



CABINET

Monday, 1st December, 2014

7.00 pm

Town Hall Watford

Publication date: 21 November 2014

CONTACT

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Caroline Harris Democratic Services Manager on 01923 278372 or by email – legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk .

Welcome to this meeting. We hope you find these notes useful.

ACCESS

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TOILETS (including disabled)

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- Do not stop to collect personal belongings
- Go to the assembly point at the Pond and wait for further instructions
- Do not re-enter the building until authorised to do so.

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If you do not wish to have your image / voice captured you should let the Chair or Democratic Services Officer know before the start of the meeting.

An audio recording may be taken at this meeting for administrative purposes only.

CABINET MEMBERSHIP

Mayor	D Thornhill	(Chair)
Councillor	D Scudder	(Deputy Mayor)
Councillors	K Crout, S Johnson, I Sharpe and M Watkin	

AGENDA

PART A - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2014 to be submitted and signed.

Copies of the minutes of this meeting are usually available seven working days following the meeting.

(All minutes are available on the Council's [website](#).)

4. CONDUCT OF MEETING

The Cabinet may wish to consider whether there are any items on which there is general agreement which could be considered now, to enable discussion to focus on those items where the Cabinet sees a need for further debate.

5. TO CONSIDER THE FUTURE INVOLVEMENT OF WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL IN THE HOUSING AND REGENERATION INITIATIVE (HARI) (Pages 1 - 20)

Report from the Head of Community and Customer Services

6. PRESENTATION OF WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL'S HOUSING STRATEGY (2015-2020) FOR APPROVAL (Pages 21 - 148)

Report from the Housing Section Head

7. LOCAL PLAN PART 2 (Pages 149 - 340)

Report from the Head of Regeneration and Development

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY REFRESH (2015-2020) DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION, LAUNCHING JANUARY 2015 (Pages 341 - 384)

Report from the Economic Development Manager

9. WI-FI CONNECTIVITY PROJECT (Pages 385 - 394)

Report from the Head of Regeneration and Development

10. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (Pages 395 - 402)

Report from Head of Regeneration and Development

11. MULTI STOREY CAR PARKS (Pages 403 - 406)

Report from the Head of Regeneration and Development

*PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: Monday 1 December 2014
Report of: Head of Community & Customer Services
Title: To consider the future involvement of Watford Borough Council in the Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI)

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 HARI has proved to be a successful partnership over the many years it has existed. We are now in a different economic and housing environment and to that end we need to consider if HARI is still fit for purpose and should continue. The HARI Board has recently considered various options to review the way the HARI Partnership operates, so it is appropriate to consider all options, including termination of the partnership agreement.
- 1.2 The options considered by the HARI Board were:
1. Continue with HARI, update the constitution, re-focus and re-launch the Partnership. .
 2. TRDC and WBC to give written notice of termination , which in-line with the HARI Agreement (copy at Appendix A) dated 09.11.05, means the HARI Agreement will cease on 31.03.16
 3. All parties to the HARI Agreement (list at Appendix B), to be solicited to seek their agreement to termination of HARI, with an cessation date of 31.04.15.
 4. Another option the Board wishes to propose for consideration.
- 1.3 The HARI Board on 22.09.14 recommended that HARI should cease either by mutual agreement (No. 3 above) or, failing that, that notice of termination from Watford Borough Council (and Three Rivers District Council) (No. 2 above)

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To agree the termination of the Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI) Agreement either by mutual consent or by service of a termination notice
- 2.2 To delegate any and all future decisions on HARI, including any financial arrangements, to the Head of Community & Customer Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Alan Gough, Head of Community & Customer Services.

telephone extension: 8600

email: alan.gough@watford.gov.uk

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 The HARI partnership comprises Watford Borough Council, Three Rivers District Council and the registered providers operating in our two boroughs. The current partnership agreement dates back to 2005 and sets out the role of HARI as maximising delivery of affordable housing, assisting in attracting funding towards strategic housing objectives and assisting in the delivery of housing management related projects. The partnership was established at a time when WBC had access to finances and TRDC had access to land and the case for putting resource into joint working was therefore clear. HARI has proved to be a successful partnership over the many years it has existed. However, we are now in a different economic and housing environment and to that end we need to consider if HARI is still fit for purpose and should continue. There is a legally signed HARI Agreement dated 09.11.05 (Appendix A) which contains a section on Termination (section 6) and must be adhered to.

3.2 HARI underwent a Review in 2013/14 and proposals on the way forward for HARI came forwards from that Review to the HARI Board. Due to various reasons these proposals were never formally agreed and as such the existing HARI Agreement, ways of working etc. all remain as they were prior to the Review.

The momentum for change which was built up throughout much of last year has slowed down. In part, this was due to the departure of the HARI coordinator at the end of 2013. Whilst some temporary cover has been provided with respect to the coordinator and HARI business has continued in recent months, including the holding of the Board meetings and the two sub-group meetings, there has been limited proactive HARI activity taking place. However both Councils have continued to liaise with Registered Providers both on an individual basis and through other forums, and arguably there has been no noticeable or adverse impact on new affordable housing developments or other areas of common interest. This therefore raises the fundamental question of whether or not the HARI Partnership is actually of vital importance to all parties concerned and whether the staffing resources invested by the Councils and registered providers in keeping the partnership functioning could be better deployed on more targeted activities outside of the formal partnership structure.

3.3 Given the above, the opportunity exists to fundamentally consider the way forward for HARI. Sets out below are the various options for consideration and the issues associated with each option.

3.4 Option 1 – HARI to continue, being refreshed and re-launched in line with the Review

The HARI Board commissioned an independent and thorough review of the partnership in early 2013. This was conducted by the Chartered Institute of Housing's

Director of Consultancy and included a series of interviews with a range of partner representatives and a workshop at the 2013 AGM.

Following further consideration and discussion of this study, there were a number of key outcomes –

- a revised 'vision' for the partnership
- the development of four core values to better focus the work of all members
- agreement that the HARI coordinator role be outsourced for up to two years
- changes to the Board composition to provide more balance between LA and RP members
- a revised and more transparent approach to using HARI's financial reserves
- recognition that a new funding mechanism will be required in the medium term in view of changes to the HCA's grant funding of new developments
- a new HARI 'Agreement' including Terms of Reference.

This option would entail maintaining the formal HARI Partnership and pressing ahead with the above outcomes.

3.5 Option 2 – Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) and Watford Borough Council (WBC) given written notice of termination , which in-line with the HARI Agreement, meaning the HARI Agreement would cease on 31.03.16 (the notice is a minimum of 12 months expiring on 31 March in any year)

Agreement of this Option would mean a longer time period for the dissolution of HARI than Option 3, however during this period the existing meeting and other HARI arrangements – such as the Board, Sub Groups, AGM etc – would not be required to occur.

In legal terms this is the simplest way for HARI to cease with least risk implications.

3.6 Option 3 - All parties to the HARI Agreement, be solicited to seek their agreement to termination of HARI, with a cessation date of 31.04.15

Agreement of this Option would mean a shorter time period for the dissolution of HARI than Option 2, however during this period the existing meeting and other HARI arrangements – such as the Board, Sub Groups, AGM etc. – would not be required to occur.

In legal terms this is a more complex and time consuming process as agreement with all signatories would need to be achieved for the cessation of HARI to occur.

3.7 As the HARI Board supported Option 2 or 3 then TRDC are taking an appropriate report through their committees to agree this position. This report is to seek the formal agreement of WBC to progress Option 2 or 3.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that:

Under option 1 - a one-off contribution from the Council may be required to assist in the re-launch.

Under options 2 and 3 - the Council are unlikely to incur any costs arising from the termination of the agreement. If all parties agree to terminate the HARI partnership, then each party may be entitled to a share of the balance held.

4.1.2 The Fraud Shared Service currently has a Tenancy Fraud Officer funded by the HARI partnership. This is a fixed term post which is funded until March 2016. It is understood that this funding will continue even if Option 3 is chosen.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the HARI agreement can only be terminated by either of the Councils or both giving at least 12 months notice to terminate such notice expiring on 31 March in any year or by the mutual consent of all parties to the Agreement. There are also provisions in the Agreement regarding dividing assets and dealing with any staff employed which would have to be managed once termination was agreed.

4.3 Equalities

4.3.1 There will be no impacts due to HARI ceasing as there will be no policy changes as a result ie. WBC will continue to engage with Registered Providers on all aspects of housing provision and housing development.

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
<i>More difficult to engage with registered providers locally</i>	2	2	4
<i>Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service's Risk Register.</i>			

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 No changes to staffing are proposed.

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 There are no impacts on accommodation.

4.7 Community Safety

4.7.1 There will be no impacts due to HARI ceasing as there will be no policy changes as a

result ie. WBC will continue to engage with Registered Providers on all aspects of housing provision and housing development.

4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 There will be no impacts due to HARI ceasing as there will be no policy changes as a result ie. WBC will continue to engage with Registered Providers on all aspects of housing provision and housing development.

Appendices

- HARI Agreement dated 09.11.05

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report

- None

File Reference

- None

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Date 9th November 2005

HARI AGREEMENT

Carol Chen
Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Town Hall
Watford
Herts WD17 3EX

Ref: W10029-268

This Agreement is dated the 9th day of November 2005 between the Parties referred to in Appendix 1

Recitals.

The purpose of this Agreement is to establish a partnership between the Councils and the RSL's to be known as the Housing and Regeneration Initiative (HARI).

The purpose of HARI is to:

- Maximise the delivery of affordable housing in the geographical region covered by the Councils.
- To assist the Councils to attract the maximum funding available and to meet the strategic housing objectives of all the parties.
- To assist in the delivery of housing management related projects

It is hereby agreed as follows;

1. The parties will establish a Committee to be known as the HARI Board to oversee the day to day operation of HARI.
 - 1.2 **The terms of reference for the HARI Board are as follows:**
 - 1.2.1 To ensure that all parties adhere to the terms of this agreement
 - 1.2.2 To monitor control and review the operation and structure of HARI including approving the business plan and the work plan
 - 1.2.3 To establish appoint and review all staff to be employed to work for HARI
 - 1.2.4 To consider issues raised by any party and make any recommendations as required to either the Councils or the RSL's for action
 - 1.2.5 To consider and approve all policies relating to the operation of HARI
 - 1.2.6 To set HARI's budget on an annual basis and to agree how HARI will be funded and to receive HARI accounts
 - 1.2.7 To set up any sub committees or groups to undertake projects or tasks as the Board deem necessary
 - 1.2.8 To select RSL's to become Preferred Development Partners

- 1.2.9 To consider any applications to join HARI and agree new parties subject to ratification by the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- 1.2.10 To deselect RSL's as Preferred Development Partners
- 1.2.11 To suspend or terminate the membership of any party from HARI
- 1.2.12 To consider and determine any claim or dispute that may arise between any of the parties under this Agreement relating to the working of HARI or the implementation of this agreement.

1.3 The membership of the HARI Board shall consist of the following:

- 1.3.1 One Executive Member of each of the Councils
- 1.3.2 The Chief Housing Officer or their nominee of each of the Councils
- 1.3.3 An equal number of RSL representatives to the number of Council Chief Housing Officer Representatives. Selected annually by ballot of all RSL parties at the AGM, no RSL may have more than 1 representative on the Board

1.4 Conduct of Board meetings

- 1.4.1 The Chair of the Board will be one of the Executive Members of any Council. The Chair will alternate for every meeting. The Chair will remain Chair for all consultation purposes from the close of one meeting until the commencement of the next meeting. For the first meeting after the commencement of this agreement the Chair will be the Executive Member of WBC
- 1.4.2 The Board will meet at least once every three months, any Board member can request the summoning of any additional meetings in consultation with the Chair
- 1.4.3 The Board will be quorate when at least four members are present
- 1.4.4 Voting will be by a show of hands and a simple majority will prevail. In the event of a tied vote the Chair will have a casting vote.
- 1.4.5 Any member who has either a personal or a personal and prejudicial interest as defined by the Model Code of Conduct for Councillors in respect of any item of business before the Board must make the necessary declaration before the commencement of any consideration of that item. The member must leave the room and take no part in the discussion or voting on the item if

- the interest is both personal and prejudicial or if an RSL member it relates directly to the RSL they are either employed by or are a member of.
- 1.4.6 All agendas will be published at least 5 clear days in advance of every meeting and circulated to all parties. Minutes will be taken and circulated to all parties no later than 7 working days after the meeting.
 - 1.4.7 All meetings will be in public unless an item to be discussed is either exempt or confidential information
 - 1.4.8 Any party will be entitled to attend any Board meeting and at the discretion of the meeting speak.
 - 1.4.9 All Board members will have the full authority of the party they represent to make any necessary decisions that will bind that party.

2 Funding

- 2.1 Each party will contribute to the financing of HARI annually. The HARI Board will set the budget and will determine the payment to be made from each party annually (including any anticipated levy from development) and not later than the 28th February in the preceding financial year. The party hosting the accounts will within 21 days of receipt of notification of the budget and contributions to be levied send a written demand for those contributions addressed to the parties. All payments must be received by party hosting the HARI accounts by no later than the 30th June in any financial year, for that year. Should any party not have paid their required contribution by that date the party will be automatically suspended from membership of HARI, and a report will be submitted to the next Board meeting. Should the defaulting party not have paid by the date of the Board meeting or be able to provide an explanation for failure to pay that satisfies the Board the Board will consider termination of that party's membership.
- 2.2 Should the amount demanded from any party and paid in relation to the levy be too little in relation to actual completed units during the financial year the difference will be added to the demand for the following financial year. Should the amount demanded from any party and paid be too great the party will receive a credit in the subsequent financial year.
- 2.3 Should the party defaulting be a host party for either staff employed by HARI or accounting then the Board will appoint a new party to be host. The

defaulting party will transfer all materials, equipment and staff to the new host within 3 calendar months of receiving notice of termination.

2.4 The Board will cause to be published and sent to all parties the amount of contributions required from each party to fund HARI

2.5 Following the setting of the initial budget after the commencing of this agreement the Board when setting future years budgets will not increase the total budget available to HARI by more than the percentage figure specified in the retail price index for the month of January immediately preceding the setting of the budget

3 Hosting

3.1 The HARI Board will at its first meeting select a Council, or Councils to act as the host for staff, equipment and operation of HARI's accounts.

3.2 The name of the host(s) will be sent to all parties within 14 days of their appointment.

3.3 Staff

The Board will engage such staff as it considers necessary to ensure the efficient and effective running of HARI, at least one member of staff will be employed as the HARI partnership coordinator who will be responsible to the Board for the day to day operational organization of HARI.

3.4 All staff engaged by the Board will be employed by the host party and will be subject to the usual terms and conditions of employment of that party. Should the Board engage a member of staff who is already in the employ of a party to this agreement the member of staff will remain an employee of that party and will be seconded to the host party. The Board will appoint staff according to the host party's recruitment procedures. The Board will select who from the Board will be on any appointment panel.

3.5 In the event of it becoming necessary for what ever reason to terminate the employment of any staff engaged by the Board HARI will be responsible for all termination payments and any consequential compensation payments or damages awarded to the employee in consequence of that termination, save that in the event of redundancy, any period of employment where the employee was immediately prior to their engagement by the Board employed by either the host party or any other party the host party or other employing

party will pay themselves the element of redundancy related to that period of employment.

- 3.6 In the event that HARI is required to pay any sums as referred to in 3.5 above the Board will be able to demand from each party such additional sums as it sees fit to cover the amount(s) due, and each party will be obliged to pay to the host accounting party the sum due from them within 28 days of written demand being received. Failure to pay by any party will have the same consequences as set out in 2.1 and 2.2 above and will also be a recoverable as a debt.
- 3.7 The HARI partnership coordinator will report directly to the Board but will, together with all other staff engaged by the Board be line managed by a named nominee of the host party.
- 3.8 The Host party will arrange for any staff engaged by the Board to be accommodated within the host organization and provided with all necessary materials and equipment to undertake their duties
- 3.9 The Board when setting its budget will include sufficient funds to reimburse the host party for all costs incurred by that party in employing staff engaged by the Board, including any on secondment the provision of accommodation and equipment and materials, associated support and for the provision of accounting services.
- 3.10 The Board will agree annually an appropriate fee with the host party for its services under 3.9 above. The calculation of the fee will be consistent with the Host parties accounting practices in respect of such partnerships. The fee will be paid quarterly in arrears on the first working days of January, April, June and September.
- 3.11 The host party responsible for keeping HARI accounts will be responsible for submitting quarterly accounts to the Board for its consideration and a full set of audited accounts to the Board within 3 months of the close of the financial year. For the avoidance of doubt the financial year will be from 1st April to 31st March.
- 4.0 Annual General Meeting**
- 4.1 In June of every year HARI will hold an event known as the Annual General Meeting (AGM) the purpose of the event is for all staff and members of the

parties to meet to discuss the operation of HARI to monitor and review its past performance and consider its future work programme.

- 4.2 The AGM will be chaired by the Board Chair and any decision making will be by way of a show of hands and simple majority. In the event of a tied vote the Chair will not have a casting vote and the decision will be deemed not to be carried.
- 4.3 The AGM can make recommendations to the Board on changes to the operation of the Board, and its structure and membership.
- 4.4 The Board will also seek approval from the AGM of any new parties to HARI it has considered since the previous AGM. No new party will formally become a party to this agreement until ratified by the AGM.
- 4.5 The AGM will be the forum where RSL parties are balloted for selecting members to the Board.

5.0 Preferred Development Partners

- 5.1 A number of the RSL's have the status of Preferred Development Partners.
- 5.2 The Board has the responsibility of selecting RSL's to be Preferred Development Partners and for de-selection. The criteria the Board will use for both is set out in a protocol entitled 'Selection and Deselection of Preferred Development Partners' which will be circulated to each party. The protocol will be reviewed at least annually by the Board.

6.0 Termination

- 6.1 Any party wishing to terminate their membership of HARI must submit written notice of termination to the HARI partnership co-ordinator. The notice period for termination by a party is 12 months. The notice will expire on the 31st March in any year
- 6.2 The Board can terminate the membership of any party in accordance with paragraph 2.1 above.
- 6.3 The Board can terminate the membership of a party on receipt of a written request from an RSL, WBC or TRDC and following a hearing into the reasons for the request, giving the party subject to the written request the opportunity to appear before the Board and make representations. In the event that the Board accedes to the request the party will be given 3 months

notice of termination and will be entitled to a refund of its contribution for the period it ceases to be a party. If the party is a host it will transfer all staff materials and equipment to the host nominated by the Board on the expiration of the 3 month period.

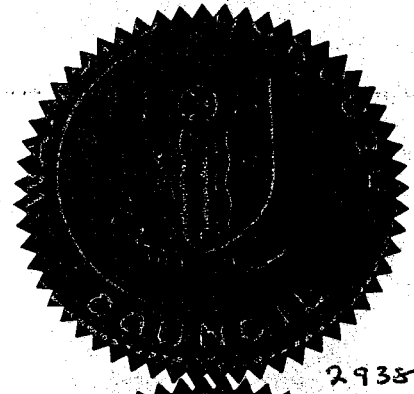
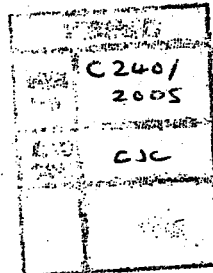
6.4 In the event that either WBC or TRDC serve notice of termination this Agreement will cease at the expiration of the notice period. All monies or assets purchased by HARI will if in surplus at the end of the notice period be used to defray any expenses involved in the dissolution of HARI in the first instance, then be divided in accordance with the proportion of the contributions levied amongst all the parties.

6.5 The host party will be responsible for accounting to all the other parties in the event of 6.4 above within 3 months of the end of this Agreement and for circulating a final set of audited accounts.

The Parties hereby confirm and declare that the signatories to this Agreement are duly authorised to enter into it and have full and ostensible authority to act on their behalf.

**THE COMMON SEAL of THE
WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL**
affixed in the presence of

Angela Walsh
Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Law Manager



**THE COMMON SEAL of THREE
RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Affixed in the presence of

One & More

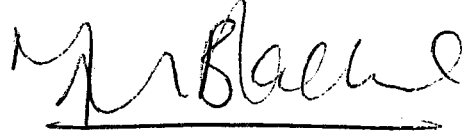
~~SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL
DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES~~

**THE COMMON SEAL of ALDWYCK
HOUSING ASSOCIATION**
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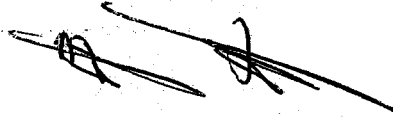
Tracy Williams
Director of Property Services



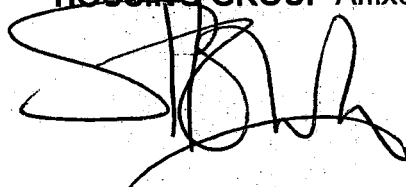
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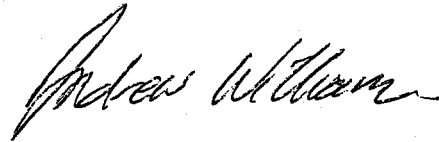
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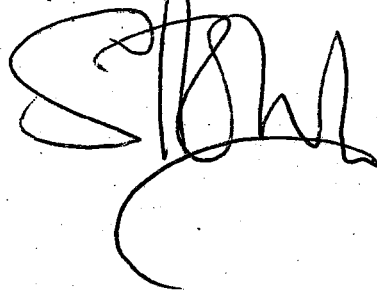
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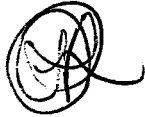
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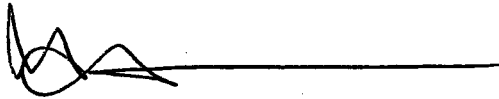
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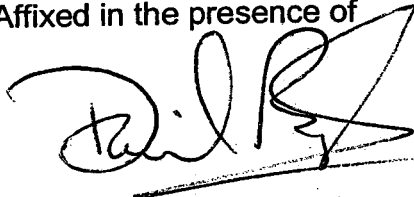
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DISTRICT YMCA** Affixed in the presence of



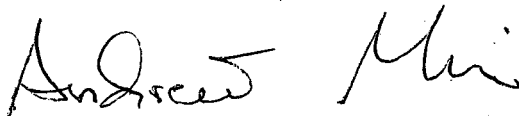
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HOUSING ASSOCIATION**
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HOUSING ASSOCIATION**
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HOUSING GROUP**
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HOUSING TRUST Affixed in the presence of~~

George Atkins

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CHURCHES HOUSING ASSOCIATION**
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ARMY HOUSING ASSOCIATION**
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APPENDIX 1

The Parties

Watford Borough Council of Town Hall, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD17 3EX (**WBC**)

Three Rivers District Council of Three Rivers House, Northway, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 1RL (**TRDC**)

together known as the Councils

Aldwyck Housing Association of 6 Houghton Hall Business Park, Porz Avenue, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5UZ (**Aldwyck**)

Anglia Housing Group of 6 Central Avenue, St. Andrews Business Park, Thorpe St. Andrew, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 0HR (**Anglia**)

Origin Housing Group of 110 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BS (**Origin**)

Network Housing Group of Olympic Office centre, 8 Fulton Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0NU (**Network**)

L&Q Beacon of Beacon House, 50 Stoke Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL2 5AW (**Beacon**)

Places for People of 305 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8QF (**PPF**)

Riversmead Housing Association of Riversmead House, 36 Ware Road, Hertford, SG13 7HH (**Riversmead**)

Watford and District YMCA of Charter House, Charter Place, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD1 2RT (**YMCA**)

Ridgehill Housing Association of 12 Elstree Way, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, WD6 1JE (**Ridgehill**)

Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association of 70 Queensway, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP2 5AD (**Hightown**)

Paradigm Housing Group of 1 White Hill, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 1AB, (**Paradigm**)

~~**Sanctuary Housing Association** of White Lion House, Town centre, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 0JL (**Sanctuary**)~~

~~**Hanover Housing Association** of 1 Bridge Close, Staines, Middlesex, TW18 4TB (**Hanover**)~~

~~**Warden Housing Association** of Malt House, 281 Field End Road, Eastcote, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 9XQ (**Warden**)~~

**Metropolitan Housing Trust of Cambridge House, 109 Mayes Road, London, N22 6UR
(Metropolitan)**

**Aeton Housing Association of Capital House, 25 Chapel Street, London, NW1 5DH
(Acton)**

**ASRA Greater London Housing Association Limited of Asra House, No 1 Long Lane,
London, SE1 4PG (ASRA)**

**Circle 33 Housing Association of 3 Corsica Street, Highbury, London, N5 1JG (Circle
33)**

**English Churches Housing Group of 3 Bede Island Road, Leicester, LE2 7EA
(English Churches)**

**Housing 21 Housing Association of The Triangle, Baring Road, Beaconsfield,
Buckinghamshire, HP9 2NA (Housing 21)**

**Rickmansworth Churches Housing Association of Wensum Court, High Street,
Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, WD3 1BR (Rickmansworth Churches)**

**The Salvation Army Housing Association of 229-230 Shoreditch High Street, London,
E1 6PJ (SAHA)**

together known as the RSLs.

*PART A

Report to: *Cabinet*
Date of meeting: *Monday 1 December 2014*
Report of: *Housing Section Head*
Title: *Presentation of Watford Borough Council Housing Strategy (2015-2020) for approval*

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 A new Housing Strategy and Action Plan has been drafted to cover the period 2015-20. While there is no statutory duty to produce a Housing Strategy, this is a key strategic document which will have an important role in supporting delivery of the Local Plan and providing an overarching direction for the council's other housing related plans and strategies.
- 1.2 The development of the Housing Strategy has involved extensive evidence analysis and consultation, with a particular emphasis on securing an integrated approach with other emerging corporate strategies such as the Local Plan II and the forthcoming Economic Development Strategy.
- 1.3 The Housing Strategy has been developed with considerable input from the elected Members participating in Housing Policy Advisory Group (HPAG) and Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) and other Members attending open joint meetings of these groups.
- 1.4 The associated Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis in order to assess what has been achieved and where priorities may need to be adjusted in the light of emerging evidence, opportunities or resource constraints. This report seeks delegated authority for this annual review to be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Watford Borough Council Housing Strategy 2015-20 is approved for publication.
- 2.2 That annual reviews of the Action Plan be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Rachel Dawson, Housing Section Head.

telephone extension: 8902

email: Rachel.dawson@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Alan Gough, Head of Community and Customer Services.

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 Watford is a small and densely populated borough which has seen significant demographic, economic and tenure related change in recent years. The task of maintaining an excellent housing offer to support sustainable growth and ensure a good quality of life for residents is a formidable challenge. It is the role of the Housing Strategy to identify the following:

- Housing related needs and aspirations
- The housing related interventions that should have a high priority in improving the housing offer to meet needs and aspirations
- The resources and opportunities available to implement these

3.2 The Housing Strategy will support delivery of the Local Plan and form the overarching direction for housing-related strategies, policies and plans such as the Nomination Policy, Homelessness Strategy, Tenancy Strategy and Private Sector Renewal Policy.

3.3 The vision is for “A Housing Strategy which will improve the well-being of local people by making Watford a better place to live, with sustainable and healthy homes, and a balanced, vibrant community”.

3.4 The scope of the Strategy is broad, with a focus not only on increasing the supply of housing but also on improving conditions within the existing housing stock and supporting complementary activities aimed at promoting economic growth, health and wellbeing.

3.5 The **Themes** identify particular areas of activity in which housing-related interventions will take place. **Priorities** will identify the activities within each theme which are likely to produce the most beneficial impact. **Tasks** within the action plan are the translation of the priorities into action.

3.6 The themes are as follows:
Theme 1: Improving the supply of housing
Theme 2: Improving the condition and management of housing
Theme 3: Support to specific client groups where intervention is required
Theme 4: Key locations
Theme 5: Wellbeing, economy and health
Theme 6: Communication

3.7 The priorities have been selected based on:

- A high level of recommendation from the evidence base and/or the consultation

- Identified gaps in provision for particular groups
- Identified ability of certain projects/schemes/services to have a high impact on improving Watford's Housing Offer
- The availability of resources to implement the task

3.8 The priorities and tasks reflect the importance of addressing property condition in addition to encouraging sustainable new development. They recognise the council's role in influencing new development through evidence based dialogue with developers and registered providers and the importance of engaging with and communicating with the community in order to promote housing opportunities and maximise the potential benefits to health and the economy. The tasks also reflect the important role of the council's partners including private landlords, registered providers and developers in addition to voluntary and statutory agencies both inside and outside of our own borough. While some of the activities are borough wide, others reflect locally concentrated activity in recognition of the diverse nature of our borough and the major development projects being undertaken by the council and our partners at the current time.

3.9 The Housing Strategy includes a methodology for annual dataset compilation which will identify the council's preferred housing mix to be used in order to inform and influence planning decisions.

3.10 It is a priority to develop a housing related Communication Strategy in order to manage client expectations, engage the community in issues around sustainable growth and promote initiatives which will support economic growth and promote good health.

Key messages will include:

- Watford Borough Council wants to prioritise local homes for local people and to support economic growth.
- Watford is pro-growth, but the growth must be sustainable.
- Watford takes a planned approach to growth.
- Watford may need to look beyond its own boundaries for resources to meet the needs of its residents.
- Watford Borough Council seeks to encourage empowerment and self-reliance among residents in resolving their housing solutions.
- Watford Borough Council recognises its important role in supporting vulnerable people with limited capacity to resolve their housing problems.
- Watford Borough Council wants to work with a wide range of partners – statutory, voluntary and private – in order to meet housing needs.
- Watford Borough Council recognises that housing has a very significant role to play in improving health, well-being and economic prospects in the town.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications as a result of this report.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the body of the report and the Strategy.

4.3 Equalities

4.3.1 An analysis of the effects of the Housing Strategy and Action Plan upon protected characteristic groups has been carried out. The analysis has drawn on monitoring information and the results of research projects. We are satisfied that the outcomes of the Housing Strategy will be positive in terms of furthering equality aims. The analysis of the effects of the Housing Strategy is available for examination if requested.

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
<i>Lack of capacity or skills to undertake actions within the Action Plan</i>	2	3	6
<i>Unforeseen lack of resources to undertake actions within the Action Plan</i>	3	3	6
<i>Significant changes to the legislative or operating environment during the lifetime of the Strategy.</i>	3	3	9
<i>Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service's Risk Register.</i>			

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 No changes to staffing are proposed.

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 There are no impacts on accommodation.

4.7 Community Safety

4.7.1 The Strategy will see continuing engagement with Community Safety objectives in both the development of new homes and improvement to existing stock condition and the quality of surroundings in Watford.

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 The Strategy promotes sustainable growth and energy efficiency.

Appendices

- Appendix A Housing Strategy Introduction (Executive Summary)
- Appendix B Contexts – National
- Appendix C Contexts – County and London
- Appendix D Contexts – Local
- Appendix E Needs analysis
- Appendix F Action Plan
- Appendix G Glossary

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report

- Equalities Impact Analysis

File Reference

- None

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Draft foreword to the Housing Strategy by Watford's Elected Mayor.

Welcome to Watford's new Housing Strategy and Action Plan.

Housing is one of our biggest challenges in Watford. We have exceeded our housing delivery targets, yet Watford is a town of high house prices and high rents with a comparatively low supply of land to build on. Therefore we must make the most of all available resources and opportunities to deliver the best housing offer we can for our town.

Our Housing Strategy and Action Plan for 2015 to 2020 sets out our plans. These plans involve improving the supply of new homes, improving the condition of the homes which we already have, introducing special initiatives to meet needs in particular areas, and ensuring that an excellent housing offer contributes to good health, a thriving economy and well-being among our residents.

Watford is a lively and attractive town with excellent shopping, leisure and cultural facilities. It is also a popular place to work and do business. As a result, lots of people wish to live here. Many people who already live here are also seeking a home of their own in the town. Consequently, there is high demand for housing in the borough. Housing needs and aspirations range from those who have moved to Watford to take up employment opportunities and wish to live near their place of work., those who want to move to a home which is more suitable for their families' needs, to those who have become homeless and require an offer of accommodation urgently.

We are facing both challenges and opportunities. The Localism Act 2011 has produced big changes to the way social housing is allocated, the types of tenancies which are offered and the ways that homeless households are assisted. The Energy Act 2011 sets out a new framework to achieve energy

efficiency measures for both homes and businesses. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 is introducing radical changes to the system of welfare benefits. The system of funding the development of new affordable homes has changed significantly since 2010. However, there is large potential to attract housing-related funding and investment to our town. This strategy aims to maximize these opportunities for the benefit of Watford's residents.

Our Housing Strategy aims to address a wide spectrum of housing needs and aspirations. We will be undertaking an ambitious agenda of activity to make Watford's housing offer excellent. This will include tasks such as working closely with registered providers to increase the supply of affordable housing, introducing initiatives to promote home energy efficiency, implementing street improvement projects to improve neighbourhoods, and developing a communications strategy to provide better information on housing options. More broadly, we will undertake housing activities to improve health, economic development and well-being in Watford.

We have worked extensively to involve as many people as possible in developing our new Housing Strategy and Action Plan. We would like to thank everyone whose views and recommendations have helped to shape our plans. We very much value our relations with partner organizations, and we look forward to working with them to turn this Housing Strategy into action.

Watford Housing Strategy 2015-2020 – Summary

1. The role of a Housing Strategy in Watford

“The purpose of a housing strategy is to guide local action – to assess the current and future balance of housing supply and demand, the working of the market, the impact of local conditions on people’s lives, and on the achievement of social goals – and to plan effective intervention.”

(Goss and Blackaby, 1998)

Watford is a very dynamic borough. It has seen big demographic, economic and tenure-related changes since the beginning of the millennium. The town offers high achieving schools, a wide range of job opportunities, attractive leisure activities and diverse cultural facilities. Consequently it is an increasingly popular place to live and there is high demand for all types of housing in the borough. Watford is also a town of big ambitions and potential to grow further in terms of population and employment.

With the borough’s very small size, high population density and urbanised built environment, the task of maintaining an excellent housing offer to support sustainable growth and to maintain high quality of life in the town is a formidable challenge. The market alone cannot meet housing needs; therefore, a planned and interventionist approach is required. It is the role of a housing strategy to identify the following:

- Housing related needs and aspirations
- The housing-related interventions that should have high priority in improving the Housing Offer to meet needs and aspirations.
- The resources available to implement those housing-related interventions.
- Partnerships which will achieve successful outcomes.

Reasons why Watford needs a strategic approach to housing through the Local Plan and housing-related strategies and policies

- i) To ensure a co-ordinated approach to housing activity in Watford and a coherent suite of policies and strategies to deliver the council’s ambitions.
- ii) To balance the housing agenda and other agendas such as sustainable economic growth.
- iii) To promote housing’s role in delivering the corporate agenda and wider objectives including health and wellbeing.

iv) To ensure Housing retains a high corporate profile and contributes to the council's status of being well positioned to influence and deliver.

v) To maximise opportunities and resources to meet housing needs and aspirations, using Council assets and external or partnership funding opportunities.

vi) To maximise out-of-borough and cross-boundary development opportunities in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

vii) To prevent and tackle issues which lead to poor housing conditions, such as overcrowding and poor condition privately owned housing.

viii) To support economic growth in Watford, with employers able to recruit staff and retain skilled employees.

The Watford Borough Council Housing Strategy will support the delivery of the Local Plan and will form the overarching direction for the following housing-related strategies, policies and plans:-

- The Watford Borough Council Nominations Policy
- The Watford Borough Council Tenancy Strategy
- The Watford Borough Council Homelessness Review, Strategy and Action Plan
- The Watford Borough Council Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.

The Housing Strategy will complement the following corporate plans, policies and projects which are being carried out by other council teams:

- Watford's Local Plan Part 1 – Core Strategy 2006-2031
- Watford's Local Plan Part 2 – Sites Allocations and Development Management
- The Duty to Co-operate
- The review of the Council's property and assets.
- The Watford Borough Corporate Plan 2014-2018
- The introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy
- The Residential Design Guide
- The Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- The Watford Council Economic Development Strategy.

2. Diagnosis of need and Guiding Policy

The Diagnosis of need

Watford's housing need can be summarised as consisting of the following:-

- i) Demand for housing greatly exceeds supply.
- ii) Housing for market sale or market rent is mostly unaffordable to people on low to medium incomes.
- iii) The delivery of affordable housing is becoming more challenging.
- iv) Watford is a small borough and there are competing demands for development on its land.
- v) Watford's existing housing stock requires a range of improvements to ensure it continues to offer suitable, safe, warm and healthy homes.

Selected policy options for the Housing Strategy:-

The Housing Strategy will adopt a whole housing market approach, and will not focus just on housing for those in highest housing need.

The Housing Strategy will be open to the merits of introducing a range of new tenures, and will not focus on just the limited number of traditional tenures.

The Housing Strategy will focus on both optimising the supply of new housing and improving the condition of existing housing, not just on the issue of a new supply of housing.

The Housing Strategy will aim to empower property owners and tenants to take action to improve their housing circumstances, helping them to make informed choices and raising aspirations.

Guiding principles for the Strategy

- 1. Evidence-based
- 2. Agile and adding value, with an annual review of performance indicators and priorities.
- 3. Bold prioritisation
- 4. Recognition that we are working in a changing environment.
- 5. Promotion of support and self-reliance
- 6. An emphasis on communication and engagement with the community.
- 7. A clear understanding of where the council can intervene and where it can influence.
- 8. To empower residents and property owners to improve their housing circumstances.

Guiding principles for Action Plan

- 1. Bold prioritisation
- 2. Realistic and resourced
- 3. Identification of who is best placed to deliver: assets, skills, time, resources
- 4. Open to new partnerships
- 5. Strong scoping and management of projects
- 6. Celebrating achievements.

3. The vision for the Housing Strategy

Following extensive consultation, the following vision for Watford's Housing Strategy has been devised:

A Housing Strategy that will improve the well-being of local people by making Watford a better place to live, with sustainable and healthy homes, and a balanced, vibrant community.

4. The Structure of the Housing Strategy

The Watford Housing Strategy shall consider Watford's housing needs and appropriate interventions to meet these challenges on four levels:-

AIMS



THEMES



PRIORITIES



TASKS

Aims set the overall direction in which the housing strategy will develop.

Themes identify particular areas of activity in which housing-related interventions will take place. The housing strategy is structured around six themes.

Priorities will identify the activities within the themes which are likely to produce the most beneficial impact if they receive resources and are the focus for activity. The priorities will guide the development of the action plan.

Tasks are the translation of the priorities into action which will implement housing-related interventions. The tasks will be specific, measurable, resourced and timetabled.

Aims:-

Aim 1: To provide an overarching direction for housing activity in Watford that supports the long-term sustainable growth of Watford and its economy.

Aim 2: To support delivery of the Watford Borough Council vision: *a successful town in which people are proud to live* and to identify interventions in the whole housing market.

Aim 3: To maximise achievements by managing competing demands, including:-

- Single person households vs Family households
- Offices/commercial vs Residential
- Investors vs Occupiers
- The influences of the areas surrounding Watford.
- Watford as a whole vs Ward/Area based actions.

Aim 4: To ensure that housing-related activity and interventions contribute to the well-being of residents and the prosperity of Watford.

Aim 5: To support long-term sustainable economic growth and environments in Watford.

Aim 6: To predict and respond to change and future trends

Aim 7. To seek out and attract housing-related investment by having clear strategy and by creating conditions which are conducive to strategic and operational investment.

Themes:-

Theme 1: Improving the supply of housing

Theme 2: Improving the condition and management of housing

Theme 3: Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Theme 4: Key locations

Theme 5: Well-being, Economy and Health

Theme 6: Communication

Priorities within the themes:-

Theme 1: Improving the supply of housing

Priorities:-

- Priority 1:- To influence the type of new housing that is provided by inputting into the Planning process and working with private sector providers and registered providers
- 1. Priority 2:- Work with registered providers to achieve a balance between traditional social rented properties and new business which enables them to develop other types of homes, such as affordable rent, market rent, homes for sale.
- Priority 3:- To contribute to the implementation of the council's forthcoming Asset Management strategy.

Tasks:-

- Task 1 – Developing, testing and publicising annual dataset with conclusions to inform the housing mix.
- Task 2 – Participate in the production of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment in partnership with neighbouring boroughs.
- Task 3 – To establish and maintain frameworks for engagement with registered provider partners, private developers and property owners. This will include information sharing, accessing funding and development opportunities, and local marketing initiatives.

- Task 4 – Annual review of the Tenancy Strategy.
- Task 5 – Tasks to be defined pending Property Review

Theme 2: Improving the condition and management of housing

Priorities:

- Priority 1:- To revise the Private Sector Renewal Policy (includes grant and loans assistance) to make homes decent and adapt them for disabled access.
- Priority 2:- Increase the awareness of letting agents, private landlords and tenants regarding acceptable standards, responsibilities and remedies in order to empower them to make informed choices.
- Priority 3:- To improve the condition of the housing stock to enable the provision of safe, sustainable, healthy and well-maintained homes.
- Priority 4:- Renew cross service procedures to improve the customer experience and effectiveness of casework on overcrowding and illegal/retaliatory eviction and harassment.
- Priority 5:- Renew evidence base through an assessment of Watford's housing stock which samples a range of homes and indicates the issues with stock which we need to address e.g. energy efficiency.

Tasks:-

- Task 1- Revise the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.
- Task 2 – Initiatives promoted in revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.
- Task 3 – Production of a suite of advice and information material which covers the full range of services available.
- Task 4 – Publication of the above through website, leaflet, roadshows, social media, advertising through

lettings agents.

- Task 5 – Introduce a framework to enforce the Redress scheme and include compliance across council private sector access schemes.
- Task 6 – Review Care and Repair Provision
- Task 7 – Review the current scope and effectiveness of casework on overcrowding.
- Task 8 – Implement action plan to develop our strategic and operational response to overcrowding.
- Task 9 – Investigate the need for a service to respond to illegal/retaliatory eviction and harassment.
- Task 10 – Implement action plan to develop our strategic and operational response to illegal/retaliatory eviction and harassment in order to minimise housing need.
- Task 11 – Commission a private sector stock condition survey/model.
- Task 12 – Develop policy responses from the stock condition survey to inform appropriate policies, strategies and procedures.
- Task 13 – Undertake Home Energy Efficiency publicity campaigns to raise awareness of the options which are available, and deliver improvements as recommended in local Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) reports.

Theme 3: Support to specific client groups where intervention is needed.

Priorities:

- Priority 1:- To carry out an annual review of the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.
- Priority 2:- To implement and monitor a revised Housing Nomination Policy and a Private Sector Discharge Policy including management of customer expectations.
- Priority 3:- To engage with private landlords with the aim of increasing the availability of privately rented homes for

households in housing need.

- Priority 4:- To devise plans to increase the supply of wheelchair accessible temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- Priority 5:- Older people – support activity to improve registered provider sheltered housing to become flexicare accommodation which will meet the current and future needs of Watford residents.

Tasks:-

- Task 1 – Review and publish an annual update of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.
- Task 2 – Implementation of the revised Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.
- Task 3 – Implementation of the Housing Nominations Policy.
- Task 4 – Development and implementation of the Private Sector Housing Discharge Policy.
- Task 5 – Increase the supply of wheelchair accessible temporary housing.
- Task 6 – Older people: agree decant protocol and associated allocation policies and criteria.

Theme 4: Key locations

Priorities:-

- Priority 1:- To support the delivery of affordable housing within the Special Policy Areas.
- Priority 2:- To implement targeted initiatives such as Street Improvement Projects which tackle a range of issues in specific areas, such as property conditions, the environment and community safety concerns, through a multi-agency approach.

Tasks:-

- Task 1 – Work with Local Asset Based Vehicle (LABV) to procure a registered provider for the Health Campus.
- Task 2 – Implement a pilot Street Improvement Project for a clearly defined neighbourhood in the borough.

Theme 5: Well-being, economy and health

Priorities-

- Priority 1:- Undertake housing related activity in line with health and well-being priorities for the borough, such as achieving “safe and healthy homes”. This will be consistent with the new Code for Sustainable Homes whose nine measures of sustainability include Health and Well-being.
- Priority 2 - Undertake housing related activity to support economic growth in Watford in consultation with Watford’s business community.

Tasks:-

- Task 1 – Undertake assessment of Watford’s housing stock to better understand the housing conditions in Watford, and to ensure that health related data identified in the house condition survey.
- Task 2 – Undertake housing related activity in line with health priorities for the borough, such as achieving “safe and health homes”, as informed by the above survey result.
- Task 3 – Support emerging initiatives in the council’s forthcoming economic development strategy by researching housing-related situations and potential interventions.

Theme 6: A Communications Strategy for housing

Priorities

- Priority 1:- To develop a co-ordinated communications strategy for housing-related issues in Watford to achieve the following:-
 - Convey a range of messages, such as expectations on the availability of affordable housing for rent, on a range of housing options, on sources of housing-related assistance, on the availability of support services, and to improve perceptions of a range of housing options.
 - To communicate information to meet the requirements, expectations and aspirations of a range of ages and demographic groups, and to communicate with more “difficult to reach” groups such as young people, vulnerable people.
 - To communicate how space can best be used in current accommodation.
 - To be receptive to existing and new technological options for communications
- Priority 2:- To devise an approach to community engagement on housing growth issues, in partnership with registered providers

Tasks:

- Task 1 – to develop the Communications Strategy for housing.
- Task 2 – to implement the Communications Strategy for housing.
- Task 3 – to devise an approach to community engagement on housing growth issues, in partnership with registered providers.

5. Housing Strategy Position Statements

Housing Growth

Watford has continued to experience high housing delivery rates and has a five year land supply as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

The council’s core strategy puts forward our ambitions for the borough which involve significant economic and housing growth. The site allocation process

will recognise the importance of safeguarding commercial sites in order to ensure employment opportunities, while planning for housing growth to support this agenda and protecting our open spaces. The council will encourage innovation such as mixed use schemes in order to balance competing demands on well positioned sites. While much of the growth activity is focused around our major sites (see p. xxx), the council will continue to encourage good quality, sustainable development on smaller sites where opportunities arise. Our Residential Design Guide sets out our expectations regarding high quality design.

The council continues its commitment to ensuring affordable housing is provided as part of residential developments and working with registered provider partners to maximise their opportunities for developing homes in our borough. This will include taking a more active role in ensuring partners are aware and have access to government and other funding or site opportunities at the earliest stage possible.

The council acknowledges the role which housing growth can play in promoting sustainable economic growth in Watford. The two most outstanding issues which link housing growth and economic growth are:-

- i) Seeking a co-ordinated approach to meet the needs of both sustainable economic and housing growth in Watford, reflected in the designation of sites for particular types of development. .
- ii) Facilitating the development of housing options for Watford employees in receipt of a particular range of incomes e.g. employees of the various parts of the service sector. The aim of this approach is increase the supply of skilled employees in Watford and reduce difficulties in recruitment for certain employment sectors.

When examining the possibilities of residential development in the town centre, the council will encourage housing developers to optimise the quality of design to encourage that the housing options are sustainable for this particular environment. Developers will be encouraged to consult the council's design guide and noise policy in order to ensure suitable design and residential development in suitable locations.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Key locations (wards and neighbourhoods)
- Well-being, Economy and Health
- Communication

Balancing residential and commercial growth

There is considerable pressure for sites to be released for residential development, which risks undermining the council's ambition for economic growth in the longer term. The council is seeking a co-ordinated approach which will meet the needs of both economic and housing growth in Watford. This will be achieved by safeguarding certain sites for commercial use while acknowledging that some sites previously designated for employment use are no longer viable for this purpose and could more appropriately be redesignated as residential sites.

Specific sites are to be identified and designated for different uses such as residential, commercial and open space.

The council acknowledges the link between housing provision and the ability of employers to recruit and retain their staff, as well as the impact on business relocation decisions. The Housing Strategy has identified the theme of communication as key priority. Part of our strategic approach will be to develop a whole market approach to housing options advice, including proactive work with employers to signpost employees to appropriate accommodation opportunities.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Key locations (wards and neighbourhoods)
- Well-being, Economy and Health
- Communication

Community engagement

The council recognises that economic and housing growth can be controversial within local neighbourhoods. There are opportunities to improve the way in which we communicate the benefits of growth and consult our residents about their concerns. We recognise that the expertise in this field may lie within partner organisations such as registered providers and will seek to work in partnership with them in order to refine our approach to engaging with members of the community.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Key locations (wards and neighbourhoods)
- Well-being, Economy and Health
- Communication

Housing mix

The council will seek the provision of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures to meet the requirements of all sections of the community. The existing stock profile across Watford varies quite considerably from ward to ward. As Watford is a small borough, the council takes a whole borough approach to achieving its required mix rather than attempting to balance the stock on a ward by ward basis. The areas most suited to higher density development are identified within our Local Plan. In order to retain a balanced profile, lower density family houses with gardens will be sought in more suburban areas.

The council wishes to encourage a good quality, well managed private rented sector and will encourage proposals for new development within this tenure, although this will remain distinct from the affordable housing requirements within our planning policy.

In terms of advising on the council's preferred housing mix within schemes, a services of datasets will be analysed on an annual basis and agreed corporately to inform the council's approach to proposed schemes. The data sets will be agreed annually. At the time of publication they are anticipated to include:-

Whole housing market information template

- i) Net housing completions
- ii) Projects completions
- iii) Gross affordable housing completions mix provided
- iv) Number of affordable homes provided 2012/2013 and percentage of gross housing completions on qualifying sites.
- v) Gross housing completions by size
- vi) Gross housing completions by type
- vii) Average house prices in Watford
- viii) Market snapshot of homes for sale priced at £300,000 or less
- ix) Market snapshot of homes for private rented whose rent levels is at or below the national maximum Local Housing Allowance level.

Affordable housing supply template

- i) Affordable housing stock profile (bedrooms and bedspaces, flats vs houses)
- ii) Affordable delivery during the previous financial year.
- iii) Affordable lettings during the previous financial year.
- iv) Affordable pipeline
- v) Household types and projections
- vi) Temporary accommodation profile (bedroom requirement and bedspaces)
- vii) Housing register home seekers A-D (bedroom requirement and bedspaces).
- viii) Housing register transfers A-D (bedroom requirements and bedspaces)

- ix) Housing register E or equivalent (bedroom requirement and bedspaces)
- x) Affordability including Local Housing Allowance rates
- xi) Comments e.g. nomination policy changes.

These datasets will be completed and reviewed annually to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose and responsive to changing needs.

The council acknowledges the funding requirements placed on registered providers in order to bring forward new affordable housing. Our Tenancy Strategy sets our expectations regarding conversions from social to affordable rent and the affordability considerations we anticipate registered providers will apply.

Where registered providers have the opportunity to purchase a whole site and can therefore enhance the affordable housing offer beyond the requirements of the section 106 agreement, the council will be open to negotiation on a case by case basis to set the appropriate housing mix of tenure and property type.

The council is monitoring the demand for a new type of housing for employees of Watford. This consists of short-term managed accommodation which is sometimes self-contained and sometimes has shared facilities. This accommodation can be created from buildings which have been used for other purposes e.g. hotel accommodation. If demand grows for this type of accommodation and tenure a new position statement will be devised.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Key locations (wards and neighbourhoods)
- Communication

Shared accommodation

There is considerable demand for housing of all types in Watford. This includes shared accommodation which can offer a more affordable and flexible option for many residents, from professionals working locally or commuting, to those on lower incomes or who are reliant on housing benefit. Watford has some high quality shared housing. The council recognises the interest in property conversions to meet this need and will continue to monitor the impact on residents and businesses.

While it is anticipated that the need for well managed shared accommodation will increase, there is a corresponding pressure on family sized accommodation in Watford. Local Plan II Policy HS5 aims to safeguard family housing by ensuring that any subsequent conversion of a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to flats cannot automatically proceed on the grounds of already being an HMO, and will be subject to strict criteria. This is to retain the potential for HMOs to be converted back to family housing which is less easily achieved where conversion to flats has occurred.

The council has considered whether it would be appropriate to apply for an article 4 directive for the borough. This would require planning permission to be applied for, where there was a proposal to convert a property into a House in Multiple Occupation for between 3 to 6 occupants. This is not being pursued at the current time due to the low proportion of HMOs within the borough and the findings that these properties were not causing detriment which would justify additional measures being put in place.

Similarly, the Council has considered whether additional licensing should be introduced to include premises outside the statutory HMO licensing requirement. However, there is no evidence to indicate that this measure is required locally, and there is information to demonstrate that other activities would prove more effective.

The council continues to provide a range of advice and enforcement activity regarding HMOs and the launch of the Street Improvement Project will address issues within priority localities which residents associate with higher density living.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Key locations (wards and neighbourhoods)
- Communication

Self build

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the government's intention to promote self build as another option for housing development. Local authorities are required to plan for a range of needs, including self-build. At the current time, there is a very low level of interest in self-build, and the proposal is to continue monitoring the situation for future consideration if appropriate. The register will be retained within the Planning Policy Department and evidence of national policy development and more localised good practice will be updated on an annual basis within the Housing Service to determine whether further action is required.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing

Empty homes

Watford is a high demand area and there is not a large amount of empty residential property in the borough. Current analysis shows that those properties that have been unoccupied for 12 months or more are relatively evenly distributed throughout the borough, without a prominent concentration in one area. The council has previously dedicated resources to bringing empty residential properties into use. This activity is labour intensive and costly to

the council and brought a low level of return. The decision to discontinue empty homes work in this form remains an appropriate position for the council.

A range of activity continues regarding any nuisance issues generated by empty properties. The council also has the opportunity to engage with the PLACE (Private Leasing Agreements Converting Empties) scheme where funding is available for property owners to bring their homes into use either for sale or to rent to clients nominated by the council. Negotiations are continuing regarding the terms of the scheme and whether this is a viable option for the council to pursue.

The council will still deal with empty homes on an individual basis when the empty home is having a negative impact on the neighbourhood in which it is located.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Improving the condition and management of housing
- Key locations (wards and neighbourhoods)

Supported Housing

In Watford there is a range of supported housing provision for a number of client groups including young people, those with mental health issues, experiencing substance misuse, with learning disabilities and experiencing domestic violence. Funding for the support element is provided through Housing Related Support which is commissioned by Herts County Council.

The council will seek active involvement in these commissioning decisions through Herts Heads of Housing and the Strategic Partnership Accommodation Board.

Due to reductions in the revenue funding available, it is not viable at the current time for the council to seek the development of new dedicated supported housing schemes for particular client groups. The council will continue to support our partners where they have viable proposals for such schemes either within new build accommodation or through private sector leasing, where they can demonstrate the needs of a certain client group over and above other potential uses. This will be informed by the market position statements on different client groups being produced by Herts CC which are due to be published in November 2014.

The use of council property assets to host supported housing schemes which are managed by the voluntary sector and registered providers will be reviewed under the WBC Property Review 2014 (see below). This will determine the extent to which WBC can continue to offer the accommodation element to supported housing schemes. The priority will be those schemes which serve Watford residents although an appropriate balance will be sought where WBC benefits from reciprocal arrangements with other boroughs.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Council property assets – capital, revenue and land

The council has a small number of sites which could potentially be released for residential development. There are also properties currently used for temporary accommodation and commercial premises which could be put to alternative use. The Property Review 2014 will take into account competing demands for these assets and the potential for re-provision into more suitable or cost effective accommodation. The benefits of disposal will also be considered.

Depending on the outcome of the review, there may be opportunities for increasing and improving housing supply and condition. The council will develop an asset management strategy which will set out how council assets will be deployed in the future.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Improving the condition and management of housing.
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

The Private Rented sector

The council recognises the opportunities and the challenges of having a large private rented sector in the borough, which is likely to expand further during the lifetime of the Housing Strategy. The aim is to promote good quality, well managed private rented housing which will contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of our residents, and that acceptable standards are in place irrespective of the amount of rent paid by the occupants.

Our activity will be informed by a revised Private Sector Renewal Policy which will set out our approach to both owner occupied and rented housing and the advice, assistance and enforcement activity that will take place in the borough. Evidence of conditions in the private rented sector will be gained through an assessment of Watford's housing stock which will examine issues including energy efficiency and the presence of hazards in the home, with an understanding of the profile of the stock and the residents so that targeted intervention can be planned.

The council will work proactively with landlords and tenants in order to ensure that the expected standards and responsibilities are well publicised and understood by both parties and appropriate action is taken to prevent issues from arising. Examples of required standards: elimination of category 1 hazards, complete compliance with the energy efficiency standards introduced

under the Energy Act 2011. Areas for priority action have been identified relating to illegal and retaliatory eviction and overcrowding and the council is seeking to improve cross departmental working to ensure the best outcomes can be achieved for tenants and their landlords.

There are no plans to introduce an Accreditation scheme for privately rented accommodation. Research carried out across Hertfordshire has determined that this would not achieve effective outcomes in comparison with the level of resources required.

The council is developing a Private Sector Discharge Policy which will result in homeless applicants being re-housed in the private sector where the council has a duty to accommodate them. Activity to enable access to private sector tenancies as a homelessness prevention measure will also continue. In order to achieve these objectives, the council will seek increased partnership working with landlords and encourage the participation of the voluntary sector and registered providers in securing and managing homes for private rent which will meet the statutory requirements for private sector discharge of duty.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the condition and management of housing.
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.
- Key locations (wards and neighbourhoods)

New housing for market sale

The council encourages the development of well designed housing for the owner occupied market which will comprise a range of property sizes and types to meet the needs of our diverse community. It has been identified that the transition from a two bed property to a larger property can be problematic for families in terms of availability and affordability. At the same time, the availability of properties which are desirable to people wishing to downsize is also restricted (see section on older people below).

The council's capacity to intervene is limited, however measures have been identified where the council could take a more proactive role. These include engaging with registered providers to explore the potential for market sale in order to meet particular identified needs and ensuring a wider promotion of the opportunities presented by shared ownership and initiatives such as Help to Buy. This will involve a communication strategy which takes account of an audience outside the traditional housing service client group and the media used will need to reflect this wider remit.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Affordable housing

There is considerable pressure on the supply of affordable housing in Watford and the council is taking measures to make most effective use of this scarce resource. Policy changes will encourage a more planned exit from existing accommodation and a corresponding reduction in homelessness as well as promoting the private rented sector as a viable alternative to social housing.

A new Housing Nomination Policy will be introduced in 2015 which will end the practice of holding an open housing register and set more restrictive criteria about which applicants may apply for social housing. This includes the requirement for applicants to be living in Watford and to have done so for five out of the last six years. There are also tighter restrictions regarding those who own properties or have sufficient means to meet their own housing need. Homeless households will have a reduced priority on the register which will align them with overcrowded households who have remained in the parental home. The council will no longer accept applications from those who are adequately housed and a more holistic advice offer will signpost them to alternative housing options.

The council will retain a housing duty towards certain homeless clients who will not meet the criteria to join the housing register. A Private Sector Discharge Policy will be implemented in 2015 to enable the council to offer private rented properties to clients providing that the statutory requirements are met regarding property location, condition and management. This Policy will also apply to applicants on the housing register subject to sufficient supply.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Homelessness prevention

In developing its Homelessness Strategy, the council has committed to maintaining an agile and evidence based approach in reflection of the rapidly changing strategic and operational environment. The council will review its Homelessness Strategy on an annual basis in order to identify whether priorities and actions remain appropriate and deliverable.

The aim of the Strategy is to prevent homelessness wherever possible and to provide support to clients where homelessness does occur. It is not intended to document the vast range of services provided on a day to day basis, but rather outline the key priorities for improving and expanding existing provision.

The council remains committed to client groups outside of its statutory obligations including single homeless people who are not in priority need and those who are sleeping rough. We recognise the key role played by partners in delivering services which extend beyond the expertise and resources of the council and will continue to take an active role in leading the Prevention of

Homelessness Partnership (POsH) and supporting our partners in bidding for external funding. A particular focus is to ensure the provision of services to Watford residents and to ensure that these are prioritised where local resources are being deployed.

Relevant Themes

- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Provision of temporary accommodation

Under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 local authorities are obliged to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households who have no other home in which they can reasonably be expected to live.

The council will continue to investigate options to expand the amount and range of temporary accommodation available. Our aim is to accommodate households within the Watford borough where possible unless the household has a stated preference to seek housing in another area in which case assistance will be offered to achieve this in line with our statutory obligations. Where it is necessary to make a placement outside of the borough, the council will undertake to move the household back to Watford at the earliest opportunity. We are mindful of the cost and welfare implications of utilising bed and breakfast accommodation and will seek alternative solutions in order to reduce or eliminate its use in the longer term. It is a priority to the council to adhere to the six week statutory maximum period for bed and breakfast placements where households have children or a pregnant family member.

A particular need for wheelchair accessible housing has been identified to meet the needs of a full range of households in housing need including disabled persons – the council's own units are not wheelchair accessible. Between April 2011 and March 2014 a total of 17 persons whose priority need consisted of a physical disability were accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation.

Relevant Themes

- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Older people

There is a significant amount of designated older person's accommodation in Watford in both the social and private sectors. Some of this stock is now outdated and even contemporary developments can fail to meet the aspirations of older residents who continue to work, drive and have family members to stay in their homes. It is noted that there has been a net outflow of population in the 60-74 age group to other boroughs.

The council will encourage the development of general needs housing which could be occupied by older people in preference to dedicated schemes which

are restricted to older people only, if they are of a type which is already well represented within the housing stock. Applications are encouraged for development types which are currently under represented and are consistent with the Lifetime Home standard. The council has no evidence to suggest that there is a need for further residential care schemes in the borough at the current time and will work with Hertfordshire County Council towards the objective of avoiding the need for costly admissions to hospital and care placements through improved joined up working on prevention measures.

The council's current priority is to support the improvement of schemes which are no longer fit for purpose and ensure the provision of flexi care schemes which enable residents to remain in their home with varying levels of care and support according to their needs over time.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing.
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Disabled adaptations

The council has a statutory duty to administer Disabled Facilities Grants which assist with access to and within people's homes. The council will continue to commit funding from its own resources to complement the grant received via the Better Care Fund in order to meet local needs. In order to maximise resources, the council will encourage registered providers to fund adaptations within their own stock and will engage with the county wide project to examine the potential for joint procurement. It is recognised that the policy and procedures relating to Disabled Facilities Grants can be improved in order to ensure that pressing needs are met most effectively and this review will be undertaken as part of the development of the Private Sector Renewal Policy in 2015.

The council will continue to work closely with registered providers who are advertising adapted properties to let, in order to make best use of existing adaptations and minimise the need either to further adapt or remove adaptations wherever possible.

It is recognised that in some cases it might be more appropriate for a resident to move to other accommodation rather than remain in a home which will be adapted. Watford Council will continue to give consideration to schemes and resources to facilitate this, for example Relocation Grants.

See the Needs Analysis for details of adaptations undertaken between January 2009 and March 2014.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the condition and management of housing.
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Procurement and commissioning

Subject to funding constraints, the council will continue to commission services from external providers where additional expertise or capacity is required in order to deliver our strategic priorities and service requirements. Examples include the deployment of DCLG homelessness prevention grant to fund work with high needs client groups and single homeless people. This activity will be evidence based and undertaken in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules which incorporate the requirement to assess social value considerations. Social value is the consideration of how procurement might offer social, economic or environmental benefits to the community. The council will enter into contracts or service level agreements as appropriate and will undertake monitoring of performance in order to ensure the desired outcomes are being achieved and value can be demonstrated.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing.
- Improving the condition and management of housing.
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

Empowerment of residents

The council is aiming to empower Watford residents to have a greater ability to resolve their own housing issues and make informed decisions.

Relevant Themes

- Improving the supply of housing.
- Improving the condition and management of housing.
- Support to specific client groups where intervention is required.

6. Priorities – Evaluation Criteria

Where an area of activity is defined as being a priority in the Housing Strategy Action Plan, this means that resources, including staffing, project time and funding, will be directed towards achieving the associated objectives. Outcomes will be monitored and evaluated through a suite of indicators designed for this purpose.

The priorities and related tasks in the housing strategy action plan focus on either new schemes or projects or improvements and expansions to existing schemes. They will not focus upon tasks and schemes which are already being implemented on a day-to-day basis.

Because of the discrete level of resources, the housing strategy action plan focuses upon priorities and tasks which have been identified as likely to have the most beneficial impact upon the Watford Housing Offer. The principles upon which high priority for resources and action have been chosen are:

Priority Selection criteria

- a. A high level of recommendation from the evidence base and/or the consultation exercises.
- b. Identified gaps in provision for particular groups.
- c. Identified ability of certain projects/schemes/services to have a high impact in improving Watford's Housing Offer.
- d. The availability of resources to implement the task..

Further information on the reasons why the priorities have been chosen is included in the Needs Analysis section.

Watford Housing Strategy

CONTEXTS – NATIONAL

Changes at a national level have a significant impact on both local authorities and registered providers and the way housing and housing-related services are provided. The following is a summary of key legislative and policy changes introduced between 2011 and 2014:-

Legislation

The Localism Act 2011- The Localism Act provides for radical changes in the following:

- The allocation of social housing
- The types of tenancies offered, introducing the Flexible or Fixed Term tenancy.
- The way a full homelessness duty can be discharged, with the legal entitlement to offer suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

The Energy Act 2011 – The Energy Act 2011 set out a framework to achieve energy efficiency measures for both homes and businesses. The Act creates the Green Deal, a new financing framework to enable the provision of energy efficiency improvements, funded by a charge on energy bills rather than up-front payments. The Act also created the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), an obligation on energy companies to help certain groups of consumers who need extra support with saving energy, such as those living in homes that are more difficult to make energy efficient and those on very low incomes. Forthcoming changes under this Act which are relevant to the private rented sector are:

- From April 2016 landlords of residential properties will not be able to unreasonably refuse requests from their tenants for consent to install energy efficiency improvements where financial support is available, such as via the Green Deal and/or the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). There is, however, no obligation for landlords to fund improvements.
- From April 2018 it will be unlawful to let properties rated as F or G on the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 – The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a wide range of changes to welfare benefits. These changes have been anticipated to impact upon the demand for housing advice and money advice services, and has changed the income situation for registered providers and private landlords. The changes introduced include:-

- *Universal Credit*, scheduled to be phased in between October 2013 and 2017. Regardless of tenure, Universal Credit will replace Housing Benefit for working age claimants, income based Job Seekers Allowance, Income

Support, income-related employment and support allowance, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credits. These separate benefits will no longer exist. Universal Credit will cover housing; there will be no separately identifiable payment made exclusively for housing costs.

- *Direct Payments* – Once a household is in receipt of Universal Credit, payment will be calculated and paid directly to the claimant on a monthly basis in arrears. The current mainstream practice of Housing Benefit payments being made directly to landlords will end.
- *Household Benefit caps* – From April 2013 a total cap was introduced on the amount of benefits any individual or couple is entitled to. Different weekly caps were set for single people, and for couples and households with children.
- *Size Criteria/Underoccupancy (Spare room subsidy changes)* – These changes applied to the social housing sector and were introduced from April 2013. Housing Benefit has been restricted according to the number of bedrooms which each person/family requires. Those who are assessed as under-occupying their home will have their Housing Benefit reduced by a percentage rate set at 14% for a tenant with one extra bedroom, and 25% for a tenant with two extra bedrooms or more.
- *Discretionary Housing Payments* – Discretionary housing payments provide financial assistance to tenants in receipt of Housing or Council Tax benefit where the local authority considers the household needs help with their housing costs.
- *Local Housing Allowance changes* – From April 2013 Local Housing Allowance claims for tenants of the private rented sector were set using the April 2012 Local Housing Allowance rate increased in the Consumer Price Index rather than the higher retail price index. From January 2012 in the private rented sector the age limit for single claimants without dependants to whom the shared accommodation rate applies rose from 25 to 35 years of age. From April 2011 the amount of Local Housing Allowance received per tenant was capped.

There are indications that further benefit restrictions might be introduced between 2015 and 2017, including a freezing of benefit levels for people of working age. If these changes are introduced preparations will need to be made for the impact they will have on segments of Watford's population.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 – The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires local authorities to work in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Board to develop a Health and Wellbeing strategy that responds to the specific needs of local populations and communities.

The Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012 – The Social Value Act 2012 promotes sustainable procurement which is described as “A process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation but also to society and the economy, while minimising damage to the environment.” Areas affected by the Act which are relevant to housing include:-

- Supporting local growth and local jobs

- Reducing pressure on council services
- Reducing Fossil fuel consumption/Carbon Dioxide emissions
- Reduce adverse health impacts
- Promoting equality and social inclusion
- Promoting sustainable urban living.

The Care Bill 2013 – The Care Bill 2013 recognises decent, safe and accessible housing as critical to wellbeing. It stresses the importance of housing in the prevention of the need for care and support and promotes better integration between housing and health related services.

The Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc) (England) Order 2014. - This Order requires persons who engage in letting agency work or property management work to belong to a redress scheme that has been approved by the Secretary of State or that has been designated as a government administered redress scheme.

Housing Policy

Laying the Foundations: The Housing Strategy for England – Through this national strategy, published in 2011, the Government aimed to improve affordability and housing market stability. The strategy proposed the following:-

- Increasing housing supply
- Encouraging growth in the private rented sector
- Bringing empty homes back into use
- Providing appropriate support and protections to vulnerable households and families on low incomes.
- Ensuring that new homes are well designed, of the highest quality and environmentally sustainable.

National Planning Policy Framework – From the perspective of the National Planning Policy Framework, development should not be prevented provided it is sustainable and does not affect vital local environmental protections. To demonstrate compliance, local authorities must have in place up-to-date development plans for their district that take into account the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. The requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework include:

- Local Planning Authorities should “use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing in the housing area.” (Paragraph 47).
- Local Planning Authorities should set out strategic policies in their Local Plan to deliver the homes and jobs needed in the area over the Plan Period.
- Local Planning Authorities have an obligation to fulfil a “Duty to Co-operate” with neighbouring local authorities.

The Affordable Rent regime – Following the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, the funding available for the Affordable Homes Programme was reduced. In response the Homes and Communities introduced Affordable Rent, a revenue based funding model that gives registered providers the flexibility to develop new homes on which an “Affordable Rent” of up to 80% of market rent can be charged. In addition,

a proportion of properties previously rented out at Social Rent can be converted to Affordable Rent when relet. Surpluses generated by Affordable Rents, once management and maintenance costs have been covered, can be used for the delivery of new affordable housing. The National Planning Policy Framework revised the definition of affordable housing to include Affordable Rent. Affordable Rent is outside the national rent regime which embraces Social Rents, but it is subject to other rent controls that require it to be offered to eligible households at a rent of up to 80% of local market rents.

The Public Health Outcomes Framework 2012 – The Public Health Outcomes Framework focuses on integrating public health into local government. It provides for all services to be planned and delivered in the context of the broader social determinants of health such as poverty, housing, employment, crime and the environment. This will embrace a wide range of housing-related activity, including projects to work more closely with private landlords.

Review of Property Conditions in the Private Rented Sector – In February 2014 the Government published the results of a consultation exercise in reviewing conditions in the private rented sector. It acknowledged that, while most landlords are reputable and provide decent and well maintained homes, a small proportion of landlords neglect their properties and do not provide a good service to their tenants. These landlords, together with lettings agents who provide a poor quality service, should be the focus of policy action. Proposals included:-

- Making tenants aware of their rights through a Tenants' Charter
- Providing and publicising information on local authority websites.
- Imposing a statutory duty on local authorities to investigate and deal with housing complaints, and not closing the case when the tenant leaves the property; the case will remain open until the property is fixed generally. This could assist in reducing retaliatory evictions as there is no benefit to the landlord in evicting the tenants.
- Information sharing between local authorities on so-called "rouge landlords."
- Providing tenants with a holistic approach to handle issues including financial advice, housing advice, mediation with landlords and referrals to other agencies.

The proposed outputs from the review are awaited.

Private Rented Sector Energy Efficiency Regulations – consultation on the implementation of the Energy Act 2011 – in July 2014 the Government published a consultation on energy efficiency in the private rented sector, aiming to support landlords in making improvements to their properties and empowering tenants to request improvements. The policy proposals also include methods of funding these improvements and information on the occasions when the obligation to carry out improvements can be waived.

The proposed outputs from this review are awaited.

Methods of new affordable housing development

Government capital grant funding (formerly Social Housing Grant) is no longer widely available to fund housing development. The main forms of funding affordable housing development from Central Government, local government and registered providers are now:-

Local authorities

- Disused land
- New Homes Bonus
- Other supplementary funding
- Funding from Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- Facilitation of conversion of redundant office and commercial premises.

Registered providers

- Section 106 agreements
- Developer contributions
- Affordable rental income (this method of funding affordable housing will be reviewed in 2015)
- Private finance - debts and bonds. The Bond market may soon have equal status with banks in terms of a role in funding affordable housing.
- Institutional investors such as Pension Funds.
- Cross-subsidisation from diversified activities such as market sale or market rent.
- Reserves.

Government

- Limited grant funding – very little Social Housing Grant is now available.
- Equity Loans - an example of this is Build to Rent.
- Guarantees (these do not count as public debt). Examples of guarantees are some low cost home ownership schemes.
- Disused land, such as land owned by the Ministry of Defence and Public Health bodies.

Examples of Government schemes to promote home ownership or increase the supply of market rented or privately rented housing are:-

Help to Buy – The Help to Buy scheme takes two forms:

- *The Equity Loan scheme*- this was introduced in April 2013 and is for the purchase of new homes only. The scheme assists the purchase with the offer of an equity loan. The Government loans a buyer up to 20% of the value of their new home. The buyer will then require a minimum 5% deposit and will need to fund the rest of the purchase from a conventional mortgage. The equity loan is interest free for the first five years. This scheme applies to newly built homes only.

- *The Mortgage Guarantee Scheme* – This was launched in January 2014 and aims to boost high loan-to-value lending for buyers who cannot afford large deposits. This schemes applies to both newly built and existing homes.

Build to Rent – The Build to Rent Fund supports the development of new purpose built privately rented homes. The fund is being used to facilitate institutional investment in the private rented sector and demonstrate models of a more professional, larger scale private rented sector.

The Private Rented Sector Guarantee – The private rented sector housing guarantee scheme supports the building of new homes for the private rented sector across the United Kingdom, offering housing providers a direct government guarantee on debt they raise to invest in new privately rented homes. The guarantee is designed specifically to attract investment into the private rented sector from fixed income investor who want a stable long-term return on investment without exposure to residential property risk.

The Affordable Housing Guarantee Scheme – The Affordable Housing Guarantees Scheme aims to unlock capacity to deliver more homes without increasing public debt. The Government has made announcements to guarantee particular levels of debt. The housing guarantee uses the Government’s fiscal credibility to reduce the cost of borrowing for housing providers, as well as attract investment from fixed income investors seeking a stable, long-term return on their investment without exposure to residential rental property risk.

The new contexts for Registered Providers

Registered providers have a major role to play in delivering the Watford Housing Strategy. The landscape in which registered providers operate has changed significantly since 2010.

The main changes can be summarised as follows:-

Past	Present
Government Grant	Reduced grant (decreased by 63% between 2010 and 2013)
Secure income from Housing Benefit	Welfare Reform, including Direct Payment of benefits to tenants
High credit scores	Credit scores more variable.
Loans from banks	Limited availability of finance from banks

Registered provider activities and remits are now characterised by the following:-

1. Purposes and Objectives – The registered provider sector is debating its purposes and objectives. Registered providers are reviewing their strategies and business plans to aim for a workable balance between social and commercial aspirations.

2. New freedoms and risks – Registered providers have been given new freedoms, but these are accompanied by higher risks. There may be debates about the pace and scale of changes within organisations.
3. Commercial vs Social – Increasing commercial activities allows greater autonomy and more opportunity to cross-subsidise submarket rented housing.
4. Low supply of Government capital subsidy – The amount of social housing grant available for new affordable homes has now been very much reduced.
5. New sources of funding – Reductions in both grant levels and bank lending have forced the registered provider sector to seeking funding on the capital markets, notably in the form of Bond finance. Bond financing looks set to increase and there are likely to be more innovative deals with institutional investors
6. Rent arrears: the effects – There have been concerns about how loan covenants will be affected by the higher rent arrears which might be incurred by the changes introduced by the Welfare Reform Act.
7. Value for Money and use of Assets – As part of the drive to become more commercial, many registered providers are seeking greater value for money from procurement and improving their asset management strategies.
8. New health and community services – Because of fiscal austerity, some registered providers are looking increasingly to deliver social value through community services which can provide an additional income. New partnerships are starting to emerge between registered providers and health authorities.
9. Working with local authorities – There is a view that closer working with local authorities will be key to moving forward, especially over the issues of welfare reforms and other changes in housing-related policy.

Future development

In the 2013 Autumn Statement the Government announced a review to consider the role that councils can play in helping to meet the housing needs of their local population within the context of the need to ensure good value for money and fiscal discipline. It will be entitled *The Review of local authorities' role in housing supply*.

The Review's terms of reference include:-

- What more councils, stock holding and non stock holding, could do to support housing supply, including making maximum use of their existing asset base to support development through asset sales, increasing their capacity and skills to support locally led larger scale development, and how councils are using their own land to support their own and others' house building.

- What innovative financing mechanisms councils have used to increase house building while ensuring value for money, and how central government can manage impacts on public sector borrowing. This should include consideration of institutional investment including pensions.
- How local authorities can best drive efficiency improvements in both their management and development of social housing to free up more resources to support new housing development.

The Review will report in late 2014 or early 2015.

Watford Housing Strategy

CONTEXTS – COUNTY AND LONDON

Watford is located in the south west of the county of Hertfordshire, close to the boundary with the north London boroughs of Hillingdon, Harrow and Barnet. Policy and demographic developments within both the county of Hertfordshire and London have an impact on housing supply and demand in Watford.

The County of Hertfordshire

As a district authority, certain activities in Watford are determined or influenced by Hertfordshire County Council, other Hertfordshire-wide organisations, and various sub-county local authority groupings.

Health and Well-being of people in Hertfordshire – Developing a health and well-being strategy for 2012-2015- The Health and Well-being Board for Hertfordshire has identified the following priorities for its strategy between 2012 and 2015:

- Priority 1: Tackling Obesity
- Priority 2: Reducing smoking
- Priority 3: Managing long-term conditions to reduce the use of emergency care
- Priority 4: Supporting family carers
- Priority 5: Promoting good mental health including helping people live well with dementia
- Priority 6: Helping families facing multiple problems to thrive
- Priority 7: Reducing the harm caused by drugs and alcohol
- Priority 8: Fulfilling lives for people with a learning disability

In addition, Hertfordshire County Council Health and Community Services Plan for 2012-2015 contains the following housing-related commitments:

- Re-ablement and Recovery
 - Make new accommodation schemes such as Flexicare/Extra Care housing and supported living widely available around the county.
- Personalisation
 - Improve our care services and support to people who have dementia and their families.
 - Reduce the number of older people and people with learning disabilities living in residential care homes.

The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Strategy – The growth strategy for Hertfordshire has been published and sets out ambitions to make the county the leading economy within the “golden triangle” of London, Oxford and Cambridge.

Hertfordshire’s economy consists of 1.1 million employees, 50,000 businesses and £26 billion GVA. However, the growth strategy identified the increasingly lack of affordable housing in the county as a barrier to growth, particularly for those who work locally.

