for the consideration and determination of planning applications for development in the north area. It is understood that the Joint Committee will be considering the Design Guide for adoption in the south area (Dunstable) in summer 2010.

The above provision has generally been applied to flats / apartments (one and two bed), with a higher provision (two spaces) afforded to town centre houses. Car parking is provided within courtyards, garages and through on-street provision.

Travel plans

As part of the proposed transport strategy, it is recommended that Travel Plans for future new developments within the masterplan area are implemented to promote travel by sustainable modes, which would promote measures to reduce staff and visitor journeys to / from Dunstable by private car and should therefore reduce the demand for car parking in the town centre.

Development type	Employment density assumption*	Net increase in floorspace (sqm)	Potential job creation (approximate)
Shops, restaurants, cafés and services (Class A1 - A4) (sq.m)	1 workspace per 19 sq.m	13,340	700
Community facilities (Class D1) (sq.m)	1 workspace per 36 sq.m	7,480	170
Leisure facilities (Class D2) (sq.m)	1 workspace per 90 sq.m	2,200	20
Flexible space (Class A1-A4, B1 or D1) (sq.m)	1 workspace per 20 sq.m **	3,000	180
TOTAL POTENTIAL JOB CREATION			**1,070**

Table 3.2: Potential job creation

Source: AECOM assumptions based on: Arup (2001), 'Employment densities: a full guide'.

* The names of some classifications have been amended for ease of use in this document and therefore the employment densities are an approximate indication only.

** Employment densities for flexible development have been estimated as Employment B1 uses for the purposes of this exercise. It should be noted that if some of this space came forward as residential then the job number estimate would reduce commensurately.