llewelyn davies
architecture
planning
design

Dacorum BC, Three Rivers DC and Watford BC
Urban Capacity Studies

Final Report: Non-Technical Summary

December 2004

Llewelyn Davies
in association with
ATIS REAL Weatheralls

Dacorum BC, Three Rivers DC and Watford BC

Urban Capacity Studies

DRAFT Final report: Non-Technical Summary

December 2004

Llewelyn Davies
in association with ATIS Real Weatheralls

Our Ref.: 32500

llewelyn davies
architecture
planning
design

Contents

1 Introduction 1

2 The Study Area 2

3 Overview of Study Approach 4

4 Summary of Findings 6

4.1 Physically-identifiable sources 6
4.2 'Small sites' 6
4.3 Non-physically identifiable source types 6
4.4 The total potential 6

1 Introduction

In line with Government guidance for housing as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG 3), Llewelyn Davies, in association with ATIS REAL Weatheralls, were commissioned to produce a study to estimate the potential for providing new homes in the built up areas of three authorities in Hertfordshire:

- Dacorum Borough Council;
- Three Rivers District Council; and
- Watford Borough Council.

This is the non-technical summary of the study. The study is presented in more detail in four further volumes. These are:

- **Volume 1:** Final Written Report;
- **Volume 2:** Design Exercises;
- **Volume 3:** Site Schedules; and
- **Volume 4:** Mapping.

The study was commissioned to provide supporting technical work to inform the preparation of Development Plan Documents as required under the new planning regulations. It was jointly commissioned by the three Councils to ensure a consistent approach across the authorities.

The study looks forward over the timeframe to 2021 in line with the emerging regional guidance for the East of England. Indeed, the study was undertaken against a background of concerns about the impact of new housing development on greenfield sites, and a rapidly evolving national and regional planning policy agenda. Its focus is on quantifying the land and buildings within existing settlement boundaries to accommodate additional housing.

A key thrust of current planning policy is that in meeting housing requirements, priority must be given to the re-use of previously developed land. The Government has set a national target: by 2008, 60% of all new housing should be provided on previously developed-land and through conversions of existing buildings.

The requirement for an up-to-date urban capacity study was set out in the revised PPG3 (Housing) published in March 2000, which states that *"... in order to establish how much additional housing can be accommodated within urban areas and therefore how much greenfield land may be needed for development, all local planning authorities should undertake urban housing capacity studies"* (paragraph 24).

It should be noted that this study is not a statement of Council policy, rather it is a technical document for consideration, assisting in the production of new development plan documents as required under the new planning procedures: the study merely identifies land and buildings where the potential may exist for new housing development to come forward in the timeframe to 2021.

Any urban capacity assessment though, is, by definition, a snapshot in time. Such studies can be used as a proactive planning tool by the Councils to bring forward sites for development through their LDF. However, some of the sites identified will not come forward in time for whatever reason. Equally, other un-identified sites will. In our experience, these will generally balance each other out. The findings of the study should therefore be considered as part of any policy review and reviewed to test the assumptions underlying the estimates and to monitor the progress of the identified sites over time.

2 The Study Area

Three studies were carried out simultaneously in Dacorum, Three Rivers and Watford, ensuring a consistent approach between the three. The study sought to identify sites and buildings with the potential for new housing development in the main towns and urban areas within the study area (Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1). It also sought to assess the potential from a range of other 'non-physically' identifiable sources such as the potential from conversions and LOTS (living over the shop).

The three districts are very different in character: Dacorum is dominated by the new town of Hemel Hempstead but also includes a number of smaller, and older, settlements, such as Berkhampsted. Watford is very urban in nature and Three Rivers very suburban. In total, the capacity study has assessed the potential in eighteen settlements of varying sizes across the study area. The importance of identifying potential within these settlements is underlined by the extent of the Metropolitan Green Belt around London, which covers much of the study area. Any Greenfield sites needed to meet the housing requirement would be likely to require a greenbelt boundary change.

Dacorum Borough Council Area

The main settlement in the Borough is Hemel Hempstead; a new town built around the neighbourhood concept. Large areas of open land run through the town and these form an important part of its new town character. The other major settlements are Berkhamsted and Tring. Berkhamsted is an historic town with a large conservation area. Tring is a smaller, more rural market town.