The Local Enterprise Partnership has identified the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Enterprise and innovation in the heart of the Golden Triangle.
- Priority 2: Harnessing our relationships with London.
- Priority 3: Re-invigorating vibrant town centres for the 21st century, including advancing a new vision of town centres.

Hertfordshire Infrastructure Planning Partnership – A county-wide approach is being taken to examine infrastructure needs within Hertfordshire as these involve the statutory responsibilities of a number of organisations and cross-district boundaries.

The Duty to Co-operate – Hertfordshire local authorities are examining how cross-boundary working on planning and housing could work in practice.

The Hertfordshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2014-2015 - Hertfordshire County Council has convened a working group to produce a Hertfordshire child and poverty action plan. The action plan for 2014-2015 contains the following housing-related targets:-

- Explore mechanisms for assisting families experiencing fuel poverty.
- Explore methods of communication with homeless households living in temporary accommodation in order to provide assistance and promote new schemes and services.
- Promote sources of help and advice for people living in poorer housing conditions, especially those in the private rented sector.
- Continue to provide new affordable housing with two, three and four bedrooms which are suitable for households with children.

Hertfordshire Thriving Families – A new Thriving Families service has been established in Hertfordshire. It will be integral to Hertfordshire’s Thriving Families programme. The objective for Hertfordshire Thriving Families is to enable families to tackle barriers that stop them from thriving and provide support that sustains this progress for generations to come.

Housing-related support – Hertfordshire County Council commissions housing relating support services, both accommodation-based and service-based, for vulnerable people throughout Hertfordshire. As well as assessing the need for services, Hertfordshire County Council also monitors the quality of these services. In mid 2014 housing-related support was awarded to housing and support providers in Watford who provide accommodation and assistance to the following client groups:

- Older people
- People with mental health issues
- Single homeless people
- People with learning disabilities
- Young people aged 16-25 years.
- Women escaping domestic violence

The Strategic Partnership Accommodation Board – This Board acts as the main governance and strategic partnership forum in Hertfordshire for the development of services for children aged 16 and 17 who are homeless or may present as homeless. The Board will agree the priorities and strategic direction regarding improving preventative services and accommodation and support related services aimed at:-

- Preventing children becoming homeless
- Meeting the needs of homeless children
- Preventing children becoming looked after
- Providing a range of accommodation for care leavers.

The Better Care Fund – the Better Care Fund was announced by the Government in the June 2013 spending round to encourage a transformation in integrated health and social care. The Better Care Fund creates a local single pooled budget to incentivise the National Health Service and local government to work more closely together, placing well-being at the focus of health and care services. This includes funding for Disabled Facilities Grants.

The connections with London

Although Watford does not share a border with a London borough and is not within the political remit of the Greater London Authority, its economic, social and demographic links with London are close and are likely to increase. In July 2014 the Office for National Statistics published an estimate the Watford's population had increased by 2.2% between mid 2012 and mid 2013, consisting of a net growth of 2,004 persons. It was estimated that 53.0% of the growth (1,062 persons) consisted of in-migration from other boroughs within the United Kingdom, while 38.7% (776 persons) came from excess births over deaths and 8.2% (165 persons) came from the net increase in persons arriving from overseas. Information from the Office for National Statistics on population estimates for mid 2012 to mid 2013 suggests that a notable proportion of the in-migration from other boroughs was due to London residents moving to Watford. (please see chapter 8, section 1 on Population Growth).

Links between Watford and the London boroughs are influenced and characterised by the following:

- Watford's excellent railway links with London. The journey between Watford Junction and London Euston is scheduled to take approximately twenty minutes.
- The urban character of a large number of Watford's residential areas. This can replicate the character of residential areas in London and is mostly in contrast to the surrounding low-density Hertfordshire areas. In addition, Watford's small size and good internal transport links make most of the residential areas well connected with facilities such as shops, schools and places of worship.
- Watford has a range of leisure and cultural facilities to serve a wide range of needs and aspirations. The town also has one of the few thriving night-time economies in south west Hertfordshire; estate agents report that this makes the town attractive to residents of north and west London.
- Watford's housing is relatively affordable in comparison with the surrounding London boroughs and neighbouring Hertfordshire areas. This has a number of impacts:
 - The lower rents lead to households moving out of London boroughs to find more affordable housing in Watford.
 - The placing, by London local authorities, of homeless families in the private rented sector.
 - The migration of families from London who wish to find comparatively affordable family-sized homes and to access excellent schools in and around the town.
 - Watford has a much larger range of smaller housing options, such as shared houses, bedsits and one bedroom flats, than its neighbouring local authorities. This makes Watford an attractive destination for single person households who are seeking more affordable accommodation.

Possible future developments:

- The new Metropolitan line may make Watford a more attractive place to live for City workers who will now have excellent transport links with their place of employment. The new Health Campus and Charter Place shopping centre could be additional incentives to move to the town.
- There may be increased investment in residential accommodation in Watford, and thus a further expansion of the private rented sector.

The London Plan was introduced in July 2011, replacing the previous spatial strategy of 2009. Further revisions of this plan will be monitored to assess their impact upon Watford.

Watford Housing Strategy

CONTEXTS – LOCAL

The Council is working on a number of projects which relate to the strategic housing direction for Watford. Below is a summary of these policies and projects:

Planning Policies

The Watford Borough Council Corporate Plan 2014-2018: Investing in our town

Corporate Priority 1: Making Watford a better place to live in

- Delivering new homes – a target of 260 new dwellings per annum.
- Identifying and managing ways to tackle homelessness and the demand and supply while improving conditions through the revised Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy and Private Sector Renewal Policy.
- Implementing measures to maintain and improve conditions in homes to ensure they are suitable for use and promote the health, safety and welfare of residents through the revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.
- Working with registered providers, including Watford Community Housing Trust, on affordable housing solutions.
- Delivering Local Plan Part 2 – Site Allocations, Development Management Policies, Town Centre policies.
- Implementing the Green Deal programme as a member of the Green Deal Together Community Interest Company to deliver energy efficiency solutions to businesses and residents to reduce ill health due to excess cold and to address fuel poverty.

Measures of success:

- New homes delivered each year, including a number of affordable new homes.
- Households supported to find solutions to their housing needs.
- Number of homes improved to remove hazards to residents' health, safety and welfare.
- Take up of Green Deal installations by those eligible.

Watford's Local Plan

Part 1 – Core Strategy 2006-2031

The Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted on 30 January 2013. This means that the Core Strategy now forms part of the development plan and will be used in determining planning applications.

Watford Borough Council's Core Strategy sets out the key elements of the council's planning vision and spatial strategy for the borough. The Core Strategy is the central part of the Local Plan and establishes the direction for other documents that will set out the planning strategy and policies in more detail. All other Local Plan documents must be consistent with the Core Strategy.

Overall vision for Watford

- Watford town centre will have a series of sectors where commercial, shopping, leisure, recreation and cultural activities support each other in well designed surroundings. Further high quality town centre housing will be developed, providing safe and attractive accommodation of various types, including family units, in good proximity to the railway stations at Watford Junction and Watford High Street.
- Watford's existing local centres will be improved to provide our communities with strong neighbourhood centres with a wide range of services, including schools and retail facilities with good access to public transport. There will be an appropriate mix of housing for all, including affordable housing. The new housing will lead the way in sustainable construction and technology.

The Housing Vision for Watford

- It is important that the council identifies an adequate and continuous supply of land for housing to meet Watford's housing growth requirements in sustainable locations. It is also important that the council encourages a range of housing types and sizes, including affordable housing, to meet the requirements of all sectors of the community. New residential development, whether through new build or extensions and alterations to existing homes, should be designed appropriately for its location.
- Taking various evidence into consideration, including population projections, the council considers that a minimum total target of 6,500 homes from 2006 to 2031, an average delivery rate of 260 dwellings per annum, is suitable for the borough.
- Specific sites will be identified and allocated through the site allocations document. Identification will be in accordance with the Core Strategy and will be informed by the evidence base and results of the consultation.
- In allocating sites for residential development, priority will be given to sites which will best contribute to building sustainable communities and support the

town's regeneration initiatives, taking into account the Special Policy Areas of the spatial strategy.

- Factors that will support the residential allocation in the site allocations document will include:
 - Consistency with the spatial strategy
 - Previously developed land
 - Proximity to neighbourhood centres
 - Close to public transport, walking and cycling network routes
 - Location within the town centre or at other strategically located sites.

- Factors that will go against residential allocation will include:
 - Not previously developed land
 - Land at risk of flooding
 - Existing employment land, open space or other community facilities for which there is still an identified need.
 - Land with high biodiversity, landscape or cultural heritage significance.
 - No access to reliable public transport links.

- The general approach is that the type/size and density of developments will be informed by the design guidelines in the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document which will be used to ensure that development are appropriate to the surrounding context, infrastructure capacity and character of the area.

- The council will seek to reduce inequalities, create socially mixed communities with greater choice and a mix in size, types and location of housing to meet the needs of the whole of Watford's community, The Local Plan will assist in supporting Watford's Housing Strategy in this aim. The council will seek the provision of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures at a local level to meet the requirements of all sections of the community. This includes the provision of:
 - Family sized units
 - Smaller housing units
 - Provision for those unable to compete financially in the housing market sector.
 - Those with special needs as informed by local evidence.

- Higher density developments, mainly including flats, will be focused around the town centre and key strategic sites such as the Watford Junction and Health Campus Special Policy Areas, and to a limited extent around the area at the proposed station at Ascot Road. Medium density developments such as flats and houses may be appropriate close to neighbourhood centres where they are well served by transport links. Low density family houses with gardens will be sought in more suburban areas.

- A rate of 35% affordable housing will be sought on major applications of ten residential units and above or sites or more than 0.5 hectare. Only in

exceptional circumstances will the council consider a lower level of affordable housing provision, where the developer can demonstrate exceptional planning, or other constraints on the development of the site through the submission of a development viability assessment. The affordable housing provision shall be:-

- Social Rent 20%
- Affordable Rent 65%
- Intermediate affordable housing (low cost home ownership) 15%.

Watford's Local Plan Part 2 – Site Allocations and Development Management

This part of the Local Plan will provide more detailed policies for considering applications for planning permission and identify specific sites for development and the type of development that would be appropriate. It will set out policies for the town centre.

Part 2 will include development management policies which will support the Core Strategy by setting out additional planning policies that the council will use when making decisions on applications for planning permission. There will be more detail on site specific matters and sites will be allocated for different land uses.

The Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new charge which will allow the council to raise funds from new developments for use on infrastructure to support the growth of the borough.

The money collected from the levy will be used to support development by funding infrastructure which the council and the community need. It will come into force from April 2015. The levy will apply to most new buildings. Charges will be based on the size, type and location of the new development and will be set out in a charging schedule.

Residential Design Guide, July 2014

The Residential Design Guide (RDG) for Watford provides detail on designing new residential development in the borough, in relation to both extensions to existing buildings and larger scale development of new residential units.

A revised version of the Residential Design Guide has been produced by the Council and was subject to public consultation. The revised document was adopted on 23 July 2014.

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan

The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) provides an assessment of the infrastructure necessary to support the existing and planned increase in new homes and jobs within the borough up to 2031. It takes account of the projected population growth in the borough and the need to encourage sustainable development and mitigate climate change. The assessment includes a review of the existing provision, an analysis of the required future provision and, where known, its location, when it will be provided, how it will be funded and who will be responsible for delivery.

The IDP has been informed by information from a range of service providers: County and District Council services (such as education, libraries and highways), the Local Strategic Partnership, and infrastructure providers external to the Council (such as health services, emergency services and utility companies). It focuses on key infrastructure needs derived from various plans and strategies of each of these partners.

The Watford Borough Council Property Review

The Watford Borough Council Property Review has been set up to assess the current use of Watford Council's assets. The Review is due to report in Autumn 2014. The brief for the review includes Council assets which are residential, commercial, leisure facilities and land.

The Watford Borough Council Economic Development Strategy

The Watford Borough Council Economic Development Strategy will set out the following:

- How we will achieve economic growth in Watford.
- An assessment of the economic impact of major schemes.
- How we can make Watford attractive for business
- How we can ensure that we have the skilled workforce required in the borough
- The implications for housing.

The Watford Developers' Forum

The Watford Developers' Forum will meet twice a year. It is a networking forum with the development sector in Watford. The aims of the forum are:

- To provide an arena in which the private sector – developers, property professionals and registered providers – is able to voice their views and concerns, offer practical advice and influence how Watford Borough Council can achieve its strategic development aims.

- To gain a deeper understanding of the key development issues in Watford, focusing on identifying practical action that would improve the development climate and support investment and sustainable growth.
- To help shape the Council's vision for growth and development of the town and to gain a deeper understanding of the changing property market.
- To promote Watford's major mixed use regeneration schemes and other investment opportunities.
- To share learning on removing barriers to development and to promote high quality schemes.

Housing-related policies

These housing-related policies link directly to the Housing Strategy but deal with very specific areas of housing activity.

The Watford Borough Council Nominations Policy

A nominations policy specifies the criteria under which households are eligible for social housing, and how priority to be allocated social housing will be awarded.

In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, a new nominations policy has been devised for the allocation of social housing in Watford and how applications for social housing will be prioritised. The main changes which are proposed are:-

- i) Band E is the lowest priority band on the housing register. Band E applicants will be removed from the housing register and new applicants who would have been Band E will not be able to register. The exceptions are:
 - Social housing tenants where Watford Borough Council would have nominations to the resulting vacancy.
 - Home seekers aged over 60 for designated older persons' accommodation only.
- ii) Residency connection – In order to join the housing register applicants must be living in Watford now and have lived here for five out of the last six years. This is a tightening from the previous three out of the last five years or six out of the last twelve months. Employment in Watford or close relatives living in the borough will not now constitute a local connection. Exceptions will include members of the armed forces and tenants of housing associations in Watford.
- iii) Priority for statutory homeless people – Statutory homeless people will now be placed in Band C rather than Band B. This change is part of a plan

to prevent homelessness. There will be a reduction in the priority inequality of housing register applicants in overcrowded situations who are sharing with friends or family, and households applying for accommodation under homelessness legislation.

The Watford Borough Council Tenancy Strategy 2012-2015

Tenancy strategies were introduced by the Localism Act 2011 for local authorities to use in making best use of affordable housing stock and to improve partnership working with registered providers. Guidance is provided to registered providers on the following:

- Rent levels for general and special needs housing, and for existing and new affordable housing.
- Flexible and Lifetime tenancies
- How to assist households who are under-occupying their homes.
- Homelessness and the use of the private rented sector.
- Local lettings plans and special housing plans.

The first Tenancy Strategy was produced in December 2012. In light of the allocation of social housing since that time, including the allocation of new homes at affordable rent level and the conversion of some social rented homes to affordable rent upon reletting, an interim Tenancy Strategy will be revised by December 2014.

The Homelessness Review, Strategy and Action Plan 2014-2015

Under the Homelessness Act 2002 each local authority is required to produce a review of homelessness in its area and a strategy for preventing and tackling homelessness at least once every five years. The latest homelessness review, strategy and action plan for Watford was produced in 2013, with an undertaking to review the action plan on an annual basis. The 2014-2015 revised action plan will be produced by October 2014. The action plan will contain the following tasks:-

- i) Understanding and improving methods of preventing illegal and retaliatory eviction in the private rented sector.
- ii) Reviewing our housing advice offer with customer services.
- iii) Investigating options to expand the portfolio of temporary accommodation.
- iv) Implementing the new Nominations Policy.
- v) Implementing the new Private Sector Discharge Policy.
- vi) Introducing a new Communications Strategy in conjunction with the Housing Strategy, to tackle high expectations and high rates of refusals, and to manage demand.
- vii) Contribute towards a corporate Domestic Violence Policy.
- viii) Monitoring the number of evictions from social housing and the number of Discretionary Housing Payments which are ending.
- ix) Ending of funding for the Transitions Service managed by New Hope (providing short-term direct access accommodation to help homeless

- people to manage the “transition” from homelessness to settled accommodation) in March 2015 – minimising the impact.
- x) Review of Council funding to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy guides the development of Watford Council’s service to owners and tenants of privately owned residential property in the borough, setting priorities and allocating resources within each of the following areas of activity:

- Promoting and Enabling
- Direct Financial Assistance
- Enforcement

Subject to an analysis of available data and good practice, the priorities which may be considered for the inclusion in this policy include issues such as poor housing conditions which present a risk to health, home energy conservation, overcrowding, assistance to vulnerable people living in privately owned homes, the private rented sector, houses in multiple occupation, and health and well-being. The private sector housing renewal policy will be a priority in the main housing strategy action plan.

The Climate Change Strategy 2015-2020

The Watford Borough Council Climate Change Strategy for 2015 to 2020 will represent the council’s broad vision regarding climate change. Its aim is to “make Watford a borough that acknowledges Climate Change, maximises its opportunities and minimises its threats to increase the wellbeing of the community.”

Impact of National Legislation

The Welfare Reform Act 2012

Watford Community Housing Trust is the largest registered provider in Watford and owns the majority of larger social rented housing in the borough. Therefore, it is likely to have the largest number of tenant households who are affected by the changes to Spare Room Subsidy. As in July 2014, the position was as follows:

- The number of tenant households in April 2013 who were affected by the Spare Room Subsidy changes was 312. By contrast, by the end of July 2014 the number of Watford Community Housing Trust tenant households affected by the Spare Room Subsidy changes was 252.

- Most affected tenants had decided to “stay and pay” which is consistent with the national trend.
- Watford Community Housing Trust employed a dedicated worker from November 2012 to work with households who would be affected by the Spare Room Subsidy changes. This officer has helped 80 tenant households affected by the Spare Room Subsidy changes to downsize, either by transfer or by mutual exchange.
- By July 2014 two households who were affected by the Spare Room Subsidy changes from April 2013 had been evicted by Watford Community Housing Trust. Neither of the evictions were due solely to the Spare Room Subsidy changes – both households were already in rent arrears before the Spare Room Subsidy changes was implemented in April 2013.

Partnerships

Watford Council is a member of a number of multi-authority and multi-agency forum which focus on various types of housing activities. The main forums, of which Watford Council is a member, are:-

- a) HARI Board – meeting quarterly, a forum for Watford Council, its neighbour Three Rivers Council, and the registered providers who work in one or both local authority areas.
- b) HARI Management Group – meeting quarterly, the HARI group which focuses on housing management activities.
- c) HARI Affordable Housing Group – meeting quarterly, the HARI group which focuses on affordable housing development activities.
- d) Herts Choice Homes Board – meeting quarterly, the group which oversees the operation of the Herts Choice Homes Consortium which controlled the Choice-Based lettings system for Watford, Hertsmere, Three Rivers St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield councils.
- e) Herts Heads of Housing Group – meeting quarterly, heads of housing within each local authority area meet to discuss housing issues and share good practice.
- f) Prevention of Single Homelessness Group (PoSH) – meeting once every two to three months, a multi-agency forum consisting of members of organisations who work with single homeless people in Watford and Three Rivers.
- g) Herts and Beds Housing Group – meeting quarterly, a group of housing and environmental health officers who work on improving housing conditions.

- h) Accommodation Solutions Group – meeting once every four to six months, this group is convened by Hertfordshire County Council. It allows the Hertfordshire County Council and district councils to discuss the accommodation needs of special needs groups across the county.
- i) Child Poverty Strategic Objectives Group – meeting quarterly, this group is convened by Hertfordshire County Council. It devises and implements the action plan for reducing child poverty in Hertfordshire. The action plan includes housing-related objectives.
- j) Housing Strategy and Developers Liaison Group – meeting quarterly, this group consists of strategy and development officers from across Hertfordshire. The group meets to share good practice and receive information from external organisations.
- k) Housing Liaison Group – This group consists of officers from across Hertfordshire who award Disabled Facilities Grants and install adaptations.

Resources

The following resources may fund the projects that compose the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan:-

Internal resources

- Homelessness Grant allocated by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- Watford Council capital programme
- Capital budgets for temporary accommodation
- Private Sector Housing Funding including Decent Homes Assistance
- Assets – land and property.
- Watford Borough Council community grants.
- Discretionary Housing Payments

External resources

- Local Enterprise Partnership Funding.
- Homes and Communities Agency Affordable Housing Programme

- Registered Provider funding
- Land Backed Asset Vehicle (LABV)
- External energy efficiency budgets
- Better Care Fund (including funding for Disabled Facilities Grants)
- Health-related funding.
- Housing related support funding.

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Watford Housing Strategy – Needs Analysis

A) A Picture of Watford

1. Population growth

As a local authority area, Watford is estimated to have had a very high rate of population growth between mid 2012 and mid 2013. It has the highest estimated population growth in Hertfordshire.. The following statistics indicate a net population rise of 3,435 persons between March 2011 and mid 2013, a 3.8% increase:-

- March 2011 total population 90,301 persons
- Mid March 2012 total population estimate 91,732 persons
- Mid March 2013 total population estimate 93,736 persons

The Office for National Statistics estimates that the Watford population experienced net population growth of 2,003 persons between mid 2012 and mid 2013, and that the growth consisted of the following:

- The excess of births over deaths 776 persons 38.5% of the growth
- Net internal in-migration 1,062 person 53.0% of the growth
- Net international in-migration 165 persons 6.2% of the growth

In Hertfordshire Watford had the 5th largest number of births, despite having the 8th largest population in mid 2012.

Qualitative evidence has been obtained which implies that households are moving to Watford from some London boroughs to seek more affordable accommodation, but at present a comprehensive picture of this is not available. Population growth in London boroughs is estimated to have been due predominantly to excess of births over deaths and net international in-migration, while almost all boroughs have seen population loss due to out-migration to other United Kingdom boroughs. The statistics on population change between mid 2012 and mid 2013 estimated that the following north London boroughs had seen out-migration to other United Kingdom boroughs consisting of these numbers:-

- Brent -4,922 persons
- Harrow -2,352 persons
- Barnet -1,732 persons
- Enfield -1,676 persons
- Hillingdon -297 persons

The net in-migration to Watford from other boroughs of 1,062 persons shows considerable variation between the age groups as follows:

Age group	Increase/decrease in number of persons
0-14 years old	+293 persons
15-19 years old	-222 persons
20-35 years old	+1,008
35-44 years old	+55 persons
45-59 years old	-81 persons
60-74 years old	-78 persons
75+ years old	+87 persons
Overall internal inflow of population	+6,905 persons
Overall internal outflow of population	-5,843 persons
Net internal inflow of population	+1,062 persons

This indicates how in-migration to Watford is predominantly of children aged under 14 years and young adults in the 20-35 year old age group. This suggests that housing demand is growing among young families and young single person households.

2. Census 2011 and other demographic data

The growth of younger and older age groups

The Census 2011 shows that Watford has a comparatively young population compared with the East of England region and with England itself:-

	<i>Watford</i>	<i>East of England</i>	<i>England</i>
▪ 0-4 years old	7.5%	6.2%	6.3%
▪ 5-14 years old	11.9%	11.5%	11.4%
▪ 15-24 years old	12.2%	12.2%	13.1%
▪ 25-44 years old	33.8%	26.5%	27.5%
▪ 45-59 years old	17.9%	19.8%	19.4%
▪ 60+ years old	16.8%	23.9%	22.3%

In 2011 the wards with the highest percentage of residents who were aged 0-9 years were Holywell at 16.2%, Vicarage at 15.7% and Callowland at 14.6%. In 2011 the wards with the highest percentage of residents who were aged 60 and over were

Nascot at 23.3%, Park at 20.6% and Meriden at 20.3%. These wards contain a significant number of housing schemes and residential care homes for older people.

Household types

The 2011 Census revealed that the Single Persons households under pensionable age had become the most frequent household type in Watford, composing 21.1% of all households. The wards with the highest percentages of this type of household were Central at 35.4%, Callowland at 26.5% and Holywell at 24.9%. In 2001 married couples with children composed the most frequent household type in Watford.

Tenure

In March 2011 the tenure structure of Watford's housing stock was composed of the following:-

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Owned outright | 24.4% of the housing stock |
| • Owned with a mortgage | 37.2% of the housing stock |
| • Low cost home ownership | 1.2% of the housing stock |
| • Social Rented | 16.3% of the housing stock |
| • Private Rented | 20.1 of the housing stock. |
| • Other | 0.8% of the housing stock |
| • Total | 36,681 households |

There have been two very significant changes in terms of tenure:-

- The percentage decline in households who own their homes with a mortgage, from 46.0% in 2001 to 37.2% in 2011.
- The percentage increase in households who are now renting their homes from a private landlord, from 9.8% in 2001 to 20.1% in 2011. Numerically, Watford's private rented sector almost doubled in size between 2001 and 2011. The private rented sector is particularly large in the following wards: Central at 35.1%, Callowland at 30.8% and Vicarage at 30.7%.

Accommodation types and supply

The wards which experienced the highest percentage growth in the supply of unshared homes between 2001 and 2011 were Park at 26.1% increase, Central at 20.1% increase and Holywell at 14.2% increase. The wards which experienced the lowest percentage growth in the supply of unshared homes between 2001 and 2011 were Leggatts at nil growth, Oxhey at 2.0% and Stanborough at 5.0%

Ethnicity

In 2011 the wards which saw the highest percentages of residents from the following ethnic backgrounds were:-

- *White British* – Woodside at 76.5%, Oxhey at 73.8% and Stanborough at 73.3%
- *White Other* – Central at 14.5%, Vicarage at 12.5% and Holywell at 9.8%
- *Asian* – Vicarage at 35.7%, Holywell at 26.8% and Park at 22.2%
- *Black African-Caribbean* - Vicarage at 9.0%, Holywell at 8.0% and Central at 7.4%

In-migration from overseas

The West Watford wards of Vicarage, Holywell and Central have the largest populations of Watford residents from outside the United Kingdom who have arrived since 1991. Of their residents who were born outside the United Kingdom, 80.7% of Central's population arrived since 1991, followed by 75.6% in Vicarage and 72.9% in Holywell. These three wards have higher numbers of small housing stock i.e. containing one or two bedrooms. Prior to 1991 some residents may have lived in Central, Vicarage or Holywell initially, then moved to parts of the borough with larger housing stock.

In terms of the "new" immigration of residents born in countries admitted to the European Union between April 2001 and March 2011, Central ward appears to have been the most popular destination. In March 2011 of the 3,147 Watford residents born in European countries admitted to the European Union between April 2001 and March 2011, 20.2% lived in Central, 15.6% lived in Vicarage and 11.9% lived in Callowland.

There was relatively small immigration from overseas to Watford between mid 2012 and mid 2013. This consisted of 165 persons, of whom 150 were aged 0-30 years. There was out-migration to an overseas destination of 22 person aged 35-54 years.

The housing-related implications of increasing in-migration from other areas could include greater demand for privately rented homes, as privately rented accommodation is the easily accessible tenure.

Population projections

The Population Projection Unit at the Office for National Statistics has made population projections for each local authority between 2014 and 2020. The projections for Watford are:-

Total population

	2014	2017	2020
0-14 years old	18.9%	21.4%	21.0%
15-24 years old	10.5%	10.2%	9.5%
25-44 years old	33.7%	32.7%	32.4%
45-59 years old	18.9%	18.4%	19.0%
60+ years old	17.9%	17.3%	18.1%

Males

	2014	2017	2020
0-14 years old	20.8%	22.0%	21.6%
15-24 years old	12.5%	12.0%	11.8%
25-44 years old	33.3%	32.0%	31.4%

45-59 years old	18.8%	18.0%	17.6%
60+ years old	14.6%	16.0%	17.6%

Females

	2014	2017	2020
0-14 years old	20.0%	22.0%	21.2%
15-24 years old	12.0%	10.0%	11.5%
25-44 years old	34.0%	30.0%	30.8%
45-59 years old	16.0%	18.0%	17.3%
60+ years old	18.0%	20.0%	19.2%

Outstanding trends from these statistics are:-

- Percentages by age group are not due to change particularly significantly between 2014 and 2020. .
- The steady rise in 0-14 years olds as a percentage of the population.
- The slight, although not significant, rise in the number of older people as a percentage of the population. The rise in the percentage of males aged 60+ is predicted to be much higher than the predicted rise in the percentage of females aged 60+.
- The 15-24 and 25-44 year old age groups are predicted to show a slight decline.

3. Housing Supply

Newly built homes in Watford April 2009 – March 2014

	Number of new affordable homes	Net housing completions	Affordable housing as a % of net housing completions
2009/2010	224	516	43.4%
2010/2011	356	633	56.2%
2011/2012	95	417	22.8%
2012/2013	184	541	34.9%
2013/2014	82	352	23.3%

Gross completions of new homes in Watford by size, April 2009 – March 2014

	Total	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
2009/2010	540	38.8%	42.8%	9.5%	8.9%
2010/2011	665	42.0%	41.5%	6.1%	10.4%
2011/2012	479	46.6%	45.9%	5.0%	2.6%
2012/2013	568	27.1%	53.0%	6.7%	13.2%

2013/2014	385	35.8%	41.3%	13.2%	9.7%
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A total of 74 new affordable homes are due to be completed between April 2014 and March 2015. However, this number may increase or decrease depending on a range of circumstances such as delays in development.

The need for a wider range of housing options and types

The housing strategy consultation exercises have revealed that demand for housing at all levels in Watford is high.

Demand for “traditional” affordable housing for rent continues to remain very high. There is clear evidence that households in receipt of low to medium level earnings will rarely be able to afford homes for market sale or market rent. Therefore, development of homes for lettings at a low rent will continue to be encouraged.

However, Watford Council also wishes to encourage the provision of other housing options in addition to the traditional housing options spectrum of Owner-occupation - Low Cost Home Ownership – Private rent from a Buy to Let Landlord – Social Rent. Research into Band E on the housing register (the lowest priority band but containing 75% of housing register applicants) has shown that there are large segments of the population who will have difficult accessing the usual social or market housing, but who have jobs in Watford and contribute to the vitality of the town’s economy. The council wishes to work with registered providers to assess the potential for new housing options such as:-

- High quality shared housing and/or houses in multiple occupation.
- Market rent schemes, to remain separate from the main affordable housing programme.
- Niche market for housing for sale to improve housing pathways in Watford, such as the progression from a two bedroom to a three bedroom home, to remain separate from the main affordable housing programme.
- A full range of low cost home ownership options.

Watford is the most densely populated borough in Hertfordshire and one of the most densely populated local authority areas in England. Its density increased from 37.2 persons per hectare in 2001 to 42.1 persons per hectare in 2011. With an overall size of just 2,142 hectare, it is also the smallest local authority area in Hertfordshire. Significantly, it is surrounded by local authority areas whose densities are much lower. For example, the population density figures for neighbouring boroughs in 2011 were:-

- Dacorum 6.8 persons per hectare
- Hertsmere 9.9 persons per hectare
- St Albans 8.7 persons per hectare
- Three Rivers 9.8 persons per hectare

Although the Census 2011 recorded that 66% of Watford’s housing stock still consists of houses, small units containing one and two bedroom have undoubtedly formed a very significant part of Watford’s overall development of new homes since 2009:

1 and 2 bedroom homes as a percentage of total development

▪ 2009/2010	81.6%
▪ 2010/2011	83.5%
▪ 2011/2012	92.5%
▪ 2012/2013	80.1%
▪ 2013/2014	77.1%

A need for more family-sized homes and lower density housing for older people has been identified and would be appropriate for more peripheral sites in the borough. Watford Council would like to examine the option to work with neighbouring authorities to devise mutually beneficial arrangements for the development of lower density housing as part of cross-boundary initiatives.

4. House prices

House prices in Watford have risen so that they are now equal to some parts of North London. The average house price in Watford was £274,807 in September 2013, rising 18.9% between 2009 and 2013. Further increases are expected as the Croxley Rail Link makes the borough more desirable for investment in residential property.

Equally, there remains pressure on Watford due to its relative affordability compared to surrounding local authority areas such as St Albans, Three Rivers and Hertsmere.

Average costs of lower priced housing (priced at under £300,000)

Regular research exercises have been carried out into the average cost of homes in Watford which have been priced at £300,000 or below. In June 2014 research was carried out into 591 properties in Watford advertised on the Rightmove website which were priced at or below £300,000. The results for each property size were as followed:

• Studio homes	9 homes in sample	Mean average price £126,933
• 1 bedroom	204 homes in sample	Mean average price £170,940
• 2 bedroom	295 homes in sample	Mean average price £243,471
• 3 bedroom	83 homes in sample	Mean average price £269,425

5. Market Rent levels

In terms of market rent levels, Watford is much more equal with both the surrounding local authority areas and north London boroughs. This may be indicative of the attractiveness of the borough for property investors who purchase houses and flats in order to rent them out. The average market rent in Watford in September 2013 was over £1,000 per month.

Average levels of lower priced rents (below the national maximum level for Local Housing Allowance)

Regular research exercises have been carried out into the average monthly rents of homes in Watford whose rents are at or below national Local Housing Allowance maximum levels. In June 2014 research was carried out into 271 properties in Watford on the Rightmove website whose monthly rents were at or below Local Housing Allowance maximum levels. The results for each property size were as followed:

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| • Studio homes | 22 homes in sample | Mean average rent £614 |
| • 1 bedroom | 97 homes in sample | Mean average rent £801 |
| • 2 bedroom | 112 homes in sample | Mean average rent £1,025 |
| • 3 bedroom | 40 homes in sample | Mean average rent £1,215 |

6. Earnings levels

In 2011 the biggest employment areas for residents of Watford were, in descending order:

- Wholesale and retail, trade, repairs
- Transport, Storage, Communication and Information
- Human Health and Social Work.

The Annual Survey of Household Earnings has recorded that earnings of Watford's residents are significantly higher than earnings of Watford's employees. This indicates firstly that a proportion of Watford's residents commute to work in higher paid occupations in London, and secondly that Watford has a large and thriving service industry whose employees typically have comparatively low earnings. Research into earnings of Watford-based jobs in July 2014 found the following income levels:-

Lower earnings levels

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Graduate Accounts Administrator | £17,000 |
| • Quality Assurance Administrator | £18,000 - £20,000 |
| • Marketing Officer | £18,000 - £24,000 |
| • HGV Mechanic/Technician | £20,000 |
| • Media Sales Executive | £20,000 |
| • Chef de Partie | £23,000 |
| • Payroll Clerk | £23,000 - £26,000 |
| • Graduate Business Trainee | £23,000 - £28,000 |

Median earnings levels

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| • Test Technician | £25,000 - £27,000 |
| • Lettings Negotiator | £25,000 - £30,000 |
| • Year 2 Class Teacher | £25,000 - £45,000 |
| • Commercial Laundry Engineer | £26,000 |
| • Civil Engineer | £28,000 - £33,000 |
| • Finance Analyst | £30,000 - £40,000 |
| • Pharmaceutical Process Engineer | £30,000 - £36,000 |

- Finance Analyst £34,000 - £40,000
- Bespoke Buyer £35,000 - £38,000
- Assistant Manager £35,000 - £40,000
- Test Engineer £35,000 - £45,000

Higher earnings levels

- Business Analyst £40,000
- Finance Analyst £40,000 - £50,000
- Mechanical Design Engineer £45,000
- Application Support Team Leader £45,000 - £55,000
- Data Scientist £45,000 - £55,000
- Sales Consultants £50,000 – £75,000
- Data Centre Build Manager £55,000 - £60,000

Source:- Universal Job Search website

Comparisons with Sections 4 and 5 show that it would be difficult for a household with only one income to purchase even a lower priced property in Watford.

7. Social Housing in Watford

The Census 2011 recorded a total of 5,979 social rented homes in Watford, and an additional 361 have been built since then. The landlord with the highest amount of social housing stock is Watford Community Housing Trust, owning 4,226 homes in March 2014 which constitutes 66.7% of the borough’s total social housing. A total of 3,718 homes were general needs while 508 were designated for older people only. In addition, as in August 2014 there were 503 homes for low cost home ownership in Watford.

On the housing register band A is the highest priority and band E is the lowest priority. Band B has hitherto contained all homeless households, so tends to provide the highest number of successful bidders for social housing. In June 2014 the numbers on Watford’s housing register were as follows:-

June 2014	Housing register by bedrooms required (live applications)				
	1	2	3	4/5	Total
A	5	0	0	0	5
B	42	25	8	2	77
C	4	72	10	8	94
D	263	282	172	18	735
E	2485	1090	299	15	3889
Total	2799	1469	489	43	4800

Between April 2013 and March 2014 the numbers of types of social rented housing which were let were as follows:-

2013/2014	Properties let by bedroom size				
Band	1*	2	3	4/5	Total

A	3	1	0	0	4
B	39	129	26	2	196
C	3	7	8	3	21
D	49	11	65	4	129
E	40	4	1	0	45
Total	134	152	100	9	395

**Including 57 homes for older people only.*

Watford Borough Council transferred its housing stock to Watford Community Housing Trust in September 2007. Tenants of the former Council-owned housing mostly retained the Right to Buy powers. Right to Buy sales in Watford remained very low during the most acute years of the economic recession between 2008 and 2012. However, in 2012 the Government introduced increased discounts for Right to Buy purchases. The number of homes purchased under the Right to Buy have now risen steeply.

Time period	Number of Right to Buy sales completed.
September 2007 – March 2008	3
April 2008 – March 2009	3
April 2009 – March 2010	2
April 2010 – March 2011	2
April 2011 – March 2012	5
April 2012 – March 2013	19
April 2013 – March 2014	28
April 2014 – August 2014	16

The demand for social housing far exceeds the supply. In addition, social housing turnover has decreased in recent years. A total of 395 homes were let between April 2013 and March 2014, compared to 471 between April 2012 and March 2013.

The Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities greater freedom to set their own policies about who should qualify to go on the waiting list for social housing in their area. This means that they are now able, if they wish, to prevent people who have no need of social housing from joining the waiting list. Authorities are still obliged to ensure that social homes go to the most vulnerable in society and those who need it most.

Watford Council is compiling a new Nominations Policy, to be implemented by the end of 2014. The main changes in the new policy are:

- i) Band E is the lowest priority band on the housing register. Band E applicants will be removed from the housing register and new applicants

who would have been Band E will not be able to register. The exceptions are:

- Tenants in Watford or where Watford Community Housing Trust would have nominations to the resulting vacancy.
 - Home seekers aged over 55 for designated older persons' accommodation only.
- ii) Residency connection – In order to join the housing register applicants must be living in Watford now and have lived here for five out of the last six years. This is a tightening from the previous three out of the last five years or six out of the last twelve months. Employment in Watford or close relatives living in the borough will not now constitute a local connection. Exceptions will include members of the armed forces and tenants of housing associations in Watford.
- iii) Priority for statutory homeless people – Statutory homeless people will now be placed in Band C rather than Band B. This change is part of a plan to prevent homelessness. There will be a reduction in the priority inequality of housing register applicants in overcrowded situations who are sharing with friends or family, and households applying for accommodation under homelessness legislation.

8. Homelessness

The number of households applying for assistance under homelessness legislation has risen significantly between 2008 and 2014.

Total number of households applying for assistance and the outcome of their applications:-

	2008/2009	2012/2013	2013/2014
Accepted for assistance	86	154	149
Intentionally homeless	9	-	13
Non priority need	9	5	11
Not homeless	20	29	17
Ineligible	3	1	-
Total	127	189	190

Reasons for homelessness among households accepted for assistance

	2008/2009	2012/2013	2013/2014

Eviction by parents, other family or friends	32	70	66
Non-violent relationship breakdown	4	6	4
Violent relationship breakdown	4	10	9
Other violence or harassment	-	5	2
Mortgage Arrears	5	2	2
Rent arrears	1	1	1
Ending of a privately rented tenancy	36	49	59
Leaving an institution e.g. prison, care, asylum seeker accommodation	3	5	4
Other	1	6	2
Total	86	154	149

In October 2013 the Watford Council Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan, containing 17 tasks, was approved by the council's Cabinet. The strategy contained an undertaking that the action plan would be reviewed annually.

The Homelessness Strategy Action Plan for 2014/2015, containing ten tasks, is due to be approved by October 2014. Three tasks will be carried over from the 2013/2014 action plan:

- Understanding and improving methods of preventing illegal eviction in the private rented sector.
- Reviewing the Housing Advice Offer in partnership with Customer Services.
- Investigating options to expand the portfolio of temporary accommodation.

Seven new tasks will be introduced:-

- Implementing the new Nominations Policy
- Implementing the new private sector housing discharge policy.
- Introducing a new Communications Strategy in conjunction with the Housing Strategy, to tackle high expectations and high rates of refusals, and to manage demand.
- Contribute towards a corporate Domestic Violence Policy.
- Monitoring the number of evictions from social housing and the number of Discretionary Housing Payments which are ending.

- Ending of funding for the Transitions Service in March 2015 – minimising the impact.
- Review of direct financial assistance to households as a measure of preventing homelessness.

Under previous legislation, people who became homeless were able to refuse offers of accommodation in the private rented sector. The Localism Act lets local authorities meet their homelessness duty by providing good quality private rented homes. A policy will be devised for discharging homelessness duty in the private rented sector. This will specify the standards of accommodation required and the minimum length of tenancy.

9. Temporary Accommodation

The majority of households who apply to Watford Borough Council require temporary accommodation because they have nowhere else to stay. This temporary accommodation will act as their home while they are awaiting the outcome of their homelessness application and, if they have been accepted for assistance, while they are awaiting a successful bid for a settled home through the Choice Based lettings system. Watford Council aims to avoid, as far as possible, the use of bed and breakfast hotels and higher cost temporary housing so that households can use temporary accommodation owned by the council. Watford Council owns a small number of hostels (a total of 59 units) and self-contained homes offering temporary accommodation (13 units). However, the demand for temporary accommodation owned by the council regularly exceeds supply.

Numbers of households in temporary accommodation March-July 2014

	March	April	May	June	July
Number of households in temporary accommodation owned by the council *	69	66	66	68	69
Number of households in forming the shortfall housed in other accommodation	42	55	59	49	59
Total	111	121	115	117	128

**Totals are less than 72 units because some larger families occupy more than one unit.*

Watford Borough Council's Property Review is due to report at the end of 2014. At present a large number of council-owned assets are used for housing purposes, including temporary accommodation for both homeless households and single person households. The review will assess all council assets to identify the different ways in which they could be used to provide a supply of much needed permanent and temporary accommodation. This will provide options for increasing the supply of housing. A particular need for wheelchair accessible housing has been identified to meet the needs of a full range of households in housing need including disabled persons – the council's own units are not wheelchair accessible. Between April 2011 and March 2014 a total of 17 persons whose priority need consisted of a physical disability were accepted for assistance under homelessness legislation.

The Lifetime Home standard prescribes design criteria relating to the following:- parking, entrances, communal lifts and stairs, internal doors and hallways, circulation space, ground floor living space including the availability of bathroom facilities and bedspaces, the strength of walls, the accessibility of bathrooms, the location and accessibility of service controls, and window heights.

The Wheelchair standard prescribes design criteria related to the following:- circulation space, availability of lifts, doorway widths, the relationship of living, dining and kitchen areas, the accessibility of kitchens, the arrangement of bedrooms, the accessibility of bathrooms, sufficient storage space, and the location and accessibility of service controls.

10. Overcrowding

Overcrowding can be divided into three categories:

- i) One household which is too big for the accommodation in which it is living.
- ii) One household within which a second household has formed e.g. a daughter may have had a baby. The second household is continuing to live with the original household, but is seeking its own accommodation.
- iii) A number of separate households – usually single person households – occupy one dwelling. The most frequent example of this is a house in multiple occupation accommodating a large number of single person households.

The 2011 Census identified the following wards as having the highest rate of occupancy relating to the number of homes which have fewer rooms than the occupying household(s) require:

- Central 25.9% (1,023 homes)
- Holywell 21.8% (755 homes)
- Vicarage 20.0% (596 homes)

The 2011 Census identified the following wards as having the highest rate of occupancy relating to the number of homes which have fewer bedrooms than the occupying household(s) require:

- Vicarage 13.6% (405 homes)
- Holywell 11.7% (403 homes)

- Central 9.2% (364 homes)

The increase in the supply of homes in each ward between 2001 and 2011 was broadly consistent with the growth in the number of households in each ward. The exception to this was Vicarage which saw a 12.4% increase in the number of households between 2001 and 2011, yet saw an increase of only 5.6% in the number of unshared dwellings during the same period. Population density in Vicarage increased from 75.3% persons per hectare in 2001 to 87.0 persons per hectare in 2011.

In April 2014 a study was carried out of households on Watford's housing register who were seeking family-sized accommodation with three or four bedrooms (excluding Band E housing applicants). A total of 100 households were included in the study, and 89 were registered for housing because of overcrowding.

Type of overcrowding

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| • Three children in a two bedroom home | 50 households |
| • Two children in a two bedroom home | 26 households |
| • Four children in a two bedroom home | 10 households |
| • Three children in a three bedroom home | 3 households |
| • Two children in a three bedroom home | 3 households |
| • Three children in a one bedroom home | 2 households |
| • Two children in a one bedroom home | 2 households |
| • Four children in a three bedroom home | 2 households |
| • One child in a one bedroom home | 1 household |
| • No children in a three bedroom home | 1 household |

Tenure of households

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| • Social housing tenant | 56 households |
| • Private rented tenant | 41 households |
| • Living with family | 2 households |
| • Owner-occupier | 1 household |

Wards in which the households were living

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| • Holywell | 27 households |
| • Central | 14 households |
| • Callowland | 13 households |
| • Leggatts | 7 households |
| • Meriden | 7 households |
| • Park | 7 households |
| • Stanborough | 7 households |
| • Nascot | 6 households |
| • Vicarage | 6 households |
| • Woodside | 3 households |
| • Tudor | 2 households |
| • Oxhey | 1 household |

Research has shown that overcrowding is concentrated disproportionately in certain parts of the borough, particularly the south west wards of Vicarage and Holywell. These districts are also where the supply of large family-sized affordable housing is lowest. The council will take a proactive approach to seek possible sites for the development of larger affordable homes in and around these areas.

11. The condition of privately owned housing

The new Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy will guide action towards those activities which are most likely to have a major impact in improving privately owned housing in Watford. The policy will identify the different alternatives such as programmes and spending priorities. It will provide guidance on choosing among options according to the beneficial impact they will have.

The current Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy was devised in 2006. A new policy needs to be devised to meet new challenges such as the Health and Wellbeing agenda, new opportunities for funding, The Green Deal, the increase in the size of the private rented sector, and the likely demand for more shared housing and homes in multiple occupation.

Options which will be considered in the new Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy are:

- Loans vs Grants
- Property based services vs people based services
- Whole home Decent Homes Standard vs remedying Category 1 hazards only.
- Borough-wide schemes vs ward and neighbourhood schemes.
- Borough-wide schemes vs schemes based on particular types or age of housing stock.
- Universal eligibility schemes vs selective eligibility schemes.
- Limited advertising services vs proactive advertising of services.
- Increased prosecution of landlords for poor practice and/or illegal eviction.
- Restriction of houses in multiple occupation of homes vs allowing the market to operate freely.

Street Improvement Project

A pilot plan is being devised for a Street Improvement Project for the area around Cassio Road, Whippendell Road and Marlborough. This has been identified as an area in need of both housing and environmental improvement. A cross-departmental team has been assembled to progress the project.

Stock Condition Survey

Section 3 of the Housing Act 2004 imposes an obligation upon local authorities to keep information on privately rented housing under review.

The last Private Sector Stock Condition Survey was carried out in 2009. Its headline findings included:

- Watford has an older property profile than the national average, with 53.8% built before 1944.
- Of the total number of non decent dwellings, Watford has a higher proportion than average occupied by vulnerable people.
- The highest number of vulnerable people in non-decent dwellings are in pre 1945 housing stock.
- The average SAP rating in Watford is 53.
- 26.3% fail the Decent Homes standard – cost implications are in excess of £34 million overall, and an average of £3,253 per failing property.

The aims of a new Stock Condition Survey might include:-

- To provide housing stock model data for every dwelling in the privately owned housing stock. The information will include Housing Health and Safety Rating System Category 1 hazards, the hazard of excess code, and fuel poverty.
- To develop a comprehensive housing stock database.
- To link the different data sets together to create the database.

Service take-up

Take-up of services in Watford can be very variable between particular areas. Examples of the variation in take-up of particular schemes are as follows:-

	Homes receiving assistance through the Handyman Service, April 2011 – December 2013	Decent Homes Assistance 2008-2013
Woodside	7	7
Stanborough	4	1
Meriden	3	1
Leggatts	6	5
Tudor	6	1
Callowland	5	4
Nascot	2	2
Park	2	-
Central	10	7
Vicarage	17	12
Holywell	4	4
Oxhey	2	2

	Disabled Facilities Grants made to privately owned homes, 2009-2014	Number of insulation works (loft and cavity wall) carried out.
Woodside	23	258
Stanborough	11	148
Meriden	29	341
Leggatts	25	121
Tudor	11	45
Callowland	11	103
Nascot	13	191
Park	13	201
Central	10	44
Vicarage	16	62
Holywell	23	129
Oxhey	2	191

The Housing Pathways Survey, carried out in June and July 2014, surveyed Watford residents on what they liked about their current homes and what they did not like. A total of 97 residents submitted a reply, of whom 41 (42.3%) were aged 55 and over. A total of 70 respondents (72.2%) either owned their home or rented privately. When asked what they did not like about their current home, a total of 17 respondents stated that they were concerned about the condition of their home:-

"Damp inside the flat, especially in winter."

"Needs a new roof"

"There are no ventilation fans so mould is an issue particularly in the bathroom, even with the windows open."

"Rising damp, mould in carpets, wardrobe and cupboards."

"Windows need replacing and there is dampness on the back wall."

"Solid brick walls so installing insulation becomes more complicated."

"Dangerously under-maintained. Landlord refuses to contact me as a tenant."

"It is old and needs a lot of work doing to it which financially I cannot afford."

"It is cold, damp and needs a lot of work to bring it up to date."

“As it is old I have high maintenance and energy costs.”

“The bathroom needs refurbishment, and the bath, sink and toilet need replacement.”

“It needs a lot of work and maintenance, but as a tenant I lack the rights to ensure that these issues are dealt with.”

“Lack of insulation.”

“It was built around 1900, so many floors and walls are not level. There are lots of cracks. It needs regular maintenance.”

“Refurbishment of the property needed (door and windows required).”

“As I’m disabled and need to use a wheelchair, it is a struggle to get in and out as I have no ramp. Also, my kitchen needs to have some adaptations so I would be able to use the cupboards properly.”

12. Disabled Facilities Grants

Disabled Facilities Grants are a means tested grant that enables the home of home owning and private tenants who have some form of physical or sensory impairment to be adapted to meet their needs. The number of homes receiving completed works per calendar year were:-

- 2009 20 properties
- 2010 27 properties
- 2011 39 properties
- 2012 49 properties
- 2013 40 properties
- 2014 to 31 March 12 properties

The most adaptations carried out most frequently between January 2009 and March 2014 were:-

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| ▪ Level access showers | 77 works carried out |
| ▪ Stairlifts | 54 works carried out |
| ▪ Other bathroom adaptations | 20 works carried out |
| ▪ Ramp installations | 15 works carried out |
| ▪ Door openers | 14 works carried out |
| ▪ Ground floor extensions | 11 works carried out |

Expenditure on Disabled Facilities Grants has been:-

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| ➤ April 2013 – March 2014 | £350,448.18 |
| ➤ April 2012 – March 2013 | £295,613.24 |

13. The Private Rented Sector

Watford's private rented sector is a major priority for policy development and strategic intervention for the following reasons:-

- The sector more than doubled in size between 2001 and 2011, increasing from 3,170 properties (9.8% of the housing stock) to 7,371 properties (20.1% of the housing stock). This growth was due mostly to the movement of existing housing stock from other tenures (mostly owner-occupation with a mortgage) instead of newly built housing. Property investment and Buy-to-Let mortgages also propelled this tenure growth. Estate agents advise that the sector is likely to expand further, partly because of the demand for privately rented housing and partly because Watford is an increasingly attractive town for residential property investment. In the Watford wards of Central, Vicarage and Callowland the private rented sector composed more than 30% of the housing stock by March 2011.
- With the decreasing turnover of social rented housing stock in Watford, the private rented sector is increasingly seen as an option for discharging the local authority duty under homelessness legislation. A Private Sector Discharge Duty will set out the formal policy for this.
- Between April 2013 and March 2014 the ending of a privately rented tenancy became the single biggest reason for homelessness. Research into these cases reveal that tenants had often had little knowledge of their rights, and that illegal eviction was often due to a landlord's lack of knowledge of their obligations, such as serving the correct period of notice.
- Between April 2013 and March 2014 Environmental Health carried out work to deal with 173 households in Watford who had been experiencing difficulties as a tenant of the private rented sector. The numbers were distributing by ward as follows:-

○ Woodside	4
○ Stanborough	8
○ Meriden	4
○ Leggatts	9
○ Tudor	6
○ Callowland	17
○ Nascot	12
○ Park	5
○ Central	46
○ Vicarage	29
○ Holywell	26
○ Oxhey	7

- A consultation exercise carried out with Environmental Health officers revealed that dealing with issues in the private rented sector required not only technical property-based knowledge from officers but also the ability and capacity to provide support and advocacy on behalf of the tenants.

There is considerable potential for a tailored communications strategy to disseminate information on rights and responsibilities to both landlords and tenants, and also for a more comprehensive advice service to be provided.

The Housing Team and the Environmental Health team both make major contributions to the Council's work to improve the customer experience of residents and tenants of privately owned housing. A joint plan will be agreed to improve the co-ordination of roles when dealing with cross-cutting issues such as overcrowding and illegal eviction.

14. Empty Homes

In June 2014 a total of 175 residential properties in Watford which had been empty for 12 months or more were identified:

Number in each ward

▪ Woodside	4 properties	2.3%
▪ Stanborough	9 properties	5.1%
▪ Meriden	13 properties	7.4%
▪ Leggatts	6 properties	3.4%
▪ Tudor	17 properties	9.7%
▪ Callowland	16 properties	9.1%
▪ Nascot	16 properties	9.1%
▪ Park	17 properties	9.7%
▪ Central	38 properties	21.7%
▪ Vicarage	15 properties	8.6%
▪ Holywell	9 properties	5.1%
▪ Oxhey	15 properties	8.6%

Numbers by reason for being empty

▪ Empty Class B (last use was by either a charity or a housing association)	79 properties	45.1%
▪ Empty unoccupied and unfurnished	40 properties	22.9%
▪ Exempt (either left empty by a deceased person or a repossession)	25 properties	14.3%
▪ Long term empty premium	23 properties	13.1%
▪ Empty uninhabitable/Major Works being carried out.	7 properties	4.0%
▪ Standard 50% empty	1 property	0.8%

These statistics include 11 homes which are designated for older people only.

15. Home energy efficiency

Home energy efficiency is a major part of the Government's housing-related policy agenda. As Watford has a higher proportion of older housing stock than all other

Hertfordshire local authorities, research has been carried out into where the most energy inefficient housing stock is located.

The following data from the Census 2011 shows the percentage of households per ward who do not have central heating:-

Ward	No of households	Number of households without central heating	% of households without central heating
Woodside	3,002	60	2.0%
Stanborough	2,792	35	1.3%
Meriden	3,229	77	2.4%
Leggatts	2,774	63	2.3%
Tudor	2,456	70	2.9%
Callowland	3,161	196	6.2%
Nascot	3,173	44	1.4%
Park	2,938	30	1.0%
Central	3,948	126	3.2%
Vicarage	2,971	101	3.4%
Holywell	3,460	120	3.5%
Oxhey	2,777	55	2.0%

Information was gathered on which age of homes were most likely to suffer from low energy efficiency ratings, and which age of homes were most likely to have a large gap between their actual energy rating and their potential energy rating. The information was gathered from Energy Performance Certificate for homes in Watford on the Right Move website in December 2013.

The Current Energy Efficiency rating of each home (1 = lowest and 100 = highest)

	Rating 0-20	Rating 21-40	Rating 41-60	Rating 61-70	Rating 71-80	Rating 81-100	Total
Pre-1919	2 1.6%	6 4.9%	62 50.8%	35 28.7%	15 12.3%	2 1.6%	122
1920s & 1930s	1 1.1%	11 12.0%	50 54.3%	23 25.0%	6 6.5%	1 1.1%	92
1940s & 1950s	-	-	13 38.2%	12 35.3%	9 26.5%	-	34
1960s &	-	4 8.9%	15 33.3%	16 35.6%	8 17.8%	2 4.4%	45

1970s							
1980s & 1990s	-	1 1.2%	11 12.9%	31 36.5%	34 40.0%	8 9.4%	85
2000s & 2010s	-	-	1 1.2%	14 17.1%	29 35.4%	38 46.3%	82

The properties which rank lowest in terms of energy efficiency ratings are those built in the 1920s and 1930s with 67.4% rated at 60 or less, followed by home built pre-1919 with 57.3% rated at 60 or less. Homes built in the 1920s and 1930s tend to have more external walls as a high proportion are detached or semi-detached. Homes built pre-1919 tend to have less external walls as a very high proportion are terraced.

The difference between the Current Energy Efficiency rating of each home and the identified Potential Energy Efficiency rating of each home

	Difference 0-5	Difference 6-10	Difference 11-15	Difference 16-20	Difference 21-25	Difference 26+	Total
Pre-1919	27 22.3%	21 17.4%	20 16.5%	12 9.9%	12 9.9%	29 24.0%	121
1920s & 1930s	13 14.4%	12 13.3%	12 13.3%	8 8.9%	13 14.4%	32 35.6%	90
1940s & 1950s	6 17.6%	4 11.8%	8 23.5%	1 2.9%	8 23.5%	7 20.6%	34
1960s & 1970s	7 15.9%	7 15.9%	17 38.6%	5 11.4%	5 11.4%	3 6.8%	44
1980s & 1990s	37 43.5%	22 25.9%	11 12.9%	8 9.4%	5 5.9%	2 2.4%	85
2000s & 2010s	67 81.7%	8 9.8%	5 6.1%	2 2.4%	-	-	82

Homes built in the 1920s and 1930s show the highest potential for energy efficiency improvement with 35.6% of homes in the sample having a gap between actual and potential energy efficiency of at least 26 points, while 24.0% of homes built before 1919 have a points gap of at least 26 between actual and potential energy efficiency.

Watford has a wide range of housing stock. Borough-wide housing schemes, have been successful in encouraging take-up of more low cost energy efficiency measures in certain wards than others. Take-up of measures has been highest where there is a prevalence of stock type which is easier to improve (e.g. more homes built with cavity walls). Examples of these wards are Meriden, Woodside and Park. Other wards with a high level of solid wall homes, such as Tudor, Central and Vicarage, have seen a smaller number of homes receiving energy efficiency improvement works. External wall insulation will now be the focus of localised and targeted energy efficiency schemes.

In 2013/2014 a successful scheme was carried out to improve the energy efficiency of solid wall homes on the Boundary Way estate in Woodside.

16. Health issues

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation for 2010 identified four Watford neighbourhoods as ranking as within the 25% most deprived in England in terms of Health and Disability (Number 1 means the most deprived in England and number 32,482 means the least deprived). The neighbourhoods are:-

Neighbourhood	Ward	Ranking in terms of Health and Disability
010A	Vicarage	6,357
009C	Central	6,693
003D	Meriden	7,090
009B	Central	7,992

The Health Profile for Watford in 2011 identified Watford as having a higher than average number of hip fractures sustained through a fall. Of the 70 hip fractures which took place in Watford during that year, 45 took place in the home. Older people were disproportionately affected – the average age of a woman in Watford sustaining a high fracture was 84.6 and the average age of a man in Watford sustaining a hip fracture was 84.5. A total of 97.8% of those who sustained a hip fracture due to a fall were aged 60 and over.

The Health Profile for Watford in 2014 showed that Watford has, over a three year period, a much higher than average rate of excess winter deaths. This translates into 58 extra deaths each year, an excess of 28.9%, slightly less than the worst English local authority excess of 32.1%. Further work needs to be undertaken to identify the home improvements which could lessen this excess.

In July 2014 One Watford, Watford's Local Strategic Partnership, agreed the following Public Health Priorities for Watford:-

- a) Improve access to help with alcohol issues.
- b) Increase exercise and weight management
- c) Improve availability of screening in Primary Care for Tuberculosis and Sexual Health.
- d) Safe healthy food
- e) Continued focus on delivering health outcomes through *safe and healthy homes*.
- f) Local or emerging issues that arise from further or local research.

The need for improvements to existing homes for older people

The Health Profile for Watford in 2011 identified Watford as having a higher than average number of hip fractures sustained through a fall. Of the 70 hip fractures which took place in Watford during that year, 45 took place in the home. Older people were disproportionately affected – the average age of a woman in Watford sustaining a high fracture was 84.6 and the average age of a man in Watford sustaining a hip fracture was 84.5. A total of 97.8% of those who sustained a hip fracture due to a fall were aged 60 or over.

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17. Older People

In mid 2014 an assessment was carried out of the supply of and demand for accommodation in Watford which was designated for older people only. There is a large number of sheltered schemes which are outdated in terms of property sizes, bedroom availability and the type of facilities. The findings on supply consisted of the following:-

- 20 social rented schemes of sheltered housing containing a total of 681 self-contained flats.
- 9 private housing schemes of low support housing schemes, containing a total of 418 self-contained flats.
- 1 Extra Care social rented scheme, containing a total of 31 flats.
- 13 residential care or nursing homes, containing a total of 717 places.

The findings on demand consisted of the following:-

- Social rented housing – generally low demand with a small number of bids for properties which became available.
- Private housing schemes for older people were quite difficult to sell, as evidenced by interviews with estate agents. This is particularly the case with schemes containing very little car parking and mostly one bedroom flats. Some private flats for older people for sale were included on the empty homes list.
- The biggest demand for housing among older people was for bungalows.

The statistics on estimated population growth/decline from the Office for National Statistics for mid-2012 to mid 2013 showed that Watford is likely to have been experiencing a decrease in its “younger older” population aged between 60 and 74.

Extra Care/ Flexi Care is defined as:- *housing designed with the needs of frailer older people in mind and with varying levels of care and support available on site. It comes in a number of built forms included flats, bungalow estates and retirement villages. It can sometimes provide a good alternative to a residential care home. Domestic support and personal care is available, usually provided by on-site staff but can also be provided by external sources.*

It is recommended that Watford's supply of social rented Extra Care housing for older people is expanded in order to increase the supply of housing options for older people and to promote a long-term, high quality, adaptable housing options to be considered by Watford's "younger older" residents.

18. Communications

An effective communication strategy is key to achieving the vision and aims within the housing strategy. It can achieve the following:-

- Influence expectations on the availability of social rented housing and any changes which have been made to eligibility/allocation criteria. This has particular relevance to the new Nominations Policy and Private Sector Discharge Policy.
- Educate the customer base on the range of housing options available, so social rented housing is not seen as the only choice.
- Improve perceptions of certain housing options which might have been poorly regarded, such as the private rented sector, houses in multiple occupation, sheltered housing.
- Publicise services and encourage their take-up, such as the services provided to improve the condition of privately owned housing stock.

Generation Y, born between 1980 and 2000, is now accustomed to using the Social Media for giving and receiving communication. Generation Z, members of whom were born since 2000 and will shortly become housing service customers, are likely to view the internet and Social Media as even more integral parts of their lives. Generation Y (household heads aged between 16 and 34) is highly represented among the housing service's traditional client groups. In August 2013 this generation was represented as follows on the housing register:

- Seeking one bedrooms 52.2% of household heads
- Seeking two bedrooms 67.8% of household heads
- Seeking three bedrooms 32.2% of household heads
- Seeking four bedrooms 45.8% of household heads.

Children's centres who work with young families and local organisations who work with single person homeless people report that use of mobile devices among their client groups is widespread. There are high levels of proficiency in using the Social Media, especially Facebook, for social purposes. Users tend to be not so effective in using it for activities such as applying for housing, downloading documents and applying for benefits.

The older generation may prefer to use more traditional methods of communication such as meetings, phone calls, leaflets, information booklets and letters.

Technological options continue to evolve. The I-phone and Twitter have been the major innovations since 2009. Much greater use is now being made of mobile devices by the population, and websites and apps are now more adaptable to this. It is predicted that there could be more widespread use of technologies such as

Google Glass and Instagram in public services. Social landlords are continuing to expand the ways in which Facebook can be used by their customers.

There needs to be continued exploration of how communication technologies can be used to meet the vision and aims of the housing strategy. In order to achieve the aims of the housing strategy in focusing on the whole housing market, the council will need to communicate with a much wider range of groups, such as potential market renters and owner-occupiers.

Major Projects in Watford – current and potential

The following major projects are the focus of economic and housing growth in Watford:-

The Croxley Rail Link – In 2013 Hertfordshire County Council and London Underground were granted the legal powers to build, operate and maintain the Croxley Rail Link. This £118 million scheme will be the largest infrastructure project Hertfordshire County Council has delivered and the first new railway built in Hertfordshire since 1925.

The scheme will see the Metropolitan Line in Watford re-routed and extended to Watford Junction via Watford High Street. New stations will be provided on the new rail link at Ascot Road and at Vicarage Road to serve the Watford General Hospital and the new Health Campus.

The new rail link will support growth and economic development in south west Hertfordshire as well as improving connections into London and reducing pressure on Watford's road network. The target date for trains to start running on the new link is 2017.

Watford Health Campus – The Watford Health Campus is an opportunity to improve a large area surrounding Watford General Hospital running down from Vicarage Road to Wiggenghall Road, much of which has been derelict and unused. The aim of the scheme is to create new jobs, homes and accessible green space to West Watford.

Over a 15-20 year period the Health Campus will deliver:

- Approximately 700 quality homes, including affordable accommodation.
- New business and work opportunities, with premises and facilities to attract new businesses to West Watford and creating up to 1,600 new jobs.
- Attractive new landscaped spaces including riverside walks and new wildlife habitats.
- The opportunity for new hospital facilities, with an improved road network and better use of space to offer greater flexibility for the hospital's future plans.

Kier has been appointed as the development partner for the project.

Charter Place – Watford’s already high quality retail offer will be enhanced by the development of Charter Place which was built in the 1970s. The redevelopment will include:

- New high quality retail outlets
- A new nine screen cinema and additional leisure venues
- A new restaurant quarter
- A new enclosed market.

Completion is due to start in 2015, with the new development scheduled to open in 2017.

Office Development in Watford

Watford is the key office market in Hertfordshire, but there is a growing level of competition from other local authorities.

Watford needs more large office development. The town has a very limited supply of large premises. In Clarendon Road, which is still the core office centre, offices are usually split into smaller premises.

As a popular business and industrial location, Watford benefits from strategic proximity to the M1 and M25. However, the existing office and business premises are now expensive and dated, and competition to attract firms is being provided by local authorities such as Dacorum and Milton Keynes.

The Energy Performance requirements which will be in force from 2018 may mean that some Watford business premises will be unviable, particularly those built before 1980.

Profiles of wards in Watford

	Woodside
Tenures	A high proportion of social housing (25.7%), especially family-sized.
Condition/ Age	A high proportion of housing built in the 1920s and 1930s
Supply and demand	A shortage of general needs flats. Retirement complexes for older people not popular. High demand for bungalows.
Housing need	An area of origin for a comparatively high number of households who have become homeless because of parents or other family eviction.
Recent development	5.7% increase in the number of homes between 2001 and 2011.

Private Housing Service take-up	High take-up of Disabled Facilities Grants and Energy Efficiency Grants.
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	Stanborough
Tenures	A high proportion of homes owned with a mortgage (41.2%)
Condition/ Age	A high proportion of housing built in the 1930s
Supply and demand	A shortage of general needs flats. Retirement complexes for older people not popular. High demand for bungalows.
Housing need	An area of origin for a comparatively high number of households who have become homeless because of parents or other family eviction.
Recent development	5.0% increase in the number of unshared homes between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	Generally low take-up of services.

	Meriden
Tenures	The highest amount of social rented housing in Watford (33.7%).
Condition/ Age	A high number of 1950s and 1960s built housing, and a moderately high number of 1930s built homes.
Supply and demand	A large number of young families in the area.
Housing need	An area of origin for a comparatively high number of households who have become homeless because of parents or other family eviction. Contains a lower super output area which is in the top 25% most deprived in England in terms of overall deprivation.
Recent development	12.7% growth in the number of unshared homes between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	Very high take-up of Disabled Facilities Grants and Energy Efficiency Grants.

	Leggatts
Tenures	A high proportion of social rented housing in the ward (22.2%).
Condition/ Age	A high proportion of homes built in the 1920s or in the 1980s and 1990s.
Supply and demand	The location for low demand 1980s and 1990s built flats.
Housing	An area of origin for a comparatively high number of households who

need	have become homeless because of parents or other family eviction.
Recent development	Nil% rise in the number of homes in the ward between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	High take-up of Disabled Facilities Grants, medium take-up of Energy Efficiency Grants.

	Tudor
Tenures	A high percentage of owner-occupation at 75.9%. A total of 40.8% is owned outright while 35.1% is owned with a mortgage.
Condition/ Age	A predominance of 1930s built semi-detached housing. A high proportion of energy inefficient housing.
Supply and demand	Bungalows in very high demand and very low supply. 1990s built Reeds development very popular for private renting.
Housing need	A comparatively high proportion of older people.
Recent development	8.4% rise in the number of unshared homes in the ward between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	Low take-up of all services

	Callowland
Tenures	Very large private rented sector in the ward (30.8%). The highest proportion of owner-occupation with a mortgage in the borough (44.6%).
Condition/ Age	Very high number of 19 th century terraced homes. Large number of 1990s built flats.
Supply and demand	A new young affluent professional population is choosing to live in 19 th century terraced homes. 19 th century terraced houses very popular for both sale and Buy to Let landlords.
Housing need	Residents usually have problems upsizing from two bedroom housing to three bedroom housing. The location of low demand 1990s built flats.
Recent development	8.7% rise in the number of unshared homes in the ward between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	Low take-up of all services

	Nascot
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Tenures	A high percentage of owner-occupation at 69.3%. A total of 32.2% is owned outright while 37.1% is owned with a mortgage.
Condition/ Age	A mix of housing of all ages.
Supply and demand	Highest number of housing schemes for older people in the borough. Very high house prices.
Housing need	Very high levels of under-occupation. A lack of attractive downsizing options for older people. High proportion of older people in the ward
Recent development	11.5% rise in the number of unshared homes in the ward between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	Medium take-up of Disabled Facilities Grants and Energy Efficiency Grants.

	Park
Tenures	The highest percentage of owner occupation in the borough at 77.2%. A total of 48.7% is owned outright while 39.6% is owned with a mortgage.
Condition/ Age	A higher proportion of larger homes built in the 1920s and 1930s
Supply and demand	Very high house prices. Recent developments of low cost home ownership homes.
Housing need	Very high levels of under-occupation. A lack of attractive downsizing options for older people. High proportion of older people in the ward.
Recent development	26.1% rise in the number of unshared homes in the ward between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	Very high take-up of energy efficiency grants. Very low take-up of other services.

	Central
Tenures	Highest proportion of privately rented homes in the borough (35.1%).
Condition/ Age	Very high proportion of purpose built flats and converted flats. High proportion of 19 th century terraced homes. A large number of flats built in the 2000s and 2010s
Supply and demand	Has seen a very rapid growth in the numbers of households and homes between 2001 and 2011. Very large number of single person households.

Housing need	Contains a lower super output area which is in the top 25% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. Has a high level of overcrowding.
Recent development	20.1% rise in the number of homes in the ward between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	Medium take-up of Handyperson service, low take-up of other services.

Vicarage	
Tenures	High proportion of privately rented homes (30.7%).
Condition/ Age	Very high number of 19 th century terraced homes. High number of terraced homes converted to flats.
Supply and demand	Outside investors viewing the area for future investment when the new metropolitan railway and the Health Campus are complete.
Housing need	Largest amount of overcrowding in Watford.
Recent development	5.6% rise in the number of homes in the ward between 2001 and 2011. (This compares with a 12.4% rise in the number of households in the ward over the same period.)
Private Housing Service take-up	Between 2008 and 2013 the ward which received the highest number of Decent Homes grants. Highest take-up of the Handyperson service between 2011 and 2013. Low take-up of other services.
Special policy areas	Contains part of the Special Policy Area of the Watford Health Campus.

Holywell	
Tenures	Second largest concentration of social housing in Watford (29.0%.)
Condition/ Age	High number of 19 th century terraced homes. High number of 1950s and 1960s built homes. Very high proportion of purpose-built flats.
Supply and demand	The most populous ward in Watford.
Housing need	An area of origin for a comparatively high number of households who have become homeless because of parents or other family eviction.
Recent development	14.2% rise in the number of unshared homes in the ward between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing	Low take-up of all services

Service take-up	
Special policy area	Contains part of the Special Policy Area of the Watford Health Campus. Contains the Special Policy Area of Ascot Road.

	Oxhey
Tenures	A high percentage of owner-occupation at 70.4%. A total of 30.0% is owned outright while 40.4% is owned with a mortgage.
Condition/ Age	A high number of larger 19 th century houses – detached and semi-detached. Contains a large amount of social housing built in the 1920s.
Supply and demand	A high proportion of older people.
Housing need	
Recent development	2.0% rise in the number of unshared dwellings in the ward between 2001 and 2011.
Private Housing Service take-up	Medium take-up of energy efficiency grants, very low take-up of other services.

B) The Themes

Theme 1: Improving the supply of housing

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A small borough with high pressure on sites and infrastructure. ➤ A borough which is rapidly and visibly improving and becoming more desirable. ➤ A more rapid population growth than neighbouring local authorities. ➤ Major projects relating to housing, employment and facilities. ➤ Residential property in Watford is attractive to investors. ➤ Housing costs, in terms of rents and prices, are increasing, although are still lower than most parts of London. ➤ Homelessness has been increasing in Watford. This increase is due particularly to the ending of tenancies in the private rented sector. ➤ Government funding for newly built affordable housing has been reduced since 2010. ➤ Watford Borough Council has a statutory duty to provide
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	temporary accommodation for homeless households. Demand for temporary accommodation exceeds supply.
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Priorities:-

1. To influence the type of new housing that is provided by inputting into the Planning process and influencing private sector providers.
2. To work with registered providers to achieve a balance between traditional social rented properties and new business which enables them to develop other types of homes, such as affordable rent, market rent, homes for sale.
3. To contribute to the implementation of the council's forthcoming Asset Management strategy.

Relevant Position Statements

- Empty Homes
- Conversions to Affordable Rent
- Affordable Housing Mix
- Residential/Commercial
- Self-build
- Community Engagement
- Council's own assets
- Housing growth
- Owner-occupied housing.

Theme 2: Improving the condition and management of existing housing

Relevant issues:

Summary

- A higher than average amount of pre-1919 built homes.
- A higher percentage of homes built in the inter-war years.
- Hazards of excess cold, trips and falls.
- Strong demand for disabled adaptations
- A growing private rented sector
- Issues with conditions, overcrowding and management of homes
- Uneven concentrations of service recipients and enforcement action among privately owned housing in Watford.
- Partial knowledge of services among home owners, landlords and tenants.
- The Housing Act 2004 requires that local authorities retain a good level of knowledge about housing stock in their area.

Priorities

1. To revise the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy (which includes grants and loan assistance) to make homes decent and adapt them for disabled persons
2. To increase the awareness of letting agents, private landlords and tenants regarding acceptable standards, responsibilities and remedies in order to empower them to make informed choices.
3. To improve the condition of the housing stock to enable the provision of safe, sustainable, healthy and well-maintained homes.
4. Renew cross-service procedures to improve the customer experience and effectiveness of casework on:-
 - Overcrowding
 - Illegal or retaliatory eviction of harassment.
5. To renew the evidence base through an assessment of Watford's housing stock which samples a range of homes and indicates the issues with the stock we need to address e.g. energy efficiency.

Relevant Policy Statements

- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- Private rented sector and working with landlords.

Theme 3: Support to client groups

Relevant issues:

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ There are competing housing needs. There has been a significant increase in the number of single person households, yet also a big increase in the number of children aged under four years old.➤ Demand for affordable housing exceeds supply. Alternative to traditional affordable housing options are not extensively promoted.➤ There is demand for housing from higher paid professionals and lower paid employees of the service industry.➤ Watford residents earn more than Watford employees.➤ Housing development numbers have exceeded their target, but homelessness is still increasing due to issues.
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Priorities

1. To carry out an annual review of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan
2. To implement and monitor a revised Housing Nominations Policy and a Private Sector Discharge Policy, including management of customer expectations,
3. To engage with private landlords with the aim of increasing the availability of privately rented homes for households in housing need.
4. To devise plans to increase the supply of wheelchair accessible temporary accommodation for homeless households.
5. Older people – to support activity to improve registered provider sheltered

housing to become Flexicare accommodation which will meet the current and future needs of Watford residents.

Relevant Policy Statements

- Older people
- Adaptations
- Housing nominations
- Procurements and Commissioning
- Homelessness (supporting beyond statutory duties)
- Temporary accommodation
- Supported housing.

Theme 4: Key locations

Relevant issues:

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are substantial variations between wards in Watford. The following are brief profiles of housing characteristics in each ward.• Overcrowding is concentrated particularly in Central, Vicarage and Holywell wards.• The pipeline of affordable housing will be concentrated mainly in a small number of Special Policy areas including the Watford Health Campus (Vicarage and Holywell wards), Watford Junction (Central ward) and Ascot Road (Holywell ward).• Particular types of energy inefficient housing stock are concentrated in certain wards.• The street environment in certain neighbourhoods have been identified as in need of multi-agency improvement action.
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Priorities

1. To support the delivery of affordable housing in the Special Policy Areas.
2. To implement targeted initiatives such as Street Improvement Projects which tackle a range of issues in specific areas, such as property conditions, rubbish outside, community safety concerns, through a multi-agency approach.

Relevant Policy Statements

- Empty homes
- Private Rented Sector and working with landlords
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)
- Community Engagement

Theme 5: Wellbeing, economy and health

Relevant issues:

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The quality of the home has a substantial impact on health; a warm, dry and secure home is associated with better health. In addition to basic housing requirements, other factors that help to improve well-being include the neighbourhood, security of tenure and modifications for those with disabilities.• Housing-related hazards that increase the risk of illness include damp, mould, excess cold and structural defects that increase the risk of an accident (such as poor lighting, or lack of stair handrails).• The elderly are particularly at risk of health problems relating to accidents and excess cold in the home.
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Priorities

1. Undertake housing related activity in line with health and well-being priorities

for the borough, such achieving “safe and healthy homes”. This will refer to the new Code for Sustainable Homes whose measures of sustainability include Health and Wellbeing.

2. Undertake housing related activity to support economic growth in Watford in consultation with Watford’s business community.

Relevant Policy Statements

- Older people
- Residential/Commercial

Theme 6: Communication

Relevant issues:

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ In late 2013 information on Social Media usage in the United Kingdom was as follows:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 84.1% of the U.K. population is now on-line.• 48% of adults in the United Kingdom used a social network in 2012, rising to 87% among 18-24 years olds.➤ Watford Borough Council has an ambitious programme of economic and housing growth which needs to be communicated effectively through successful community engagement.➤ Housing-related policies are set to change and require intensive communication in order to achieve their objectives.➤ Watford has a younger than average population. Young people aged under 35 are disproportionately highly represented among the customer base of the Housing Team. There are now very distinct differences between age groups in terms of the communication methods which are used.➤ Watford’s “older older” person age group, i.e. those aged 75+, remains steady in numbers. This older age group is likely to prefer more traditional methods of communication.
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Priorities

1. To develop a co-ordinated communications strategy for housing-related

issues in Watford to achieve the following:-

- Convey a range of messages, such expectations on the availability of affordable housing for rent, on a range of housing options, on sources of housing-related assistance, on housing-related support services, and to improve perceptions of a range of housing options.
 - To communicate information to meet the requirements, expectations and aspirations of a range of ages and demographic groups, and to communicate with more “difficult to reach” groups such as young people, vulnerable people.
 - To be receptive to existing and new technological options for communications
2. To devise an approach to community engagement on housing growth issues in partnership with registered providers.

Relevant Policy Statements

- Housing Growth
- Community Engagement
- Procurement and Commissioning

Areas to monitor where intervention is less achievable

1. Levels of demand from people wanting to move and stay in Watford, including from London and other Hertfordshire local authorities.
2. The desire of investors to buy and rent out property. Watford residential property usually provides a good return on an investment.
3. Competition in the housing market from high income working people.
4. Decreased revenue funding for supported housing.

Housing Strategy Action Plan 2015-2020

This strategy will be comprehensively reviewed and reassessed on an annual basis.

Theme one:- Improving the supply of Housing	
Priority 1:	To influence the type of new housing that is provided by inputting into the Planning process and working with private sector providers and registered providers.
Task 1: Developing, testing and publicising annual dataset with conclusions to inform the housing mix.	Project lead Housing and Planning
	Project Team
	Resources Existing staffing
	Timescale Annually in January.
	Description of Project To produce two information templates, one to focus on affordable housing and one to focus on the whole housing market. This will provide standardised data tools to be used by the Planning team. The content of the template will be revised and modified when appropriate.
	Outputs Completed data templates with conclusions and recommendations to assist in the consideration of planning applications for residential developments.

	<p>Outcomes Outcomes of planning applications which are responsive to identified needs in Watford and planning policies.</p>
<p>Task 2: Participate in the production of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment in partnership with neighbouring boroughs.</p>	<p>Project Lead Planning and Housing</p>
	<p>Project Team Other Hertfordshire local authorities</p>
	<p>Resources From existing budgets.</p>
	<p>Timescale Year 1 of the Housing Strategy.</p>
	<p>Description of Project A cross-boundary housing research project to objectively assess housing needs in Watford and the surrounding area.</p>
	<p>Outputs Completion of a research project plus recommendations.</p>
	<p>Outcomes Outcomes of planning applications which are responsive to identified needs in Watford and planning policies.</p>
<p>Priority 2:</p>	<p>Work with registered providers to achieve a balance between traditional social rented properties and new business which enables them to develop other types of homes , such as affordable rent, market rent, homes for sale.</p>

Task 3:- To establish and maintain frameworks for engagement with registered provider partners, private developers and property owners. This will include information sharing, accessing funding and development opportunities, and local marketing initiatives.	Project lead Housing Supply Team
	Project Team Housing Strategy
	Resources Staffing
	Timescale Year 1 of the Housing Strategy.
	Description of project To formalise liaison with registered providers in order to improve partnership working and increase the amount of registered provider activity in Watford.
	Outputs A prescribed number of meetings each year, and a definite set of plans from the meetings in order to improve partnership working.
	Outcomes A high level of registered provider activity in Watford. A rate of affordable housing development in Watford that equals and exceeds corporate targets, and other housing development for which there is an identified need in Watford.
Task 4: Annual review of the Tenancy Strategy	Project lead Housing Strategy Officer
	Resources Existing staffing

	<p>Timescale Annually by December.</p>
	<p>Description of project To revise the Tenancy Strategy to give guidance to registered providers on the council's expectations in terms of rent setting, types of tenancies granted and affordable housing provision for special needs groups.</p>
	<p>Outputs A revised Tenancy Strategy devised with input from stakeholder organisations, giving clear guidance to registered providers.</p>
	<p>Outcomes Rent levels and tenancies which are consistent with identified needs in Watford.</p>
Priority 3:	To contribute to the implementation of the council's forthcoming Asset Management strategy.
Task 5: Tasks to be defined pending outcome of Property Review.	<p>Resources To be confirmed</p>
	<p>Timescale Year 1 of Housing Strategy</p>
	<p>Description of project These tasks will be set when the Property Review has been completed.</p>
	<p>Outputs To be confirmed</p>
	<p>Outcomes Making optimum use of corporate assets and resources and continuing to meet our statutory homelessness duties.</p>

Theme two:- Improving the condition and management of housing

Priority 1:	To revise the Private Sector Renewal Policy (which includes grant and loan assistance) to make homes decent and adapt them for disabled access.
Task 1: Revise the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy	Project lead Housing.
	Project team Environmental Health
	Resources Existing staffing
	Timescale December 2015.
	Description of project To produce a Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy which aims to maintain and improve housing conditions, and support an accessible private housing sector that promotes health, safety and sustainability, that provides assistance to those most in need, that complies with legislation, and that supports Watford Borough Council's corporate objectives. The policy will meet the challenges of a range of changing contexts, including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High demand for services because of the characteristics of housing stock and residents. • The need for a service which is both property- and people-based • A very diverse client base so challenges in devising bespoke solutions

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminishing resources from Government. • A multiplicity of new funding opportunities
	<p>Outputs A new policy which prioritises the council's activities and resources related to privately owned housing.</p>
	<p>Outcomes The Private Sector Housing Renewal policy will assess the current system of grants and loans, and prioritise future activity in order to create the maximum beneficial impact from using corporate resources. It will aim to ensure improved housing conditions and associated health benefits.</p>
<p>Task 2: Initiatives to support residents promoted in revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.</p>	<p>Project lead Housing</p> <p>Project team Environmental Health, Communications</p> <p>Resources To be confirmed</p> <p>Timescale December 2015 – April 2016</p> <p>Description of project To implement tasks arising from the revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.</p> <p>Outputs To be confirmed</p>

	<p>Outcomes Good take-up of service resulting in improved housing conditions and associated health benefits.</p>
Priority 2:	<p>Increase awareness of letting agents, private landlords and tenants regarding acceptable standards, responsibilities and remedies, in order to empower them to make informed choices.</p>
Task 3: Production of a suite of advice and information material which covers the full range of services available	<p>Project lead Housing</p>
	<p>Project team Environmental Health, Communications.</p>
	<p>Resources Identified from Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Homelessness Grant.</p>
	<p>Timescale April 2015</p>
	<p>Description of project A comprehensive approach will be taken to assemble advice and information material for stakeholders of private sector housing.</p>
	<p>Outputs A full range of information documents to be devised in an appropriate and accessible format, to be available in hard copy and on-line. To lead to a higher take-up of services. To be easily updated if required.</p>
	<p>Outcomes Stakeholders in privately owned housing, including private landlords, private tenants and home owners, to have a higher level of knowledge of services available to them from the council.</p>

Task 4: Publication of the above through websites, leaflets, roadshows, social media, advertising through lettings agents.	Project lead Housing
	Project team Environmental Health, Communications
	Resources Identified from Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) homelessness grant.
	Timescale April to September 2015.
	Description of project To ensure that information sources are available in a range of media in order to maximise accessibility.
	Outputs A full range of information documents to be devised in an appropriate and accessible format, to be available in hard copy and on-line. To lead to a higher take-up of services. To be easily updated if required.
	Outcomes Stakeholders in privately owned housing, including private landlords, private tenants and home owners, to have a higher level of knowledge of services available to them from the council
Task 5 – Introduce a framework to enforce the Redress scheme and include compliance across council private sector access schemes.	Project lead Environmental Health
	Project team Housing, Communications
	Resources To be confirmed
	Timescale September 2015
	Description of project This project will ensure compliance with the Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc) (England) Order 2014. This

	<p>Order requires persons who engage in letting agency work or property management work to belong to a redress scheme that has been approved by the Secretary of State or that has been designated as a government administered redress scheme.</p>
	<p>Outputs A framework will be devised to enforce the Redress scheme and ensure compliance across schemes managed by the council to improve access to the private rented sector among households in housing need.</p>
	<p>Outcomes This project will ensure compliance with the Redress Schemes for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc) (England) Order 2014.</p>
Priority 3	Improve the condition of the housing stock to enable the provision of safe, sustainable, healthy and well-maintained homes.
Task 6: Review Care and Repair Provision	<p>Project lead Housing</p>
	<p>Project team Environmental Health, Corporate Procurement, Legal.</p>
	<p>Resources Existing staff resources</p>
	<p>Timescale December 2015</p>
	<p>Description of project Review current needs for the service and delivery options.</p>
	<p>Outputs Revision of in-house or external delivery options.</p>
	<p>Outcomes Clients supported to access council funding for Disabled Facilities Grants and Decent Homes</p>

	Assistance.
Priority 4	Renew cross service procedures to improve the customer experience and effectiveness of casework on overcrowding and illegal/retaliatory eviction and harassment.
Task 7: Review the current scope and effectiveness of casework on overcrowding	Project lead Housing,
	Project team Environmental Health
	Resources Existing staffing
	Timescale September 2015
	Description of project A comprehensive review of all work undertaken to deal with cases of overcrowding by Housing and Environmental Health and the results and outcomes from current procedures.
	Outputs Research into procedures and results, with recommendations into changes to be made and the outcomes which are sought.
	Outcomes An improved and co-ordinated service to assist residents who are experiencing overcrowding, with agreement on the outcomes which will be sought. Performance measures to be agreed.
Task 8: Implement action plan to develop our strategic and operational	Project lead Housing

response to overcrowding.	Project team Environmental Health
	Resources To be confirmed.
	Timescale December 2015.
	Description of project A plan to implement the tasks identified through the review of procedures to tackle overcrowding and to achieve the outcomes which are sought.
	Outputs Completion of the identified tasks.
	Outcomes An improved and co-ordinated service to assist residents who are experiencing overcrowding, with agreement on the outcomes which will be sought. Performance measures to be agreed.
Task 9: Investigate the need for a service to respond to illegal/retaliatory eviction and harassment.	Project lead Housing
	Project team Environmental Health, Legal
	Resources Existing staffing
	Timescale September 2015.

	<p>Description of project A comprehensive review of all work undertaken to deal with cases of illegal/retaliatory eviction by Housing and Environmental Health and the results and outcomes from current procedures.</p> <p>Outputs Research into procedures and results, with recommendations into changes to be made and the outcomes which are sought.</p> <p>Outcomes An improved and co-ordinated service to assist residents who are experiencing illegal/retaliatory eviction with agreement on the outcomes which will be sought. Performance measures to be agreed.</p>
<p>Task 10: Implement action plan to develop our strategic and operational response to illegal/retaliatory eviction and harassment in order to minimise housing need..</p>	<p>Project lead Housing</p> <p>Project team Environmental Health, Legal, Communications</p> <p>Resources To be confirmed</p> <p>Timescale December 2015.</p> <p>Description of project A plan to implement the tasks identified through the review of procedures to tackle retaliatory eviction and to achieve the outcomes which are sought. To take account of any legislative changes.</p> <p>Outputs Completion of the identified tasks.</p>

	<p>Outcomes An improved and co-ordinated service to assist residents who are experiencing retaliatory eviction, with agreement on the outcomes which will be sought. Performance measures to be agreed.</p>
Priority 5	<p>To renew the evidence base through an assessment of Watford's housing stock which samples a range of homes and indicates the issues with stock which we need to address e.g. energy efficiency.</p>
Task 11: Commission a private sector stock condition survey/model.	<p>Project lead Housing.</p>
	<p>Project team Environmental Health, other Hertfordshire local authorities.</p>
	<p>Resources To be confirmed. £100,000 bid for Capital Programme pending approval.</p>
	<p>Timescale December 2015</p>
	<p>Description of project To commission a private sector stock condition survey to provide updated information on privately owned housing stock across Watford.</p>
	<p>Outputs A range of updated stock data on privately owned housing in Watford plus recommendations for priorities for action to inform appropriate policies and strategies.</p>
	<p>Outcomes A sound information base to ensure that policies and strategies related to privately owned housing are responsive to Watford's needs and circumstances.</p>

<p>Task 12: Develop policy responses from the stock condition survey to inform appropriate policies, strategies and procedures.</p>	<p>Project lead Housing.</p> <p>Project team Environmental Health</p> <p>Resources Existing staffing.</p> <p>Timescale December 2015 - April 2016.</p> <p>Description of project To implement the priorities for action as recommended by the Private Sector Stock Condition survey.</p> <p>Outputs To be agreed.</p> <p>Outcomes A set of actions linked to the policies and strategies linked to privately owned housing which are responsive to Watford's needs and circumstances.</p>
<p>Task 13: Undertake Home Energy Efficiency publicity campaigns to raise awareness of the options which are available, and deliver improvements as recommended in local Home Energy Conservation</p>	<p>Project lead Environmental Health</p> <p>Project team Housing, Communications</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Timescale</p>

Act 1995 (HECA) reports. <i>(This task is still under discussion).</i>	Description of project To devise a plan to raise awareness of the options which are available to increase energy efficiency in the home.
	Outputs Increased take-up of energy efficiency schemes in Watford.
	Outcomes A higher level of energy efficient housing stock in Watford. Beneficial impacts upon health

Theme three:- Support to client groups where intervention is needed	
Priority 1	To carry out an annual review of the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan
Task 1: Review and publish annual update of the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	Project lead Helen George, Housing Strategy Officer
	Resources Existing budgets, DCLG homelessness grant, external funding opportunities to be identified
	Timescale End of October annually
	Description of project To fulfil the undertaking to review and update the homelessness strategy and action plan on an annual basis in order to ensure it is responsive to the new issues which have arisen.

	<p>Outputs Revised action plan drafted and approved Revised projects scoped and resources identified</p> <p>Outcomes Increased prevention of homelessness and effective tackling of homelessness when it occurs.</p>
Task 2: Implementation of the revised Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	<p>Project lead Housing Strategy</p> <p>Resources Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Homelessness Grant</p> <p>Timescale October to September, annually</p> <p>Description of project To implement the tasks identified as appropriate for inclusion in each year's annual action plan. The tasks will be assigned to Housing Strategy, Housing Supply, Homelessness Prevention and Housing Options, and external organisations.</p> <p>Outputs Revised projects implemented.</p> <p>Outcomes Increased prevention of homelessness and effective tackling of homelessness when it occurs.</p>
Priority 2	To Implement and monitor a revised Housing Nomination Policy and a Private Sector Discharge Policy including management of customer expectations.

Task 3: Implementation of the Housing Nominations Policy.	Project lead Housing
	Project team Customer Services Centre, Communications
	Resources Existing budgets, DCLG Prevention of Homelessness Grant
	Timescale By 1 April 2015
	Description of project To implement the revised Housing Nomination Policy including changes to software, working procedures and communication material and ensuring partner agencies and housing applicants receive the relevant training and support. To put in place appropriate monitoring on a quarterly basis of the housing register, associated lettings and impacts on homelessness and temporary accommodation occupancy rates.
	Outputs Revised Policy published and implemented Revised software, working procedures and communication material Well trained staff and partner agencies Fully informed and supported clients
	Outcomes A more tightly focused housing register and nominations to registered providers which reflects the needs of local people. A decrease in homelessness applications and an increase in planned move on from accommodation.

Priority 3:	To engage with private landlords with the aim of increasing the availability of privately rented homes for households in housing need.
Task 4: Development and Implementation of the Private Sector Discharge Policy	Project lead: Housing Project team: Customer Services Centre, Communications, Environmental Health, Legal.
	Resources: Existing budgets, DCLG homelessness grant
	Timescale: By 1 April 2015
	Description of project: To implement a Private Sector Discharge Policy which will enable the council to discharge its homelessness duty with the offer of a private rented tenancy. To establish initiatives and working procedures which will enable access to suitable properties which meet the statutory criteria. To put in place appropriate monitoring on a quarterly basis to assess the outcomes of the policy.
	Outputs: An approved Private Sector Discharge Policy Revised working procedures and communication material Well trained staff and partner agencies Fully informed and supported clients
	Outcomes: Increase in homelessness prevention Reduction in homelessness applications

Priority 4:	To devise plans to increase the supply of wheelchair accessible temporary accommodation for homeless households
Task 5: To increase the supply of wheelchair accessible temporary housing.	Project lead: Housing Project team: Corporate Procurement, Property.
	Resources: Staffing
	Timescale: Years 1-2 of the Housing Strategy.
	Description of project: To provide an improved supply of temporary accommodation for homelessness applicants who have physical disabilities, to include wheelchair users. To ensure that they are living in accessible accommodation while awaiting the outcome of their homelessness application or the offer of suitable accommodation. To be guided on the appropriate level of accessibility by the Lifetime Homes standard and the Wheelchair Standard.
	Outputs: A specified number of units.
	Outcomes: An improved homelessness service for applicants who have physical disabilities.
Priority 5:	Older people – support activity to improve registered provider sheltered housing to become Flexicare accommodation which will meet the current and future needs of Watford residents.
Task 6: Older people: agree decant protocol and associated allocation policies and criteria.	Project lead: Housing Project Team: Watford Community Housing Trust.
	Resources:

	<p>Timescale: April 2015.</p>
	<p>Description of project: To in place the protocols and procedures to support the conversion of traditional sheltered housing schemes to Flexicare accommodation. Flexicare will provide a more adaptable housing options for older people.</p>
	<p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Decant proposal • The allocations policies and criteria required for letting the new accommodation.
	<p>Outcomes: The successful integration of flexicare as part of Watford's spectrum of housing options for older people. Improved health and wellbeing among older people.</p>

Theme four:- Key locations	
Priority 1:	To support the delivery of affordable housing within the Special Policy Areas.
Task 1: Work with Local Asset Based Vehicle (LABV) to procure a registered provider for the Health Campus.	<p>Project lead: Property, Housing</p>
	<p>Project team: Corporate Procurement, Legal</p>
	<p>Resources</p>
	<p>Timescale To be confirmed.</p>

	<p>Description of project To contribute housing-related knowledge in order to guide the selection of a registered provider to acquire and manage the affordable housing stock on a major Special Policy Area, the Health Campus.</p>
	<p>Outputs The selection of a registered provider who satisfied all prescribed criteria for the acquisition and management of affordable housing on the Health Campus.</p>
	<p>Outcomes As above.</p>
<p>Priority 2:</p>	<p>To implement targeted initiatives such as Street Improvement Projects which tackle a range of issues in specific areas, such as property condition, the environment and community safety concerns, through a multi-agency approach.</p>
<p>Task 2: Implement a pilot Street Improvement Project for a clearly defined neighbourhood in the borough.</p>	<p>Project leads: To be confirmed</p> <p>Project team: Environmental Health, Housing, Planning.</p> <p>Resources: To be confirmed</p> <p>Timescale: To be confirmed</p> <p>Description of project: An holistic project to improve the quality of the environment in specific neighbourhoods in Watford. As well as improvement to housing, the project will aim to improve the position with regard to the following: boundary walls, signage, wheelie bins, potholes and car parking.</p>

	<p>Outputs: A plan for the area, including a series of tasks to be carried out.</p>
	<p>Outcomes: Significant improvement in the environment in the area. Performance measures to be devised.</p>

Theme five:- Well-being, Economy and Health	
Priority 1:	To undertake housing-related activity in line with health and well-being priorities for the borough, such as achieving “safe and healthy homes”. This will refer to the new Code for Sustainable Homes whose measures of sustainability include Health and Well-being.
Task 1: Undertake an assessment of Watford’s housing stock to better understand the housing conditions in Watford, and to ensure that health related data is identified in the house condition survey. (See Theme 2, Priority 4, Task 10).	<p>Project lead Housing</p>
	<p>Project team Environmental Health, other Hertfordshire local authorities.</p>
	<p>Resources To be confirmed. £100,000 bid for Capital Programme pending approval.</p>
	<p>Timescale December 2015</p>

	<p>Description of project To commission a private sector stock condition survey to provide updated information on privately owned housing stock across Watford.</p> <p>Outputs A range of updated stock data on privately owned housing in Watford plus recommendations for priorities for action to inform appropriate policies and strategies. To focus particularly on health-related recommendations.</p> <p>Outcomes A sound information base to ensure that policies and strategies related to privately owned housing are responsive to Watford's needs and circumstances with regard to health issues.</p>
<p>Task 2: Undertake housing-related activity in line with health priorities for the borough, such as achieving “safe and healthy” homes, as informed by the above survey result.</p>	<p>Project lead Housing, Environmental Health</p> <p>Project team Communications</p> <p>Resources Existing staffing resources.</p> <p>Timescale January 2016 to March 2016.</p> <p>Description of project To be confirmed after the completion of the Private Sector Health Condition Survey.</p> <p>Outputs To be confirmed.</p>

	<p>Outcomes Improved housing conditions with positive health and safety impacts.</p>
Priority 2	Undertake housing related activity to support economic growth in Watford in consultation with Watford's business community.
Task 3: To support emerging initiatives in the council's forthcoming economic development strategy by researching housing-related situations and potential interventions.	<p>Project lead Housing Strategy</p>
	<p>Project Team Economic Development, Transport.</p>
	<p>Resources Staffing</p>
	<p>Timescale Year 1 of the Housing Strategy.</p>
	<p>Description of project To provide an information bank to allow housing-related information to contribute to other policy areas e.g. transport, economic development. To allow housing-related information to support funding bids for new schemes/projects.</p>
	<p>Outputs A standard template on housing-related information, to be reassessed and updated in consultation with stakeholder organisations.</p>
	<p>Outcomes Effective housing-related support for regeneration initiatives in Watford.</p>

Theme Six:- Communication and community engagement

Priority 1:

To develop a co-ordinated communications strategy for housing-related issues in Watford to achieve the following:-

- Convey a range of messages, such expectations on the availability of affordable housing for rent, on a range of housing options, on sources of housing-related assistance, on housing-related support services, and to improve perceptions of a range of housing options.
- To communicate information to meet the requirements, expectations and aspirations of a range of ages and demographic groups, and to communicate with more “difficult to reach” groups such as young people, vulnerable people.
- To be receptive to existing and new technological options for communications

Task 1: Develop the communications strategy for housing

Project lead
Housing, Communications

Project team
Planning, Environmental Health, Customers Services, Revenues and Benefits.

Resources
Existing staff resources

Timescale
Year 1 of the Housing Strategy.

	<p>Description of project To produce a new Communications strategy in recognition of the changing customer base and the new expectations of communications e.g. use of the Social Media, and also in recognition of the essential role which a lack of effective communication plays in driving homelessness and housing need, and ineffective use of affordable housing stock.</p> <p>Outputs A housing communications strategy for Watford, defining what we wish to achieve and the tasks which will implement the strategy.</p> <p>Outcomes Reduced homelessness and housing need, and good take-up of new and existing housing options. Positive engagement of the community on issues relating to housing growth.</p>
<p>Task 2: Implement the communications strategy for housing</p>	<p>Project lead Housing Strategy</p> <p>Project team Communications, Planning, Environmental Health, Customers Services, Revenues and Benefits</p> <p>Resources To be confirmed.</p> <p>Timescale Years 1-2 of the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>Description of project Implementation of the tasks included in the housing strategy.</p> <p>Outputs Completion of the tasks including in the housing strategy.</p> <p>Outcomes Reduced homelessness and housing need, and good take-up of new and existing housing options. Positive engagement of the community on issues relating to housing growth.</p>

Priority 2	To devise an approach to community engagement on housing growth issues, in partnership with registered providers
Task 3: To devise an approach to community engagement on housing growth issues, in partnership with registered providers.	Project lead Housing, Regeneration and Development.
	Project team Communications, Partnerships and Performance
	Resources Existing staff resources.
	Timescale Year 1 of the Housing Strategy.
	Description of project To be confirmed.
	Outputs Revised framework for community engagement.
	Outcomes Positive engagement from the community relating to housing growth.

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Glossary

2011 Census – A national survey of all people and households in the United Kingdom, last carried out on 27 March 2011.

Accessible housing – Accessible housing refers to the construction or modification of housing to enable independent living for persons with physical or visual impairment. Accessibility is achieved both through design and adaptations.

Affordable Housing - Affordable housing is the sum of Social Rent, Intermediate/Affordable Rent and Low Cost Home Ownership. New affordable homes are defined in line with Planning Policy Statement 3 as additional housing units (or bedspaces) provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Affordable Rent – introduced as a new type of rent by the Homes and Communities Agency in February 2011. Affordable Rented housing is let by registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is not subject to the national rent regime but is subject to other rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent. Revenue from Affordable Rents can be used to fund affordable housing development. Registered providers are given permission to use Affordable Rents for their development programmes by the Homes and Communities Agency. Affordable Rents can be created either by the development of new affordable housing or the conversion of existing affordable housing when it is relet.

Better Care Fund – The Better Care Fund is a pooled budget for health and social care services, shared between the National Health Services and local authorities, to deliver better outcomes and integrated services for older and disabled people. Disabled Facilities Grants are funded through the Better Care Fund.

Choice-based lettings – Choice-based lettings is a method of allocating affordable housing for rent which has mainly been adopted by local authorities in the United Kingdom since 2000. The Choice-based lettings system is usually characterised by the following three features:

- All households who wish to be allocated affordable housing for rent must apply to join a housing register through which their priority for housing will be assessed.
- All properties which are available for letting will be advertised.
- Households on the housing register can express their wish to be allocated a property through “bidding” for it. Of all bidding households, the household with the highest priority is offered the property.

Communities and Local Government – The Government department responsible for overseeing affordable housing provision and homelessness reduction.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CILs) – The Community Infrastructure levy is a new levy that local authorities in England and Wales can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The levy mostly replaces the system of agreeing planning obligations between local councils and developers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, although the system of Section 106 agreements remains in place for the negotiation of the provision of affordable housing.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) – Disabled Facilities Grants are means tested grants that enable the home of home owners and private tenants who have some form of physical or sensory impairment to be adapted to meet their needs. The disabled occupant must agree to live in the property for a certain period after the works are completed, unless health reasons mean they will live in the property for a shorter time.

Duty to Co-operate – The Duty to Co-operate was created by the Localism Act 2011. It places a legal duty on local planning authorities, county councils in England and public bodies to engage constructively, acting on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters.

Homes and Communities Agency – The Government organisation which regulates the activities of registered providers, including their affordable housing development programmes.

Housing-related support – Housing-related support services are defined as services that aim to develop or sustain an individual's capacity to live independently in accommodation. Housing-related support services are not general health, social care or statutory personal care services, but services which aim to support independent living arrangements. Housing-related support services in Watford are funded by a grant which is administered by Hertfordshire County Council.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – this term refers to residential property where “common areas” exist and are shared by more than one household. Common areas may be bathrooms or kitchens, but can also be stairwells and landings. HMOs can be divided into self-contained flats or bedsits, or consist of lodgings. HMOs differ from purpose-built blocks of flats since most will have been converted from a large building originally intended for use by a single household.

Housing Benefit – Means-tested financial assistance to meet housing costs for tenants of the social rented sector. Under the Localism Act 2012 Housing Benefit will become part of the new Universal Credit payment.

Housing Register – The register of people applying for homes owned and/or managed by registered providers.

Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV) – A LABV is a distinct legal entity, characterised by joint equal representation on the Board by the public and private sector partners. In return for the public sector transferring its assets into the partnership, the private sector partner will inject finance, technical expertise and a capability to deliver.

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) – Local Enterprise Partnerships are partnerships between local authorities and businesses. They decide what the priorities should be for investment in infrastructure and economic development in their area.

Local Housing Allowance – Means-tested financial assistance to meet housing costs for tenants of the private rented sector.

Localism Act 2011 – The Localism Act 2011 received Royal Assent in November 2011. The housing-related provisions are:

- Local authorities have the freedom to determine who will qualify to go on their housing register.
- Local authorities will have the flexibility to bring the homelessness duty to an end with an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector without requiring the household's agreement.
- Local authorities have an obligation to publish a tenancy strategy setting out, for their local authority areas, the tenancies which should be granted and the circumstances in which certain tenancies will be granted.
- Local authorities have the power to offer flexible tenancies to new social tenants. A flexible tenancy is a tenancy for a fixed term.

Low cost home ownership – Low cost home ownership is the sale of homes at prices below market level. They can combine sale and rent, or can incorporate a low interest equity loan which reduces the cost of monthly repayments.

Registered provider (RP) – also known as a housing association or registered social landlord (RSL), a landlord of affordable housing who is registered with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Section 106 agreement – A Section 106 agreement is a legal agreement (similar to a covenant) which provides a means of ensuring that private housing developers contribute towards the infrastructure that is required to make a development acceptable in planning terms. Contributions may be either financial or in kind and may be used to deliver affordable housing.

Social rented housing – Social rented housing is rented housing which is owned and managed by local authorities and registered providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. A Social Rent is usually 50% to 60% of full market rent.

Special Policy Areas – The Core Strategy, part of Watford's new Local Plan, identifies a number of "Special Policy Areas" (SPAs) which form an important part of the spatial strategy. Each of these areas has a separate policy.

Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) – Strategic Housing Market Assessments are cross-boundary housing research projects. They are designed to enable local authorities to think spatially about the nature and influence of the housing markets in respect to their local area, and to provide robust evidence to

inform policies aimed at providing the right mix of housing across the whole housing market – both market and affordable housing.

Temporary Accommodation – Under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1997, if a local authority has reason to believe that a household may be homeless, eligible for assistance and have a priority need, they should secure that accommodation is available on a temporary basis pending a decision as to what the duty is to the households under homelessness legislation. The local authority may also provide accommodation while the homelessness applicant is awaiting an offer of suitable housing.

*PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 1st December 2014
Report of: Head of Regeneration and Development
Title: Local Plan Part 2 (LP2) – second consultation draft

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 Local Plan Part 1 – the Core Strategy was adopted in January 2013. The Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for Watford to 2031 and forms the strategic planning context.

1.2 Part 2 of the Local Plan will replace and update the remaining Watford District Plan 2000 policies and site allocations, to support the delivery of the Core Strategy vision and objectives by:

1) identifying sites and areas for specific purposes; and

2) providing environmental criteria, against which development proposals and planning applications can be judged.

1.3 The draft consultation is being brought to Cabinet so that it can be considered alongside the Economic Development Strategy and the Housing Strategy.

1.4 An earlier draft of the policies was discussed by members of the Planning Policy Advisory Group on 1st October, and changes have been made as a result.

1.5 Cabinet is asked to endorse the draft plan as the basis for consultation.

1.5 An independent Environmental Report, which meets the requirements for Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment, will also be published for consultation.

1.6 A further statutory consultation stage will be required before the Plan is submitted for examination.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That members agree that the draft Local Plan Part 2 progress to consultation.

2.2 That delegated authority be given to the Head of Regeneration and Development to

make any necessary editorial changes/corrections prior to consultation.

Contact Officer:

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Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development.

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

3.1 The Council first asked stakeholders for views on what Local Plan Part 2 should cover, back in November 2012, and followed this up by publishing draft policies and a list of potential sites for consultation during November and December 2013.

3.2 Since then we have also been working on keeping our evidence base up to date.

3.3 The draft Plan, set out at Appendix A, incorporates the development management and sites policies into a single document, and takes account of comments received, additional evidence and new information. The related maps are contained in a separate map book, at Appendix B.

3.4 A summary of the key issues by topic is set out below:

3.5 **Special Policy Areas and Mixed Use Allocations:**

Policies setting out the development expected in the Special Policy Areas (SPAs) at Watford Junction, the Health Campus, Lower High Street, the Dome Roundabout, Western Gateway and the Town Centre are already adopted in the Core Strategy. LP2 does not set out new proposals for these areas but defines the precise boundaries to be shown on the Policies Map.

3.6 Smaller mixed use allocations are proposed within the SPAs at: the Gas Holder site, a former petrol station at the Dome roundabout, and a site including North Watford library and clinics (which would need to be re-provided as part of any redevelopment). Mixed uses are also proposed at The Brow and The Gossamers – which would involve redeveloping shopping parades with housing above, to re - provide and provide additional housing.

3.7 **Sustainable Development**

This chapter sets out the required standards for sustainable design (a minimum Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 for all new homes, with Level 5 within the SPAs) and supports renewable energy and the provision of decentralised energy networks.

3.8 Policies also bring forward and update policies from the current District Plan which set out issues to be considered when determining planning applications in relation to:

drainage and flood risk; the protection of river corridors, canals and watercourses; water consumption; water quality/pollution; waste; unstable, contaminated and potentially contaminated land; air quality; noise and lighting.

- 3.9 In recognition of concerns about the potential conflict between additional residential development and both existing businesses and planned events in the town centre, we will be consulting on whether anything needs to be added to the noise policy to ensure that both business interests and residential amenity are protected, without preventing residential use in the town centre. The current policy already requires that mitigation is provided where noisy locations cannot be avoided. A suggestion is to add particular reference to the night time economy in the policy and also to consider defining a specific area of the town centre where these issues particularly arise - and where a greater degree of mitigation may be necessary than elsewhere in the borough to achieve the same satisfactory internal noise level.

3.10 **Town and Local Centres**

This section defines the town's primary and secondary shopping frontages and, like the current District Plan, sets percentage levels limiting non-retail uses within these and the town centre, and in district centres.

- 3.11 Restaurant hubs are identified around the entrance to Charter Place/ northern end of Market Street, and around the northern end of King Street and the facing entrance to town centre. These areas would be excluded from the percentage calculation, and restaurant uses would be supported.

- 3.12 A new policy seeks to prevent the clustering of betting and money shops in the town centre and North Watford District Centre – this will be possible if the government implements proposed changes to the Use Classes Order which will mean such uses will require planning permission (which they do not at present).

- 3.13 This section also includes policies identifying character areas in the town centre, protecting community facilities, and protecting residential amenity when considering applications for restaurants, pubs or take-aways.

- 3.14 Potential retail led mixed use development sites are identified at Sainsbury/Iceland/Oceana; Former TJ Hughes site; BT Telephone Exchange and surrounding area; Church St Car Park (which would include replacement parking) and Charter Place (the latter to reflect the scheme already going ahead). Additional work is required to assess the deliverability and timescales of these sites before submission and examination.

3.15 **Housing**

This chapter sets out policies to protect family housing and set out when conversions may be appropriate, as well as the considerations relating to applications for HMOs, hostels, guest houses and self contained flats within HMOs (which seek to prevent concentrations of such uses). There are also policies to protect gardens from inappropriate development, and to retain affordable housing, and older persons housing.

- 3.16 The plan identifies sites for at least 2,487 new homes (including expected housing delivery in the Special Policy Areas and other mixed use sites), which, taking account of existing completions and commitments, should allow sufficient choice and flexibility to meet the minimum 6,500 homes target set in the Core Strategy.
- 3.17 A Gypsy and Traveller site is identified next to the current site at Tolpits Lane. The principle of this location has been subject to examination and is set out in the adopted Core Strategy.

3.18 **Economic Development and Employment**

The Core Strategy set a minimum target of an additional 7,000 jobs between 2006 and 2031. The evidence available for the Core Strategy showed that this level of growth could be accommodated without additional employment allocations. A change in approach is proposed in light of the recent Economic Development and Growth Assessment (EDGA) which shows a much higher likely requirement for employment space.

- 3.19 A key finding, in terms of the Local Plan, is the importance of protecting employment land from redevelopment for other uses. The EDGA presents a number of different growth forecasts and scenarios, but even that based on providing employment consistent with the growth in labour supply expected from 260 homes per year (as the minimum required by the Core Strategy) is expected to require almost an additional 165,000 sqm of office floorspace, and just over 21,000 sqm of industrial space.
- 3.20 A policy statement has been prepared which sets out current and emerging policy, alongside the latest evidence, to assist us in retaining Clarendon Road as a key office location. This is attached for information at Appendix C.
- 3.21 Policies now offer additional protection to unallocated employment sites, and step back from the previous proposal to release Sandown Road from employment use. The BT Depot at Reeds Crescent, a longstanding housing allocation which has not come forward for redevelopment, is proposed to be designated instead for employment. Additional employment related policies relate to Leavesden Studios Operations (at the Island/Ashridge Roundabout site) to reflect a similar policy recently adopted by Three Rivers in relation to this site which straddles the boundary, and to Woodside Leisure Park, which is flagged up as a potential employment location, should it become available in future.

3.22 **Education**

The Core Strategy identified a need for schools at The Health Campus, Watford Junction and at Ascot Road. In the first consultation on LP2, we also consulted on allocations at Lanchester House and adjacent to Orchard School (for expansion). Lanchester, Orchard and Ascot Road are either already built or have planning permission so do not need to be allocated for development. Only one allocation is therefore proposed – a site at Bedford Street, which could be linked to the Watford Junction SPA. The Health Campus SPA boundary has been drawn to include Laurence Haines school which could be expanded to provide the additional requirement for the Health Campus.

3.23 **Transport**

The transport chapter sets out car and cycle parking standards. For residential parking, a maximum requirement is to be retained in the controlled parking zones, but a minimum standard is to be reintroduced elsewhere in the borough. Support is given to the introduction of car clubs. Provision of electric vehicle charging points will be required.

3.24 **Infrastructure**

The Core Strategy sets out policy relating to the delivery of infrastructure. In response to feedback on the first LP2 consultation, a policy has been added to cover applications for mobile phone masts, which is no longer sufficiently covered by national policy.

3.25 **Design and Heritage**

This section contains 2 policies – one relating to the design of shopfronts and advertisements, and one relating to the protection of the historic environment, including listed buildings, locally listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens and archaeology. These largely take forward and clarify policies in the Watford District Plan 2000.

3.26 **Green Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation**

This section sets out policies on trees, woodlands and hedgerows, open space and play space in residential areas, and cemetery provision. The first consultation on Local Plan 2 also proposed sites for the Sports Hubs referred to in the Core Strategy. This raised concern about potential conflict with Green Belt policy (although it was always the case that Green Belt policy would still apply where relevant), and on further consideration it is thought unnecessary to allocate these sites through the planning process. They are instead being addressed through the Sports Facilities Strategy.

3.27 We previously consulted on a potential cemetery site on council owned land at Paddock Road in Hertsmere (which would need to be allocated in their Local Plan rather than our own). This raised concerns, primarily relating to access through existing allotments, and 2 additional sites have now been identified within Watford Borough. All 3 sites are presented as options in the coming consultation - not all may be taken forward. The additional options are to extend the existing North Watford cemetery, and/or to identify an additional site at Russell Lane. All 3 options would be for woodland burials.

3.28 Sites to be removed from or added to the Green Belt are also identified in this section – the proposals are intended to address minor boundary anomalies, in line with the approach set out in the Core Strategy, and have already been subject to consultation. The most significant amendment in terms of scale is the Island Site/Ashridge Roundabout, related to Leavesden Studios, which is released in order to maintain a logical and consistent Green Belt boundary with that agreed at the Three Rivers Local Plan examination.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications contained in this report.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no direct legal implications in this report. The LP2 will need to be consulted on and then go through an examination in public before being formally adopted by Council.

4.3 **Equalities**

4.3.1 A full equalities impact assessment was undertaken for the Core Strategy. Local Plan 2 supports delivery of the Core Strategy. A screening assessment was undertaken at the time of the last consultation on LP2 to assess whether there were any additional potential impacts. The assessment found that most policies either had a neutral effect or were not relevant (i.e. that whether a person had one of the protected characteristics or not had no relevance to the impact of the policy). No significant impacts were identified, either positive or negative, which would require further assessment. Policy adjustments for this consultation are not expected to change this assessment, which will be reviewed ahead of the pre-submission consultation.

4.4 **Potential Risks**

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Significant new issues or changes in government policy/ evidence could lead to a need to a significant change of policy and delay to submission	2	3	6

4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 Staffing is in place to manage the consultation.

4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1 No accommodation impacts.

4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 Policies in the Local Plan are designed to improve community safety – no specific impact.

4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 The plan policies are intended to ensure development within Watford is delivered in a sustainable way and that high standards of sustainability are met.

4.8.2 An independent Environmental Report which meets the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements has been prepared and will also be published for consultation. Any recommendations will be considered before the plan is prepared for submission.

Appendices

- A. Local Plan Part 2 – second consultation – policies
- B. Local Plan Part 2 – second consultation – map book
- C. Clarendon Road Policy Position Statement

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

File Reference

- *LP00. Local Plan Part 2.*

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Local Plan Part 2 – Second Consultation – December 2014

1. Introduction
2. Special Policy Areas and Mixed Use Sites
3. Sustainable Development
4. Town and Local Centres
5. Housing
6. Economic Development and Employment
7. Education
8. Transport
9. Infrastructure
10. Urban Design and the Historic Environment
11. Green infrastructure, Sport and Recreation
12. Monitoring and Delivery

Appendices: [note – Appendices begin at F to follow on from Core Strategy Appendices A-E]

F Noise Standards – currently being updated by Environmental Health but will be inserted ahead of the consultation.

G Car Parking Standards

H. Cycle Parking Standards

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Local Plan Part 2 – Watford Borough Council

1. Introduction

Part 1 of Watford's Local Plan – the Core Strategy - was adopted on 30th January 2013. The Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and spatial strategy for Watford borough to 2031 and forms the strategic planning context.

The Core Strategy and remaining policies of Watford District Plan (WDP) 2000 currently make up the development plan for Watford, along with Hertfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plans.

Part 2 of the Local Plan will replace and update the remaining Watford District Plan 2000 policies and site allocations, to support the delivery of the Core Strategy vision and objectives by.

- 1) identifying sites and areas for specific purposes; and
- 2) providing environmental criteria, against which development proposals and planning applications can be judged.

We first asked for views on what Local Plan Part 2 should cover, back in November 2012, and followed this up by publishing draft policies and a list of potential sites for consultation during November and December 2013. These views, and those submitted in response to this consultation, will be used in preparing a final plan for submission to the Secretary of State for examination.

Purpose of this consultation:

Before we prepare the final plan for submission we are again asking for your views. We have made changes as result of feedback during the previous consultation, and also in light of further evidence and advice. These include combining development management policies and site allocations into a single document.

Changes to policy wording since the last consultation are shown for information, with new text underlined and deleted text shown as ~~strikethrough~~. Changes to supporting text are not shown.

It would help if you could focus comments on these changes, to let us know if they address previous concerns.

Alongside this we are also consulting on the Environmental Report prepared to assess the sustainability of the proposed policies. This report contains the sustainability and strategic environmental assessment required by the European Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.

You will see that in many cases policy numbering in each chapter does not start at 1. This is because the numbering follows on from that in the Core Strategy, to make it clear that the policies will all form part of the same Local Plan. Once agreed the policies will all operate together and, following adoption, the policies will be shown on an adopted policies map.

At this consultation stage, we have not yet produced a full policies map. You can see all the maps in the accompanying map book.

Summary of key changes:

Many of the changes are to improve the clarity of policies, but your attention is drawn to the more significant changes on which we would particularly like your views.

Special Policy Areas and Mixed Uses

The previous consultation presented some options for the boundaries of these.

Amendments have since been made to:

SPA2 - Watford Junction – Options A and B are both included in the SPA.

SPA3 – Health Campus - the boundary has been extended to include Laurence Haines School

Changes have been made to the mixed use allocations proposed in the last consultation: MXD1 The Town and Country Club is now proposed as housing allocation; MXD2 Colonial way is part of the employment policy; MXD 4 has been removed due to flooding constraints; MXD5 has been merged with the housing allocation proposed on the adjoining site; MXD 6 has been removed due to the requirement to retain as employment. There is now an option for the northern part of MXD 7 Ascot Road to form part of the Watford Business Park employment area; MXD 8 is part of the town centre and a new MXD 9 (The library and north Watford facilities) has been added.

Sustainable Development

We are asking for views on changes to the noise policy to try to balance the interests of residents and businesses in the town centre. The policy already requires mitigation to ensure acceptable noise levels within residential properties, but we are asking whether it would be helpful to identify particular areas within the town centre where additional mitigation is likely to be required to secure

acceptable noise levels (the acceptable noise level would be the same as elsewhere).

Housing

The site threshold has been removed and all housing sites are now identified. The list of sites has been amended in light of additional information since the last consultation. **Appendix XXXX** details the changes.

The affordable housing policy has been modified to allow replacement housing to be provided within the Borough, rather than necessarily on the same site.

An additional policy has been added to protect older persons' housing.

Economic Development and Employment

The latest evidence on employment suggests that additional employment space is likely to be needed in future, particularly high quality office space. This means that policies protecting existing employment space, whether in designated employment areas or not, have been strengthened. We are also consulting on additional employment sites – the BT Depot on Reeds Crescent (as a designated employment area, given that the previous Local Plan housing allocation has never come forward), a site for Leavesden Studios Operations at The Island Site/Ashfields roundabout – to reflect an adjoining allocation in the recently adopted Three Rivers Local Plan, and a policy noting that should Woodside Leisure Park become available for development, employment would be the preferred use. The BT Depot at Reeds Crescent was presented as a housing site in the previous consultation – and we would welcome views on both alternatives for this site.

Boundaries of some employment areas have been amended – the most significant changes are to Fishers – which has been extended southwards to incorporate part of the Health Campus site, on which business uses are proposed; and to Greycaine/Odhams/Sandown – which now retains Sandown Road as an employment location (rather than releasing to mixed use as previously proposed). Land close to the CRL station at Ascot Road could be part of the Watford Business Park employment area, rather than part of a mixed use site – this is now presented as a new option.

Town Centre and Retail:

An additional policy is proposed to restrict clustering of betting shops and money shops, which had been identified as a concern. Whilst at present such changes do not require planning permission and so are difficult to control, the Government has proposed changes which will allow such control, once they come into force.

Education:

The sites proposed in the last consultation have all now been delivered or secured planning permission and so do not require allocation. An additional site has been identified at Bedford Street.

Transport:

The parking policy has been expanded to provide for car clubs.

Infrastructure:

A new policy has been added to cover mobile communications infrastructure.

Green infrastructure:

In the last consultation we proposed a woodland cemetery site at Paddock Road in Hertsmere. Due to concerns about the suitability of this site we are also asking for views on two additional options for cemetery provision. These are expansion of the existing North Watford cemetery, and a new site at Russell Lane.

The proposed Sports Hub allocations have been removed due to concerns about potential conflict with green belt policy.

An additional amendment to the green belt boundary is proposed at the Island site/Ashfield roundabout. This change is proposed in order to maintain a logical green belt boundary following amendments made in the Three Rivers Local Plan, and is specifically to allow for the future expansion of Leavesden Studios operations.

How to comment:

Please submit comments on either the proposed policies or the Environmental Report by 2nd February 2015

The quickest and easiest way to submit comments is via our online system at this link: **TO ADD ONCE CONSULTATION SET UP**. Comments may be submitted by selecting the relevant document then clicking on the pen symbol next to the policy on which you wish to comment. Before you submit comments for the first time you will need to register on the system. This is a simple process requiring a valid email address. Submitting comments this way is easy to do, and avoids any chance of confusion as to which policy you are commenting on.

If you are unable or prefer not to submit comments online, please email them to strategy@watford.gov.uk, ensuring each comment clearly indicates the policy referred to, and the change being sought, suggesting revised wording if appropriate. Such comments should be sent in a format that allows comments to be easily cut and pasted into the consultation system.

Our postal address and contact details are:

Watford Borough Council
Planning Policy
FREEPOST ANG0394
Watford WD17 3BR
Email: strategy@watford.gov.uk
Tel: 01923 278263

Preparation process

There are a number of formal stages in the preparation of the Local Plan, which we are supplementing with additional consultation to ensure all interested parties have a chance to help shape the plan.

Policies are also subject to sustainability appraisal / strategic environmental assessment which considers the environmental impact of the preferred policy approach and all reasonable alternatives, and equalities impact assessment which considers the effect on defined “protected characteristics”. Plan preparation is therefore an iterative process, with the aim of arriving at a plan that there is as much agreement on as possible by the time we reach the formal publication stage (Stage 2 in Table 1 below).

By Stage 2 the plan should be ready to submit for examination, and the scope of consultation is then limited to compliance with defined legal and soundness tests. It is therefore in everyone’s interest to express their views on the plan content at an early a stage as possible.

Preparatory work was already well underway alongside Core Strategy preparation before the “notification” stage below which was introduced by new regulations.

Table 1 Local Plan Part 2 Preparation Process		
<i>Preparatory</i>	Much of the work undertaken since 2005	Call for sites in

work	including evidence gathering, consultation on options and sustainability appraisal for the Core Strategy is also relevant to Local Plan Part 2. Suggestions for site allocations were requested on two previous occasions.	2006 and 2009.
1. Notification	Regulatory stage – a letter was sent to all consultees informing them of our intention to prepare the Local Plan Part 2 and the subject matter thereof. Suggestions on content were invited.	November 2012
1st Consultation	At this stage we consulted on initial policy ideas and alternatives, giving an indication, where possible, of our preferred approach. The alternatives had already been subject to sustainability appraisal – these findings were also published for consultation.	November-December 2013
2nd Consultation	At this stage we are publishing our first full draft of the plan for comment. The Environmental Report (which sets out the findings of the sustainability appraisal) is also being published for comment.	Current Stage Dec 2014- Feb 2015
2. Publication	Publication of the plan we intend to submit for examination. This involves a 6 week consultation. At this stage the scope for comment is limited to compliance with specific legal and soundness tests.	Spring 2015
3. Submission	Plan submitted for independent examination by a Government appointed inspector.	
4. Examination	An independent inspector will examine the soundness of the plan and consider the comments made at publication	

	stage.	
5. Adoption	On adoption the policies become part of the statutory development plan.	

2. Special Policy Areas and Mixed Use Allocations

Special Policy Areas

Why is this policy needed?

2.1 Although Special Policy Areas were identified as broad locations in the Core Strategy, the precise boundaries are to be set in Local Plan Part 2. These boundaries will be shown on the policies map once adopted. The proposed boundaries can be seen in the Special Policies and Mixed use Allocations chapter of the map book accompanying this consultation.

What is it intended to do?

2.2 To allocate the Special Policy Areas and define their boundaries.

This does not replace any existing policy.

Special Policy Areas

The following Special Policy Areas are identified in the Core Strategy. Core Strategy policies SPA1-SPA6 set out the type of development appropriate in each area. Development within the Special Policy Area boundaries, as shown on the Policies Map, should accord with the related Core Strategy policy.

SPA1 Town Centre
SPA2 Watford Junction
SPA3 Health Campus
SPA4 Lower High Street
SPA5 Dome Roundabout
SPA6 Western Gateway

Mixed Use Allocations

Why is this policy needed?

2.3 The sites below have been identified as suitable for a mix of uses. The policy identifies the sites, and provides information on the type of development likely to be appropriate at each location.

What is it intended to do?

2.4 To allocate the sites listed for mixed use development.

The list of sites proposed has changed since the previous consultation as a number of new sites have been identified, and others have been removed or reallocated due to new evidence. Sites at the Town and Country Club, and Lower Derby Road have been changed to purely housing allocations. The Nissan Garage has been removed due to new evidence on flooding. Sandown Road has

been removed as new employment evidence shows it should be retained for employment use (this is explained more fully in the Economic Development and Employment Chapter). Other sites have been removed because they are sufficiently covered by other relevant policies.

2.5 A new site is proposed at the North Watford library and clinics – any redevelopment here would need to include re-provision of the existing facilities. A former petrol station at the Dome Roundabout has been identified as a redevelopment site, which could include a mix of residential and retail. Additional sites are also proposed at The Brow and The Gossamers, both of which would include redevelopment of existing retail and housing provision, to provide a net increase in housing numbers.

The map booklet accompanying this consultation shows the site locations, and additional information.

This does not directly replace any existing policy.

2.6 Mixed Use Allocations Policy					
A mix of uses will be appropriate on the following sites, as identified on the Policies Map. Such proposals should accord with the broad mix of uses identified.					
<u>Site ref</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Proposed use</u>	<u>Estimated housing component</u>	<u>Implementation considerations</u>	<u>Delivery timescale</u>
<u>MXD3</u>	Gas holder site (within SPA4)	Retail and office use could be appropriate	0	Most of this site falls within the flood plain. Potentially contaminated land. Close to an AQMA. Listed building to be retained and improved.	3-5 years
<u>MXD9</u>	North Watford Library and Health Facilities (within SPA5)	Mixed use to include residential as well as re-providing existing facilities on site or in the immediate vicinity.	20-30	Existing facilities need upgrading and could be better provided by consolidating the separate sites, and providing some residential. In design terms the site could accommodate 2.5-3 storey development	5-10 years

				<p>and should include parking and amenity space.</p> <p>The library is a locally listed building which should be retained, as should existing trees on site.</p> <p>Potentially contaminated land.</p> <p>AQMA.</p>	
<u>MXD10</u>	Former petrol station, Dome Roundabout (within SPA5)	Residential uses with ground floor retail	8-10	<p>An L shaped residential terrace of 2-2.5 storeys fronting onto the roads to the south west.</p> <p>Potentially contaminated land.</p>	0-5 years
<u>MXD11</u>	The Gossamers	Mixed retail and residential	100-200	<p>Potentially contaminated land Redevelopment to include reprovision of existing facilities and open space.</p>	0-5 years
<u>MXD12</u>	The Brow	Mixed retail and residential	24 additional	<p>Potentially contaminated land.</p>	0-5 years

~~MXD1 Watford Town and Country Club~~

~~MXD2 Colonial Way~~

~~MXD4 Nissan Garage, Lower High Street~~

~~MXD5 Lower Derby Road~~

~~MXD6 Sandown Road~~

~~MXD7 Ascot Road~~

~~MXD8 The Parade~~

The policies in this chapter support/deliver:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 17, 69, 157
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A well planned town with homes to suit all needs 3. A healthy town 4. A prosperous and educated town 5. A town that protects its environment and heritage
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	<p>SO1. A family friendly town centre SO2. Sustainable Neighbourhoods SO3. Enhance Watford's regional economic and transportation role</p> <p>SO4. Enhance Watford's regional health, recreational, educational, cultural and social role</p> <p>SO5. Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets</p>
Core Strategy Policies:	SS1, SPA1-6, HS1

3. Sustainable Development

SD5 Sustainable Design

SD6 Sustainability Statement

SD7 Renewable Energy

Why are these policies needed?

Key legislation aims to reduce CO₂ emissions globally by 50% by 2050. The UK has committed to reducing emissions by at least 34% by 2020 and at least 80% by 2050.

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development throughout. It acknowledges the key role planning plays in shaping places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. It requires local planning authorities to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The government is committed to zero carbon homes by 2016. Where it is not possible to reduce the regulated CO₂ emissions to zero using on-site measures, the remaining emissions can be mitigated through allowable off-site solutions.

Policies SE1, SE4 and U1 of the Watford District Plan 2000 were replaced by the Core Strategy, but these proposed policies incorporate and update some of the content of those policies. This policy supplements Core Strategy policies and together with proposed Policy SD14, replaces SE7.

What are they intended to do?

The council is committed to working towards lower carbon emissions in line with Core Strategy policy SD3, which sets out the broad approach to dealing with climate change, and the Watford Climate Change Strategy. This policy is designed to expand on policy SD3 and provide clarity. The preferred approach is to achieve sustainability measures through the use of nationally recognised code levels enabling a clear framework for developers and assessors to use.

We previously asked for views on two different levels of sustainable design standards. Given the responses we received and the importance of sustainable design, our preferred option is the higher of the two standards. We intend to progress this option unless superseded by government policy. A sustainability statement is considered essential to assess compliance with policy.

Policy SD 5 Sustainable Design

All residential development will be expected to meet a minimum of Code for Sustainable Homes level 4*. Non-residential development should meet BREEAM Very Good.

All Major Development should meet current BREEAM Communities standards. Major development within the Special Policy Areas should achieve a minimum of Code for Sustainable Homes level 5 or BREEAM Excellent.

No dwelling shall be occupied until a Final Code Certificate has been issued for it certifying that the appropriate Code Level or BREEAM rating has been achieved.

**The dwelling(s) shall achieve a Code Level in accordance with the requirements of the Code for Sustainable Homes: Technical guide (or such national measure of sustainability for house design that replaces that scheme).*

Policy SD 6 Sustainability Statement

In order to demonstrate compliance with Core Strategy Policy SD1 a sustainability statement should be submitted to the council for all new development applications (including those for extensions) to detail sustainability measures implemented to meet the council's targets. This should be informed by the Building Futures Sustainable Design Toolkit and online guidance at www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures.

This statement should also form part of any pre-application discussions with the local authority ~~Development Management section of the Planning Department~~ prior to submission of a planning application.

Policy SD 7 Renewable Energy Technology

Development proposals should incorporate renewable energy technology where feasible and financially viable.

Proposals for appropriate renewable energy technology on existing homes and non-residential buildings will be supported.

Proposals for standalone renewable or low carbon energy generating schemes will be considered in accordance with the NPPF. Schemes will be considered favourably where careful siting and design ensures the scheme does not have an unacceptable impact, in isolation or cumulatively with other similar developments, on the environment and local amenity.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF (para 93-96); Building Regulations.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO2: Sustainable neighbourhoods. SO5: Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.

Core Strategy Policies:	SD3 Climate Change, UD1 Delivering High Quality Design.
Other Local Policies:	Climate Change Strategy.

Decentralised Energy

Why is this policy needed?

The NPPF (Para 97) requires local planning authorities to identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems. Core Strategy Policy SD3 promotes the delivery of, and contribution to, networks of decentralised community heating systems.

What is it intended to do?

The Low and Zero Carbon Study identifies parts of Watford as having potential for district heating systems as identified on the Energy Opportunities Plan. Due to the costs and practicalities of installing the necessary pipe work, district heating generally needs to be implemented through large scale developments. The Core Strategy identifies areas where a large scale of development is expected as Special Policy Areas (SPAs). This creates opportunities for solutions on a neighbourhood scale. Once district heating systems are in place in the SPAs the networks will have the opportunity to naturally expand to incorporate the wider areas identified in the Low and Zero Carbon Study. It would be desirable for development within these wider areas to deliver or contribute to networks of district heating to help the borough contribute to national renewable energy targets and improve energy efficiency.

Text has been added to the policy to ensure that the contribution towards the provision of district heating networks does not threaten the financial viability of a scheme.

Policy SD 8 Decentralised Energy

Proposals for decentralised energy networks will be supported.

Within SPA1 Town Centre, SPA2 Watford Junction or SPA3 Health Campus, development will be expected to contribute towards the provision of district heating networks where financially viable.

Throughout the borough, developments will be expected to link up to available networks.

Where no network is currently in place, development should occur in such a way that connection at a later date will be feasible.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF para 97.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well planned town with homes to suit all needs. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO5. Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	SD3 Climate Change.

Flood Risk

Why is this policy needed?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear (para 100) about the need to avoid inappropriate development in areas at the highest risk of flooding, and that where development is necessary, it is made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides more advice on how flood risk, from all sources, should be assessed and taken into account.

Drainage is a particular issue in Watford with potential impacts on settlements along the River Colne downstream of Watford. The Surface Water Management Plan also identifies areas within Watford which may be at risk of flooding from local sources (primarily surface water). The Surface Water Management Plan is prepared and kept under review by Hertfordshire County Council.

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010, removes the automatic right to connect to sewers and enables authorities to adopt Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for new developments and redevelopments. It sets out the basis for a number of more local documents, such as on sustainable drainage and emergency planning.

This policy replaces Saved Watford District Plan 2000 Policy SE27 Flood prevention.

What is it intended to do?

The policy sets out a requirement for flood risk, whether from rivers of other sources, to be assessed in relevant locations.

In Watford the Functional Floodplain (FRZ 3b) is defined as the area where there is a 5% chance of flooding in any one year (1 in 20 year event) for the River Gade catchment and where there is a 2% chance of flooding in any one year (1 in 50 year event) for the Upper Colne and Mimms Hall Brook area.

Policy SD9 will ensure that development is steered towards sites and areas with lower flood risk using the sequential test, and that where applicable an exception

test is applied. In some cases developers will be required to contribute to the delivery of flood risk management schemes and facilities as set out in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, the Flood Risk Management Strategy for Hertfordshire and other relevant plans and policies, such as by the Environment Agency and DEEFRA.

Developers will also be responsible for incorporating flood resilient and resistant design and construction, raising flood awareness and improving emergency planning as part of certain development schemes.

All new development should incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as part of the design.

Policies on drainage and flood risk have been amalgamated into a single policy covering all types of flooding.

Policy SD 9 Managing Flood Risk

Development must be located, designed and laid out to minimise ~~ensure that~~ the risk of flooding from all sources ~~is minimised~~, whilst not increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.

~~Development proposals should demonstrate that they have taken account of any recommendations or issues identified in any relevant local or regional flood risk documents. This could include Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and Surface Water Management Plans.~~

Development will be guided to areas of lower flood risk through the application of the Sequential Test, and where applicable, ~~an~~ the Exception Test ~~will also be required~~. This means that development of unallocated sites will not be permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding, unless they meet the Sequential and/or Exception tests.

A site specific flood risk assessment will be required for development proposals over 1ha in flood risk zone 1, and for all development proposals (including minor development and change of use) in flood risk zones 2 and 3, and in the areas identified as at risk of flooding in the latest Surface Water Management Plan.

~~Where development is located within the floodplain (after satisfying the sequential and exception tests where required) there will be a commitment by the applicant to promote the management and reduction of flood risk through resistant and resilient design and construction~~

Development proposals within flood risk zone 3 (FRZ3a and 3b) should also show in areas at risk of flooding (including from surface water flooding) will need to demonstrate that:

- ~~• requirements for resilient and resistant design and construction have been satisfied;~~
- ~~• the developer has provided a plan to raise flood awareness of future residents or occupiers of the development and improve emergency planning such as a flood emergency and evacuation plan in consultation with the emergency and resilience teams of the local planning authorities (both County and district); and~~

- The design and construction are resilient and resistant to flooding, including safe access and egress routes.
- A plan is in place to raise flood awareness of future occupiers and improve emergency planning on consultation with the local authorities.
- The development It would not constrain the natural function of the flood plain, either by impeding flow, hindering maintenance access or by reducing flood water storage capacity.

Developers should demonstrate that their proposal takes account of relevant recommendations or issues identified in local or regional flood risk documents, including strategic flood risk assessments and surface water management plans.

~~When considering design of developments, Floor levels in flood zones 2 and 3a should be designed to be above the 4% 1 in 100 years plus climate change predicted maximum flood levels, plus a minimum freeboard of 300mm, taking account of climate change. The allowance to be made for climate change should follow the latest Environment Agency standing advice (currently 'Climate Change Allowances for Planners'). As part of the modelling, an allowance of at least 30% for climate change would be expected.~~

Drainage and surface water:

The Council will expect developers to show that there is adequate waste water infrastructure capacity to serve all new developments.

In order to demonstrate this, applications should:

- Contain drainage proposals which demonstrate that there is no increase in surface water run-off and which achieve greenfield run off rates.
- Demonstrate how the drainage proposals maximise other environmental benefits such as biodiversity and green infrastructure
- Show that opportunities for SuDs have been maximised and incorporated.
- Show that there would be no increased risk to foul and surface water flooding both on and off site and that where upgrades are required that the developer has liaised with the relevant water/wastewater infrastructure provider to ensure these are in place ahead of occupation of the development.

Policy SD 10 Drainage

~~Development must be located, designed and laid out to ensure that the risk of flooding from any source is minimised whilst not increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.~~

~~The council will require applications for development to include a Drainage Impact Assessment including mitigation measures. Drainage proposals for new development should demonstrate no increase in surface water run-off and aim to achieve greenfield runoff rates. Drainage proposals should also show how they maximise other environmental benefits, such as biodiversity and green infrastructure.~~

~~In 'Areas of Search' (identified in the Surface Water Management Plan) all new development (including householder extensions) will be expected to assess the risk of surface water flooding in more detail, and where there is a risk, show how it will be~~

addressed.
~~Development proposals are required to demonstrate that:
the requirements for integrated sustainable drainage or SuDS have been considered from an early design stage, and opportunities have been maximised and been incorporated into the design and implementation of the proposal;
enough space has been set aside for SuDS; and
the requirements for providing a Drainage Impact Assessment in consultation with HCC have been satisfied.
there is no increased risk to foul and surface water flooding both on and off site and that where upgrades are required that these are in place ahead of occupation of the development.~~

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF: Paras 100 -104 on flood risk, Para 99 on climate change adaptation. A Practice Guide Companion to PPS25.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A town that protects its environment and heritage. A healthy town.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO2: Sustainable Neighbourhoods. SO5: Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	SD1: Sustainable Design, SD2: Water and Wastewater, SD3: Climate Change, GI1: Green Infrastructure.
Local Policies:	SFRA 2012, Flood Risk Management Strategy, Surface Water Management Strategy

Water Consumption

Why is this policy needed?

Hertfordshire is classified as suffering from serious water stress. Assessments for the county show that the vast majority of the rivers and groundwater are over-abstracted.

In Watford the average water use per person is approximately 174 litres per person per day (l/p/d). This is well above the national (148 l/p/d) and Hertfordshire (163 l/p/d) averages and is not sustainable.

Adopted Core Strategy policy SD2 highlights the council's aim to minimise water consumption whilst also protecting water quality.

The water consumption target is supported by local evidence in the Water Cycle Study and referred to in the adopted Core Strategy.

What is it intended to do?

This policy is intended to expand on the Core Strategy policy SD2 to set a specific water target for new development in line with that set in the Water Cycle Study. All development will need to employ water efficiency measures to reduce water consumption.

Policy SD 11 Water Consumption

Development should be designed to protect water resources.

Planning permission will only be granted, where it is demonstrated that adequate water supply is available and that efficient use of water resources has been made, to enable a predicted per capita consumption of 105l/p/d, by incorporating all or some of the water efficiency measures as outlined in the Building Futures Sustainable Design Toolkit and online guidance. This could include:

- Rain water harvesting
- Harvesting and recycling of grey water
- Using water efficient appliances
- Green roofs and walls, and
- Drought proof planting and water efficient landscaping / irrigation measures

Development will be resisted that relies on groundwater abstraction without demonstrating that water efficiency and water re-use measures have been maximised.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF (para 94).
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO5: Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	SD2: Water and Wastewater.
Other Local Evidence:	Water Cycle Study, Environment Agency aims.

Protection and Restoration of River Corridors, Canals and Watercourses

Why is this policy needed?

Most of Watford's urban area is framed by the flood plains and green infrastructure belonging to two rivers, the River Gade to the west, and the River Colne to the east, as well as the Grand Union Canal, also to the west. These waterways make an important contribution to the character of the town. Local Wildlife Sites through which the rivers pass (such as Cassiobury Park), also provide important sites for the feeding and roosting of wintering wildfowl and other wildlife.

The Water Framework Directive sets a target for all rivers to have a good ecological status or potential by 2027 (natural watercourses are given an ecological "status" whilst man-made or substantially altered watercourses are given an ecological "potential"). At present the watercourses in Watford are classified as "moderate" so improvements are needed to achieve "good" status.

This policy is a modified version of saved Watford District Plan policies SE18, SE19 and SE26. It replaces SE26; SE18 and 19 having been replaced in the Core Strategy.

What is it intended to do?

To enhance and improve the river corridors, canals and watercourses, to help achieve at least a "good" ecological status or potential.

The Thames River Basin Management Plan, due to be updated in 2015, sets out river restoration and other mitigation measures for the improvement of the water environment, water quality and water ecology, and includes actions to help the River Colne and River Gade achieve good ecological status or potential.

Policy SD 12 Protection and Restoration of River Corridors, Canals and Watercourses

Development should be set back by at least 8m from the top of the bank of a main river (as defined by the Environment Agency) and at least 5m from the top of the bank of any other watercourse, to ensure that acceptable flood flow routes are maintained; to enhance and protect the local water environment, biodiversity, wildlife corridors and green infrastructure; and to allow access for essential maintenance.

Where developments are considered to affect nearby watercourses or where proposals are in, adjacent, or close to a river or watercourse, the Council will require improvements to the water environment and water ecology. This should include restoration and enhancement of marginal, bankside and floodplain habitat where appropriate, as well as in-stream, aquatic habitats. Developers should make on site improvements to the water environment as far as possible. If this should prove impossible, then financial or land contributions towards the restoration of rivers or watercourses ~~may be considered~~ will be required.

Where proposed development is adjacent to a watercourse the applicant should show they have taken account of the Thames River Basin Management Plan, the Colne Catchment Management Plan and other relevant river management and restoration plans and how the proposal contributes to habitat and biodiversity improvements through river restoration (including de-culverting), biodiversity enhancements or other mitigation measures in consultation with the Environment Agency. The historic interest of the watercourse should be taken into account in determining the appropriate approach to restoration.

Wherever ~~possible~~ appropriate, public access to the watercourses should be

provided, which should be designed to allow access for all users, including those who use wheelchairs or with pushchairs.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	Water Framework Directive.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO4 Enhance Watford's regional health, recreational, educational, cultural and social role. SO5 Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets
Core Strategy Policies:	SD2, GI1, GI3.
Other Local Policies :	Thames River Basin Management Plan.

Waste Management

Why is this policy needed?

National Policy sets out a number of objectives including:

- Encouraging and engaging with the community to take more responsibility for dealing with waste;
- Disposing of waste without harming human health and the environment;
- Locating waste recycling, handling and reduction facilities as close as practicable to the origin of the waste; and
- Driving waste management up the waste hierarchy, with disposal as a last resort.

Whilst the responsibility for dealing with waste (and minerals) lies principally with County and Unitary Councils, District Councils can help promote kerbside collection and community recycling through planning policy. This can be done by ensuring that new development makes sufficient provision for waste management and by promoting designs and layouts that secure the integration of waste management facilities.

The amount of waste produced in Hertfordshire is approximately 3 million tonnes per year, of which over 500,000 tonnes is local authority collected (household waste). Hertfordshire has limited landfill capacity and has only one remaining landfill that is expected to be available until 2017. At present a large proportion of waste is exported out of the County, normally into Bedfordshire landfill facilities. In

order to reduce dependency on landfill, levels of recycling are increasing. Nevertheless, 60% of all of Hertfordshire's household waste still goes to landfill.

This policy is a modified version of SE7 Waste Storage, Recovery and Recycling in New Development, which it replaces.

What is it intended to do?

The policy is intended to encourage householders and occupiers of other buildings to sort and recycle waste. Waste and recycling storage areas should be integrated into all new development and must provide adequate space to facilitate waste recycling through separation, storage, handling, bulking and collection of waste generated within the property. Facilities should be well designed so that they do not detract from the amenity of the area in which they are located.

Adequate space must be provided to ensure that waste containers can be easily accessed and collected by waste collectors.

A Site Waste Management Plan is required by law for all construction projects that are worth more than £300,000. This aims to reduce the amount of waste produced on site and should contain information including types of waste removed from the site and where waste is being taken to. Projects over £500,000 may require further information.

Policy SD 14 Waste

All development will be expected to provide adequate storage for waste and recycling in a convenient location for collection. The siting and design of waste and recycling areas should not result in any adverse impact to residential or workplace amenities. Guidance can be found in ~~Appendix 4~~ at <http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/planning-and-development/refuse---recycling-requirements-for-residential-developments-.en> .

For developments likely to generate significant waste, the council will expect the Waste Hierarchy to be implemented. The Strategic Objectives outlined in the Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies should be adhered to as well as Policy SD4 of the Core Strategy.

Further guidance is available from:

- Building Futures: A Hertfordshire guide to promoting sustainability in development (<http://www.hertslink.org/buildingfutures>).
- Hertfordshire Waste Partnership: <http://www.wasteaware.org.uk/>
- Site Waste Management Plans: Waste and Resources Action Programme Guidance <http://www.wrap.org.uk>

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (until superseded by the National Waste Management Plan for England).
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO4: Enhance Watford's regional health, recreational, educational, cultural and social role. SO5: Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	SD4 Waste

Unstable, Contaminated and Potentially Contaminated Land

Why is this policy needed?

As a local planning authority we are required, by law, to ensure that a site is suitable for use taking account of ground conditions and land instability, including from natural hazards and/or former and proposed activities.

This policy is a simplified version of WDP2000 policy SE24 which it replaces.

What is it intended to do?

Nearly all new developments in Watford will take place on previously developed land, often referred to as brownfield land. Where there may be a risk of contamination, site investigation information will be required. Further assessments may be required to assess the effects (including cumulative effects) of contamination/pollution on health, the natural environment or general amenity, and the potential sensitivity of the area or proposed development to adverse effects from pollution and any necessary remediation, as a condition of any planning permission.

The presence of contamination in the ground does not mean that the area cannot be developed. Indeed many contaminated and potentially contaminated sites have been successfully and safely redeveloped to provide safe and high quality housing and working environments. This policy is intended to ensure redevelopment of potentially contaminated land occurs in an appropriate way to ensure remediation to a level that is suitable for the use of the land.

Further guidance is published on the Environment Agency website, on related issues such as the relationship between derelict land, contaminated land and land or groundwater potentially affected by contamination (potentially contaminated land). Information on the location of former landfill sites, which are often an initial indication for unstable, contaminated and potentially contaminated land, is available from the EA web-map: [Interactive Maps - Environment Agency - What's in your backyard?](#)

Policy SD 15 Unstable, Contaminated and Potentially Contaminated Land

Where unstable, contaminated or potentially contaminated land is suspected, site investigation information will be required to assess the risk and the level of contamination and the suitability of the site for the proposed use. This should include a strategy for the remediation of the site.

The Council will require appropriate remediation of any unstable or contaminated land before development can commence. Where adequate remediation of the proposed development cannot be achieved, planning permission will be refused.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF para 109.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO2: Sustainable neighbourhoods. SO4: Enhance Watford's regional health, recreational, educational, cultural and social role. SO5: Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	SD1 Sustainable Development.

Potentially Hazardous or Polluting Development

Why is this policy needed?

Contamination of land is a material consideration in the granting of planning permission, this means that LPAs are legally required to consider contamination by potentially hazardous or polluting development when granting planning permission. The policy is also needed to ensure public health and the environment are protected.

Groundwater protection is needed as Watford is located over a chalk aquifer and is identified as a high risk area for groundwater vulnerability. Most of Watford falls within groundwater source protection zones (SPZ) 1 and 2, which are designations made by the Environment Agency to help ensure drinking water is clean and safe.

All groundwater sources are heavily over-abstracted locally which usually impacts on surface water and the water environment. Particularly following dry winter periods, groundwater sources become depleted with impacts on water supply security and the natural environment. These effects are expected to increase in future due to the impact of climate change, in particular the higher tendency to extreme weather events such as droughts.

The Water Framework Directive requires countries throughout the European Union to manage the water environment to consistent standards. This includes progressively reducing the pollution of groundwater and preventing or limiting the entry of pollutants. Watford is located over the Mid-Chilterns Chalk which is currently at poor chemical status – it is essential that there are no negative impacts and that improvements are made wherever possible.

A variety of land uses and management practices have the potential to adversely impact on groundwater quality. This includes industrial uses, cemeteries, petrol stations, waste management, water abstraction and the use of ground source heat pump systems. There may be restrictions on some of these uses within SPZ1 and SPZ2 and developers are encouraged to contact the Environment Agency for advice.

This policy is a modified version of SE25 Potentially Hazardous or Polluting Development and SE28 Groundwater Quality which it replaces.

What is it intended to do?

To prevent unacceptable risks from pollution this policy will ensure that new development is appropriate for its location. The effects (including cumulative) of pollution on health, the natural environment and the potential sensitivity of the area or proposed development to adverse effects from pollution will be taken into account.

The policy also ensures that potential impacts on the groundwater supply and quality are considered and assessed at an early stage in the process, before any decision is made on a planning application.

Waste and Mineral applications, which could include potentially hazardous or polluting development, will need to comply with the Hertfordshire Waste and Minerals planning documents.

Policy SD 16 Potentially Hazardous or Polluting Development

Proposals for potentially hazardous or polluting development will only be permitted where the Council is satisfied that there will be no risk to public health or the environment and no significant adverse effects on general amenity resulting from release to water air or land, or from noise, dust, vibration, heat or light.

Developments that could adversely affect groundwater quality, flow or volume will not be granted permission. Where there may be a potential impact, a preliminary risk assessment will be required to identify the risks, and appraise the development and remediation options.

Planning permission will be refused where ~~insufficient information is provided, or the~~

risk associated with the development is unacceptable.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF para 94, 109-110, 120. EU Water Framework Directive.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO4: Enhance Watford's regional health, recreational, educational, cultural and social role. SO5: Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	SD1 Sustainable Development. SD2 Water and Wastewater

Air Quality

Why is this policy needed?

The Core Strategy refers to the issue of air pollution and air quality, particularly as a result of congestion on the road network. The Sustainability Appraisal also highlighted the strong link between Watford's transport policies and air quality.

In 2005, the council carried out an assessment of air quality across the borough and concluded there were six areas that would not meet the national air quality objective. These areas were designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA), maps of these areas can be seen on the council website. The council regularly produces Updating and Screening Assessments, Progress Reports and amendments to the Air Quality Action Plan that it has produced to try and improve air quality.

Where a development is in, or close to an AQMA, an air quality assessment may be needed to establish the effects that the development will have on air quality. Consideration will need to be given to the impact of a development on air quality, in terms of emissions caused by the operational characteristics of the development (industrial, commercial and domestic) and the traffic generated by it.

This proposal is an amalgamated and modified version of policies SE20 Air Quality and SE21 Air Quality Management Areas, which it replaces.

What is it intended to do?

The policy is intended to ensure that development occurs in line with the council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to improve air quality throughout the borough, and in particular in the identified AQMAs.

The council aims to improve air quality in designated AQMAs, not just maintain it. This means that there may be occasions where although a development can demonstrate there will be no negative impact on air quality, refusal may still be appropriate if no improvement can be obtained.

Policy SD 17 Air Quality

Applications for all major development and other development which, due to its nature or operational characteristics, may give rise to emissions, will be required to consider the impact of the development in terms of the effects on air quality caused by both the operational characteristics of the development (industrial processes and emissions, biomass boilers, etc.) and the traffic generated by it. The Council will have regard to the potential effects of a development on local air quality when determining planning applications.

Developments should not cause significant harm to air quality, cumulatively or individually. Any development within or adjacent to locations with poor air quality, areas designated as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), will need to be assessed with regard to the council's Air Quality Action Plan. Applicants should ensure that development in these areas improves the air quality. Where adequate mitigation is not provided and/or is not practicable, planning permission may be refused.

Air Quality Management Area locations can be found on the council's website.

(For reference the current link is:

<http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/content/ehl/east/pollution-control-local-air-quality.en>)

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF para 124.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. Town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO2 Sustainable Neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	SD1 Sustainable Design, SD3 Climate Change. EMP2 Employment Land.
Other Local Policies:	Air Quality Management Areas, Air Quality Action Plan.

Noise Protection

Why is this policy needed?

The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies and decisions should aim to:

- avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life as a result of new development;
- mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising from noise from new development, including through the use of conditions;
- recognise that development will often create some noise and existing businesses wanting to develop in continuance of their business should not have unreasonable restrictions put on them because of changes in nearby land uses since they were established; and
- identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.