Three Rivers District Council Area

Three Rivers is located on the outer fringes of London. Rickmansworth, Chorleywood, Croxley Green and South Oxhey are equally sized, with populations of around 10,000 people. Smaller settlements include Abbots Langley. Many of the built up areas are suburban in nature and between these the district has large areas of attractive open countryside, much of it Green belt. The Colne Valley Park also forms an important recreational resource.

Watford Borough Council Area

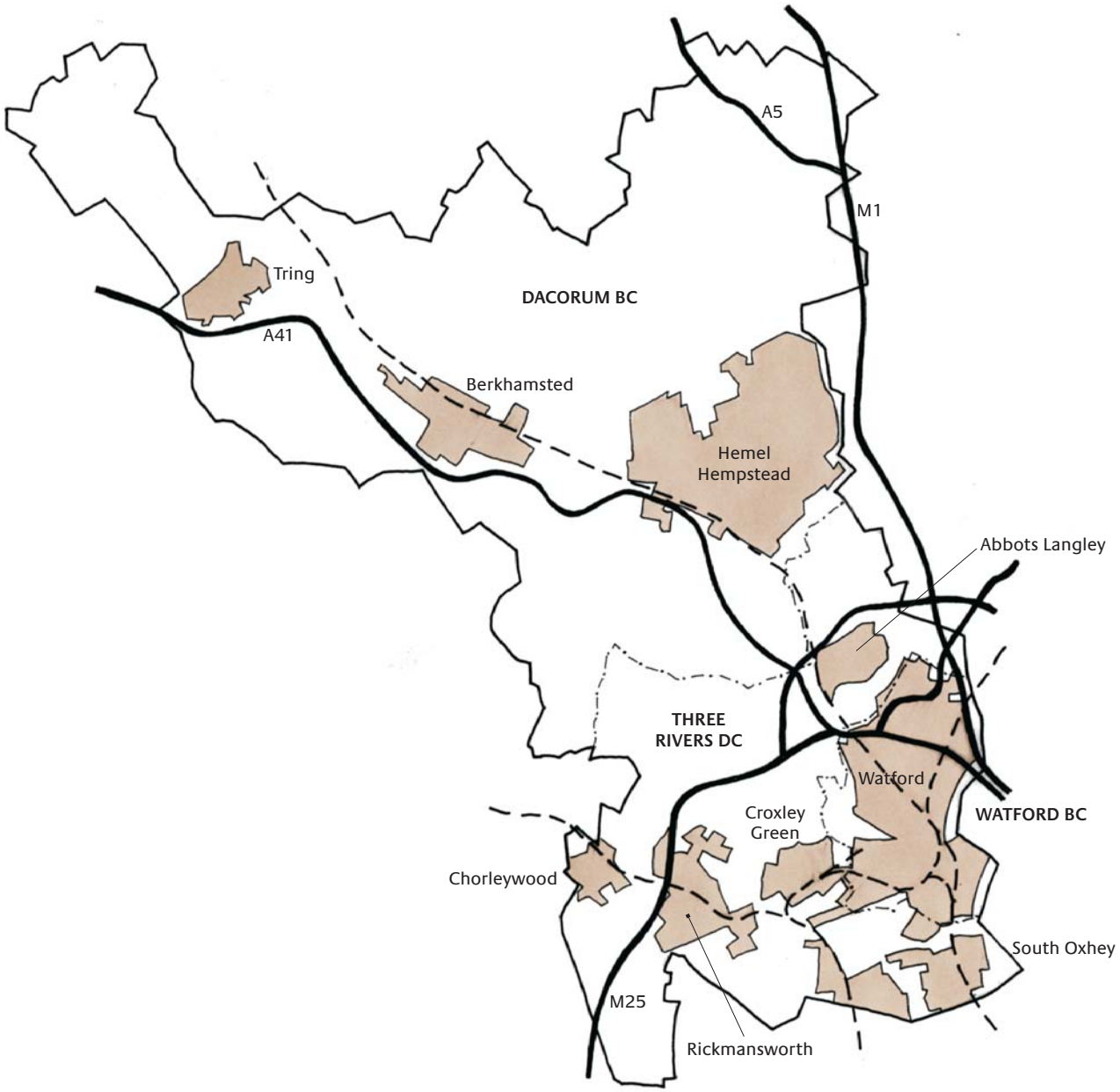
Watford is a large town with a culturally and economically diverse population of approximately 80,000. Historically a market town and a centre for the printing industry, it has evolved into a regionally significant transport hub, due to its communication links and sub-regional shopping, leisure and employment centre. Although physically separated from London by the Green belt, it shares many social, environmental and economic characteristics with outer London boroughs.