Part 2 of the Technical Guide to the NPPF (March 2012) has some guidance on noise emissions from Mineral Works in paragraphs 28-31, which would be relevant to the rail aggregate and concrete batching plants at Watford Junction.

This policy is a modified version of policy SE22 Noise, which it replaces. In addition to the provisions in the existing policy discussions with Environmental Health officers and the Town Centre manager have highlighted potential noise and disturbance issues where upper floors of premises in the town centre are converted to residential development. In principle residential development is a positive land use in a town centre as it contributes to maintaining a vital and vibrant town centre. However, issues can arise where existing uses of the ground floor of buildings and in particular those associated with the night time economy generate noise which may disturb residents of converted upper floors. To manage this so that both the uses can coexist successfully it is important to ensure that suitable noise attenuation measures are in place and where it is not possible to achieve an acceptable level of noise within a residential unit, permission for the conversion will not be given. We have identified areas within the town centre where this issue is more likely to arise and where we will expect a full noise report to be submitted with any applications for conversion to residential uses.

What is it intended to do?

Noise sensitive developments should be adequately separated from major sources of noise, such as road, rail and certain types of development which generate above average levels of noise such as night clubs.

New residential development should wherever possible be sited away from noise generating land uses. Noise generating uses should be sited away from noise sensitive uses (more guidance available from BS 4142).

Policy SD 18 Noise

All noise sensitive development (residential, schools, hospitals, hotels, etc.) should be located away from significant sources of noise arising from roads, railways and certain commercial uses (Classes B2 and B8, motor repair uses, night time economy etc.). Where this is not possible, a full noise assessment will be required to assess the potential impact of noise on the development and to propose mitigation measures to achieve acceptable noise levels for future occupiers without adversely impacting the operation of existing businesses in the area (see Appendix F for detailed guidance). Where acceptable noise mitigation cannot be achieved (through design and layout, insulation measures, etc.) planning permission may be refused.

In relation to the night time economy an area has been defined where particular attention will be paid to ensure that where residential development is proposed either as a result of conversion or new build a satisfactory residential environment can be achieved without impacting adversely on the operation of existing businesses contributing to the night time economy in the town centre. This area is shown on the map in the map book.

All development that may give rise to significant noise due to its nature or operational characteristics should be located away from existing noise sensitive uses. Where this is not possible, a full noise assessment will be required to assess the potential impact of noise on existing properties and to propose mitigation measures to achieve acceptable noise levels (see Appendix ii (b) for detailed guidance). Where acceptable noise mitigation cannot be achieved (through design and layout, insulation measures, hours of operation, etc.) planning permission may be refused.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF para 123.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 a family friendly town centre SO 2 Sustainable Neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	SS1 Spatial Strategy SPA1 Town Centre SD1 Sustainable Development and SD3 Climate Change. EMP2 Employment Land.

External Lighting

Why is this policy needed?

The National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Planning Authorities to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation by encouraging good design, planning policies and decisions. Under section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, local authorities have a duty to take reasonably practicable steps to investigate complaints of statutory nuisance, including: "Artificial light emitted from premises so as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance."

The [Department for Communities and Local Government](#) (DCLG) is responsible for lighting policy in the planning regime, and the [Department for Transport](#) is responsible for street lighting policy and lighting on most transport premises.

This policy is a modified version of Watford District Plan 2000 policy SE23 Light Pollution, which it replaces.

What is it intended to do?

External lighting contributes to the delivery of high quality design such as through improvements of legibility, community safety and the quality of the public realm. However, it is important to avoid light pollution that can have a negative effect on the amenity of surrounding areas and have a negative impact on biodiversity by influencing plant and animal activity patterns. In particular, light pollution can be harmful to birds, bats, and other nocturnal species that avoid overly lit areas. Lighting should be avoided in the open countryside, and nature protection sites, such as in woodlands and nature conservation areas and applications for this might be refused if mitigation is not satisfactory/ suitable.

Proposals involving the provision of publicly accessible developments in the vicinity of residential property, a listed building or a conservation area or open countryside, where external lighting would be provided or made necessary by the development, are required to be accompanied by a Lighting Impact Assessment prepared by a lighting specialist. Conditions may be used to mitigate any significant impact, for example by limiting the times of use and restricting illumination levels. The replacement or improvement of existing lighting to minimise impact shall also be considered.

What you told us

Minor amendments were suggested to consider appropriate landscaping and avoid adverse impact on heritage assets, changes have been made to the policy to reflect this.

Policy Wording

Policy SD 19 External Lighting

In order to minimise light pollution in the environment, all external lighting schemes should be designed to:

- a. be the minimum needed for security and/or operational purposes;
- b. avoid pollution from uplighting, glare and light spillage;
- c. avoid adverse impact on residential amenity;
- d. avoid adverse impact on the character / openness of the Green Belt;
- e. avoid adverse impact on ecological interests;

- f. avoid dazzling or distraction of users of roads and waterways;
 - g. where possible consider appropriate landscaping to limit visual intrusion;
 - h. avoid adverse impact on heritage assets.
- Any development that is unable to comply may be refused planning permission.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF para 125.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	<p>A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs.</p> <p>A healthy town.</p> <p>A town that protects its environment and heritage.</p> <p>A safer town.</p>
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO2 Sustainable Neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	SD1 Sustainable Design and SD3 Climate Change.

4. Town and Local Centres / Retail

- TLC3: Restriction of non-retail uses in prime retail frontage;**
- TLC4: Restriction of non-retail uses in INTU Watford (Harlequin and Charter Place centres);**
- TLC5: Restriction of non-retail uses within secondary frontages;**
- TLC6: A3 Hub Areas.**

Together these policies set out the approach for the future spatial pattern of the primary shopping area for Watford. The maps which support them should be read alongside the policies.

Watford is identified as having a regional role in terms of retail provision and it is important for the town's economic prosperity that this continues in the future. The town has three distinct areas; the covered malls (former Charter Place and Harlequin centres) both operated by Intu; the primary shopping frontage mostly located along the High Street and secondary frontage.

The former Charter Place centre will undergo a programme of refurbishment and redevelopment to bring it up to modern standards in terms of the floor space offer. The redevelopment includes leisure facilities (Cinema) and various restaurant units. The former Harlequin centre is being managed to create the bigger floor plates which retailers want. In policy terms the intention is to concentrate the higher end retail into these covered malls and allow the complementary uses which will support this to develop around this higher end retail.

Both the High Street as the primary shopping frontage and the secondary frontage areas have suffered from higher vacancy and turnover levels during the recession and it is important to create the right balance on these streets between maintaining the level of retail on the frontages and allowing the supporting uses such as services and restaurants to locate in these frontages as well. To achieve this balance the policies proposed involve continuing to restrict non-retail uses in some places, where it is more important to retain retail, whilst relaxing the current position in other areas.

To allow restaurants to flourish in a location which will encourage footfall in both the mall areas and the High Street it is proposed to introduce A3/restaurant hub areas at the main entrances to the Intu centre but on the street frontage. The area where High Street and King Street meet is one of these hubs and is already operating successfully within the new development in that area.

Information Box: A Class Uses

Town and Country Planning Act Use Classes Order	Use/Description of Development
A1: Shops	Retail sale of goods to the public: shops; post offices, travel agencies and ticket agencies, hairdressers, funeral directors and undertakers, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, Internet cafés, sandwich bars (where food etc to be consumed off the premises).
A2: Financial and Professional Services	Financial services: banks, building societies, bureau de change, professional services (other than health or medical); estate agents and employment agencies. Other services which it is appropriate to provide in a shopping area: betting shops (where the services are provided principally to visiting members of the public)
A3: Restaurants and Cafés	Restaurants and Cafés (i.e. places where the primary purpose is the sale and consumption of food and light refreshment on the premises). This excludes Internet cafés which are now A1.
A4: Drinking Establishments	Public house, wine bar or other drinking establishments (i.e. premises where the primary purpose is the sale and consumption of alcoholic drinks on the premises).
A5: Hot Food Take Away	Take-aways (i.e. premise where the primary purpose is the sale of hot food to take-away)

Why is this policy needed?

The policies are needed to ensure that Watford has:

- A strong and vibrant town centre
- A family friendly town centre (Core Strategy SO1)

What is it intended to do?

To strengthen and consolidate Watford's position as a regional centre in the retail hierarchy (Core Strategy SPA1).

To seek a more balanced provision of town centre facilities including retail, leisure, entertainment for all ages and all groups of people (SPA1).

The group of policies sets out a spatial approach for the primary shopping area as defined in the Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy, adopted January 2013. The approach is to focus the main shopping function of the town centre into the Intu centre (Charter Place and former Harlequin Centre) and the section of High Street area which is designated as primary frontage. In these two areas it is proposed that A class uses other than A1 be restricted (target A1 is 90% for Intu centre - TLC4 and 70% for the primary shopping frontage – TLC 3). To complement this and to encourage the restaurants (A3 class) needed to support the shopping function, two A3 hub areas (policy TLC6) are identified. The hub areas are located at the two main entrances to the Intu centre on the external High Street sections which will encourage customers to come outside the covered centre areas to the High Street when they wish to eat and drink. Once customers are on the High Street it is expected that they will use the High Street as well as the covered centres for shopping purposes and it is anticipated that the High Street will be able to develop a different and complementary retail offer for shoppers to that provided by the Intu centre.

The last piece of the picture concerns the secondary frontages, where the approach is to relax the existing restraint policy and allow freedom to change use between A1 and A2 and A3 subject to any requirement for planning permission (TLC5). This will encourage the occupancy of current vacant units and ensure a continued footfall for the town centre.

It is proposed to maintain the number of pubs and takeaways at the current levels, only allowing an additional unit where one has already closed in that area (TLC5). Policy TLC7 is designed to ensure that changes of use to restaurant (A3) pubs (A4) and hot food take away uses (A5) do not cause issues for community safety or residential amenity.

All retail units will fall into one of the designated parts of the shopping area as shown on Map xx: and the relevant policy for each area should be referred to when considering a change of use from retail (A1) class.

Policy TLC 3

Restriction of Non-Retail Uses in Prime Retail Frontage

Within Prime Retail Frontage (as identified on the policies map), uses outside Use Classes A1, A2 or A3 will not be allowed at ground floor premises.

Use Classes A2 and A3 on ground floor level will only be permitted if it will not detrimentally undermine the retail character, function or effectiveness of the prime retail frontage.

The Council will normally seek to retain at least ~~80%~~70% of the shop fronts units on a street within the prime area in retail use (i.e. Use Class A1). When considering all proposals, the Council will take into account the length of time the premises have been vacant and the vacant building's impact on the attractiveness of the Town Centre.

Policy TLC 4 Restriction of Non-Retail Uses in the INTU Watford (Harlequin Centre and Charter Place)

Within INTU Watford (the Harlequin and Charter Place) Shopping Centre (including units with direct access to High Street and Queens Road as defined on the policies map) planning permission will not be granted for uses outside Use Classes A1, A2 or A3.

Permission will only be granted for Use Class A2 and A3 if the total number of units in non-Use Class A1 uses, excluding the food court, will not exceed 10% of the total number of units.

Policy TLC 5 Restriction of Non-Retail Uses Within Secondary Retail Frontage

Within the Secondary Retail Frontages (as identified on the policies map) the Council will permit uses falling within classes A2 and A3 and other uses appropriate for a Town Centre. The existing level of use classes A4 and A5 in a secondary frontage will be retained and changes into these use classes only permitted where it can be demonstrated that use classes A1-A3 cannot be sustained (for example where a unit has been vacant for a period of 15 months ² or more and it can be shown that attempts to successfully market it for Use Classes A1-A3 have been unsuccessful).

Policy TLC 6

A3 Hub Areas

Restrictions relating to the proportion of A1 and A3 uses will not apply in the areas defined on the policies map as restaurant hubs. A3 uses will be encouraged to locate in these areas. Additional A4 and A5 uses will not be permitted in these areas.

Saved Watford District Plan 2000 Policies will be replaced as follows:

Proposed new policies TLC3 and 4 will replace Watford District Plan policy S5. TLC4 will replace S6, and TLC5 will replace S7.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF paras 23-27.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	Prosperous and educated town.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 – a family friendly town centre. SO3 – enhance Watford’s regional economic and transportation role.
Core Strategy Policies:	SS1 Spatial Strategy. SPA1 Special Policy Area – Town Centre. TLC1 Retail and Commercial Leisure Development

TLC6A: Betting/Money shops Clustering Policy.

This is a new policy which sets out the proposed approach to manage the distribution of betting/money shops (money shops includes services such as Cheque cashing, Cash Converters, Loan Companies, and Payday lenders but excludes banks within the shopping areas in Watford) in the shopping centres in Watford.

Why is this policy needed?

The policy is needed to ensure that Watford:

- Has a strong, vibrant town and local centre (in line with NPPF Para 23 objectives)
- Family friendly town centre (Core Strategy SO1)

The issue of the potential social harm caused by the location of betting shops and pay day loan shops close to more deprived areas has become a national issue and along with the potential negative impact to town centres, it was considered appropriate to look at what is happening in Watford in more detail. Research was carried out to understand the picture in Watford and to assess how this compares to parts of London where restrictive measures for controlling the number and location of betting and money loan shops are in place or are proposed. This allows us to assess whether such measures may be justified in Watford. The research concluded that:

- When compared with the London Boroughs the levels of deprivation in Watford are significantly lower falling outside the

top 20% nationally whereas the London Boroughs reviewed have areas falling into the top 5% most deprived areas nationally.

- There is some correlation between the location of betting shops/pay loan shops and the more deprived areas in Watford; but as this relates to areas close to the town centre within Watford it is not unreasonable to find betting shops there as part of the wider town centre activity.

The Government issued a Technical Consultation on Planning in July 2014 for comments which included a proposal to amend the A class of the Use Classes Order (see information box above for the current A class). This would result in betting shops and pay day loan shops being in a use class of their own rather than being in a class with several other uses such as estate agents. This would mean that, unlike at present, planning permission would be required to change from any other use class to a betting shop or a money shop. Also, other uses falling into other parts of the A class use class are allowed to change to the existing A2 class without the need for planning permission under the provisions of the General Permitted Development Order. The right to change use from one part of the use class to another can be removed under Article 4 (1) of the GPDO, but not changes within the same section of a class. This means that at the moment there is no method for controlling changes of use within the existing A2 Use Class. The changes proposed by the Government would allow control from all other uses to betting shops and pay day loan shops as these uses would be in a separate use class.

We have drafted a policy assuming that the changes proposed in the Technical Consultation will be implemented prior to the policies being submitted for examination. This means that planning permission would be required for a change of use to a betting shop or a money shop; therefore, the policy has been drafted to manage the location of new premises in relation to existing premises and avoid clustering of these uses. If the proposed change does not go ahead then the policy will be reviewed.

What this Policy is intended to do?

The policy seeks to manage the number and location of new betting shops or pay day loan shops in terms of the overall number and their location in relation to other betting and pay day loan shops. The findings show that there has been little overall change to the total number of premises during recent years. This suggests that the number has stabilised at a level which is viable for the town and more should not be required to meet the needs of the local population.

Buffers were applied to assess the degree of clustering at 50 and 100m where any overlapping of the buffers is an indicator of clustering. The policy proposes that changes of use to betting and money shops within the buffer of should be refused. This exercise showed that the 50m buffer does not really

work effectively whilst the 100m buffer protects a reasonable area around the existing premises and leaves parts of the town centre outside the buffer areas where additional units could locate. A larger buffer area excludes most of the town centre and would not be appropriate.

The restraint policy is to apply to the town centre areas most at risk from pressure for additional units and the North Watford District Centre where there are a higher number of existing units already. These centres are considered to be more at risk than the local centres as they have a higher number of existing units and are in areas where there is more pressure for changes of use. The evidence base mapping shows that should additional units be permitted in these areas then there is a greater likelihood of clustering occurring if some form of restraint is not used.

Policy TLC 6A Restriction of Betting and Money Shops Clusters

Planning Permission will not be granted for betting shops and money shops within 100m of each other within: the Parade, High Street, Market Street and Queens Road in the Town Centre and the North Watford District Centre (as defined on the policies map).

Nuisance and Community Safety

Why is this policy needed?

This policy is needed to protect the amenity of those living close to properties where use classes A3, restaurant; A4, drinking establishment and A5, hot food takeaways are located.

What is it intended to do?

The policy seeks to protect the amenity of residents close to a property where a change of use or new building is proposed for classes A3, 4 and 5. The policy states that permission may be refused on the grounds of impact on amenity in terms of noise, fumes etc and in terms of community safety issues which may arise from the land use.

Therefore if you are proposing to change the use of or construct a new building accommodating a use considered to be in classes A3, A4 or A5 you will have to show how you have dealt with potential impacts in terms of noise and nuisance for nearby residents and community safety. If you are a resident living close to development proposal for such a use you will be able to ensure that any potential impact on your amenity is considered fully in determining the application

This policy will combine and replace Watford District Plan policies S11 and S12.

Policy TLC 7 Nuisance and Community Safety (Classes A3 - Restaurant, A4 - Drinking Establishment and A5 - Takeaway)

Proposals for use classes A3, A4 and A5 will be refused where there will be an adverse effect on the amenities of residential occupiers or community safety.

Where permission is granted for Use Classes A3, A4 or A5 or for an extension of such use, conditions appropriate to the permitted use will be imposed relating to community safety, hours of opening (in line with any statutory licensing hours appropriate to those premises) , noise, emission of fumes, the disposal of refuse and restricting the sale of hot food to be consumed off the premises.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF: Para 58 Quality of new development.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	Prosperous and educated town.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 – a family friendly town centre. SO3 – enhance Watford’s regional economic and transportation role.
Core Strategy Policies:	SS1 – Spatial Strategy. SPA1 - Town Centre. TLC1 – Retail and Commercial Leisure Development.

Character Areas

Why is this policy needed?

The Core Strategy defines the primary shopping area within the town centre and identifies an indicative wider town centre area; details of the proposed boundaries are found under the section headed Town Centre Boundary in the map book accompanying this document, and will, on adoption, be shown on the Policies Map.. Within both the primary shopping area and the wider town centre there are areas which have a distinct character and or function such as Clarendon Road or the Civic Area around the Town Hall. This policy describes and seeks to reinforce that character to maintain the richness and diversity of the town centre. The most successful town centres have areas of distinct character which make an important contribution to their attractiveness as places to visit and enhance the economic prosperity of the town.

What is it intended to do?

The policy sets out the distinct character areas within the town centre and identifies the areas on the accompanying map (to be found in the map book for this consultation) . The intention is to reinforce the character identified through development management decisions. The policy is linked to the following Core Strategy strategic objectives: SO1; SO3 and SO4 and policies: SS1, TLC1 and SPA1. If you live, run or own a business in any of the character areas you will be expected to show how you are reinforcing that character should you need to apply for planning permission for development.

This is a new policy and does not replace any saved policies.

Policy TLC 8 Character Areas

The town centre area as defined on the policies map covers parts of the town outside of the primary shopping area but which have a high proportion of land in town centre uses (NPPF para 23 sets these out as retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, community and residential). The different land uses tend to cluster together and the physical character of the area reflects those clusters. The primary shopping area is already defined in the Core Strategy and covers the part of the town centre where shops are found. The primary and secondary frontage within this area are defined on the policies map and policies TLC 3-6 set out the policy approach for these frontages. Aside from the primary shopping area other character areas are evident and are shown on the accompanying map below. The areas include:

- Commercial area – Clarendon Road
- Cultural Area – The Parade and ~~pond Area~~ Colosseum/Palace Theatre
- Civic area – Town Hall/Library/College/~~Sports~~ Leisure Centre/Colosseum
- Queens Road specialist and local shops
- Market Street specialist and local shops
- Lower High Street shopping and restaurant area – King Street to Ring Road south
- Heritage area (St Mary’s and High Street/ King Street Conservation Areas)

The areas identified are referred to by the predominant land use in the area at ground floor level and all areas include a range of other uses as well.

i) Commercial Area - Clarendon Road

A policy relating to the retention of commercial floorspace in the commercial area around Clarendon Road is included in the Employment section (Policy EMP4).

ii) Cultural Area: - The Parade and Colosseum/Palace Theatre

This area has an important role to play in creating a diverse family friendly town centre. The area makes an important contribution to the cultural offer of the town and it is important to reinforce this. Much of this area is designated as secondary retail frontage and policy TLC 5 applies in terms of land use at ground floor which allows the growth of service and restaurant /café use in this area. The use of upper floors in this area for office or residential will be encouraged as the occupation of upper floors will make an important contribution to the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre. The Colosseum is functionally part of the cultural offer of the town but is physically separated from the cultural area by the ring road so it is shown as being within the Civic Area. The Palace Theatre is also functionally a key part of the town's cultural offer, but is located within the area where retail is the main activity and is included in this area rather than the cultural area.

This area e has one potential retail led mixed use development site (allocated site R1) Council is consulting on including at the area around the existing Sainsbury store and units No 45-61 on The Parade and 12-15 Albert Road ~~as a future retail led mixed use development site which could include leisure and residential on the upper floors.~~ The redevelopment of this site would be a key part to the regeneration of this area. The improved public realm for The Parade area provides an ~~The public realm project currently under way will create a~~ entertainment space for outdoor shows such as Imagine Watford and ~~will~~ makes a very positive contribution to reinforcing the cultural role of this part of the town centre.

iii) Civic Area – Town Hall/Library/College and Leisure Centre

It is recognised that there is some development potential on underused sites within this area; redevelopment proposals which reinforce and enhance the primary function of this area as a civic/college part of the town will be encouraged providing the proposals are able to contribute, through S106 /CIL, to the enhancement of the public realm within the conservation area. More information on the areas where enhancement is required is set out in the Conservation Area Management Plan.

iv) Queens Road and Market Street Specialist/Local Shopping Areas

It is important to ensure that there are smaller retail units available for local and specialist independent retailers within the town centre area. Redevelopment proposals which involve the loss of smaller units and their replacement with larger floor plates will be resisted in these areas unless it can be demonstrated that the units will provide floor space for an existing specialist/local trader in the area to grow their business. Residential units will be encouraged on the upper floors of existing or redeveloped units in these areas.

The Council will seek S106 and other contributions towards developing and implementing schemes to improve the physical quality of the public realm in these areas.

v) Lower High Street King Street to Ring Road - south – Shopping and Restaurant Area

The aim in this area is to encourage and reinforce the existing pattern of successful smaller retail units and restaurants. This area has a high quality physical environment in terms of the buildings, many of which are listed or locally listed and lies within a conservation area. This area will form the key link between the Croxley Rail link station at High Street and the primary shopping area of the town which will assist in maintaining its attractiveness as a retail and restaurant location. The Council will support proposals to improve the quality of the shop fronts to some of the units at the southern end which follow the guidance given in the Adopted Shopfront Design Guide Adopted.

vi) Heritage Area St Mary’s and High Street/King Street conservation areas

Policies for these conservation areas are set out in the Adopted Conservation Areas Management Plan.

The prime concern in these areas is the impact of any proposed development on the designated heritage assets. The Council will expect proposals for development in these areas to actively seek to enhance the identified character and appearance of the conservation areas.

Church Road car park and the green area abutting it are allocated as a redevelopment site (R4) for retail led mixed use. Any redevelopment of this area should retain a visual link to the ring road and should seek a more active frontage to the church yard. The footpath should be retained and made more formal.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF paras 23; 70.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	Prosperous and educated town.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 – a family friendly town centre. SO3 – enhance Watford’s regional economic and transportation role. SO4 – enhance Watford’s regional health, recreational, educational, cultural and social role.
Core Strategy Policies:	SS1 – Spatial Strategy 1. SPA1 – Town Centre. TLC1 – Retail and commercial leisure development.

Public Realm Enhancement

Why is this policy needed?

A key part of creating an attractive town centre which people want to visit is the quality of the public realm. Watford Borough Council has produced a Streetscape Design Guide in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) which sets out a co-ordinated approach to the enhancement of the public realm in the High Street and on key side roads. The Council has undertaken the first stage of the works in delivering the Top of the Town Enhancement works between the Rickmansworth Road and Clarendon Road. The Council will seek S106 and/or CIL funding from town centre development to help deliver the remainder of the enhancement works set out in the Adopted Streetscape Design Guide.

What it is intended to do?

The policy as set out will allow the collection of funds from new development in the town centre to deliver an enhanced public realm for the town which will increase the attractiveness of the town for visitors and businesses.

This is a new policy and does not replace a saved policy.

Policy TLC 9 Public Realm Enhancement

The Council will apply S106 and/or CIL funding as appropriate on all development within the town centre area to contribute towards the delivery of an enhanced public realm within the town centre as set out in the Adopted Streetscape Design Guide.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF Para 23 Vitality and viability of town centres; Para 57 high quality and inclusive design for all development including public spaces.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	Prosperous and educated town. Town which protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 – a family friendly town centre. SO3 – enhance Watford’s regional economic and transportation role.
Core Strategy Policies:	SS1 Spatial Strategy. SPA1 – Town Centre. INF 1 – Infrastructure Delivery.

Restriction of Non A1 Uses in Local Centres

Why is this policy needed?

The network of local centres across the Borough provides an important local resource for the residents of Watford and it is important to ensure that these centres continue to do this. Local shops are a key component of local centres and it is important to ensure that the shops continue to play this role. Watford is a compact but congested town and it is important that the local centres are located in parts of the town where residents can access them by foot and cycle as well as by car or bus.

What is it intended to do?

This policy seeks to protect and reinforce the network of local centres within the town so that they are able to offer a range of services to the population within a reasonable distance of all properties. The policy seeks to retain local shops as the core of the district and local centres and restricts non-retail A class uses to a percentage of the units in a given centre. This means that all residents should be able to access local shops within a reasonable distance from their homes.

This policy replaces WDP 2000 policy S9 and applies a similar approach to the new hierarchy of centres. Policy S10 was deleted in the Core Strategy.

Policy TLC 10

Restriction of Non A1 Use Classes in District Centres

Within the district and local centres as identified in Table 2 of Part 1 of the Local Plan – Core Strategy adopted January 2013 and defined on the policies map uses outside Use Classes A1, A2 and A3 will not be allowed at ground floor level of any premises. Use Classes A2 and A3 will only be permitted on the ground floor if it will not detrimentally undermine the retail character, function or effectiveness of the district or local centre in question. Levels of units outside Class A1 will be limited to 50% of the units in a given defined centre class A2 and A3 which will be acceptable within District and local centre frontages are set out below:

District Centre:

~~North Watford/St Albans Road District Centre – extent of shopping centre frontage is defined on the adopted policies map. Amounts of Class A2, A3, A4 and A5 will be restricted to:~~

~~Options:~~

1. 50% of units
2. 40% of units but allow to rise to 50% when vacancy levels are > 10%.

Neighbourhood Centres:

Extent of the shopping frontages is defined on the adopted policies map

- Garston Park Parade
- Goodwood Parade
- Longspring
- Langley Road/St Albans Road
- Buckingham Road
- Bushey Arches
- Vicarage Road
- Whippendell Road East

New Facilities

- Ascot Road Station Area
- JR Tagger Site to enhance Bushey Arches

Amounts of Class A2, A3, A4 and A5 will be restricted to:

Options:

1. 50% of the units
2. 40% but allow a rise to 50% where vacancy levels >10%

Local shops:

The extent of shopping frontage is defined on the adopted policies map

- The Brow
- Euston Avenue
- Leavesden Road
- Langley Way
- Orbital Crescent
- The Gossamers
- Tolpits Lane
- Tudor Avenue
- Villiers Road
- Horseshoe Lane
- Whippendell Road/Ascot Road
- St Johns Road
- St James Road
- Harwoods/Hagden Lane
- Haines Way
- Watford Fields

• North Approach

Eastbury Road
New Facilities

- Health Campus
- Nascot Grange Development
- Leggatts Campus redevelopment

Amounts of class A2, A3, A4 and A5 will be restricted to
Options:

1. 50% of the units
2. 40% dropping to 50% when vacancy >10%

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF Para 23 - resilient network of centres.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A prosperous and educated town.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO2 – Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	SS1 - Spatial Strategy. TLC 2 – Neighbourhood Centres.

Community Facilities

Why is this policy needed?

This policy is needed to provide stronger protection for existing community facilities which play an important role in delivering a place where people want to live. Where major new development is proposed such as in the SPAs or where facilities are lost as part of a redevelopment proposal the Council will seek new facilities for communities as part of the development proposals where there is an identified demand. Over time it is hoped to encourage community facilities, where appropriate, to locate near to local centres.

What is it intended to do?

The policy will protect existing facilities unless criteria can be met which show that the facilities are no longer required. New facilities will be encouraged where there is an identifiable demand. This policy means that the Council will

protect community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship – NPPF para 70) from redevelopment unless they can be replaced with a more appropriate facility or it can be shown that the facility is no longer needed and the building cannot be used by another community group. The Council is seeking through this policy and the Core Strategy policies that community facilities are spread across the borough and over time located close to local centres as well. This means that as a resident you should be able to access community facilities reasonably close to your home.

This policy replaces Watford District Plan 2000 policy CS3, and together with TLC2 replaces CS6. CS8 and CS9. Together with TLC7 it also replaces H15.

Policy TLC 11

Community Facilities

The Council will protect existing and encourage the provision of new community uses that address an identified demand from the local community. Such uses should be located within a sustainable and accessible location close to the desired need; located as a complementary use either within or close to an identified neighbourhood centre and be accessible to all in the community that they serve.

The Council will not permit the loss or downgrading of existing community uses (~~local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship~~ social, recreational and cultural facilities and services which meet the community needs) unless: it has been demonstrated that demand for the existing use or an alternative use from the local community has dropped to such a level that such uses are no longer required; it can be demonstrated that there is no demand for community uses in that property and evidence has been provided to show that the property has been marketed as a community use for a period of two years and no viable uses have come forward; appropriate, alternative uses can be provided in a nearby location that fully address the needs of the community

Note: Demand for uses is demonstrated through representations received during consultations and letters received from local community groups. Some facilities are identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Relevant distances are set out in Table 5 of the Core Strategy.

Community uses are all those which support and serve the residents of the town and range from education and health to leisure facilities to local churches and community centres. Many agencies apart from the Council are responsible for the provision of such services.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF : para 70.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well planned town. A well informed community.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO4 Enhance Watford's regional health, recreational, educational, cultural and social role.
Core Strategy Policies:	SS1 - Spatial Strategy. TLC2 – Neighbourhood Centres.

TLC 12

Community Facilities Site Allocations

The following site will be allocated for the provision of new community facilities to be delivered using private sector funding.

CF1 Tolpits Lane.

TLC 13

Town Centre Retail Site Allocations

To deliver the additional retail floor space identified in the Core Strategy at Table 3 the following sites within the town centre have been allocated for retail use along with other town centre uses, which meet the Council's policy objectives for the town centre, on upper floors:

R1 Sainsbury's and adjoining land

R2 Former TJ Hughes and adjoining land

R3 BT Telephone Exchange and adjoining Wellstones

R4 Church Street Car Park and land fronting Market Street/Market Place

R5 Charter Place centre and adjoining land onto the High Street

Maps of proposed allocations can be found in the Town and Local Centre section of the map book accompanying this consultation.

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5. Housing

Delivery of housing will be in accordance with the Core Strategy, proposed Development Management policies and site allocations. Evidence from the forthcoming housing strategy (to be updated annually) will inform planning decisions.

Conversion of HMOs to flats

Why is this policy needed?

There has been a history in Watford of homes which would be suitable for family use, and which have been used as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) subsequently being converted into flats.

Use as an HMO does not generally involve changes that would prevent the property being returned to use as a family dwelling at a later date. However, once a property is converted into flats, it is less likely to be viable to return it to a single family dwelling. The need for family dwellings should therefore be considered before conversion to flats is agreed.

The current trend for building flats seems to be continuing (79% flats were built in 2013 as a percentage of gross housing completions) and while this satisfies a need for a sector of society this often means new housing developments in the borough, which are sought after by families, are not as available.

What is it intended to do?

This policy is intended to prevent family housing being lost to flats due to previous use as an HMO. The aim to ensure that a mix of housing is available within communities.

Previously if a property had been in HMO use then conversion into flats would generally be allowed. The intention is to stop this and clarify that such proposals must apply the same standards that any dwelling has to adhere to when converting to flats. However, where the property has been vacant for more than 18 months this will be taken into consideration.

Policy HS 5

Conversion of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to Flats

Any proposal to convert an existing House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to flats must comply with Policy HS7 (conversions). Previous evidence of use as an HMO will have no positive impact on the application.

~~In circumstances Where evidence shows the existing property is vacant, if evidence can be provided to show that the property has been vacant for at least 18 months this will be taken into account favourably for the application.~~

This policy is a modified version of parts of saved Watford District Plan 2000 policies H13 Conversions and H14 Conversions: Provision of family sized units, but is new as a separate policy.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 47-55.– ‘Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes’.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well planned town, with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 A family friendly town centre. SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	HS1 and HS2.
Local Policies:	Housing Strategy.

Applications for New HMOs or Hostels

Why is this policy needed?

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) provide much-needed accommodation, mainly for single people. However, a large number of HMOs in one area can change the physical character of that residential area and this can sometimes have an impact on the existing community.

What is it intended to do?

The planning system can assist in achieving a mix of households within Watford's neighbourhoods, meeting different housing needs while protecting the interests of other residents, landlords and businesses. When planning for a new HMO, self-contained flat or Hostel it is important that the impact on the neighbourhood ~~neighbouring surroundings~~ is minimal and this policy aims to ensure this. The housing policies aim to ensure that a good mix of housing types is available within our communities, but at the same time ensure there is no adverse effect from concentrations of HMOs. This will be carefully monitored and if in the future an Article 4 direction is required for additional control on HMOs this will be implemented by the council.

Changes made since the last consultation are primarily to improve clarity, and to refer to self contained flats forming part of HMOs. Criteria relating to bin storage and parking have been removed, not because they are not important, but because they are covered by other policies in the plan.

Policy HS 6

Applications for New Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), self-contained flats (as block HMOs) or Hostels

Proposals for ~~new~~ housing in multiple occupation (HMO), self-contained flats (as block HMOs) or Hostels will be acceptable where:

1. They proposal does ~~do~~ not result in more than 10% of the existing residential frontage in a street block consisting of a mix of ~~Houses in Multiple Occupation-HMOs~~, self-contained flats or Hostels.
2. The housing strategy shows there is a local need for the HMO, self-contained flats or hostel accommodation in the vicinity ;
3. The design of any extension is appropriate in terms of the property itself and the character of the area;
4. The proposal ~~does~~ would not affect the residential frontage in a street block so as to unacceptably alter the character of that street block or the immediate neighbourhood;
5. The proposal satisfies the appropriate Environmental Health standards (including ~~the~~ amenity and space standards);
- ~~6. Car parking is provided in accordance with the council's standards~~
- ~~7. The proposals provide acceptable arrangements for bin storage and other shared facilities; and~~
6. There would be ~~is~~ no significant adverse amenity impact(s) on the

surrounding area.

The term 'HMO' applies to both uses 'Class C4' (commonly referred to as small/medium-sized) and 'sui generis' (commonly referred to as large-sized) dwellings, unless otherwise stated.

This policy is a modified version of saved Watford District Plan 2000 policy H13 Conversions, and together with proposed policies HS5 and HS7, it will replace that policy.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 47-55.– 'Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes'.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well planned town, with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 A family friendly town centre. SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	HS1 and HS2.
Local Policies:	Housing Strategy.

Conversions, Subdivisions and Extensions of Family Housing

Why is this policy needed?

Conversions should only be allowed where they will not harm overall housing mix or the character of an established residential area. Even though conversions may add one or two bedroom dwellings, this should not be at the expense of larger family dwellings which are often harder to replace.

What is it intended to do?

It is essential that the best use is made of the Borough's housing stock considering its constraints. The policy aims to ensure that the number of family sized units is protected and the overall number of conversions does not harm the streetscape.

Policy HS 7

Conversions and Subdivision of Family Housing

For all conversion and extension applications the character of the area and the amenity of neighbours must be protected.

Conversions of dwellings with less than 100sqm habitable floorspace will not be allowed.

The subdivision of dwellings with 100sqm or more of existing habitable floorspace will only be permitted where all of the following apply:

- there is not undue pressure on existing levels of on-street parking, open spaces and other services in the area;
- the proposal ~~it~~ does not result in more than 10% of the existing residential frontage in a street block* consisting of a mix of flat conversions, HMOs or guest houses;
- adequate, safe and secure access to all dwellings is provided, whilst retaining a single front door to the street;
- conversion is of a suitable layout with acceptable amounts of internal and external storage space;
- the proposal ~~it does~~ provides good refuse and storage facilities. Careful thought is required to the siting of bin stores so as not to harm the streetscene;
- the proposal would ~~it does not~~ have an no adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents; and
- the proposal ~~it~~ complies with the Residential Design Guide criteria on conversions and extensions to dwellings ~~(including those for 'granny' annexes)~~.

* The term residential frontage in the street block will normally relate to individual (including both sides in the street). However, where the street is longer than 300 metres, then we will consider that section of the street (on both sides) which extends 150m on either side of the site's boundaries. Any buildings that were originally single family dwelling houses will be taken into account in calculating the percentage.

In addition, the subdivision of dwellings with more than 150 sqm of existing habitable floorspace will be expected to include at least one family-sized

unit (at least 70 sqm) with access to a dedicated rear garden

This policy is a modified version of saved Watford District Plan 2000 policy H13 Conversions and H14 Conversions: Provision of family sized units. Together with proposed policies HS5 and 6, it will replace H13 and 14.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 47-55.– ‘Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes’.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well planned town, with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 A family friendly town centre. SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	HS1 and HS2.
Local Policies:	Housing Strategy.

Non Residential Proposals in Residential Areas

Why is this policy needed?

It is important to maintain and improve the quality of the environment in residential areas.

What is it intended to do?

It is necessary to control inappropriate non-residential activities which would harm the residential environment and amenities of local people. Therefore the policy intends to protect and improve the local area. In order to maximise the quality of the residential environment certain uses may be restricted in residential areas such as those that would lead to an increase in traffic, noise, smells, or other factors that would adversely affect the character of the area.

Policy HS 8

Non Residential Proposals in Residential Areas

Proposals for non-residential uses (including non-residential extensions and proposals which would result in an intensification of an existing non-residential use) within primarily residential areas will be assessed having regard to:

1. The need to retain existing residential accommodation, open space or off-street car parking spaces/garages;
2. The Any detrimental effect on the character of the area; and
3. Any adverse effect on residential amenity by reason of noise, dust, smell, traffic generation, on street parking or general disturbance

This policy is a modified version of saved Watford District Plan 2000 policy H15 which it replaces.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 47-55.– ‘Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes’.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well planned town, with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 A family friendly town centre. SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	HS1 and HS2.
Local Policies:	Housing Strategy.

Retention of Affordable Housing

Why is this policy needed?

The pressure on the affordable housing stock continues to increase. The difficulty in obtaining affordable housing means that, once obtained, it should be carefully protected.

What is it intended to do?

The policy aims to prevent development which would involve a loss of affordable housing units.

Policy HS 9

Retention of Affordable Housing

Development involving the loss of affordable housing will not generally be permitted, unless the replacement of the affordable housing is provided in the proposed development replaced within Watford. The proposed replacement units must match or improve on the lost units' size and tenure.

This policy is a modified version of saved Watford District Plan 2000 policy H16 which it replaces.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 47-55.– ‘Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes’.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well planned town, with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 A family friendly town centre. SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.

Core Strategy Policies:	HS1 and HS2.
Local Policies:	Housing Strategy.

Quality of Garden Development

Why is this policy needed?

In June 2010 the definition of previously development land changed to exclude gardens. However, with land constraints within the Borough there is still pressure from developers for the council to allow garden development.

The council recognises that the pattern of development, urban form and character of well-established residential areas could be considerably altered by garden development. Such development can also present problems, mainly with loss of amenity space, difficulty with maintaining privacy, harm to local character, harmful effects on wildlife and increased flood-risk.

What is it intended to do?

This policy sets out the circumstances in which garden development is and is not acceptable in order to ensure any garden development permitted is of a high standard. The policy is also intended to prevent new housing development located immediately behind existing houses and sharing the same access ("tandem development"). The design-led approach will also ensure that the cumulative impact of different schemes in an area does not harm the visual amenity and residential character of the area.

Policy HS 10

Quality of Garden Development

Garden development (and new residential development on infill plots) will only be permitted where it complies with:

- Policies UD1 and SD1 of the Core Strategy;
- The Residential Design Guide in general and in particular within paras 7.3.4; 8.18 and 8.19 concerning back garden development;
- The Character of the Area Study;
- Conservation Area Appraisal Documents and Management Plans where applicable; and where:
- garden land* which contributes either individually or as part of a larger swathe of green space to amenity of residents or provides wildlife habitats is retained;
- there is no detrimental effect of noise and disturbance from traffic

- gaining access;
- the character of the area is maintained with particular regard to the plot size, scale, design and density, building footprint, gaps between buildings and streetscape of the development. Infill, frontage development where building lines/plot and frontage widths, scale and urban grain should reflect that of the context;
- access roads are suitably landscaped and have acceptable spacings from the flank walls of the adjoining buildings.

*Garden development includes: any development involving land previously used as a garden including free standing outbuildings, new dwellings, alterations/ extensions and changes of use to existing buildings.

This policy is a modified version of saved Watford District Plan 2000 policy H9 back garden development, which it replaces.

This policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 47-55.– ‘Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes’.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well planned town, with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 A family friendly town centre. SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	HS1 and HS2.
Local Policies:	Housing Strategy.

Older Persons' Housing

Why is this policy needed?

Watford's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008) identifies a growing need for supported residential accommodation and extra care housing. Ensuring that the supply of specialist housing for older people in the Borough meets their needs is a priority for Watford.

National research reveals that the majority of older people prefer to either remain living in their home, or prefer accommodation which is part of the ordinary housing stock, where this is suited to their needs. Therefore, adapting the existing housing stock to extend housing choice for older people and the provision of suitable mainstream and specialist accommodation will be encouraged particularly where this can release family sized accommodation.

What is it intended to do?

This policy aims to retain older persons' accommodation except where it is unfit for purpose and could not be redeveloped to meet a need and to ensure a range of housing options is available for older people. Regard will be given to Watford Housing Strategy in determining the suitability of proposals for specialist accommodation.

Policy HS11

Older Persons' and Specialist Housing

Proposals for specialist accommodation should have regard to Watford Housing Strategy. The loss of older persons' accommodation and other specialist housing will be accepted only where it can be shown that properties are not fit for purpose and could not be redeveloped to meet a need.

This is a new policy and does not replace any saved Watford District Plan policy.

This policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 47-55.– 'Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes'.
Watford Sustainable	A well planned town, with homes to suit all

Community Strategy Objective:	needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 A family friendly town centre. SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	HS1, HS2
Local Policies:	Housing Strategy.

Housing Delivery

Why is this policy needed?

Watford's Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy sets out a housing target for the Borough to provide a minimum of 6,500 homes between 2006 and 2031.

The provision to be met in the Core Strategy period is 3177.

Table 1 below as at 31/3/14 shows progress towards achieving this target. The remaining balance to be allocated in the site allocation is 1248 units.

Table 1:

1	Housing Target	2006/07 to 2030/31	6500
2	Net Housing Completions	2006/07 to 2013/14	3323
3	Provision to be met in Core Strategy Period (1-2)		3177
4a	Sites under construction		246
4b	Sites with detailed planning permission		467
4c	Sites with outline planning permission		523
5	Windfall sites (63 p.a. from 2020/21)		693
6	Total supply		1929
7	Housing (6-3) to be allocated.		1248

Site allocations help ensure there will be sufficient land to accommodate new development, along with windfall sites which will continue to play a role. In identifying sites, priority has been given to those which can best contribute to building sustainable communities and support the town's regeneration initiatives taking into account the Special Policy Areas of the spatial strategy. Regard has been give to site availability, deliverability and viability.

What is it intended to do?

The policy shows where the principle of residential development is acceptable, subject to site specific requirements being met.

Policy HS12 Housing Delivery

The following sites are allocated for housing. A map showing the location of each site and other additional information can be found in the housing section of the map book accompanying this consultation.

Site	Location	Indicative capacity	Site specific considerations / requirements	Phasing
H1	Chalk Hill	(80-120)	<p>The site is bordered by 2 storey buildings to the east and south, and railway line to the west. Access is off Bushey Arches. Part of the site at this point is a public car park. Local shops and facilities are nearby. Limited parking may be appropriate given public transport accessibility, subject to the provision of a car club and adequate cycle parking. Adjacent to Nationally/ Locally Listed Buildings.</p> <p>Significant site level changes may reduce the quantum of development, but enable potentially taller buildings.</p> <p>Station Car park is unlikely to be available for redevelopment and the site may have to be developed as two separate parcels of land. Building heights should range from 2-3 storeys fronting onto Bushey Arches and 3-4 storeys at the rear of the site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where applicable CIL residential rate of £120 applies • Potentially contaminated land • Site is near an AQMA and may suffer 	0-5 years

			<p>from noise pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Ground water SPZ 2 	
H2	Shakespeare Industrial Estate			
H3	Cecil Street			
H4	Bedford Street			
H5	Land at Pinner Road	49-60	<p>The site borders Bushey Station to the north, 2 storey terraced housing to the east and south, and the railway line to the west. Access is provided off Pinner Road. Network Rail may have requirements.</p> <p>Near local shops and facilities.</p> <p>Opposite Oxhey Conservation Area and two Locally Listed Buildings. Significant site level changes may reduce the quantum of development possible, but allow taller buildings.</p> <p>Station Car park is unlikely to be available for redevelopment and the site may have to be developed as two separate parcels of land.</p> <p>Building heights should range from 2-3 storeys fronting onto Pinner Road and 3-4 storeys fronting onto the railway line.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIL and SI06 • Potentially contaminated land • Site is near an AQMA and may suffer from noise pollution 	3-5 years
H6	Skatepark, Lower Derby Road	62-74	<p>The site coming forward is dependent on relocating the skate park to a suitable location elsewhere.</p> <p>A constrained site between a railway line and the town centre ring road, the area is slightly larger than the adjacent Rainbow House development.</p> <p>A contemporary style residential block,</p>	3-5 years

			<p>similar in scale to Rainbow House would be appropriate (8-9 storeys). Part of the land contains the access road to the Intu Shopping Centre Car park and is limited for redevelopment. Site is very close to High Street Station and the Town Centre so car free development could be appropriate given public transport accessibility, subject to the provision of a car club and adequate cycle parking.</p> <p>Site lies within SPZ1 and requires mitigation otherwise damage to groundwater resources is very likely.</p> <p>A level 2 SFRA has assessed this site as suitable for either residential or commercial development. The SFRA notes that additional ground investigation and a detailed drainage assessment based on site specific conditions should be carried out by qualified professionals and submitted with any planning application.</p> <p>If CIL applies, residential charges = £120 per sq.m for residential.</p>	
H7	Vicarage Road	12-27	<p>The site is bordered on three sides by 2 storey terraced housing and new development would need to be of a similar scale. A 3 storey element could be acceptable on the north-western corner of the site.</p> <p>Private amenity space and off street parking would be expected. Limited parking or car-free development could be acceptable, given public transport links and facilities, subject to provision of a car club and adequate cycle parking.</p> <p>Proximity to The Square Conservation Area and a Locally Listed Building will limit new build capacity.</p> <p>Brownfield site, subject to contamination,</p>	1-5 years

			<p>implying development will help remediate. Next to Watford Health Campus proposal so will benefit from improved access to transport.</p> <p>CIL /S106 will apply. CIL residential rates are £120 per sq.m</p>	
H8	BT Depot. Reeds Crescent			
H9	Metalworks Whippendel Road			
H10	Humphreys Yard			
H11	Telephone Exchange – First Avenue	12-18	<p>This attractive 2 storey property fronting onto First Avenue should be retained as this enhances the streetscene. Infill development to the rear could be accessed by the existing route to deliver a terrace of residential properties with rear gardens and a smaller residential building behind the retained frontage property. Between 2-3 storeys of development would be appropriate here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially contaminated area. • Site is located near a wildlife site (250m) <p>CIL/S106 will apply. Where chargeable the CIL rate is £120 per sq.m for residential.</p>	5-10 years
H12	Site at Dome Roundabout			
H13	The Gossamers			
H14	Builder's Yard, Queens Avenue	21-49	<p>Adjacent development at Christie Court is comparable as an in-fill residential development in this location. The site is surrounded by 2 storey terraced houses. New development would need to be 2-2½</p>	5-10 years

			<p>storeys, with an access road, parking and amenity space.</p> <p>Contemporary style terraced housing could accommodate a similar density of housing to older properties nearby. Provision of car/cycle parking would reduce housing capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIL/S106 may apply. CIL residential rates are £120 per sq.m • Brownfield site; potentially contaminated land • Site near an AQMA and may suffer from noise pollution 	
H15	Leveret Close			
H16	Bill Everett Community Centre	30-40	<p>A suburban location with modest public transport links. Development nearby is generally 2 storey semi-detached housing. A mix of detached, semi-detached or terraced 2-2½ storey family housing would be appropriate. A significant amount of the available land would need to be allocated to private amenity space, access and parking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If CIL applies the residential rate is £120 per sq.m 	1-5 years
H17	Metropolitan Station Approach			
H18	Rickmansworth Road	4-6	<p>Small site surrounded by 2 storey residential properties. Could potentially accommodate a short terrace or small block of flats, of 2-2½ storeys.</p> <p>Accommodating parking and amenity space further reduces the potential capacity of the site for new housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIL/S106 may apply • Potentially contaminated land • Site is near an AQMA and may suffer from noise pollution 	3-5 years

<u>H19</u>	<u>Garages – The Gossamers</u>	<u>3</u>	<p>A suburban location surrounded by a mix of 1-2 storey residential terraces and communal landscaping. To the east, beyond a tree belt, lies the M1. A short residential terrace of 2 storeys may be achievable on this tightly constrained site. As an out-of-centre location, sufficient land will need to be allocated to parking and amenity space. A contemporary style design would be advisable, similar in layout to the earlier housing nearby.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIL/S106 may apply 	3-5 years
<u>H21</u>	<u>Town and Country Club, Halsey House, Rosslyn Road</u>	<u>20-30</u>	<p>A town centre location surrounded by a mix of 2-3 storey residential development, a multi-storey car park and the rear of commercial units facing the High Street.</p> <p>An 'L' shaped 3-storey block of flats fronting Rosslyn Road and the southern access road may be possible. While communal amenity space to the rear may be acceptable, some car parking should also be provided. A contemporary design would be advisable. Alternatively, the attractive existing building could potentially be converted and extended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially contaminated land • Site is near an AQMA – development may exacerbate air quality pollution 	5 years
<u>H22</u>	<u>Watford Station, Cassiobury Park Avenue</u>	<u>100</u>	<p>The site comprises the existing train station and associated parking and access. The Station building and platforms are Grade II Listed, which limits the potential for comprehensive redevelopment, while the strip of land to the north is relatively narrow, heavily treed and has limited access. Car parking areas may have some potential for development, but are relatively narrow.</p> <p>Adjacent housing on Cassiobury Park</p>	?

			<p>Avenue is 2 storey, while more modern flat development by the main station car park is 3 storey. These would guide the scale of any infill development.</p> <p>The Station is scheduled to close to passengers in 2017, however, the line is expected to remain open for stabling trains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially contaminated land • Site is near an AQMA and may suffer from noise pollution • CIL/S106 may apply. 	
<u>H23</u>	<u>Croxley View</u>	<u>100</u>	<p>Currently a green space buffer between an industrial estate and a housing estate. Development should maintain the character as one dominated by open landscaping. The cycle route and footpath need to be maintained within a suitably wide vista to ensure they remain welcoming.</p> <p>Adjacent housing is a mix of 2 storey terraces and 4 storey blocks of flats. New development should be no larger than this scale. An out-of-centre location which will require generous parking and amenity space provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially contaminated land • Cycle way through the site should be protected • Electrical cabling at south of site is a consideration 	1-4 years
<u>H24</u>	<u>Garages, Bowmans Garages</u>	<u>3</u>	<p>A suburban location surrounded by a mix of 1-2 storey residential terraces and landscaped parking. A short residential terrace of 2 storeys may be achievable, although the site is tightly constrained. As an out-of-centre location, sufficient land will need to be allocated to parking and amenity space. A contemporary style design would be advisable, albeit similar in layout to the earlier housing nearby.</p>	10-15 years
<u>H25</u>	<u>Police</u>	<u>30</u>	<p>A former police station in a suburban</p>	0-10

	<u>Station North Orbital Road</u>		location. North Orbital road is directly to the south and access may be an issue if it is directly on to the road.	years
Total		526/660		

Housing will also be delivered as part of mixed use development on the following sites:

MXD9	North Watford Library and Health Facilities	20-30	For considerations see Mixed Use Allocations policy	5-10 years
MXD10	Former petrol station, Dome Roundabout	8-10	For considerations see Mixed Use Allocations policy	0-5 years
MXD11	The Gossamers	100	Mixed retail and residential redevelopment For considerations see Mixed Use Allocations policy	0-5 years
MXD12	The Brow	24	Mixed retail and residential redevelopment For considerations see Mixed Use Allocations policy	0-5 years
SPA2	Watford Junction	1500	As set out in the Core Strategy Policy SPA2	4-13 years
SPA3	Health Campus	209	This housing figure is in addition to 504 which already have outline planning permission	6-7 years
SPA6	Western Gateway	100	The original 300 figure in the Core Strategy SPA 6 policy has been reduced to 100 as this site is now potentially being considered for employment use but the SPA has been widened to include a site at Croxley view of 100	
		1961/ 1973		

Note: The estimated number of dwellings in this Policy has been calculated taking into account information within the SHLAA; known development constraints; and indicative schemes put forward by agents or site owners through the call for sites, in discussion with officers or through a formal planning pre-application.

This is a new policy and does not replace any saved Watford District Plan policy.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 47-55.– ‘Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes’.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well planned town, with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1 A family friendly town centre. SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	HS1 and HS2.
Local Policies:	Housing Strategy.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Why is this policy needed?

The council has a responsibility to plan for the housing needs of everyone, including Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Watford’s Core Strategy sets out the Council’s approach to providing new pitches in the Borough

Existing authorised Traveller sites and any new sites granted planning permission, will be safeguarded for Traveller use for as long as the need exists for Traveller accommodation within the Borough. There is considered to be no need at present for additional plots for Travelling Showpeople in the Borough. However, additional provision for pitches is needed.

What is it intended to do?

A new site at Tolpits Lane is proposed to be allocated to provide for the future accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. Due to land constraints, land

owner issues and suitability of sites it is considered to be an exceptional circumstance to designate this site within the Greenbelt.

GT 1 Gypsy and Traveller Provision

The following site will be designated as a Gypsy and Traveller site:

Land at Tolpits Lane

The location of this site is shown in the housing section of the map book accompanying this consultation.

This is a new policy and does not replace any saved Watford District Plan policy.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	Planning Policy for Traveller Sites.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well planned town, with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO2 Sustainable neighbourhoods.
Core Strategy Policies:	HS4
Local Policies:	N/A

6. Economic Development and Employment

The Core Strategy sets a target of at least 7,000 additional jobs by 2031 to maintain Watford's role as a regional centre. The key locations and sectors for this job growth, and delivery mechanisms, are set out in Policy EMP1. Policy EMP2 of the Core Strategy protects designated employment areas for employment use.

The additional policies in this chapter identify the designated employment areas, and offer additional protection for existing employment uses in other areas. A specific policy covers the Clarendon Road/Station Road/Bridle Path area given this area's particular status as the borough's primary office location.

The latest evidence in relation to employment suggests that employment growth is likely to be considerably higher than the 7,000 set as a minimum figure in the Core Strategy, and that additional floorspace is likely to be needed to accommodate the jobs.

Determining the longer term requirement for employment space will be an issue for the next plan review, but in the meantime it is clear that the past rate of loss of employment floorspace cannot be sustained and it is important to protect remaining employment uses, whether or not they are in designated areas.

Info box:

The Core Strategy sets a target of at least 7,000 additional jobs in Watford between 2006 and 2031.

Assessment of the East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM) 2013 regional forecasts in the Economic Delivery and Growth Assessment (EDGA) 2014 suggests potential growth of over 13,000 additional jobs between 2006 and 2031.

Emerging figures from the next run of the EEFM suggest this growth could be still higher at 14,900 additional jobs.

The 2010 Employment Market Assessment identified significant potential for office growth (up to 90,000sqm additional B1a floorspace by 2031), and a need to improve the quality of stock in this area to attract occupiers and generate new jobs.

The 2014 EDGA suggests, that when compared to supply, the need for additional office floorspace could be higher still – ranging between 164,000 and 215,000 sqm of additional office floorspace by 2031.

EMP3 Employment Areas

Why is this policy needed?

This policy identifies the employment areas to which policies EMP1 and EMP2 of the Core Strategy apply.

What is it intended to do?

As well as identifying the employment areas, the policy is intended to protect these areas for employment use unless evidence shows there is a surplus of B class employment space when assessed against likely requirements.

In light of new evidence which suggests a need for additional employment floorspace to 2031, the BT Depot on Reeds Crescent is proposed as an additional employment designation. This site was allocated for housing in the District Plan 2000, but has never come forward for that use. This site performed well against the assessment criteria used to assess existing and potential employment locations in the EDGA. As this site was presented as a housing site in the previous consultation we would welcome views on both alternatives for this site.

Boundaries of some employment areas have been revised since the previous consultation. The boundaries can be seen in the employment section of the accompanying map book. The most significant changes are to Fishers – which has been extended southwards to incorporate part of the Health Campus site, on which business uses are proposed; and to Greycaine/Odhams/Sandown – which now retains Sandown Road as an employment location (rather than releasing to mixed use as previously proposed). Land close to the CRL station at Ascot Road could be part of the Watford Business Park employment area, rather than part of a mixed use site – this is now presented as a new option.

Please note that the numbering of employment areas has been amended since the previous consultation (which used numbering from the previous District Plan).

This policy replaces saved policy E1 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

Policy EMP3

Employment Areas

The Employment Areas to which policies EMP1 and EMP2 of the Core Strategy apply are, as defined on the Policies Map:

E1 Watford Business Park

E2 Imperial Way/Colonial Way

E3 Fishers

E4 Greycaine Road/Odhams/Sandown Road

E5 BT Depot, Reeds Crescent

E6 Clarendon Road/Station Road/Bridle Path Policy Area

Loss of B class employment use will be resisted unless monitoring/evidence has identified a surplus of B class employment space or replacement provision is made.

Area E6 will remain in class B1(a/b) office use, as further set out in Policy EMP4.

E1 and E4 include Areas of Search ELAS221, and ELAS213 and 214 identified in the Waste Site Allocations Local Plan

EMP4 Clarendon Road and Bridle Path Office Area

Why is this policy needed?

Clarendon Road connects the main rail station of Watford Junction and the town centre. This is a prime and sustainable location for offices, and it is identified as such in the Core Strategy. Yet, in the current market, the area has seen high vacancy levels and development pressure for redevelopment to other uses.

Although there is low demand for office space at the moment, forecasts suggest that a significant amount of additional office floorspace will be needed in Watford in the future. Should office accommodation in this prime location be lost, it would be extremely difficult to provide the additional office space needed for the future in such a convenient and sustainable location. A policy is therefore needed to protect the office potential of the area, whilst also encouraging improvements to make the quality of the office accommodation in the area better suited to the type of demand expected in the future.

This policy provides more detailed guidance for Clarendon Road than set out in the Core Strategy policies EMP1 and EMP2.

What is it intended to do?

This policy protects the Clarendon Road/Station Road/ Bridle Path area for office floorspace. The policy also seeks additional floorspace to meet the needs of identified growth sectors.

The policy supports EMP1 of the Core Strategy which identifies the need to improve the quality of employment premises in Clarendon Road as one way of delivering job growth.

This policy means that developers wanting to develop premises in this area should propose employment schemes, providing additional high quality B1a/b office floorspace.

This policy does not directly replace any policies from the Watford District Plan 2000.

Policy EMP4

Clarendon Road, Station Road and Bridle Path Office Area

Within the Clarendon Road, Station Road and Bridle Path office employment area proposals for (re)development should ~~be employment led, providing~~ provide an increase in the amount of modern, high quality B1a and B1b office floorspace to meet the needs of growth sectors including knowledge intensive industry, service sector, finance, media and creative industries, and the public sector. ~~Proposals in Clarendon Road~~ should demonstrate that they will contribute to growth in employment in the medium and longer term to 2031.

~~No net loss of employment floorspace will be permitted, and additional floorspace will be supported~~

Any development

Limited ancillary/supporting uses may be acceptable where they are compatible with and specifically contribute to the vitality and viability of the employment uses if they are compatible with office uses in this area and ~~there is no net loss of B1a/b floorspace; and where they do are of a scale which does not undermine either the role of the town centre or the proposed Watford Junction redevelopment.~~ Such uses will be limited to 15% of the floorspace in the employment area.

Residential use is not appropriate in this primary office location.

EMP5

Leavesden Studios Operations

Why is this policy needed?

The Island site straddles the administrative boundary between Watford Borough and Three Rivers District. The Three Rivers Site Allocations document has recently been recommended for adoption by a planning

inspector and includes a policy for the part of the Island Site which falls within Three Rivers District. It makes sense for a similar policy to apply to the remainder of the site, within Watford's boundary to ensure a consistent approach. This site is required for the future expansion of Leavesden Studios which, with its popular Harry Potter attraction, is of national economic benefit as well as employment benefit to the area.

What is it intended to do?

This policy provides for the future expansion of Leavesden Studios and ensures a consistent approach for the site with Three Rivers.

It does not replace any saved policy in Watford District Plan 2000.

EMP5 Leavesden Studios Operations – The Island Site

Development of the Island Site should be connected to the operation of Leavesden Studios.

The design of any development should take into account the site's proximity to, and protect the visual amenity of, the Green Belt. Appropriate landscaping should be provided.

EMP6 Woodside Leisure Park

Why is this policy needed?

The latest economic evidence suggests that additional employment sites are likely to be required during the plan period. This site is not proposed as an employment allocation at this stage because it is not currently available, nor is there any certainty that it will become so. The policy is therefore included to set out that were it to become available, based on current evidence, an employment use would be appropriate rather than residential.

This site was assessed as ranking second only to Clarendon Road as a suitable employment location in the Economic Delivery and Growth Assessment.

What is it intended to do?

It is intended to flag up the suitability of this site for employment use, were it to become available.

It does not replace any saved policy in the Watford District Plan 2000.

EMP6 Woodside Leisure Park

This site is currently in mixed leisure and restaurant use.

Should it become available for redevelopment, employment uses would be sought here rather than residential, unless the latest evidence available at the time shows there is no need for additional employment uses.

EMP7

Change of Use from B Class Outside of Designated Employment Areas

Why is this policy needed?

In light of the most recent evidence, it is important to protect existing employment uses wherever possible.

What is it intended to do?

This policy ensures that, where planning permission is required, employment uses are protected unless certain criteria are met.

This policy does not replace any saved policies in the Watford District Plan 2000, although it reintroduces the policy concept previously set out in Policy E6 (which was deleted on adoption of the Core Strategy). This is due to the new evidence suggesting a greater need for employment space than previously supposed.

EMP7

Change of Use from B Class Outside of Designated Employment Areas

The loss of B class employment space outside of designated employment areas will only be permitted where:

The most up to date evidence shows there is a surplus of B class employment space ;or

Replacement provision is provided within Watford; or

The property has been vacant for at least 6 months and there is clear evidence to show it cannot be reused or redeveloped for employment use in the medium term; and

The proposal is compatible with adjoining uses.

The policies in this chapter support/delivers:

National Policy:	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paras 18-22, 160-61.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	For Watford to be a prosperous and educated town.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO3: Enhance Watford's regional economic and transportation role.
Core Strategy Policies:	EMP1, EMP2.

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7. Education

The County Council has a duty to plan for and secure sufficient school places for their area in line with their duties under section 14 of the Education Act 1996. In the wider Watford town area, the County Council identified a need for up to 4 additional primary schools (or 10 to 11 form entry classes (FE)) over the lifetime of the Core Strategy (to 2031). This is largely as a result of the planned housing growth on strategic sites in central and west Watford, and individual sites in other areas. It is also related to recent increases in birth rates. Watford Borough Council has been actively engaging with HCC to ensure this demand is met.

Based on current pupil forecasts, the County Council recommends that two sites should be allocated and reserved for secondary education in SW Herts across the plan period. Given the geographic spread of existing schools, this secondary school need is to be provided in neighbouring Three Rivers District.

The Core Strategy sets out the education need within Policy INF1 and also in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

Why is this policy needed?

Policy INF1 of the Core Strategy identifies new school capacity as a priority for infrastructure delivery in Watford.

The sites proposed in the last consultation (Lanchester House, Orchard and Ascot Road) have all now been delivered or secured planning permission and so do not require allocation. An additional site has been identified at Bedford Street, which could meet identified need related to planned development at Watford Junction.

In the Special Policy Areas, the boundary of the Health Campus SPA has been extended to include the existing Laurence Haines School – future expansion here may be possible to meet needs relating to the Health Campus development, which is one additional form of entry.

This equates to 8 additional primary school forms of entry, the current need identified by the County Council. Nevertheless, there may be a need for additional primary school places within Watford over the plan period and the Borough Council will continue to work with the County Council to ensure that adequate provision is made.

What is it intended to do?

It is intended to ensure that education facilities will be delivered in the plan period. It identifies sites suitable for primary school facilities.

SP 1 Education

Development for education and training needs will be encouraged and supported by the council in conjunction with other relevant Local Plan policies.

The following site is allocated for primary school use:

- Bedford Street

4) This policy supports/delivers

National Policy	NPPF (para 37, 72)
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs.
Core Strategy Policies	INF1

8. Transport

Car Parking Provision, Low Emission Vehicles

Why is this policy needed?

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development and acknowledges the role transport policies can play in facilitating not only sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. Every opportunity should be taken to promote and encourage sustainable transport modes. In this context, local parking standards should take account of the accessibility of the development; the type, mix and use of development; the availability of and opportunities for public transport; local car ownership levels; and an overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.

What is it intended to do?

In accordance with this policy context, the Local Plan Core Strategy has an overarching objective to promote environmentally sustainable movement and to seek ways to reduce the overall need to travel. Car parking standards need to reflect this objective, whilst also recognising that car parking standards play a key role in creating and achieving high quality development and living environments across the Borough. The right balance therefore needs to be found for these standards.

Policy T6 replaces Watford District Plan Policies T22, T24 and T26. T23 was replaced in the Core Strategy. Policy T7 is a new policy and does not replace any existing policy.

Policy T 6

Car parking provision

a) Residential Development

All residential development will be expected to comply with the car parking standards set out in Appendix G, based upon the number and size of dwellings proposed. The extent of the Council's full controlled parking zones is shown in a map available at:

<http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/transport-and-streets/parking/controlled-parking-zones/>

As the extent of the full* controlled parking zones is subject to change, this map will be updated as required.

All parking spaces must have minimum dimensions of 2.4m wide by 4.8m long with a minimum area 6m deep in front of the space to allow for manoeuvring in and out of the space. All external and integral garages must have minimum internal dimensions of 3m wide by 5.5m long (per vehicle) with a minimum area 7m deep in front of the garage to allow for manoeuvring in and out of the garage. Any spaces or garages that do not meet these minimum dimensions will not be considered as parking accommodation for the purposes of this policy.

i) Where a site is located within a full controlled parking zone, the number of parking spaces provided on-site will not be permitted to exceed the maximum provision. All new residential developments will be excluded from the controlled parking zone which will mean that future residents and their visitors will not be entitled to residents' permits to park within the on-street parking bays. This is to ensure that the development does not exacerbate existing on-street parking congestion. This will be secured by means of a planning obligation. In all cases, the same ratio of parking provision will be required for market and affordable housing.

Car-free developments will be considered acceptable in principle within the full controlled parking zones.

ii) Where a site is located outside a full controlled parking zone, a minimum number of parking spaces must be provided within the site. Where there are four or more dwellings, a 25% provision of unallocated visitor spaces will be required, based on the number of dwellings.

Note: Within full controlled parking zones, parking enforcement is carried out between 8am and 6.30pm, Monday to Saturday (including bank holidays).

b) Non-residential Development

All non-residential development will be expected to comply with the car parking standards set out in Appendix G, based upon the proposed use and the Accessibility Zone of the site is located within. Accessibility Zones for the borough are shown on the map book These are defined having regard to accessibility to railway stations and bus routes, with a minimum number of services, that provide an alternative means of travel to the private car.

The Accessibility Zone within which the site is located ~~will~~ determines the Parking Restraint Factor applied to set the minimum and maximum acceptable parking provision for the proposed development, ~~known as the Parking Restraint Factor~~. The Parking Restraint Factor for each Accessibility Zone is shown in the table below and is a percentage of the maximum parking standard shown in Appendix G. The minimum provision will ensure that the operational needs of the proposed use and that the needs of people with disabilities are met on site. The maximum provision will act as a restraint on commuter travel by private car and encourage the use of non-car modes of travel. ~~Only in exceptional circumstances, on the merits of the proposed development, will parking provision below the minimum or above the~~

maximum provision be considered acceptable. If proposed parking provision is below or above the expected standard, evidence will be required to justify this departure.

c) All Development

Where it is proposed that car parking provision will fall below minimum standards outside a full controlled parking zone, provision of dedicated car club spaces and vehicles will be required. Provision for car clubs will also be expected for residential development in Special Policy Areas where more than 20 parking spaces are proposed.

Parking Restraint Factor**		
	Accessibility Zone	
	Zone 1	Zone 2
Parking Restraint Factor	0-50%	50-100%

* Full controlled parking zones are areas where on-street parking is restricted throughout the entire year. They typically exist to ensure local residents can park near their homes in locations that are attractive for commuter parking.

** The Parking Restraint Factor is applied to the maximum standard and determines the minimum and maximum number of parking spaces for a given development. For example, if the maximum standard for a proposed development is 10 spaces, based on use and floor area, then: a site in Zone 1, there would be a minimum of 0 spaces and maximum of 5 spaces. For a site in Zone 2, the minimum would be 5 spaces and maximum 10 spaces.

Policy T 7

Parking provision for low emission vehicles

The Council will require the provision of electric vehicle charging spaces in new developments, including for electric pool cars or electric car clubs. ~~Such parking spaces should be provided within the standards set out in Appendix iii.~~ Where new houses are proposed with dedicated parking, plug charging points will be expected on houses adjacent to parking spaces. For other development proposals, the following electric vehicle charging provision will be expected

- 0-20 spaces - no provision
- 20-50 spaces - 1 charging point

50-100 spaces - 2 charging points
Every additional 50 spaces - 1 additional charging point

Detail regarding the ongoing management of electric vehicle charging points and related parking spaces will be required in car parking management plans.

Cycle Parking Provision

Why is this policy needed?

The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable development and acknowledges the role transport policies can play in facilitating not only sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. Every opportunity should be taken to promote and encourage sustainable transport modes, and cycling is a key part of the sustainable travel agenda.

The Core Strategy Objectives promote environmentally sustainable movement and seek ways to reduce the overall need to travel, particularly by private car. More people could potentially be encouraged to cycle for local journeys if they had secure cycle storage facilities at their home and at their destination. It is therefore important that secure cycle storage facilities are provided for both residential and non-residential developments to encourage cycle ownership and use.

What is it intended to do?

This policy is intended to ensure that developers provide high quality cycle parking facilities within their developments, which will help encourage modal shift towards cycling.

It replaces saved policy T10 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

Policy T 8

Cycle parking provision

All new development will be expected to comply with the cycle parking standards set out in Appendix H. Long term cycle parking facilities for residents and/or employees of a development must be conveniently located, safe to use, secure and weatherproof. The design of the facility should complement the development and be well integrated into the building or the layout of the site. Short term cycle parking facilities for ~~the use of visitors or customers to the development~~ should be conveniently located in relation to the public realm and safe to use.

For dwelling houses, individual provision should be made within the private garden area. For flatted developments and commercial uses, communal cycle stores should be provided.

Access and Servicing

Why is this policy needed?

In all developments, the main impact of vehicular movement is in the immediate vicinity of the site. Suitability of access/egress arrangements is a key consideration in determining a development proposal.

What is it intended to do?

To ensure safe access and egress is provided.

It replaces saved policy T21 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

Policy T 9

Access and servicing

All development proposals including redevelopments, changes of use or extensions to existing developments should include adequate provision for access/egress and servicing arrangements to meet the necessary safety and capacity requirements. The Council will also seek to ensure that the needs for access and service arrangements are taken into account fully in the design of all public and private highway improvement schemes.

The Council will normally require redevelopment schemes within the Town Centre to provide rear servicing facilities so as to avoid access via the High Street.

The policies in this chapter support/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF paras. 29-32, 35, 39.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO1: A family-friendly town centre. SO2: Sustainable neighbourhoods. SO3: Enhance Watford's regional economic and transportation role. SO4: Enhance Watford's regional health, recreational, educational, cultural and social

	<p>role.</p> <p>SO5: Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.</p>
<p>Core Strategy Policies:</p>	<p>SD1 Sustainable Design T2 Location of New Development T3 Improving Accessibility T4 Transport Assessments UD1 Delivering High Quality Design.</p>

9. Infrastructure

Why is this policy needed?

Policy INF1 of the Core Strategy refers to working with developers and providers to ensure sufficient capacity and design of communications infrastructure to meet anticipated demand. This policy sets out the considerations to be taken into account in determining proposals for telecommunications infrastructure, now this issue is no longer fully covered by national policy guidance.

What is it intended to do?

It is intended to ensure that telecommunications infrastructure is sited and designed to minimise adverse impact.

This policy does not directly replace any saved policies, as policies relating to telecommunications were deleted on the adoption of the Core Strategy. However the changes to shorten and simplify national guidance mean that national policy guidance no longer fully covers the issue. The additional policy and wording was proposed by the Mobile Operators' Association in response to the first consultation.

This policy supports/delivers –

National Policy	NPPF paras 42-46
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives	A town that protects its environment and heritage
Core Strategy Policies	INF1

INF 2 Mobile Communications

Proposals for telecommunications development will be permitted provided that:

(i) the siting and appearance of the proposed apparatus and associated structures is designed to minimise impact on the visual amenity, character or appearance of the surrounding area;

(ii) if on a building, apparatus and associated structures are sited and designed to minimise impact to the external appearance of the host building;

(iii) if proposing a new mast, the applicant has demonstrated that they have explored the possibility of erecting apparatus on existing buildings, masts or other structures. Such evidence should accompany any application.

(iv) if proposing development in a sensitive area, the development does not have an unacceptable effect on areas of ecological interest, areas of landscape importance, archaeological sites, conservation areas or buildings of architectural or historic interest.

When considering applications for telecommunications development, the local planning authority will have regard to the operational requirements of telecommunications networks and the technical limitations of the technology.

10. Urban Design and The Historic Environment

Shop fronts and Advertisements/Signs

Why is this policy needed?

National policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the importance of high quality design and states that: “The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people” (Paragraph 56, Page 14).

What is it intended to do?

This policy supports Core Strategy Policy UD1 (Delivering High Quality Design). Policy UD1 provides an overarching policy for the design of new development in the Borough. That detailed policy is further supported by a suite of local design guides and character assessments. These documents include a Residential Design Guide (2014); Shopfront Design Guide (2013), Streetscape Design Guide (2013), character appraisals for conservation areas and the Watford Character of Area Study (2011).

Further to the aforementioned policy and guidance on design, this policy provides more detailed coverage of two particular topics: shopfronts and advertisements/signs.

It replaces saved policies U24 and U25 of the Watford District Plan 2000.

Policy UD 3

Design policy: shopfronts and advertisements/signs

Shopfronts

The Council will require a high standard of appearance for all shopfronts and associated awnings, security shutters and signs. New shopfronts on existing properties should be in keeping with the character of the upper part of the building and should ~~look~~ seek to enhance the appearance of the building as a whole. All new shopfronts should relate well to adjoining building frontages. Where traditional shopfront features remain, these should be preserved wherever possible. All works involving shopfronts should be in accordance with the guidance contained within the Shopfront Design Guide (2013).

Advertisements and Signs

The Council will consider all applications for the display of advertisements, and decide on appropriate action with regard to existing advertisements, on the basis of their affect on local amenity and public safety in terms of the:

- a. character and appearance of the building or locality of display;
- b. advertisement size, location, design, illumination or colour;
- c. likely affect on traffic safety, including pedestrian safety and convenience; and
- d. environmental benefits of display.

Where advertisement consent is granted for special reasons, such as to screen an area of land, consent may be granted for a period of less than 5 years. Where advertisements are located on shopfronts, the design should be in accordance with the ~~guidance contained within the~~ Shopfront Design Guide (2013).

The Historic Environment

Why is this policy needed?

The built heritage of Watford makes an important contribution to the character and identity of the town. Assets range from Grade I listed buildings to registered parks and conservation areas. Each of the assets is unique and valuable to the town. National policy and legislation is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the importance of the historic environment, with the main Government objective being to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

The Core Strategy contains strategic level policies and sets out the Council's intention to protect these assets. There is a need to provide more detail concerning how this will be achieved in relation to the various asset groups.

What is it intended to do?

When assessing applications for development, there will be a presumption in favour of the retention and enhancement of heritage assets. Applications will be supported where they sustain, conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance, character and setting of the asset itself.

It replaces saved polices U15, U17, U18, U19 and U20 of the Watford District Plan 2000. U10, U11, U12, U13, U14, U16 and U21 were replaced by UD2 of the Core Strategy.

Policy UD 4

~~Built Heritage Conservation~~ The Historic Environment

Listed Buildings (Nationally Listed Buildings)

The Council will preserve the character and setting of the borough's listed buildings and will support applications where:

> The extension/alteration would not adversely affect its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest, both internally and externally, or adversely affect its wider setting; both internally or externally or its wider setting;

> Any change of use would preserve its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest and ensure its continued use/viability.

Applications involving the demolition of a listed building will only be granted in wholly exceptional circumstances.

~~Development proposals which do not directly include a listed building, but impact on their setting will only be supported where the setting of the listed building is not adversely harmed. Where development proposals lead to harm to, or loss of significance of, a listed building due to an impact on its setting, this harm or loss should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.~~

Conservation Areas

Within conservation areas development ~~will not be permitted unless the proposal:~~ will be supported where it:

- > Is of a design and scale that preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area;
- > Uses building materials, finishes, including those for features such as walls, railings, gates and hard surfacing, that are appropriate to the local context;
- > Retains historically significant boundaries, important open spaces and other elements of the area's established pattern of development, character and historic value, including gardens, roadside banks and verges;
- > Retains and restores, where relevant, traditional features such as shop fronts, walls, railings, paved surfaces and street furniture, and improves the condition of structures worthy of retention;
- > Does not harm important views into, out of or within the Conservation area;
- > Protects trees, hedgerows and other significant landscape features and incorporates landscaping appropriate to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;

Results, where relevant, in the removal of unsympathetic features and the restoration or reinstatement of missing features.