Table 2.1: Survey Areas

Authority Area	Settlement / Survey Area	Approx. Population
Dacorum	Hemel Hempstead	81,000
	Berkhampsted	16,000
	Tring	13,000
	Bovingdon	4,000
	Markyate	3,000
	Kings Langley	4,000
	Wilstone	500
	Aldbury	800
	Long Marston	500
Three Rivers	Rickmansworth	10,000
	Chorleywood	11,000
	Croxley Green	11,000
	Abbots Langley	9,000
	Carpendars Park	5,000
	South Oxhey	11,000
	Oxhey	3,500
	Maple Cross	2,000
Watford	Watford	80,000

Project title: **Dacorum**	Drawing title: **Figure 2.1: The Study Area**	Date: **13-12-04**	Scale: **N.T.S.**	
		Project number: **32501**	Drawing number: **001**	Revision: **001**

Llewelyn-Davies
Brook House
Torrington Place
London WC1E 7HN
T 020 7637 0181
F 020 7637 8740
E info@ldavies.com
www.ldavies.com



Drawing title:
The Study Area

N

3 Overview of Study Approach

The Urban Capacity Study was undertaken in line with good practice guidance[1] published in 2000, aimed at encouraging better practice in the preparation of housing capacity studies. This document, *'Tapping the Potential'*, identifies four stages to capacity assessment:

1 Identifying sources of capacity;
2 Surveying the capacity;
3 Assessing the yield; and
4 Discounting the potential.

While *Tapping the Potential* does not prescribe a national methodology for capacity studies there is a clear expectation in PPG3 that authorities should have regard to the principles set out in the guide when undertaking capacity studies.

Tapping the Potential confirms that the starting point for any capacity study should be a survey of the area to explore the potential within each source. Surveying the study area can take a number of forms:

- **Comprehensive Surveys** of the whole study area to map and record all sites, which can then be put on a data-base and tracked for future reference;

- **Priority Area Studies** focus on areas which are most likely to yield housing capacity and/or where increased housing would meet policy objectives, such as in town centres or close to public transport; and

- **Typical Urban Area (TUA)** studies involve dividing the study area into "homogenous character" case study areas, determined upon the basis of land use, character, housing density and age. The capacity of an area is then calculated by surveying a number of sample areas and then applying the findings of these sample surveys to the remaining areas of the same character type.

The studies for Dacorum, Three Rivers and Watford followed a 'hybrid' approach, combining Priority Area Studies and Comprehensive Surveys. Central to the philosophy of our approach has been to seek to identify as many of the physically identifiable opportunities for new housing as possible as this avoids many of the grossing-up assumptions inherent in the TUA approach.

The approach was to identify all land and buildings with housing potential and then to discount on the basis of detailed analysis. A number of sources of capacity are outlined in *Tapping the Potential*. If a robust study is to be produced then all of these sources should be examined, although in practice there is considerable overlap between these sources. In summary these are:

- review of existing housing allocations;
- review of land and buildings allocated for other uses;
- vacant land not previously developed;
- previously developed vacant and derelict land and buildings (non housing);
- the intensification of existing areas;
- redevelopment of existing areas of housing;
- redevelopment of car parks;
- subdivision of existing housing;
- potential of living over retail units;
- empty homes; and
- conversion of commercial buildings to residential use.

The first seven of these can be identified through site surveys and are referred to as the physically identifiable sources. The remaining four sources are more difficult to estimate as they are not easily identifiable. As such, these are referred to as the other or non-physically identifiable source types.

[1] DETR, December 2000, Tapping the Potential – Assessing Urban housing Capacity: Towards Better Practice

Tapping the Potential requires that each of these sources is surveyed to identify the potential (unconstrained) yield and then for this to be discounted to identify the available potential. A key principle is that studies should not discount potential in an arbitrary way during the survey. The approach should be to identify all land and buildings with housing potential and then to discount on the basis of detailed analysis. The approach can be summarised as following three stages:

- **Stage 1: Identifying the Potential** – Site surveys based on urban character areas recording initial appraisals of sites.

- **Stage 2: Exploring the Potential** – Stocktaking of all sites identified based on the acceptability, in principle, of development for housing in line with PPG3 objectives. On the basis of this process sites are either 'Accepted' or 'Rejected' for the purposes of the study with design work applied to those sites which are 'Accepted'.