Within conservation areas, permission for development involving demolition or substantial demolition will not be granted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- > The structure to be demolished makes no significant contribution to the special character or appearance of the area;
- > It can be demonstrated that the structure is wholly beyond repair or incapable of beneficial use;
- > It can be demonstrated that the removal of the structure and its subsequent replacement with a new building and/or open space would enhance the conservation area.

Permission will not be granted for development outside of but near to a conservation area which adversely affects the setting, character, appearance of or views in to and out of that conservation area.

Locally Listed Buildings

Proposals for development affecting the appearance, character or setting of locally listed buildings should ensure that due regard is paid to safeguarding the relevant features of the building and its setting. Proposals that involved the demolition of the building are unlikely to be approved.

Registered Parks and Gardens

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals that would cause unacceptable harm to registered parks or gardens, their settings or public views into, out of, or within them.

Archaeology

Where an application site includes, is considered to, or is found to have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, it must be accompanied by an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where desk-based research is insufficient to properly assess the interest, a field evaluation.

There is a presumption against any harm to scheduled monuments and heritage assets with archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments.

Where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance (archaeological interest) is justified, planning conditions will be included in any permission to ensure that an adequate record is made of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost. This will be secured through an archaeological written scheme of investigation (WSI) which must include provision for appropriate publication of the evidence. The potential for local public engagement and dissemination should also be considered and included in the WSI where this is deemed to be appropriate.

The policies in this chapter support/deliver:

National Policy:	NPPF (paras 17, 56-58, 60-61, 63-64, 66-67, 126 – 141).
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A town that protects its environment and

	heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic Objectives:	SO2: Sustainable neighbourhoods. SO5: Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	UD1 Delivering High Quality Design. UD2 Built Heritage Conservation.

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11. Green Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation

Green Infrastructure refers to a network of multifunctional green space, both new and existing, rural and urban which supports the natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities. It provides landscape, wildlife, recreation, sport and cultural experiences and can play a key role in adapting to and mitigating climate change.

The Core Strategy sets out the approach for green infrastructure in Watford in the following policies:

- GI1 Green Infrastructure
- GI2 Green Belt
- GI3 Biodiversity
- GI4 Sports Hubs

Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

Why is this policy needed?

The policy is needed to ensure the adequate protection of the trees, woodlands and hedgerows within the borough. Watford is essentially an urban area but does contain significant and high quality areas of green infrastructure which contain trees, woodland and hedgerows. In addition the borough contains many trees in gardens and on streets, all of which play an important role for human and animal welfare by providing breathing space within the urban area and valuable habitats. The proposed policy amalgamates and amends policies SE36, 37 and 39 of Watford District Plan 2000 (with references updated) which have been working effectively.

What is it intended to do?

The policy sets out in more detail how the Council intends to protect these important assets and make provision for replacement and additional assets with new development schemes. There are additional protections in place for trees which are particularly important such as; those in conservation areas and where a tree preservation order is in place. In conservation areas, the law requires that works to trees over 75mm diameter (at 1.5m above normal ground level) are only be carried out after the Council has been notified in order for them to consider applying a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

The policy will ensure that advice is sought regarding work to protected trees or those in a conservation area, if they have to be felled then they will be replaced with a suitable new tree. In addition, where street trees have to be felled in conservation areas the council will seek to replace them through agreement with Hertfordshire County Council.

Where redevelopment of a site involves the loss of trees the developer will be expected to replace those trees with new ones and where there are significant losses that will be at a level of two new trees for every one lost.

Policy GI 5

Trees, woodlands and hedgerows

The council will seek the retention of trees, woodlands and hedgerows. Planning permission will be refused for any development that would harm protected woodland (including ancient woodland), trees (those in conservation areas or covered by a tree preservation order) and hedgerows. Adequate protection should be provided to trunks, root systems and limbs throughout the period of construction. Where the felling of a tree or removal of a hedgerow is permitted, a replacement tree or hedge of an appropriate species, size and in a suitable location will be required, taking account of issues such as landscape and biodiversity.

To assist in delivering the urban greening and legibility project, it is expected that major new development and development within the Special Policy Areas will deliver significant amounts of new tree planting. Details of landscape schemes will be expected to demonstrate how the proposed planting will meet this requirement. Where there is a significant loss of trees on a site to allow for redevelopment, replacement trees will be required on the basis of 2 new trees for every one lost.

Within new development wherever appropriate, new planting with locally native species including traditional fruit trees and edible hedgerows will be required within development. Development should be designed in such a way as to allow trees and hedgerows to grow to maturity without causing undue problems of visibility, shading or damage. Development likely to result in future requests for significant topping, lopping or felling will be refused. Where appropriate a plan should be provided for the protection of trees, hedgerows and shrubs throughout the construction of the development in accordance with advice contained in the British Standard Institute code of practice "Trees in relation to Construction" (BS5837:2012) or any amendment thereafter.

In the case of trees which contribute significantly to the amenity of the area the Council will make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) ensuring they are not felled, or pruned to the detriment of the environment and ensure their replacement should felling become necessary. Where it is necessary to remove trees within conservation areas which are not protected by TPOs, the Council will require a replacement tree to be planted as near as is reasonable to the location of the tree to be removed.

This Policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF Para 109 and 114.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objective:	A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Strategic	SO5 Enhance Watford's environment,

Objectives:	green infrastructure and heritage.
Core Strategy Policies:	GI1 Green Infrastructure and GI3 Biodiversity.

Sports Hubs

Why is this policy no longer needed?

Core Strategy policy GI4 Sport and Recreation states that the council will consolidate and improve its sports facilities across the borough. It goes on to say that the Sports Facilities Strategy and supporting evidence base will inform decisions for development proposals affecting sports facilities.

The Sports Facilities Strategy identifies that many of the sports clubs in the borough are small and potentially unviable in the long term, and there is a high level of dependence on council facilities. In light of these findings the strategy proposes the development of four 'strategic pitch sites' across the borough:

- Woodside Playing Fields in the north of the borough;
- Watford Grammar School / Sun Postal Football Club/ Fullerians Rugby Club site in the centre of the borough;
- Westfield Community Technical College; and
- King George V Playing Fields in the south of the borough.

Comments at the previous consultation raised concerns that Sports Hubs may impact on the Green Belt. It was not intended that proposals within the Sports Hubs would result in development contrary to Green Belt policy, therefore it has been decided that it is more appropriate to rely on a revised Sports Facilities Strategy to deliver Strategic Sports facilities through prioritised council investment across the borough. Any proposals will need to adhere to Local Plan policies, particularly those relating to Green Belt.

The Sports Facilities Strategy is produced by the Parks department of the council. It will be an adopted document and publicly available.

Policy GI 6 Sports Hubs

~~The council will:~~

~~1. Support development proposals for any of the designated strategic pitch sites if they will:~~

~~(a) increase the "carrying capacity" of the site and ability to accommodate higher levels of participation or standards of play; or~~

~~(b) support the creation of a financially and environmentally sustainable voluntary community sports club that will cater for a variety of participants; or~~

~~(c) be ancillary to the use of the site for sport and physical recreation (eg new~~

~~changing rooms or parking) and not adversely affect the quantity, quality or carrying capacity of the pitches and other facilities and their use; or~~

~~(d) affect only land which is incapable of being used for sport and physical recreation or related ancillary accommodation.~~

~~2. Not allow the development for another purpose of any sports facilities owned or operated by a sports club or school unless:~~

~~(a) The council is satisfied that there is no current or foreseeable future need for the facility; or~~

~~(b) The sports facility that will be lost as a result of the proposed development will be replaced by a facility with at least the same carrying capacity and of better quality in a sustainable location, with long term arrangements acceptable to the council that will guarantee both public access and effective management and maintenance; or~~

~~(c) The proposed development is for an outdoor or indoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to the development of sport to outweigh its loss.~~

~~3. Allow the potential development of all or part of some existing sports sites which are currently without changing accommodation, provided that compensatory provision at the nearest strategic pitch site will increase its capacity to accommodate use by an amount at least equivalent to the playing capacity that will be lost and there is no need to retain all or part of the site for another sport or green space use.~~

~~4. Require housing developers to contribute to the development or enhancement of the nearest strategic pitch site to their proposed development.~~

Open Space and Children/ Young Person's Play Space in Residential Development

Why is this Policy Needed?

The policy is needed to ensure that sufficient open space and children/young person's play space is included in new residential development. All new residential development regardless of the size of the scheme will result in more people requiring access to open space and in many cases children/young person's play space: so it is proposed to take forward, in revised form and amalgamated, policies L8 and L9 from the Watford District Plan 2000.

What is it intended to do?

The policy sets out in more detail the thresholds and levels of open space and children/young person's play space which new residential development will be expected to deliver. In larger schemes the open space and play space should be included within the development whilst in the case of smaller schemes it may be more appropriate to seek commuted payments.

Proposals for housing development in Watford will be expected to make provision on site, or at a nearby site, for open space and children/young person's play space needs as generated by the development. Where new space cannot be provided developers will contribute towards the improvement of existing facilities.

Policy GI 7

Open space and children/young person's play space in residential development

Applications involving the loss of open space and or children/young person's play space will be refused and the Council will seek to rectify any deficiencies in open space and children's play facilities and upgrade existing facilities wherever possible.

Requirements:

Open Space:

All new-build housing developments, regardless of size, will be required to provide for sufficient open space as part of the development at a ratio of a least 2.8 hectares (7 acres) of open space for every 1,000 persons unless there is sufficient provision within the locality to meet the additional demand likely to be created by the new development. The open space will normally be a coherent unit and laid out so that it is suitable for recreation.

Children/young person's Play Space:

New housing developments involving family sized accommodation (i.e. 2 bed or more) will be required to make provision for children/young person's play facilities:

- On sites where 50 or more dwellings are involved provision should be made on site;
- On sites involving less than 50 dwellings provision may be made at relevant existing play facilities as follows:
 - Within 60m for a LAP (Local Area for Play)
 - Within 240m for a LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play) and
 - Within 600m for a NEAP (Neighbourhood Area Equipped for Play); MUGA (multi – use games area); skate park; or Adventure playground.

Commuted Payments:

Open space:

Where the site area is over 0.2 hectares or 10 dwellings commuted payments will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances. In developments where site area is less than 0.2 ha, or in acceptable high density schemes where sufficient open space cannot be provided within the development, commuted payments will be required for the provision or improvement of nearby open space or sport and recreation facilities, based on the formula of 2.8 hectares per 1,000 population.

Children/Young Person's Play Space:

Commuted payments towards future provision or upgrading will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances or where sites are less than 0.2 hectares. The Council considers it appropriate to secure open space provision on-site, or through commuted sums for off-site new provision or improvement of existing facilities nearby to the development site, in accordance with SPG 10: Open Space Provision or any amendment thereafter.

This policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF paras 73,74 and 114.
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs. A healthy town. A town that protects its environment and heritage.
Core Strategy Objective:	SO2 Sustainable Neighbourhoods. SO5 Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	GI1 Green Infrastructure. GI3 Biodiversity.

Cemeteries

Why is this Policy Needed?

Watford Borough Council is responsible for the provision and maintenance of cemeteries within the borough. The NPPF highlights that the planning system must 'positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area'. Core Strategy Policy INF1 states that 'infrastructure provision in Watford will reflect the council's priorities for infrastructure set out in the infrastructure delivery plan'. Cemetery capacity is highlighted as a priority.

The borough currently has two cemeteries, at Vicarage Road and North Watford. Vicarage Road Cemetery is already full, the only burials taking place now are those in common graves and the Garden of Rest. North Watford Cemetery has eight years burial space capacity, however the cemetery has different sections available for the principal religious denominations and for children, this demand for different burial areas means that a new cemetery is required to serve the borough from 2014.

Watford's tight administrative boundary means that finding an appropriate location for a new cemetery is challenging. One option is to provide a new cemetery based on Woodland Burial Principles that would be conducive to a Green Belt location.

What is it intended to do?

The final policy will allocate sites to meet the need for cemetery provision in Watford.

Options

We consulted on one site in the previous consultation – a site on council owned land at Paddock Road. This is located within Hertsmere Borough and therefore, if taken forward, would not be an allocation in the Watford Local Plan – but would

need to be identified in Hertsmere's Local Plan. Due to concerns raised in relation to that site, we are now also asking for views on two alternative options.

The additional alternative options are:

CM2 North Watford Cemetery

There is potential to extend the existing North Watford Cemetery, this site would be suitable for woodland burial or more formal traditional burials.

CM3 Russell Lane

We are asking for views on a new potential site at Russell Lane, this is in the Green Belt but would be suitable for woodland burial. It is screened from the A41 with established trees.

Policy GI8 Cemeteries

In line with Core Strategy Policy INF1 the council proposes the following options for cemetery use:

- Option1: CM1 Paddock Road
- Option 2: CM2 North Watford Cemetery expansion
- Option 3: CM3 Russell Lane

This policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:	NPPF para 89
Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:	A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs.
Core Strategy Objective:	SO2 Sustainable Neighbourhoods. SO5 Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.
Core Strategy Policies:	GI1 Green Infrastructure GI2 Green Belt INF 1 Infrastructure Delivery and Planning Obligations

Green Belt

Why is this policy needed?

National guidance attaches great importance to Green Belts and sets out their purposes in Para 80 of the NPPF. The predominantly urban nature of Watford means that the protection of surrounding Green Belt land is of particular importance. Most of Watford's green infrastructure assets are located within the Green Belt.

The Green Belt around Watford has proved successful at providing opportunities for access to open space as well as retaining an attractive landscape to preserve the character of Watford and prevent its merger with adjoining towns.

What is it intended to do?

As agreed in Core Strategy Policy GI2 the approach is to retain the existing Green Belt boundary while dealing with any boundary inconsistencies that have emerged since the WDP2000. This policy will make minor revisions to correct existing anomalies and create defensible Green Belt boundaries in the Local Plan and accompanying Proposals Map. Some of the changes reflect the situation on the ground – i.e. to recognise where sites have already been developed. Others are changed to maintain a logical boundary. Only one change is linked to proposed development – this is the change at Ashfields, which reflects changes to the Green Belt boundary in Three Rivers, in order to maintain a logical boundary. Part of this site is also covered by the Leavesden Studios Operations Policy EMP5 in the Economic Development and Employment Chapter, whilst other parts of the site would remain as open space. More detail on the reasons for change at each site are included with the site maps in the map book accompanying this consultation.

Policy GI9 Changes to the Green Belt

In line with Core Strategy Policy GI2 the council proposes the following minor revisions to the Green Belt boundary.

These changes are in order to correct existing anomalies and create defensible Green Belt boundaries in the Local Plan.

The following sites are removed from the Green Belt:

- G6 Caxton Way
- G7 Clock Tower
- G8 High Road (previously developed land)
- G9 High Road (open space)
- G10 Ashfields

This policy supports/delivers:

National Policy:

NPPF paras 83-85

<p>Watford Sustainable Community Strategy Objectives:</p>	<p>A well-planned town with homes to suit all needs</p> <p>A town that protects its environment and heritage</p>
<p>Core Strategy Objective:</p>	<p>SO2 Sustainable Neighbourhoods. SO5 Enhance Watford's environment, green infrastructure and heritage assets.</p>
<p>Core Strategy Policies:</p>	<p>GI1 Green Infrastructure. GI2 Green Belt</p>

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12. Monitoring and Delivery:

Watford's Local Plan Part 1 (Core Strategy) sets out the Council's approach to monitoring and delivery. A detailed monitoring framework, including policy targets and indicators, is given in the Core Strategy Appendix E. The Core Strategy also describes how the Council will work in partnership with others to deliver the Local Plan policies and objectives. Progress is reported on at least annually in the authority's monitoring report

Development management and site allocations policies in Watford's Local Plan Part 2 are linked to Core Strategy policies. It is proposed therefore to monitor their implementation through existing Core Strategy indicators. In addition, the following indicators have been identified.

LIST OF INDICATORS TO BE ADDED.

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Local Plan 2 – Appendix G - Car Parking Standards

Use Class	Description	Maximum car parking standards
A1 (shops) Food	< 500m ²	1 space per 30m ²
	500 – 2500m ² (supermarket)	1 space per 18m ²
	> 2500m ² (superstore)	1 space per 15m ²
A1 (shops) Non-Food	< 2500m ²	1 space per 40m ²
	> 2500m ² (retail warehouse)	1 space per 35m ²
	> 2500m ² (retail warehouse) with garden centre	1 space per 25m ²
	Retail park (3 or more retail warehouses)	1 space per 40m ²
A2 (financial and professional services)	Professional offices	1 space per 30m ²
A3 (restaurants and cafes)	Restaurants and cafes	1 space per 5m ² dining area plus 3 spaces per 4 employees
A4 (drinking establishments)	Public Houses and bars	1 space per 3m ² bar area plus 3 spaces per 4 employees
A5 (hot food takeaways)	Hot food takeaways	1 space per 3m ² public area plus 3 spaces per 4 employees
B1 (business)	B1(a) offices and (b) research and development	1 space per 30m ²
	B1 (c) light industry	1 space per 35m ²
B2 (general industry)	General industry	1 space per 50m ²
B8 (storage or distribution)	Storage and distribution	1 space per 75m ²
Business Parks	Mixed B class uses (where B8 is not main use)	1 space per 40m ² (where communal parking provided)
C1 (hotels)	Hotels and guest houses	1 space per bedroom
C2 (residential institutions)	Nursing/care homes	0.25 space per bedroom (staff and visitor use)
C3 (dwelling houses)	General market and affordable 1 & 2 bedrooms 3 + bedrooms	Within CPZ - Maximum provision 1.25 spaces per unit 2.25 spaces per unit
	General market and affordable 1 & 2 bedrooms 3 + bedrooms	Outside CPZ – Minimum provision 1.25 spaces 2.25 spaces
	Sheltered accommodation for the elderly (minimum age limit of 65 years for occupation)	0.5 space per unit

Sui Generis	Dwellings in multiple occupation	Within CPZ - Maximum provision 0.5 space per bedsit room Outside CPZ – Minimum provision 0.5 space per bedsit room
D1 (non-residential institutions)	Public halls/community centres	1 space per 9m ² plus 3 spaces per 4 staff members
	Places of worship	1 space per 10m ²
	Surgeries/clinics	3 spaces per consulting room
D2 (assembly and leisure)	Leisure complex	1 space per 15m ²
	Cinemas	1 space per 3 seats
	Ten pin bowling	4 spaces per lane
	Health/fitness clubs	1 space per 15m ²
Motor Trade	Showrooms	1 space per 10 cars plus 3 spaces per 4 employees
	Workshops	3 spaces per bay plus 3 spaces per 4 employees
	Tyre and exhaust	2 spaces per bay plus 3 spaces per 4 employees
Disabled spaces	Employment use	Minimum 5% of spaces
	Residential use	Minimum 5% of unallocated spaces

Any uses not specifically listed above will be assessed on merit on a case by case basis.

Local Plan 2 – Appenedix H Cycle Parking Standards

s/t = short term

l/t = long term

gfa = gross floor area

Use Class	Description	Cycle parking standards
A1 (shops) Food	< 500m ²	1 s/t space per 150m ² gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 maximum staff on site at any one time
	500 – 2500m ² (supermarket)	1 s/t space per 150m ² gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 maximum staff on site at any one time
	> 2500m ² (superstore)	1 s/t space per 250m ² gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 maximum staff on site at any one time
A1	Shops: non-food	1 s/t space per 350m ² gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 maximum staff on site at any one time
A2	Professional offices	1 s/t space per 200m ² gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff. Note: A2 offices should be treated as B1 offices.
A3	Restaurants and cafes	1 s/t space per 100m ² gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 maximum staff on site at any one time
A4	Public Houses and bars	<u>2 s/t spaces</u>
A5	Hot food takeaways	<u>2 s/t spaces</u>
B1	Business	1 s/t space per 500m ² gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff
B2	General industry	<u>1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff</u>
B8	Storage and distribution	1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff
Business Parks	Mixed B class uses (where B8 is not main use)	1 s/t space per 500m ² gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff
C1	Hotels and guest houses	1 l/t space per 10 beds plus 1 l/t space per 10 maximum staff on site at any one time
C2	Nursing/care homes	1 s/t space per 20 beds plus 1 l/t space per 10 staff on duty at any one time
	Hospitals	1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff plus 1 l/t space per 3 students
	Education – halls of residence	1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff plus 1 l/t space per 3 students
C3 (dwelling houses)	General market and affordable 1 & 2 bedrooms 3 + bedrooms	1 l/t space per unit if no garage or shed provided
	Sheltered accommodation for the elderly (minimum age limit of 65 years for occupation)	1 l/t space per 3 units plus 1 l/t space per 5 units

Sui Generis	Dwellings in multiple occupation	1 l/t space per unit if no garage or shed provided
D1 (non-residential institutions)	Public halls/community centres	1 s/t space per 200m2 gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 staff on duty at any one time
	Places of worship	
	Surgeries/clinics	1 s/t space per consulting room plus 1 l/t space per 10 staff on duty at any one time
D2 (assembly and leisure)	Leisure complex	On merit depending on mix of uses
	Cinemas	Cinemas up to 500 seats: 1 s/t space per 20 seats plus 1 l/t space per 10 staff on duty at any one time
	Ten pin bowling	1 s/t space per 3 lanes or rink plus 1 s/t space per 25 spectator seats plus 1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff
	Health/fitness clubs	1 s/t space per 25m2 gfa plus 1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff
Motor Trade		1 l/t space per 10 f/t staff; 5 s/t spaces if shop included

Map Book Contents:

Chapter	Policy	Site Ref	Map Title
2. Special Policy Areas and Mixed use Sites	Special Policy Areas	SPA1	Town Centre
	Special Policy Areas	SPA2	Watford Junction
	Special Policy Areas	SPA3	Health Campus
	Special Policy Areas	SPA4	Lower High Street
	Special Policy Areas	SPA5	Dome Roundabout
	Special Policy Areas	SPA6	Western Gateway
	Mixed Use Sites	MXD3	Gas Holder
	Mixed Use Sites	MXD9	North Watford Library and Health Facilities
	Mixed Use Sites	MXD10	Site at the Dome Roundabout
	Mixed Use Sites	MXD11	The Gossamers
	Mixed Use Sites	MXD12	The Brow
3. Sustainable Development	SD18		Noise Sensitive Area
4. Town and Local Centres	SPA1		Town Centre Boundary
	TLC3-6		Retail Areas in the Town Centre
	TLC8		Town Centre Character Areas
	CF1	CF1	Tolpits Lane Community Facility
	TLC13	R1	Sainsbury's (Albert Road) and adjoining land
	TLC13	R2	Former TJ Hughes and adjoining land
	TLC13	R3	BT Telephone Exchange and adjoining Wellstones
	TLC13	R4	Church Street Car Park

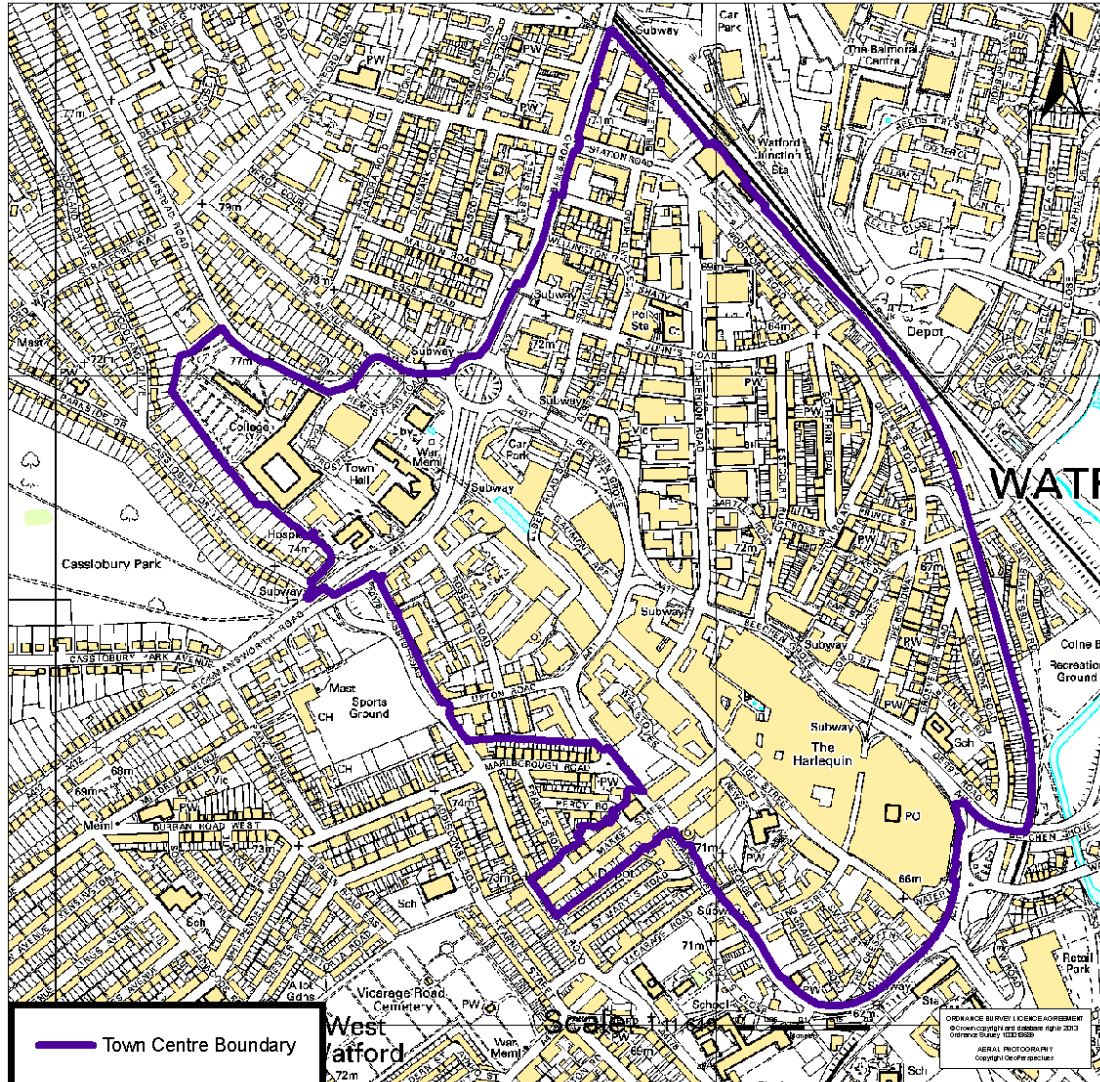
			Park and land fronting Market Street/Market Place
	TLC13	R5	R5 Charter Place centre and adjoining land onto the High Street
5. Housing	HS12	H1	Chalk Hill
	HS12	H5	Land at Pinner Road
	HS12	H6	Lower Derby Road, Skatepark
	HS12	H7	Vicarage Road
	HS12	H11	Telephone Exchange, First Avenue
	HS12	H14	Builders Yard, Queens Avenue
	HS12	H16	Bill Everett Community Centre
	HS12	H18	Rickmansworth Road
	HS12	H19	Bowmans Court Garages
	HS12	H21	Town and Country Club, Rosslyn Road
	HS12	H22	Watford Met Station, Cassiobury Park Avenue
	HS12	H23	Croxley View
	HS12	H24	Garages, The Gossamers
	HS12	H25	Police Station, North Orbital Way
	GT1	GT1	Tolpits Lane
6. Economic Development and Employment	EMP3	E1	Watford Business Park
	EMP3	E2	Imperial Way/Colonial Way
	EMP3	E3	Fishers
	EMP3	E4	Greycaine Road/Odhams/Sandown Road
	EMP3	E5	BT Depot, Reeds Crescent
	EMP3 and EMP4	E6	Clarendon Road/Station Road/Bridle Path Policy Area
	EMP5		Leavesden Studios

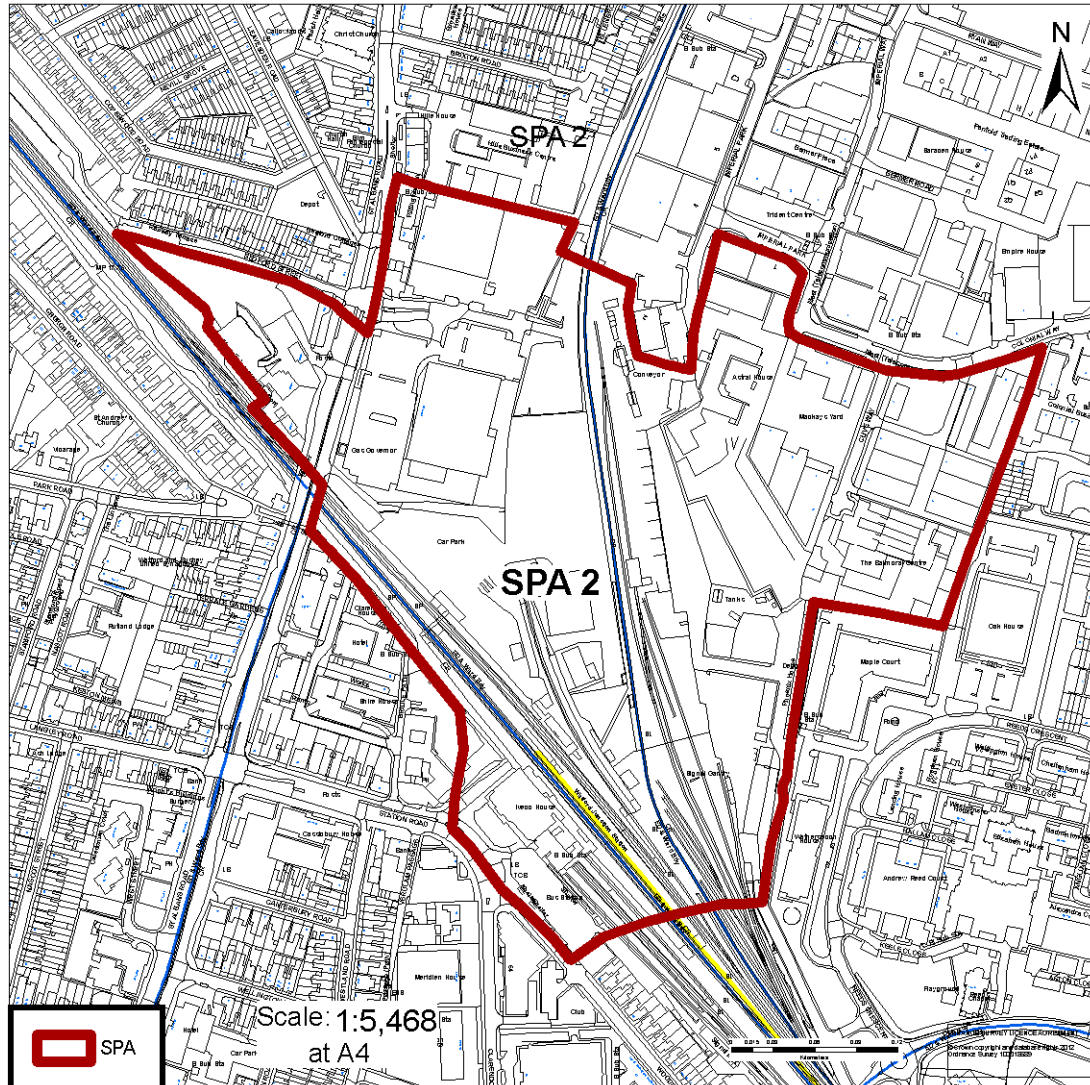
			Operations
	EMP6		Woodside Leisure Park
7. Education	SP1		Bedford Street
8. Transport	T6		Accessibility Zones
11.Green Infrastructure	GI8	CM1	Paddock Road
	GI8	CM2	North Watford Cemetery Expansion
	GI8	CM3	Russell Lane
	GI9	G6	Caxton Way
	GI9	G7	Clock Tower
	GI9	G8	High Road (previously developed land)
	GI9	G9	High Road (open space)
	GI9	G10	Ashfields

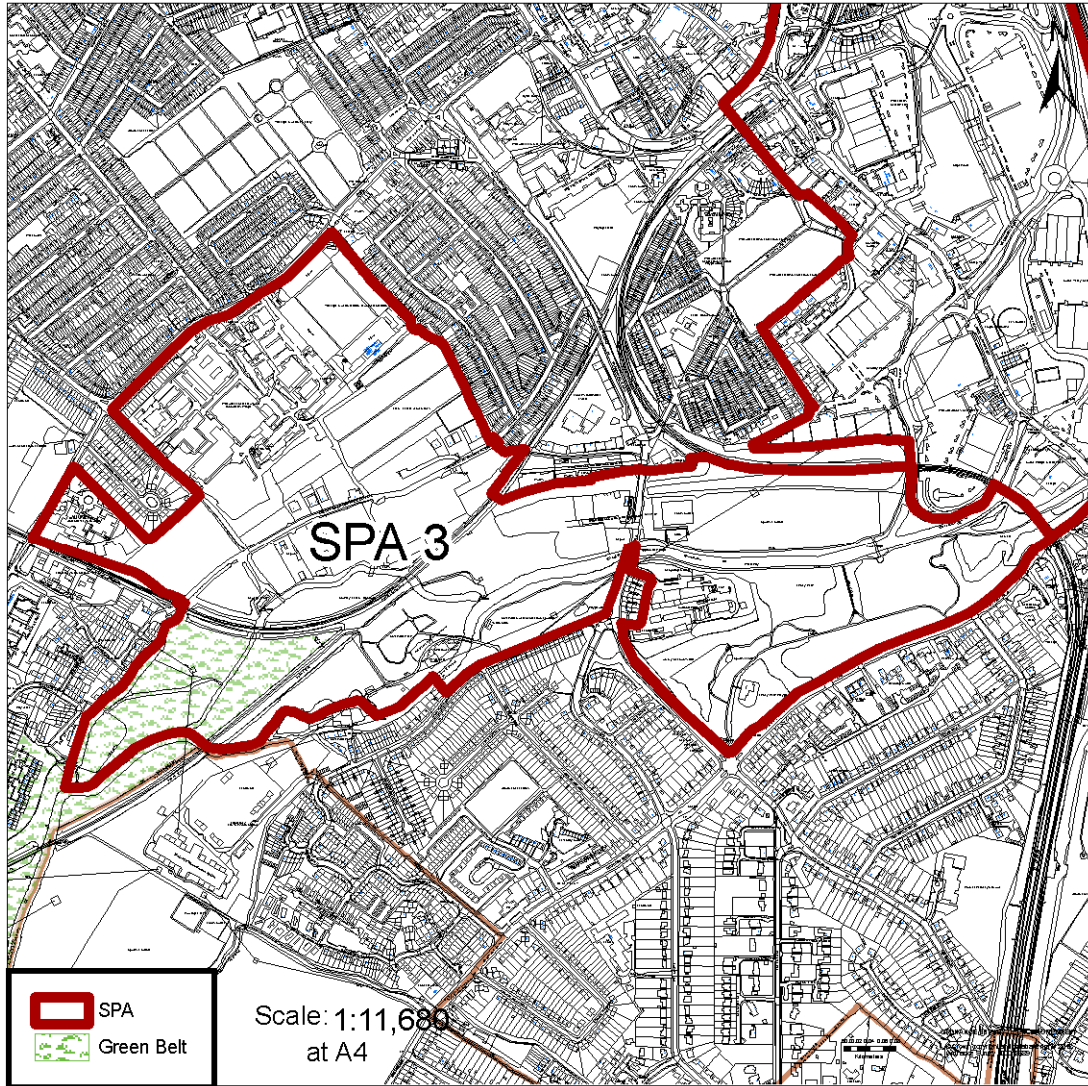
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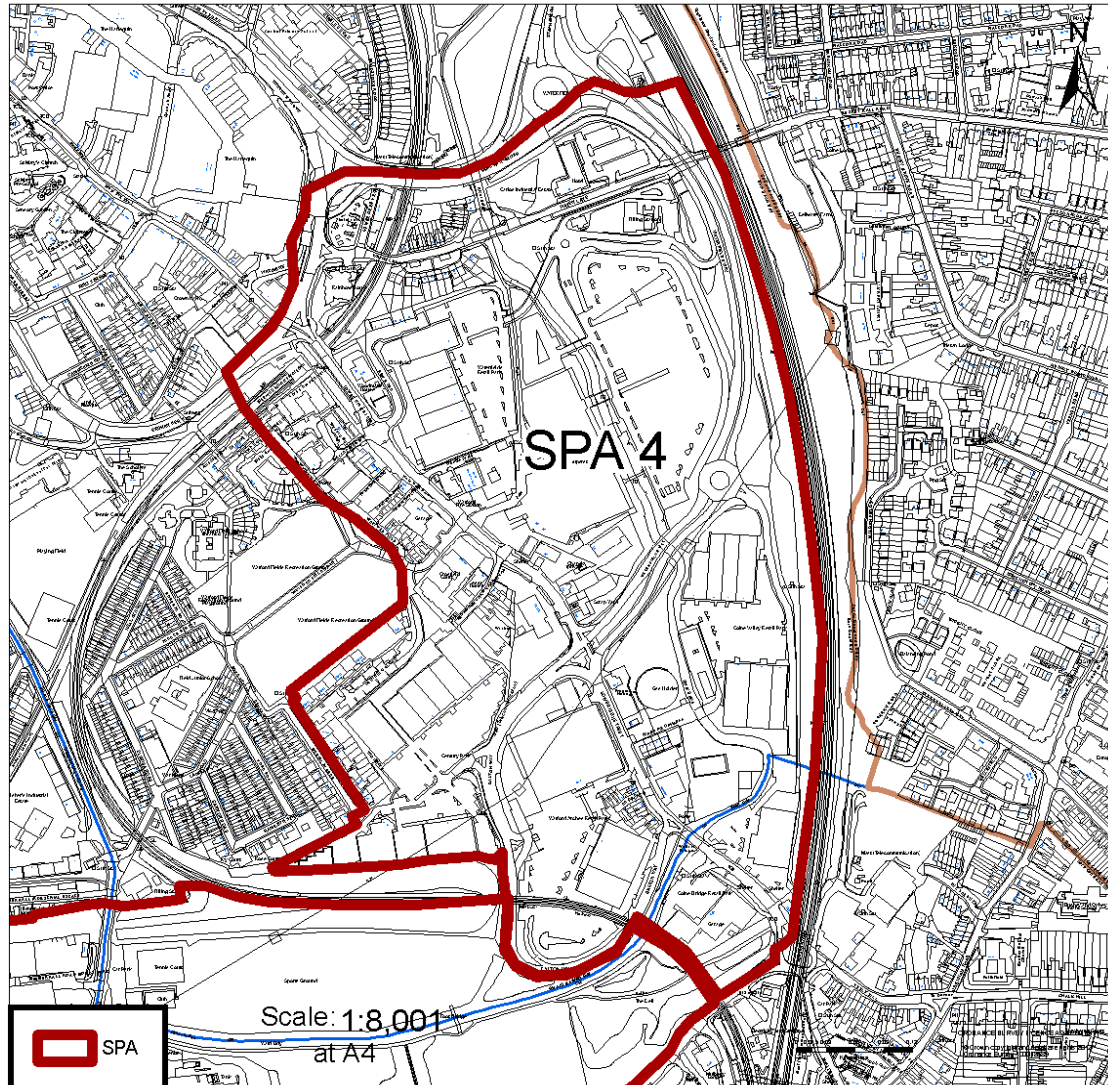
Map Book
1. Special Policy Areas and Mixed Use Sites.

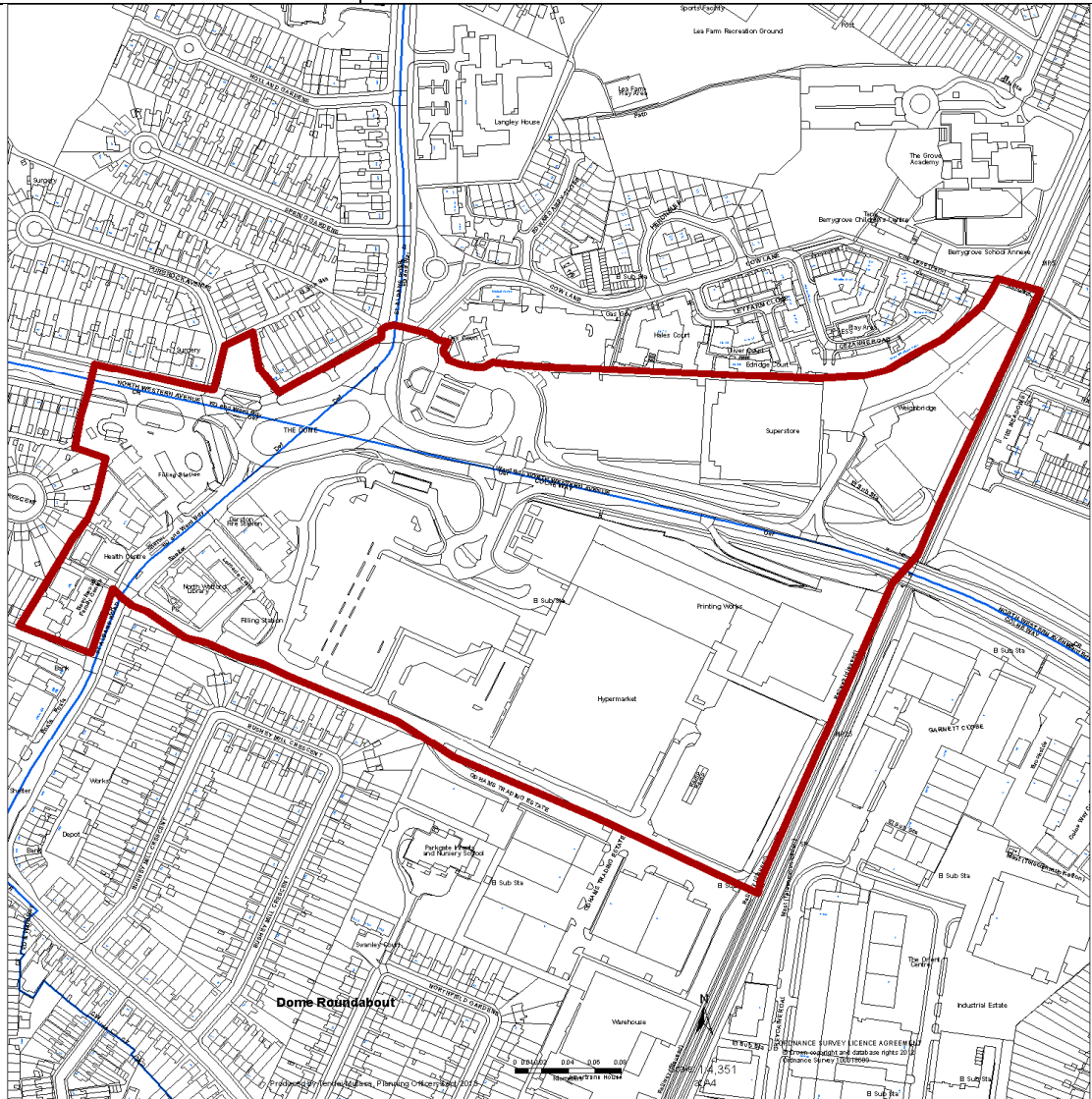
Site Ref: SPA 1 | Town Centre

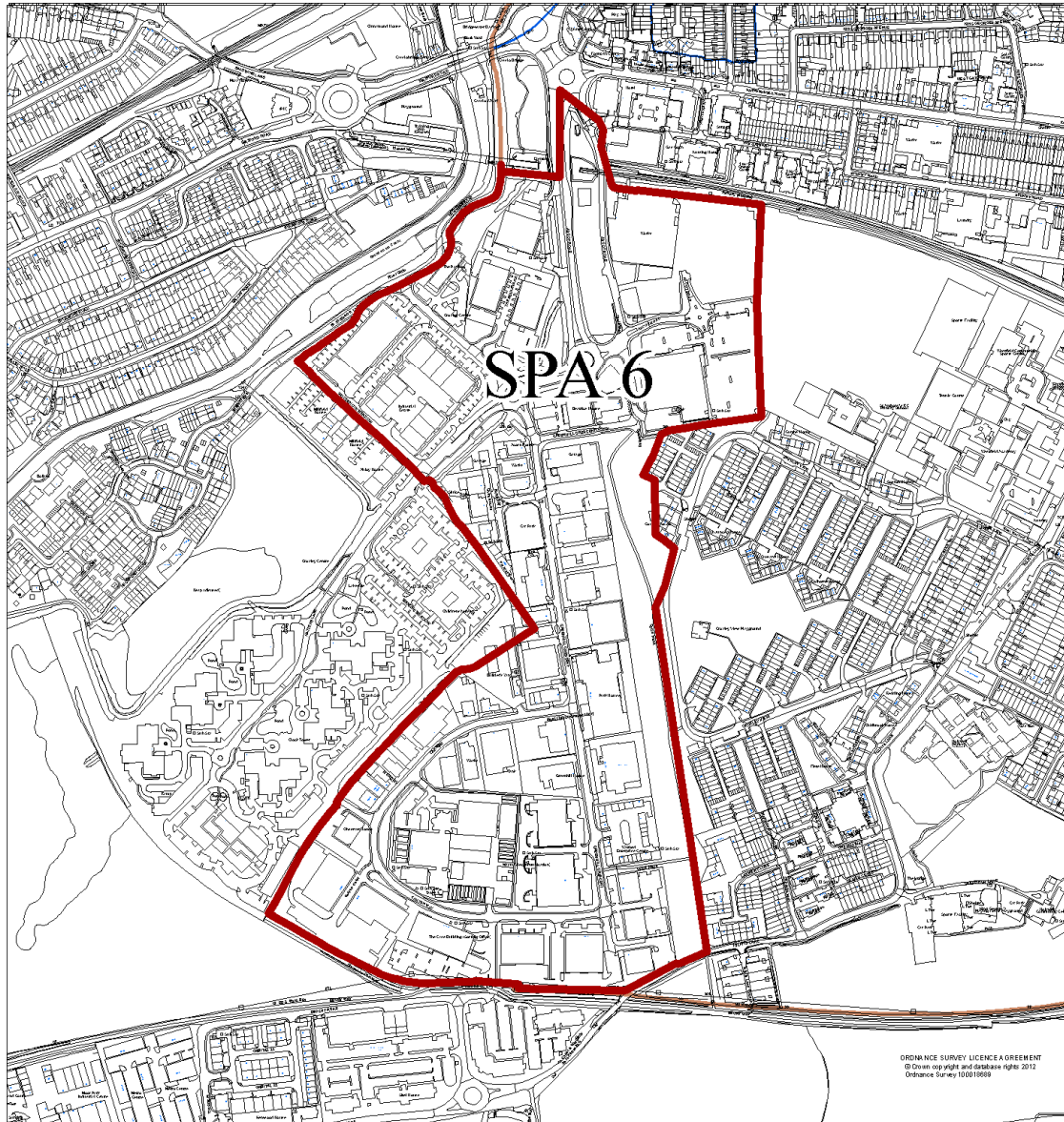


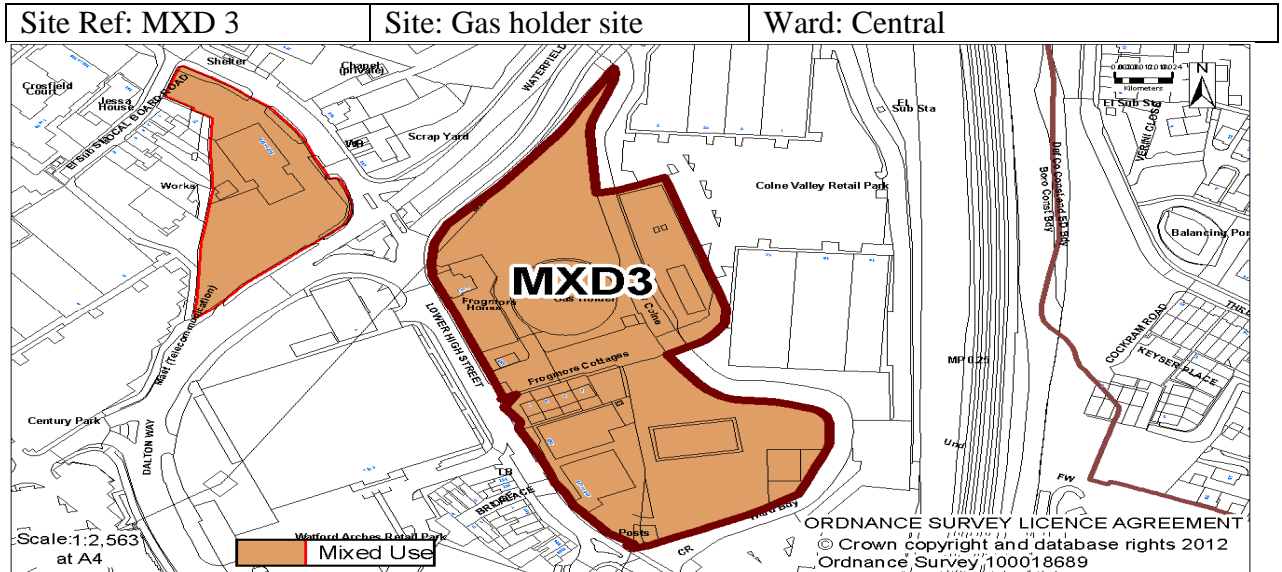






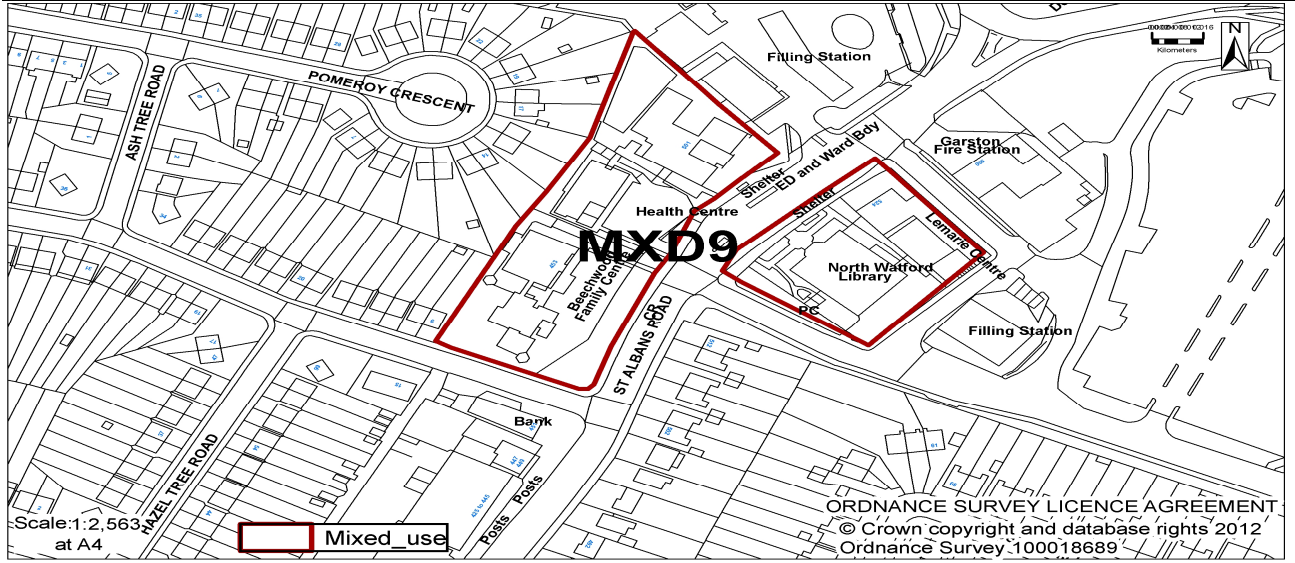






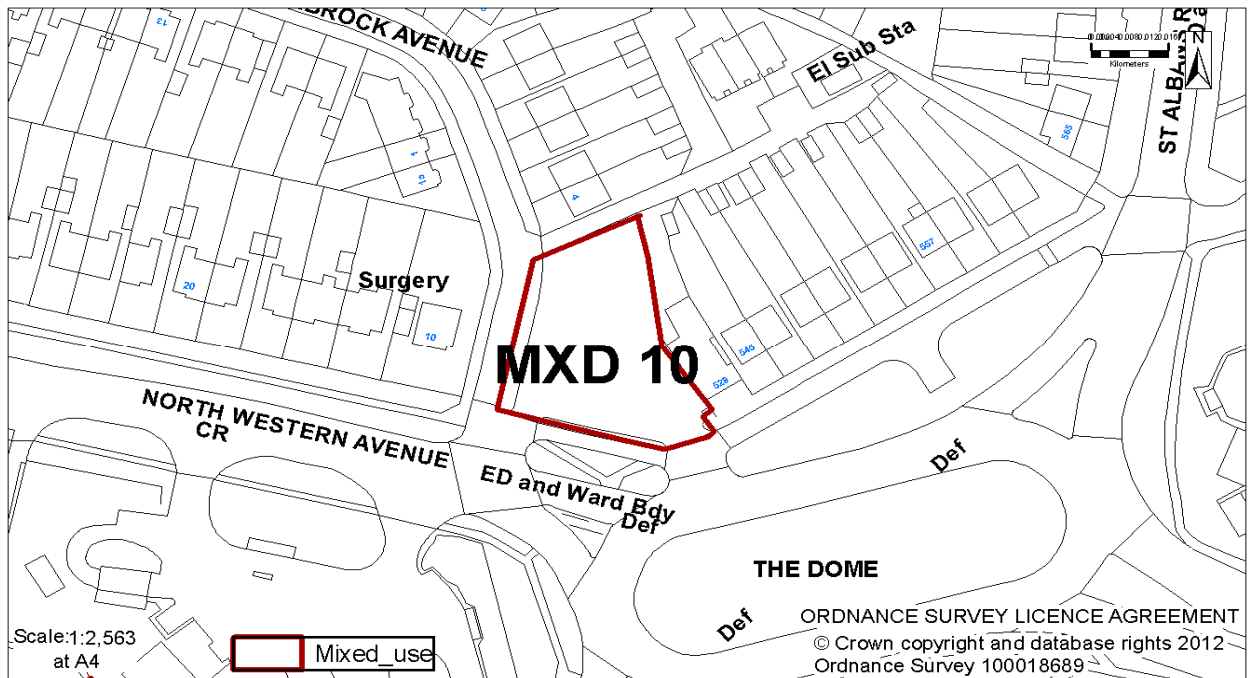
Site	Site area (ha)	1.87
Status	Current use/allocation	Gas holder/Frogmore house building
	Proposed use	Retail and office led development. Other uses that are compatible with the flood zone
	Time frame for delivery	3-5 years
Existing policy designations		Within SPA 4 area and listed building on site

Site Ref: MXD 9	Site: North Watford Library and Health Facilities	Ward: Tudor
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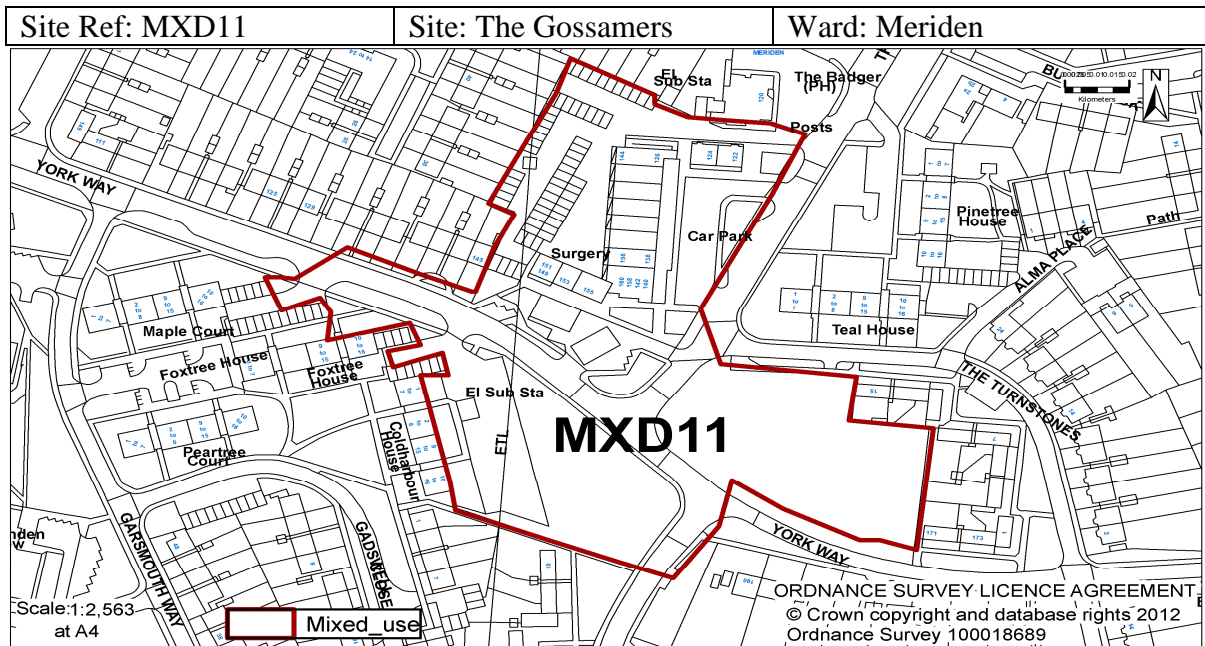


Site	Site area (ha)	0.82
Status	Current use/allocation	Library, NHS Clinic and Family Planning Clinic
	Proposed use	Residential and re-provide facilities
	Adjacent land use(s)	Residential
	Indicative capacity	20-30
	Time frame for delivery	0-5 years
Existing policy designations		SPA 5 Locally Listed Building

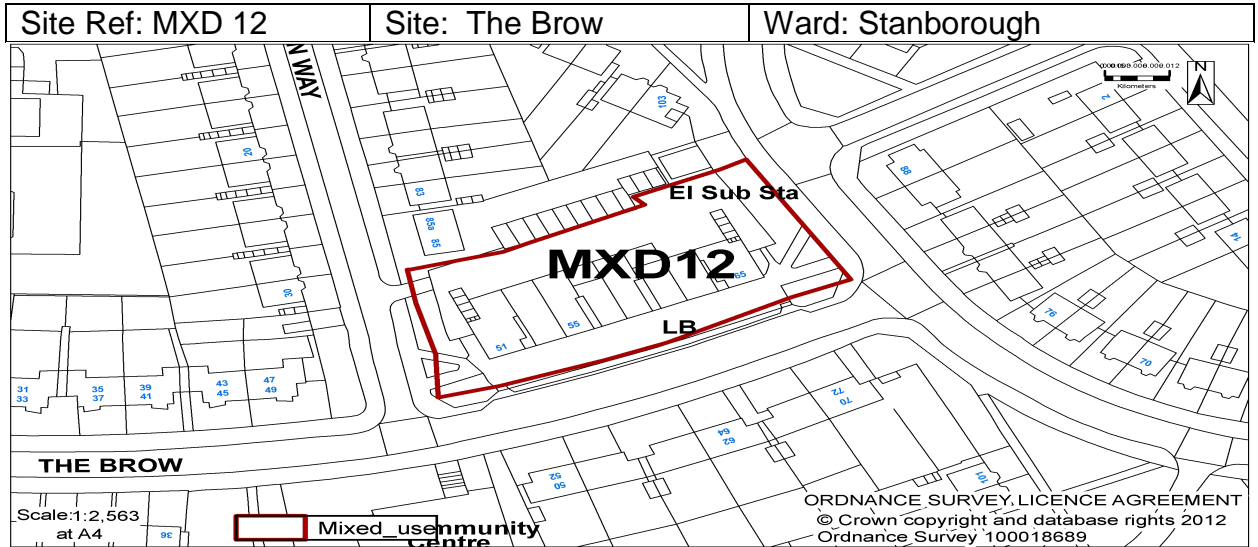
Site Ref: MXD10	Site: Dome Roundabout	Ward: Stanborough
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Site	Site area (ha)	0.14
Status	Current use/allocation	Former petrol station
	Proposed use	Residential (retail on ground floor acceptable).
	Adjacent land use(s)	Residential
	Indicative capacity	8-10
	Time frame for delivery	1-4 years
Existing policy designations		SPA5



Site	Site area (ha)	1.75
Status	Current use/allocation	Residential /retail/ open space/garages
	Proposed use	Mixed use residential/retail
	Adjacent land use(s)	Residential/retail and retirement home
	Indicative capacity	100
	Time frame for delivery	1-3 years

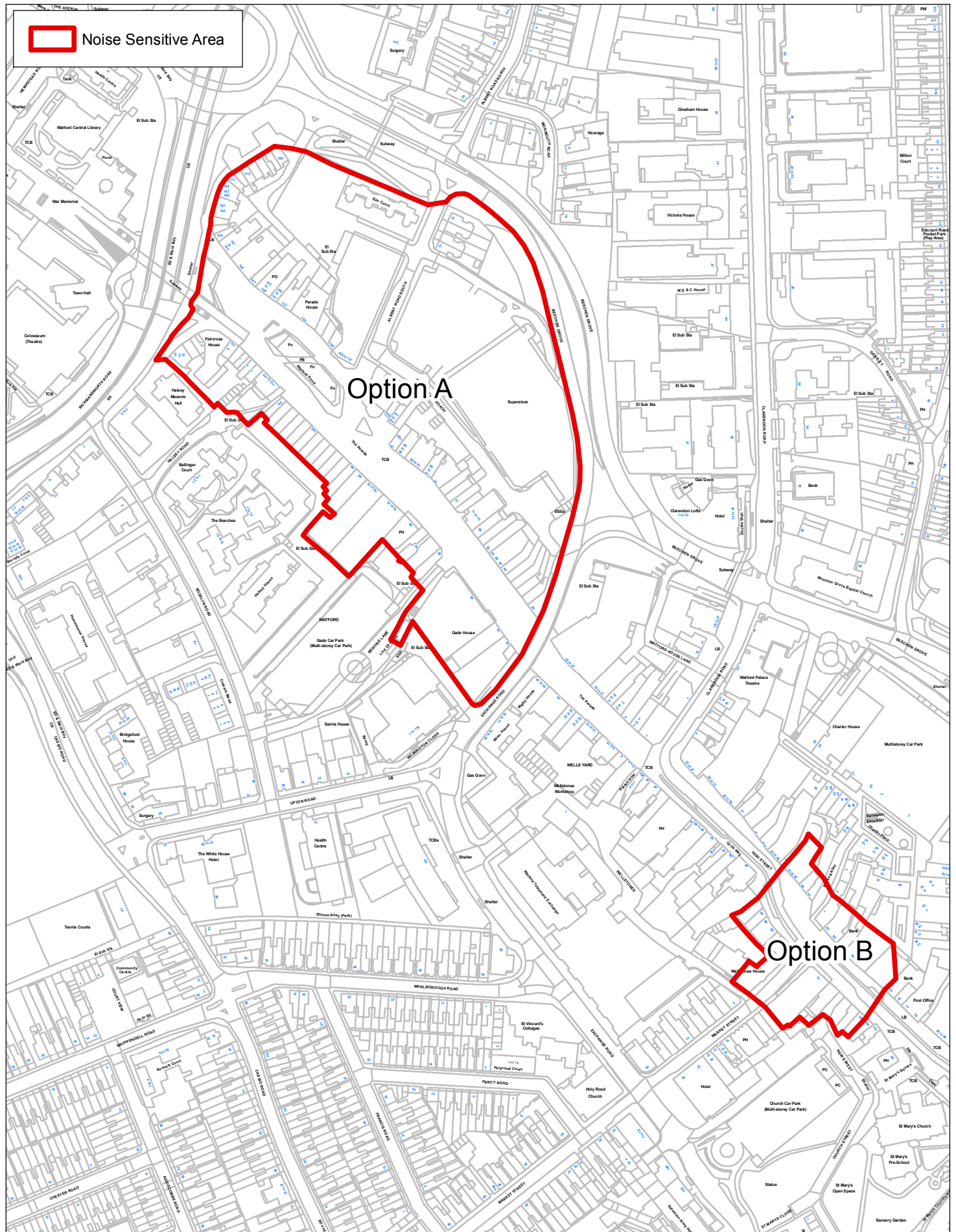


Site	Site area (ha)	0.1
Status	Current use/allocation	Retail/Residential
	Proposed use	Retail/Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Residential
	Indicative capacity	32 (24 additional)
	Time frame for delivery	3-5 years
Existing policy designations	None	

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Noise Sensitive Area

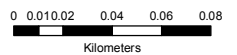


Watford Borough Council
Town Hall,
Watford,
Hertfordshire WD17 3EX
Visit the Watford Borough Council website
www.watford.gov.uk

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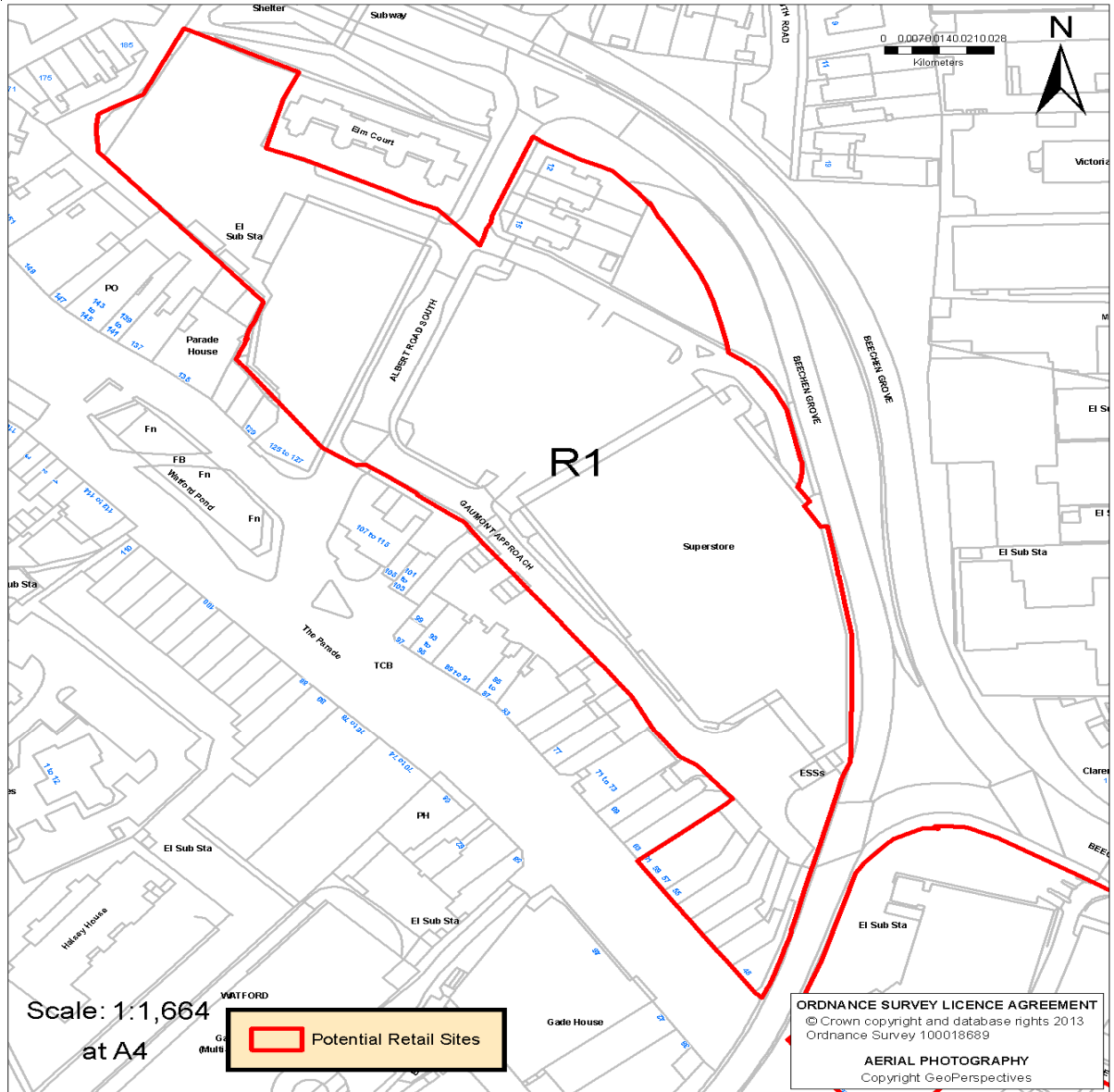
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AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY
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Site Ref: R1

Site: Sainsbury's site



Site	Site area (ha)	1.51
Status	Current use/allocation	Sainsburys and car park, Oceana, Iceland and carpark.
	Proposed use	Retail led mixed use which must be compatible with the Town Centre objectives.
	Adjacent land use(s)	Railway/Residential
	Time frame for delivery	5 + years
Existing policy designations	None	

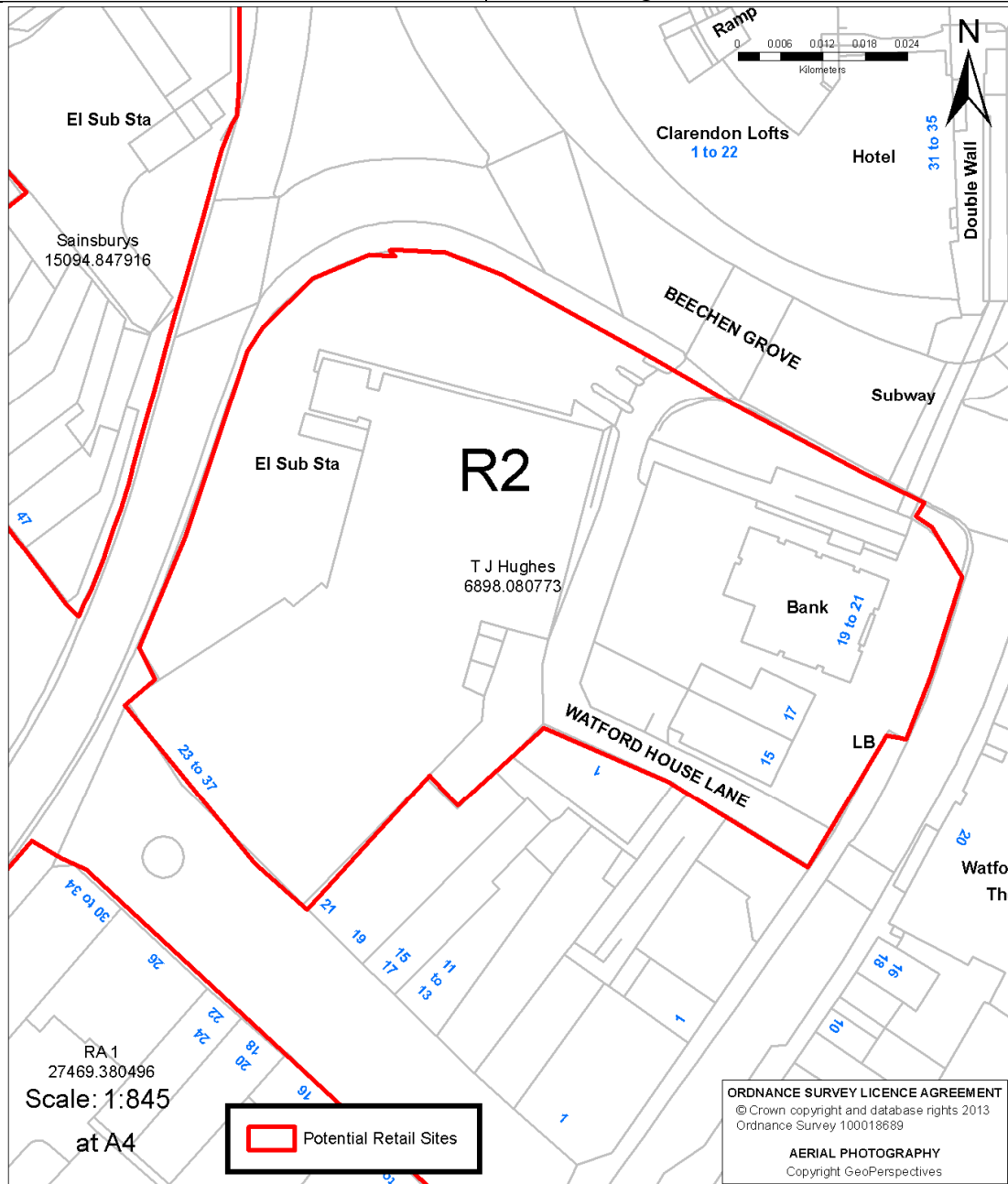


Implementation considerations:

CIL and S106 may be applicable

Potentially contaminated land

Small area of access road to the site has surface water flooding issues.



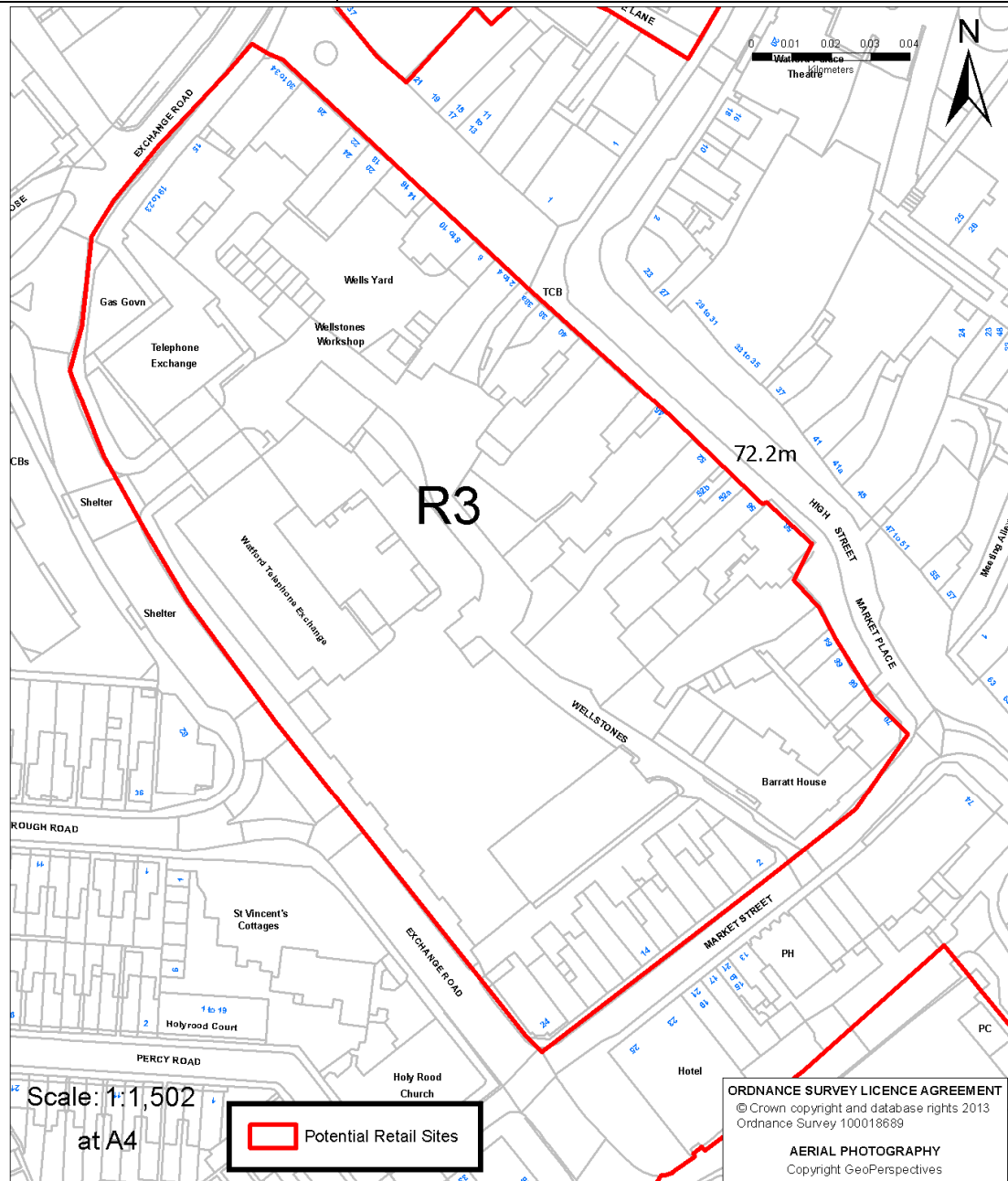


Implementation considerations:

Where applicable CIL charges will be £55 per sq.m for retail and £120 per sq.m residential
 Locally listed building on site.

A small area along the access road to the site is a surface water flooding vulnerable zone.

Site	Site area (ha)	0.69
Status	Current use/allocation	Mainly retail
	Proposed use	Retail led mixed use which must be compatible with the town centre objectives.
	Adjacent land use(s)	Retail/Residential
	Indicative capacity	49-88
	Time frame for delivery	3-5 years
Existing policy designations	None	

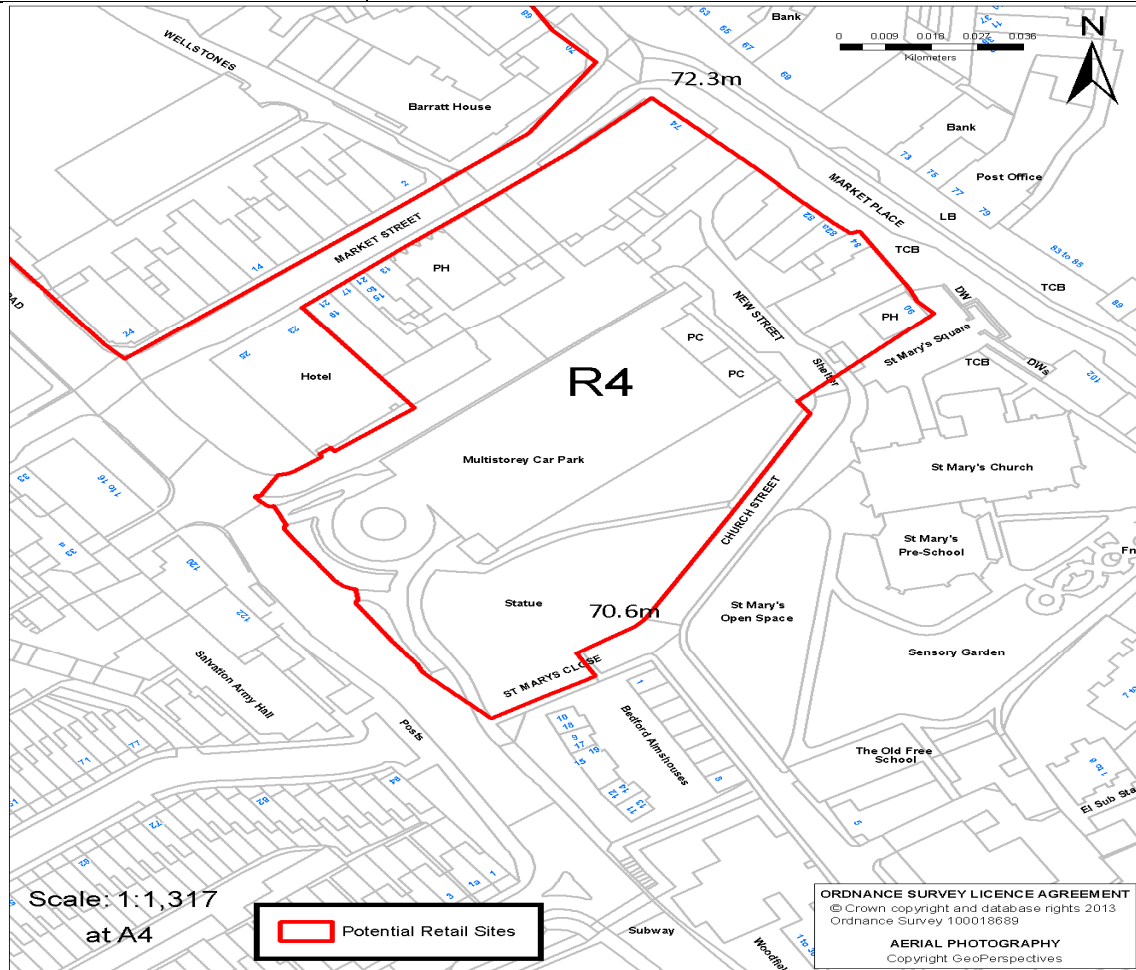


Site	Site area (ha)	2.75
Status	Current use/allocation	Variety of users. Office, retail, carpark and BT exchange.
	Proposed use	Retail led mixed use which must be compatible with the Town Centre objectives.
	Adjacent land use(s)	Variety retail and residential
	Time frame for delivery	10+ years
Existing policy designations		Listed building on site



Site Ref: R4

Site: Church Car Park

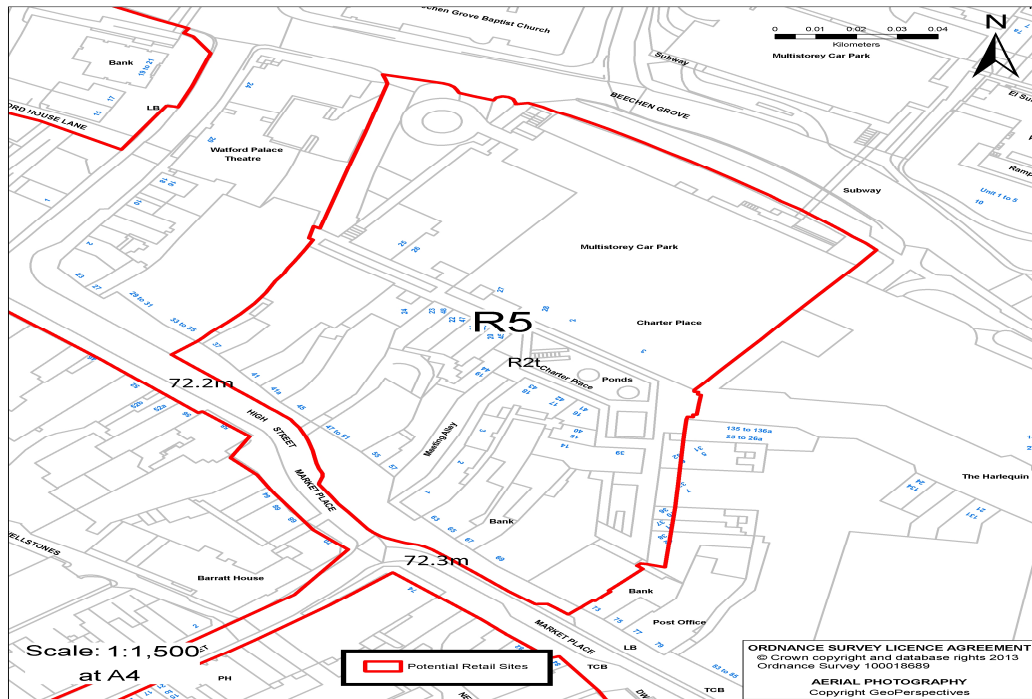


Site	Site area (ha)	1.16
Status	Current use/allocation	Car park/retail/residential
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Railway/Residential
	Time frame for delivery	5-10 years
Existing policy designations	None	

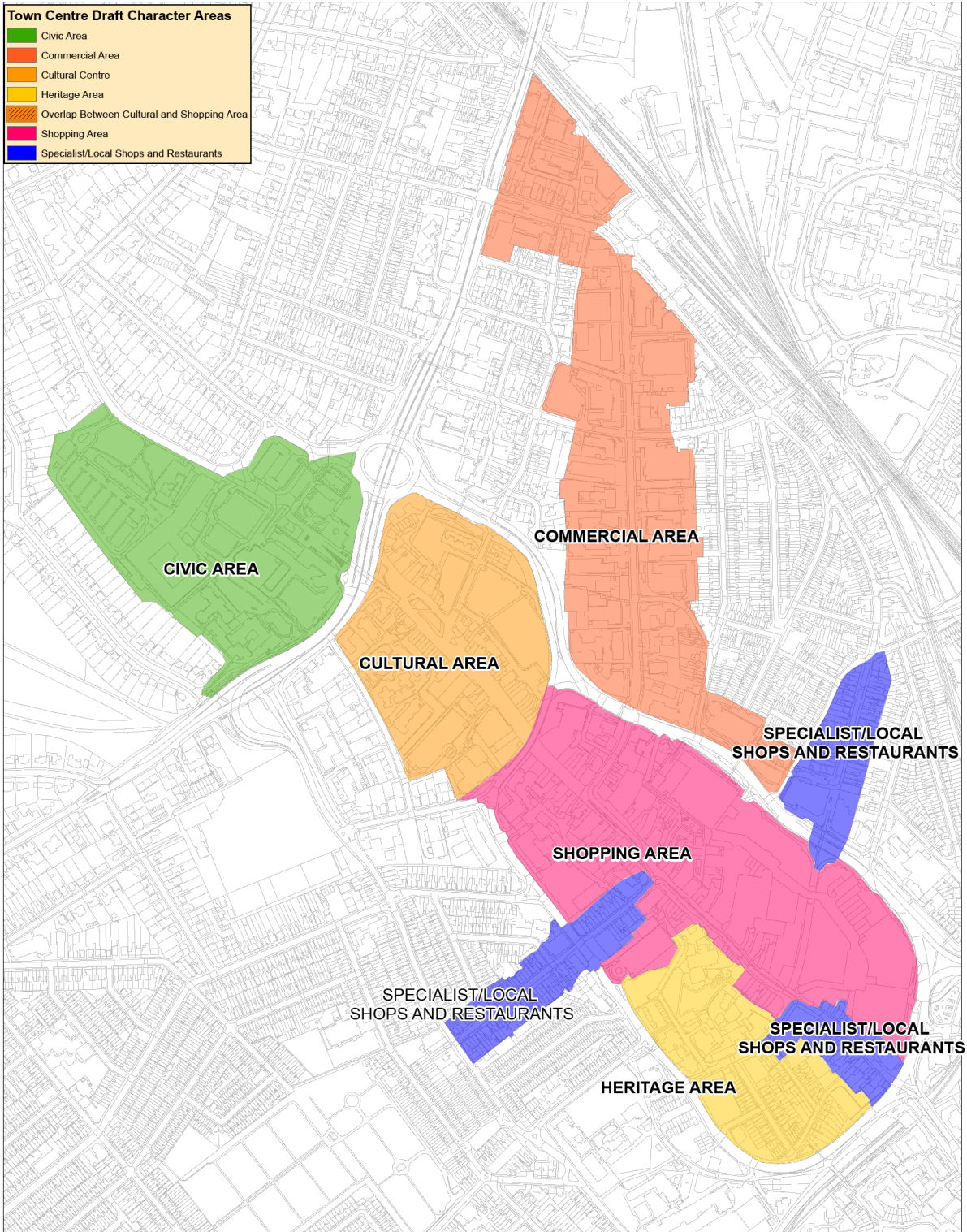


Implementation considerations:

Where CIL would apply - charges would be £55 sq.m retail and £120 for residential.
Site overlooks St Mary's church which is a listed building.

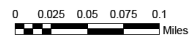


Site	Site area (ha)	2.1ha
Status	Current use/allocation	Retail and multi-storey carpark
	Proposed use	Retail led mixed use which must be compatible with the Town Centre objectives.
	Adjacent land use(s)	Railway/Residential
	Time frame for delivery	0-5 years
Existing policy designations	Town Centre	



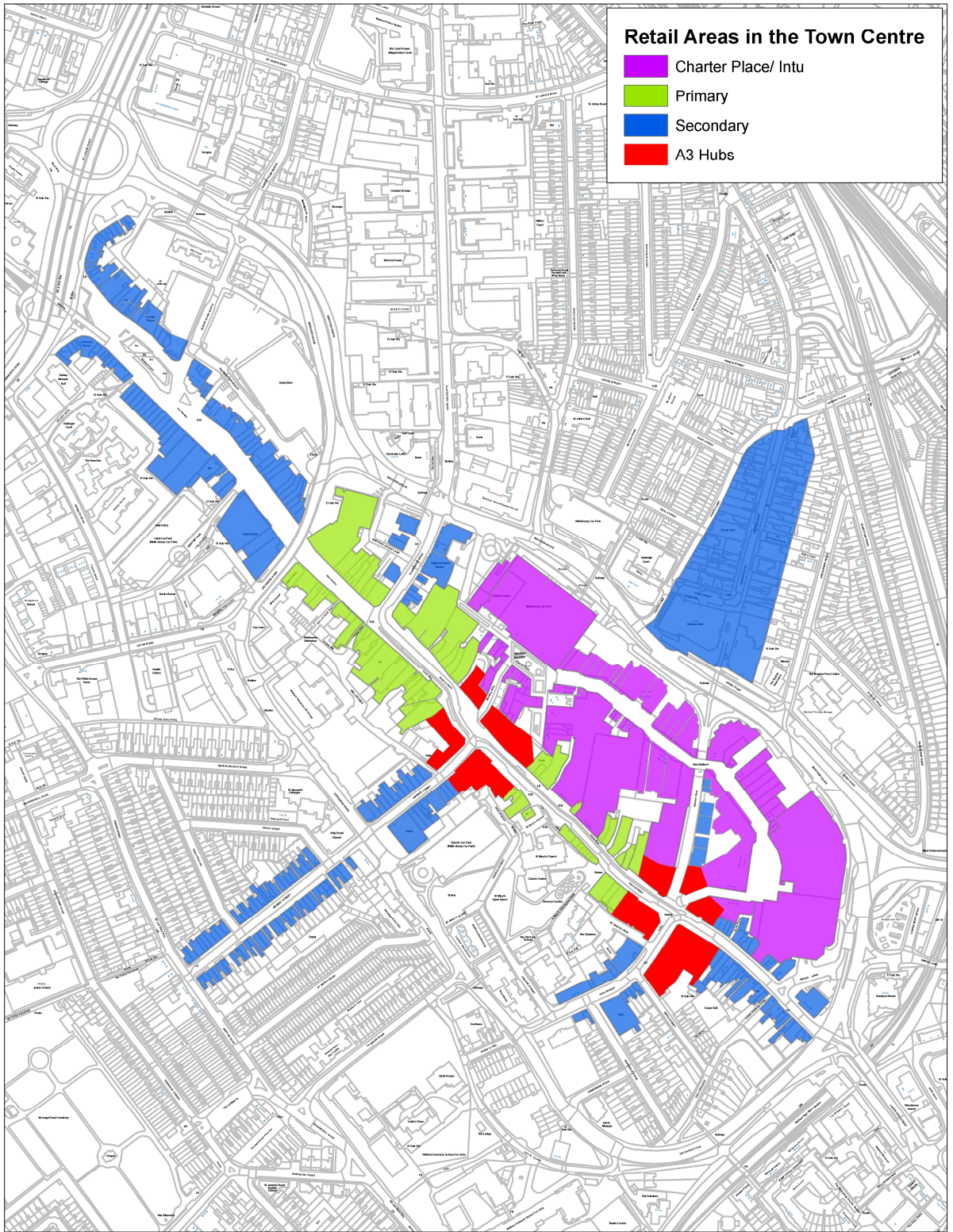
Town Centre Character Areas

Produced by Tendai Mutasa, GIS Planning Officer, September 2014



Scale: 1:2,310
at A3

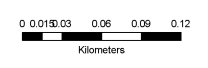
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Produced by Mutasa, Policy GIS, Sept 2014



Scale: 1:4,670
at A4

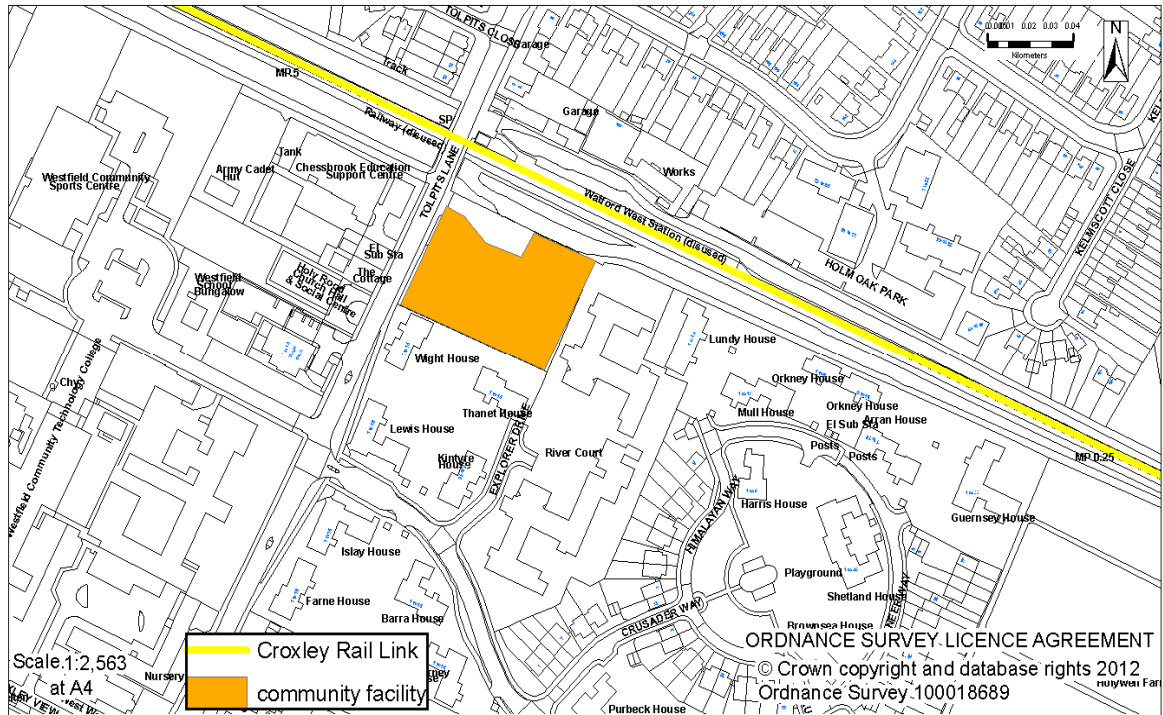


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Site Ref: CF1

Site: Tolpits Lane Community Facility

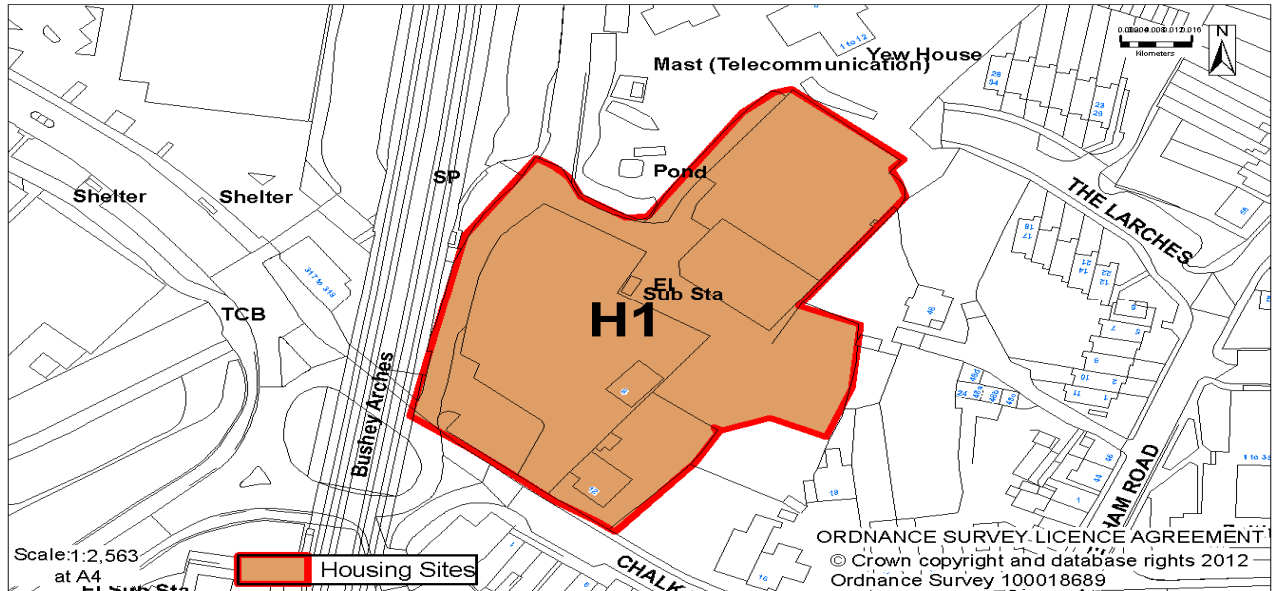
Ward: Vicarage



Site Area	1 ha
Current Use	Carpark
Proposed Use	Community centre for Muslim use
Comments/constraints	Electricity substation on site

MAP BOOK – 5. Housing Sites

Site Ref: H1	Site: Chalk Hill	Ward: Oxhey
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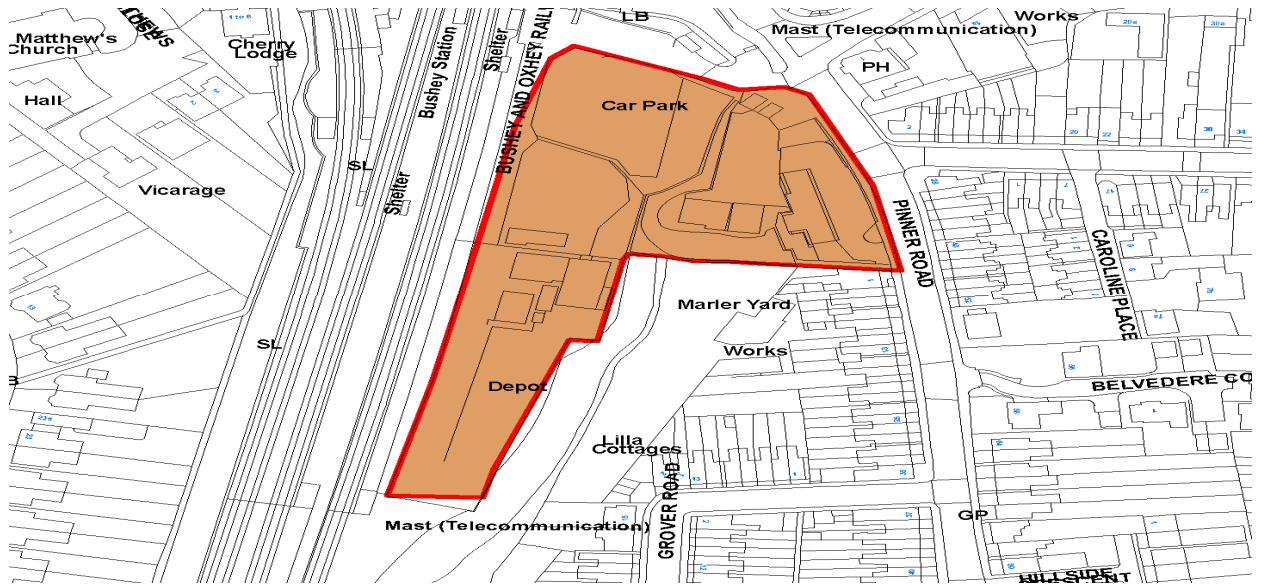


Site	Site area (ha)	0.45
Status	Current use/allocation	Waste transfer site
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Railway/residential /main road
	Indicative capacity	80-120 still to be determined.
	Time frame for delivery	0-5 years
Existing policy designations	None	

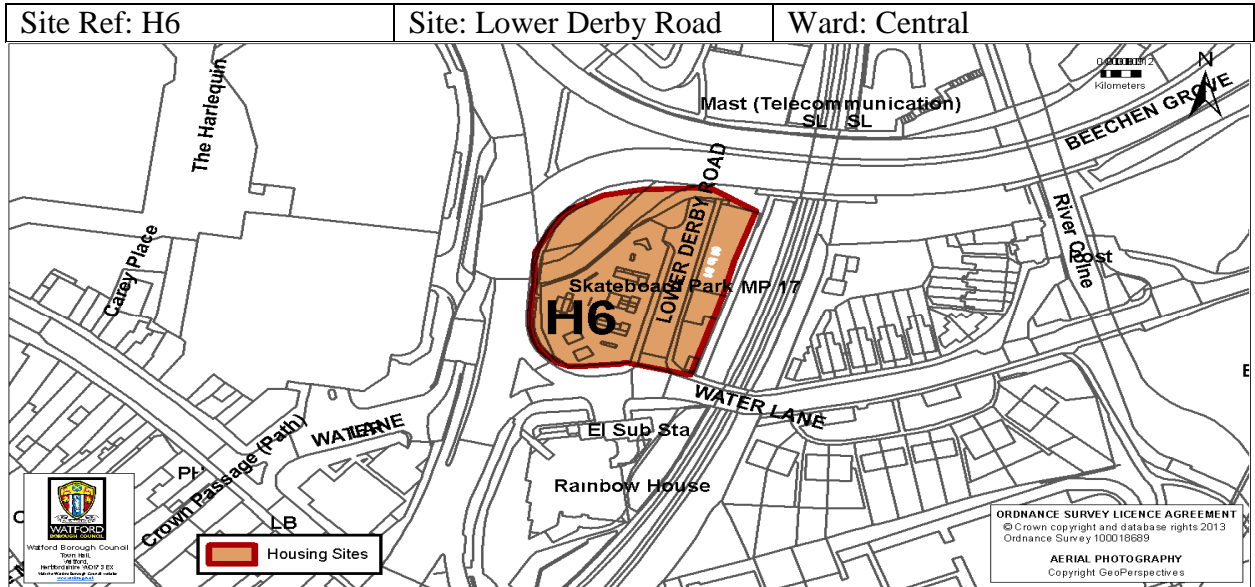
Site Ref: H5

Site: Land at Pinner Road

Ward: Oxhey

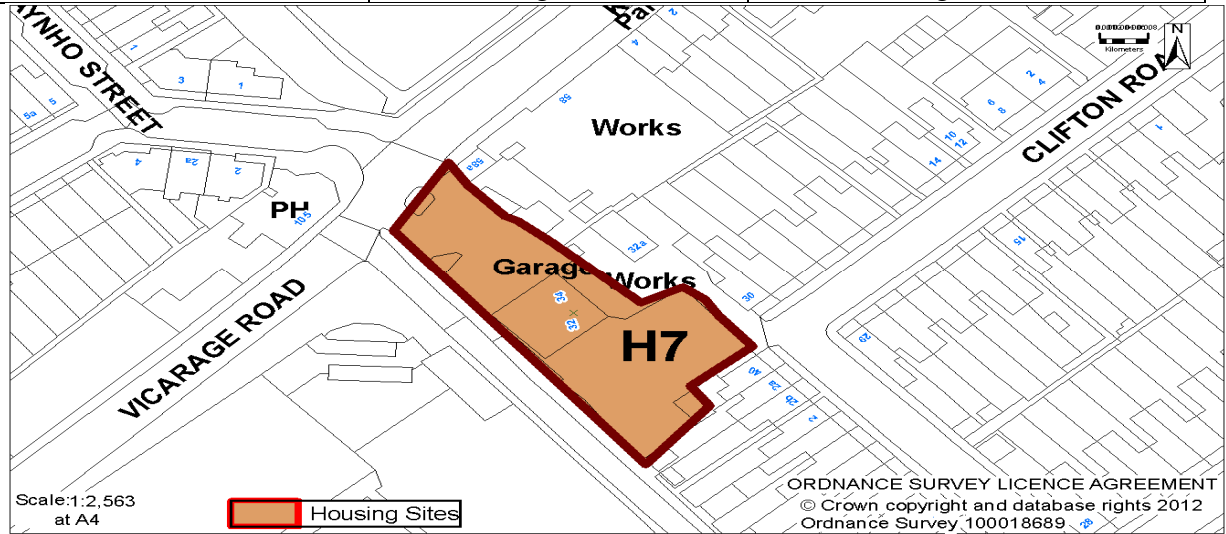


Site	Site area (ha)	0.85
Status	Current use/allocation	Car park and railway land
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Railway/Residential
	Indicative capacity	36-60
	Time frame for delivery	3-5 years
Existing policy designations	None	

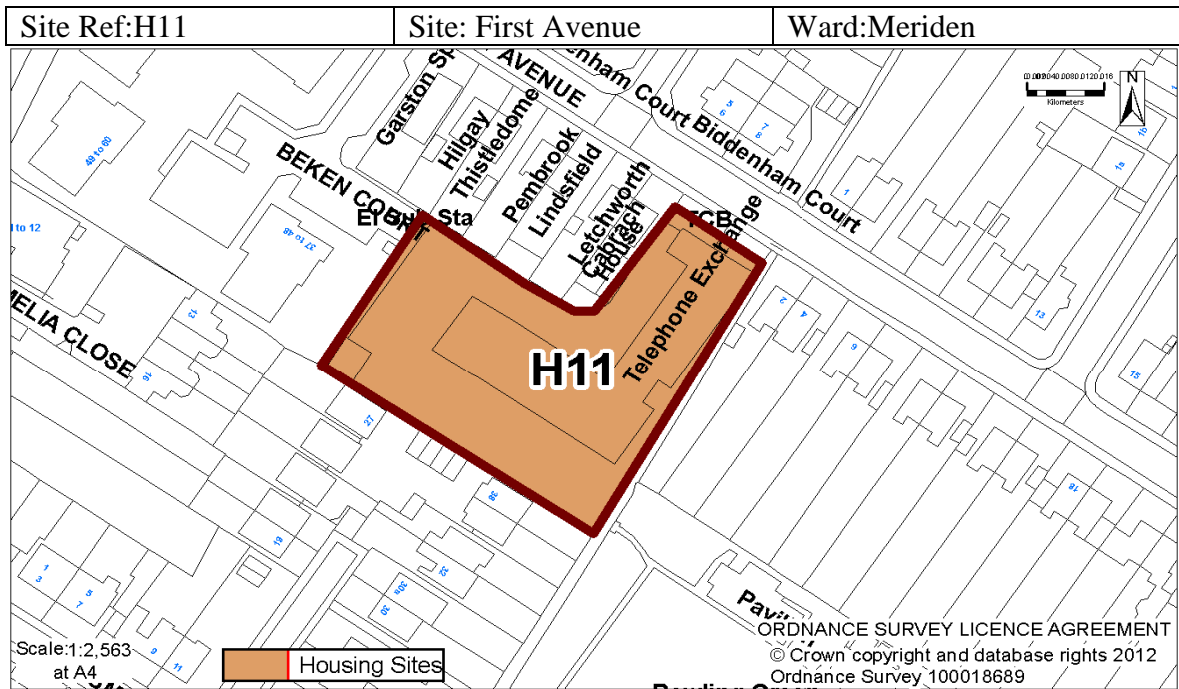


Site	Site area (ha)	0.35
Status	Current use/allocation	Non- residential
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Retail/Residential
	Indicative capacity	62-74
	Time frame for delivery	3-5 years
Existing policy designations		No

Site Ref: H7	Site: Vicarage Road	Ward: Vicarage
--------------	---------------------	----------------

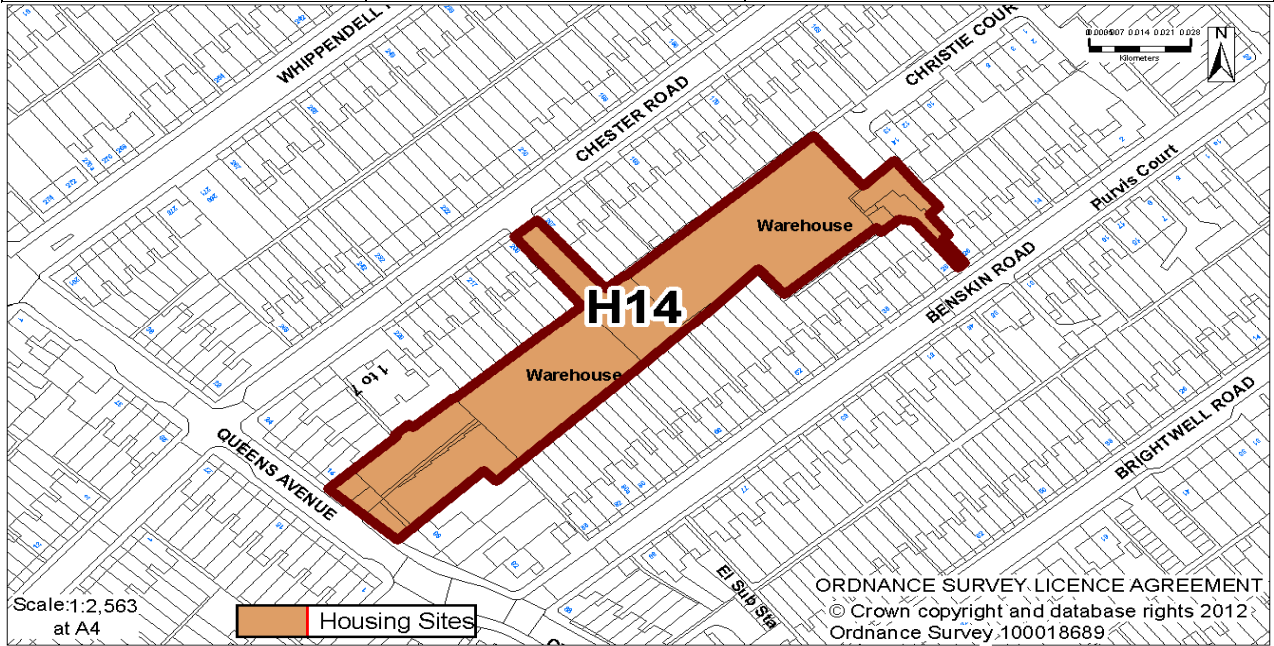


Site	Site area (ha)	0.25
Status	Current use/allocation	Garage
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Allotment, football ground, retail and residential
	Indicative capacity	12-15
	Time Frame for delivery	1-5 years
Existing policy designations		Locally listed building on site.

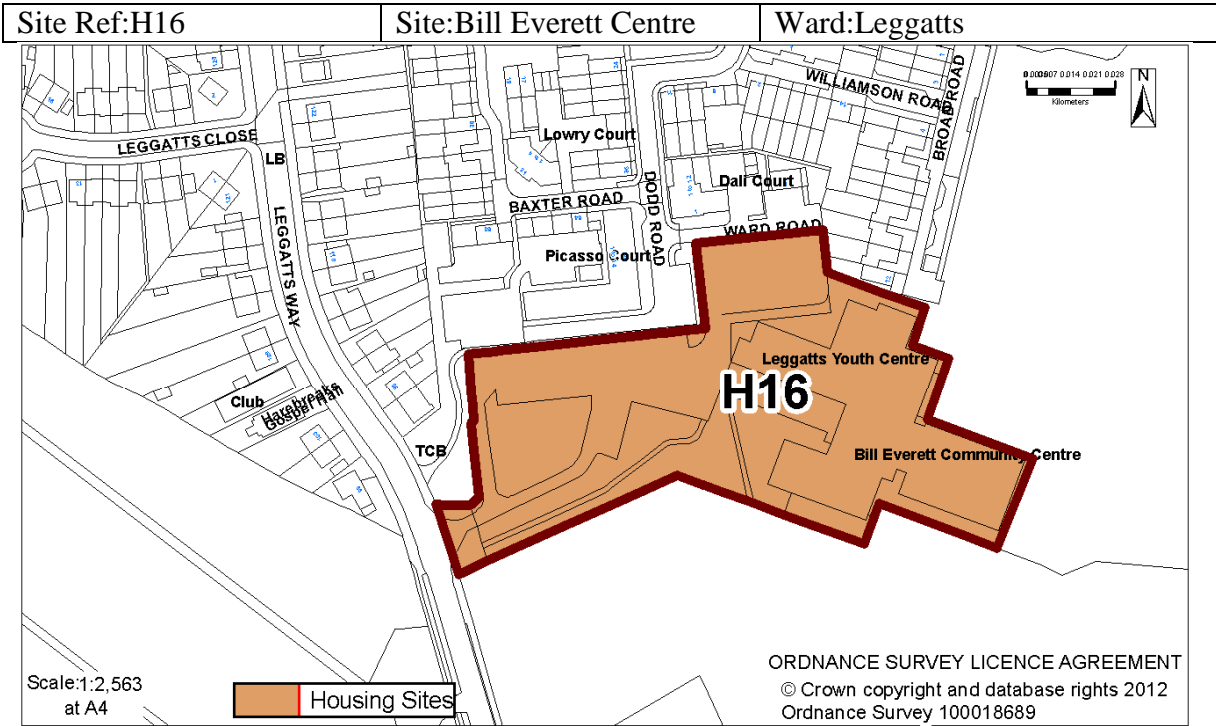


Site	Site area (ha)	0.34
Status	Current use/allocation	Telephone Exchange
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Residential
	Indicative capacity	12-18
	Time frame for delivery	5-10 years
Existing policy designations		None

Site Ref: H14	Site: Queens Avenue	Ward: Vicarage
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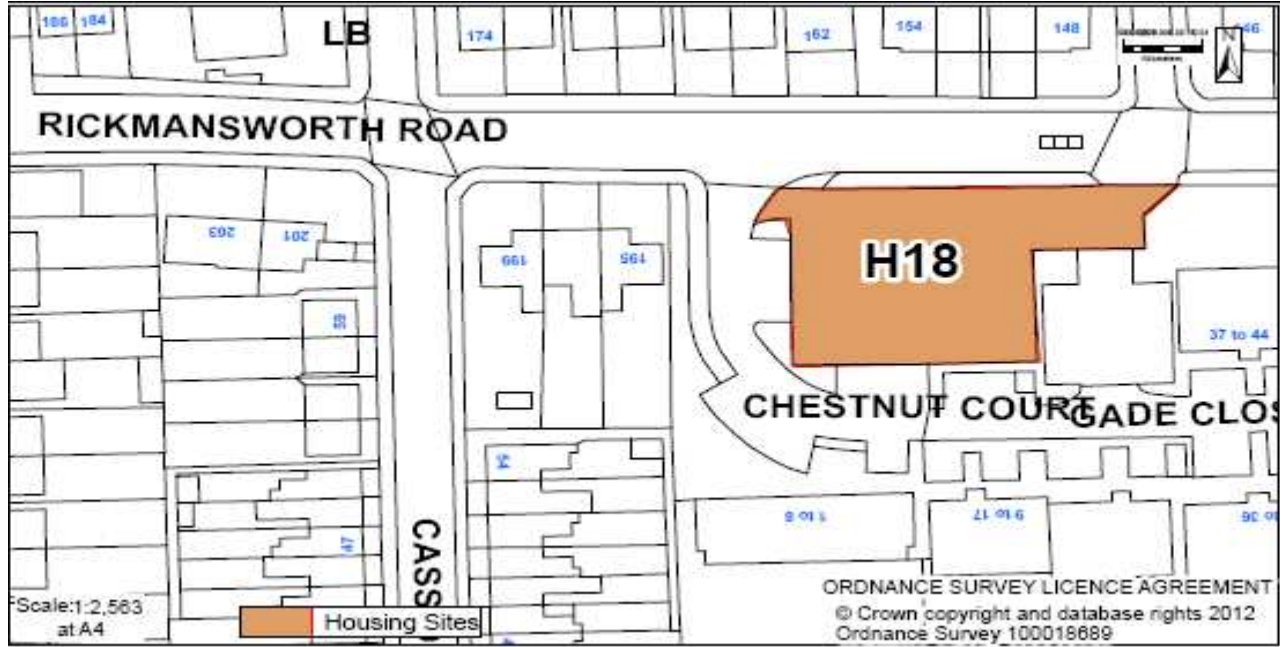


Site	Site area (ha)	0.51
Status	Current use/allocation	Builders yard (unallocated)
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Railway/Residential
	Indicative capacity	21-49
	Time frame for delivery	5 -10 years
Existing policy designations		None

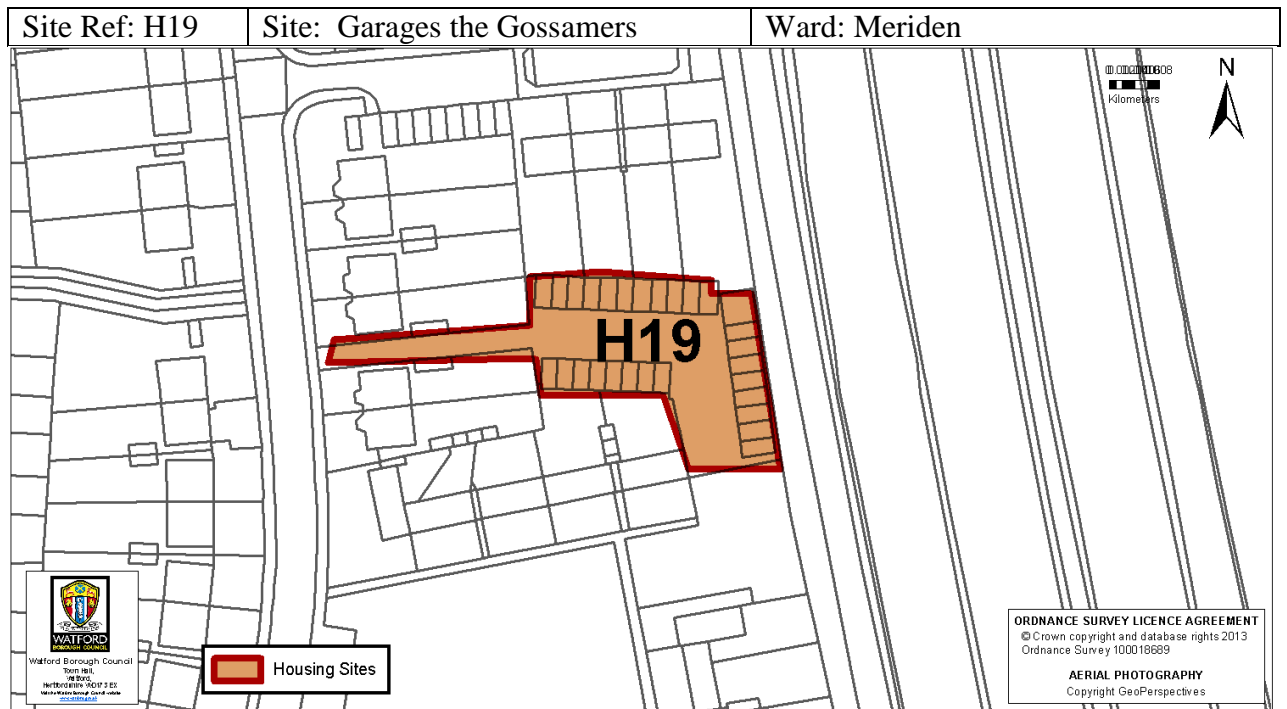


Site	Site area (ha)	1.07
Status	Current use/allocation	Demolished BECC site
	Proposed use	Residential (if not required as a school site)
	Adjacent land use(s)	School/Residential/Playing field
	Indicative capacity	30-40
	Time Frame for delivery	1- 5
Existing policy designations		

Site Ref: H18	Site: Rickmansworth Road	Ward: Park
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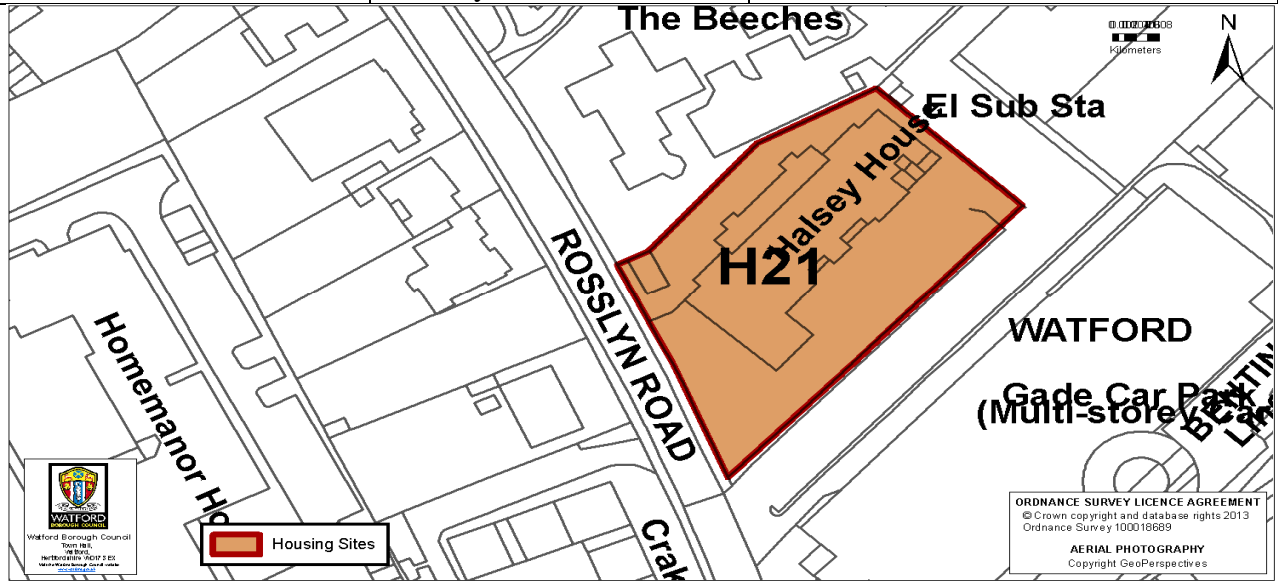


Site	Site area (ha)	1.44
Status	Current use/allocation	Car park and railway land
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Railway/Residential
	Indicative capacity	4-6
	Time frame for delivery	3-5 years
Existing policy designations	None	



Site	Site area (ha)	0.1
Status	Current use/allocation	Garages
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Residential
	Indicative capacity	3-4
	Time frame for delivery	3-5 years
Existing policy designations	None	

Site Ref: H21	Site: Watford Town and Country Club	Ward: Central
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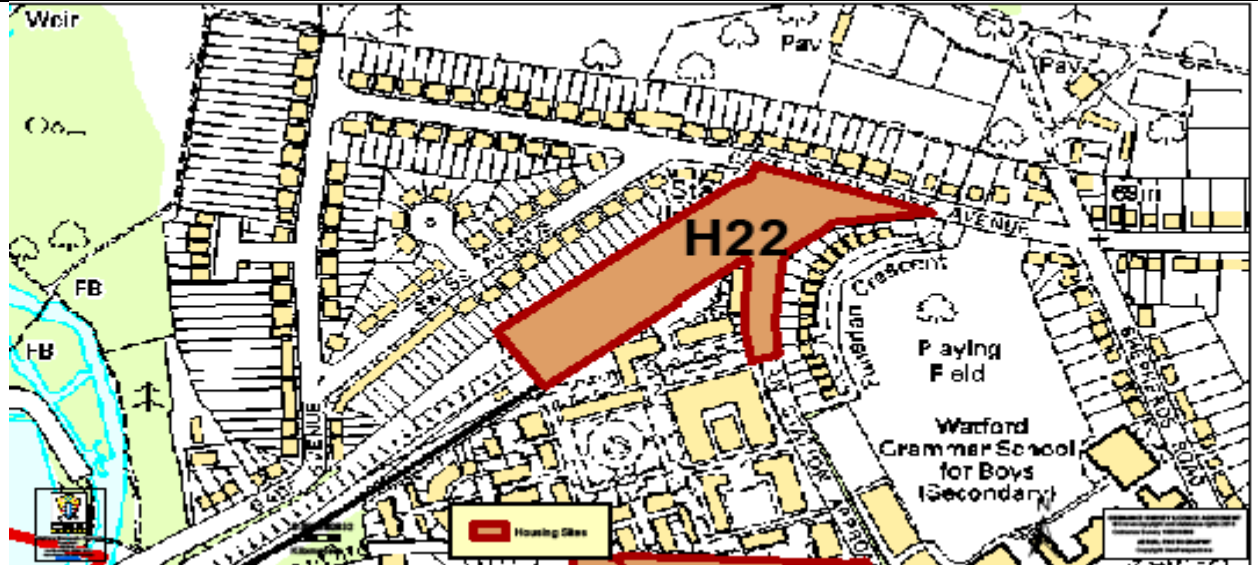


Site	Site area (ha)	0.26
Status	Current use/allocation	Watford Town and Country Club
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Retail/Residential
	Indicative capacity	15-25
	Time frame for delivery	5 years
Existing policy designations	None	

Site Ref: H22

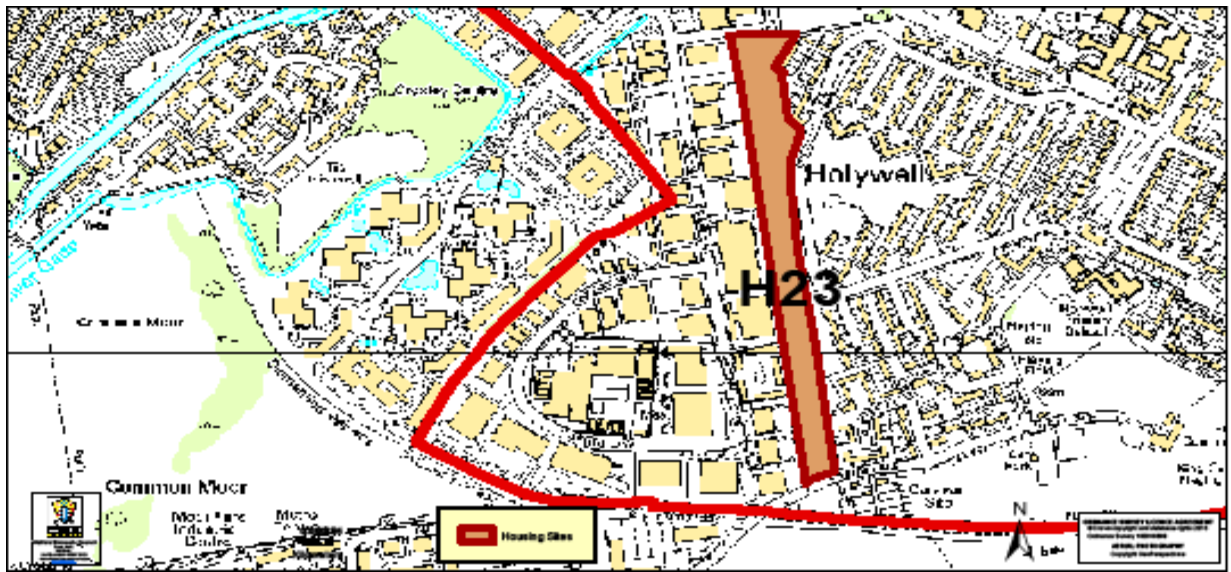
Site: Met Station

Ward: Park



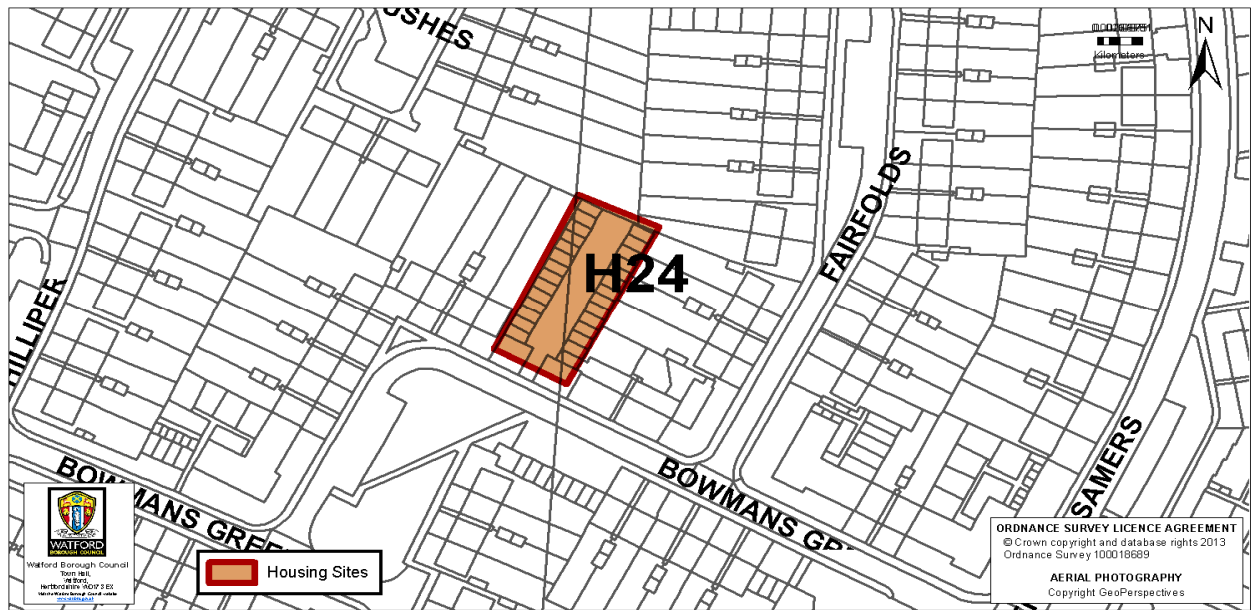
Site	Site area (ha)	3ha
Status	Current use/allocation	Station, forecourt, carpark and railway
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Railway/Residential
	Indicative capacity	100
	Time frame for delivery	2-5
Existing policy designations	None	Grade II Listed building

Site Ref: H23	Site: Croxley View	Ward: Holywell
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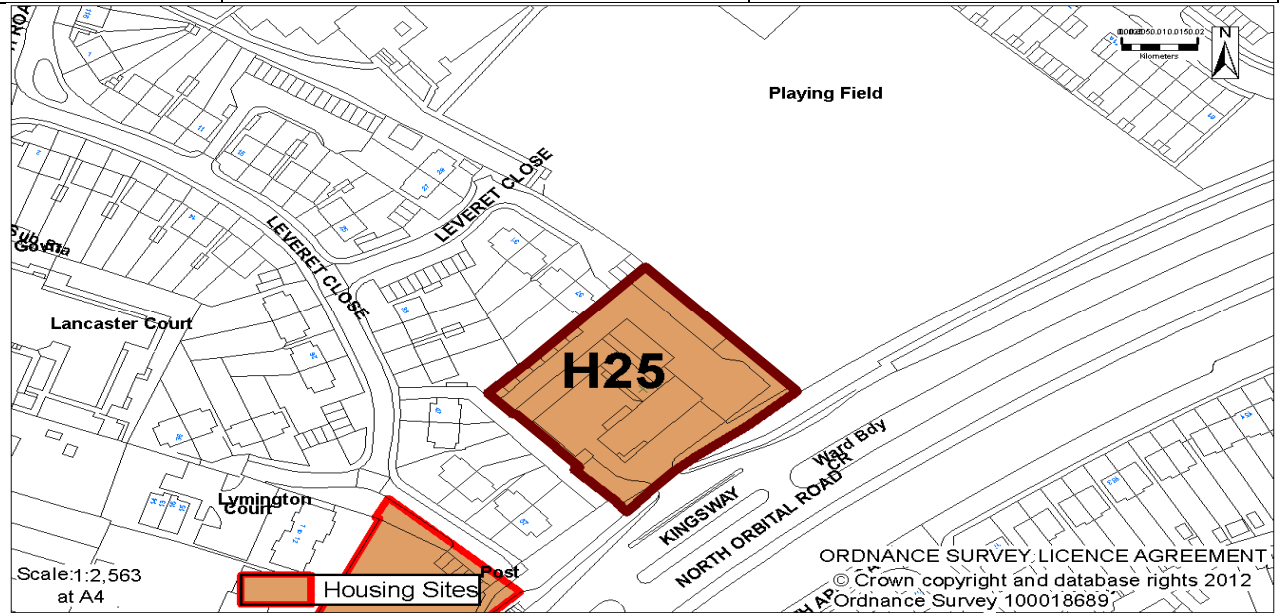
Site	Site area (ha)	3.25
Status	Current use/allocation	Open Space
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Business park and residential
	Indicative capacity	100
	Time frame for delivery	1-4 years
Existing policy designations	None	Open Space

Site Ref: H24	Site: Bowmans Court Garages	Ward: Meriden
---------------	-----------------------------	---------------



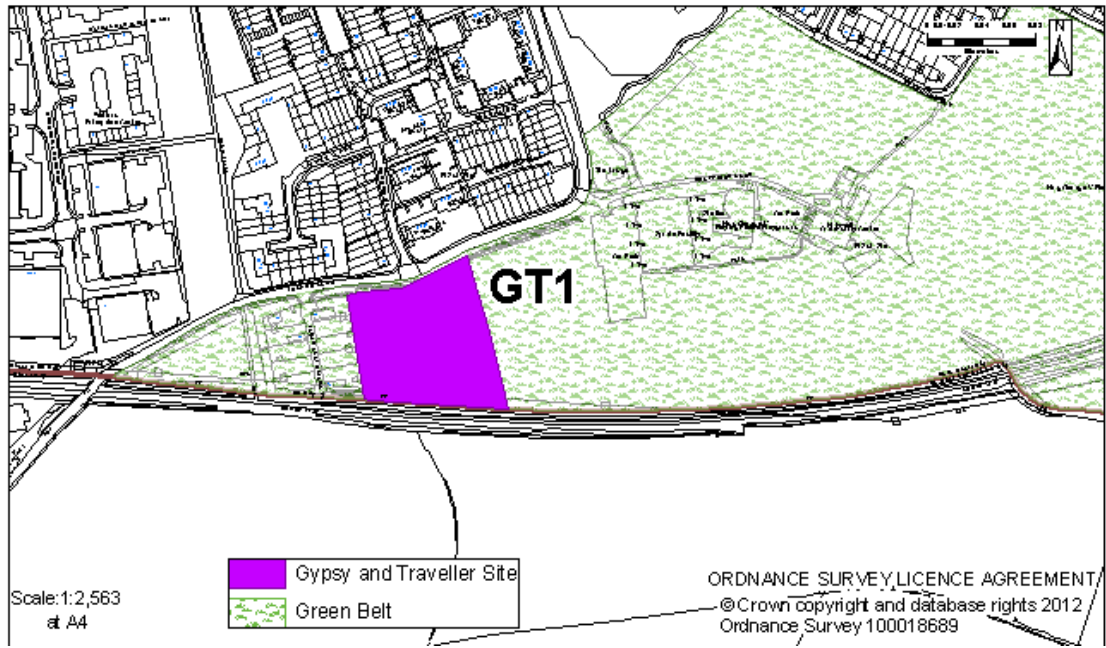
Site	Site area (ha)	0.1 ha
Status	Current use/allocation	Vacant garages
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Residential
	Indicative capacity	3-4
	Time frame for delivery	10-15 years
Existing policy designations	None	

Site Ref: H25	Site: Police Station North Orbital	Ward: Woodside
---------------	------------------------------------	----------------



Site	Site area (ha)	0.31
Status	Current use/allocation	Police Station - vacant
	Proposed use	Residential
	Adjacent land use(s)	Open Space/Residential
	Indicative capacity	30
	Time frame for delivery	5 years
Existing policy designations	None	

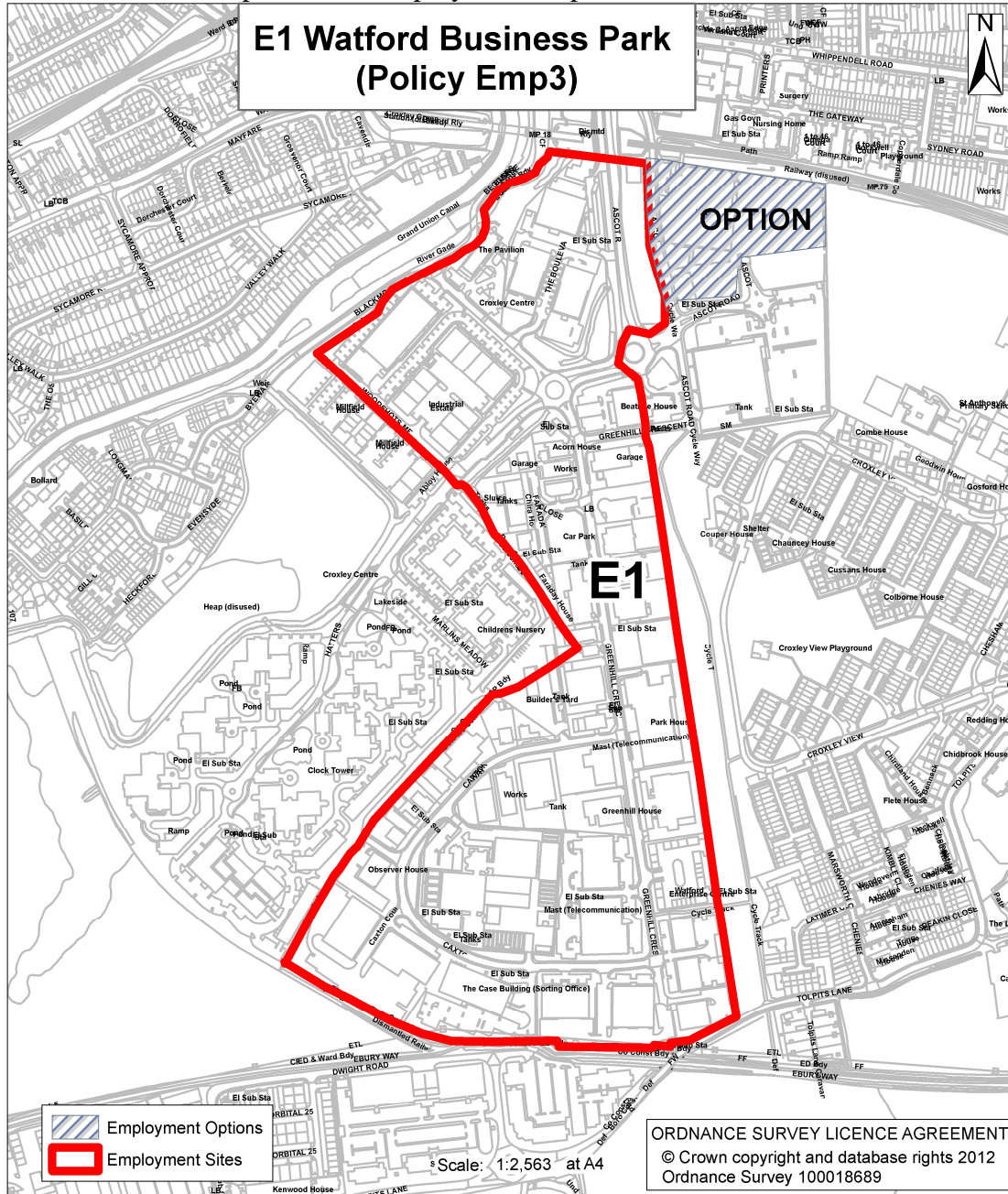
Site Ref: GT1	Site Name: Tolpits Lane	Ward: Holywell
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Current Use	King George IV playing field
Constraints	The site is located within the Green Belt and is identified as a Local Nature Reserve

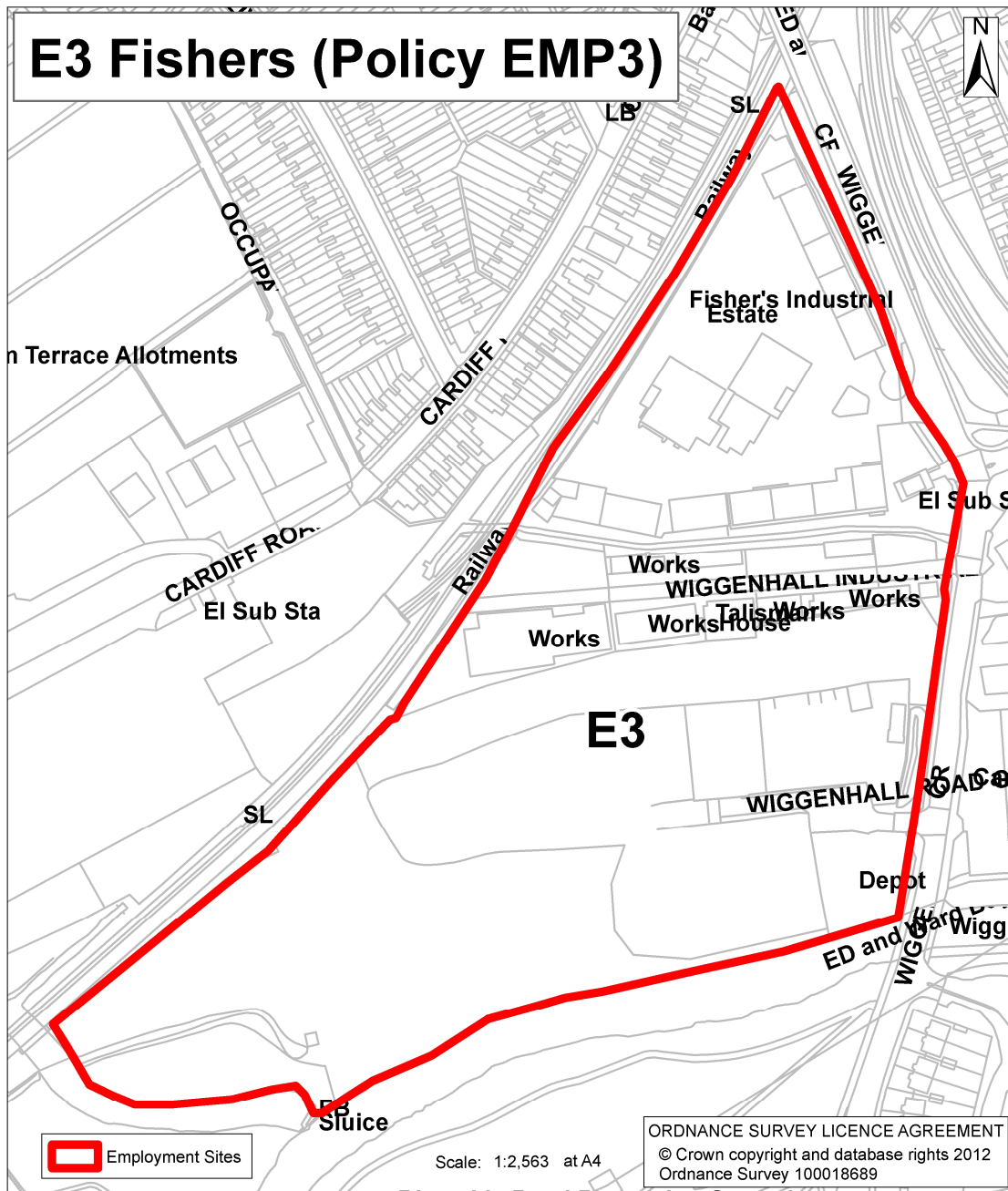
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6. Economic Development and Employment Maps

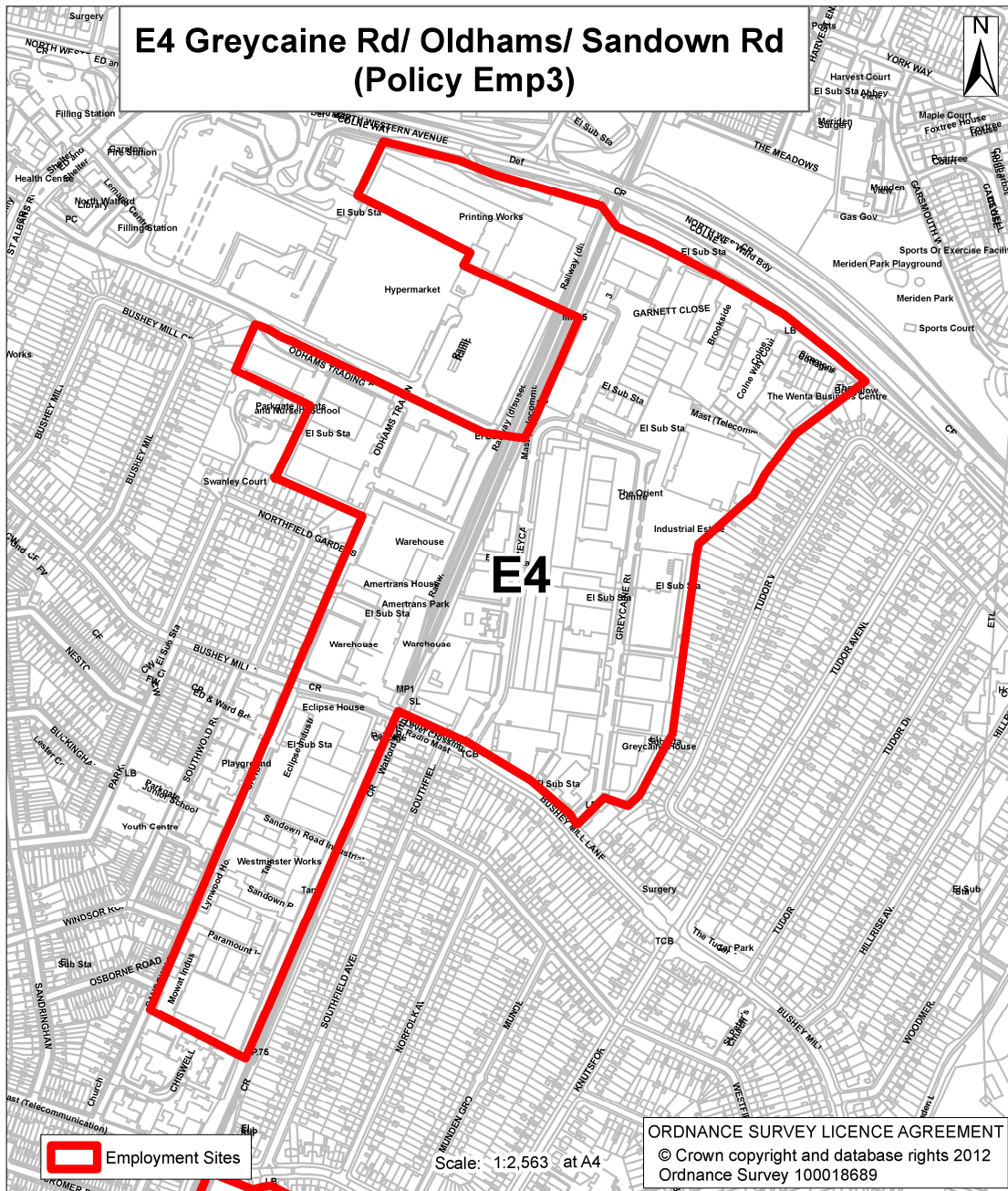


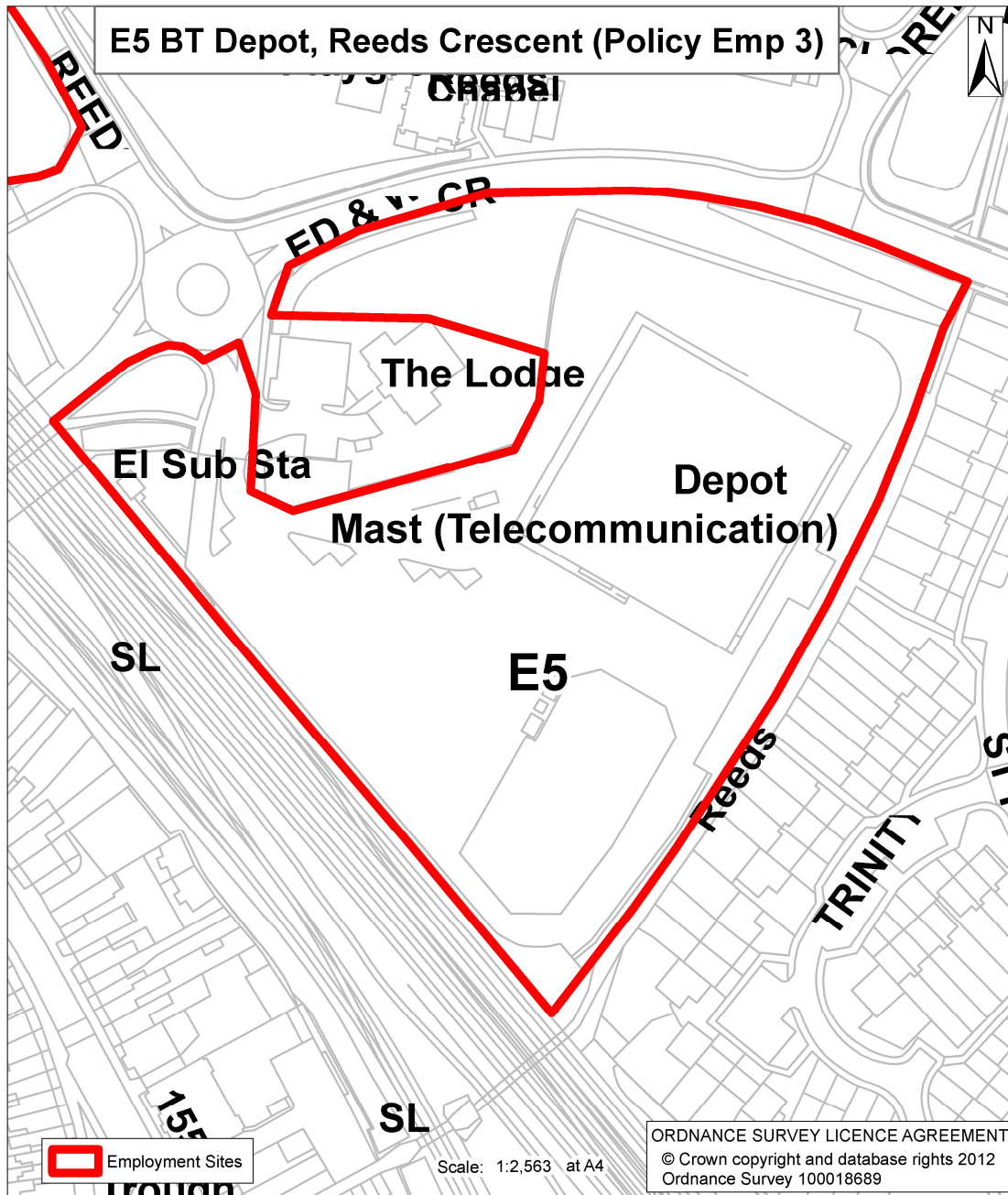


E3 Fishers (Policy EMP3)

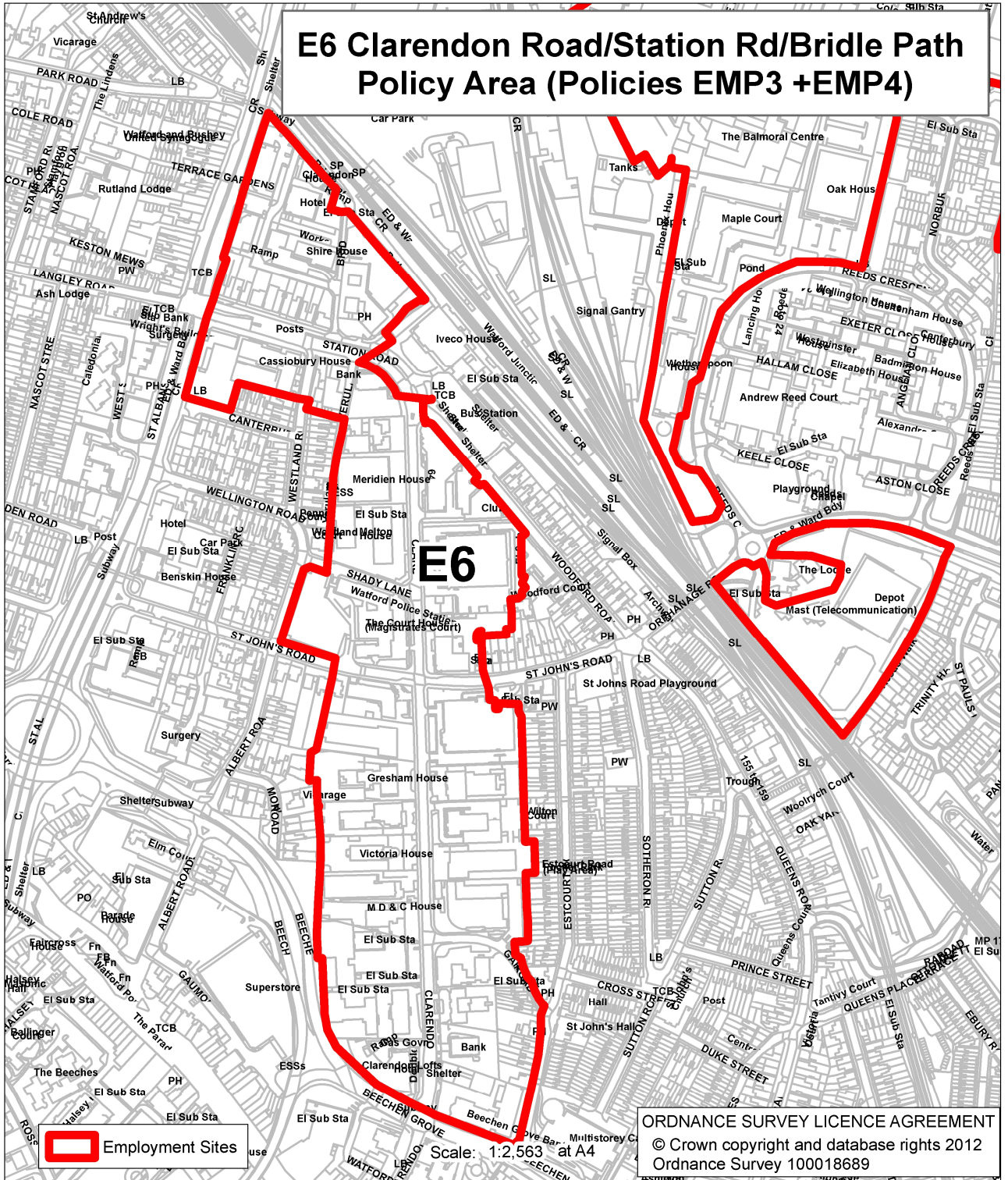


E4 Greycaine Rd/ Oldhams/ Sandown Rd (Policy Emp3)

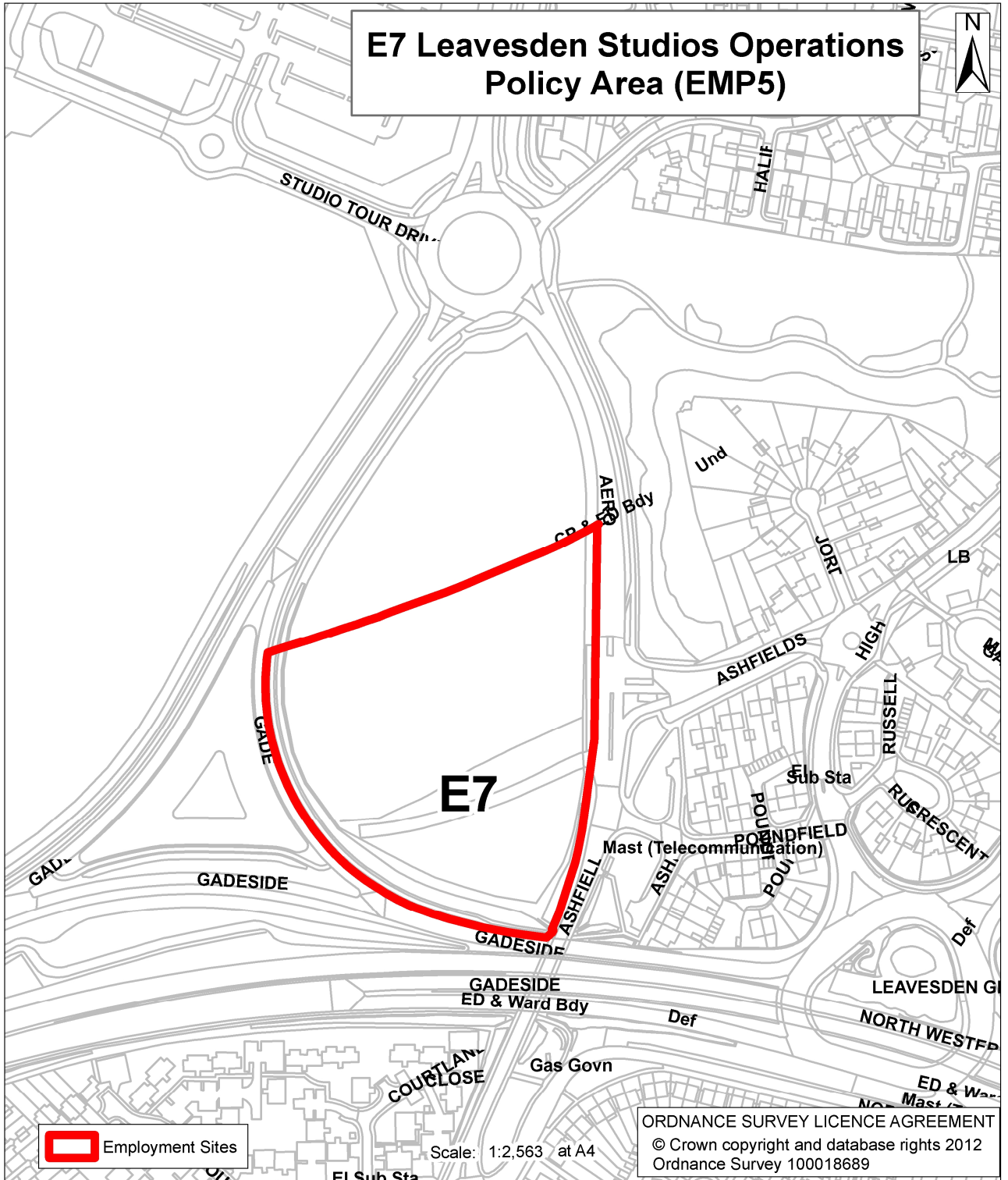


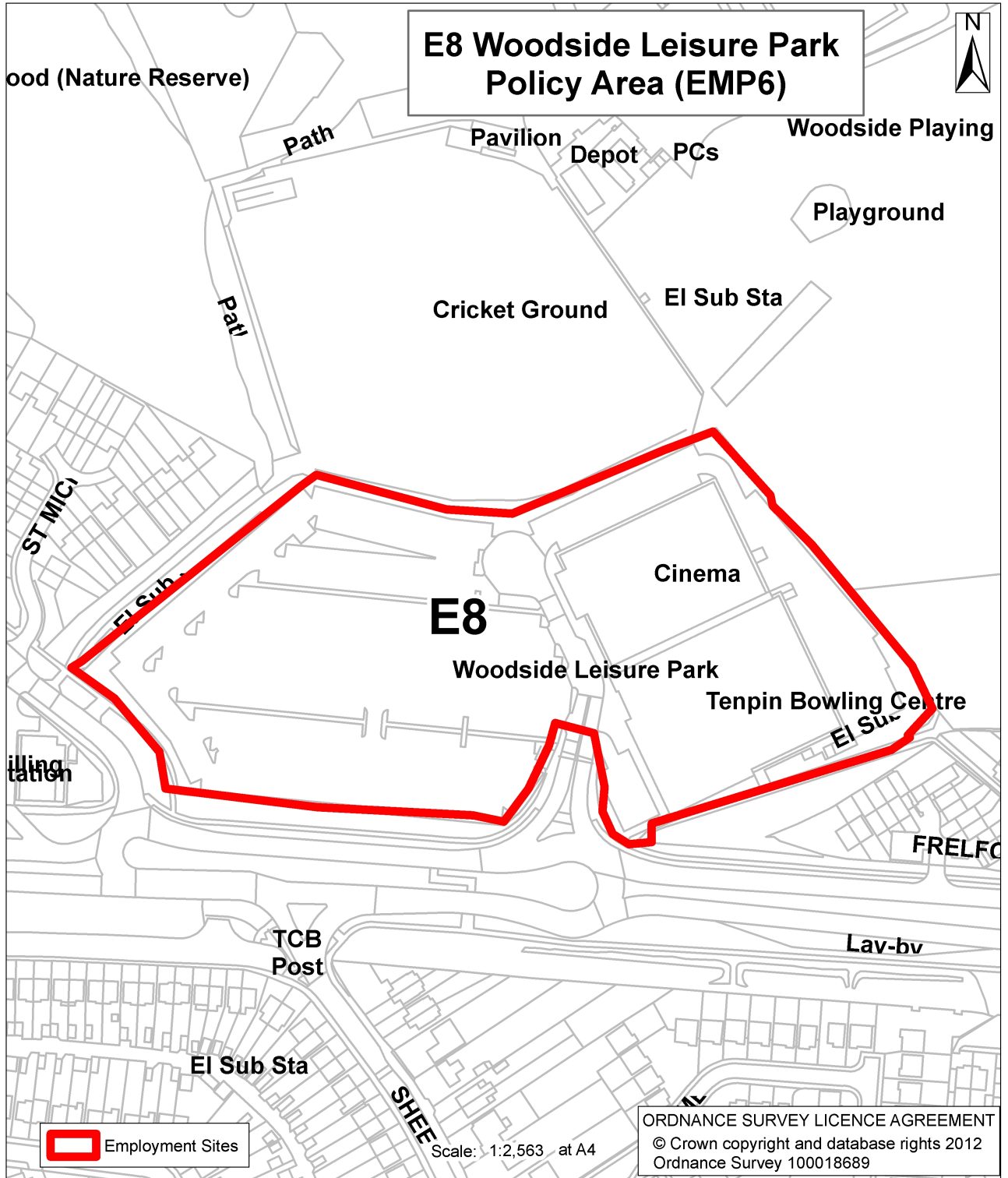


E6 Clarendon Road/Station Rd/Bridle Path Policy Area (Policies EMP3 +EMP4)



E7 Leavesden Studios Operations Policy Area (EMP5)

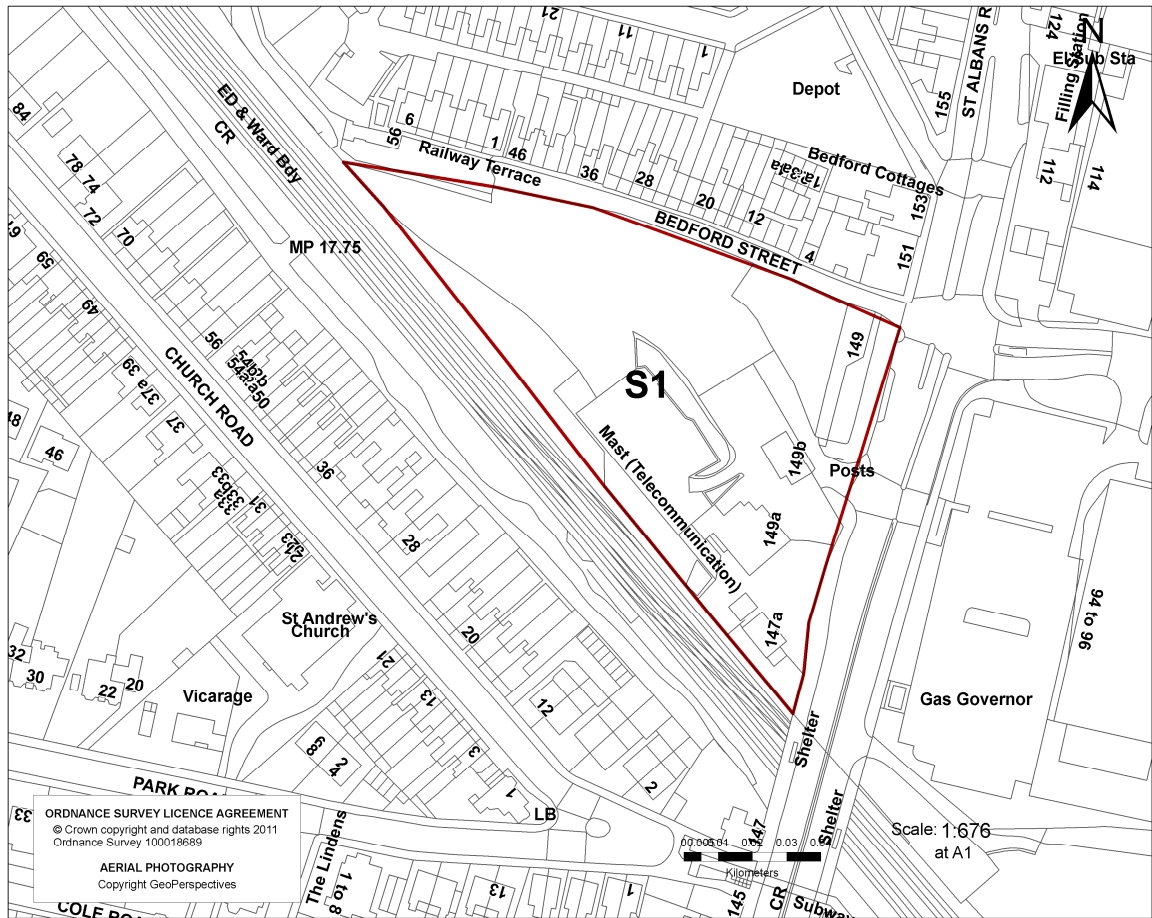




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Map Book – 7. Education

S1 Bedford Street

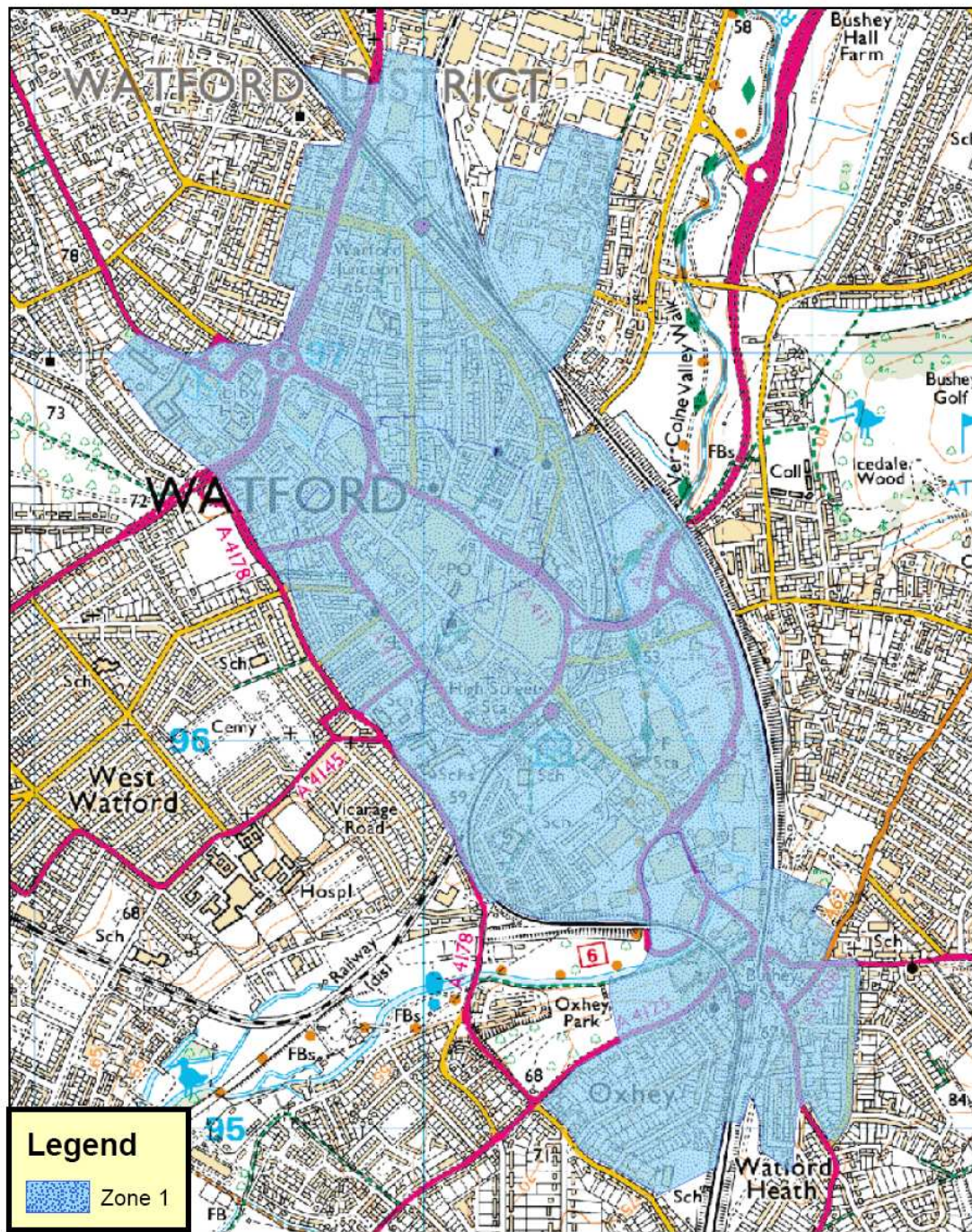



This site has been identified as a potential primary school site, it also falls within Watford Junction SPA 2.