- **Stage 3: Delivering the Potential** – Analysis and phasing of sites including an assessment of their viability and deliverability.

An important element in the Study is case study design analysis which assists in calibrating the implications of the different policy scenarios in terms of density and car parking policies etc. Nineteen sites were selected for case study design analysis. The densities achieved for these sites under each scenario have been used as the basis for assessing the potential of the other identified sites. The work of ATIS REAL Weatheralls has sought to assess the costs and values associated with developing these sites. This viability exercise forms a basis for categorising the sites into periods of deliverability.

4 Summary of Findings

Our findings are presented by authority in Volume 1 of the main report (Sections 7 – 9) and summarised below.

4.1 Physically-identifiable sources

The study sought to assess the potential from both the physically identifiable and non-physically identifiable source types. In total, the survey work identified 1,916 sites for consideration. 683 of these were considered suitable for design analysis and viability assessment, informing the discounting and phasing process. The study assumes that there is the potential to deliver **15,196** new homes across the three boroughs in the period 2004 - 2021. This is broken down as:

Dacorum BC:	5,154 dwellings
Three Rivers DC:	2,328 dwellings
Watford BC:	7,714 dwellings

4.2 'Small sites'

Due to the nature of the areas surveyed and the size of the sites, many of these were assumed to have a potential dwelling capacity below five units. It is not possible to identify all of the small sites across the three areas and we have therefore based our estimates of potential from these sites on completion rates achieved since 2001 (i.e. post publication of PPG3). The potential capacity from the small sites is estimated to be **1,819** units over the period 2004 - 2021. This is broken down as:

Dacorum BC:	544 dwellings
Three Rivers DC:	646 dwellings
Watford BC:	629 dwellings

4.3 Non-physically identifiable source types

The study also assessed the potential from non-physically identifiable sources, such as the conversion and reuse of empty buildings. This comprises a much smaller amount of potential, reflecting the inherent difficulties associated with these source types and the assumptions underlying the calculations. The potential capacity from these source types is estimated to be **252** units over the period to 2021. This is broken down as:

Dacorum BC:	129 dwellings
Three Rivers DC:	15 dwellings
Watford BC:	108 dwellings

4.4 The total potential

The vast majority of potential derives from the physically identifiable sites. Dacorum and Watford also display higher amounts of potential than Three Rivers, reflecting the mix of sites across the boroughs and, in particular, the suburban characteristics of the Three Rivers district.

Including the number of completions achieved in the three authorities over the period 2001 – 2004[2], it is estimated that the potential exists to accommodate **19,773** dwellings across the three authorities in the time period to 2021. This is broken down as:

Dacorum BC:	7,132 dwellings	(including 1,305 completions 2001 – 2004)
Three Rivers DC:	3,725 dwellings	(including 736 completions 2001 – 2004)
Watford BC:	8,916 dwellings	(including 465 completions 2001 – 2004)

[2] Based on monitoring of completions by Dacorum BC and Herts CC (for Three Rivers DC and Watford BC)

Llewelyn Davies
Brook House
Torrington Place
London
WC1E 7HN
United Kingdom

T +44 207 637 0181
F +44 207 637 8740
E info@ldavies.com
www.ldavies.com

Llewelyn Davies
Churchill House
12 Mosley Street
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
NE1 1DE
United Kingdom

T +44 191 230 8060
F +44 191 230 8061
E newcastle@ldavies.com

Llewelyn Davies
China Office
3i Technical Club
15 Guanghuali
Jianguomenwai
Beijing 100020
P.R. China

T +86 10 65936611
F +86 10 659366110
E weimeng5699@vip.sina.com

Llewelyn-Davies Sahni
1990 Post Oak Boulevard
Suite 1200
Houston
Texas 77056
USA

T +1 713 850 1500
F +1 713 850 1023
E rsahni@theldnet.com

Representative office: Greece
Pavlos Ninios Renaissance
22 Miniati Str
Arditos Mets
116/36 Athens
Greece

T +3021 0921 2850
F +3021 0921 2855
E reteco@compulink.gr
www.pavlosninios.gr

Representative office: Spain
F. Longoria Architects
Nervión 3
Madrid 28002
Spain

T +34 9 1564 7924
F +34 9 1564 7837
E longoria0@infonegocio.com