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Transport Maps


Accessibility Zones





Watford Borough Council
Town Hall
Watford
West Yorkshire WF1 1BB
www.watford.gov.uk

**Cycle and carparking - zone 1
(Rest of Borough - zone 2)**

Produced by CR, Planning Policy, September 2013


Scale: 1:13,107
at A4

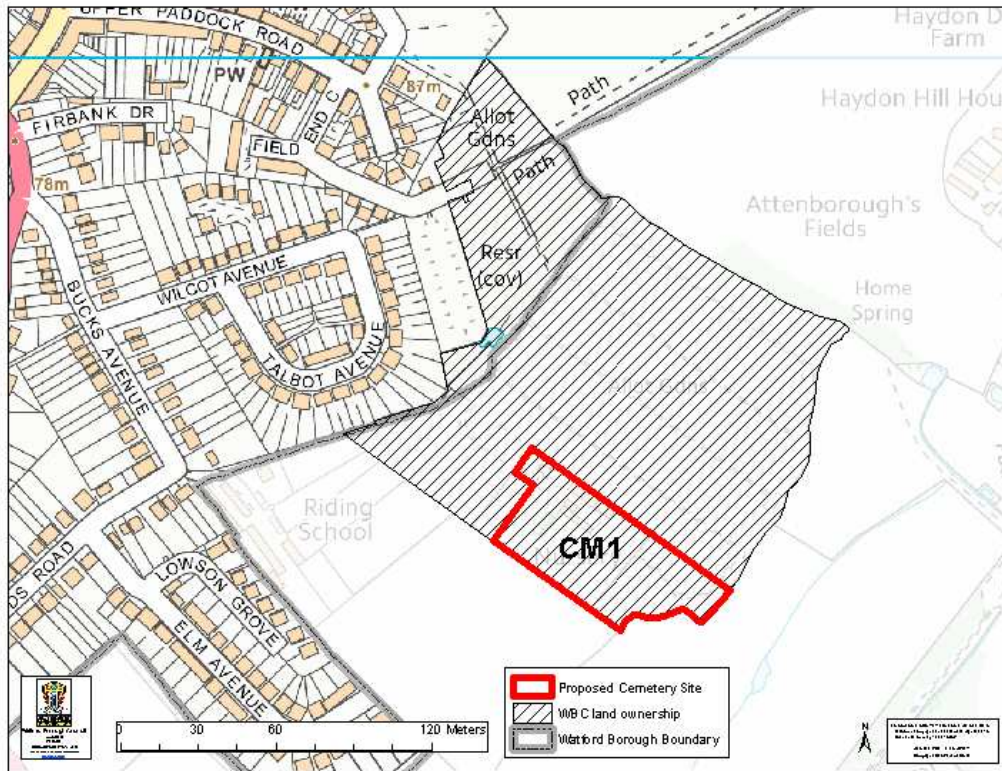

0 200 400 600 800 1000
Kilometers

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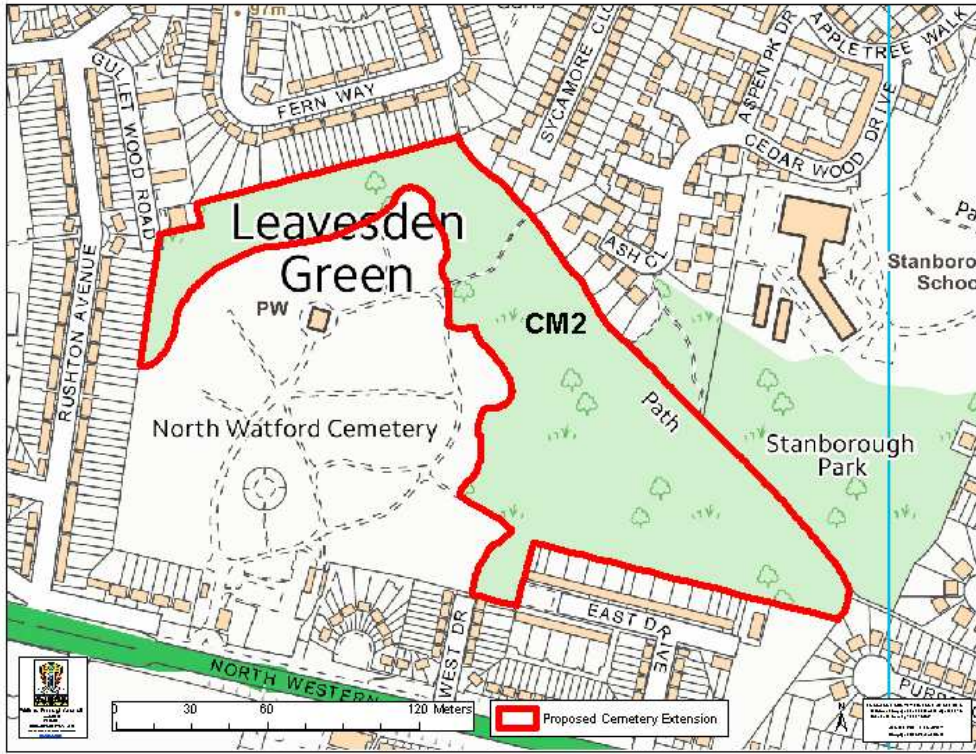
Map Book . 11. Green Infrastructure

CM 1	Paddock Road
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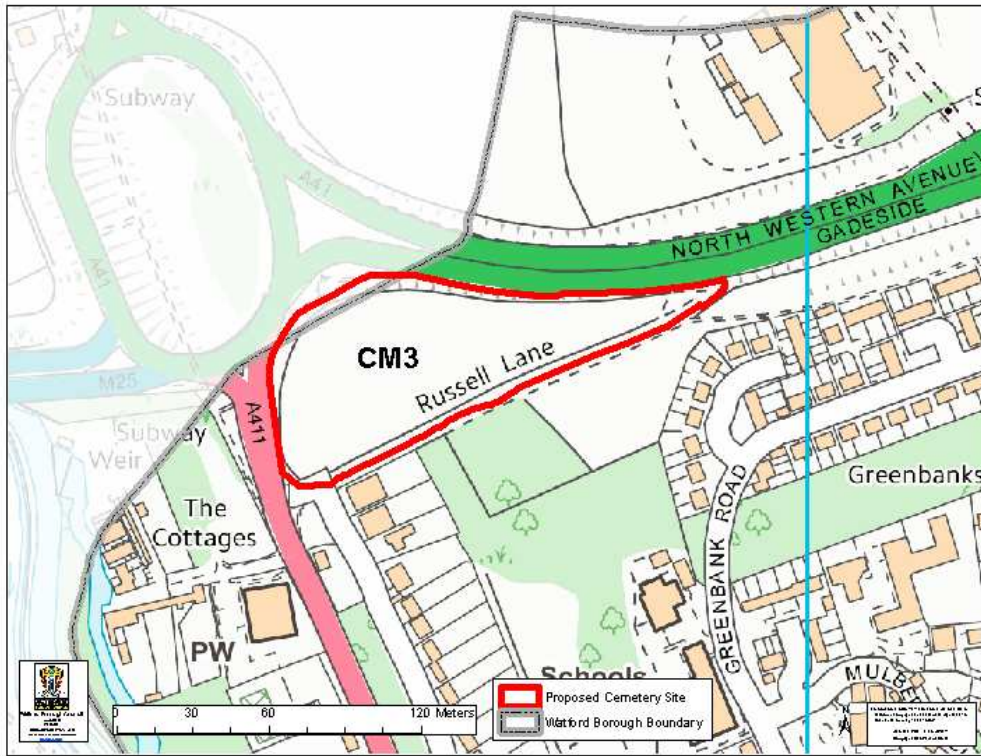
Current Use	Allotment land
Proposed Use	Cemetery

CM 2	North Watford Cemetery expansion
------	----------------------------------



Current Use	Wildlife corridor and open space
Proposed Use	Cemetery

CM 3	Russell Lane
------	--------------

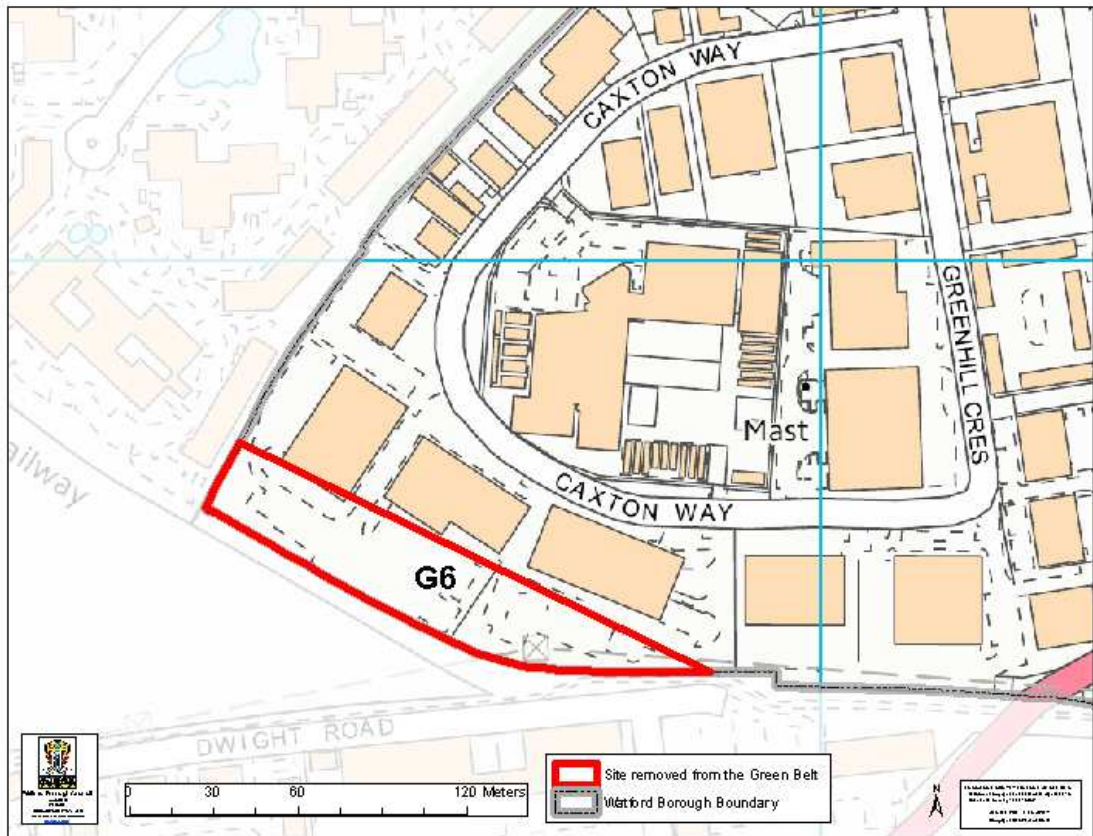


Current Use	Green Belt
Proposed Use	Woodland burial cemetery

Site ref: G6

Site: Caxton Way

Ward: Holywell

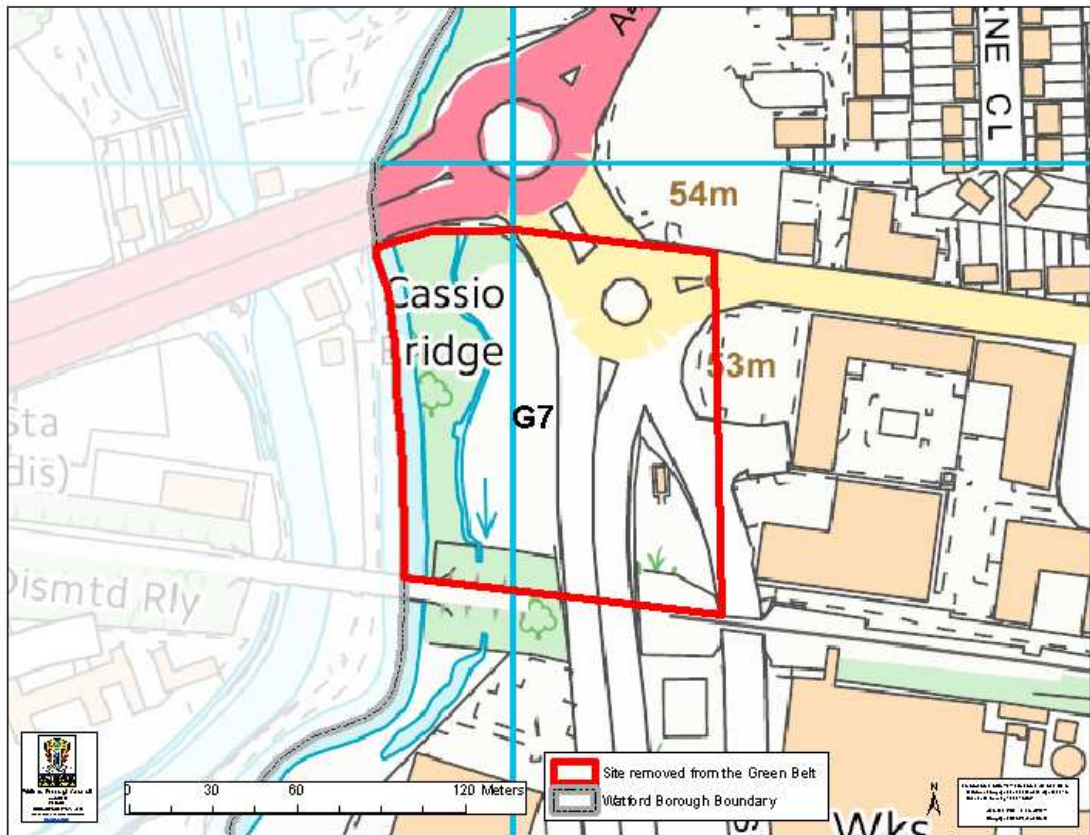


Site Area	1.1 ha
Current Use	Green Belt
Proposed Use	Employment
Reason for Change	Site is in a designated employment area and currently used for parking. The Ebury Way provides a better boundary to the Green Belt.

Site ref: G7

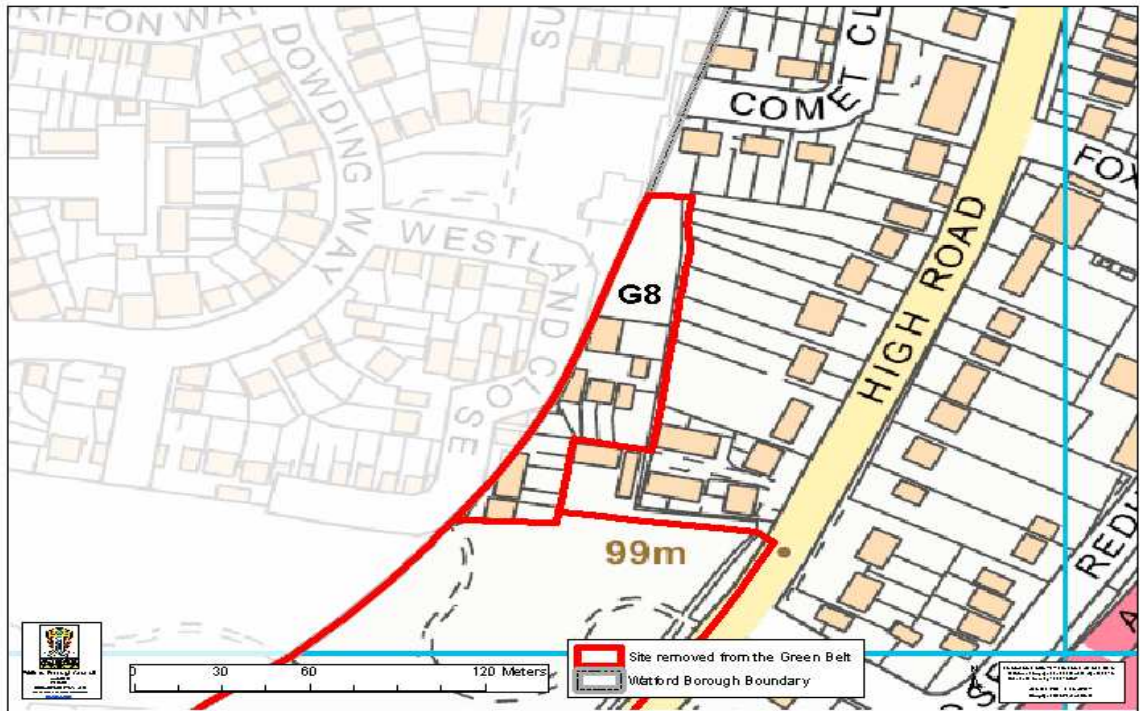
Site: Clock Tower

Ward: Holywell



Site Area	1.7 ha
Current Use	Green Belt
Proposed Use	No designation
Reason for Change	Small site with roads running through, area is set aside for the Croxley Rail Link.

Site ref: G8	Site: High Road	Ward: Woodside
--------------	-----------------	----------------

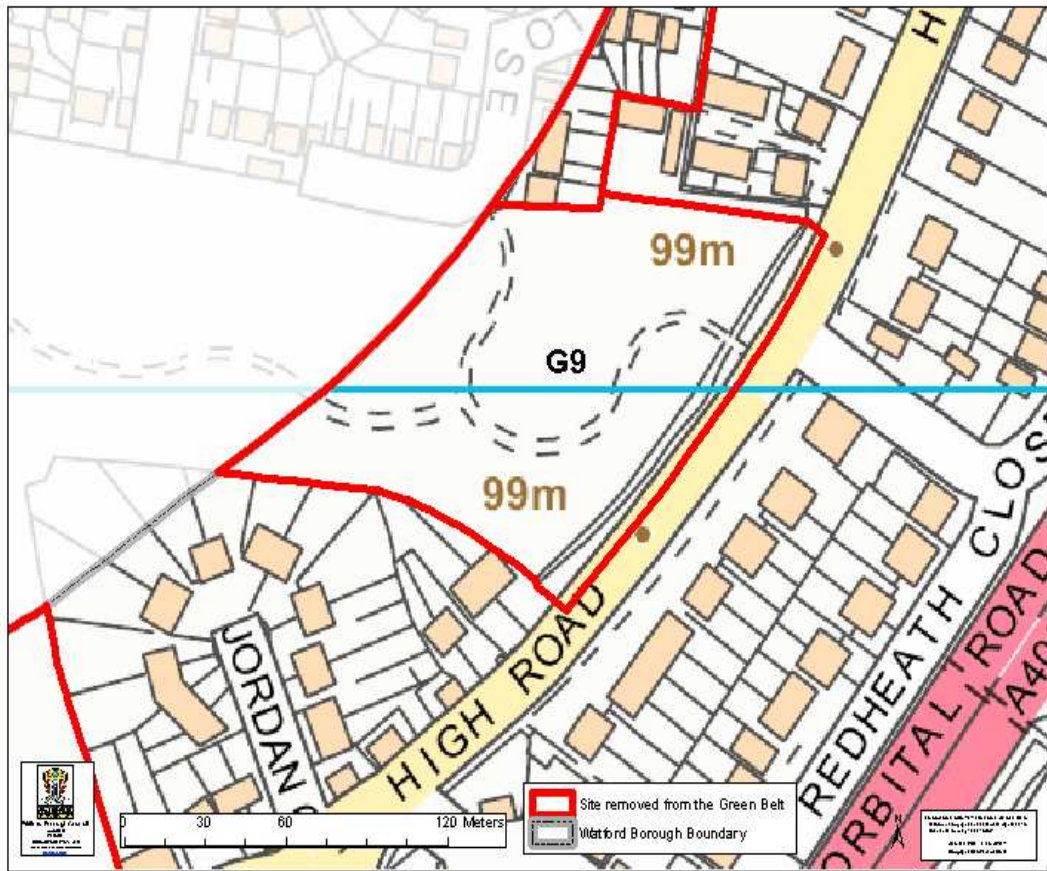


Site Area	0.4 ha
Current Use	Green Belt
Proposed Use	No designation – developed site.
Reason for Change	Remove part of the Green Belt where land has already been developed.

Site ref: G9

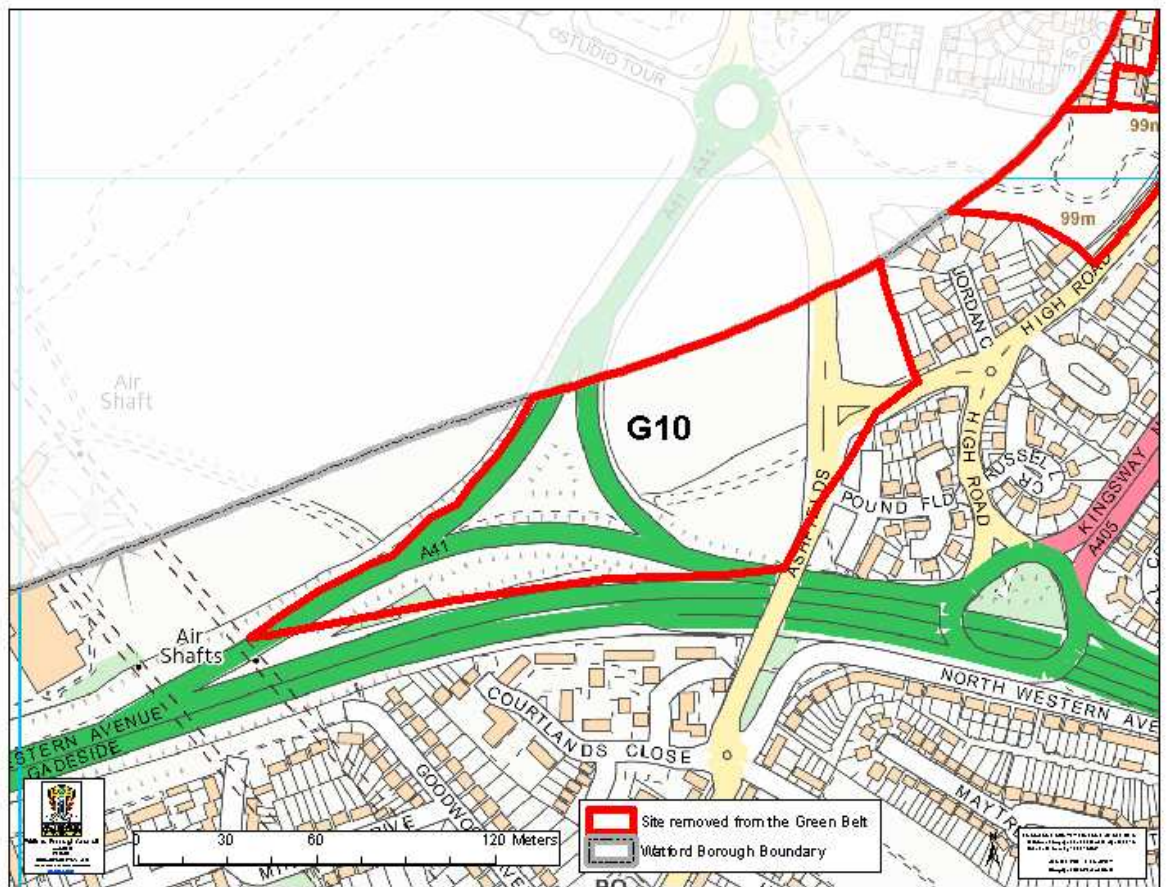
Site: High Road

Ward: Woodside



Site Area	1 ha
Current Use	Green Belt
Proposed Use	Open space
Reason for Change	To maintain a logical Green Belt boundary, following adjacent changes to the boundary in Three Rivers.

Site ref: G10	Site: High Road	Woodside
---------------	-----------------	----------



<u>Site Area</u>	<u>5.7 ha</u>
<u>Current Use</u>	<u>Green Belt, island site surrounded by major road.</u>
<u>Proposed Use</u>	<u>Part of site to be designated for Leavesden Studios Operations (see Employment Chapter). Remainder to be open space (to north east). Western part of site is occupied by existing roads..</u>
<u>Reason for Change</u>	<u>Land required for Leavesden Studios. Exceptional circumstances for removal from the Green Belt agreed at neighbouring Three Rivers District Council site allocations examination.</u>

Clarendon Road/ Station Road/Bridle Path Office Area – policy position statement

The Clarendon Road/Station Road Employment Area is identified in Policy E1 of the Watford District Plan 2000. This area is covered by an Article 4 Direction removing permitted development rights to change from office use to residential use. A planning application is therefore required for such changes of use.

Policy E1 identifies this area as one for primary office use (Class B1a), and sets out that release for housing or mixed use development would be exceptional, and would only occur where it is demonstrated that the site is no longer required to meet future employment and business needs. The latest evidence, in the form of the Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment 2014, indicates that space in this area is required to meet such needs so this test could not be met at the present time.

Policies EMP1 and EMP2 of the Watford Core Strategy 2013 also identify the Clarendon Road area as the focus for office use. Improvements to the quality of office stock in this area are part of the strategy for delivering job growth in Watford.

The latest evidence on future employment and business needs is set out in the Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners in 2014, using data including the 2013 East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM). The study's assessment of this recent run of the EEFM forecasts total job growth of 13,290 over the period 2006-31, almost double the 7,000 minimum target set in the Core Strategy. 11,630 of these are predicted to be B1a or B1b office jobs. This means we need to protect, improve, and indeed increase, our stock of quality office accommodation.

The EGDA sets out 4 potential future scenarios for future employment space requirements. These are based on the Spring 2013 EEFM, past development rates, labour supply (based on the Core Strategy Housing Target) and labour supply (based on 2012 Sub National Population Projections). The EGDA goes on to compare the forecast requirement to the existing supply (in the form of extant planning permissions and the employment component expected from major development projects at Ascot Road, Town Centre improvements, Watford Business Park, Watford Health Campus and Watford Junction). All scenarios bar the past development rates scenario anticipate a substantial additional requirement for office floorspace. The past development rates scenario is not considered a sustainable one to plan for as past development rates are likely to have been constrained by losses of space and supply side factors and would effectively represent an acceptance that the borough would continue to underperform economically.

The table below, extracted from Table 7.3 of the EGDA (numbering may change in final version) summarises the potential requirement:

Scenario	Baseline EEFM (Spring 2013)	Labour Supply (260dpa)	Labour Supply (2012 SNPP)
Office Space requirement	253,720	202,400	244,025
Potential supply of office space	38,295	38,295	38,295
Surplus(+)/Shortfall (-)	-215,425	-164,105	-205,730

(extract from Table 7.3 draft EGDA 2014)

This area, with its location close to the railway station and the town centre, is Watford's primary office location. Redevelopment in this area represents an opportunity to provide additional high quality office accommodation.

Emerging Policy – Local Plan Part 2:

In response to the most recent evidence, Local Plan Part 2 proposes continuing the approach of protecting office uses in the Clarendon Road/Station Road/Bridle Path area (which was subject to consultation in Nov/Dec 2013) and extending this to look to provide additional high quality office floorspace in this area.

What does this mean?

Taken together, the existing and emerging policies and latest available evidence mean that non-employment uses are unlikely to be considered acceptable in this area. Rather we will be seeking improvements to the amount of high quality office floorspace available here.

Any supporting uses should be clearly ancillary in nature and of a type which support and enhance the vitality and viability of the primary office use of the area. Residential use is not acceptable in this location.

*PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 1st December 2014
Report of: Economic Development Manager

Title: Economic Development Strategy Refresh (2015-2020), Draft for Consultation, launching January 2015

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 One of the Council's key priorities is 'to provide the strategic lead for Watford's sustainable economic growth' and a dynamic Economic Development Strategy, owned not just by the Council, but by the town and all its stakeholders, is key to defining both the issues involved and actions required to deliver against this priority.

1.2 Informed by a comprehensive new evidence base (the Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment), including revised economic projections for the Borough to 2031, there is a need to take stock of where Watford is today and introduce a number of new policies and measures to ensure Watford remains on a trajectory for sustainable economic growth.

1.3 The emerging strategy focuses on five core areas:

Priority 1 – the Sustainable growth of Watford and its Economy

Priority 2 – Transport and Connectivity

Priority 3 – Inward Investment and Business Retention

Priority 4 – Innovation and Enterprise

Priority 5 – Employability and Skills

1.4 The revised economic projections for the borough also point to a step change in the level of commercial and employment growth, and subsequent commercial floorspace growth, the Borough is expected to cater for to 2031. The refreshed Economic Development Strategy will consider and advise on a range of, but not mutually exclusive, options for the Council and its stakeholders to consider to service this projected increase in demand. These include:

- 1) Accommodating more of the Borough's growth requirements within the Major Development Areas
- 2) Resisting further loss of existing employment space to other competing uses such as residential
- 3) Allocating new employment areas, however, given Watford's constrained urban boundary, options for such sites are limited
- 4) Intensification of existing employment sites, such as Watford Business Park
- 5) Assuming, and planning for, some of these needs to be met elsewhere i.e. outside the boundary of Watford.

- 1.5 The Draft strategy has now been prepared and Council Officers will begin a formal consultation with key stakeholders, including residents, in January 2015.
- 1.6 The Strategy will then be refined based on comments received and following clear and transparent dialogue with respective parties to ensure their endorsement and support is secured.
- 1.7 The draft consultation is being brought to Cabinet so that it can be considered alongside the Local Plan Part 2 Consultation and the Housing Strategy.
- 1.8 Cabinet is asked to endorse the draft plan as the basis for consultation. Following a formal consultation process and any required editorial changes, the Strategy will be brought back to Cabinet in March for sign off and adoption.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That members agree that the draft Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 progress to consultation in January 2015.
- 2.2 That delegated authority be given to the Economic Development Manager to make any necessary editorial changes/corrections prior to final review and adoption by Cabinet.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Andrew Gibson, Economic Development Manager
telephone extension: 8286 email: andrew.gibson@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development.

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 Despite wider economic challenges nationally, Watford has fared reasonably well throughout the 2008-2013 global financial crisis, making significant progress towards its development targets as defined in the Councils Adopted Core Strategy, which outlined the towns spatial vision for growth and setting minimum targets of 6,500 houses and 7,000 additional jobs between 2006 and 2031.
- 3.2 Watford is now over 8 years into its 25 year planning strategy and as stated above, while the town has made significant progress towards its overall targets, it is important to monitor impact and ensure the towns overall growth rate remains on a sustainable trajectory.
- 3.3 A comprehensive evidence base has been commissioned, assessing the Borough's future economic development needs objectively in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supporting Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This report, prepared by Nathaniel Litchfield & Partners, has been entitled the Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) and was completed in November 2014.
- 3.4 The EGDA analysis has shown that while the Council has and is continuing to deliver significantly towards its overall housing targets, employment growth has been less consistent.
- 3.5 The analysis has also shown that the increased pressures and land values for residential development, as opposed to commercial development, have resulted in a net erosion of employment space in Watford, directly affecting the town's ability to deliver against its future job targets.
- 3.6 The EGDA has also tested a range of economic scenarios for the town, leading to the development of a number of economic projections for the Borough.
- 3.7 In light of more positive macro-economic projections regionally and nationally, the scenario testing has shown that Watford has the potential to deliver significantly more jobs than were originally envisaged through the Local Plan Core Strategy, which were forecast at a time when economic confidence nationally was much lower.
- 3.8 It has now been concluded that the Borough has the potential/market demand to deliver almost double the number of jobs as stated in the Local Plan Core Strategy (close to 14,000 rather than the 7,000 as originally envisaged). This, however, places additional pressures on the limited amount of developable land available within the constrained borough boundary.
- 3.9 The 2011 Census data has also shown a significant step change in the commuting flows to and from Watford and the wider regional economic role which Watford plays, providing significant levels of employment for residents of beyond Watford's boundary. Whilst being an attractive destination for businesses and employees, Watford also has a duty to support its own residents employment needs, but a declining self employment rate between 2001 and 2011 suggests this is proving increasingly challenging. The new Economic Development Strategy includes measures, initiatives and policy interventions to address this.

3.10 The new evidence base was commissioned in conjunction with both the Economic Development and Planning Policy sections to ensure a consistent approach to evidence collection and the outputs of the work have already been used to inform the wider Local Plan Part 2 approach, including Development Management policies as well as the re-classification of some sites for employment use through the Site Allocations work.

3.11 As stated previously, the revised economic projections for the borough also point to a step change in the level of commercial and employment growth, and subsequent commercial floorspace growth, the Borough is expected to cater for to 2031. The refreshed Economic Development Strategy has considered and advises a range of, but not mutually exclusive, options for the Council and its stakeholders to consider to service this projected increase in demand. These include:

- 1) Accommodating more of the Borough's growth requirements within the Major Development Areas
- 2) Resisting further loss of existing employment space to other competing uses such as residential
- 3) Allocating new employment areas, however, given Watford's constrained urban boundary, options for such sites are limited
- 4) Intensification of existing employment sites, such as Watford Business Park
- 5) Assuming, and planning for, some of these needs to be met elsewhere i.e. outside the boundary of Watford.

3.12 The emerging strategy focuses on five core areas:

Priority 1 – the Sustainable growth of Watford and its Economy

- Striking the balance between the competing pressures for residential and commercial development and optimising the limited number of development sites in the town to deliver better economic sustainability and balance the overall direction of growth
- Reinforcing the foundations for long term sustainable growth through the delivery of new infrastructure, alleviating existing congestion and delivering new capacity to support growth
- Achieving 'smart growth' through delivery of the major development projects which have the ability to deliver a step change in both economic, social and environmental benefits

Priority 2 – Transport and Connectivity

- Maximising Watford's location strengths and reinforcing the town's role as a regional transport hub for North London and South West Hertfordshire
- Planning for and delivering improvements to transport infrastructure and services in order to continue to attract investment and securing high-quality, long-term employment opportunities
- Supporting sustainable travel through local, regional and national transport connections, and delivering improved access to employment, leisure and community services

Priority 3 – Inward Investment and Business Retention

- Making sure Watford has the right places and spaces to retain and attract

- Watford's current and future employers
- Improved promotion of the town as a place to do business
- Ensuring Watford has the right services and processes to embrace business investment in the town

Priority 4 – Innovation and Enterprise

- Supporting Watford's entrepreneurial and innovative local economy
- Ensuring the right space, advice and guidance is available for both start-up and growing businesses in the town
- Nurturing the local business environment and supporting initiatives that help our local employers improve their productivity and competitiveness

Priority 5 – Employability and Skills

- Working with local employers to deliver the right labour pool to support private sector job growth
- Ensuring local residents have the appropriate skills to access the new jobs being created
- Addressing gaps in the local skills market that have knock on effects for the overall sustainability of the local economy

3.13 It is proposed that the Draft Economic Development Strategy will move forward to consultation in January 2015. Key stakeholders to be consulted include:

- The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
- Watford and West Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce
- West Herts College
- Job Centre Plus
- Watford Business Growth Forum
- The Watford Enterprise Agency (Wenta)
- Local businesses
- Local residents
- Developers, landowners and commercial agents active in the town
- Neighbouring local authorities under the Duty to Cooperate

3.14 Consultation in January will also allow comments on both Local Plan Part 2 and the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 to be considered concurrently, ensuring that both the suite of economic development and planning policies complement one another in the aim of securing the long term sustainable economic of Watford.

3.15 Cabinet is therefore requested to endorse the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020 as the basis for consultation. Following a formal consultation process and any required editorial changes, the finalised Strategy will be brought back to Cabinet in March for final review and Adoption.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

4.1.1 The strategy may have an impact on the Council's finances, especially following the localisation of business rates. However, the impact of the strategy is not known at this stage.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in the report

4.3 Equalities

4.3.1 A full equalities impact assessment will undertaken on production of a final draft strategy, however the Economic Development Strategy is focussed on supporting all individuals within the community.

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Inability to secure support from key stakeholders within the town	2	3	6
Changes in government policy/evidence collection methodology may lead to a need to review existing evidence base	2	3	6

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 Staffing is in place to manage the consultation.

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 No accommodation impacts.

4.7 Community Safety

4.7.1 Policies in the Economic Development Strategy are designed to improve the level of economic opportunities available to local residents, as well as overall community cohesion community safety – no specific impact.

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 The Economic Development Strategy is intended to ensure the long term sustainable economic growth and development of Watford.

Appendices

A. Draft Economic Development Strategy

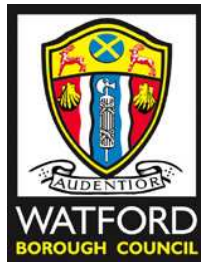
Background Papers

The Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment, prepared by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners, November 2014

File Reference

- *LP00. Local Plan Part 2.*

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Draft Economic Development Strategy 2015-2020

December 2014

Version: Draft V0.2 – Draft for Consultation

Setting The Scene

Watford is the largest town in Hertfordshire and the only non-metropolitan borough completely contained within the M25. The town benefits from excellent transport links, with the London Underground and Overground, West Coast Mainline, M1 and M25 all linking the borough with the rest of Hertfordshire, Greater London and the Midlands, as well as providing easy access to Heathrow, Luton and Stanstead airports. It is a commercial and retail hub at the centre of a sub-region serving approximately 500,000 people within a 20 minute travel time, and 5,000,000 within 45 minute travel time.

Historically, Watford has always been a strong location for business and industry, going back as far as the 1800's. Today the town remains a successful commercial hub and is a desirable place in which to live, work and enjoy leisure time. Local businesses are active and engaged in local governance and partnerships which help underpin commercial vitality, and the large, skilled working-age population makes a significant contribution to the local economy, as well as embracing the close links with London.

The town is currently home to around 3500 businesses with a good mix of company size and sector, with many international HQ's and a higher than average start-up success rate, and a range of businesses in between. There is representation from financial and professional services sectors, pharmaceutical, health sciences, creative media, manufacturing and retail and leisure industries, amongst many others.

Watford's town centre has attracted visitors to enjoy its broad retail offer and vibrant night time economy for decades, and recent initiatives such as the public realm enhancements, New Watford Market and comprehensive events programme have enabled the High Street to fare comparatively well during a challenging period for town centres across the UK. The forthcoming £100m redevelopment of Charter Place, due for completion in 2017, also demonstrates the town centres continued attractiveness to the market as one of the premier retailing destinations nationally.

However, looking back over the past 10-15 years, it is clear that the town has had its challenges. In the early 2000's jobs peaked at 61,370, however fallout from the dotcom boom and the departure of a number of key employers resulted in the town losing 9,250 jobs between 2001 and 2005¹. Yet Watford fared relatively well through the 2009-2013 global recession maintaining comparatively low unemployment levels, largely due to its locational strengths and the healthy breadth of sectors represented in the town. A number of initiatives were introduced in Watford's Core Strategy 2006-2031 and the Economic Development Strategy 2010 in order to boost workforce jobs, re-enforce Watford's position as a sustainable centre for employment and continue to improve the economic wellbeing of its residents. This included the allocation of Special Policy Areas (SPA's) as focus areas for future regeneration, and the formation of several major development projects to bring forward new housing and employment space. Progress has been made towards local employment targets since 2006 with a total of 56,800 workforce jobs recorded in 2014². 4,680 new jobs have been created over this period averaging 520 per year since 2005.

However, Watford does face some challenges in securing its future economic success. With a fast growing population and boundary constraints - its 93,736 residents³ are forecast to grow to 95,300 by 2021⁴ within a borough covering only 8.3 square miles - there is high

¹ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment – September 2014

² Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment – September 2014

³ ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2013

⁴ ONS Population Projection 2014

demand for land and resources within this densely populated area. Therefore the social, environmental and economic pressures the town experiences are similar to those of many London boroughs, particularly in areas such as commuting, congestion and availability of land for development.

Current evidence suggests that despite Watford's strong economic profile, there are some underlying trends emerging that need to be addressed to ensure the town's economy remains robust in the future. The boroughs self-containment rate (proportion of residents working within the borough) fell from 49% to 37% between 2001 and 2011⁵, suggesting that the town has not been able to increase employment capacity in line with its population growth. Employment space across the borough has been eroded over the last 9 years⁶, with several factors accelerating the loss of employment space, particularly in disparate areas unprotected by policy which tend to support local employment. A recent study referred to an "acute shortage of available employment land" within the town.⁷ There is also recognition of the challenge to address national housing pressures, particularly in such a spatially constrained borough where demands for housing and employment land effectively compete. However, recognition of these challenges presents Watford with an opportunity to intervene, in order to protect local employment and introduce measures to deliver the sustainable growth of its employment base and workforce.

The major development projects outlined in the 2010 Economic Development Strategy are coming to fruition. In excess of £1.5bn of investment is happening, with both public and private funding to bring forward new employment and housing spaces for the residents of Watford. Croxley Rail Link (CRL) is a key transport infrastructure project which catalyses other developments through the green credentials it brings, increased sustainability and positive impact on commercial viability of nearby sites. Significant scale regeneration is happening within the Town Centre, Watford Health Campus, Watford Business Park and at Ascot Road, and is planned for Watford Junction. Major infrastructure regeneration is a key to unlocking local growth and there is strong support for Watford's growth plans at both a regional and national level - CRL is listed in the UK governments 2013 National Infrastructure Plan and Watford is key to delivery within Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) M1/M25 Growth Area, leveraging maximum investment from its economically significant rail and strategic road networks.

A commonly held view of what makes a place successful in economic terms is a place which is able to continually upgrade their business environment, skills base and physical, social and cultural infrastructures so as to attract and retain high-growth, innovative and profitable firms. It is able to maintain an educated, creative and entrepreneurial workforce, thereby enabling them to achieve a high rate of productivity, high employment rate, high wages, high GDP and low levels of income inequality and social exclusion. Watford's aspirations for the future economic growth are in line with this thinking. This strategy considers how historic strengths can be maximised and future developments can enable Watford to deliver upon its ambition to remain the economic and transport hub of North West London and Hertfordshire. The priorities are:

- 1) The Sustainable Growth of Watford and its Economy
- 2) Transport & Connectivity
- 3) Inward investment & Business retention
- 4) Innovation & Enterprise
- 5) Employability & Skills

⁵ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment September 2014

⁶ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment September 2014

⁷ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment September 2014

Watford's Economy - S.W.O.T Analysis

Watford's Strengths

Location – excellent access to strategic road network and national rail connections
Resilience of the local economy through recent recessionary times
Diverse employment base - breadth of sectors operating in the town
Breadth of size and scale of businesses – international HQ's and start-ups
Large working age population
Skilled local workforce
High start-up survival rate
High levels of in-commuting
High demand for commercial / industrial premises
Vibrant and safe Night Time Economy (NTE)
Active local business community and strong partnership working
Regional retail hub and strong and expanding town centre offer
Stable political environment, with strong track record of delivery

Watford's Weaknesses

Lack of developable land to support growth
Declining containment rate – job creation growth rates slower than working age population growth rates
Recent losses of employment land to alternative uses
Shortage of high quality, fit-for purpose office space
Constraint of existing commercial space – demand forecast to outpace supply
Localised congestion at peak times
Support for growth and start-up businesses is constrained
Pockets of deprivation
Some constraints in the local labour market

Watford's Opportunities

Further exploit the towns locational USP
Working with neighbouring authorities to identify any potential for growth needs to be met outside of the borough
Maximise the economic impact of the major development projects
Re-energise the local commercial property market by kick-starting commercial development
Resist loss of future employment space and identify any new sites or those suitable for intensification
More sustainable commuting and travel through transport infrastructure investments
Town centre Business Improvement District (BID)
Improve broadband connectivity and speeds
Fresh approach to skills matching locally, working with West Herts College and Job Centre Plus
Business support – extend incubation capacity to meet demand and more specific support for growth businesses
Building on successes of existing business engagement agenda, including successful sector-led cluster groups

Watford's Threats

Insufficient new employment space coming forward in development pipeline
Further loss of existing employment land through competing residential land values
Not being able to provide the right spaces and places to attract future employers and enable local businesses to grow
External perceptions of the town and its overall offer
The ability to provide sufficient affordable housing for low income workers
Continued competition from other retail and employment centres
Growth of local skills gap as Watford homes a growing skilled population that commutes out – cannot meet the needs of local employers from local labour market

Watford's Priorities

Priority 1) Sustainable Growth of Watford and its Economy

Key Issues:

- Striking the balance between the competing pressures for residential and commercial development, and optimising the limited number of development sites in the town to better deliver sustainable economic growth
- Reinforcing the foundations for long term sustainable growth through delivery of new transport and social infrastructure, alleviating existing congestion and delivering new capacity to support growth
- Achieving 'smart growth' through delivery of the major development projects, which have the ability to bring a step change in both economic and social benefits

The Trajectory for Sustainable Growth

The limited availability of developable land is a primary challenge for Watford as the borough is so tightly restricted by its administrative boundaries. Bringing forward strategies to meet both housing and employment needs requires balanced and supporting approaches, and there is growing recognition that difficult choices will need to be made over the allocation of sites for both uses. Good progress has been made towards housing targets, with 3,300 of the planned 6,500 homes having been delivered by 2014 (period 2006-2031).

While progress has also been made towards the employment target of as defined in the Adopted Core Strategy (7,000 additional jobs to 2031), it's important to note that these targets were set at a point in time when national economic confidence was much lower.

In line with this thinking, and in light of a more positive economic outlook nationally, recent government policy has placed responsibility on local authorities to assess future economic development needs within the Borough objectively in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supporting Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

The recently completed Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) sets out 4 potential future scenarios for future employment space requirements. These are based on the Spring 2013 East of England Forecasting Model (EEFM), past development rates, labour supply (based on the Core Strategy Housing Target) and labour supply (based on 2012 Sub National Population Projections).

All scenarios tested under the EDGA, bar the past development rates scenario, anticipate a substantial additional requirement for employment floorspace, and in particular, office floorspace. The past development rates scenario is not considered a sustainable one to plan for as past development rates are likely to have been constrained by losses of space and supply side factors and would effectively represent an acceptance that the borough would continue to underperform economically in light of its wider potential – this approach would not be in line with national policy or the Councils own aspirations.

The study's assessment of this recent run of the EEFM forecasts that Watford has the potential to support total job growth of 13,290 over the period 2006-31, almost double the 7,000 minimum target set in the Core Strategy. The study has also concluded that 11,630 of these are predicted to be B1a or B1b office jobs.

The table below, extracted from Table 7.3 of the EGDA summarises the potential requirement in sq.m:

Scenario	Baseline EEFM (Spring 2013)	Labour Supply (260dpa)	Labour Supply (2012 SNPP)
Office Space requirement	249,510sq.m	198,190sq.m	239,815sq.m
Potential supply of office space	38,295sq.m	38,295sq.m	38,295sq.m
Surplus(+)/Shortfall (-)	-211,215sq.m	-159,895sq.m	-201,520sq.m

(extract from Table 7.3, EGDA 2014)

These new projections are not intended to replace those set out in the Core Strategy, but to ensure this strategy takes into account the most evidence at time of writing. The projections do, however, highlight the Boroughs need to protect, improve and indeed increase our stock of high quality commercial accommodation.

Delivering New Employment Space to 2031

In light of these revised economic projections, it's important to understand the Boroughs likely ability or propensity to deliver against this opportunity. The EDGA goes on to state that "the boroughs employment potential remains constrained by a number of factors." These can be summarised as:

- High land values restrict the viability of commercial development and favour residential schemes
- Total office space in Watford decreased by 6% between 2000 and 2012, whilst it increased by 15% across the East of England as a whole.
- Total industrial space in Watford decreased by 11% during the same period, whilst increasing by 4% across the wider region.
- Minimal new office space has come forward over the last decade
- Permitted Development Rights continue to threaten unprotected employment spaces
- The spatial constraint of the borough results in different uses replacing each other rather than bringing forward net new capacity
- Miss-match between jobs available (high proportion of service-related jobs) and highly qualified professional resident workforce, many of whom commute out of Watford for higher paid employment

It is important that these issues are understood and addressed if Watford is to ensure it is delivering sustainable local economic development, particularly the need for the Borough to increase the supply of new and improved employment space. This will require an adjustment to current policy approach, as discussed below.

Balancing Land Uses

Watford's Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) is wide, reaching across Greater London and into Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, as well as across wider Hertfordshire. The borough remains a net-importer of labour - its location and reputation as an employment

hub means the town can attract and retain high quality employers that provide employment for populations across neighbouring districts and counties, accessing Watford via good transport links. Based on recent census data, the town supports employment for up to 2,000 residents from St Albans district, between 2,000 and 5,000 residents from each of Hertsmere and Dacorum districts and over 5,000 from Three Rivers. Thousands of workers also commute both in and out of Watford from Greater London each day⁸. Whilst being an attractive destination for workers, Watford also has a duty to support its own residents employment needs, but the decline in self-containment rate between 2001-2011⁹ suggests this is proving increasingly challenging.

The factors outlined earlier demonstrate the implications of a shortage of space on the town's employment potential. For Watford to maintain its position as a regional economic centre, delivering employment not only for its own residents but for a significant number of residents from neighbouring authorities, a fine balance needs to be struck between the competing land uses of residential and employment.

The borough also needs to strive to provide spaces for supporting services for the growing population, to meet demand for schools, local centres, green spaces and community facilities. Whilst Watford endeavours to optimise land utilisation within its boundaries, dialogue is also needed with neighbouring authorities under Duty To Cooperate, to consider how best to provide the sites to support demand from the population across the sub-region.

Central to both the challenge and opportunity in Watford is land values. Watford is a desirable location both to live and to work, so demand is high, yet space is constrained. This results in higher land values, which makes residential development more viable than office or industrial development in the short term. Whilst local commercial property agents suggest there is growing investor confidence in the town, there is still latent uncertainty which is restricting funding for new commercial developments. However recent evidence suggests that demand is very high and supply tighter than headline figures indicate, so it is possible that within 1-2 years this tight supply will push values to the level where new commercial development can occur¹⁰.

As things stand, the lack of new commercial development in the town over the last two decades has led to a stalling in the office market. Growth businesses are struggling to find the accommodation they need within the town as they expand, and natural churn is not happening because many businesses want to stay in Watford but have to remain in outdated premises due to the lack of alternative space. This has resulted in some Watford employers paying high rents for sub-standard properties. Many new leases were signed during the peak of the early 2000's, so there is likely to be a wave of lease breaks coming within the next few years. Proposed changes to the energy performance ratings of commercial buildings in 2017 also have the potential to further impede the attractiveness on Watford existing commercial stock. This trigger point will lead to employers re-evaluating their premises and location choices, and the town needs to be able to offer sufficient capacity of fit-for-purpose accommodation to secure this employment for the long-term.

In parallel there has been an erosion of existing commercial space. As an historic industrial town, Watford's employment sites are dispersed across the borough. Some areas can be logically packaged and protected as employment spaces through policy, as was done through the Core Strategy and Local Plan, but 52% of 'B Class' jobs (office, commercial, industrial) are within employment space that is spread across small sites outside of the core

⁸ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

⁹ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

¹⁰ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

employment areas¹¹. This space typically provides employment for local residents, and is the most likely to be targeted for conversion to non-commercial uses.

Engagement with the property market through the recently formed Watford Developers Forum provides a channel to communicate with developers and landowners around current evidence and local market trends, and will help build confidence in the town's potential. However at the same time a level of intervention may be required to kick start the commercial market, in order to demonstrate the viability of commercial developments and act as a catalyst for private sector investment new commercial capacity in the town.

Smart Growth – the Role of Watford Major Infrastructure and Regeneration Schemes

Major infrastructure regeneration is often the key to delivering sustainable development, which is why the Croxley Rail Link was a critical, enabling project in unlocking Watford's future economic potential. The town strives to achieve 'smart growth', meaning that the major development projects are linked, complement each other, and the cumulative benefits are far greater than those of each individual project. The projects represent a step change in the town's development, delivering significant new economic, social and environmental benefits to Watford's residents, ranging from improved access to transport and employment opportunities for deprived communities, to expanding the retail and leisure offer in the town centre, to creating new employment spaces and therefore new jobs for local people. As a programme, the major development projects deliver a mixed composition of new employment and residential spaces, as well as servicing accommodation, including education, leisure and health facilities that are suited to the wider long-term needs of the town.

Herts LEP SEP outlines their commitment to working with WBC to achieve maximum economic impacts linked to the major development projects happening across Watford. These are recognised as significant infrastructure and brownfield regeneration schemes that will bring forward new spaces for much needed residential and commercial developments. The towns 'smart growth' approach will underpin the developments and ensure sustainability in the growth of Watford's local economy over time.

Croxley Rail Link

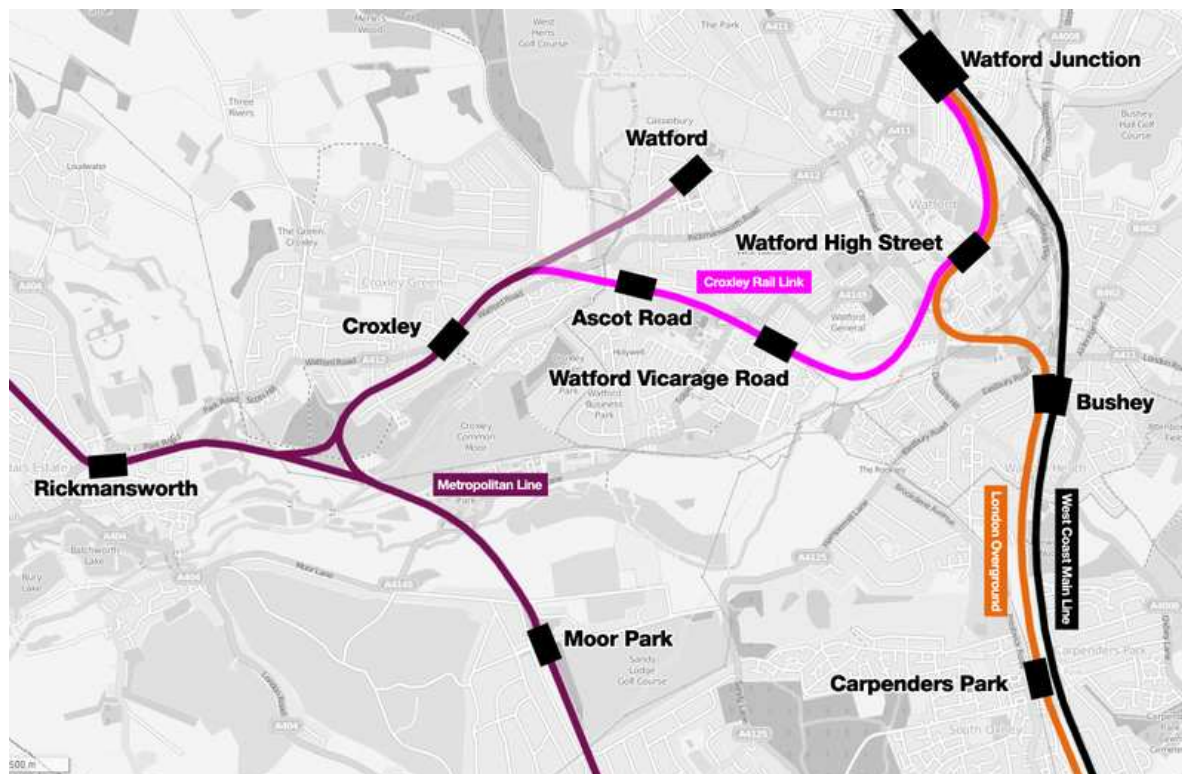
Croxley Rail Link (CRL) is a £175m investment to extend the Watford Branch of the Metropolitan Tube Line to Watford Junction via Watford High Street. Two new stations are being created, at Ascot Road – Cassiobridge Station – which will serve Ascot Road and Watford and Croxley Business Parks, and at Vicarage Road, serving Watford Health Campus and the hospital, Watford Football Club, as well as the residential areas of West Watford. The line will come into Watford High Street Station, linking the town centre, and into Watford Junction, enhancing this regional transport hub. The town will have excellent tube connectivity with 4 stations in the Borough.

Hertfordshire LEP SEP's 'game changer 2' is investing in infrastructure, and Croxley Rail Link is outlined as the highest priority. Due for completion in 2017, this is deemed a "transformational regeneration project" which will "stimulate investment in a range of complex brownfield sites across Watford."¹² CRL is a clear example of sound development and 'smart growth', as it is the thread that links Watford's major development projects together. It not only provides physical connectivity between them, it also positively impacts the surrounding land values and addresses sustainability and green travel issues that enable smart growth. It is a catalyst in unlocking the viability of other development schemes across

¹¹ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

¹² Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

the town, resulting in new employment and residential spaces being created and existing ones refreshed so that Watford can continue to attract and retain good quality employers and secure local jobs for the long term. The Croxley Rail Link is also a committed scheme in the Governments National Infrastructure Plan 2013, demonstrating the scheme's strategic importance both locally, regionally and nationally.



Benefits of Croxley Rail Link

- Approximately 2,700 net additional households will fall within an 800m catchment area of a station
- Improved East-West public transport connection for Watford and Croxley Green
- Will provide an important public transport link for patients and employees of the existing hospital and planned Watford Health Campus
- Supports economic development in Watford by providing first class transport links to business and retail centres
- Provides an Underground rail link to central London for all of Watford's residents and will supplement existing passenger services from Watford Junction and Watford High Street. On completion of the proposed rail link up to 16 trains an hour will link the town with London

Ascot Road

This 5 acre site is adjacent to the new Cassio Bridge Tube station, due to open in 2017, and was previously home to a Royal Mail depot. It is part of a broader 13 acre mixed-use development which also encompasses a new Morrison's supermarket and a primary school. CRL connectivity transformed this site from one limited to industrial or warehousing use, to a site suitable for high-quality office space. With a capital investment in excess of £100m, this offers excellent potential for major HQ office building, being located directly next to a London tube station and at the gateway to the Watford and Croxley Business Parks. Whether

occupied by a single or multiple tenants, this scheme creates a significant capacity of new, contemporary employment space, which will attract employers to the town and has the potential to support over 3,000 new jobs. The recent EDGA study referred to Ascot Road as “a good employment site”, due to its proximity to Watford and Croxley Business Parks, transport connectivity and employment capacity.

Watford Business Park

Watford Business Park, within Special Policy Area (SPA) 6 covering the Western Gateway, comprises around 65 acres in the South-West of Watford, currently supporting over 100 businesses and employing in the region of 1,200 jobs. Whilst it is a major employment area, a significant proportion of the existing properties are over 50 years old, of poor specification and are deteriorating. The supporting road and communication infrastructure is also outdated.

WBC is the freeholder, and most buildings were sold off with long ground leases during the 1950's and 1960's with little service or estate management provision. The leases have between 42 and 111 years remaining and this fragmented leasehold structure has proved a significant barrier to new investment. Existing property and land uses are also disjointed, comprising a mix of car dealerships and trade counters alongside major employers such as Beko and Prism Power. Improved transport connectivity delivered by CRL and the new Cassiobridge Station significantly elevates the strategic importance of this site, and boosts the case for redevelopment of the business park as an employment destination. However without a significant rationalisation of landholdings and uses there is a risk that this strategic site may fail to secure new businesses and employment and could deteriorate further.

WBC is working in partnership with Greenhills Asset Management who successfully manage the adjacent Croxley Green Business Park on behalf of Threadneedle Investments, to deliver the Strategic Masterplan and Regeneration Initiative for the site into which Herts LEP invested £1.5m in December 2013. Initial work has identified potential for phased redevelopment, on a site by site, opportunistic basis over a 15 year period. Intensification of the sites will provide more employment capacity, as existing land use is currently inefficient at 1 job per 76sq.m. compared to 1 job per 22sq.m in Croxley Green Business Park¹³. Preliminary assessment suggests that development values of initial phases could be in excess of £100m, have the potential to create over 1,300 jobs and bring an increase in rateable value of over £3m.

Watford Health Campus

The regeneration of this 29 hectare brownfield site surrounding Watford General Hospital and Watford Football Club has been a long term strategic objective for the town. The Watford Health Campus scheme brings together the public and private sector to transform this area over the next 15-20 years, creating an attractive new community, delivering new jobs, homes, public and green open spaces and community facilities.

Watford Health Campus' location adjacent to Watford General Hospital presents a once in a lifetime opportunity for future development of the hospital site. The £300m project will bring forward 750 new homes, including 35% affordable, and significant new business and employment opportunities with new commercial and industrial spaces and capacity for 1,300 new jobs.

Better access and modern infrastructure will reduce congestion and improve access to the site. The new Vicarage Road tube station created as part of CRL will provide good transport

¹³ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (EGDA) September 2014

links for hospital users, residents and businesses occupying the Health Campus, as well as for the wider community in West Watford, and new road infrastructure will provide far quicker access for hospital vehicles. There new cycle and pedestrian routes will also be created. Community green open spaces are planned, and shops and community facilities are designed to build a lively neighbourhood centre.

Hertfordshire LEP have contributed £6m Growing Places Funding towards the scheme, and £7m of NHS funding has helped secure delivery of the new road infrastructure linking the hospital to the wider region. While funding is yet to be secured, Watford is also likely to see a £350m-£400m redevelopment of the hospitals clinical facilities over the coming years, to deliver improved health services for residents across wider South West Herts.

Watford Junction Interchange Re-development

The redevelopment of the area surrounding Watford Junction presents an unprecedented opportunity for the town to deliver significant new housing and employment capacity, and is critical to meeting both employment and residential targets as defined in the Adopted Core Strategy. The regeneration will deliver a high-density mixed-use scheme as well as leverage a significantly enhanced transport interchange, 1,800 new homes, employment space to support around 2,300 new jobs, as well as retail and leisure spaces and community facilities. Again Croxley Rail Link has been a catalyst for redevelopment as it improves access to the site and increases the flow of passengers through Watford Junction transport interchange.

This is a complex scheme, with a number of obstacles to overcome in making the development fully viable. New infrastructure is required in the form of an access road and a pedestrian bridge, multiple landowners bring land assembly challenges, remediation work is complex, and working across the West Coast Mainline creates physical construction challenges. Provision for a new school will also be required to support the growing local population. However, the benefit this redevelopment will bring to the town is unparalleled in both economic a social terms, because of the scale of new employment and housing capacity, and it also presents an opportunity to boost perceptions of visitors and investors of by transforming this gateway to the town.

The total development value of this scheme is likely to be in excess of £600m over a 15 year period. A phased approach will be undertaken, with the first phase deliverable by the end of 2020. Achieving a strong commercial centre at Watford Junction is essential in enabling the town to provide the employment spaces needed to secure its economic future and put growth on a sustainable footing, yet the scale of this site also enables provision for the towns housing needs alongside new employment space.

Town Centre

Watford town centre has always been a successful retail destination, anchored by what was the Harlequin centre, now Intu Watford, and was ranked 37 in the national retail index in 2008¹⁴. It plays a pivotal role in driving forward the local economy and providing around 90,000 residents and 500,000 people living within 20 minutes of Watford with a thriving sub-regional centre which meets their needs in terms of retail, business, social, leisure and cultural activities. However, Watford's national retail rank slipped to 41 in 2009 and 45 in 2013¹⁵. The town centre was highlighted as a priority area for development in 2010 ED strategy, which noted the changing nature of retailing, the challenges being faced by High Street decline nationally, and strong competition from nearby retail centres. The priority set

¹⁴ Javelin Venuescore 2009

¹⁵ Javelin Venuescore 2013-14

out to re-establish Watford as a successful and vibrant regional retail destination, with a thriving High Street alongside a one of the biggest indoor shopping centres in the UK.

The £100m+ redevelopment of Charter Place and expansion of Intu Watford, expected to be completed by Autumn 2017, will attract new major brands to the town, create hundreds of new jobs, and enable Watford to compete successfully for regional retail spend. Intu regional director Rebecca Ryman stated that the scheme will “transform the town” and considerably boost retail rankings, placing Watford “firmly in the top 20”. The redevelopment will also bring a multi-screen cinema and bowling facilities into the town centre. This will build more diversity in recognition of the need to balance retail and leisure offerings, and provide linkage between daytime and night time economies which will encourage longer dwell time, and enable families to enjoy a more rounded town centre experience.

Significant public realm works were completed in 2013/2014, with over £8m invested in the redevelopment of The Parade, creation of the Met Quarter restaurant area and the New Watford Market, as well as several smaller schemes. Further improvements are planned for other areas along the High Street. The Parade redevelopment included creation of new events spaces, and has resulted in a more European style café culture which has encouraged new restaurants to open, all bringing more vibrancy to the town and contributing to the positive link between the town's day and night time offers.

There is wide recognition of the positive impact of culture on local economies. The growing role of culture in Watford town centre, again identified in the 2010 strategy, has progressed significantly with the annual Imagine Watford Festival launching in 2011 and a year long Big Events Programme launched in June 2014. The cultural programme is being delivered in partnership with stakeholders across the town and will be carried forward by the Town Centre Partnership (formed September 2013).

The Town Centre Partnership (TCP) is the catalyst to ensuring maximum benefit is derived from recent investments and securing the town centres sustainable future. In 2014 WBC recruited a Town Centre Manager and used £100k High Street Innovation Fund, awarded by government following the 2011 Mary Portas report, as a fund for the TCP to evidence early delivery and to support the TCP in its aspirations to develop into a Business Improvement District (BID). BID's are a proven model, and this will become the future engine for development within the town centre. There are uncertainties around the future of local authority regeneration funding, and whilst the WBC is committed to delivering a high quality of baseline services to the town centre, there is recognition that a BID would bring a level of sustainability to future funding, over and above that provided by the council, and with predictability over the 5 year BID term. This also puts the decision making about spend into the hands of those private sector businesses that will derive most benefit from future investments. The Town Centre Partnership hopes to go to BID ballot in October 2015.

The Town Centre Strategy 2013 explores the current challenges and opportunities facing the town centre in more detail, sets the direction for the TCP and considers activities that a future BID may undertake in order to secure long term sustainability. Watford's town centre redevelopment and strategy is also supported by Hertfordshire LEP's Priority 3 're-invigorating our places', which suggests that successful town centres play a key part in delivering economic growth and sustainability.

Already, however, there is a growing body of evidence to demonstrate how recent investments such as the public realm enhancements and market relocation have helped catalyse private sector investment in the town centre. The vacancy rate in Watford town centre has decreased significantly throughout 2014 and following recent dialogue with local agents, approximately 80% of the vacant units in Watford, including units which have been vacant for a number of years, are now under offer and progressing towards occupation.

While some of these new High Street tenants are existing tenants displaced by the forthcoming Charter Place redevelopment, many are new entrants to Watford.

Major Development Projects - Impact Summary

Project	Timeframe	Gross Development Value	Total Direct Jobs – excluding indirect and induced jobs	Long Term Impact (Direct GVA per annum)
CRL	Complete Autumn 2017	£175m	NA	£300m+ per annum (wider economic benefit, CRL Business Case)
Watford Town Centre	Charter Place Complete Autumn 2017	£100m+	2,220	£23.9m GVA per annum
	New Watford Market, completed 2014	£2.6m		
	Public realm enhancements, completed 2014	£4.3m		
Ascot Road	Completed 2017	£100m+	3,020	£130.8m GVA per annum
Watford Business Park	2015-2025	£100m+	1,110	£47.8m GVA per annum
Watford Health Campus	2015-2025	£300m+	1,280	£41.4m GVA per annum
Watford Junction redevelopment	Phase 1 2017-2020	£600m+	1,910	£86.2m GVA per annum
	Future phases to 2030			

Accommodating Positive Growth

Watford's Major Development Projects created an ambitious yet achievable framework for development across the town. Following many years of under investment, these bring a unique opportunity for the town to re-establish itself as a regional economic hub, secure a sustainable future, and enable the creation of new commercial spaces. This increased supply should ease the pressure on land values, encouraging redevelopment of existing commercial spaces and further new development. These projects are the foundations for achieving both the employment and housing targets set out in the Core Strategy.

The trajectory for growth outlined in 2006 was robust. Yet both the local and national economy has changed significantly over the last 9 years. Local population growth has accelerated far faster than projected by the ONS; the growth in Watford's working age population has been significant and is forecast to increase further. It is prudent to take

account of new evidence as it emerges and adapt evolving strategies accordingly. The 2014 Watford EGDA suggested that even taking into account all of the new employment capacity planned for through the Major Development Projects, Watford will still have a shortage in capacity of both commercial and industrial space¹⁶.

Within the context of accommodating a positive floorspace requirement for both office and industrial uses over the plan period, the EDGA outlines a number of (but not mutually exclusive) options for the Council to consider, both as part of its ongoing site allocations work, through Local Plan Part 2, and wider policy formulation.

- Major Development Projects
Assess the allocation of employment space within the major development projects and identify any scope to increase capacity, or intensify development
- Resist loss of employment space in the future
There has been “significant loss of employment spaces over the last decade”¹⁷, so sites should be reviewed and new policy protection introduced where appropriate. Also the Article 4 Direction on Clarendon Road could be extended to other employment areas.
- Allocate new employment sites
The Watford EGDA recognises that “as a tightly constrained and under-bounded borough, new development sites are limited”. However, all new potential for both employment and housing within the borough needs to be identified and assessed. Any new employment sites should seek to benefit from Watford’s strong transport links and be located close to established employment areas where possible to capitalise upon critical mass and cluster effects as well as existing amenities and facilities.
- Intensification of existing sites
Better utilisation of the existing office and industrial stock could be achieved through gradual redevelopment of individual plots. In major employment areas policy could attempt to reduce encroachment of non ‘B-Class’ uses which tend to produce lower intensity of job creation.
- Assume (and plan for) needs to be met elsewhere
 - Duty to Cooperate arrangements could enable consideration of how needs could be displaced to adjoining local authority areas that fall within the boroughs functional economic market area (FEMA).

Planning for the long-term sustainable future of the town requires vision beyond the major development projects. Refreshment and re-invigoration of the town needs to be an ongoing process if sustainability is to be achieved in Watford’s growth and resilience secured in its economy. A continual process of monitoring and improvement will keep the towns offer fresh for visitors, residents and businesses and in doing this, the next wave of private sector led development projects will emerge. Sustainability runs through all of the priorities in this strategy, which are interlinked, and all contribute to delivering long term sustainable economic wellbeing for the borough.

¹⁶ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment 2014

¹⁷ Watford EGDA 2014

Priority 1 - Emerging Actions

Action	Partners	Milestones
Enter discussions with neighbouring districts within Watford's FEMA, under Duty to Cooperate, to consider how land for future employment and residential uses could be better provided through a joined up approach across districts.	Neighbouring Local Authorities Hertfordshire County Council	
Accelerate and where appropriate, consider intensification of the Major Development Projects.	WBC Watford Health Campus LLP Developers Landowners	
Improve policy protection for small local employment areas – extend policy protection to all viable employment areas in the town, including potential extension of Article 4 Direction to remove Permitted Development Rights from strategic employment sites.	WBC – Planning Policy	
Within Local Plan Part 2, identify on any potential new employment sites through Site Allocation work.	WBC – Planning Policy	
Identify other existing employment sites suitable for upgrading/intensification.	WBC – Planning Policy	
Working with landowners to overcome obstacles and bring forward a viable Watford Junction redevelopment scheme.	WBC Network Rail Landowners Hertfordshire County Council Hertfordshire LEP	
Work with Greenhill's Asset Management to rationalise landholding in Watford Business Park to enable new investment and upgrading of outdated commercial stock.	WBC Greenhill's Asset Management	
Commission a detailed assessment of the viability of commercial development in Clarendon Road compared to other commercial areas, and also into wider blockages in the office and industrial markets across the Borough.	WBC Hertfordshire LEP Watford Developers Forum Landowners	
Continued sector engagement with local property market through the Watford Developers Forum.	WBC Local Development Sector	
Support for the TCP and its proposed progression to a BID as the engine for future development of the town centre.	WBC Watford Town Centre Partnership	

Priority 2) Transport and Connectivity

- Maximising Watford's location strengths and reinforcing the towns role as a regional transport hub for London and South West Hertfordshire
- Planning for and delivering improvements to transport infrastructure and services in order to continue to attract investment and secure high-quality long-term employment
- Supporting sustainable travel through local, regional and national transport connections, and delivering improved access to employment, leisure and community services

The Role of Transport in Local Economies

Watford's location and transport infrastructure continues to be one of its primary assets. Transport and connectivity has a direct impact on an area's economic competitiveness as it facilitates the free flow of goods, services and people. This strategy considers the impact of current schemes, but also points to the next wave of transport and infrastructure projects needed to sustain the borough over the longer term.

Transport investments unlock local economic growth in many ways:



Sustainable Transport Infrastructure to Support Future Growth

Watford was the first district in Hertfordshire to justify a specific Growth and Transport Plan (GTP), largely in recognition of the urban nature of the borough and growing evidence to suggest that where green and sustainable forms of transport are introduced, modal shift occurs and local people start to use them. The role of the town as a sub-regional transport hub also requires that bespoke infrastructure planning is undertaken. The 2014 GTP considers the impact of the current major development projects, but also provides initial scope to support future investments, and links into Hertfordshire LEP's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). It seeks to ease constraints and increase capacity on all transport modes, particularly on road and rail networks which are used by the majority of commuters. In a spatially constrained borough which is part of a highly congested region, improvements in transport infrastructure are a positive investment in the long-term sustainability of the local economy.

The 'smart growth' approach interlinks investments in transport infrastructure and development of employment spaces. Major employers expect to be located on strategic sites that are close to transport hubs. Where there is a cluster of company head quarters, as there is in Watford, the nature of their operations means that they draw skills from a wide catchment and visit other sites nationally, and internationally, therefore strategic transport connections are needed to support this. This impacts how sites are allocated, as the sites with the best access to good transport infrastructure will attract and retain good employers, whilst sites outside the immediate vicinity of a transport connection may be more suited to residential uses. This highlights that it is not simply about having the number of sites for employment, sites also need to be in the right location in terms of transport connectivity to achieve the full employment potential.

M1/M25 Growth Area

Hertfordshire LEP considers investing around transport hubs as the key to unlocking local economic growth, setting out three growth areas in its SEP, each linked to major road and rail arteries. Watford is at the heart of the LEP's proposed M1/M25 growth area. Whilst transport links are deemed good, the region experiences heavy congestion, particularly on its road networks and on mainline rail routes into London Euston. Herts LEP refer to "the chronic congestion facing much of the county"¹⁸ partly as a result of Hertfordshire claiming "2% of the national population, 1.3% of the land and nearly 3% of all national vehicle miles"¹⁹. Significant population growth and the lack of investment over recent years has helped build the case for new infrastructure projects to support future economic growth within the region.

Croxley Rail Link is the primary infrastructure investment for Hertfordshire LEP over coming years as it delivers the wide scale economic benefits discussed in the previous chapter. Whilst the Metropolitan Line is already a core part of Watford's existing transport infrastructure, the extension gives Watford's business and employment areas far greater accessibility to labour and services both locally, and from a wider catchment. CRL opens up transport interchanges, commuter routes and travel choices at a neighbourhood level, across the region, into London and nationally.

The improvements in congestion will be realised through increased travel choices for local communities – a journey from Croxley Green to Watford Junction will take 12 minutes – and residents will have greater transport access to employment, but also to health, education

¹⁸ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

¹⁹ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

and leisure services. CRL delivers improved access to economic opportunity communities across the borough.

Long-term sustainable economic benefits of CRL:

- Catalyst for creation of new employment and housing spaces by improving the viability of brownfield regeneration schemes
- More high quality employers attracted – improve local employment offer for high skilled workers and reduce out-commuting
- Better strategic connections - direct connectivity to London and interchange at Watford Junction for the Midlands
- Improved local connectivity – better local access for residents to key employment and leisure areas, enhancing quality of life
- Expanding the labour market and encourage inward investment – a wider catchment of skills and labour for current and future Watford employers
- Encourage sustainable commuting – modal shift away from the car
- Reduce congestion by improving and introducing new public transport links
- Increase business productivity by reducing journey times and congestion, and delivering agglomeration benefits

Links with London

Being inside the M25 and with strong transport links, the town offers an excellent location for businesses requiring close proximity to London, but without the overheads a London location commands. Hertfordshire LEP outlines its ambitions around 'Harnessing our relationships with London'²⁰ and Watford is perfectly placed to do this. The existing transport network enables 47% of working Watford residents to commute into Greater London and around 27% of those employed in Watford commute in from London, enabling great cross fertilisation of skills and knowledge between the two centres. Watford benefits from a wide range of businesses re-locating outside of London as they grow, bringing a wealth of diverse employers into the town.

Good transport links encourage inward investment, but they also enable local skilled workers to commute out to other areas. A factor in the decline of Watford's self-containment rate is the increasing number of high-skilled workers commuting out of the borough for higher-paid work. But also over the same period the number of in-commuting workers originating from London has increased by 13%, highlighting the growing economic and spatial connectivity between Watford and the capital. The implications of this are discussed further in the Employability and Skills chapter.

Watford Junction

Watford Junction is the gateway for London commuting, and also for sub-regional and regional commuting. It is a key enabler to Watford's role as a regional employer. The station currently provides an interchange for West Coast Mainline and Virgin train services into London Euston and out across the Midlands towards the North West, connections to Gatwick airport and Clapham Junction, London Overground services and local train connections to St Albans and the Chilterns. From 2017 it will also connect with the London Underground Metropolitan Line through CRL.

The strategic importance of Watford Junction is increasing, linked with the impact of the major development projects. It acts as the entrance to the town for workers, and business and leisure visitors, and facilitates the flow of investment. It is the point at which many

²⁰ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

people form first impressions of Watford. A recent capacity study suggesting that the 6.9m people travelling through this interchange is forecast to increase organically, but also that CRL will bring an additional 1.6m people per annum through the station by 2017. There is already overcrowding at peak times so increased patronage will result in additional pressure on the existing facilities and services. Enhancements to the station itself are essential in supporting this forecast growth in capacity and to cater for the needs of the town and its commuters over coming decades. In line with a 'smart growth' approach, regeneration is linked to surrounding schemes, and transformation of this interchange in turn improves the viability of adjacent land, making the location increasingly attractive as an employment location. An improved interchange would also provide an opportunity to improve permeability through the site and into the existing Imperial Way/Colonial Way employment area, significantly improving its pedestrian and cycle access from the station itself.

As discussed in the last chapter, regeneration of the wider site is critical in meeting Watford's employment and housing targets. Hertfordshire LEP has stated its commitment to working with Watford Borough Council to achieve maximum economic benefit from the developments related to Watford Junction

Improved Services

The government is consulting on the Rail Utilisation Strategy which considers a broad range of UK wide rail improvement programmes and rail services, including schemes like HS2 and Cross Rail. Some of these have the potential to impact on Watford Junction. Any impact from other schemes needs to deliver net additional capacity to support future economic growth, and not lead to displacement of existing services. Another consideration is the pressure to increase the movement of freight by rail in order to alleviate road congestion. If this were to compromise Watford's inter-city or commuter rail connections it, could potentially inhibit local growth.

Some of this current constraint is legacy from the 2008 timetable changes which reduced the number of trains stopping at Watford Junction. There have recently been some positive increases with Southern Services delivering more capacity in 2014 and London Overground trains increasing the number of carriages. These measures attempt to maximising potential from existing infrastructure, but new infrastructure is required to support future need. This strategically important interchange must have sufficient services and capacity to support the growing local and regional economy.

Watford's Transport Investments

CRL and Watford Junction are the two most significant investments in transport infrastructure to support growth; however, there are several other schemes detailed in the 2014 GTP, at various stages of planning and feasibility, which will support growth in the local economy by improving accessibility and reducing congestion..

The next wave of transport schemes to support growth

M1 Junction 5 – Major Highway Maintenance

This scheme will improve signalling and provide additional capacity at this key motorway interchange. Improving connectivity here would help unlock economic growth in many of the ways discussed at the beginning of this chapter, and will also influence the towns ability to attract and retain international businesses due to improved access to the major airports.

Watford Junction: Colonial Way Link Road

A key element to unlocking the potential of the Watford Junction regeneration scheme is this link road. It would connect the A4008 at Stephenson Way (which links to the M1 J5) and the A412 St Albans Road, including crossing over the St Albans branch line.

Watford Health Campus Link Road

A new access road will open up the Health Campus site and create a bus-only link to Willow Lane. This will connect Wiggshall Road and Dalton Way, providing access to the M1. The primary purpose is to provide better strategic access to the Watford General Hospital, enabling it to service a wider population across the region, but it will also provide access to new homes and businesses and alleviate congestion around the local area.

Western Gateway: Tolpits Lane Link Road

Watford Business Park is currently only accessible from the North of the site. This scheme would open up access from the South, alleviating congestion at the current access points, including Rickmansworth Road, and improving current constraints on vehicular flows in and out of the park. It would help deliver productivity gains and cost reductions to businesses in Watford and Croxley business parks. This road is linked to delivery of the overall Watford Business Park regeneration project discussed in the last chapter and again demonstrates 'smart growth' with transport investments supporting sustainable redevelopment of employment spaces.

Abbey Line Upgrade

A feasibility study is being undertaken to assess various improvement options for the rail line connecting Watford and St Albans. These include rationalisation of stations including potential for a new station near to the Dome roundabout, conversion to light rail and connecting to Euston post 2026. The study also assesses conversion to guided bus and extending the line into St Albans city and Watford town centres.

Dome Roundabout

This busy interchange experiences heavy congestion at peak times, particularly on the A41 and A412. A number of improvement options are currently being considered.

Local road junction improvement schemes

There are a range of schemes proposed to improve capacities and flows of traffic around many of the town's major road arteries and junctions. These include several along both the A411 and A412, maintenance of the A41, improvements around Bushey Arches, and at road junctions between Eastbury Road / Brookdene Avenue, Vicarage Road / Wiggshall and the A41 / Hartspring Lane.

Access to the town centre will be greatly improved through CRL connectivity, and this has been a major catalyst for the Intu expansion. Improvements in transport help connect employers to the labour market, but also give local people better access to leisure opportunities so that spend is reinvested in the local amenities rather than in competing centres. Enhancements in local travel amenities such as bus services, cycle routes and pedestrian areas all contribute to improvements in access to amenities for local communities, and provide critical connectivity particularly in the parts of Watford where up to 40% of residents do not have access to a car²¹.

The Watford Urban Futures Transport Package, supported by Hertfordshire LEP provided funding for Watford Business Park pedestrian and cycle access enhancements, and for low

²¹ 2011 ONS car ownership data

cost travel alternatives to access key areas of growth and employment in Watford. The influence of local transport on inward investment should not be underestimated – employers are highly concerned by how easy it is for their staff to get to work because this affects their ability to attract the required levels of skills into their businesses. If journeys to work are too difficult, they will not be able to recruit and retain the staff they need to operate, and this will ultimately determine where they locate. Ensuring appropriate travel-to-work schemes are in place is a key component in retaining good local employment. These can be varied, but could include park and share schemes, or priority bus and business routes, as well as improved cycle and pedestrian access.

Better transport links encourage inward investment, support business retention and enable workers to access employment, all of which help contribute to the local economy and improve containment rates, which then in turn, reduce congestion. The linkage between these factors is what helps build sustainability.

Emerging Actions

Emerging Action	Partners	Milestones (to follow)
Lobby for new rail services through Watford Junction to deliver increased capacity, and more interchanges across Watford's wider transport network of rail, road and tube routes.	WBC Herts LEP Network Rail London Underground HCC DfT Local Businesses Developer, investors and landowners	
Lobby for local transport improvements targeted at congestion in the main road arteries connecting the town	WBC Herts LEP HCC Local Businesses	
Lobby for more local transport schemes, bus, cycle and pedestrian, particularly to better connect deprived areas to employment opportunities, leisure and community services	WBC Herts LEP HCC Local Businesses	
Mitigate against the effects of the major development project construction phases on local transport routes	WBC HCC	
Plan for and deliver the next wave of transport schemes to support growth	WBC HCC Herts LEP	
Work with the Town Centre Partnership to introduce an improved Town Centre Parking Strategy	WBC Watford TCP	
Utilising Watford's unique transport strengths as a lever for inward investment and business retention	WBC Chamber of Commerce Herts LEP	
Ongoing updating and delivery of the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan	WBC HCC	

Priority 3) Inward Investment and Business Retention

- Making sure Watford has the right places and spaces to retain and attract Watford's current and future employers
- Improved promotion of the town as a place to do business
- Ensuring Watford has the right services and processes to embrace business investment in the town

Watford's ability to attract good employers and ensure they remain within the borough, providing long-term appropriately skilled employment for local people, will affect sustainability in the local economy. In order to do this, the right business accommodation needs to be available. Watford has been successful in securing a number of major employers from across a range of business sectors, and in nurturing and growing a strong SME base. However, recent evidence has suggested there has been a decline in both the quality and quantity of commercial and industrial space in Watford, in contrast to the wider regional trend²². This could affect the towns' ability to compete to attract good employers in the future, despite its locational strengths. Once businesses are located in the borough, the right environment needs to be created to promote and support growth, in order that they remain in Watford and provide long-term employment.

Watford's Employment Spaces

Watford has seven main commercial and industrial employment areas: Clarendon Road / Station Road, Watford Business Park, Ascot Road, Colonial Way / Imperial Way, Greycaine Road / Odhams Industrial Estate, Sandown Road and Fishers / Wighenhall Road which will become part of the Watford Health Campus employment area. These areas account for around 48% of 'B Class' jobs (office, commercial, industrial) and 24% of total jobs in the borough. The remaining 52% of B Class jobs is spread across smaller disparate sites which span the borough. Recent evidence suggests that there continues to be high demand, but that there is insufficient supply of good quality spaces, as outlined in Priority 1. Outside of B Class jobs, retail is the dominant employment sector, supporting significant local and regional employment in the town centre and is forecast to bring forward substantial additional employment potential through the Charter Place redevelopment, with new jobs in the retail, leisure and food and drinks sectors.

Industrial Market

Watford is home to a diverse range of businesses involved in a wide spectrum of industrial activities, and several specialist manufacturers are based in the borough including DDD Ltd, Prism Power, Sigma Pharmaceuticals, Siemens and Teledyne TSS. Demand is high due to Watford's M1/M25 location, and the vacancy rate has remained comparatively low at around 7.5% for some time²³. However this persistently low rate has had the adverse effect of preventing the churn, intensification and upgrading of existing sites that would be expected to take place within a normal market environment. Therefore many of Watford's industrial sites are dated and poorly specified, with businesses remaining in properties longer than they might otherwise because of the lack of alternative accommodation. This does however evidence Watford's strengths as an employment location, as businesses are often prepared

²² Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (2014)

²³ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (2014)

to pay similar rents to neighbouring areas for what in reality is sub-standard premises, in order to remain in the town.

Local agents suggest that a continued lack of supply will severely impede Watford's future economic growth potential²⁴. New industrial sites are sorely needed in order to decant existing businesses and allow redevelopment and reconfiguration of older sites to better meet future need. However, this requires new development land to come forward which is highly constrained. Whilst some new capacity will be delivered through the major development projects such as Watford Health Campus and Watford Business Park, without a significant step change in policy it will be difficult to protect against further loss of employment space. If losses continue the net result may be that no new capacity is created in the town despite the major development projects, and the gap between Watford's ability to create jobs and growth in its working age population continues to deepen, putting further pressure on commuting, congestion and local labour markets, and undermining the towns aspirations as a regional employment hub.

Office Market

Clarendon Road is Watford's prime office location. The office stock here is a mixture of relatively new high quality offices and older secondary space. Major employers KPMG, TJX Europe and FIS Global are located on Clarendon Road, whilst other big employers including HSBC, Hilton Worldwide, Majestic Wine and Weatherspoons are located in employment areas across the town. Property agents suggest that the office market has improved recently and there is a growing investor confidence in the town²⁵.

However, a residual market uncertainty has resulted in minimal new office space being developed over recent years, and there is still a significant challenging in funding office developments, undermining the short term viability of bringing forward new schemes. Vacancy rates are around 15% (down from 24% in 2010), but more detailed analysis shows that this drops to only 4.1% when considering vacancy of high-quality space²⁶. This constraint in the office market is resulting in similar problems to those in the industrial market, where many businesses find themselves locked into outdated premises due to lack of alternative space. Market feedback suggests that growth businesses struggle to find new premises to accommodate their expansion locally, and so are inclined to move outside of the borough. Again, the lack of new space coming forward is restricting the necessary churn in the market which would ordinarily allow upgrading or intensification of existing sites. There is growing evidence of a level of market failure in the local commercial property market, particularly with regard to office development.²⁷

High land values present both opportunities and challenges, but could lead to further erosion of Watford's existing office stock, particularly where older premises are below short term viability for organic commercial redevelopment and residential development is more feasible. If sites are bought at a value which only makes residential viability possible, commercial redevelopment will be significantly compromised. WBC introduced an Article 4 Direction on Clarendon Road in order to protect the office accommodation from switching to residential use, but these pressures are being felt across the borough, particularly if premises stand vacant for any period of time. The recent EGDA assessment suggested that it is possible that the tight supply may push rental values to a level where development is viable if sufficient land can be made available to accommodate growth. Headline rental values on

²⁴ Watford Economic Growth and Delivery Assessment (2014)

²⁵ Watford EGDA 2014

²⁶ Watford EGDA 2014

²⁷ Watford EGDA 2014

Clarendon Road are currently £20-£22 per sqft²⁸ and market feedback suggests that values of £25 per sqft would be the trigger point for organic commercial redevelopment. In parallel to this, market feedback also suggests that if a new block were to come forward on Clarendon Road this could break the market deadlock by providing new capacity to support natural churn and demonstrate viability of commercial space in this location, both resulting in a kick-start to the market.

Hertfordshire LEP is committed to working with WBC to achieve “maximum economic impacts”²⁹ linked to Watford’s major development projects. In order to do this, pre-existing issues in the commercial market need to be addressed, and then appropriate levels of employment space need to be delivered through these schemes. Even with protection of existing sites and delivery of new spaces through the major development projects, forecasts indicate that there will still be a shortage of capacity in the commercial market if jobs are to be created in line with working age population growth. Therefore, and as stated under Priority 1, dialogue is also needed with neighbouring districts to consider how new employment and residential space is provided for local people in the sub-region in the longer-term.

The wider context of this is the growing body of evidence suggesting that if adequate space cannot be provided in the Watford area, it is often the case that the businesses will tend to focus their search on other regional centres such as Milton Keynes, Slough, Maidenhead or Reading – this potentially represents not only lost economic opportunity to Watford, but to the wider sub-region. Securing Watford’s employment position is therefore strongly in the interests of the wider sub-region due to the large volume of residents from neighbouring districts that are employed in the Watford.³⁰

It is also worth noting that in practice the employment area in which Watford operates extends beyond its boundaries, which are little recognised by local businesses. Immediately beyond Watford’s boundary are a number of industrial estates, including several developments on Tolpits Lane and also on Otterspool Way. There are commercial office locations at Croxley Green Business Park and also at Leavesden, all of which are seen as Watford locations by many businesses – for this reason, it can often be the case that Watford’s wider role is underplayed. This reinforces Watford’s strategic role in the heart of this economic sub-region.

Promoting Watford

Watford’s historical strengths as an employment, retail and transport hub has created a reputation for the town as a good place for business to locate. There is an opportunity, however, to extend and enhance the marketing and promotion of Watford as a regional hub, but also profiling the town’s major development projects and wider quality of life offering.

Watford has always experienced strong success with companies seeking relocation from London, and this will continue as firms look for the cost efficiencies to be gained from a strong edge of London commercial and transport hub. However the towns appeal extends beyond this and Watford attributes enable it to continue to attract inward investment on a national and international basis, as well as through exploiting links with London.

²⁸ Watford EGDA 2014

²⁹ Hertfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan March 2014

³⁰ Watford EGDA 2014

Town Centre

Watford's town centre supports a significant level of employment particularly in the retail and leisure industries. Recent pressure on the retail sector and high streets nationally has led to the closure of businesses in many other town centres. But Watford has fared well. As a result of the investment discussed in the first chapter, this national trend has been reversed locally, with many new shops and food businesses opening on the High Street, and new brands are being attracted into the expanded Intu Watford. This is a very positive position for the town and is boosting local employment as well as create an even more vibrant town centre. New businesses need to be secured in the town and an environment created in which they can trade successfully. The creation of the Town Centre Partnership in 2013 and potential future Business Improvement District provides a vehicle to help achieve this, as it brings those businesses together to plan for future success collectively, and decide how to invest in the town centre to provide a sustainable long-term trading environment.

There are also a number of office sites within the town centre that provide employment. If the Town Centre Partnership is successful in securing a BID, these would be inside the proposed BID area. Any future BID Board will shape the future of the town centre and have an influence over how these premises are retained and marketed as employment spaces. There currently is a challenge with many vacant upper floors. Consideration is needed of how best to utilise these spaces which have the capacity to contribute towards either employment or residential targets, yet both present their own individual challenges. The spaces may require investment to make them fit-for-purpose for business which could lead to viability challenges, whilst residential uses is already proving problematic due to conflict with existing town centre uses, particularly Night Time Economy. Together stakeholders and the TCP / BID Board will seek to establish right approach for the town centre and wider borough.

Business Retention

Once businesses are located in Watford, proactive business retention is needed to secure this employment for the long-term. Watford is considered a positive place for businesses to operate, indicated by an active local business community and engagement in local governance and partnership activities. Ensuring the town remains conducive to local business operations will help sustain a strong employment base. There are many measures that can be introduced that support business retention locally, for example.

- Engaging major employers: active engagement with existing major employers to identify any barriers and provide assistance where possible. Watford's Big Business Connect, established in 2013, provides a forum to engage and support the top 30 employers in the town.
- Planning for growth: identifying high growth local companies and planning for growth with them. The Business Growth Forum is a forum well suited to extending this activity within the town.
- Ease of engagement with the local authority: Hertfordshire's Better Business For All initiative encourages a more open and supportive approach by local authorities when assisting with regulatory matters, in order better meet the needs of businesses.
- Business Charter: Watford will create a business charter to outline commitments to support local businesses and create a framework for simple engagement with the council.

- Local supply chain: active promotion of the local supply chain helps stimulate demand and supply, and therefore growth of locally based businesses. WBC is in a strong position to lead by example in supporting local supply chain, and can influence how the requirement to support local supply chain is embedded in to contracts. With the scale of development in the town there is scope to seek commitments from the developers involved in these schemes, and also to consider how this could be further encouraged through planning policy.

Emerging Actions

Emerging Action	Partners	Milestones (to follow)
Continue and strengthen local business groups such as Big Business Connect and the Business Growth Forum	WBC Chamber of Commerce	
Extend marketing of the town, specifically marketing opportunities around the major development projects and further enhance the Watford For You brand	Chamber of Commerce Watford For You Big Business Connect Business Growth Forum	
Support the HCC Better Business For All initiative	HCC	
Create a Watford Business Charter	Big Business Connect Business Growth Forum Chamber of Commerce	
Lead by example by further supporting local supply chain through procurements and policies, and through greater application of 'social value'.	HCC Chamber of Commerce	

Priority 4) Innovation and Enterprise

- Supporting Watford's entrepreneurial and innovative local economy
- Ensuring the right spaces, advice and guidance are available for both start-up and growth businesses within the town
- Nurturing the local business environment and supporting initiatives that help our local employers improve their productivity and competitiveness

Watford is, and needs to continue to be a place where businesses thrive and grow. Increased productivity all creates positive impact on local economies, enabling firms to employ more people and retain more spend within the local economy. Watford has a strong track record in nurturing enterprise and fostering entrepreneurial activities; this can be strengthened and extended to meet the growing local economy and needs of Watford businesses.

Start-ups and Entrepreneurism

Watford has a higher than average start-up success rate and an established culture of entrepreneurial activity. The Borough supports high levels of business start-up rates, with 93 new VAT registered businesses per 10,000 working-age inhabitants in 2010, which is much higher than county (81), regional (61) and national (59) average³¹ However, Watford performs slightly less well in terms of business survival rates, with 43% of new start-ups surviving at least five years in the Borough. This compares with 44% across Hertfordshire, 46% across the wider East of England and 44% across the UK as a whole

Social enterprise Wenta (Watford Enterprise Agency), now the leading provider of business support across Herts, Beds and Bucks, has been successfully providing help and guidance to local businesses for over 30 years. They have made significant progress in improving business survival rates through the support they offer to start-up and small businesses. In 2010, with support from WBC, they launched the My Incubator service at their site in Colne Way, Watford. This initiative is designed to provide physical space and mentoring support for start-up businesses in those critical early stages of operation. My Incubator has proved a great success. Since it opened, the Watford Incubator has helped 665 businesses start up; they have run 161 courses which have helped train 1214 clients and they have held over 3700 1:1 advisory sessions. Clients who have received intensive support through the Incubator have a 96% survival rate after the first year.

Support for start-up businesses is critical. According to the office of national statistics 1 in 7 people now work for themselves. There are 4.54 million self employed people in the UK, a figure which is up 8% on 2013. The biggest rise being the over 50's where the figures are up 35% on 10 years ago. If this trend continues, support for these entrepreneurs in terms of advice and suitable start up premises will be key to helping the local economy prosper and grow.

However, the current Wenta premises are dated, comprising a mix of old industrial units along with some more modern office units added in 2004. Despite the age of the premise Wenta has been operating at near full capacity for some time. There is a great level of need in the market, but scaling up services to meet this high demand in the existing location is challenging. Wenta's ability to grow, extend support to more entrepreneurs who need it, and

³¹ Watford 2014 EGDA

to provide contemporary office space for start-up businesses, is restricted by the physical space they are operating in. New facilities are needed in order to scale local start-up support services to meet increasing demand, and offer more fit-for purpose high-quality space.

Nurturing Growth Businesses

Whilst Watford supports a good number of knowledge-based activities compared to the wider region and nationally, it is less well represented than other areas in the sub-region, suggesting neighbouring local economies are better placed to harness and benefit from these growth sectors³². However, this may reflect the fact that Watford is home to a greater share of larger employers (many of which operate in knowledge-based industries) compared with other authorities in the sub-region that are characterised as having a greater SME business base. The town has always achieved resilience from its healthy spread of sectors, yet specific focus on further developing knowledge-based activity will help embed sustainability within the towns economy, and will complement the capability in nearby areas.

The creative economy in Watford is considered to be relatively under developed given the close proximity to London and the commercial and lifestyle benefits this offers.³³ However, Watford's Cultural Plan suggests that there is "considerable scope to bring the sector up to and beyond the national and South East average". The programme of cultural events and creation of new cultural spaces, launched in 2013, gave a boost to this aspiration. In addition the success of Warner Bros Studios Leavesden is making a significant impact on the growth of this sector within the town, particularly in local supply chain businesses. Watford's Creative Industries Networking Group was started in 2012 and has proved highly successful as a forum which brings together local businesses in the creative sector to share best practice and promote growth of the sector.

SMEs are widely recognised as the growth engines of the UK economy, and are expected to deliver much of the employment growth during the ongoing economic recovery. Small, growing businesses face specific challenges which need to be supported in order to retain them within local economies. Providing the quality and quantity of fit-for purpose work spaces to support these companies as they grow will with help Watford's small businesses survive and thrive. The significance of this was highlighted in the previous chapter.

Effective signposting for all local businesses, but particularly for SME's and growth businesses is essential to ensure companies can access the support that they need. Rationalising support services and bringing them into single point of local access would streamline services and make them more accessible to firms. This could provide a single point of access to a wide range services from business support and mentoring, to regulatory advice, education, finance, premises, and skills. Providing signposting to apprenticeship schemes will enable firms to harness the skills needed to operate, and awareness of business support programmes could identify financial investment schemes.

Hertfordshire LEP SEP outlines the county-wide initiative "Hertfordshire Business Growth Programme", intended to support growth businesses and the proposed Hertfordshire Growth Hub is intended to provide access to knowledge and expertise to help drive better performance. Wider promotion of these initiatives and improved signposting would better enable for Watford's growth businesses to access sources of support available in the region.

³² Watford EGDA 2014

³³ Watford EGDA 2014

Improving Competitiveness

Watford has an active business community which participates in local forums, partnerships and governance structures across the town. This culture of positive business engagement is one to be strengthened and extended to benefit the wider community of local businesses. This involvement by local companies helps create a more competitive environment for all business to operate in, by removing barriers to trade and pioneering new initiatives to increase productivity for local businesses. Examples of this are the Business Growth Forum, a group of local businesses committed to improving Watford's overall competitive business environment; Big Business Connect, a forum of Watford top 30 businesses; and the Town Centre Partnership, a group of town centre business leaders introducing a Business Improvement District to boost that specific trading environment.

Whilst Watford's diversity of sectors has added resilience to the local economy, a number of specialist sectors also operate within the town. Two sector specialist networking groups have emerged, CING, the Creative Industries Networking Group, and PING, the Pharmaceutical Interest Networking Group. Hertfordshire LEP has stated its commitment to nurturing networking to support growth, and PING in particular is well aligned with their SEP priority around 'Global excellence in Science and Technology'. These groups both aim to promote best practice and knowledge share between local specialist companies, which helps improve their competitive positions in both national and international markets, and embedded the strength of these sectors within the local economy. There is potential to support other sector aligned forums to come forward and evolve within the town.

Watford and West Herts Chamber of Commerce is an active and dynamic chamber offering a range of support services to help businesses operate and compete effectively in local, national and international markets. Membership enables businesses to access specific expertise and advice around all business functions. Networking is also a core part of the Chambers' offer, bringing local businesses together to connect and build relationships that foster mutual growth.

There are a range of active networking groups operating within Watford, each with a slightly different offer, so something suited to all types of business. The Federation of Small Business (FSB) is very active locally, providing comprehensive support and engagement with national agendas. Networking groups like BNI and Business Buzz offer diverse ways for businesses to connect for mutual benefit. Engaging with these groups proves an excellent way for local authorities to improve communication and extend links with local businesses. Regular participation could better enable WBC to deliver against several of its economic development priorities by improving signposting and communication, and could give a mechanism for more structured feedback from a wider range of local businesses.

Watford town centre is the heart of the town, and the local business community has come together to creating the Town Centre Partnership in order to secure the long term future of the town centre, as discussed earlier in this document. Improving the competitiveness of Watford's Town Centre as a regional destination for retail and leisure is a key objective of the TCP and any future BID. Watford's forecast rise in retail rankings will be one of many indicator of success. Footfall is also a key metric, and WBC and the TCP are jointly investing in a footfall counting solution, due to be in place by Christmas 2014, in order to assess pedestrian flows around the town. This will give robust metrics to evidence the impact of investments made, particularly for events. This will also aid future decision making about areas for investment.

As Watford seeks to improve the promotion of the town and enable businesses to adapt to changing trends in consumer behaviour, particularly in the retail sector, the need for wireless internet connectivity in the town centre has become more evident. There is a growing

expectation for people to connect to the internet wherever and whenever they want, at no cost. For business, this transforms the way they can engage their customers, bringing vast opportunities for innovation in how they attract and retain customers, and drive efficiencies through their organisations. WBC, working with local partners is seeking to introduce WiFi to the town centre in late 2015. In parallel to this many business areas outside of the town centre are struggling to operate with poor internet connectivity, due to the lack of super fast broadband being available. WBC is exploring ways to improve broadband speeds and download capacities in business areas either through fibre or wireless connectivity. There is also the potential to introduce this key infrastructure to business areas across the town

Watford has approximately 22 local or neighbourhood centres across the Borough which have a key role to play in serving residential areas across the borough. These range in size and scale, some distributed along major arterial routes such as St Albans Road, and other serving specific local residential catchment areas. The success of these local centres is key in providing access to particular types of convenience retail offers and service that are best delivered near to residential, and therefore reducing impact on local congestion.

Emerging Actions

Emerging Action	Partners	Milestone (to follow)
Working with stakeholders to investigate ways to improve accessibility to start-up business support, and enable services to scale to meet growing demand within the market	Wenta Chamber of Commerce Business Growth Forum Herts LEP	
Improve local signposting to support for small and growth businesses	Chamber of Commerce Business Growth Forum	
Signposting for local businesses to the Herts Growth Hub	Herts LEP	
Identifying Watford's SMEs with most growth potential and facilitating links to appropriate support to nurture growth	Chamber of Commerce Business Growth Forum Herts LEP	
Support for sector specialist local networks	CING, PING, Chamber of Commerce Business Growth Forum	
Local networking groups supported	Herts LEP Chamber of Commerce Watford's range of networking groups	
Support Town Centre Partnerships development towards a BID	TCP	
Wireless broadband connectivity delivered – WiFi in the town centre and community areas and business quality broadband into major employment areas	TCP Watford Community Housing Trust West Herts College Safer Watford	
Footfall counting solution implemented in town centre	HCC TCP	

Priority 5) Employability and Skills

- Working with local employers to deliver the right labour pool to support private sector job growth
- Ensuring local residents have the appropriate skills to access the new jobs being created
- Addressing gaps in the local skills market that have knock on effect on the overall sustainability of the local economy

Watford has a large working-age population and a skilled local workforce. These strengths have contributed to the town's economic resilience over recent years and has positively influenced inwards investment and the town's appeal to businesses. At a county level, Hertfordshire LEP's SEP recognises that whilst the wider working age population is generally well qualified and headline indicators for economic activity and employment rates are strong, this masks some underlying issues in the labour market. In Watford this is evidenced through a miss-match between jobs available (high proportion of service-related jobs) and highly qualified professional resident workforce, many of whom commute out of Watford for higher paid employment³⁴. The decline in self-containment rate has highlighted the need to better connect the skills of local people to the jobs available, which in turn would improve pressures of commuting and congestion. Also, within Watford there remain small pockets of persistent or entrenched unemployment, primarily in the more deprived areas of the town.

Unemployment

In economic terms unemployment is lost productivity. Whilst it clearly also has wide ranging social implications, equipping unemployed groups with the skills needed to return to the local workforce will help provide more capacity in the labour market and build in more stability in the local economy. Unemployment levels in Watford have historically been comparable to the regional average, but lower than the national average. The number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants fell by 34% over the last year. 22% of claimants are considered long-term unemployed, but targeted schemes such as 'work coaching' for this group are proving to have some success and should be supported and extended where possible.

Unemployment in the 18-24 age group fell from 3,085 to 2,030 between 2013 and 2014; in the 25-49 age group from 620 to 390; and in the 50+ age group from 645 to 485. Whilst these figures are very encouraging, there still remain a number of people out of work with the potential to respond to effective schemes aimed at re-engaging them in economic activity. A consideration when assessing Watford's unemployment figures is whether or not they are wholly representative of borough residents, as many job seekers from outside the borough register in Watford due to the good employment potential and number of employers located here – this again reinforces Watford's role in providing employment for many residents beyond its statutory boundary.

The forthcoming changes to the benefits system and introduction of Universal Credit is expected to make it easier for people to access short term and flexible employment opportunities, because of the removal of the 16 hour threshold in place with Job Seekers Allowance. Local partners have suggested that they expect to see an improvement in how people can access work opportunities, partly due to new automation within the system, and also because benefit payments will be able to supplement low pay regardless of hours worked.

³⁴ Watford 2014 EGDA

The Hertfordshire LEP SEP outlines its 'Foundations for growth' initiative which considers the localised pockets of chronic disadvantage and poor performance in the county, and seeks to enable individuals to develop skills needed to progress within the workforce. Watford supports this programme, and will work with the LEP to deliver initiatives that help bring Watford residents back into the local workforce.

Skills Provision

Good education provision facilitates development of skills within the local population, but also influences inward investment. Employers will make location choices based on skills within the local labour market and also on the quality of local school provision for families of their staff. Watford has 23 primary schools and 8 secondary schools³⁵, many of which are rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, and also West Herts College and Watford UTC providing a range of academic and vocational education options up to the age of 18. With the town's population growing fast, there is a need to work closely with HCC to ensure adequate sites are available for education provision in order to retain the boroughs reputation for outstanding schools and colleges. There is also scope to engage employers in education more actively at an earlier stage, developing the links to employment earlier in the education process, inspiring young people about future workplace opportunities across Watford's Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) and improving alignment of the skills being developed to better meeting employers future needs.

West Herts College has strong links with local businesses and highly regarded work placement and apprenticeship programmes. Development of workplace skills is embedded throughout their range of courses to ensure students leave not only with good qualifications, but also with the attributes needed in the work place. They work closely with local employers to identify skills required, seeking to match their requirements with strong student candidates. Watford UTC is underpinned by the UTC models core principle of developing technical work place skills and close alignment with local employers. Watford UTC is supported by local companies Hilton Worldwide, Twin Technologies, Watford Football Club, CAE Technologies, The Grove and Warner Bros Studios Leavesden.

However despite these strong and varied education offerings and their active approach to business engagement, there are indicators pointing to a skills gap both across the county and locally. Hertfordshire LEP reports that 79% of Hertfordshire businesses experience skills gaps amongst their employees.³⁶ This highlights the scale of challenge for businesses in sourcing not only the quantity, but also the quality of skills they need to operate their businesses at optimum productivity. There is a growing body of evidence from Watford employers who have expressed similar challenges, suggesting they are struggling in particular to fill low-skilled posts. This is driven by a disconnect between local supply and demand, but specific challenges also exist, for example small businesses, which make up a significant proportion of the local and national economy, are less able to plan for recruitment and skills development. Another consideration is that the economic activity rate (i.e. the proportion of working age residents either in or seeking employment) in Watford at 88.9% is higher than both the regional (80.3%) and national (77.4%) figures. This suggests that limited capacity exists to expand local labour supply from current residents³⁷.

This all points the need to create a Watford Skills Board to enable those experienced in the field to take a more joined-up and effective approach to improving the connection between employers needs and local skills. A Skills Board would have a remit to assess the local skills

³⁵ <http://www.watford.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/>

³⁶ Hertfordshire LEP Newsletter September 2014

³⁷ Watford 2014 EGDA

gap, review current provision and make recommendations for future interventions. The benefit of doing this collaboratively is to maximise impact, achieve better scale of resources and bring a more cohesive engagement with local employers, ultimately achieving a better outcome for Watford businesses and residents.

The remit of this board could include:

- Commission a detailed labour market analysis - quantify the gap between supply and demand
- Identify ways to extend programmes intended to re-skill Watford's unemployed population and to re-engage residents in the labour market
- Highlight any overlap between providers and identify potential economies of scale through collaboration
- Explore potential to consolidate approaches to apprenticeships, particularly those servicing the forthcoming major development projects, through a dedicated Watford wide scheme – making it easier for contractors and sub-contractors to employ local people on short term basis
- Identify ways to improve access to skills for local employers, bring better awareness of schemes aimed at connecting skills and jobs.
- Recommend ways to better match skills delivery programmes to the needs of future employers

Connecting Skills and Jobs

Wage levels for workplace jobs within Watford are 14% lower than resident wages. This suggests that skilled residents are commuting to higher paid jobs outside the Borough, particularly in Central London - between 2001 and 2011, the volume of residents travelling to London for work increased by 25%³⁸. Yet whilst it is recognised that in recent years local job growth has not keep pace with growth in Watford's working-age population, it is also likely that Watford has attracted a flow of London workers to relocate, with the increased capacity in housing stock in recent years proving more affordable than London housing. The town is an attractive place to live, so people may have relocated but retained their London based employment. It should also be recognised that high-skilled and highly-paid workers, particularly those holding senior positions, are naturally more likely to have the means and ability to commute. These factors therefore also contribute to the gap between resident and workforce wages

Whilst the town embraces these labour market links with London, Watford's economic aspirations mean that the town needs to strive to address the decline in self-containment rate noted earlier in this document. There are a number of benefits associated with high levels of workforce self-containment, which include reduced congestion and traffic at peak times, a better work-life balance and increased local expenditure as an area's population grows. Watford's vision sees the town as vibrant economic hub, as a good place to both live and work – not simply a dormitory town for London. The town is challenged to both increase supply of lower level skills from within its local population, and also to attract more high skilled posts to the borough, encouraging high skilled workers to take up local employment and the lifestyle benefits this brings.

Watford Borough Council's role within the major development projects presents an opportunity to lead by example in connecting jobs and skills. Watford's comprehensive regeneration programme will bring forward a wide range of new jobs, both during construction phases and long term. Requirements can be embedded into contracts obliging

³⁸ Watford 2014 EGDA

contractors seek local skills and support apprenticeship programmes. Social Value is a vehicle that can support this; however, the stipulation can be more proactively incorporated into contracts where WBC has appropriate influence, as has been done on the Watford Health Campus scheme with development partner Kier, and also elsewhere through policy, for example requiring developers to incorporate apprenticeships as part of planning conditions. Even during times of austerity, the public sector remains a significant procurer of goods and services, and as such, is well positioned to positively influence adoption of local skills.

Emerging Actions

Emerging Action	Partners	Milestones (to follow)
Support creation of a local skills board, bringing together key partners to review the skills landscape in Watford and wider SW Herts and drive forward a more comprehensive to education and skills across the sub-region	Herts LEP HCC JCP Youth Connections West Herts College Watford UTC Neighbouring authorities	
Work with partners to review of the Major Development Projects to match jobs created with local skills	WBC Development Partners West Herts College Watford UTC Watford JCP Youth Connexions	
Identify ways policy led approaches to encourage broader use of local skills in major developments	WBC Watford JCP Developers Forum	
Working with WBC housing team to explore how the Housing Nominations Policy can better support economically active residents	Housing team	
Supporting Herts LEP in developing their skills strategy, and specifically with the Watford elements, and to implement its 'Foundations for Growth' initiative locally.	Herts LEP HCC	
Supporting HCC, as the education authority, in delivery of local initiatives to improve the education offer	HCC	
Working with HCC to identify appropriate sites for education provision	HCC	
Support for workforce planning with SMEs	Chamber of Commerce Business Growth Forum	

Consultation Questions

- 1) Do you agree with the overall Priorities of the Draft Economic Development Strategy?
- 2) Do you agree with the emerging actions of the Draft Economic Development Strategy?
- 3) Do you feel the revised economic forecasts for the Boroughs future employment growth are realistic and deliverable?
- 4) Have the correct partners been identified in terms of delivery?
- 5) With particular regard to short term viability challenges in delivering new office space, how do you consider these can be overcome?
- 6) What metrics do you consider relevant to monitoring the overall impact of the proposed strategy?
- 7) How should the strategy be communicated with the wider public, including businesses, residents and the development sector?

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*PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 1st December 2014
Report of: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development
Title: WiFi Connectivity Project

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report gives an overview of two opportunities for WBC, firstly to deliver street level WiFi connectivity to the town centre and other specific community areas across Watford on a cost neutral basis, and secondly to deliver business quality wireless broadband connectivity from WBC rooftop locations and generate an income for the council.

1.2 Street Level WiFi

The opportunity for WiFi was initially identified within the town centre because of the benefits that WiFi access could bring to visitors and businesses. However, after further investigation there is also a case for introducing connectivity to deprived community areas within the borough because it could support Channel Shift initiatives, and enable the residents to use devices like smart phones to access key services. Improved connectivity would therefore deliver both economic and social benefits. The mechanism to achieve this a service concession contract, an established model which means that WiFi could be implemented without capital or revenue investment from WBC.

1.3 Rooftop Concession

A service concession contract is also the mechanism recommended to deliver business quality broadband connectivity from rooftops. This model enables WBC to generate an income, and risk resides with the infrastructure provider.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 To progress to procuring both a WiFi service concession and a rooftop service concession in January 2015. Procurement for the two concessions would run in parallel, but as separate procurements. The preferred bidders detailed proposals would be returned to Cabinet for approval prior to awarding any contracts. If successful it is estimated that a WiFi service could go live in October 2015.

- 2.2 A Procurement Exemption has been agreed to engage the services of specialist consultants Regional Network Solutions to support the project. RNS assists with feasibility studies, soft market testing, asset and requirement capture, assistance in drafting contracts, and procurement evaluation. They bring in-depth technical and commercial knowledge of this market. Details are in the Appendix.

Contact Officer:

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Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development

3.0 **DETAILED PROPOSAL – Street Level WiFi**

- 3.1 A service concession model is a proven model used by local authorities across the UK to implement WiFi. A consortium of 17 London Boroughs utilised this approach successfully in 2012. The project lead for the London consortium, Terry Brewer, Director Commercial Contracts and Procurement Harrow Borough Council who is also the ICT lead for the LGA, is sharing best practice with WBC.
- 3.2 The service concession approach is based upon the Local Authority offering street furniture assets (lampposts, CCTV buildings etc) to the market, enabling a wireless infrastructure provider to use these to create a wireless network, potentially in return for a fee. This, therefore, switches the model from cost based to at least cost neutral, and potentially to income based, and also transfers the risk from the local authority to the provider. However, this model is only possible if the market deems the area in question commercially viable.
- 3.3 This project is being undertaken by WBC in partnership with stakeholders across the town in order to maximise both economic and social outcomes. These are Watford Community Housing Trust, Watford Town Centre Partnership, West Herts College, Safer Watford, and Herts County Council and Herts LEP are supportive of this initiative and approach.
- 3.4 These partners collectively engaged Regional Network Solutions, specialist consultants, to carry out a feasibility study in Summer 2014, to determine whether there was interest from the market in investing in Watford. This involved capturing what all partners need from a WiFi solution, high level asset audit to establish whether Watford has the right types of asset to offer the market, and a soft market testing exercise. This brought confirmation that HCC are happy for streetlamps under their ownership to be offered as assets in the concession; a MoU is being drafted between WBC and HCC to support this. The soft market testing engaged 7 companies, ranging from local firms to major infrastructure providers like BT. This exercise concluded that there is limited, but definite interest to invest in Watford, primarily because of our location inside the M25.
- 3.5 The model that the market would use involves creation of a WiFi network, but also the installation of what are termed ‘small cell’ devices which boost 3G/4G connectivity. These small devices are fitted to the side of buildings or onto CCTV columns or streetlamps. WiFi provision no longer generates the income it once did, as users now

expect WiFi access free of charge, so the wireless network infrastructure provider generates income by selling 3G/4G capacity to the mobile network operators. The mobile operators are struggling to cope with the explosion in demand for capacity, so this is of great benefit to them. Watford gains by having both WiFi access and improved 3G/4G connectivity, and a cost neutral implementation.

- 3.6 The suggested areas for coverage from an economic development perspective are the town centre, reflecting the proposed BID area so within the ring-road but also including Watford High Street Station in anticipation of CRL, and also including the civic area and West Herts College. It would also be desirable to have coverage across central Watford between the ring road and Watford Junction, Market Street, and Vicarage Road to the football club and hospital. Also proposed for inclusion is Cassiobury Park at Café Cha Cha Cha and the paddling pools in anticipation of the HLR funded regeneration project.
- 3.7 The model also enables the inclusion of community areas that would benefit from improved connectivity, to help them engage with key services, for example improving access to benefits and work opportunities. This can be achieved in two ways, firstly through the requirement for Social Value to be applied within the contract, but also community areas may now prove commercially viable in their own right, because mobile operators require more network capacity in areas where, despite a level of deprivation, there is still relatively high smart phone usage. The proposed areas for coverage are focused around the towns community centres, which correspond to areas where Watford Community Housing Trust has a presence and where WBC would perceive there to be a higher level of social and economic need.
- 3.8 It should be noted that whilst these are the areas recommended for coverage, the exact areas to be included will be established during the procurement phase based upon what the market deems viable.
- 3.9 Any supplier will need to maintain the commercial viability of the network. They will be wholly responsible for the network, its installation, maintenance and operation. The duration of the contract will to some extent be determined by the market, but is likely to be between 5 and 10 years, to allow for a refresh cycle. The benefit to WBC is not only the cost neutral financial basis, but also that the onus to ensure a good quality of service resides with the provider in order to maintain commercial viability.
- 3.10 Procurement of a service concession involves providing the market with the exact detail of assets available along with the requirements specification. A detailed asset register needs to be compiled, including street furniture, CCTV and property assets. The requirements are being captured in conjunction with partners, and will incorporate a wide range of considerations including:
- Content filtering
 - Security
 - Data management
 - Speed and capacity
 - Geographical coverage
 - Availability
 - Services available on the network
 - Application integration

- Integration with Intu WiFi
- How advertising is managed
- Asset management

This is an indicative list, other requirements are likely to be identified as partners are consulted in more detail.

- 3.11 It is anticipated that the branding of Watford WiFi and its welcome pages will be in line with Watford For You branding to represent a cohesive image of the town. A communication plan will also be produced to inform businesses and residents about the new WiFi and how to get the most from it.
- 3.12 An application strategy is also being considered, so that partners and stakeholders are prepared to utilise this new infrastructure when it arrives, and ensure that any integration issues have been considered and mitigated where possible.
- 3.13 RNS are supporting WBC and partners in these projects as discussed earlier. Autumn 2014 will involve detailed planning, producing a full asset register and requirements specification, and the preparation of the service concession contract, in readiness to go to procurement at the end of January 2015.
- 3.14 Indicative time frames are:
- January 2015: Procurement
 Early Spring 2015: Cabinet review / approval
 April 2015: Award contract
 May 2015: Licenses signed
 October 2015: WiFi service go-live
- 3.15 Evaluation of tenders submitted during the procurement process will be seeking best fit with requirements specification, delivery of maximum economic and social benefit, and the most advantageous cost model.

DETAILED PROPOSAL – Rooftop Concession

- 3.16 There is a second opportunity for WBC and partners to seek a ‘rooftop concession’. This involves rental of rooftop assets to the market to enable a far higher capacity wireless network to be created. This model could generate income for WBC and partners (eg WCHT), and has the potential to build an infrastructure upon which high speed business quality broadband could be delivered to Watfords main business and employment areas. These areas, particularly Watford Business Park, are struggling with poor connectivity which is not likely to be improved through the HCC Connected Counties programme. The potential for a rooftop concession is being explored in parallel to the street level WiFi opportunity because there are likely to be different market providers interested in bidding for a rooftop concession than for a street level WiFi concession, and potential rental values and income generated are potentially far higher for rooftops than for street level assets.

There is the potential to generate income for WBC through the rooftop concession, although the level of potential revenue cannot be predicted until early stages of the procurement process, based upon market feedback.

- 3.17 The rooftop assets that can be offered to the market to create a wireless broadband network are being identified and audited in parallel to the street level assets. So a concise register of rooftop locations will be prepared by January.
- 3.18 RNS is supporting WBC in creation of the concession contract, requirements specification and other procurement documentation. This should also be ready in January. Therefore it is recommended that the two procurements run in parallel in order to maintain momentum within the market, partners and locally, and secure both the connectivity improvements and income streams for WBC in 2015.
- 3.19 As stated earlier, the detail from the proposals of preferred bidders on both the WiFi and rooftop concessions, will be returned to Cabinet for approval prior to any contract being awarded.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.2 If WBC succeeds in procuring a WiFi service concession this will enable a cost neutral option for WiFi implementation. There will be no revenue or capital expenditure.
- 4.1.3 It is possible that a small income may be derived from rental of the street level assets to the market. The potential for this will be established through the procurement process as the market feeds back on their view of commercial viability. It is recommended that any income generated could fund resources to create and manage the WiFi welcome page and integration with partner applications.
- 4.1.5 The rooftop concession has the potential to generate income for WBC and partners, although exact levels cannot be defined until feedback is gathered from the market in the early stages of procurement.
- 4.1.4 The £8,450 cost for RNS services detailed in the appended Procurement Exemption will come from Economic Development budget, although partner contributions are being sought towards this cost.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the body of the report. The Council will need to ensure that any landowners where Wi-Fi assets are to be attached have given their approval.

4.3 **Equalities**

- 4.3.1 None

4.4 **Potential Risks**

The feasibility study undertaken during summer 2014 enabled detailed due diligence

to be carried out to assess the viability of the project. This also enabled mitigation of many of the risks, which is why the likelihood of the risks occurring is low in the table below. A brief more fully outlining risks and mitigation is included in the appendix.

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
There is no market interest in Watford at the procurement stage, or no longer interested in a concession model	1	4	4
Assets required by the market to create the network are not available	1	4	4
Procurement and legal issues related to OJEU	1	3	3
State Aid challenges	1	3	3
Ragged End Request	1	3	3
Planning issues – planning policy deters bidders	1	3	3
Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service's Risk Register.			

4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 Alongside economic development resources to manage these projects, resources will be required to create and manage the WiFi welcome page and future application integration. It is proposed that this is funded from any income generated through the service concessions.

4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1

4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1

4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1

Appendices

- Appendix A - RNS Procurement Exemption October 2014
- Appendix B - Watford WiFi Concession Risk Assessment October 2014

Background Papers

- The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

Watford Borough Council Executive WiFi Report Final – Produced by RNS, September 2014.

File Reference

- None

Exemption Request for WiFi Project Consultancy

15th October 2014

Summary

Procurement Exemption is required to engage the services of Regional Network Solutions (RNS) to assist with Phase 2 of the WiFi project, at a cost of £8,450, on the basis of limited market and exceptional circumstances.

Justification

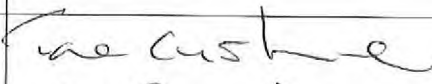

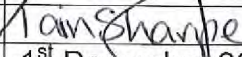
Watford Borough Council plans to go to market for a concession contract to implement a public access Wi-Fi network across the town centre and some specific community areas across the borough. This model has been used successfully by other local authorities and gives Watford the opportunity to implement WiFi on a cost neutral basis. This approach is based upon the local authority offering street furniture assets (lampposts, CCTV buildings etc) to the market, enabling a wireless infrastructure provider to use these to create a wireless network. However, the model is only possible if the location is deemed commercially viable by the market. A feasibility study was required to assess viability.

WBC is working on this project with partners across the town - West Herts College, Watford Community Housing Trust, Watford Town Centre Partnership, Safer Watford. Undertaking the project as a collaboration of local partners ensures both economic and social benefits are delivered and successful outcomes are achieved for multiple groups across the town. Jointly, these partners engaged Regional Network Solutions (RNS) to undertake a feasibility study. As all partners contributed towards the costs of the feasibility, WBC was not required to follow a full procurement process. RNS completed the scope of the feasibility fully, successfully and satisfactorily and the stakeholders were happy with the outcome. Watford is deemed viable for a concession based model.

The Feasibility Study was 'Phase 1', 'Phase 2' is the Enablement Phase, which involves detailed asset audit and producing an asset register, preparing the detailed concession contract and all supporting requirements and technical documentation, procurement, and technical and commercial evaluation. RNS propose a fee of £8,450 to assist with this phase. RNS has proved to have extensive and highly specialist knowledge of both the commercial and technical aspects of this market, and are fully abreast of fast moving trends and developments. These skills and knowledge are not held by WBC or any of the partner organisations. RNS engage only with public sector organisations, and their proven track record and experience suggest that they are specialists within a very limited market. Their involvement as a 'critical friend' to help guide us through Phase 2 of this project will help ensure the right outcome is achieved.

Funding contributions are being sought from the partner organisations, however, the recommendation is for a procurement exemption to enable RNS to be engaged to support Phase 2, on the basis of limited market – they are a highly specialist provider, and exceptional circumstances – they were engaged by the group of stakeholders to successfully deliver Phase 1, so have strong and established working knowledge of this project and what it is looking to achieve for all partners.

Approved Exemption Record Form

	Details
Exemption category <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unforeseeable emergency • Exceptional Circumstances • Limited market • Prior approval 	Limited market and exceptional circumstances. Please see explanation overleaf
Details / Circumstances / Explanation of why an exemption was required:	Please see explanation overleaf
Approved by (Name and date): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MD – Manny Lewis • HoS – Jane Custance 	 
Portfolio Holder informed (Name and Date):	 Tim Sharpe
Date reported to Cabinet:	1 st December 2014
Contract Title:	WiFi Project Phase 2
Vendor / Contractor:	Regional Network Solutions
Date Contract let:	October 2014
Term of Contract:	Fixed fee
End date:	On completion of WiFi concession procurement process
Total Value of Contract:	£8,450
WBC Contract Manager (Name and contact details):	Cherie Norris 01923 278029
Comments / Other Information:	None
Date entered onto Exemptions Register:	
Signed by Head of Service:	

Copies to:

Contract File
 Head of Service
 Corporate Procurement Manager
 Central Register of Exemptions

Watford WiFi Concession Risk Assessment

October 2014

1. Market no Interest in the Borough of Watford

- Already undertaken a process of soft market testing which demonstrated an interest in the market to engage with Watford Borough Council both through a wireless and rooftop concession strategy.
- Continue to engage with the Market; providing detailed information to the market in respect to both the Council's vision and aspirations as well as information about Watford and demonstrating that asset due diligence has been undertaken. In essence sell Watford to the market and give confidence to the market that Watford to ready to engage.

2. Assets not available

- Careful and diligent review of Asset Portfolios using experience acquired on other wireless concessions. Work already undertaken with key internal and external stakeholders to establish the art of the possible in respect to assets owned by the Council.
- To make the proposition more attractive beyond Watford Town Centre already engaged with Hertfordshire CC to make available for the purposes of this concession street lighting columns throughout the Borough.

3. Procurement and Legal

- Concessions currently exempt from OJEU however to ensure transparency and best value an OJEU process is adopted voluntarily adopted. Procurement already consulted and guidance sought with documentation already used on other successfully implemented concessions in the United Kingdom being shared with Procurement.
- Concession licence documentation already used on other wireless concessions has been shared with Legal and guidance sought.

4. State Aid Challenges

- Based on experience ensure on going transparency, reiterating that this is a concession and keeping all parties informed of terms and conditions and not changing after competitive dialogue process or favouring one particular supplier
- Market value rental will apply to all assets used, no assets will be offered for free.

5. Ragged End Request

- Determine a long enough concessionary period which will attract the market but does not offer the option of a ragged end which will dilute value of the asset portfolio in the longer term. Extending further than 10 years will give issues with OJEU so ragged end requests after this should be refused.

6. Market no longer interested in Concessions

- Watford Borough Council benefits from being located within the M25 as strategically any council within the M25 remains a high priority for potential bidders and their potential clients the Mobile Operators. Outside the M25 the concession narrative unless a large city or conurbation is no longer considered attractive.

7. Planning Issues – Planning Policy will deter bidders.

- As part of the initial due diligence process the Planning Department has already been engaged and initial guidance sought. Before commencing the procurement process a guidance note will be issued by Planning which will outline to interested parties the current pre-planning guidance in respect to deployment of wire;less hardware on street furniture.

*PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 1st December 2014
Report of: Head of Regeneration and Development
Title: Business Improvement District

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the proposal to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for Watford town centre, which has been led by businesses in the town and supported Watford Borough Council.
- 1.2 The report outlines Watford Borough Council's role as a partner/Board Member on the Town Centre Partnership which is as:
- the Town Centre Manager's employer;
 - the organisation that approves the BID business proposal and business plan prior to ballot;
a town centre rate payer itself;
 - the organisation responsible for management of the ballot and collecting the levies charged and transferring payments to the BID Company, which the authority is legally obliged to do.
- As the Council is a business ratepayer within the designated area in the town centre, the report outlines the financial implications for the Council should the ballot to establish the BID return a positive majority.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Cabinet agree to support the principle of Watford BID subject to the approval of the BID proposal and business plan.
- 2.2 Subject to the approval of a BID Business Proposal by Committee in 2015 Cabinet agree to nominate the Head of Regeneration and Development as the named person to cast the vote in respect of the Council's eligible properties in the BID boundary area, in consultation with the appropriate portfolio holder.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Maria Manion, Town Centre Manager
Telephone extension: 8260 email: maria.manion@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development.

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Council's corporate objectives are to 'Enhance the town's sustainability' and 'Enhance the town's economic prosperity and potential' by exploiting and enhancing its potential as a major retail and business centre.
- 3.2 To achieve this ambition businesses and agencies need to work together to bring investment into the town, to enhance the environment, and promote Watford as the region's primary town centre with the aim of attracting more shoppers, visitors and businesses. A BID provides the opportunity to support this ambition.
- 3.3 The Watford BID will cover the area set out in Appendix 1 and is led by the Town Centre Partnership and an internal, council, BID project group. The Town Centre Partnership includes representatives from across the town, including Intu, the College and the Council. Watford Borough Council is represented by Manny Lewis, Managing Director; other members include the elected mayor, Dorothy Thornhill.
- 3.4 Business Improvement Districts already operate in over 180 locations across the UK. A BID would establish a professional, sustainable and accountable organisation with a specific vision of working together for the benefit of Watford town centre users and businesses.
- 3.5 A BID is a business led initiative. It is an arrangement whereby businesses in a clearly defined area come together as a group and agree what additional improvements they want to see happen in their area in order to stimulate business growth; how they will manage and deliver those improvements and what will it cost them. All of this information is captured in a Business Plan, and a ballot needs to be held, with all businesses within the BID area voting as to whether they would support a specified increase in their business rates which can be used to deliver the improvements specified within the Business Plan.
- 3.6 A BID can last for a maximum of 5 years and must be able to demonstrate how it has benefited businesses who have funded it. The Council would be responsible for collecting the additional business rate levy and the costs of administration and collection could be recovered from the BID receipts.
- 3.7 **The Watford town BID**
Timescales on the Watford BID are progressing quickly. It is proposed the Watford ballot will take place in October 2015; with the result known at the end of October 2015. The vote needs to be satisfied on two counts; a majority of those voting by number and a majority of those voting by rateable value of the premises they occupied or are entitled to occupy. These dates align with a 1 April 2016 start date for implementation

of the BID, so the BID operates across full financial years.

- 3.8 The Watford BID is being developed by the Town Centre Partnership, supported by the Council through a Town Centre Manager, Town Centre Partnership Support Officer, Technical Admin support and a BID project group. Technical support will be sourced externally on an as needs basis. The Business Plan which forms the basis for the ballot will be developed by the Town Centre Manager in summer 2015. This will need to include the costs of billing and collection, including an assessment of non-payment and the required amendments to the Council's business rates systems.
- 3.9 Baselines of current service delivery will need to be established in consultation with relevant WBC service groups to ensure the BID only delivers services over and above what is currently provided in the town.
- 3.10 Businesses were consulted in November 2014 and this will continue into 2015, this consultation will help shape a future BID Business Plan while also feeding into other relevant corporate policy documents.
- 3.11 The Business Proposal will be presented to Committee ahead of the production of the final Business Plan for Council approval in summer 2015.
- 3.12 Colleagues in Legal Services and Democracy (co-ordination of the ballot and service level agreements) and Revenues (will be responsible for billing and collection arrangements) will be involved in the development of the BID proposals as part of the BID working group. Whilst the detail on the costs of billing and collection is still being finalised (the Council will need to implement a new BID module within its business rates system as the BID levy is a separate liability), the view is the BID could be implemented in time of the annual billing in March 2016.
- 3.13 The ballot area has been agreed by the Town Centre Partnership and a voters list will be established, to support this proxy arrangements will have to be put in place. The costs of the ballot are likely to be met by the Council. The BID ballot will be managed by Electoral Services at a cost of approximately £5,000. They will handle all statutory notices, pre-ballot notifications and will issue and collect ballot papers. The ballot is planned to take place in October 2015.
- 3.14 In the proposed Watford BID area it is likely that businesses with a rateable value of less than £10,000 will be exempt from the levy. There are approx 550 businesses in the proposed area above this threshold; based on a levy of 1% an additional income of around £500,000 per annum or £2.5m over the period of the BID term could be generated. However, at this time the levy rate has to be agreed, and given that businesses within the Intu centre already pay service charges for a range of additional services any proposed rate will need to ensure a fair and equitable rate across the town.
- The levy will be determined in advance of the completion of the Business Proposal, and will be confirmed in the Business Plan.
- 3.15 Watford Borough Council has three properties (Town Hall, toilets and car park) in the BID area, based on a 1% levy this would result in a potential levy of £4,798 per

annum.

3.16 The Council is legally obliged to collect levies and can charge the BID company a fee for this arrangement.

3.17 **Next steps for the BID**

- Agree the business priorities for the business plan - this will be achieved via a number of business engagement events and via the TCP Board Members visiting businesses on a one to one basis.
- Agree the BID levy – The TCP Board need to establish what the prospective BID company will be expected to deliver and the probable costs of this. The levy will be set based on this and on an assessment of business tolerance of any levy.
- Agree exemptions – it is being considered that any business with a rateable value of less than £10,000 should be made exempt from the BID levy.
- Consult with business rate payers – Members of the TCP are looking to engage and consult with a minimum of 200 businesses within the BID area. The TCP are supported by the Town Centre team. This is currently being undertaken and will inform the content of the Business Plan.
- Ensure all statutory dates for the ballot have been complied with – the BID project group will track and identify all the relevant dates.
- Finalise billing and collection/accounting arrangements – new ICT systems will need to be implemented and costs of billing and collection/accounting arrangements fully baselined so they can be factored into the Business Plan.

3.18 **Funding a the BID process**

The TCP has applied for a BID loan of £50,000 to help fund the process, if the loan is approved and the ballot is successful the loan will be repaid in full, if unsuccessful the loan does not have to be repaid.

3.19 **Experience from other BIDs**

There is documented evidence from across the UK that demonstrates the success of BIDs in other areas. In Bedford they now have 6 main events per year attracting over 200,000 people, in Derby's Cathedral Quarter (celebrating their third anniversary as a BID), they have developed a ranger service who meet and greet members of the public and liaise on a daily basis with businesses and partners; they have launched loyalty cards, secured funding for new Christmas lights and support large events. The projects and services delivered by BIDs vary from town to town and should be unique and relevant to the town.

3.20 Generally local authorities have been supportive of BIDs developed in their area and have been supportive of the process and like Watford have assisted with early funding to develop the proposal and cashflow to support the establishment of the BID following a positive vote. Many authorities vote in public to further demonstrate their support for the proposal.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

4.2 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the actual cost to the Council will only be known once the full details of the scheme are known.

4.3 There are a number of organisations within the proposed BID district with which the Council has contractual and/or financial relationship. A review of the existing arrangements needs to take place to review the details of the financial arrangements to understand where the responsibility for paying any BID Levy sits. It may be that some of these responsibilities remain with the Council, which may increase the costs to the Council.

4.4 There will be additional costs to the Council for collection of the BID Levy. It is currently assumed that these will be passed on to the BID. In addition there will be set up and training costs which may also be incurred. It is also assumed that these will be passed back to the BID.

4.5 The Council will also incur additional costs in relation to the ballot for the BID. These costs are not currently contained in the existing budget and a growth bid will need to be submitted to cover the additional costs.

5 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

5.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legislation requires the Council to approve the final BID proposal before it can go forward to a ballot. The Council as a rateable occupier in the proposed BID levy area will be entitled to vote on the BID proposal. It will have one vote for each eligible rateable heraditament in the BID area.

6 Equalities

6.1 There are no direct impact on equalities from this report.

7 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
The local authority don't support the creation of a BID	2	5	5
The TCP fail to engage with businesses	2	5	10
The TCP fail to secure a YES vote at ballot	3	4	12
<i>These will be added to the risk register going forward as the BID progresses.</i>			

8 Staffing

8.1 Staffing is being put in place to support the development of a BID for Watford.

9 Accommodation

9.1 No accommodation impacts.

10 **Community Safety**

10.1 There are no specific community safety issues.

11 **Sustainability**

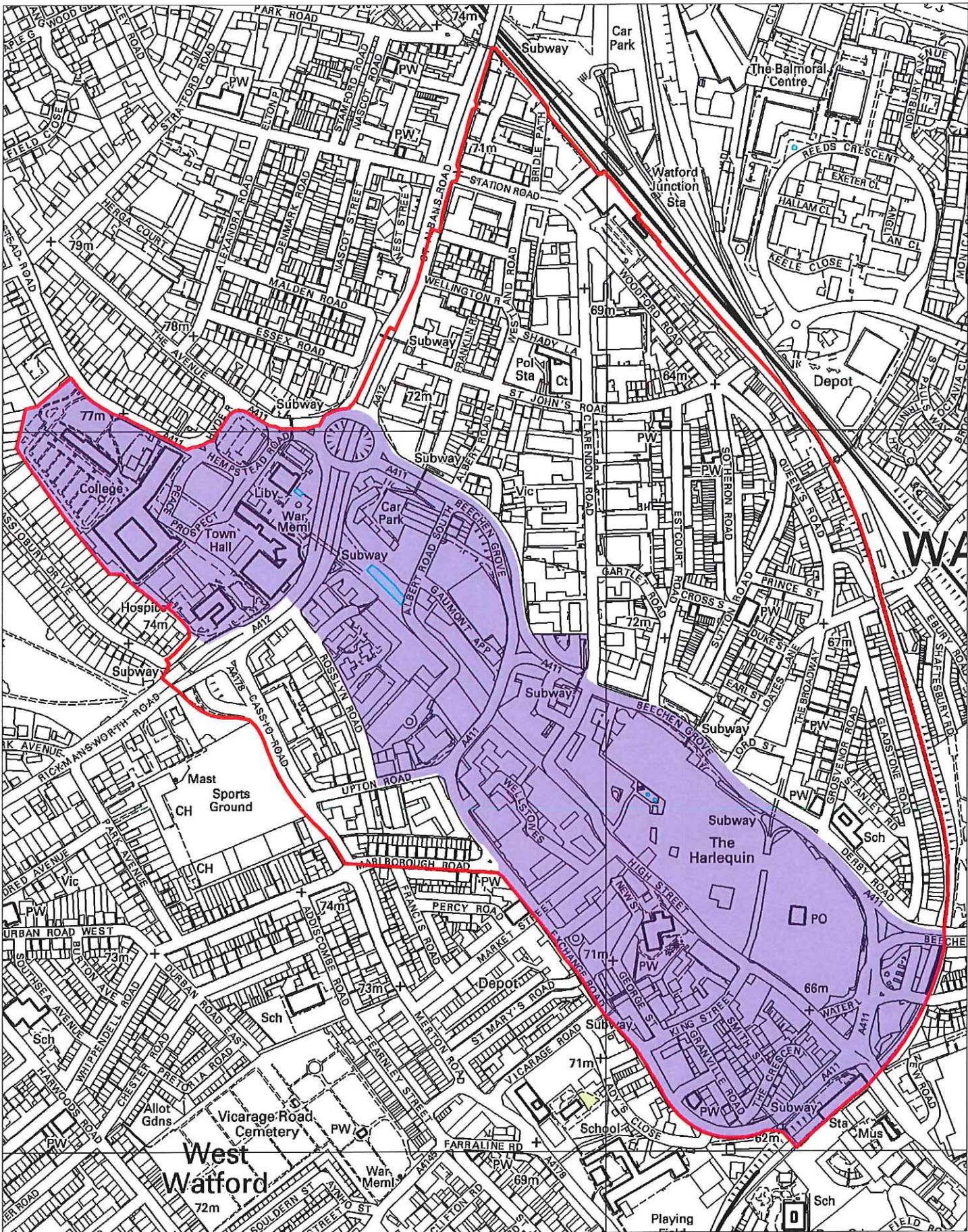
11.1 The creation of a BID is a sustainable way of maintaining investment in the town centre and supports the Council's corporate objectives.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Outline of the BID area

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

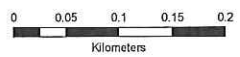


- Town Centre Partnership Boundary
- Town Centre Area

Produced by ER, Planning Policy, May 2014
 I:\GIS_Job_Requests\PLANNING_ & _DEVELOPMENT\POLICY\Town Centre Partnership\Maps



Scale: 1:5,000
at A3



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Part A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 1st December 2014
Report of: Jane Custance (Head of Regeneration & Development)
Title: Multi Storey Car Parks

1.0 **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Council has recently invested significantly in improving the Town Centre via public realm improvements and the relocation of the market. Other projects, such as the redevelopment of Charter Place, will see the further improvement and upgrading of the town centre. However, a significant number of visitors to the town park in Gade, Sutton and Church car parks. Although, these car parks provide an important facility for the town centre, their appearance and the user experience they offer could be significantly upgraded. The Council has therefore been working on a project to secure improvements of this nature, together with necessary structural repairs.
- 1.2 In addition, engagement with residents, businesses and town centre retailers has questioned whether the current policy of operating these car parks predominantly as shopper car parks is the right model. The Council is currently consulting on the development of a Car Parking Strategy for the town. As part of this consultation, respondents are being asked whether the focus should be changed towards parking for other users, for example, commuters.
- 1.3 The report considers lease offers received for Sutton, Church and Gade car parks.
- 1.4 The car parks are currently managed by Intu Properties under a lease terminating in 2035. There is a break clause which provides that the lease can be broken by either party on 31st March 2015 by giving 3 months notice.
- 1.5 The new lease arrangements will provide an increase on the income received from Intu in recent years and secure investment in excess of £2m.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet

- Authorises the Property Section Head to give notice to Intu under the break clause to terminate the lease.
- Agrees to enter into three 15 year leases and associated legal documentation for each car park with Town Centre Car Parks;(TCCP)
- Delegates to the Managing Director authority to agree to final terms for the necessary leases.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

Martin Jones, Section Head for Regeneration and Property
telephone extension: 8408 email: Martin.Jones@watford.gov.uk

Hannah Heinemann, Property Development Project Manager,
Telephone extension: 8212, email: Hannah.Heinemann@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development.

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 Background

The Council's freehold car parks Sutton, Church and Gade are leased to Intu until 2035 with a break option either party may exercise no later than three months prior to March 2015.

Intu has stated that the three car parks are not part of their business plan from Spring 2015.

The existing lease provides the Council a guaranteed rent of £593,000 plus additional overage payment in the event revenue thresholds exceed deductible costs. To the year ending 31st March 2014 the overage payment received by the Council was £148,335 producing a total income for the last financial year of £741,335.

The Council is responsible for maintaining the car park structures and a recent structural survey by Pyle has identified the need for works to all three car parks at a cost estimate in excess of £2,000,000.

Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) have been appointed to provide advice to the Council on the procurement strategy and the approach to secure the required investment as well as to optimise the income stream to the Council.

Their report dated 10th June 2014 recommended seeking offers for a lease from the

market as this would give the greatest flexibility for the Council.

Following interest from 5 parties, the Council received offers from two parties. Both accepted the Heads of Terms attached as Appendix 1. Both offers received secure a rent higher than that currently received as well as capital investment in excess of £2.1m. The detailed proposals of the parties are set out under Appendix 2 (Part B) of the report.

It is estimated that there will be legal and consultancy costs associated with the lease negotiations in the region of £43,500.

3.4 Recommendation

All parties were interviewed and put forward a strong customer focus. The winning bid (TCCP) however stood out due to their on-going commitment to new technology, more certainty of their offer in that there were fewer conditions and this is because their level of due diligence had been more thorough. Their website also reflects their strong customer focus. TCCP also demonstrated commitment to engage with the town centre partnership and the town centre users. They also put forward the most economical advantageous offer.

TCCP will set the car parking tariffs they see appropriate for the car parks. However, they will consult the Council on the tariffs at lease commencement and any changes thereafter. This is similar to the existing arrangement with Intu.

Officers are aware that members are concerned that some improvements to the car parks need to be made in the short term. TCCP have identified some works that can start within the first 6 weeks of lease commencement. These include decoration of entrance halls and stair cases and a deep clean of the lifts in the car parks. All works will be carried out within the first 18 months of the lease.

It is recommended that individual leases for each car park are being entered into to provide for the potential of redevelopment of Gade Car Park site should this be something that the Council wishes to do within the 15 year period.

On balance, although both offers received were strong, it is considered that the proposal by TCCP is overall the most economical advantageous offer. It is therefore recommended that WBC enter into a lease for each car park with them.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

- 4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the financial implications are contained in the body of the report. The additional costs in relation to the consultancy and legal fees relating to the lease negotiations can be contained within the current revenue budget.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Council has procured external legal advisers Walker Morris to advise on and draft the leases.

4.3 Equalities

4.3.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Delay in completing the leases	2	4	8
Reduced rental offer during negotiations	1	3	3
Gap in management	2	4	8
Lessee defaulting on delivering works	1	4	4
<i>Lessee defaulting on paying rent</i>	1	4	4
<i>Lessee assigning lease to different operator</i>	3	1	6
<i>Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service's Risk Register.</i>			

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 TUPE may apply but both bidders have been made aware.

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 n/a

4.7 Community Safety

4.7.1 Improved CCTV is proposed plus higher levels of staff presence.

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 LED lighting is proposed to be increased as part of the lease offer.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Heads of Terms (Part B)
- Appendix 2 – Detailed Proposal (Part B)
- Appendix 3 – LSH Recommendation Report (Part B)